

Understanding culture (Education)

What is crime and deviance?

What is deviance?

Bullets

- Deviance is behaviour by individuals or social groups that fails to conform to culturally expected norms of behaviour.
- It is a relative concept - no act in itself is deviant per se.
- Labelling theory makes the important point that it is the social reaction or label that defines an act as 'deviant'.
- Deviance is controlled by sanctions. Sanctions can be positive or negative, formal or informal.

Text

The term deviance is associated with behaviour that differs from the normal. In addition, sociologists tend to view deviant behaviour as acts which provoke a sense of public disapproval. Deviant behaviour is also frequently subject to some form of sanction that serves to promote conformity. Anthony Giddens (1993) defined deviance as: 'non-conformity to a given norm, or set of norms, which are accepted by a significant number of people in a community or society'.

Clinard and Meier (2001) developed four definitions of deviance: statistical, absolutist, reactivist and normative. The statistical definition of deviance applies to any behaviour that is uncommon. However, because behaviour is statistically rare, this does not in itself make it wrong. The absolutist definition of deviance applies to any act that is negatively sanctioned across all societies. An example of absolute deviance would be incest, for which there is a taboo in every culture. Because there are so few examples of absolute deviance it follows therefore that nearly all examples of deviance must therefore be relative. This means that what constitutes deviance will vary according to cultures, time periods, subcultures and social groups. Relative deviance implies it is not so much the quality of the act that matters but the social reaction to that behaviour.

The reactivist definition of deviance is closely associated with labelling theory. Howard Becker argued that no action in itself is deviant: it has to excite some reaction from others. Therefore, whether an act is defined as 'deviant' or not depends upon who commits it, who sees it, and what action is taken about it. Labelling theory highlights how those with power can label certain groups or their activities as 'deviant'. The normative definition of deviance applies to any behaviour which contradicts social norms. These can be formal norms, such as laws, rules or informal norms which apply according to the social context in which behaviour is judged. So at a theme park, queuing is formalised through roped off areas and people who jump the queue can be expelled from the park, however, at the bar of a pub the process of queuing is informal. In either case pushing in is still viewed as normatively deviant.

Ken Plummer (1979) makes a distinction between societal and situational deviance. Societal deviance occurs where there is a broad consensus that an act is wrong. Situational deviance occurs when in the context the societal deviant behaviour is understandable. An example of this would be the runner Paula Radcliffe urinating in the gutter whilst racing in a marathon. Under any other circumstance this action would not only be viewed as offensive but criminal and liable to arrest.

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Therefore the critical variable in definition of deviance is the reaction of the audience. It follows that if no one observes an act of deviance then it cannot be defined as such and people escape the label of 'deviant'. Such is the strength of society's norms and values that behaviour, along with those who commit it, becomes labelled as outside normality. Ken Roberts (2001) makes a distinction between culpable deviance (when the individual committing it is held personally responsible) and non-culpable deviance (when deviance results from factors beyond an individual's control, such as someone with Tourette's syndrome shouting).

Deviance is culturally determined meaning that it can change over time and will vary between cultures. Cross-cultural studies reveal a multitude of behaviours seen as normal in one culture but highly deviant in others. An example of this is the cooking and eating of animals such as cats and dogs in some far-east countries. Whereas this is viewed with disgust in our society, some other cultures have cultural rules about food commonly consumed in Britain such as pork and beef.

Deviancy may be part of sub-cultures within the overall culture of society. For example, young people may not see the taking of 'soft drugs' as deviant to the same extent as their parents' generation. Deviance is therefore not simply certain forms of behaviour; but a status given to behaviour by outsiders.

Questions

- 1. How is deviance different to crime?
- 2. Give examples of how deviance differs between cultures and across time?

Keywords

1. Absolute deviance: term for behaviour that is negatively sanctioned in every society, for example, incest.
2. Relative deviance: an act of deviance defined in terms of the social reaction to that behaviour.
3. Situational deviance: term associated with Ken Plummer that refers to how acts, normally viewed as deviant, are excused because of the context in which they occur.
4. Societal deviance: term associated with Ken Plummer which describes a broad consensus that an act is wrong.

What is crime?

Bullets

- Crime, like deviance, is a social construction.
- Crimes may be viewed as 'just' or 'unjust' according to individual values.
- Although most criminals processed by the system are working class there is evidence of crime among the middle class.
- Many legally-defined criminal acts do not end in prosecution or punishment, reflecting how agents of control exercise discretion and how crime can be both viewed as abnormal and normal.

Text

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Compared to defining deviance, crime is considerably more straightforward and refers to activities that break the law within society. The Oxford English Dictionary defines crime as: 'an act punishable by law, as being forbidden by statute or injurious to the public welfare'. However, even defining crime in this legal way can be misleading since it does not take into account the process of law-making. Laws are a social construction since they often reflect the values and concerns of the time period and are devised and enforced by humans. Over and above the above legal definition of crime Mooney et al., (2000) suggest that many people also share a 'normative definition of crime'. Crime is often considered an injurious act which offends against society's norms and values.

Crime is therefore associated with 'serious acts' but this ignores the fact that crime can be petty and most people break them. For example, how many drivers never exceed the speed limit? Who has not dropped litter? Dog licences were dropped simply because so many respectable people simply refused to buy one. They chose to keep an illegally unlicensed dog instead. So just like deviance, crime is viewed in a relative way too, with some crimes viewed more seriously than others. This can be determined by society's cultural framework and to some extent the harm that crime causes on others. Some people will use David Matza's 'technique of neutralization' that "no one was seriously hurt" by an action to defend their law breaking.

Thus there is an interesting relationship between crime and deviance as reflected in these definitions:

Crime is behaviour which breaks the laws of a particular society.

Deviance is behaviour which goes against dominant social norms of society or a social group.

Crime but not deviant are actions which, despite being illegal are so common or accepted that they are not subject to sanctions.

Before industrialisation the most serious crimes were either religious in nature, or crimes against the property of the aristocracy. For example, heresy (to proclaim doctrines other than Christianity), sacrilege (stealing or damaging church property), and blasphemy (taking God's name in vain) were all punishable by death. It was also a capital offence to hunt fish or cut down trees belonging to the aristocracy. However, murder of one commoner by another was not taken very seriously by the authorities. Offenders were expected to atone for their behaviour by paying money to the victim's family as a form of compensation.

Sociologists recognize that from the point of view of the public laws can be seen as just or unjust. Often respectable people will be prepared to break the law if they feel it is unjust, or they may not even recognize the fact they are committing a crime. Thus, for example, the middle classes may vocally condemn pilfering from factory floors, yet will themselves steal stationery and make private telephone calls from their offices. To them this is a 'perk' of the job alongside 'fiddling' their expenses, and avoiding the payment of taxes. Marxists argue that the preoccupation over crime as a working class phenomenon disguises the enormous amount of white-collar and corporate crime that is committed. It follows therefore that the distinction between crime and deviance is by no means clear-cut.

The law is not fixed or permanent in any society, it varies with time. For example, car drivers are no longer legally required to have someone walking in front of the car with a red flag. More importantly, since the 1960s it has no longer been a crime for consenting males to participate in homosexual sex. It is hard to believe that 70 years ago, during the period of 'prohibition' in the USA, the possession and consumption of alcohol was illegal. Despite its commonplace location within contemporary Western culture, in many Islamic countries possession and consumption of alcohol is illegal today.

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Even within the categories imposed by the legal system, there may be a wide discrepancy between criminal acts and their perception. Rape is considered in most cultures a serious crime, yet until 1991 a married man forcing his wife to have sex against her will was not classified as rape but 'conjugal rights'. Edwin H. Sutherland (1945) proposed that significant amounts of white-collar activities should be reassessed in order to challenge the notion that crime is predominantly a working class phenomenon.

It is worth bearing in mind that even politicians can also be guilty of breaking the law. Laws are generally specific to a nation state and sometimes the High Court decrees that the Government has behaved illegally with regard to its domestic actions. However, as a result of globalisation and regionalisation, actions, especially in terms of human rights, may also be classified illegally in a way that transcends national boundaries. For example, in 2005 the European Court of Human Rights decreed that not allowing prisoners the right to vote in elections in Britain was illegal. Many see Britain and the USA's decision to go to war in Iraq as illegal since it did not have the approval of the United Nations.

Questions

- 1. Why do you think crime is perceived as a working class problem?
- 2. Why is crime viewed as a social construction?

Keywords

1. Carcerate: the process of locking people up, as with prison, borstal, detention centres and secure psychiatric hospitals.
2. Legal definition of crime: behaviour that contravenes formal rules (laws) of a society.
3. Normative definition of crime: recognition that some criminal acts are of such a grave character that they offend against society's consensus norms.
4. Social construction: not naturally produced but the result of human action or culture.

Media and crime

Crime myth and reality

Bullets

- Left Realists emphasise there is a real fear of crime by ordinary people.
- Geoffrey Pearson claims people tend to look back nostalgically on the early years of their lives as 'golden ages' of lower crime and higher morality.
- Pearson refers to this nostalgic image of the past as reflecting 'respectable fears'.
- Besides fearing crime people are fascinated by all aspects of crime.
- The media plays a crucial role in 'sensitising' certain actions as crimes, such as domestic violence and marital rape.

Text

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It is a fortunate fact that most people have little first-hand experience of crime, but this does not mean that it is not a real fear in ordinary people's lives. Sociologists recognise the important role can media play in shaping ideas, and this is equally true of their fears and assumptions about crime in society. Leslie Wilkins (1964) coined the phrase 'deviancy amplification' to reflect how agencies like the media can actually generate an increase in deviance. Some view the media's reaction to deviant and many criminal acts as out of proportion to the actual problem.

Left Realism more than any other perspective emphasises how there is a real fear of crime. They also recognise that fears are often inversely related to risk of being a victim, but that some groups such as women, the elderly and ethnic minorities have their fears heightened by media reporting. Tabloid newspapers and sensational reporting on television heighten people's sensitivities and help shape their ideas. Not surprisingly some sociologists have called the media a 'window on the world' but if it exaggerates and distorts then it is not reflecting reality. The media themselves, in contrast, consider themselves as moral guardians, playing an important role in identifying issues and defining problems.

Besides newspapers and news broadcasts, people can have their fears reinforced by programmes like Crimewatch and Police Camera Action. In addition, documentaries, films, magazines, and books all present images of crime. The fact that people are attracted to media content on crime highlights how it not only frightens people but fascinates them as well. Geoffrey Pearson (1983) identified how the media shapes both a fear of becoming a victim of crime, but also a fascination with all aspects of crime illustrated by the fact that the media is full of police and crime stories: both factual (news) and fiction (drama).

Researchers have always found media effects difficult to quantify, and clearly some people are more influenced by media messages than others. Pearson talks of people having 'respectable fears'. He notes how older people often talk nostalgically of a 'golden age' of youth in the past. However, when he researched back copies of newspapers, going back as far as the Victorian age, he found this was a ongoing or reoccurring theme implying the media help construct an image of deteriorating behaviour by young people. The reality is people are simply being nostalgic about their period of youth.

It is likely that where first-hand evidence is limited or absent that people over rely upon the media for their information. Mature citizens who have no experience of drug taking may get the impression that a significant proportion of young people, have a serious addiction to drugs, judging by the sensational reporting of this social problem in the media.

The media deserves credit for successfully changing attitudes and behaviour from its highlighting of deviant and anti-social behaviour. The media can play a crucial role in 'sensitising' the public into perceiving and reporting certain activities as crimes. In the past many women accepted domestic violence as something that occurred in marriage and had to be endured and tolerated. However, the media has played an important role in reinforcing the idea that no one should be a victim of violence. It has provided important and prominent support for 'zero-tolerance' campaigns that have been successful in challenging pre-existing ideas about domestic violence and marital rape. Thanks to sensitive news reporting and story lines in soap operas, violence in the home is no longer viewed as a 'family matter' but a crime. Since the 1990s the Home Office has directed the police to treat domestic violence the same as any other violent crime.

Questions

- 1. In what ways do the media add to people's fear of crime?
- 2. What evidence is there that people are also fascinated by crime?

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Keywords

1. Deviancy amplification: the unintended outcome of moral panics or social policies whereby the media, in particular, exaggerate the social problem out of proportion.
2. Sensitisation: the role the media plays in heightening sensitivity towards certain types of behaviour.

Stereotypical criminals

Bullets

- ♣ The media uses icons and symbols as a kind of 'symbolic shorthand' for conveying negative and stereotypical images of deviants and criminals.
- ♣ The media assumes its audience is made up of decent and normal people in order to help demonise criminal and deviant groups.
- ♣ The media through the negative stereotyping of deviant and criminal groups helps construct them as 'other' groups.
- ♣ The portrayal of sexual attackers as psychopathic strangers is both misleading and dangerous for potential victims.

Text

Media coverage of crime is often simplistic with very little attempt at explaining the factors that lie behind it. Criminals are often portrayed in a narrow stereotypical way as villains, and often the emphasis is upon stylized images that symbolically emphasise deviance: e.g. items of clothes (such as hoodies), ethnicity (consider how gypsies or young black males are portrayed in the media) or even religion (think of the demonising of Muslims and the generation of 'Islamophobia'). The media is adept at using icons and symbols as a kind of 'symbolic shorthand' for conveying the image of people as 'troublemakers'.

The media like to think of themselves as agenda setters and the promoters of 'common-sense' values. They have a tendency of portraying the bulk of their audience as 'normal' and 'decent' citizens. This serves the purpose of emphasizing the deviance or criminality of the groups they like to demonise. Sensational headlines are used to whip up the concerns of its audience. In this way the media targets and isolates groups who become viewed by the 'law-abiding' majority of society as outside society's norms and values. Examples of groups that are frequent and easy targets for the media include welfare fraudsters, prostitutes, protestors, football hooligans, drug-takers. Marxists would highlight how these are all members of the working class and without defending their behaviour would point out this reporting obscures the significant amount of white-collar criminals and crimes committed by firms.

Thus the media can be accused of being quite selective in labelling of some groups more than others as deviant and/or criminal. Marxists would point out that corporate crime and white-collar crime receives significantly less coverage, unless scandal is involved. Instead the media targets easy groups to demonise those who have difficulty answering back and putting their case. The tabloid newspapers, in particular, have a well documented track record of negatively targeting 'undesirable' groups such as gypsies and asylum-seekers. Such groups are often openly linked to illegal behaviour. Such groups are generally viewed as 'other', resulting in the social construction of an identity implying 'not one of us'.

The media tends to demonise rapists as evil psychopathic strangers who prey on victims. Sadly, the reality for around three-quarters of victims is that they are raped by men they know, trusted, and often live with. Thus the media's stereotypical portrayal of criminals can not only be misleading but potentially dangerous for victims.

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Becker argues that when labels are successfully applied the outcome is often a 'deviant career' as 'deviant' becomes the 'master status' to both the individual and others. This may become a block to normal participation in society leading to such people seeking each other's company and going 'underground' in response to being shunned. This may make further deviant or criminal behaviour more likely - the media's coverage of demonised groups such as paedophiles may encourage this process.

Questions

- 1. In what ways do the media negatively stereotype criminals?
- 2. In what ways would Marxists and feminists argue that media portrayal of criminals is misleading?

Keywords

1. Deviant career: term associated with Howard Becker to illustrate how deviant behaviour may result in social reaction/consequences that are self-perpetuating.
2. Islamophobia: literally means fear of Islam, but used to describe the negative treatment of anything Muslim following the global terrorism by Islamic fundamentalists.
3. Labelling: process of defining a person that becomes a central part of their identity.
4. Master status: key defining characteristic of a person's identity. When people are perceived as deviant or criminal this can become the dominant characteristic by which they and others define themselves.

Moral Panics

Bullets

- Moral panics are perpetuated by the media through symbolisation, exaggeration and prediction.
- The media, having played a part in constructing a moral panic may then embark upon a 'moral crusade' against the identified 'folk devils'.
- The desired outcome of moral crusades is to get the authorities to embark upon a moral clampdown on identified deviants and their behaviour.
- Cohen believed that moral panics particularly result at times of rapid social change.
- McRobbie and Thornton argue that moral panics have to be considered in terms of the development of the media and an increasingly sophisticated audience.

Text

Lesley Wilkins' ideas of deviancy amplification were developed by Stan Cohen (1970) through his study of mods and rockers in the 1960s. Through his in-depth study of the conflict between these two youth groups Cohen showed how the media developed a typically exaggerated response and how through the process of deviancy amplification the media (along with the agents of control) encouraged and increased the very behaviour they were condemning.

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Cohen describes how on a wet Easter bank holiday weekend in 1964 the national newspapers were short of a main story. When reports of disturbances between mods and rockers at Clacton came through this quickly became front page news with headlines like 'Day of terror by scooter groups' (Daily Telegraph), 'Youngsters beat up town - 97 leather jacket arrests' (Daily Express) 'Wild ones invade seaside - 97 arrests' (Daily Mirror). However, as Cohen points out, seaside disturbances had been taking place since the 1950s. Despite the sensational headlines, the actual events in Clacton amounted to only a beach hut being burnt down, some broken windows, and a bit of fighting. Mostly the weekend involved bored and damp teenagers just riding around the town. Cohen investigated the reporting and found widespread misrepresentation of the facts. Whereas the media reported respectable people intimidated by fighting youths, the beaches were deserted primarily because of the bad weather.

Through the processes of 'symbolisation', 'exaggeration' and 'prediction', Cohen explains how media reporting actually encouraged a spiralling of subsequent deviant behaviour. Extra policing was drafted into the next bank holiday on the expectation that there would be violence. Cohen's point is that by predicting the violence the media helped create it, thus generating a self-fulfilling prophecy. Cohen believed that moral panics result at times of rapid social change, which are potentially unstable resulting in people looking for scapegoats upon which to blame their insecurity on. He identified how moral entrepreneurs (people who make a stand about the nation's morals, such as church leaders, politicians, etc.) use the media to feed on this insecurity by encouraging moral panics to spiral.

The media, having played a part in constructing a moral panic, may then embark upon a 'moral crusade' against the identified 'folk devils'. A recent example of this was the News of the World's campaign against paedophiles or the ongoing Daily Mail campaign against 'asylum seekers'. Miller and Reilly (1994) have argued there may be an ideological dimension to moral panics. They argue that moral panics can be used to soften up public opinion and thus act as a form of 'ideological social control'. For example, the media's coverage of Islamic terrorism (which many would describe as 'Islamophobic') has resulted in Government anti-terrorism receiving broad public support despite seriously reducing ordinary people's civil liberties.

Angela McRobbie (1994) argues that the concept of moral panic has become so common that media now use it in a conscious and reflective way. Working with Sarah Thornton (McRobbie and Thornton, 1995) she argues that moral panics were once an unintended outcome of the media but now they can be manipulated both by some groups or even the media itself. In addition, we now have an increasingly sophisticated audience, so media content about crime and deviance can be constructed in the light of this through the presentation of messages, stories and assumed outcomes. The media when it wants to generate a moral panic will generally rely upon audience prejudice and construct scares involving familiar demonised groups such as immigrants, welfare scroungers, sink estate residents, etc. In the light of this, McRobbie and Thornton argue that Cohen's work on moral panics is outdated and suggest that a more postmodernist approach is now needed.

Questions

- 1. Why does Cohen see moral panics as linked to social change?
- 2. Why do McRobbie and Thornton feel Cohen's work on moral panics is outdated?

Keywords

1. Folk devil: A term Stan Cohen used to refer to deviant groups at the centre of moral panics.

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2. Moral panic: media generated public concern over a group ('folk devils') or behaviour that is viewed as threatening to social order.

Notions of a criminal underclass

Bullets

- The media portrays crime in a stereotypical and sensationalized way, implying it is concentrated amongst a criminal underclass.
- The media reinforces Murray's idea that crime is linked to an underclass seen as outside society's consensus norms and values.
- This fits in with the Chicago School's notion of social disorganisation linking crime to areas where the mechanisms of social control are weak or absent altogether.
- Marxists argue the media focus upon a criminal underclass obscures the extent of white-collar and corporate crime.

Text

The relationship between the media and crime is clearly one of stereotyping and the sensationalization of criminals and their behaviour. One area where this is particularly evident is the social construction of a criminal underclass through media representation. New Right theorist Charles Murray's focus upon crime is centred upon the moral decline and deviant values of an underclass he describes as living 'outside society'. By underclass he means a clearly distinguishable group of people with their own values living at the bottom of society. The tabloid newspapers, have supported the spirit of Murray's analysis and reinforce the idea that crime is a particular problem associated with those living at the bottom of society.

A favourite theme of both the media and sociologists is to link crime to the breakdown of the community. Emile Durkheim argued community breakdown was linked to the twin pressures of urbanisation and industrialisation. The Chicago School in the 1920s and 1930s developed Durkheim's anomie theory with the concept of 'social disorganisation' to refer to the situation whereby the mechanisms of social control are either weak or absent altogether. The media develop this theme often linking crime to the corrupting effect of city life especially the problems associated with those who live in the inner-city and problem estates.

The media reinforce the idea that community breakdown is linked to the development of a criminal underclass made up of feckless behaviour and problem families. They argue that amongst the underclass where respectable norms and values are lacking, there is an absence of informal restraining mechanisms including such things as public opinion, gossip and neighbourhood organisations. Like Murray, the media reinforce the idea that these people are 'outside society' and link this deviant and criminal underclass to activities like anti-social behaviour, violence, welfare scrounging, prostitution, and drug-taking.

The media therefore reinforce the notion of crime being linked to a minority of the population that are outside consensus values. Marxists would argue this media portrayal of a demonised group outside and opposed to the informal social controls that respectable majority are subject to, only serves to remove the focus from white-collar and corporate crime. By reinforcing the stereotype of crime being linked to a criminal underclass, the media helps shape not only public opinion but that of the agents of control. The media is such a powerful institution that the actions and attitudes of the police and the courts can

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also become influenced. There is a danger that media portrayal may result in the labelling and targeting of certain groups.

Questions

- 1. In what ways does media coverage reflect the ideas of Charles Murray?

Keywords

1. Social disorganisation: when the mechanisms of social control are weak or absent altogether.
2. Infotainment - entertainment and sensational reporting.

News values

Bullets

- Marxists highlight the ideological position of the relationship between the mass media and crime: the significance of white-collar and corporate crime is played down.
- Functionalists see the media's coverage of crime as simply a 'window on the world' reflecting life and crime as it largely is.
- The New Right see the portrayal of violence and sexually explicit material as encouraging anti-social deviant and criminal behaviour.
- Postmodernists recognise the significant role the mass media plays in 'constructing' people's 'reality' and turning crime into a 'spectacle'. People are voyeurs of crime.
- Feminists argue that the media plays down the role of women as victims unless they are white and pretty or the victim of a high profile attack.
- Media coverage of victims of crime seems to be influenced by the social status of victims (e.g. missing white woman syndrome).
- The media emphasizes black criminality but plays down how African-Caribbeans and South Asians are twice as likely to be victims of crime as the majority white population.

Text

Marxists argue that given the concentration of the media's ownership by wealthy individuals and the general influence of the establishment over the BBC, it is inevitable that news values ignore white-collar crime and focus particularly on the crimes of the working class, youth and ethnic minorities. The limited coverage of corporate crime by the media has the effect of implying that this type of crime is both invisible and of no consequence.

Functionalists, in contrast, see the media as a 'window on the world' and therefore argue that in its coverage of crime media news values simply reflect the reality of criminal activity and people's real concerns. Critics would argue that functionalists adopt a rather naïve view of the media, its output and its effects. For example, functionalists ignore the fact that the media tend to construct stories that reflect their own agenda and interests in the knowledge that bad news is more of a story than good news.

The New Right has mostly replaced the functionalist perspective in contemporary sociological analysis. Many New Right commentators feel crime is encouraged by bad role

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models portrayed in the media together with excessive amounts of violence and sexually explicit material. In contrast to this Right Realist position, Left Realism would see the media reflecting the real fears people have about crime.

Postmodernists see the world as increasingly fragmented and individualistic. With regard to the media they emphasize the ability of the media to 'construct' reality, but recognize that individuals will interpret that reality in different ways. Adopting the ideas of Geoffrey Pearson, postmodernism starts with the premise that people have a powerful combination of fears and fascination with crime. This, according to Kidd-Hewitt and Osborne (1995), particularly lends itself to the media creating the image of crime as a 'spectacle'. The media like nothing more than a major crime event, preferably with good pictures, that they can turn into a spectacle. We also have crime turned into 'infotainment' (a mixture of entertainment and sensationalism) with programmes like Crimewatch and the multitude of reality police action programmes turning crime into a form of voyeurism.

Feminists argue that the media plays down the role of women as victims unless they happen to be white and pretty and the victim of a high profile attack. Many feminists argue that the sexually explicit representation of women in all forms of pornography (including tabloid pictures) renders all women potentially unsafe since they encourage predatory attitudes amongst men and reduce women's bodies to objects to be consumed. Feminists therefore argue the media is a tool of patriarchal control and its representation of crime is simplistic.

An example of media news values is the linking of crime to ethnic minorities. The media reinforces the stereotype of black criminality perpetuating the image that offenders are disproportionately drawn from the black community. The media, in contrast, is less prominent in reporting how minority ethnic groups are twice as likely to be victims of crime as the majority white population. Sociologists use the phrase 'missing white woman syndrome' to refer to how the social status of victims can influence media coverage. The media is therefore quite selective in the way it covers victims of crime.

Commentators on the postmodern society argue that the majority of media news coverage of crime has become 'intertextual', meaning it is a blurring of reality and fiction. Even respectable news providers (like the broadsheet newspapers or the BBC) have been accused of presenting the crime in a manner more reminiscent of tabloid newspapers. Such is the commercial pressure for audience figures that media coverage of crime becomes presented in the form of 'infotainment'.

Questions

- 1. How do Postmodernists see news values compared to traditional sociological perspectives?
- 2. How does missing white woman syndrome reflect typical media news values?

Keywords

1. Voyeurism: When people become onlookers of other's private actions for pleasure.
2. Infotainment: entertainment and sensational reporting e.g. Crimewatch

How is crime measured?

Introduction

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- PRC derive from reported crimes to the police which are then recorded and passed to the Home Office.
- The BCS is an annual victim survey of 47,000 households.
- Both measurements of crime underestimate the real level of crime.
- Nonetheless the government believes they offer a good measurement of trends in both well-reported crimes and also the less common but more serious crimes.
- Allowing for changes in counting rules, they can offer a picture on trends in both total crime rates and what is happening to specific crimes.

Text

We know about crime and patterns of crime through official statistics collected by the Home Office. The latest Home Office publication (Crime in England and Wales 2007/08) shows that crime continues to fall; a trend that began in the mid-1990s. However, this is not necessarily how people perceive the situation. When asked, most people assume crime is rising. Crime statistics are measured in two forms for the Home Office. Firstly there is Police Recorded Crime (PRC) which is all crimes reported and recorded by the police. Secondly there is the British Crime Survey (BCS) which is a victim survey of 47,000 households which reports the number of crimes this representative sample has been subject to in the previous 12 months.

The BCS was introduced in 1981. The long-term trend shows that BCS crime rose steadily from 1981 through to the early 1990s when it peaked in 1995. Since then it has been falling, making 1995 a significant turning point in the recording of crime. The fall has been significant until 2004-05, since when BCS crime levels have stabilised although crime further declined again recently. BCS crime is now at the lowest ever level since the first results in 1981. The BCS shows crime levels approximately twice the level of the PRC (10 million as opposed to 5 million), suggesting there is a considerable underreporting of crime by the public which they nonetheless admit to being victims of in the BCS.

Police recorded crime covers crimes which are reported to and recorded by the police and has closely tracked crime levels of the BCS quite closely over recent years. Trends in police recorded crime figures are however affected by changes in police activity, coverage, public reporting and recording practices. The National Crime Recording Standard implemented by the police in 2002 has significantly improved the integrity and consistency of the police recorded crime figures. However, a significant error was found in the accuracy of recorded violent crime in 2008 when it was discovered that many police authorities had not been supplying accurate figures.

There are two types of crimes. Notifiable or indictable offences are more serious crimes for which an accused person is tried in a Crown Court and if found guilty may be sent to prison. Non-indictable offences are less serious crimes, such as parking offences, which may be dealt with by a fixed penalty ticket or tried in a magistrate's court. The majority of crimes are property related. Vandalism accounts for 27% of all BCS crime and criminal damage accounts for 21% of crimes recorded by the police. A lot of crime is car-related. Two-thirds of vandalism is vehicle vandalism and vehicle-related theft accounts for 15% of all BCS crime and offences against vehicles for 13% of recorded crime. Burglary currently accounts for 7% of all BCS crime and 12% of recorded crime. Whilst crime rates are generally falling, there has been a rise in violent crime which currently represents 21% of BCS crime. Violence against the person and sexual offences account for 19% and 1% respectively of police recorded crime. Since 1995 the BCS shows that there have been large falls in domestic and acquaintance violence, a smaller fall in stranger violence, while

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muggings have remained stable.

The PRC and BCS attempt to give an accurate picture of both crime levels and trends, but they are both, especially PRC, accused of underestimating the true or real level of crime. Sociologists are generally sceptical of the accuracy of official crime statistics and talk about a 'dark side' on unreported and unrecorded crime. However, the data produced in official crime statistics can allow comparisons to be made of the total crime rate and between crimes across time. However, comparisons are problematic when counting rules have changed. The counting rules were recently changed to take account of the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) adopted on 1 April 2002 with the aim of recording crime in a more victim-focused way and maintaining greater consistency between police forces in the recording of crime.

Questions

- 1. How is the crime rate measured in England and Wales?
- 2. Why does the BCS report crime levels approximately twice the rate of the PRC?

Keywords

1. Victim survey: when people are asked if they have had a crime committed against them.
2. Dark figure of crime: the crimes that are neither reported to nor recorded by the police.

Problems with Official Statistics

Bullets

- Sociologists question both the validity and reliability of official statistics.
- Sociologists argue that official crime statistics are little more than a social construction.
- Interaction lists argue that official statistics tell us less about crime and more about the power of the police and courts to define who is arrested, charged and convicted.
- Marxists emphasise the dark figure of unrecorded corporate crime. To them official statistics deliberately emphasise crime as a working class problem.
- Feminists would argue that crime statistics ignore a significant amount of crimes against women.

Text

Comparisons between the PCR and BCS is further complicated by the differences in the profile of offences between the two sets of statistics. For example, the BCS only looks at crimes against households and excludes crimes against the under 16s, whereas recorded crime includes crimes experienced by under 16s and commercial premises. It also follows that some crimes are more likely to be reported and recorded than others. Sociologists have been critical of the official crime statistics arguing that they underestimate the true or 'real' level of crime. Sociologists advocate the use of self-report and victim studies to reveal how the real rate of crime. Both suggest that the official crime statistics significantly understates the true level of crime. For example, the latest British Crime

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Survey (2007-08) found that only 26 per cent of vandalism to cars; 45 per cent of woundings and 35 per cent of thefts from the person were reported to the police.

If we analyse the concept of crime rate there are the following variables: firstly number of offenders, the number of victims, the tolerance levels of the public about what crimes are worth reporting to the police, and the degree to which informal and formal control mechanisms in society deter criminal activity. A change in the incidence of any one or a combination of these can alter the crime rate. The problem for sociologists is that most theories have focused one of these processes whilst ignoring the impact of the others.

Attacks on the validity and reliability of the official statistics come from a range of sociologists. Interactionists argue that statistics are first and foremost a social construction and tell us more about who compiled them than about anything worthwhile. They argue statistics reveal more about the processes of reporting (by the public) and collating (by the police and judiciary) of acts that become labelled as criminal, than about the numbers of criminal acts themselves. Marxists argue that if the 'real' crime rate that included the sizeable amount of corporate and white-collar crime was ever uncovered, then the categories of 'typical criminals' (young, male, working class) would have to be revised. Feminists would argue that official crime statistics grossly underestimate the crimes. Crimes of harassment, physical and sexual attack frequently go unreported where women are victims.

Thus there are clearly a number of issues which affect the reliability of official statistics. For example, some crimes are dealt with by agencies other than the police. Benefit Fraud for example is dealt with by the Benefits Agency and crimes within the armed forces are dealt with by the Ministry of Defence. Moral panics can also affect the crime rate. If a particular group is stereotyped and demonised by the mass media, then this can lead to higher rates of reporting by the public and agents of control like the police and the courts 'stamp down hard'. As a consequence, deviance amplification takes place.

Questions

- 1. Why do sociologists see official crime statistics as a social construction?
- 2. Outline and contrast the respective criticisms of interactionists, Marxists and feminists of official crime statistics.

Keywords

1. Reliability: when data collected is replicable. If research was repeated it would gain the same results.
2. Validity: when data collected is true to life.
3. Moral panic: Term associated with particularly Stan Cohen to generally mean an exaggerated public concern over a deviant group ('folk devils') or behaviour that is viewed as threatening to social order.

Factors Behind the Non-Reporting of Crime

Bullets

- People fail to report crime for a variety of reasons.
- Many crimes are not reported because they are victimless crimes.
- Victim studies like the British Crime Survey suggest the 'real' rate of crime is about twice the 'official' rate.
- There is considerable evidence of how the police are pressurised to under-record crime reported to them - a process known as 'cuffing'.

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Text

It is worth noting that less than 10 per cent of crime is directly observed or uncovered by the police. The remaining 90 per cent comes from complaints from the public. Criminal activity which does take place and is not recorded in official statistics is called the dark figure of crime. We have already noted that some crimes are reported to the police more than others. For example, cases where insurance claims are made such as stolen or vandalised cars require a crime reference number from the police before the insurance company will settle a claim. Therefore, crime against insured property is much more likely to be reported than minor or petty theft where victims feel there is little chance of them getting their goods back or of the offender getting caught.

Many crimes do not have victims, and only the offender(s) will know that a crime has been committed. Examples of victimless crimes include illegal drug use, smuggling contraband, living off immoral earnings (prostitution). The extent to which these crimes are known and recorded will depend almost entirely on police activity and efficiency. Invisible crimes are those of which the victims are generally unaware. These are usually white-collar crimes, although not always. Firms may be unaware of theft by their employees and shops may be unaware of specific instances of shoplifting, although there is an identifiable victim in these examples.

Victims may fail to report a crime through embarrassment, humiliation or guilt. This may particularly be the case with victims of physical and sexual offences. The successful prosecution of rape offenders is below 10% so rape victims, frequently in a poor mental state may feel the enduring process of cross-examination both by the police and in court is too much to face. Other victims or witnesses of crimes may dislike or not trust the police. Crimes between criminals are unlikely to be reported to the police. People may be unwilling to report crimes if it incriminates a member of their own family or friend. Finally, employers may not wish to draw attention to crimes committed within their premises in order to avoid bad publicity or come across as inefficient. Firms may come to the conclusion that there is no point in informing the police because there is no chance of getting retribution.

As well as not all crimes being reported, not all offences which are reported to the police are recorded as crimes. Moore, Aiken and Chapman (2002) refer to the police as a filtering system who respond to each incident reported to them in an individualistic way depending upon how important they regard the 'crime'. They identify the seriousness of the offence, whether an offence is 'recordable' as stipulated by the Home Office, the social status of the victim and the discretion of the recording officer as to whether crimes get recorded or not. It has been estimated that only around 40% of reported offences are actually recorded as crimes. It would seem that because of constabulary league tables of recorded crime and pressure from chief constables and politicians alike, the police as a group are under some pressure to under-record crime. The dishonest practice of the police of not recording crimes is known as 'cuffing'. Whatever the motive or reason, the fact that only a percentage of reported crimes are recorded means that police recorded crime (PRC) is only an indication of criminal activity.

Questions

- 1. What reasons are given for the underreporting of crime?
- 2. Why might the police not record all crimes reported to them?

Keywords

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1. Cuffing: police slang for dishonest under-recording of crime to reduce the official rate.

Victim surveys and self-report studies

Bullets

- Victim surveys and self-report surveys help sociologists gain a more accurate picture of levels of crime.
- They also indicate which areas and social groups are most likely to be victims and perpetrators of crime.
- Self-report surveys reveal that criminal acts are spread more widely throughout the population than official statistics suggest.
- Sociologists are therefore just as interested in the law breakers who do not appear in the statistics because they are rarely caught or processed, as those groups who regularly appear.
- Steven Box recognises methodological weaknesses in self-report studies.

Text

In order to combat some of the problems with official statistics, sociologists often rely upon victim (or victimization) studies to provide them with a more accurate picture of crime levels and trends. Here respondents are asked if they have been a victim of crime in the previous year. They are also asked if they reported the crimes and if the police recorded them. The most important victim survey in Britain is the annual British Crime Survey. The BCS asks a representative sample of 47,000 adults what crimes they have been the victims of in the past year. The results of the British Crime Surveys do show crime levels roughly twice as high as police recorded crime (PRC). However, one problem with the sampling process of the BCS is that areas which have high crime rates offer the lowest response rates to the surveys. There could therefore be even more crime occurring than the BCS suggests.

The BCS also helps identify those most at risk of different types of crime. This is used in designing and informing crime prevention programmes. It is also used to assess people's attitudes to crime and towards the Criminal Justice System. It is one of the major sources of information about levels of crime and public attitudes to crime.

However, there are problems associated with victim surveys. Relying upon people's memory means that recollections may be incorrect or biased. In addition, victims may classify crimes that they have been victim to in the wrong categories. The British Crime Survey only looks at crimes against households so does not include corporate and white-collar crimes such as fraud. People are very unlikely to report 'victimless crimes' such as drug taking, or smuggling or admit to committing domestic violence against members of their own family even though it is included in the BCS. There is also an under-reporting of sexual crimes, despite such surveys being anonymous. Finally, the BCS does not collect data from under-16 year-olds so all examples of crimes against juveniles are not included in the statistics.

A second approach is used by sociologists in an attempt to discover more about the dark figure of crime, self-report studies. These ask individuals to list the undetected crimes they have committed over a period of time. Self-report studies usually use questionnaires (but can use interviews) to collect self-confessed information about individual criminal behaviour. Once data is collected and collated it can then be compared with data from official crime statistics. The results of self-report studies are generally used by sociologists

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to discover the social profiles of offenders. They tend to reveal that criminal acts are spread throughout the population, and that the official difference between male and female, or working and middle class rates of criminality are far smaller than the official statistics would suggest. In general, self-report studies identify more offenders than the official crime statistics. These research methods have thus brought into question many of the conventional explanations of crime which have been based on official police records.

There are severe criticisms of self-report studies generally. According to Stephen Box (1971) these criticisms can be centred on the issues of validity, relevance and representativeness. The biggest problem is assessing whether people have told the truth. Some respondents may forget, play-down or exaggerate the extent of criminal activity they have been involved in. Finally, because most self-report studies are on youth rather than professional or managerial people, they do not give a representative picture from which generalisations can be made. Various tests have been carried out to check on the results of these studies. These tests range from the use of lie detectors, to questioning adolescents' friends about crimes they claim to have taken part in. Generally, it has been found that about 80 per cent of those who reply tell the truth.

Questions

- 1. Outline the advantages and disadvantages of using victim surveys.
- 2. Outline the advantages and disadvantages of using self-report studies.

Keywords

1. Self-report: people are asked if they commit crime.
2. Victim study: asks people if they have been the victims.

What patterns of crime conviction exist in the UK?

How accurate are conviction rates?

Bullets

- Crime conviction rates tell only tell us a limited amount about crime.
- Some crimes have relatively low conviction rates.
- People who are convicted of crime are generally young, male and working class.

Text

There are many people who have committed crimes who will never appear in a court of law to answer for what they have done. Other people spend their whole lives in and out of courts and the criminal justice system, often for trivial and foolish acts. Conviction rates tell us something of who is caught, charged and convicted of crime. They do not tell us who is criminal or what crimes have been committed. Nevertheless, despite their limitations, criminal statistics and conviction rates can also tell us a great deal about society. There are distinct social patterns in who is likely to be convicted of a crime and these can be revealing about the laws and the power structures of society.

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Conviction rates for those who are charged with crime can be very low. The Fawcett Society has focused on rape and points out that in some areas women who report rape are almost five times less likely to achieve a conviction than in others. For example, in Leicestershire, less than one in thirty five women who report rape secure a conviction. In Cleveland, one in seven reported rapists is convicted. Conviction rates for rape have fallen in over a third of police areas in recent years. Rape is an unusual case in that juries are notoriously unwilling to convict men of rape. Temkin (2008) suggests that the causes for this lie in general misunderstandings and false beliefs about the nature of rape as a crime. However, in 2002, North Wales Police Chief Richard Brunstrom criticised the Crown Courts for clearing 63% of people who stood trial. Magistrates Courts which deal with less serious crime convict far more people.

People who are likely to be convicted of crime are disproportionately young, male, working class and from a Black Ethnic Minority community.

Questions

- 1. Suggest two reasons why conviction rates for some serious crimes can be very low.

Keywords

1. Conviction - going through a law court and being found guilty of a criminal act
2. Crown Courts - courts for serious charges, where the defendant goes in front of a jury
3. Magistrate court - for trivial offences or offences where the defendant pleads guilty
4. Jury - twelve people listen to a court case and decide whether the person charged is guilty or not

Young men and conviction rates

Bullets

- Males are more likely to be convicted of serious crime than females
- Most of those males convicted of crime are young.
- Many young men who experience mental health problems are more likely than females to display anti-social behaviours that are likely to lead them to commit criminal acts

Text

In UK in 2006, 1,420,000 people were convicted of offences that were serious enough to be tried in a Crown Court. Of those people, 80% were male and 7% were under 18 years of age. Wilson et al (2006) found that 7% of all young people were classified as frequent offenders, that is, they had committed an offence six or more times in the last 12 months. This group was responsible for the vast majority (83%) of all offences. 13% of all 10- to 25-year-olds had committed at least one of serious offence. The Poverty Site (2009), a website dealing with issues of inequality, showed that 45,000 people aged 18 to 20 were found guilty of an indictable offence in 2007. This represents around 2% of the age group. 90% of those found guilty are men. In addition, Black young adults are three times as likely as white young adults to be in prison and five times as likely as Asian young adults.

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Mind, the mental health charity and interest group report that boys are more prone than girls to mental health problems. Moreover, when boys have problems they are likely to appear as bad behaviour, known as conduct disorders. Young people with conduct disorders are often thought of as being trouble-makers and antisocial. Mind says that in fact they need just as much help and support as someone with depression.

Mind goes on to point out that approximately 94 per cent of the prison population in the UK are men and that levels of mental health problems are far higher in the prison population than in the general population. Lyons (2005) found that over one-third of men serving prison sentences had a significant mental health problem (such as anxiety or depression), nearly one in ten had experienced psychosis and one in four had attempted suicide in prison. Over three-quarters of men on remand and nearly two-thirds of male inmates met the diagnosis of having a personality disorder. The suicide rate among male prisoners is six times higher than among men in the general population. In 2003, there were 94 suicides in prisons in England and Wales, 80 of which were men; 19 per cent of prison suicides were men under 21 years old. Lyons claims that prison makes mental health problems significantly worse for prisoners.

Questions

- 1. Explain one possible reason why young men are more likely to commit crimes than young females.

Keywords

1. Personality disorder - these are fixed patterns of behaviour that cause serious difficulties for the individual, leading to social and personal difficulties.
2. Psychosis - complete loss of contact with any reality, perhaps with hallucinations or delusions

Young black people and the criminal justice system

Bullets

- Black young people are over-represented in crime and this could be racist
- This could be related to the poverty in which they live
- Black people are also likely to be victims of crime

Text

This was the subject of an important report of the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee in 2006-7 which addressed the issue of the over-representation of young Black people in the criminal justice system. It was reported in that document that there should not be an over-reaction because in nearly 85% of offences involving young people in 2004-5, the offenders classified themselves as white. In 2003, over 92% of young black people had no contact with the justice system. Nevertheless, young Black people are over-represented in the criminal justice system.

Altogether, Black people make up about 3% of the UK population of people aged between 10 and 17. They represent 8.5% of that age group who are arrested. They are more likely to be stopped and searched by the police and less likely to be given bail. They are also more

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likely to be remanded in custody and less likely to be given bail. They generally receive severe punishment when sentenced. They are associated with specific crimes such as drugs, robbery and firearms.

There are two ways to account for the pattern of Black over-representation in the criminal statistics: one is that they are the victims of systematic racism; the other is that young Black people are likely to commit more crime. Arguments to support the view that Black people are more likely to be involved in crime are supported by the fact that there are variations in ethnicities as the Black category is a blanket term for a whole range of different cultural and national groups some of whom are underrepresented in crime. The Home Office report notes that 80% of Black African and Black Caribbean people live in deprived communities where poverty and deprivation are apparent. Clearly, robbery will be associated with such areas. For example, 65% of firearms homicides occur in the four cities of Birmingham, London, Liverpool and Manchester which have large areas of deprivation. In addition, children who are excluded from school are likely to appear in criminal statistics, so there is a link with educational underachievement. Nevertheless, there is some evidence to support the view that there may be discrimination in policing and the criminal justice system. If Black young people do not trust the law, they may take the law into their own hands or be likely to carry weapons.

The Home Office concludes that the causes of crime among Black people can be seen as being associated with poverty, school underachievement, family breakdown and lack of positive role models within the community and the media.

It is also worth noting that Black people are also highly likely to be the victims of crime.

Questions

- 1. What percentage of young Black people are involved in criminality?
- 2. What percentage of young criminals is White?
- 3. Suggest reasons why young Black people are over-represented in crime statistics.

Keywords

1. Homicide - murder

Women and criminality

Bullets

- Women are more likely to be the victims of crime than men.
- There has been an increase in female criminal behaviour, especially among young women.
- Women are more likely to be associated with less serious crime than men.

Text

Women are known to be over-represented in victimisation statistics for crimes such as domestic violence and sexual crimes. The BCS surveys have shown differences in gender patterns of victimisation over the years. They suggest that women are more likely to know the person who has committed the crime. Males are more likely to be the victims of strangers. Female murder victims are usually murdered by a partner. In addition, they are

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less likely to report crimes against them than are men.

In Victorian times, women were very likely to find themselves in prison; however in the last century, the consistent pattern has been that women are less likely to offend than men. But, a new trend is beginning to emerge from various recent statistics and surveys on offending which is that there is a degree of convergence between the sexes in less serious offending. Women and men are more nearly equally likely to be involved in petty crime. Both genders are likely to experience arrest but the rate of increase for women has been higher than that for men. In 2007 women comprised over one in four of those given a caution. However, males remain disproportionately involved in more serious crime. Of the women who are arrested, a far larger proportion of these are young compared to the pattern for males.

Research for the Office for Criminal Justice Reform by Hunter, Hearnden and Gyateng of King's College London (2009), suggests that in 2007, women comprised just over one fifth of all those sentenced. Between 2002 and 2007, the number of women sentenced rose by 12 per cent, compared to a three per cent fall for men. Three per cent of sentenced women were given custodial sentences compared to eight per cent for men, and in each year between 2002 and 2007, men were more likely than women to be given a custodial sentence. After steep rises in the numbers and proportions of women offenders sent to prison in the 1990s, both have fallen since 2002. Just over 10 per cent of sentenced women received a community sentence compared to 15 per cent of sentenced men. As with custodial sentences, in each year from 2002 to 2007 a greater proportion of males than females received a community sentence, with the gap widening since 2004. In 2007, three-quarters of all female sentences resulted in a fine compared to 64 per cent of male sentences. In each year since 2002, a greater proportion of females than males received a fine.

There has been recent media interest and concern about the increase in female imprisonment. There has been a five per cent increase between 2002 and 2007 for women received into custody; for males over that same time period there was a decrease of four per cent for those under sentence. However, most women and men are serving sentences of less than 12 months. In 2007, women were most commonly serving a custodial sentence for drug offences; for men it was for violent offences. Women are more likely than men to be subject to proceedings for breach of prison discipline and have higher rates of self harm and suicide. Women prisoners also had greater physical and mental health needs than male prisoners and report higher rates of ill health than women in the general population.

Questions

- 1. What differences are there between male and female conviction patterns?
- 2. How might you account for the increase in female criminality in recent years?

Keywords

1. Custodial - prison sentence
2. Community sentence - a way of tailoring punishment to suit the criminal for example, rehabilitation or anger management course for drug and violent offenders
3. Petty crime - minor crime

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Why is there a relationship between gender and crime?

What is the relationship between gender and crime?

Bullets

- Crime is a male activity
- Female crime conviction rates are rising for minor crimes, though serious crimes tend to be male.
- Most female crime is linked to theft whereas males commit a wider range of crimes
- Males are more likely to be the victims of violent and stranger crimes
- Females are more likely to be the victims of domestic violence, sexual crimes and crimes by known people.

Text

Statistical evidence is unarguable. Crime is a male activity. In 2002, there were more than four male offenders to every female offender. 90% of prisoners are male and 98% of people convicted for sex offences are male. Men outnumber women in all of the serious crime categories and age groups. National statistics point out that between 85 and 95 per cent of offenders found guilty of burglary, robbery, drug offences, criminal damage or violence against the person are male.

National Statistics point out that there are serious differences in the patterns of involvement with the criminal justice system for males and females. For example, in 2000 the peak age of offending was 18 for males and 15 for females. They also show that theft was the most commonly committed offence by both men and women in 2002. Theft is a female crime, so 57 per cent of female offenders were found guilty of or cautioned for theft and handling stolen goods compared with 34 per cent of male offenders.

Nevertheless there has been a rise in the amount of crime convictions for females and this has been the subject of recent moral panics. The Commission on Women and the Criminal Justice System report that in 1993 there were about 1,560 women in prison. By 2003 there were 4,461 females in prison and between 2001 and 2002, the number of women in prison increased by 15% compared with a 6% increase in the number of men in prison. However the problems may be overstated because three quarters of women in prison are on short sentences of less than 12 months. The vast majority of women sentenced to prison are convicted of non-violent offences; they are most often sent to prison for theft and handling stolen goods. There is evidence from Nacro that courts are dealing more harshly with women in response to media concern than they did in the past, so the rise in female crime is an illusion rather than a reality.

Victim studies such as the BCS and official statistics show that men are more likely to be the victims of violent crime than women. National Statistics suggest that over 5 per cent of men and just under 3 per cent of women aged 16 and over in England and Wales were the victims of some sort of violence in the twelve months prior to interview in 2002/03. Men and women aged 16 to 24 are the most at risk age group. Around 15 per cent of men and 7 per cent women of this age reporting that some sort of violence had been used against them. Males are more likely to be the victims of stranger crime, whereas women are more likely to be the victims of assault by their partners or ex-partners. Domestic violence is the only category where females outnumber male victims; however, domestic

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violence is a seriously under-reported crime.

One other gender pattern that is of interest is the fact that men are much less concerned that they may be the victims of crime than women despite the likelihood of their being a victim being much higher. Women report fear of mugging and rape. Feminists would point out that although women are not realistic in terms of the likelihood of being a victim, the impact of such crimes on their lives is so significant that the fear is not in fact, unreasonable. However, women are more likely to live restricted lives and to fear going out alone at night because of their fear of crime.

Questions

- 1. What crimes do women fear?
- 2. To what extent is female fear of crime reasonable?

Keywords

1. Conviction - going through a law court and being found guilty of a criminal act
2. BCS - British Crime Survey, an annual victim study

Is there a link between female crime and female victimisation?

Bullets

- We do not fully understand the link between gender and crime
- Feminists complain that women are the victims of the criminal justice system.
- Many women in prison have been the victims of deprivation and abuse
- Study of partner killings suggest that there are real differences between the way that men and that women are treated by the criminal justice system and which the justice system recognises

Text

There are now more women committing crimes and serving sentences in prison than ever before. At the same time, women are often the victims of abuse, violence, and murder. Does society itself make women the victims of men in the home and also in the criminal justice system? There is concern that there is a link between criminality and victimisation which is not fully understood. Elizabeth Stanko points out that the popular ideology of the home as a safe haven obscures the fact that for many females the domestic environment is an extremely dangerous place indeed. Dobash and Dobash suggested that domestic violence represents attempts at control, domination, and humiliation of the victim. On the other hand, The Fawcett Society says that in the past ten years, the number of women in jail has nearly trebled, largely because women are being treated more harshly by the courts. Over 4,400 women are currently in prison in the UK.

When further analysis of data is undertaken it is clear that rather than being dangerous, many women offenders are themselves victims. Over half of women in prison have suffered domestic violence and 1 in 3 has experienced sexual abuse. The Fawcett go on to argue that prison causes damage and disruption to the lives of vulnerable women. 70% of women prisoners have mental health problems, and 37% have attempted suicide.

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Approximately two-thirds of women in prison have dependent children and over 17,700 children a year are separated from their mothers by imprisonment.

There is a further argument that prison is not appropriate for women because their crimes are linked to economic deprivation. The most common offences for which women are sent to prison are theft and handling stolen goods, and 65% re-offend on release. There are further claims that the Criminal Justice system discriminates on ethnic grounds because ethnic minority women are overrepresented in the criminal justice system. For example 36.3% of the female prison population is made up of ethnic minority women.

Dr. Judith Rumgay, says that there is a link between criminality in women and victimisation and reports that in England, for example, Morris et al (1995) found that nearly half of a sample of 200 women prisoners reported a history of physical abuse and almost one third reported experience of sexual abuse. Forty-two per cent of the sample were categorised as having recent histories of abuse, with a further 14% having earlier victimisation experiences. Similarly high levels of abuse were reported in a review of women prisoners conducted by the prison inspectorate (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons 1997).

Abbott and Wallace point out that of all female murder victims in the UK, 45 per cent are killed by a current (or former) male partner; the figure for men is 8 per cent. There have been a number of notorious cases of battered women who have killed their abusive partners. Kiranjit Ahluwalia was jailed in 1989 for killing her violent husband. She had suffered 10 years of rape and abuse by her husband and after he threatened to burn her with a hot iron, Ms Ahluwalia threw petrol over her husband's duvet and set it alight while he was sleeping. Men often kill in response to an event and can claim that the event was not premeditated whereas women kill in the same way as Ms Ahluwalia kill, when the victim is asleep or otherwise unlikely to fight back. Thus they are convicted of premeditated murder, which is much more serious. After a long trial and an appeal suggesting that she experienced battered woman syndrome, her case set a historic precedent - that women who kill as a result of severe domestic violence should not be treated as cold-blooded murderers. Nevertheless there were still many complaints that men who killed were treated with less severity than women who killed their partners.

It can be argued that altering the laws relating to the conviction of battered women who kill their abusers would not help the large number of abuse survivors who become involved in different forms of crime. The guilt of women charged with the most common offences of shoplifting and deception, or those found to be driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol, is unlikely to be affected by their history of being the victims of abuse.

Questions

- 1. Which type of serious crime are women most likely to be convicted of
- 2. Explain one reason why women are less likely to commit partner murder than men.

Keywords

1. Premeditated - planned in advance
2. Unpremeditated - happening on the spur of the moment
3. Imminent - immediate
4. Battered wife syndrome - similar to post traumatic distress syndrome, lengthy cycles of abuse can affect the thinking of the victim
5. Historic precedent - legal term meaning first time in history

Early studies of gender and crime

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Bullets

- Pollack claimed that women commit as much crime as men, but that they are protected because they are good liars and because men look after them
- Chivalry thesis was used to explain how men protect women
- Heidensohn criticised Pollack because she said women are invisible in research
- PMS has been used as a legal defence in court cases, however, women labelled as 'bad' are often treated very harshly by the system

Text

A popular theory explaining why women are underrepresented in crime statistics was proposed by Pollack (1950s) who claimed that women were naturally deceitful liars. He suggests that female criminality is not really taken fully into account in official statistics because most shoplifting is female as is abortion (criminal at the time of Pollack's writing). Thus female crime is not likely to come to the attention of authorities. He went so far as to claim that females were able to commit domestic crime such as sexual abuse and poisoning of relatives and not to be detected. There are two basic reasons why women are able to get away with their criminal behaviour according to Pollack. One is that women traditionally learn to lie about menstruation and sex so they transfer this skill into daily life, the other is that law enforcement officials tend to be male and therefore they have been brought up to protect women. This second explanation is known as chivalry thesis and it was also supported by Mannheim who claimed that males were lenient towards women.

The feminist, Heidensohn has refuted this argument by pointing out serious flaws in Pollack's case. These are that shoplifting crimes are committed by men. Men are also able to commit crimes which do not appear in crime statistics, these being sexual abuse and domestic violence. She claims that Pollack is simply basing his theory on a very negative stereotyping of women. Pollack saw women as biologically prepared to tell lies, but ignores an equally strong biological argument, that of men to use violence to attain their own ends. Pollack's views are no longer mainstream; but there are many anti-feminist blogs on the internet which accuse feminists of victimising men and treating them abusively. These often draw on Pollack's thinking.

Heidensohn put forward an opposing view to account for female underrepresentation in crime statistics and criminology in general. This is associated with the notion of the invisible women, a feminist concept that argues women have been written out of history and debate by men. Heidensohn said that women have been ignored because men dominate crime statistics as offenders, men dominate the academic discipline of sociology, male sociologists are really only interested in studying men and finally, much sociological theorising is masculine and overlooks gender.

Chivalry thesis has found some support from more recent sociologists, Hilary Allen (1987) argues mental health explanations (including PMS) for female criminality has sometimes resulted in lighter punishments by the courts. A defendant in a murder trial in the 1980s was able to use extreme PMS as a defence and thus reduce her charge from murder to manslaughter. In Canada, extreme PMS has been seen as a mitigating factor in cases of shoplifting and other minor crimes. Eileen Leonard has challenged chivalry thesis as she suggests that 'bad' women are treated more harshly by the media and criminal justice system as their crimes are seen as unfeminine.

Questions

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- 1. Outline chivalry thesis
- 2. What is the invisible woman?
- 3. How useful is chivalry thesis to explain gender differences in crime statistics

Keywords

1. PMS - Premenstrual syndrome where raised glucose tolerance leads to a blood sugar level drop and the over-production of adrenalin and resulting mood swings and aggression
2. Chivalry thesis - women are protected by men and do not appear in crime statistics
3. Chivalry - a code of conduct governed by rules of honesty and courtesy towards women
4. Lenient - kindly and soft hearted

What have feminists contributed to our understanding of crime?

Bullets

- Feminists point out that women are overlooked in traditional criminology and sociology
- The Criminal Justice system does not take their needs into account
- Women are often stereotyped as mad or bad if they come into conflict with the courts
- Feminists have challenged these stereotypes
- Feminists have been criticised for not making general theories of crime and for focussing on small scale subjective studies.

Text

Gelsthorpe and Morris (1990) define feminism as an acceptance of the view that women experience subordination on the basis of their gender and that we should seek to work towards the end of social subordination. Nevertheless, feminism is not one perspective as it draws on all traditions of sociological thought and there are fiercely argued debates within the tradition. Nevertheless female crime has been virtually ignored by mainstream criminology. Two issues arise from this: one is the generalisability problem: Do traditional male-centered theories of crime apply to women? Another problem is the gender ratio problem: What explains the universal fact that women are far less likely than men to involve themselves in criminal activity?

Feminists tend to suggest that women who offend are usually treated in one of the following two ways. They are neglected by criminologists and sociologists; women were absent from theories of crime which were usually developed from studies of men and offered as general theories of crime. They are misrepresented in statistics and reporting so that they are usually portrayed in stereotypical ways, usually portrayed as pathological and mad rather than bad. In addition, the specific needs of women are often overlooked in penal policy so that there are very few mother and baby units in British prisons. Women are separated from their children. Sheila Kitzinger points out on her website that in the UK over 60 percent of women prisoners have young children. Women are nearly always the primary care-givers and are often single mothers. At least 4,000 children are affected by their mothers' imprisonment. Only three percent of women have a child in prison with

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them and this has a disastrous effect on their health and development.

Radical feminists have point out that women are often the victims of hidden crime. Domestic abuse and sexual violence were considered part of normal family life; not only that, but women would be under pressure to accept their experiences until the 1970s when the first feminist campaigns became public. In addition, new research methods were developed to increase the sensitivity of questioning. It is through this type of work that women have been able to challenge stereotypes, one of the most damaging of which suggests that women are themselves to blame if they are raped, battered or abused. For example, American textbooks sometimes talk in terms of 'victim initiated homicide' where it is claimed that the victim herself initiated the events that lead to her death at the hands of another person.

One criticism of feminism is that rather than developing overarching general theories of female crime, feminist theories have developed a series of models related to gender and to specific crimes and situations. Another criticism argues that because the methods feminists use are subjective and frequently designed to raise consciousness, there can be little scientific value attached to their findings. On the other hand, feminist sociology has added a great deal to criminological debates by exposing criminology as 'malestream' not mainstream. It has made women visible as offenders, victims and to a lesser extent as criminal justice professionals. In addition it has challenged stereotypes, introduced new questions, new topics and new methods and illuminated sexism in theory, policy and practice. Most importantly it has raised awareness of the importance of gender in the study of crime and deviant behaviour.

Questions

- 1. What is feminism?
- 2. Why are women overlooked by traditional criminology??
- 3. Summarise the strengths and weaknesses of the feminist approach to criminology.

Keywords

1. Victim initiated homicide - the victim is responsible for her own murder because of some actions she took
2. Generalisability - this describes the extent to which research findings can be applied to settings other than that in which they were originally tested
3. Pathological - diseased and very obviously sick
4. Subordinate/subordination - lower status and secondary position in society
5. Malestream - biased towards a male view of the world

How have criminologists explained female patterns of offending

Bullets

- Early theories of crime suggest female criminals are unfeminine and unnatural
- Liberation thesis suggests that as women become more equal with men, they will commit more crime
- Marginalisation thesis suggests women do not have opportunity for crime, or use crime as a way of fighting society

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- Social control thesis suggests women are controlled and do not commit crime
- Gender studies look at both femininity and masculinity. It claims that the dominant masculine ideal is aggressive and domineering so this leads males to criminal behaviour.

Text

Explanations of women's offending have a long history dating back to the early work of criminologists such as Lombroso and psychologists such as Freud who were writing in Victorian times. They tended to look at women's biology to explain their crimes and although their theories differed, they viewed criminal women as being unnatural and unfeminine. Freud for example argued that feminine crime results from penis envy. According to Freud, all females suffer from penis envy, but most are able to come to terms with their sense of loss. Those who cannot resolve their penis envy over identify with maleness and are likely to act criminal ways. These types of theories have been heavily criticised in recent years, but were influential in their day.

Second wave feminists of the 1970s such as Adler and Simon suggest that as women became freed from domestic life, they could act more like men. Acting like men, meant that they could become involved in crime and even in violence should they so choose. Freda Adler claimed that new forms of criminality are available to women such as corporate fraud and white collar crime. This theory, which is known as liberation theory has been very heavily criticised by other feminists such as Brown who argued that feminism had thrown the spotlight onto women and made female crime more visible. Smart criticised Adler because the numbers involved in female crime are so small, that even tiny changes in figures of actual crime result in large percentage changes, thus exaggerating phenomena. One of the most telling criticisms of Adler is that it appears from other studies that women who commit offences often do so because of impoverished conditions, unemployment, a lack of educational opportunities and abuse rather than because they are liberated from male domination.

The strongest critic of Adler has probably been Carlen (1988) who looked at the way in which women are marginalised by society. Carlen interviewed offenders to discover that much law breaking is a rational response to social problems imposed on them by their secondary status. They break the law in order to survive or to provide food for their children. In addition, Carlen also suggested that female rates of crime are so low because women experience far higher levels of social control than men and so have less opportunity to commit criminal acts. This is known as the marginalisation thesis.

Heidensohn, Morris and Smart have all asked the question from a different angle, because they suggest that the key issue is to discover why women do not commit crime. This has led to social control thesis which suggests that women are subjected to very high levels of social control and that this prevents them from participating in crime.

Increasingly, sociologists and criminologists have become aware that gender is not an issue that just affects women. Men and masculinity are as deserving of study as femininity. Newburn and Stanko have suggested that masculinity is a role, and that men choose to adopt certain forms of masculinity. Men learn what it is to be a man through adopting role models. Hegemonic or dominant masculinity in our culture is based on aggression, action, toughness and domination. These characteristics can be linked to criminal behaviours.

Questions

- 1. How might biological theories of crime be criticised?

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- 2. How do feminists account for low female participation in crime?
- 3. Why is it important to study gender rather than femininity when discussing crime?

Keywords

1. Second wave feminists - feminists of the early 1960s and 1970s
2. Hegemonic - dominant mode of thought
3. Marginalised - put to one side as unimportant

Recent explanations of gendered crime and masculinity

Bullets

- Sociology has long recognised the link between crime and masculinity
- Early sociologists believed that boys needed to learn what it is to be a man
- Writers from the New Right believe crime is linked to single parent families as women cannot bring up boys on their own
- Feminist writers have taken a similar viewpoint but blame the media and absentee fathers as providing poor role models
- Messerschmidt has suggested that males who are marginalised and denied traditional routes to masculine status adopt aggressive behaviours to demand status and respect.

Text

Some of the most recent explanations of gendered crime have focused on notions of masculinity. This has a long history of study in sociology so ideas are often returned to and refined. Some of the earliest work was completed by Functionalists such as Parsons (1964) who suggested that masculinity was developed in boys during their adolescence and that this led them into delinquency. Sutherland also suggested something similar in 1924 when he pointed out that boys should be 'rough and tough'. Cloward and Ohlin said in the 1960s that younger boys in gangs follow older role models and imitate dominant aggressive behaviours. Thus, the idea that males commit crime because they are socialised into a masculine and aggressive culture is by no means a new one. However, in this early work there is no challenge to the notion that male behaviour is acceptable behaviour.

More recent concerns with gendered crimes have returned to this theorising so that in the 1990s, Miedzian suggested that violence is an acceptable behaviour in men and this is due to socialisation and the militarism to which they are exposed. Other researchers have linked violence and masculinity, sport and masculinity and the mass media and masculinity. Later studies have portrayed male behaviour in a slightly more negative light. Much of this research actually blamed women for male violence, either directly or indirectly, so the growth of single parent families and lack of a good male role model was seen as a plausible explanation for inner city male crime. This idea is pervasive and has influenced much New Right policy on the family. A similar viewpoint has been expressed by Sewell who has suggested that the criminality of Black boys is linked to the lack of positive male role models within the family.

Feminists such as Bea Campbell also took this line, but said the problem was not single mothers so much as the media notions of masculinity offered to boys who had little exposure to normal traditional male role models of men who are providers and workers.

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These fatherless boys took their notions of masculinity from films such as the Terminator series or violent computer games. Sue Lees and Liz Kelly looked at sex crime and suggested that there is a continuum of male violence from the extremes of murder and rape to minor everyday behaviour through which men are able to bully and dominate women. Their analysis can be criticised for over-emphasising the aggression of men and viewing all male behaviour as potentially damaging and anti-social. Although some men are violent and aggressive, there are many others who are not and by far the vast majority of men will never commit crimes of violence or sexual aggression.

So, it is significant that few early researchers actually attempted to identify and explain the meaning of the term masculinity itself and this has been left to more recent writers such as Bob Connell, the Australian sociologist who has pointed out that there is more than one form of masculinity with which boys can identify. He has pointed to a crisis of masculinity whereby women, through challenging male domination have led young men to feel isolated, insecure and unaware of what it is to be a man. This has led to a range of recent studies which have explored masculinity as a notion. Others have written on this theme, notably Susan Faludi and Robert Bly. The feminist Lynne Segal has taken the idea of the crisis of masculinity and suggested that men are their own worst enemy. Her idea is that notions of masculinity trap boys into self destructive and socially damaging behaviours.

Messerschmidt links masculinity and crime with economic factors. Traditionally, working class men have gained masculine status through hard jobs, a steady wage and breadwinning status in family life. If these routes to masculinity are denied, then boys are driven to violence to assert their male status and this leads to criminality. This analysis is linked explicitly to class because Messerschmidt points out that middle class boys will do well in school, and limit their masculine displays to drinking or vandalism because they have the security of knowing they will take high status occupations. Working class boys reject school as feminine and become disruptive. They recognise their own limited life chances and often direct their aggression into racist or sexist activity. This leads to domestic violence and violence against the homeless and powerless or immigrants.

Questions

- 1. What view of masculinity is suggested by many feminists?
- 2. How important is the notion of the role model in understanding male criminal behaviours?
- 3. To what extent is masculinity a dangerous concept?

Keywords

1. Delinquent - young male criminal
2. Crisis of masculinity - men are challenged by women and no longer know what it is to be a man

What have post-modernists said about gender and crime?

Bullets

- Postmodernism claims society is diverse and people create gender for themselves.
- Postmodernism is concerned with identity
- It is heavily criticised by many as being interesting but impractical
- Black men create identities for themselves as being too tough to handle
- People find criminal behaviour to be sexy and exciting, and enjoy the thrill

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- Girls are therefore attracted to male behaviour because it is challenging and a thrill

Text

Post-modern theory in sociology draws on French philosophy. It originated in a distrust of traditional thinking such as Marxism and Functionalism and suggests that society has shifted in such a way that traditional thinking is no longer relevant to our world. Post modern society is one where people define themselves through consumerism and what they buy. Typically people are diverse, individual and create their own meanings because we all have choices as to what to buy and how we present ourselves. No-one is considered expert in anything anymore because we all have access to information. There is no such thing as 'truth' as we are able to choose our own meanings. Crime is socially constructed and has no meaning beyond that which people place on it.

This sets post-modernist criminologists a problem because it is difficult to link cause and effect and look for a specific set of reasons why anyone would commit a criminal act or to design a specific research project. Much postmodernist criminology is concerned therefore with issues of identity and meaning and written in a very inaccessible language. One of the main criticisms of post-modern theorising is that it is not especially useful to create social policy and that it lacks any practical application. For example, Mary Bosworth studied women in a British prison. She began with the post modern idea that women could access a variety of feminine identities with which to help them through the strain of prison life. She concluded that women were involved in the daily creation of prison life and because prison life was a social construction, these women were also able to resist its pressure and subvert the system. This insight certainly would not help the prison system to improve its service or make life easier or more useful for prisoners.

One of the best known studies is by Jack Katz in his book, *Seductions of Crime*. Katz points out that crime is not a single category of behaviour and that to lump all crime together is not useful. Crime is a legal category. He looks at some crimes committed by young Black men in American prisons and suggests reasons why people would behave in this manner. He attempts to identify the underlying logic in what are otherwise senseless acts. For example, he claims domestic murder is actually a poor solution to an emotional crisis, so if the victim would simply stop the provocation, then possibly the murder could be avoided. Shop lifting is seen in terms of a desire to create an identity at odds with society. Young men create a criminal identity for themselves and advertise it with tattoos, slang words, dress, attitude and body language. They are badges of being above or beyond conventional morality. In effect, crime is a form of posturing and even self protective as ghettoised Black men give out a message of being too tough to handle.

Stephen Lyng has used the concept of edgework to consider criminal actions. Edgework is attractive and seductive risk taking, where individuals court harm, but employ tactics to avoid it. This could be the risk involved in extreme sports or the risk involved in criminality and violence where strategy must be employed to avoid the risk of coming to serious harm. Effectively, much crime is triggered by a search for excitement in an increasingly superficial and shallow society. This notion is useful when considering the phenomenon of the Ladette, described by Carolyn Jackson. A Ladette is a girl who adopts traditionally male behaviours such as drinking, swearing, sexual promiscuity and fighting. Girls are running risks of being seen as hard, and of general safety. In addition, according to Jackson, they are courting school failure. This behaviour is transgressive or transgression - it challenges in an aggressive way the traditional notion of femininity as being passive and meek. The ladette has become something of a media story lately and it has been argued by Anne Worrall that part of the increase in crime convictions for women can be attributed to aggressive sentencing of girls in response to changing perceptions of

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femininity and growing fear of the ladette. However, the capacity of women and girls to take on criminal behaviours and activities is not a new phenomenon. Campbell studied women in New York gangs in the 1980s and offered a picture of a life where gang membership offered women some sense of status, purpose and significance to their otherwise bleak and deprived lives.

Questions

- 1. Summarise post modernist views on crime.
- 2. To what extent is post modernism useful to an understanding of crime and criminal behaviour?

Keywords

1. Subvert - go against or damage from within
2. Edgework - voluntary risk taking
3. Transgression - going against tradition in an aggressive fashion
4. Postmodernism - an approach to sociology that rejects modernism and which emphasises change and diversity.

Why is there a relationship between ethnicity and crime?

What is the relationship between ethnicity and crime?

Bullets

- There are a wide variety of ethnic minority populations in the UK
- It is sometimes difficult to classify people according to their ethnicity
- Black ethnic minority populations are over represented in victim and conviction statistics
- This could be a response to the racism of British society
- This could be explained by cultural differences
- There may be some other cause which is, as yet, not fully understood

Text

There is a highly complex relationship between ethnicity and crime data. It is important to clarify the point that ethnicity and race are difficult terms to use accurately in sociology. Most sociologists and geneticists agree that race is a highly controversial term with little practical meaning except to those who are racist.

Ethnicity refers to a shared culture and social identity and is used far more commonly to refer to social differences between groups of people. However, despite the educated person's caution with the language and terminology of race, in this topic, 'Black' is used to describe people of African-Caribbean and African descent because it is a socially generated term. It can also be a category which those with the power to discriminate use to disempower those with dark skins. However, you should remember that even the term African-Caribbean is fraught with difficulty as there are a variety of islands and cultures to which people belong and they are not all similar. Similarly, Asian is a blanket term covering people from a vast range of cultural groups, languages, ethnicities and religious

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affiliations.

The problem in any discussion of crime is that although in modern Britain there are a variety of ethnicities, not all ethnic groups are equally represented in crime statistics as offenders or as victims. There is a low rate of offending among those of Asian descent, including people from the Indian sub-continent or those of Chinese descent. In contrast, African-Caribbean people of dark skin appear to be over-represented. The issue therefore for sociology is whether this pattern occurs as a result of a cultural difference or if it occurs because of the racism of British society. It could even be that there is a relationship, as yet undiscovered, between the two factors so that African-Caribbeans are both more likely to be criminal and that they are also the victims of over-zealous and racist policing. This argument is often made by left realists, who point to blocked opportunities and subcultural factors as being plausible causes of African Caribbean criminality.

Black people are certainly far more likely to be stopped and searched, arrested, sent for trial, held in prison to await trial and given a harsher sentence than White people. They are also disproportionately over-represented in victimisation statistics. Lea and Young (1984) claim that the police discriminate against Black people and that the Black community responds negatively to this discrimination, however they also accept that there are higher levels of crime among Blacks. Whatever the validity of the claims of racism in British society operating against the Black community, there remains a problem in that people of other ethnic minorities experience equal discrimination and poverty and are found as often in the criminal offending statistics. Asian youths are not found as often in crime statistics.

Questions

- 1. Why is race not used as a concept in sociology?
- 2. Which social groups are over-represented in criminal statistics?
- 3. Which social groups are under-represented in criminal statistics?
- 4. Why is the under-representation of Asian youths in crime statistics a problem for sociologists of racism?

Keywords

1. African Caribbean - person who traces descent to African slaves on one of the Caribbean islands
2. African - Person who traces descent to Africa
3. Black - person who identifies themselves as belonging to that group and who is of either African or Asian descent
4. Racism - discrimination on the basis of ethnic group
5. Disempower - treat someone as being of no concern or value
6. Ethnic group - refers to people of the same race or nationality with a long shared history and a distinct culture.
7. Ethnicity - refers to sense of being, derived from that shared racial or cultural background.
8. 'Black and minority ethnic' (BME) - is a term commonly used by the Home Office. Other agencies use the term 'Minority Ethnic Group'.

What are the patterns of victimisation and offending by ethnic group?

Bullets

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- There are ethnic differences in conviction rates for various crimes
- Black people appear to be the victims of the criminal justice system
- Statistics also reveal that they are over-represented in crime as well
- Among young people, Black ethnic minorities are over represented in offending.

Text

Official statistics have not always been monitored by ethnicity and so accurate data is hard to find. In addition, because of the sensitive nature of such statistics, some information is not gathered.

It is important to note that the White population can be taken as the average population because they form nearly 90% of the population of the UK. According to the 2001 Census, 2% of the UK population identifies itself as Black. There are significant variations in the crimes for which the various ethnic groups are convicted. Relatively speaking, 20% of White offenders are convicted of drugs. Nearer 30% of Black offences are drug related, but the percentage of Chinese and other offenders who are convicted for drugs related offences is nearly 50%. Black offenders are significantly more likely to have been convicted for robbery than any other ethnic group or for drug related offences.

Data suggests that Black people can be the victims of the criminal justice system. Ministry of Justice 2008 figures show that around 9.5 per cent of people arrested were recorded as 'Black' and 5.3 per cent as 'Asian' implying that, relative to the arrest rates of the population as a whole, Black people were over three times more likely than White people to be arrested. In 2008 Asian people's rates were similar to those for White people, . There were higher rates of imprisonment for rape, robbery and drug offences among Black individuals. Coid et al (2000) found that mentally ill Black males in England and Wales are 6 times more likely to be detained in secure units than White men, following criminal and highly difficult and dangerous behaviour. However, they may also be more criminal too. Tony Thompson, writing in the Independent reported that in 2004-05, there were 78 fatal shootings in England and Wales. Of these, 40 of the victims were white, 25 black, seven Asian. He pointed out that the figures do not record the ethnicity of the killers but, by and large, murderers tend mostly to target members of their own ethnic group. Thus, the problem is not confined to Black people, but they are over-represented in the statistics.

Among youth offenders, ethnicity is a significant factor. Home Office data shows that in 2004/05 there were 287,013 offences involving young offenders. Of these 84.7% of offenders identified themselves as White, 6% as Black, 3% as Asian, 2.3% as Mixed and 0.6% as Chinese or other. Of the 85,370 pre-court decisions 87.4% involved White people, 4.2% Black, 3.1% Asian, 1.2% Mixed and 0.6% Chinese or Other while the overall number of pre-court decisions increasing by 12% from 2003. Offences involving those of Mixed ethnicity were more likely to attract a final warning than those involving other ethnic groups. Offences committed by Black young offenders were more likely to attract a prison sentence when compared to offences committed by than other ethnic groups.

Questions

1. Which crime are Blacks mostly likely to be convicted of?
2. What evidence is there to support the view that the criminal justice system is biased against Blacks?
3. What evidence is there to support the view that the criminal justice system is not biased against Blacks?

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Keywords

1. Pre-court decision - punishments administered by the police, for example Cautions or Final Warnings
2. Custodial sentence - prison
3. Secure units - behind locks for example, mental hospital or prison

Accounting for official statistics

Bullets

- Official statistics are realistic
- Black people are involved in more crime than White people because they live in areas of deprivation, not because they are Black.
- The police overreact to this situation, leading to the perception that they are racist.
- A culture develops that is a response to racism, but which involves criminality and aggression

Text

Do official statistics give us a realistic view of offending? It is difficult to say because they may themselves be affected by social factors. Certainly Black young people are over-represented in crime statistics but this may reflect the reality of demographics. Most crime is committed by working class young men and as Mayhew points out, Black people tend to be over-represented in that social group. In addition, crime is typical of socially deprived neighbourhoods and BME people are overwhelmingly found living in such areas.

Bourgois makes an argument to suggest that economic exclusion and marginal low status in socially deprived areas has led BME groups to seek alternative and criminal routes to status. These strategies could include selling drugs, or running small businesses that are not registered with the authorities. This has led to the development of a street culture which is socially dangerous and semi-legal. It is also risky in terms of its association with drugs, sex and violence. Thus, drug sales are lucrative employment for someone with few skills but can be damaging to a community if there are a high number of drug related crimes.

Jock Young has stated that the police are guilty of over-policing some areas of cities in response to these processes. This was found particularly in areas that have high proportions of BME. This was certainly seen as one of the triggers for the Brixton Riots of the 1980s. The riots in the spring of 1981 resulted in over 200 injuries to police and at least 45 injuries to members of the public. Large numbers of cars, vans and buses were burned, including 56 police vehicles. Buildings were damaged and thirty or so burned. Reports suggested that up to 5,000 people were involved in the riot but only 82 arrests. The riots were triggered by a heavy handed policing operation whereby street crime was controlled through use of SUS or stopping under suspicion. Black people were far more likely to be stopped and searched and this built up resentment which eventually bubbled over into days of violence which lingered on into the summer and spread to other areas and other cities. A government enquiry known as the Scarman Report found clear evidence that police tactics had been a provoking factor.

Thus there is a strong argument that the police are racist, however there is also support for cultural views that account for Black over-representation in crime statistics by linking their criminality to issues of age, class, poverty and deprivation. For example, Lea and

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Young suggested that Black people do commit more crime than white people, whereas Asians figure quite low in crime statistics. They argue that this is because West Indians feel more deprived than other groups. Messerschmidt found that lower class ethnic minority boys have trouble finding secure employment. They cannot afford designer goods that they see around them and are under pressure to acquire so they use violence to express masculinity and crime is a form of male control. He argued that rape is used to enforce a sense of male power. This negative view of Black culture is reinforced by the prominent sociologist, Tony Sewell who claims that large sections of the community reject intellectual activity in favour of consumer goods and thus find themselves damaging their own chances of success.

Questions

- 1. Explain the causes of the Brixton riots of 1981
- 2. To what extent is Black crime a response to inequality in British society?

Keywords

1. Brixton Riots - a series of riots in 1981 that caused serious damage and resulted in injuries to the police and others.
2. SUS - a very unpopular law used by the police to stop and search people they considered to be suspicious. It was abolished, only to be replaced by a stop and question right.
3. Scarman Report - enquiry into the causes of the Brixton Riots

Are the police racist?

Bullets

- Paul Gilroy says British society is racist and crime statistics reflect the racism of the police
- The McPherson Report said the Metropolitan Police are institutionally racist
- Research into police culture reveals racist attitudes
- Stuart Hall says racism is sometimes used as a distraction from the major issues of the day by both politicians and the media.

Text

Paul Gilroy, a famous and controversial sociologist of ethnic minorities suggests that the large numbers of convictions for black young men in Britain is to do with the racism of the police. There is no greater amount of crime committed by black youths than white. There is a clear history of racism in British society and Gilroy suggests that governments do not take this seriously. He points to Enoch Powell's infamous 1968 speech 'Rivers of Blood' which argued in highly emotional terms against immigration as an example of the racist attitudes of British society, a deep undercurrent that threatens Black people and British culture itself.

Gilroy is supported in his arguments by The McPherson Report which looked into the murder and the subsequent totally mishandled investigation into the racist stabbing of Stephen Lawrence in 1993. This was explicit in its suggestion that the Metropolitan police were institutionally racist. There was some criticism of the final conclusion of the report

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which suggested that individual police officers may not be racist, but that the organisational practice of the police certainly was. One of the most serious findings of the McPherson Report was that Stephen Lawrence's parents were treated in an extremely unfortunate manner by the police, who had also failed to recognise that Stephen's friend and witness to the murder was also himself the victim of a racist attack. This has led to a shift in official attitudes so that the police are now required to view a crime from the perspective of the victim so that the definition of a racist attack is that the victim says it was.

Whether this legal obligation has actually changed police attitudes can be left open to doubt. Former Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir Ian Blair, gave evidence to the MPA's Race and Faith Inquiry in April 2009 and said, "I don't necessarily believe that there was anything racist about the activities of the Metropolitan Police in relation to the Lawrences the Metropolitan Police had been "treating people in a very monochrome way. What the investigators did was they treated the Lawrences as they treated a whole range of working class people and they just did not understand the expectations and experiences of the black community". This was essentially, the finding of the McPherson Report. It seems extraordinary that a very senior police officer would attempt to defend the police handling of this case, and suggests that the various apologies that were offered to the Lawrences contained very little substance or meaning.

There is considerable evidence gathered over the years that the culture of the police is both racist and sexist. Heidensohn has talked about canteen culture. This is the culture that develops in a workplace. In the case of the police, they work long hours in difficult conditions. They also work shifts so that they tend to develop a strong workplace culture. Many writers have pointed to the occupational culture of the police as being masculine, racist, conservative and aggressive and Reiner says this gives rise to racist behaviour and attitudes.

Since the outcry that followed the murder of Stephen Lawrence and the subsequent campaign by his parents to get justice, there has been an Amendment to the Race Relations Act (2000). This amendment removed the special exemption that the police enjoyed to that point, which meant that it was not unlawful for them to provide inferior treatment to certain groups on the basis of their ethnicity. In 2003, Mark Daly, a journalist for the BBC was still able to gather clear evidence of explicit racist attitudes among recent police recruits, even though most of the police officers with whom he had dealings seemed to be perfectly fair and reasonable. It is worthy of note that Commander Dick of the Metropolitan Police said in the same year that it would be difficult to eradicate racism from the police until it was eradicated from society as a whole. She also said that terror attacks had left many people with anti-Muslim feelings.

Probably some of the most influential work of the 1970s addressed precisely these issues. Stuart Hall, in 'Policing the Crisis' pointed out what he saw as a form of racist conspiracy which took place in society. He studied the media response to the 'new' crime of mugging and said that the media, police and government scapegoated young blacks as 'muggers' and this gave rise to a moral panic in which African Caribbeans became synonymous with street crime. However, there was industrial unrest and widespread political violence which needed control taking place at the time. The government was struggling to control a worsening spiral of violence in Northern Ireland. Hall argued that the victimisation of the young Black was a distraction from the real issues of the time which the government and authorities welcomed as it took the spotlight off their own inadequacy. It has been argued more recently that new laws which challenge people's civil liberties and exploit their fear of terrorism are being used to distract people from more real concerns of the economic collapse of 2008 and the significance of increased global warming and planetary danger from climate change.

Questions

Understanding culture (Education)

- 1. What is canteen culture?
- 2. To what extent are the police racist?
- 3. Should the victim be able to define whether an act is racist or not?

Keywords

1. Scapegoat - blame someone else for all of the problems of society
2. McPherson Report - an enquiry into the police mishandling of the inquiry into the racist stabbing of Stephen Lawrence at a London bus stop
3. Canteen culture - workplace culture that develops in certain occupations
4. Rivers of Blood speech - a speech by a leading politician of the 1960s where it was argued that Britain was being engulfed by immigrants and riots would break out
5. Exempt - the law does not apply in this case

Racism as a criminal act

Bullets

- People from ethnic minorities are vulnerable to crime
- We do not know how much racist crime occurs
- Recent laws have made racist crime much more serious and the police are expected to record and prosecute racist crime with care
- There has been an increase in the amount of racist crime recorded
- It is safe to assume that of the racist crime that occurs, very little is reported.

Text

Much of the evidence suggests that people from minority ethnic groups are more at risk of victimisation than White people. The ESRC say that in 2002/03, adults from a Mixed race or Asian background were more likely than those from other ethnic groups to be victims of crime in England and Wales. Almost half (46 per cent) of adults of Mixed race had been the victim of a crime in the previous 12 months. This compared with 30 per cent of Asians. Black adults and those from the 'Chinese or other' group experienced similar levels of crime to White people. It is not always clear whether the perpetrators were also from ethnic minorities. Often, we do not know. However, in 1999, racially motivated incidents represented 12 per cent of all crime against minority ethnic people compared with 2 per cent for white people. In 2004/05, 3.8 per cent of people of non-white ethnicity were victims of violent crime compared to 3.3 per cent of those of white ethnicity.

Partly as a response to pressure from a wide range of people and outrage at the murder of Stephen Lawrence, a category of racially aggravated crime was introduced by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. There have been other changes to the law since then, partly in response to terrorism attacks. For example the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 made it illegal to use "threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour" intended or likely to incite hatred against a group of people because of their religious belief or lack of religious belief. Crime that is prompted by an offender's hatred of someone because of their race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality or national origins, religion, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation or their disability is known as hate crime. The typical hate offender is a young white male (most homophobic offenders are aged 16-20, and most race hate offenders under 30)

This Crime and Disorder Act defined what is meant by racial aggravation and created

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specific offences of racially aggravated assault, criminal damage, public order and harassment. A racially aggravated crime is when criminal conduct can be shown to have had a racial motivation. Offences include harassment, assault and threatening phone calls and a high number of such attacks were on takeaway or convenience store staff or customers and foreign students. The CPS brought racially aggravated cases against 3,116 defendants in 2002-2003 which is 442 more than the preceding year. In 2003/4 there were 3616 prosecutions for racially aggravated crime, which represents a 16 per cent increase from the previous year. John Revell, Chief Crown Prosecutor has claimed that the number of prosecutions is up because more people are reporting racist crimes.

For the British Crime Survey 2003, all victims were asked if they thought the incident was racially motivated. The risk of racially motivated victimisation was found to be higher for people from each of the B M E groups than for white people. The risk was 4% for mixed, 3% for Asians, 2% for Black people and Chinese or 'other' ethnic groups. It was less than 1% for Whites. The estimated number of racially motivated incidents recorded by the BCS in 2002/03 was 206,000. The Race Hate Crime in Cardiff 2009 survey conducted by Race Equality First found that despite efforts made in promoting equality, many BME people are still victims of prejudice and hatred. They discovered that more than 70% of those who experienced race hate crime did not report it - either because they believed there was no point, because they did not know how to or because they were afraid of the perpetrators. Still, there are so few prosecutions that it is fair to assume that few people are willing to reporting racist crime and that only a tiny number more people need to come forward to have a dramatic impact on the statistics. Thus it is difficult to know whether racism is increasing or whether people are more willing to come forward.

Questions

- 1. Suggest reasons why we have little knowledge of the true amount of racist crime that occurs.
- 2. Suggest reasons why people who have been the victims of racist crime are unwilling to come forward.

Keywords

1. Racially aggravated crime - when criminal conduct can be shown to have had a racial motivation

Case studies of race hatred crimes

Bullets

Text

In November 2005, five white men were imprisoned for giving instructions on how to create bombs in a magazine that they had published and distributed. The magazine encouraged racial hatred and promoted a white supremacy. It had encouraged people to go out and bomb or otherwise kill or injure non-white people. It had set a competition for people to burn down synagogues and kill Jewish people. The average prison sentences were over two years each.

In July 2005, Anthony Walker, an 18 year old Black man was verbally abused at a bus stop. He, his White girlfriend and his cousin walked away from their racial abusers, but were ambushed and attacked. The cousin and girlfriend ran for help, but when they returned, they found Anthony with an ice axe in his head. He died the next day. Two men were charged and found guilty. They were sentenced to nearly forty years in prison between them. On the day of the sentence, the site of the murder was covered in racist graffiti.

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Some time later, a man was imprisoned for posting racist comments on a memorial website to Anthony Walker which suggested that white people should celebrate the death and his family should be burned. The emailer was also jailed at the same time for having pictures of child pornography on his computer.

In 2004, a Pakistani family including a heavily pregnant woman had just moved into a house in South Belfast when someone threw a 6 ft wooden plank through their front window, showering an eating area in shards of glass. It was one of a number of such attacks in the area.

Questions

Keywords

Why is there a relationship between social class and crime?

What is the relationship between social class and crime?

Bullets

- Most early theories of crime were based on the study of prisoners
- Prisoners were, and still tend to be from working class backgrounds.
- This has led to the perception of a link between class and crime which is widely accepted.
- However, class is difficult to define and whilst those who are convicted of crime tend to be working class, middle class people commit crime and some working class are not criminal.

Text

As with all analyses of crime, the link between any particular social group and conviction rates is a more complex one than at first it seems. According to conviction rates, the working class are more criminal than other social classes, however this overlooks much more complicated questions of whether laws are biased against the working classes as Marxists claim, whether the link between class and crime is actually one of deprivation and poverty rather than their behaviour or whether in fact the working class simply commit the types of crimes that are likely to lead to conviction.

Early theorists of crime studied prisoners and generalised their conclusions from a study of those who had been convicted. Lombroso believed that criminals were a genetic throwback to earlier and primitive forms of humanity and set about listing characteristics that were genetic markers for criminal behaviour. Among the traits that he described as being signs of criminality were long arms, large hands and tattoos. Much of his work has been discredited both on scientific grounds because his evidence does not support his case. Also, because he was working on the assumption that all people in prison were criminals and those who are not imprisoned are not criminal. Interestingly, from the point of view of this topic, he also described characteristics of criminality that are based on social class; he was describing the physical characteristics of manual labourers of Italy in the C19th.

Much research into the C20th worked on the assumption that people in prison were typical of all criminals and as people in prison were overwhelmingly working class, that the working classes were the criminal classes. The link between the notion of the working

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class and criminality became understood and was not really challenged even by Edwin Sutherland (1883-1950) who coined the phrase 'white collar crime' to describe the criminal behaviour of the middle and professional classes.

Writers generally took one of three possible approaches to study the link between class and crime. They looked to see if crime increased during times of economic hardship, they looked at people in prison or they looked at working class areas of towns and cities to discover if reported crime rates were higher. In general, the evidence supported the view that crime is a working class activity. Functional writers such as Merton, Stan Cohen and Cloward and Ohlin all suggested that crime is linked to working class cultural values. Early Marxists such as Bonger also claimed that poor regions had higher crime rates, though Bonger was more concerned to prove that social inequality created a criminal class. Shaw and McKay looked at poor inner city areas of towns and linked poverty with social breakdown and criminality. However, class is a difficult term to operationalise and it is difficult to generalise about working class people in the way that these researchers have all done. Moreover, these contrasting views of crime all tended to overlook the point that many working class people are not criminal and that some middle class people certainly are seriously criminal.

Questions

- 1. Explain Lombroso's theory of criminal behaviour
- 2. Suggest reasons why Lombroso has been discredited in recent years.
- 3. Who coined the term 'white collar crime'?
- 4. How can the view that working class people are criminal be challenged?

Keywords

1. Social class - refers to identity which is derived from shared status or occupational background.
2. White collar crime - the crime of the middle and professional classes
3. Operationalise - describe something in terms that make it easy to measure

What are the patterns of victimisation and offending by social class?

Bullets

- Working class people have long been stereotyped as criminal and criminals are assumed to be working class
- The police will take class background into account when dealing with people
- Poor people tend to be concentrated in certain areas of cities and towns
- These areas have high rates of victimisation and of criminality
- Government policy has attempted to deal with the problem by encouraging people to complain about nuisance neighbours
- Working class criminals actually seem to make less money from their criminal activities than criminals from higher social class backgrounds

Text

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Curiously, it is difficult to find data in the UK relating to the social class backgrounds of frequent offenders, though there is reference to poverty and deprivation in official statistics and social class can be guessed at from this data. The social characteristics of frequent young offenders point to the disorganised and chaotic social backgrounds that are associated with poverty and deprivation. The perception of the poorest people in our society as anti-social and criminal is apparent in popular thinking where the 'chav' is portrayed as part of a criminal class. Even Marx and Engels wrote about the poorest people in our society as 'the "dangerous class", the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of society'. McAra and McVie pointed to the way that the prejudices of the police against the working class can be seen in their choice of who to stop and arrest. The police are known to categorise people as being 'respectable' or 'not respectable' on the basis of dress and attitudes. Thus they will think in terms of people having 'form' or previous convictions.

In practice, therefore, the link between class and conviction rate is so obvious that it is not actually questioned. The issue is understood. In Britain, there is probably a further dimension in that the very poor tend to live in communities that are deprived. There is little social mixing in housing and some estates become notorious for disability, poverty, mental illness, alcoholism, lone parent families, unemployment and poor community relationships. These areas are often those where there are high numbers of 'nuisance neighbours'. Children who are raised in such neighbourhoods are far more likely to end up convicted of offences than those of similar backgrounds in rural areas or in areas which are more socially mixed (Reiss, 1986). Goodchild and Cole (2001) thus pointed out that there is a pattern where the most vulnerable people are housed next to those most likely to be found guilty of offending behaviour. Victimisation rates are often highest in areas where crime rates are particularly high.

Although the concentration of criminal behaviour in some geographical areas points to poverty and inequality as being part of the problem that creates crime, government policies have tended to focus on making individuals responsible for their crime and criminal behaviour. Thus, New Right theories such as those of Herrnstein and Murray have focused on the immoral behaviour of certain people and talked in terms of an underclass of morally degenerate people who should learn to respect others. This has led to the creation of the Respect Agenda, and a set of policies where people are encouraged to report their neighbours for antisocial activity to the relevant authorities. Nevertheless, it is too simple to say that poverty is a cause of crime because there are many poor people in the UK, most of whom do not engage in criminal behaviour and there are wealthy people who do commit crime.

Interestingly, in Canada, Charest, (2009) analysed the legitimate and illegitimate earnings of a sample of 204 prisoners during the three years prior to their admission. He discovered that social class background has a direct and positive effect on offenders' illegal earnings throughout that period: the higher status their background, then the higher the chances there are that offenders will gain substantial rewards from their involvement in crime. Poorer people therefore don't even make as much from their criminal activities as those from more privileged backgrounds.

Questions

- 1. Why is there very little data collected on the social class backgrounds of offenders?
- 2. Why is it risky to suggest that social class is a cause of criminal behaviour?
- 3. Why are victimisation rates higher in poorer areas than in wealthy areas?
- 4. How has the government attempted to deal with high crime neighbourhoods?

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Keywords

1. Chav - an insult term used about certain people who are assumed to be criminal, who wear branded sports goods and are seen to be from a low social class and violent.
2. Legitimate - inside the law, legal
3. Illegitimate - outside the law, illegal

Are poor social values linked to working class crime?

Bullets

- Shaw and McKay saw working class crime as being associated with poor social values and linked it to areas of deprivation in inner city areas.
- This work has been criticised, not the least because much crime is associated with areas that are not inner city areas
- Clarke says working class crime is opportunistic
- There is some evidence to support the view that some crime is linked to social values however, not all youth crime is working class.

Text

Early studies of criminality in Chicago in the 1930s by Shaw and McKay, based on functional analyses of society suggested that crime is caused by the breakdown of community relationships so that crime is a normal response to unpleasant and abnormal social conditions such as those found in poor and deprived inner-city neighbourhoods. Implicit in this is the assumption that only working class and poor people live in these neighbourhoods as middle class people are more likely to live in the pleasant suburbs around cities. Shaw and McKay were writing in an American context and linked this idea to migration. Recent migrants to the USA lived in areas of poor and cheap housing so that poor inner city areas were the ones where social breakdown was most likely to occur. The migrants were the people with no sense of community and few shared values. There are merits to this point of view. It does not make the working class out to be bad in their own right or by their nature; their crime is a response to bad circumstances.

Critics suggest that this view does not take account of ethnicity and culture, whereby some cultures are more accepting or approving of criminality than others. In addition, it is not always the inner city areas that are the ones where crime takes place. In the UK, many crime ridden estates are on the outer fringes of cities in areas where people were rehoused in the great rebuilding boom after WW2, when bombed out housing was replaced and old slum areas were demolished to make way for new homes (often high rise flats). In addition, not everyone living in inner city areas participates in crime.

In the 1990s, Clarke suggested something similar, in that much crime is related to opportunity. Working class people who experience poverty may actually calculate the risk factor in committing certain types of crime in the sense of 'does what is gained outweigh the risk of getting caught?' Crime is therefore opportunistic. Working people will see an opportunity and commit crime, so crime prevention should centre on removing the possibility of crime so that it is longer a sensible strategy for the criminal. According to Clarke, crime does not take place where criminals live, but where there are opportunities for crime to happen. Middle class people are less likely to commit crime, because they have more to lose if they are discovered.

The Peterborough Youth Study, which focused on 14 and 15 year olds in an English city,

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suggested that over a third engaged in offending behaviour of various types. Although there were plenty of opportunities, most only offended for a small amount of time each week and tended to take opportunities to do so. This is evidence in support of Shaw and McKay because those who had weak social values were more likely to offend. Offenders who felt little shame in being caught offending were at high risk of frequent offending. However, the Peterborough study found that youth crime was not especially a lower class activity, although lower class criminals were slightly more likely to be violent offenders. Young people from middle class families did have more concern about shame.

Questions

- 1. Outline Shaw and McKay's thesis on inner city crime
- 2. What evidence is there to support Shaw and McKay?
- 3. What evidence is there to contradict Shaw and McKay?

Keywords

1. Suburbs - spacious housing on the fringes of the countryside
2. Inner city - areas of poor and older housing on the edges of the city centre

What is the broken windows theory?

Bullets

- Broken windows thesis implies that working class areas develop crime because once an area looks uncared for, criminals move in
- This has led to heavy handed policing of working class areas in particular
- The evidence as to the success of the strategy is variable, crime rates have fallen but might have fallen anyway
- The causes of working class crime conviction rates are probably multi-variable in origin.

Text

This is a relatively recent theory associated with James Wilson and George Kelling in the USA. It too is very much a locational view of crime and attempts to explain the criminality of working class areas. Wilson and Kelling suggested that people tend not to damage buildings that are empty until the first window is smashed; after that first window has gone, then others are broken very quickly and the building becomes derelict. This, they say is what happens to whole neighbourhoods. A broken window leads people to assume that the area not cared for, and soon evidence of decay and damage can be seen throughout the area. People are more likely to drop litter, dump their rubbish and leave things unrepaired. Cars are abandoned, and the area goes downhill. The local population moves out or doesn't care. Teenagers who hang around are no longer challenged if they misbehave. The spiral of decline continues as drug dealers move in, prostitution is more open and 'nice' people will not go in that area.

This theory is used to explain the prevalence of crime in working class areas, and it is claimed that certain parts of our towns and cities have become 'no-go' areas for the police, taxis, social workers or doctors at certain times of day or night. Wilson and Kelling argue that if the signs of decline are halted through tactics such as quick replacement of broken windows, fast cleaning of litter, pavements, guttering, and provision of activities

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for young deprived people, then the decline of the area can be halted. They advocate (argue for) controlling begging and moving on rough sleepers. They also want to see more police on the beat so that the police are involved in crime prevention rather than arrests.

The police in many American cities have acted on this approach and so there have been policies of 'zero tolerance' of petty crime, or 'three strikes and you are out' sentencing where the third conviction for a petty crime results in a very serious sentence and a heavy response from the courts. This has seen considerable success in cities that have adopted such systems, so there is a large police presence on the streets of New York. On the other hand, it may be that the decline in crime is not so dramatic as is claimed as crime rates have declined in areas that do not follow such harsh regimes of crime prevention. In addition, there is a worry that civil liberties are lost and there is vigilantism in some areas.

One of the main criticisms of the thesis itself is that it tends to see people as belonging to the category of 'orderly' and 'not orderly'. This reveals something of a bias against working class culture and a misunderstanding of the dynamics of neighbourhoods. There are far more variables that impact on crime statistics than simple social class; these include unemployment, poverty, the probability of being arrested for any crime and the number of young men in the population

Questions

- 1. What is broken window theory?
- 2. How has broken windows thesis affected public policy with regard to crime?
- 3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of broken windows theory?

Keywords

1. Advocate - argue a strong case for something.
2. Broken windows thesis - areas go into decline when they are not physically maintained
3. Regime - government, organisation, structure to society
4. Petty crime - minor crime and small scale criminal activity
5. Civil liberties - rights under the law
6. Prevalence - frequency of something happening
7. Zero tolerance - no allowances are made
8. 'Three strikes and you are out' - two small sentences may be given for minor offences, but the third conviction results in a serious prison sentence regardless of the severity of the crime
9. Vigilante - someone who takes the law into his or her own hands rather than allow the police and courts to fight crime

What are Robin Hood theories of crime?

Bullets

- Robin Hood was a criminal anti-hero who stole from the rich to give to the poor
- Some Marxists view working class crime as justified because the system makes them victims of society
- They say that working class people are not criminal, they are the victims of the legal system

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- They also say that if working class people are criminal, they should be admired because they are justified in their actions
- Jock Young criticises this view of crime because the victims of crime are often the most vulnerable people in society.

Text

Robin Hood was a legendary outlaw who lived in Sherwood Forest. He stole money from the rich to give food to the poor. He was seen as a model of redistribution of wealth and is a hero in many legends for his support of the weak. He was probably a fictional character. However, his name has been given to a view of crime which sees it as the behaviour of the poor who are looking after their own interests. The key issue is that Robin Hood is a criminal who triumphs over evil law makers and we are pleased to see the thief succeed against the forces of justice. He is an anti-authority figure who is to be admired and this is a metaphor for the way that some left wing sociologists have viewed criminals and is in direct contrast to more usual accounts of criminal behaviour which sees crime as a problem for society.

Robin Hood theories probably begin with the work of the socialist historian, Eric Hobsbawm who suggested that when people feel constrained and repressed by authority, such as during periods of social disruption, then they look to anti-heroes who become symbols of rebellion. Some people such as animal rights activists, eco-warriors and anti-abortionists have justified criminal actions because they claim that their cause is moral and just, thus law breaking is a correct action to prevent a greater wrong to society.

Some Marxists and sociologists who take a left wing and anti-functional view of society tend to romanticise working class crime and see it as evidence of class conflict between the workers and the bourgeoisie. This type of thinking was very common in the 1970s and influenced much writing in education, for example, the work of Paul Willis. Willis saw anti-school subcultures as evidence of working class children rejecting the capitalist values of the education system.

Crime is seen by such sociologists as evidence of class war. Working class people commit crime as an act of rebellion against the rich. This type of theorising has influenced a number of writers. Traditional Marxists would claim that working class crime was a way for the oppressed to fight back and Engels claimed that it was 'natural' for working class people to turn to crime. Traditional Marxists further argue that working class crime is over policed and over-punished by the legal system and the police who turn a blind eye to middle class crime and greed. This is not a very logical argument because on one hand it suggests that the working class do not commit more crime than the middle class, but if they do, then working class crime should be forgiven because it is an act of rebellion against the forces of oppression. This is very contradictory. Either the working class do not commit crime, or they do. It cannot go both ways.

Jock Young was one of the fiercest critics of the Robin Hood thesis. He point out that it is not good enough to gloss over working class crime as being a response to oppression. The reason he offered was that much crime is violent and directed against the person; thus domestic violence is a very real threat and should not be dismissed as an act of frustration at the economy. Moreover, the victims of working class crimes are often the least powerful in a neighbourhood, so young men will target the old, the poor, immigrants and the vulnerable who are even more deprived and poor themselves.

Questions

1. What is the Robin Hood thesis?

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- 2. Is it acceptable to break the law for moral reasons?
- 3. Can crime ever be justified?

Keywords

1. Robin Hood theory - romanticises working class crime
2. Redistribution - taking from the rich to give to the poor
3. Metaphor - saying that one thing is like another
4. Anti-hero - a bad person whom we all admire
5. Romanticise - make something seem much better than it really is
6. Contradictory - saying two opposite things at once

What about middle class crime?

Bullets

- Middle class people commit a variety of crimes
- Sutherland pointed out that they were likely to commit the kind of crime which is difficult to catch and convict people for.
- States can commit illegal acts too, but rarely is anyone made to go to court
- Middle class people tend to be treated more kindly by the criminal justice system
- Money laundering - when money made through criminal activities is put through schemes so that it cannot be traced and can be spent

Text

Much of the sociology of crime is actually about working class crime, but this tends to overlook the point that the middle classes are also criminal too. Stephen Farrall and Suzanne Karstedt (2007) found that crime and illegality is common throughout all classes in Britain from the third of the people who admitted that they had paid in cash to a cleaner, plumber or other tradesman to avoid paying tax, to the 20% who have taken items from work. They found that the middle classes are Britain's biggest lawbreakers with 64 per cent of middle-class admitting to criminal actions. Curiously, these people view themselves as 'upstanding citizens'. The figure compares with 55 per cent of the general population and 43 per cent of those on lower incomes. A sample of 2,000 adults admitted morally dubious activities such as parking in disabled bays and pocketing too much change. It was often high earners who were guilty of such behaviour, and they justified it by suggesting temporary financial setbacks even though sometimes they had very high pay. In 2008, research for the G4S Security Services discovered that those admitting dodging fares on public transport were most likely to be high earning men who considered their behaviour to be morally acceptable.

Probably one of the first people to consider middle class crime was the American criminologist, Edwin Sutherland. Sutherland is associated with differential association theory which suggests that criminal behaviour is learned. Explaining crime by saying that a thief needs the money ignores the fact that most people get jobs to earn money. People behave in a criminal manner because they have social contacts with people who are criminal, or do not have contact with honest people. He studied people who stole for living, professional thieves. His best known work was *White Collar Crime* (1949) where he analysed the crimes of the American middle class or white collar workers. His main point was that the crime of the middle classes was under-reported and understudied. He claimed that the working class committed crimes such as murder and burglary which can

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be blamed on poverty or psychology. Middle class criminals are educated, intelligent and well-off. They commit crime because they have access to large sums of money and can trick people. Many of these people do not even see their behaviour as criminal.

Since this original work, it has been clear that there are many dubious and criminal practices among the middle classes. For many years tobacco companies hid their knowledge of the cancer causing properties of cigarettes and other companies did not disclose that products were damaging or unsafe. Many wealthy people evade tax. Drug crime is often conducted as a business at multi-millionaire levels of investment. In Britain the trade is estimated to be worth between £4bn and £6.6bn a year. The Home Office estimates there are 300 large-scale drug importers, 3,000 wholesalers and 70,000 street dealers. There is organised crime, such as money laundering or computer identity fraud. Generally, the term occupational crime is used to describe crime where people cheat their employers or customers for personal gain. Corporate crime is used to describe when companies themselves act in an illegal fashion. Many people die or are injured in work each year by employers who fail to implement health and safety legislation. It is safe to assume that middle class crime is seriously under-reported and that we have very little knowledge of the true extent of crime committed by the rich.

The state itself can act in illegally, so recently, many have argued that the war in Iraq was illegal and the reasons that were used to justify it were false. Others believe that nuclear arms and weapons of mass destruction are illegal. The charity, Amnesty International fights for the victims of governments who have imprisoned protesters illegally.

Research conducted into 'private' crime such as domestic violence (Dobash and Dobash), child sex abuse (Baker and Duncan) and more public crimes such as football hooliganism (Murphy et al) and drugs offences are committed by people from all social classes. There are, however, dramatic differences between the way that the criminal justice system treats middle class and white collar crime. One of the best known examples is the way in which benefit fraud is pursued by the government and the media but tax evasion which arguably costs the country ten times as much is largely ignored. The evidence from interactional research suggests that the crimes of the different social classes are treated differently by the criminal justice system. Middle class people tend to have lighter sentences in more pleasant circumstances. Category D prisons are generally known as 'White Collar prisons' and these have very low levels of security so that prisoners may even work in the daytime and return to prison at night.

Questions

- 1. Suggest reasons why we have little knowledge of the true amount of racially motivated crime that occurs.
- 2. Suggest reasons why people who have been the victims of racist crime are unwilling to come forward.

Keywords

1. Differential association theory - People behave in a criminal manner because they have social contacts with people who are criminal, or do not have contact with honest people.
2. Professional thief - makes a living by stealing
3. Corporate crime - crime committed by companies
4. Organisational crime - crime committed by individuals
5. State crime - crime committed by countries
6. White collar crime - middle class crime

Understanding culture (Education)

What do Functionalists say about crime?

What is the contribution of Durkheim?

Bullets

- Durkheim was interested in the philosophical debate about how order was possible
- Durkheim saw crime and deviance as normal, universal and even functional in small amounts
- He used the term anomie to explain crime and deviance stemming from an individual insufficiently integrated into society's norms and values
- Anomie was most common in individualistic societies and periods of social change.

Text

Durkheim regarded deviant behaviour as a normal and universal part of society. He regarded it as normal because inevitably some people will always break the rules. He regarded it as universal because, he argued, even in a community of saints some saints' behaviour would be seen as deviant (such as hogging the salt at meal times). Somewhat more controversially, Durkheim argued that small amounts of crime and deviance could even be functional. His argument was that deviance can promote positive social change (for example, the Suffragette movement or the Black American Rosa Parkes refusing to give up her seat to a White man on a bus in 1955); deviant behaviour can unite people through their moral outrage and condemnation (consider how New York came together after 9/11) strengthening bonds and unity; finally deviance is functional because it serves to define acceptable boundaries of behaviour.

Durkheim used the word 'anomie' to explain crime when someone was insufficiently integrated into society's norms and values. He associated a growth in anomie with a shift to a more individualistic society and especially periods of social change when individuals may become unsure of norms and rules and consequently at a greater risk of breaking them. Durkheim saw the period of industrialisation as particularly fertile for the growth of anomie when the agricultural communities were breaking down as people shifted to a more individualistic urban and industrial society.

Durkheim's work has made a very important contribution to the functionalist perspective on crime with his concept of anomie. His work is quite radical through comments like 'a certain rate of criminality is indispensable to collective health' since it led to great individuals who are 'before their time' and whose great deeds can move society forward. However, he also recognised that too much crime led to anomie which at high levels was a symptom of a sick society. In making the comment 'we do not condemn it because it is a crime, but it is a crime because we condemn it' Durkheim was not only recognising how crime is culturally specific, but adopting a way of thinking very similar to labelling theory that would later develop in the 1960s.

Questions

1. What promoted social order according to Durkheim?
2. Why did Durkheim see punishment as an important tool in dealing with crime?

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- 3. Why did levels of anomie increase during the period of industrialisation according to Durkheim?

Keywords

1. Collective conscience - the shared moral values of society.
2. Sanction - punishment that encourages socially expected behaviour.
3. Anomie - when someone is insufficiently integrated into society's norms and values.

How did Merton develop Durkheim's concept of anomie?

Bullets

- Merton developed Durkheim's idea of anomie, giving it more focus to society's goals and means
- He developed his five category 'anomic paradigm'
- His work is also known as 'strain theory' reflecting the strain between goals and means
- Whereas Durkheim believed anomie stemmed from insufficient integration, Merton explains material crime as stemming from over-socialisation into society's goals (the American Dream).
- Merton's work deserves credit but critics argue he ignores where goals come from or who sets the rules.

Text

The functionalist Robert Merton (1910-2003) regarded Durkheim's use of anomie as rather vague and in response to this developed his 'strain theory' since he examines the strain between the goals people aspire to but not necessarily having the means to achieve them. Merton altered the meaning of anomie to refer to a society where there is a 'disjunction between goals and means'. Specifically he wanted to identify the social structures which exerted pressure upon people into non-conforming behaviour.

Merton shared the view of Durkheim that society is based on shared values and goals. However, whilst there may be pressure on the goal of being successful (simply put the American Dream) Merton appreciated that for many Americans, particularly the urban poor, the means of achieving this goal was not available to them due to poor education, low-paid jobs, etc. Anomie develops, according to Merton, when access to the means to achieve the goals is blocked. He identified 'five types of adaptation':

Responses

1. Conformity
2. Innovation
3. Ritualism
4. Retreatism
5. Rebellion

Merton's approach is structural since he locates the cause of crime in the very nature of American society itself. However, he does recognise through his model some individualistic responses to being blocked from success: for example, one person may steal (innovator) while another may take drugs (retreatist). The model is a more sophisticated analysis of why people deviate but his interpretation of anomie is very different to Durkheim's. Whereas Durkheim defined anomie as stemming from insufficient

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integration into society's norms and values, Merton's innovators are in some ways too integrated. Such is their desire for the goal of the American Dream; they are prepared to steal to get it. However, Merton's retreatists could be viewed as insufficiently integrated.

Merton has made an important contribution to our understanding of crime here as stemming from blocked opportunities. He shows how both goals and means become structures that can shape criminal behaviour, especially material crime. Stephen Box (1983) has even used Merton's work to explain corporate crime. He argues that if businesses cannot achieve their goals through legitimate means they may turn to illegal activities to pursue their goal of profit maximisation. However, Merton is less successful in explaining non-material crime, especially that of juveniles which is often described as 'mindless' such as vandalism, graffiti, etc. Others, of a more Marxist background criticise him for failing to appreciate where society's obsession with the American Dream comes from or who sets the rules in the first place.

Questions

- 1. How is Merton's use of anomie different to Durkheim's?
- 2. Why is his work also known as strain theory?
- 3. How does Merton link crime to blocked opportunities?
- 4. What criticisms can be directed at Merton's ideas?

Keywords

1. Strain theory - theory of crime based on how the strain between sharing the goals of society but not having the means of achieving them.

What are Travis Hirschi's Bonds of Attachment ?

Bullets

- Hirschi was interested in why don't more people commit crime?
- He explains the conformity of most people as stemming from people's attachment to the social bonds that hold society together.
- Hirschi's work being centred on the concept of anomie has a lot in common with that of Durkheim and Merton.

Text

Another key sociologist to be influenced by Emile Durkheim and the concept of anomie is Travis Hirschi (1969). The question that really interested Hirschi was why don't more people commit crime than they do? His response to this question was similar to Durkheim's view that people are controlled by shared social values. The stronger the bonds that attach people to these values the less likely they are to commit crimes. Hirschi's analysis is thus centred on the forces that maintain conformity for most people in society, rather than the factors that drive a minority into deviant behaviour. Crime and deviance, he explains, occurs when the social bonds that hold society together break down and people's attachment to society is weakened.

Hirschi identified four bonds that help bind society together. The first bond he called 'attachment' and refers to the extent to which we care about other people's opinions and desires. This acts as a strong controlling element with the fear of being gossiped about, shunned in public or written about in the local newspaper acting as a major deterrent to

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respectable people. The second bond he called 'commitment' referring to the personal investment we put into our lives and risk losing if we turn to crime and get caught. Thus long-term partners, families, good jobs, freedom all act as controlling elements as we cannot run the risk of losing them. The third bond is 'involvement' which refers to the extent to which a person is integrated in the fabric of society so that they neither have the time nor inclination to behave in a deviant/criminal way. Finally, the fourth bond is 'belief' referring to how committed an individual is to upholding society's rules and laws. This will be influenced by factors such as the strength of socialisation into norms and values.

The work of Hirschi is clearly centred on the concept of anomie and has parallels with the ideas of both Durkheim and Merton. Echoing the ideas of Durkheim he argues that the more closely integrated a person is to society's norms and values, the lower their likelihood of turning to crime. He also shares Merton's interest in the structures that maintain conformity for most people in society. Hirschi's work is therefore an important development of the ideas of Durkheim and Merton with his four 'bonds of attachment' offer an accessible explanation as to why most people appear to conform whilst explaining why others may break the rules. His down-to-earth approach can make the theoretical ideas of Durkheim and Merton easier to understand.

Questions

- 1. What were Hirschi's four bonds of attachment?
- 2. How would Durkheim's stress on the importance of punishment fit in with Hirschi's ideas?
- 3. What similarities are there between the ideas of Merton and Hirschi?

Keywords

1. Bonds of attachment - four social bonds that bind us to society's values.

American sub culturalists: Albert Cohen, Cloward and Ohlin, Walter Miller

Bullets

- Albert Cohen uses Merton's idea of strain to link juvenile delinquency to a reaction to status frustration.
- Cloward and Ohlin share Merton's view that crime is linked to blocked opportunities but disagree that criminals share the same goals as the rest of society.
- Miller adopts a very different approach seeing delinquency linked to sub cultural values lower working class males are socialised into.
- All three of these functionalist sub cultural studies have been criticised for focusing solely on males.

Text

Albert Cohen (1955) was influenced by Merton's idea of strain in his study of subcultures and juvenile crime. If unable to achieve consensus goals of success (e.g. achievement in education) then 'reaction formation' can lead to 'status frustration' with feelings of failure and inadequacy. Cohen describes how delinquent youths rebound from conventional failure (e.g. in schooling) by creating their own status centred on delinquent and deviant activities. They can choose a delinquent subculture reflecting the values they have been

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socialised into with an emphasis upon rebellion. The subculture is a collective response to lack of status and encourages a rejection of accepted forms of behaviour, so that the values condemned in the wider society now become the values of the subculture.

Cohen's work is both accessible and although over 50 years old is still relevant; most people can identify with the concept of 'status frustration'. However, he has been criticised for playing up the role of organised gangs whilst ignoring the non-gang delinquency. Others have cast doubt on whether delinquents generally hold openly oppositional views as Cohen implies. Finally, Cohen has been criticised by theorising solely on males. In the light of growing female delinquency and laddette behaviour in contemporary society, we need to ask if the concepts of 'reaction formation' and 'status frustration' are applicable and relevant to deviant girls too.

The functionalists Cloward and Ohlin (1960) were also influenced by Merton, explaining working class crime in terms of achievement values (goals) and the blocked opportunities (means) to achieve them. However, whereas Merton assumes a shared consensus of social values and goals by everyone (including criminals) Cloward and Ohlin see lower working class delinquents as sharing their own deviant subcultural values. They agree with Merton that a common factor behind crime is blocked opportunities and argue this often results in lower working-class delinquents driven to seek status within their own community through an 'illegitimate career structure'.

Cloward and Ohlin identify three types of delinquent subculture found in the 'disorganized areas' of lower working class communities. The first is the 'criminal subculture' typically found in cohesive working class communities where blocked opportunities (access to a good education, employment prospects and social mobility are not readily available) encourages a sub cultural response centred around an 'illegitimate career structure' enabling them to progress into a career of crime. The second subculture is described as a 'conflict violent subculture' which exists where both legitimate and illegitimate career structures are not readily available resulting in violence (gang warfare). The third 'retreatist (drug) subculture' involves those who could not make it in crime or violence who consequently retreat into drugs and alcoholism, paid by petty theft, shoplifting and prostitution.

Walter Miller (1962) developed a rather different sub cultural explanation to juvenile delinquency seeing it linked to a macho lower class culture of 'focal concerns', into which males are socialised. He identified six 'focal concerns': 'trouble' (acceptance that violence and fighting are commonplace activities in young working class males); 'toughness' (demonstrated in the qualities of 'manliness' - being able to drink, womanise, play sport, etc.); 'excitement' (everyday hedonism involving the search for fun); 'smartness' (being sharp, streetwise, etc.); 'fate' (accepting a fatalistic outlook, taking each day and life as it comes and making the most of what you've got); 'autonomy' (resentment of anyone in authority or being pushed around by teachers, employers, bouncers, police officers, etc.).

Although Miller's work pre-dates the New Right's current 'moral panic' about one-parent families by almost 40 years, he too makes a connection between delinquent youths and female-headed lone families. He claims the delinquent males in his study were seeking masculine status through peer group activities such as fighting. A criticism of Miller is that behaviours he classes as focal concerns are prevalent across the class structure. Many females today could also be seen as sharing such deviant values.

Questions

- 1. How does Albert Cohen develop Merton's idea of strain?
- 2. How do Cloward and Ohlin's views on goals and values differ to Merton's?

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- 3. How is Miller's explanation to juvenile delinquency different to Albert Cohen's?
- 4. These sub cultural theorists were writing over 40 years ago. Are they still relevant today?

Keywords

1. Macho - extreme masculine
2. Reaction formation - when delinquent gang members rebound from conventional failure seeking to create their own alternative status.
3. Status frustration - when status is denied through legitimate means, it is often sought through deviant behaviour.
4. Illegitimate career structure - the existence of an alternative deviant opportunity structure that exists in areas where legitimate means (good education, employment prospects and social mobility) are not readily available.
5. Focal concerns - a distinctive set of deviant subcultural values which Walter Miller believes the lower working class are socialised into.
6. Moral panic - a term associated with particularly Stan Cohen to generally mean an exaggerated public concern over a group ('folk devils') or behaviour that is viewed as threatening to social order.

What Interactionist criticisms are there of sub cultural theory

Bullets

- Downes found little evidence to support subcultural theory, but his leisure values have much in common with Miller's focal concerns
- Matza equally challenges subcultural theory but then makes himself a connection between lower class youth and crime.
- Matza uses the term 'drift' and 'subterranean values' to explain why crime is higher amongst younger people than adults.
- These interactionist ideas have been criticised for not putting crime within a structural framework.

Text

David Downes (1966) from his study of adolescent working-class youth in East London, found young working-class males were 'dissociated' from mainstream values, being more concerned about 'leisure values' or petty crime. However, some might argue there is an overlap between David Downes' 'leisure values' and Walter Miller's 'focal concerns', and in rejecting mainstream values in favour of these Downes' work can be interpreted as actually supporting working-class male subcultural theory.

The work of Sykes and Matza (1962), perhaps more than anybody, challenges the idea that there is a distinct set of sub cultural working-class anti-social values. Adopting an interactionist approach, he de-glamorises delinquents, viewing them as ordinary young people who 'drift' into deviance as a normal part of growing up. Adolescents, he argues, particularly from the lower-class, 'drift' into crime and deviance out of a sense of fatalism and lacking something else to do as they pass through the period of 'no mans' land' between childhood and adulthood. However, note how he is making a connection between lower-class youth and crime, the very basis of American functionalist sub cultural theory.

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One key difference between Matza and the sub culturalist theorists discussed above is that he argues delinquents largely share the same values to the rest of society and will voice similar feelings of outrage about crime. He thus rejects the notion that there are distinctive groups with their own values since the 'drift' into deviance is part of growing up experience we all go through (although it obviously follows that some are more deviant than others which Matza agrees by linking crime to particularly to lower classes).

Rather than sub cultural values Matza claims we hold two levels of values including 'subterranean values' which adults generally learn to control (only occasionally surfacing perhaps at the Christmas office party, lad's nights, holidays in Ibiza, etc.). When they occur Matza argues we use 'techniques of neutralisation' to counteract feelings of guilt and to offer justification for our actions. Matza argues young people have less control over their subterranean values since in adolescence they are less constrained by the bonds of society making them more susceptible to suggestions of deviant acts by peer group. Again this is like sub cultural theory. His work has been criticised for making no attempt to place delinquency within a wider structural framework of economic and social circumstances.

Questions

- 1. In what ways could Downes' study be seen as supporting sub cultural theory?
- 2. What did Matza mean by the terms 'drift', subterranean values' and 'techniques of neutralization'?
- 3. Can you suggest any overlaps between Matza's work and that of Travis Hirschi?

Keywords

1. Dissociation - describes the limited aspirations of Downes' working class adolescents who were more engaged in 'leisure values'.
2. Leisure values - describes the search for a 'good time' by the adolescents in his study.
3. Drift - refers to the common experience of most youth whereby they experience a period of deviance which then passes as they gain adult responsibilities.
4. Subterranean values - deviant values which everyone holds but adults generally learn to suppress.
5. Techniques of neutralization - process whereby deviants justify their behaviour to themselves and others.

Can recent research support functionalist ideas?

Bullets

- Studies of ethnic groups can reinforce Merton's basic point that crime may be linked to blocked opportunities.
- There is contemporary evidence to support the view that blocked opportunities can still drive people into an alternative economy or illegitimate opportunity/career structure.
- Left Realism is still rooted in ideas of anomie and blocked opportunities.
- Contemporary research, such as Winlow, explains crime in terms familiar to classic functionalist analysis.

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Text

Carl Nightingale (1993) in his study of young black youth in Philadelphia found evidence that reflected both Merton's ideas of shared goals and crime linked to 'blocked opportunities'. He found that instead of adopting a counter-culture they embraced mainstream US culture adopting extremely strong consumerist and materialist values with a desire for high status consumables such as designer clothes, flash cars, gold jewellery, etc. Echoing the work of Merton, Nightingale notes how in response to 'blocked opportunities' they adopted the role of innovators and engaged in crime in order to obtain them.

Philippe Bourgois (1995) in his study of drug dealers and criminals in 'El Barrio' (a district of East Harlem, New York) drew conclusions similar to both Merton and Cloward and Ohlin. He too found within this 'inner-city street culture' an aspiration to the same goals and values of mainstream culture in the form of the American Dream of financial success. However, faced with blocked opportunities this inner-city culture, lacking the means to achieve them, engaged in an 'alternative economy' centred around drug-dealing in order to obtain the materialist trappings of US culture. This 'alternative economy' is very similar to the 'illegitimate career structure' of Cloward and Ohlin.

The development of Left Realism in the 1970s by Lea and Young saw the development of a sophisticated new theory of criminology. However, their focus upon the factors that drove young working class black males to crime returned to some traditional themes especially Merton's idea of blocked opportunities. Using concepts like subculture, marginalisation and relative deprivation Left Realism sought to explain crime amongst second and third generation blacks as stemming from high aspirations to materialism and financial success but not necessarily having legitimate means to achieve them. Poor education, higher levels of unemployment than whites and resulted in many turning to crime. Again we see parallels to Cloward and Ohlin's 'illegitimate career structure'.

Simon Winlow's (2005) recent work on masculinity within working class communities is a study of young males in Sunderland and an attempt to explain why males from such communities seem more violent today than in the past. He found that being denied access to criminal careers drove working class males into status competition amongst their peers centred on defending their 'manor' or personal space. He describes a masculine hierarchy based on toughness and increasingly valued as a release from boredom and access to status. Violence develops as a status pursuit in a climate of declining male working class manual work. Therefore, there are parallels in Winlow's work to Cohen (status frustration), Cloward and Ohlin's (violent conflict subculture), Miller (toughness) and even Durkheim's idea that crime and anomie are high during periods of social change (shift to post-industrial society).

Finally two recent studies provide contemporary support for the ideas of Merton. Robert Reiner (2007) argues the culture of consumerism that has developed since the 1950s and the affluence since then has led to a society centred on money, resulting in an 'anomic reaction' from those unable to achieve these things legitimately. Their response has been to turn to crime to achieve them. Jock Young (2007) argues the media spread images of the good life, material comfort and abundance but for those who experience poverty amongst great wealth this is humiliating. Crime, he argues, is a way of hitting back at society in a way that hurts through property crimes such as mugging and the occasional riot.

Questions

- 1. How does the theme of blocked opportunities link the work of Merton, Cloward and Ohlin, Nightingale, Bourgois and Left Realism?

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- 2. How does the work of Winlow support the Cloward and Ohlin's idea of the violent conflict subculture and masculinity as key factors behind male working class crime?

Keywords

1. Alternative economy - illegal activities centred on drug dealing, prostitution and stolen goods.

What do Marxists say about crime?

What is the Traditional Marxist Approach to Crime?

Bullets

- The seriousness of corporate crime is often 'softened' through the use of words like 'fiddles', 'cons' and 'rip-offs' (Hazel Croall).
- The financial value of working-class crime is insignificant compared to that of corporate crime.
- Marxists argue the identification of crime as a working class phenomenon obscures the 'dark side' of white collar and corporate crime.
- The Marxist view on law enforcement has been described as one dimensional through its over focus upon white-collar and corporate crime.

Text

The Marxist perspective on crime, like the functionalist perspective, adopts a top-down macro-sociological approach. Traditionally the Marxist perspective on crime and deviance has sought to see crime in the context of the capitalist system. The early Dutch Marxist Willem Bonger (1916) argued that since the capitalist system is based on greed, selfishness and exploitation it was hardly surprising that crime was an endemic characteristic of such a society. In a system that is driven by profit over human needs and results in a polarised society, he saw deprivation as a key motivating factor behind crime. Contemporary Marxists would support these ideas but go further and question the assumption shared by most criminologists that crime is predominantly committed by the working class (proletariat). Marxists argue this obscures the 'dark-side' of the huge amount of white collar and corporate crime that exists.

The American Marxist William Chambliss (1976) undertook a study of the social elites in the city of Seattle and discovered a web of connections between organized crime and politicians, senior police officers and businessmen. He found evidence of widespread corruption whereby the illegal activities of these rich people were frequently ignored. Chambliss discovered that the policing policy was to focus instead upon working class crime and working class areas. In a similar study Frank Pearce (1976) found that the behaviour of members of the American social élite would 'not creditably survive close legal scrutiny of their business or professional lives'. He argues an ideology of crime as a working class problem subtly obscures the extent of white-collar crime, whilst generating a moral concern about the extent of working class crime.

The traditional Marxist perspective on crime places a great emphasis upon the 'dark-side' of unrecorded white-collar and corporate crime. Whilst they recognise that many poor people are driven to crime out of desperation the focus upon white collar and corporate crime challenges everyday perceptions of crime. However, their view that laws reflect the

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interests of the rich and powerful has been criticised as obscuring the complexities of law-making and how laws often reflect the will of the people and consensus values. Marxist focus upon white-collar crime has also been criticised for playing down the harm done to victims of crime, who are typically members of the proletariat. This is especially true of victims of burglary and robbery.

Questions

- 1. How does Bonger see crime as an inevitable feature of the capitalist system?
- 2. What evidence is provided by traditional Marxists that there is one rule for the rich and another for the poor?
- 3. What criticisms can be addressed at the traditional Marxist approach to crime?

Keywords

1. Proletariat - the word Marx used for the working class.
2. White-collar - referring to middle class and above.
3. Corporate crime - illegal activities committed by firms and big businesses.

How significant is corporate crime?

Bullets

- The value of corporate crime significantly exceeds the value of conventional crime.
- When firms do break the law they seem to generally be treated leniently.
- The costs of corporate crime are not measured solely in economic terms but in lives lost too.
- The impact of globalisation is leading transnational corporations to evade laws by placing their factories in underdeveloped countries where corporate laws are less stringent or less policed.
- Marxist theory has been criticised for over linking corporate crime to the capitalist system.

Text

Corporate crime is criminal activity committed by businesses upon employees, consumers, the general public or the environment. Marxists argue the key motivating factor behind corporate crime is the profit motive that lies at the heart of the capitalist system. Although not a Marxist, Edwin H. Sutherland coined the phrase 'white-collar crime' when studying 70 large corporations in the USA. He found laws were frequently violated, but firms rarely prosecuted because crimes were either hard to detect, or more often were simply 'invisible' as people were unaware they were victims. It was not unusual when firms did break the law for this to be viewed as 'normal business practice'. For example, Jock Young once argued that the worst drug dealers in society are the pharmaceutical companies.

The traditional Marxist perspective sees laws made by the State as reflecting the interests of the rich and powerful. For example, Lauren Snider (1993) notes how governments are often reluctant to pass laws that threaten the profitability of large companies. It is ironic, she notes, that many of the most serious acts of deviance are committed by large corporations. Marxists are quick to point out that the value of corporate crime grossly

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exceeds that of conventional crime. There are no accurate figures for the value of both these areas of crime but in 1977 Conklin estimated the cost of conventional crime was \$3-4 billion compared to \$40 billion for white-collar crimes. The 'credit crunch' of 2008 has exposed a succession of examples of financial mismanagement, fraud, concealing of debt, insider dealing, with the consequences costing trillions of dollars. The reaction has been one of government loans rather than arrests.

Marxists highlight how the costs of corporate crime are not just financial but can be measured in lives. Firms, in an effort to maximise profits, can bend or ignore health and safety rules. Examples include the car ferry Herald of Free Enterprise which sank outside Zeebrugge drowning 193 people because the bow door was not closed. Crew members claimed they were so over-stretched by their employers P and O in order to achieve fast turn arounds that crucial mistakes like this were made with fatal consequences. At the inquest into the Hatfield rail crash which killed four people it was discovered that Balfour Beattie who maintained the track had known about the broken rail that derailed the train for 21 months. Although five directors were tried for corporate manslaughter, six months into the trial the judge ordered the jury to acquit them. The world's worst offshore disaster occurred when North Sea oil rig Piper Alpha exploded in 1988 killing 168 workers. Its operator, Occidental Petroleum, was found guilty of having inadequate maintenance and safety procedures, but no criminal charges were ever brought against it. Despite regular breaches of health and safety by businesses, to date only two companies have ever been found guilty of corporate manslaughter.

With the development of a globalised economy firms are increasingly transnational corporations. It is claimed by Michalowski and Kramer (1987) that such firms are attracted to countries that have a weak enforcement of health and safety and pollution controls for production. This policy is known as law evasion and reflects how companies are attracted to countries that are soft on law enforcement of such laws. Typically transnational corporations exploit underdeveloped countries that either lack the resources to enforce these laws, have corrupt politicians or will turn a blind eye in order to stop companies moving somewhere else. The reality of this is according to the Marxist Stephen Box (1983) that firms bypass laws that would apply to them in the developed world.

Phil Hadfield (2006) uses the nocturnal economy centred around alcoholic drink to apply Marxist theory of crime to contemporary society. He identifies the profit-making motivation of big brewery companies, who encourage drinking circuits in big cities and strategies such as 24 hours drinking, happy hours, discounts for buying jugs of beer, as a factor in the increase in violent crime. Young people with disposable income are deliberately targeted without any regard to the impact of their binge-drinking on urban communities or problems such as alcoholism. Hadfield notes how there is little sense of corporate responsibility from the brewers who use bouncers to protect their premises, but contribute nothing to policing costs. Breweries have political clout since the government benefits financially from the tax on alcohol. They can also lobby against any legislation that curbs their activities. Hadfield's conclusions are that profit is a key factor in the growth of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Some have criticised Marxists for linking corporate crime to the profit motive of capitalist economy, pointing out that in non-capitalist countries poor health and safety standards may exist as well as widespread pollution of the environment. For example, the old Soviet Union and its neighbouring Eastern European countries often had very poor track records in both these areas. The Chernobyl nuclear power disaster in the Ukraine is a good example. Others point to the extensive laws that exist to curb and control businesses in capitalist society. However, Marxists would respond that such laws are a token gesture or their absence would be difficult to justify, but that either way when they are broken firms are dealt with very leniently; so they do not act as a deterrent.

Questions

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- 1. In what ways can businesses be seen to be treated leniently when they break the law?
- 2. Is there evidence that businesses put profit before workers and the public's safety?
- 3. How is globalisation shifting corporate crime away from the developed world?
- 4. What criticisms can be directed at Marxist ideas about corporate crime?

Keywords

1. Corporate crime - crimes committed by businesses against their employees, the public or the environment.
2. White-collar crime - term coined by Edwin H. Sutherland to refer to occupational and corporate crime.
3. Law evasion - firms like to appear law abiding but will locate in countries with soft enforcement of health and safety and pollution laws.

What is the New Criminology ?

Bullets

- New criminology (Taylor, Walton and Young) see inequalities of capitalism as the root cause of crime.
- Their view of working class criminals is one of 'people-fighting-back'.
- Crime is seen as a meaningful act of an oppressed proletariat that redistributes from rich to the poor.
- Subsequently Jock Young distanced himself from this political Marxist analysis, calling it 'left idealism'.
- However, the contribution of their 'fully social theory of deviance' is significant.

Text

Neo-Marxists Taylor, Walton and Young (1973) wrote a highly influential book *The New Criminology* which was a successful attempt to integrate Marxism with interactionism/labelling theory. Their radical approach was to criticise all previous criminology for concentration upon causes to the neglect of context. As neo-Marxists they accepted the traditional Marxist view that the cause of crime lay in the 'material basis of society' (the class system) and the inequalities of capitalist system. However, they wanted to take traditional Marxism further by recognizing how acts of 'deviance' came to be labelled as 'criminal' in the first place. Thus besides individual motivation and the wider context of the problems caused by capitalism, interactionist ideas are also necessary to understand how the police, media and wider criminal justice system interact together in the social construction of crime and criminals.

Taylor, Walton and Young's work quickly became known as critical or radical criminology since they adopted a very subjective and critical Marxist approach to the criminal justice system and the media. The crimes of the rich had to be exposed along with the criminal justice system that protected them. In addition, they saw criminal activity by the working class along the lines of a political act of class consciousness. Crime was viewed as 'people-fighting-back' against the injustices of capitalism. They interpreted working class crime as a meaningful and deliberate act with criminals seen as redistributing wealth from the rich

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to the poor. However, this extreme approach led to criticisms of naivety and romanticising crime.

One aspect of New Criminology that won widespread acclaim was their 'fully social theory of deviance' which was an important attempt to explain crime through a mixture of structure and process. They identified seven important aspects of crime:

1. 'The wider origins of the deviant act': the class society of capitalism.
2. 'Immediate origins of the deviant act': the social context in which a crime is committed.
3. 'The actual act': what are the actual subjective meanings of the act to the individual.
4. 'The immediate origins of social reaction': how do others (family, peers, police, etc.) respond?.
5. 'Wider origins of deviant reaction': the reaction in terms of who holds power and sets the rules.
6. 'The outcomes of societal reaction on the deviant's further action': the labelling process.
7. 'The nature of the deviant process as a whole': the relationship of the above six aspects need to be considered as a 'fully social theory of deviance'.

The research study of Hall et al (1978) into the crime and reaction to mugging in the 1970s (Policing the Crisis) has been used to illustrate New Criminology's 'fully social theory of deviance'. Hall et al look at the way in which the crime of mugging was developed within the wider context of the capitalism. It was felt that society was in crisis and a possible proletariat revolt may arise. Therefore, in order to justify giving the police more powers to nip any uprising in the bud, people's fear of mugging was used to win over public consent. Therefore a moral panic about mugging was manipulated according to Hall et al to justify greater police power, most notably the right to stop and search individuals.

Paul Gilroy (1983) adopted the ideas of New Criminology to his analysis of black crime. Crimes committed by ethnic minorities, he argues, are frequently conscious and political acts against the racist (capitalist) system. He argues it is capitalist society that created the political revolts of blacks and Asians, and the racist policies of the state and police towards these groups. Thus radical criminology would explain juvenile delinquency (whether committed by the working class generally or ethnic minorities specifically) as a response to poor social conditions and to political marginality. Juvenile delinquency is thus both a product of capitalist inequality and at the same time, it is viewed by New Criminology as an action striking out against capitalist injustice.

Taylor, Walton and Young attracted strong criticism, including Jock Young himself who subsequently referred to New Criminology as 'Left Idealism'. He was especially critical of the view of muggers as modern day Robin Hoods redistributing income from the rich to the poor. Although he supported the principle of developing a 'fully social theory of deviance' he felt it did not examine the way society as a whole is organized, and the way in which individuals decide to carry out criminal acts. In response to this criticism he developed with John Lea 'Left Realism'. Feminists, such as Pat Carlen, have criticised the lack of any discussion of patriarchy and power by New Criminology writers.

Questions

- 1. Why do the New Criminologists see crime as political?
- 2. What criticisms can be levelled against the ideas of New Criminology?

Keywords

1. Neo-Marxists - literally means new Marxists or people who adopt a Marxist interpretation of contemporary society.
2. Strain theory - theory of crime based on how the strain between sharing the goals of society but not having the means of achieving them.

Understanding culture (Education)

Is there a Marxist subcultural theory?

Bullets

- Marxist sub cultural theory was developed within the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in the 1970s.
- They explained juvenile delinquency as a resistance through rituals and symbols to the oppression of capitalism they failed to control them yet either ideologically or economically.
- Specifically they linked delinquency to the dislocation and decline of working class community (Phil Cohen), boredom and meaningless compulsory schooling (Paul Corrigan), a 'magical' response (Mike Brake) and resistance to schooling (Paul Willis).
- Marxist sub cultural theory has been criticised for being methodologically biased using evidence selectively and for placing too much emphasis upon social class.

Text

Another development to come out of the traditional Marxist approach was a group of sociologists at Birmingham University who sought to explain the existence of subcultures in Marxist terms. Working in the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) they explained juvenile delinquency essentially as 'resistance through rituals' and symbols. As Marxists they argued that the adult population was controlled by both ideology and economic pressures (getting and keeping a job in order to pay rent, bills, debts). Working class youth, because they were furthest removed from such ideological messages and financial pressures, were in a strong position to resist these controlling mechanisms of capitalism and developed deviant youth styles (teddy boys, mods, rockers, skinheads, punks).

Several Marxist-based ethnographic studies of working class subcultures were published in Britain in the 1970s. Phil Cohen (1972) studied the emergence of 'mods' and 'skinheads' in the East End of London and concluded that youth subcultures were a symbolic solution to wider conflicts stemming from diminished employment prospects, housing policies and the dislocation and decline of the traditional working class community. Mike Brake (1985) argues that the resistance of working class youth is best understood as a 'magical' response; lightening up a dull and dreary world of adult and conformist values. Brake notes how every generation of working class youth faces the same exploitation of capitalism and similar problems of an education system designed to fail them followed by dead end jobs. However, although each generation may adopt different responses and forms of resistance they all become eventually trapped by capitalism's ideological messages or the economic constraints of rent, mortgages, credit and debts.

Paul Corrigan (1979) studied a group of working class males in Sunderland. Their preoccupation with violence, football hooliganism or just smashing milk bottles was designed to manufacture excitement in a world of boredom and meaningless compulsory schooling. This aggressive and violent youth style was seen as a way of both expressing and transforming frustrations of working class youth. Paul Willis (1977), in his study of counter school culture, examined class and school resistance in his class study of subcultural experience within an overall Marxist analysis of deviance. The irony of this group of lads is how their very resistance to school based around 'having a laff' ensured that they were instrumental in their own failure ending up in dead end jobs.

These Marxist studies have been criticised for being biased, selectively using only the

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evidence that fitted their assumptions of class-based resistance. For example, Willis focused his attention on just eight 'lads', ignoring the responses of the majority of pupils in the classroom. In addition, Marxist explanations for resistance centred on the decline of the working class community and decline of traditional working class jobs is seen as simplistic and over-deterministic. Working class youth's resistance could have been due to many other factors discounted by the researchers. Other critics have questioned the social class basis to youth subcultures which often have more to do with locality, age or sexuality. As Sarah Thornton (1995) notes, most youth subcultures are generated by the media anyway.

Questions

- 1. How did Marxist subcultural theory explain how capitalism exerted social control on the population?
- 2. What are the similarities and differences between Marxist subcultural theory and functionalist subcultural theory (Albert Cohen, Cloward and Ohlin and Miller)?
- 3. What criticisms can be made about Marxist sub cultural theory?

Keywords

1. Left realism - contemporary theory of criminology developed by Lea and Young, partly out of Marxist criminology and partly as a response to New Right (Right Realism) criticisms of the sociology of crime.

What do interactionists say about crime?

Labelling Theory and Howard Becker

Bullets

- Another name for labelling theory is social reaction theory since it is not the act itself that is significant but the way others react to it.
- The only difference between criminals and the rest of society is that criminals are those who have got caught.
- This interactionist approach examines the process of labelling in the construction of criminals rather than looking for structural explanations of crime.
- Once labelled there is a danger that this may become a person's master status and result in a deviant career.

Text

The origins of the interactionist approach go back to the work of Max Weber and Action Theory. Within the interactionist perspective Labelling Theory developed in the 1960s. Writers such as Howard Becker and Edwin Lemert pointed out that most of us commit deviant and criminal acts at one time or another and yet we continue to regard those who are categorised as 'criminal' as somehow different from the rest of us. Yet, for labelling theorists the only difference between the bulk of the population and criminals is that criminals are the ones who got caught! This theory looks at small groups rather than the whole of society.

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Labelling Theory is sometimes referred to as 'social reaction theory' because of its emphasis upon society's reactions to the deviant rather than on the deviant as an individual. Becker (1963) makes the point: 'the central fact about deviance [is that] it is created by society. Social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance and by applying those rules to particular people and labelling them as 'outsiders'. This tells us that the ability to define another person's behaviour as deviant stems from the differences in power certain groups exercise in society.

Becker illustrates this through the example of the work of anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski who describes how a youth in the Trobriand Islands killed himself because he had been publicly accused of incest. Islanders expressed their disgust, yet upon further investigation Malinowski found incest was relatively widespread and not frowned upon providing it was discreet. The rule that was broken was that the youth had been indiscreet about his behaviour. This case study illustrates the basis of labelling theory; it is not the act that is significant but the social reaction.

Becker is thus putting forward an alternative approach to the structural explanations of deviance (such as functionalist, Marxist or subcultural theory) where the focus is upon the deviant or the system as the problem. Instead he focuses upon how those who commit acts of deviance - those who become seen as 'outsiders' are labelled deviant, not because of the act, but because of the reaction that defines them as deviant. Deviance is thus viewed as relative depending upon who commits it, who sees it and what the response is, not some universal category. Even with crime, labelling theorists would argue the law often is seen to apply to some rather than others. It may be seen to be enforced more strongly on those with lowest status in society and applied more liberally to those in higher social positions.

So the central questions for understanding the labelling process are how individuals become labelled as deviant and the consequences for that person of being so labelled. In addition, we need to understand how certain acts come to be defined as deviant in the first place. Although labelling theory (unlike Marxism) does not have a coherent theory of power to explain why some groups are more successful than others in getting laws passed, Becker saw the poor and powerless, whose behaviour is most likely to be labelled as deviant, as 'underdogs'. Becker gives the example of how 'moral entrepreneurs' managed to get cannabis outlawed in the USA in 1937. A campaign by the Federal Bureau supported by Readers Digest magazine adopted a 'moral crusade' that 'plugged in' to values commonly held in society that drug-taking was wrong.

Becker noted that deviance can easily become the 'master status' of an individual. Past and present actions become defined in terms of the deviant label that is a major feature of a person's identity. The significance of master status is that this can be internalised by the individual as their key defining characteristic too. When this happens there is a danger of an individual embarking upon a 'deviant career' whereby deviance is central to their experiences.

Questions

- 1. Explain labelling theory.
- 2. What is a master status?

Keywords

1. Action theory: theoretical approach developed by Max Weber that sees action as something purposively shaped by individuals within a context to which they have given meaning.

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2. Master status: When people are perceived as deviant or criminal this can become the dominant characteristic by which they and others define themselves.
3. Deviant career: term associated with Howard Becker to illustrate how deviant behaviour may result in social reaction/consequences that are self-perpetuating.

Primary and Secondary Deviance

Bullets

- Lemert distinguished between the act (primary deviance) and the social reaction (secondary deviance).
- Ciçourel notes how middle class youth are in a better position than working class youth to negotiate themselves out of the deviant/criminal label.
- The police tend to operate to stereotypical images of criminals, therefore those who fit these characteristics are more likely to be arrested, charged, prosecuted and found guilty.

Text

Edwin Lemert (1967) distinguishes between primary deviance, the act of deviance and secondary deviance the social reaction that results in a deviant label being attached. He noted how agents of control such as the police and court officials do not apply the law uniformly. They use discretion and apply selective decisions based on judgements about whether people are 'typical' deviants or not.

When labelling occurs, Lemert recognised it can lead to difficulties for the individual, perhaps encouraging them into a 'career of secondary deviancy' through a spiralling sequence of interaction between the deviant and those around them. For example, following a criminal conviction an individual may find honest work impossible to secure and therefore driven into crime to live. Both are examples of how 'deviant careers' are constructed from the labelling process. drug abusers will seek out other drug abusers for friendship and company.

Interactionists stress the importance of the meanings that lie behind actions and the notion of power has already been implied above as a key feature in the labelling process: those with power are in a strong position to define the behaviour of less powerful as deviant. Aaron Ciçourel points out there may be a degree of 'negotiation' involved in the process of labelling. For example, middle class youth are in a stronger position (because they do not fit the typical deviant stereotype) of negotiating themselves out of arrest, charge and prosecution. He found that the police shared a stereotypical view of who constituted 'typical' criminal delinquents leading to those seen to 'fit the role' more likely to be arrested since their status undermined their opportunity to negotiate. However, by predominantly arresting people who reflected such deviant stereotypes simply served to reinforce the idea that criminals reflected this background. Thus a self-fulfilling prophecy situation occurs.

Another example of the process of negotiation is reflected in the study of male prostitutes undertaken by Reiss (1961) who found that although many of them had sex with other men, they saw this as 'work' and negotiated an image of themselves as 'straight'.

Steven Box (1981) accounts an example of serving on a jury to reinforce the idea that it is

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the social reaction rather than the act that matters. The trial consisted of a theft charge concerning a very small amount of money which the jury he was serving on found the defendant guilty. However, having finished their duty as citizens the members of the jury discussed amongst each other how they could fiddle their expenses, by claiming inflated amounts. Box points out that most people on the jury actually 'fiddled' more money than the woman they had just convicted of theft had stolen! But the citizens on the jury escaped the label of thief because there was no social reaction to what they had done. Therefore this example shows how the application of a label to someone has significant consequences for how that person is treated by others and perceives him/herself.

Questions

- 1. In what ways could Ciçourel's process of 'negotiation' be applied to ethnic groups or gender?
- 2. What does Box's example of jury service tell us about the process of labelling?

Keywords

1. Negotiation: term used by Ciçourel to show how some people can bargain their way out of becoming labelled as criminal.

Labelling Theory and the Media: Moral Panics

Bullets

- Cohen's classic study of mods and rockers illustrates the process of media generated moral panics and the creation of folk devils.
- Media reporting actually made the problem worse and increased the likelihood of it occurring again.
- The media can demonise groups using them as scapegoats and as a form of ideological social control that justifies the increase of power to the state.
- Through the construction of images of deviants the media can misinform and promote ignorance.

Text

The interactionist Stan Cohen (1970) developed the concept of a moral panic which is a classic example of social reaction and labelling. Cohen developed Leslie Wilkins' ideas of deviancy amplification through his study of 'mods and 'rockers' in the 1960s where he showed how the media developed a typically exaggerated response to these youth gangs in the 1960s. Cohen describes how on a wet bank holiday weekend during Easter 1964 the national media was short of a main story. When reports of disturbances at Clacton were heard this became front page news ('Day of terror by scooter groups': Daily Telegraph; 'Youngsters beat up town - 97 leather jacket arrests': Daily Express; 'Wild ones invade seaside - 97 arrests': Daily Mirror). However, as Cohen points out, seaside disturbances had been taking place since the 1950s and despite the sensational headlines, the actual events in Clacton amounted to only a beach hut being burnt down, some broken windows, and a bit of fighting. Mostly the weekend involved bored and damp teenagers just riding around the town.

Cohen investigated the reporting and found widespread misrepresentation of the facts.

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Through the processes of 'symbolisation', 'exaggeration' and 'prediction', Cohen explains how media reporting actually encouraged a spiralling of subsequent deviant behaviour. Extra policing was drafted into the next bank holiday on the expectation that there would be violence. Effectively by predicting the violence the media helped create it and the following bank holiday was marred by violence at Margate. Cohen believed that moral panics result at times of rapid social change, which are potentially unstable resulting in people looking for scapegoats upon which to blame their insecurity on. He identified how moral entrepreneurs (people who make a stand about the nation's morals, such as church leaders, politicians, etc.) use the media to feed on this insecurity by encouraging moral panics to spiral.

The media, having played a part in constructing a moral panic may then embark upon a 'moral crusade' against the identified 'folk devils'. For example, the tabloid newspapers can negatively target and demonise groups such as gypsies and asylum-seekers by implying they are engaged in illegal behaviour without necessarily producing any evidence. Such groups are generally viewed as 'not one of us' or 'other'-groups. The desired outcome is for the authorities to embark upon a moral clampdown on identified deviants and their behaviour. There may be an ideological dimension to moral panics through the role of interest groups and elites. Miller and Reilly (1994) argue that moral panics can be used to change public opinion and thus act as a form of 'ideological social control'. For example, the media's coverage of Islamic terrorism (which many would describe as 'Islamophobic') has resulted in Government anti-terrorism policies receiving broad public support despite seriously reducing ordinary people's civil liberties.

Finally through the media's coverage of moral panics this can construct images of deviants and criminals that are misleading and false. For example, the media tends to demonise rapists as evil psychopathic strangers who prey on victims, which simply misinforms the public about the reality of the situation which is that around three-quarters of victims are raped by men they know, trusted, and live with.

Questions

- 1. What recent moral panics have there been?
- 2. In what ways has media coverage of recent moral panics been similar to or different from the treatment of mods and rockers?

Keywords

1. Deviancy amplification: the unintended outcome of moral panics or social policies whereby the media, in particular, exaggerate the social problem out of proportion.
2. Moral panic: media generated public concern over a group ('folk devils') or behaviour that is viewed as threatening to social order.
3. Folk devil: A term Stan Cohen used to refer to deviant groups at the centre of moral panics. Often their negativity is exaggerated by the media, and they are viewed generally as a threat to social order.
4. Islamophobia: literally means fear of Islam, but used to describe the negative treatment of anything Muslim following the global terrorism by Islamic fundamentalists.

Deviancy amplification

Bullets

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- Studies of deviancy amplification highlight the classic labelling theorist point that social reaction is a crucial factor in the construction of crime and deviance.
- Young's classic study of drug takers suggests that authority reaction to soft drug use simply made the problem worse and led to a subsequent rise in hard drug use.
- Cicourel's study highlights how police action is often driven by media criticisms and campaigns for action (social reaction).
- Hall et al show how the reaction to mugging was manipulated then used as an excuse to give the police more power.

Text

The amplification of deviance is used to describe how moral panics or social policies are blown out of proportion, usually by the media, but other agencies can play a role too. Jock Young (1970), although not an interactionist, makes a useful contribution to the interactionist perspective with the example from his participant observation study of hippy squatters in Notting Hill, London. He found that drug-taking was initially a peripheral activity, but as a result of police harassment became a central activity of significant symbolic value. Young argues that from reality a fantasy moral panic develops resulting in a social construction whereby deviance becomes a bigger problem. Drug use was not initially an important source of identity but because it was perceived as such, it became constructed into an increasingly important source of identity. Young argues the police acted as amplifiers of this illegal activity. The formation of drug squads, in an attempt to control the problem, led to its amplification and resulted in more soft drug use, and an increase in hard drug use. Young predicted in the 1970s that the reaction to soft drug use in the 1960s would result in an increase in hard drug use - this prediction was confirmed in the 1980s.

We have already noted how Aaron Cicourel (1976) sees the process of negotiation and labelling as key factors in the social construction of official crime statistics. In a comparative study of two cities in the USA with similar size and socio-economic make-up he illustrates how policing practices can amplify crime. Adopting an interpretive approach he sought to understand the meanings that lay behind the policies and practices of the agents of control. The city with the highest delinquency rate employed more juvenile officers and kept more detailed records. The second city had fluctuating delinquency rates. He found that the response of the police to delinquents here varied according to publicity given to delinquency by the local media and pressure generated by the major or chief of police. Societal reaction can be clearly seen to directly affect police activity and thus recorded juvenile delinquency.

William Chambliss (1989), although a Marxist, can also offer support for the interactionist perspective and labelling theory. He found, like Cicourel, explicit police bias against working class youth in his study of two gangs in a US city. The working class 'Roughnecks' were looked upon with suspicion by the police and all of them had been arrested at least once. In contrast the 'Saints' who came from respectable middle class homes had not received as much as a driving ticket', yet Chambliss claims they often behaved in a manner more delinquent than the 'Roughnecks'. If stopped, caught or taken home by the police they or their middle class parents, were able to persuade the authorities that their pranks were harmless, largely due to factors such as 'high spirits'.

Although a Marxist study, Hall et al's (1979) research into 'muggings' in the 1970s is a useful study to illustrate the interactionist perspective. They argue that at the time the moral panic of mugging as a 'black' crime was being talked up by the media and politicians, actual mugging crime numbers were falling. Applying a Marxist analysis they

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argue that there was a genuine fear by some members of the establishment that capitalism was going through a crisis with the possibility of a revolutionary uprising by the proletariat. In case such an event should occur, the police needed new powers. However, in order to get public support for this, the fear of mugging was used, with the result that the police were given with the public's approval the right to 'stop and search'. Thus individual freedoms were reduced but the police were given the opportunity to stop and search anyone in the street. As a result of operating to stereotypes and labelling young black men were became the target of most police stop and search increasing black youth's own sense of alienation and anomie.

Questions

- 1. What are the similarities between Hall et al's study of mugging and the present moral panic about Islamic terrorism?

Keywords

1. Mugging: street robbery.

Application of Labelling Theory

Bullets

- Current criminal policy seems to be actively embracing the process of labelling as we criminalise more behaviour and increasingly incarcerate and name and shame offenders.
- There is a double standard applied to sexual behaviour. Females are negatively labelled in ways which do not apply to males.
- Females seem to escape the labelling process for delinquency compared to males, but when they are labelled it seems they are viewed as doubly-deviant (rule-breakers and unfeminine).

Text

Some people welcome the development of labelling theory and see it as offering important guidelines to social policy towards offences and offenders. For example, Stephen Jones (2001) argues that we should be actively preventing labels as much as possible through the decriminalization of a lot of behaviour. In addition, when the law has to intervene, he suggests warnings and cautions should be used in preference to incarceration (locking people up). However, the reality is that with the growing influence of the New Right on criminal policy we are criminalizing more behaviour and building more prisons with a shift towards 'naming and shaming' offenders. For example, in December 2008 the Justice Secretary, Jack Straw, introduced the enforced wearing of bright orange 'Community Payback' jackets (nicknamed by the media as "vests of shame") to all those on community service.

However, many feminists view labelling theory as potentially valuable for carrying out research on young people and understanding the significance of labels applied to young females. For example, Sue Lees (1986) in her study of teenage girls has argued that the ways in which young men and women label young women acts as a powerful mechanism of social control. She shows how the promiscuous label of 'slag' can be applied by boys and girls alike with major consequences resulting in it becoming a master status. Lees argues females tread a very fine line between labelled a 'slag' or a 'tight bitch' whereas

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boy's sexual behaviour is free from either of these labels.

Lesley Shaklady-Smith (1978), in a small ethnographic study of teenage girls, also credits labelling theory as a useful tool in understanding social reaction to females. By studying three groups of young women in the Bristol area (30 on probation orders, 15 girls members of gangs, and 30 girls in a control group) she found that girls in all three groups had committed the kinds of offences with which young men but not girls are normally associated. Thus, it appears, female deviance is higher than imagined; they are simply not being labelled. Her data does suggest that females tend to be either viewed as conformist or very delinquent. Those females viewed as delinquent were labelled as 'doubly-deviant' as rule-breakers and as 'unfeminine' and suffered as a result double rejection. Shaklady-Smith notes that, in contrast, delinquency can add to a male's masculinity. Once labelled, females became isolated from their normal peers and more dependent on the delinquent group. Labelling propelled them into more extreme forms of delinquency.

Questions

- 1. Give examples of an increase of labelling through the 'naming and shaming' of offenders.
- 2. Why do you think female levels of delinquency are seen as less than male delinquency?
- 3. In what ways might an increase in laddette behaviour change the ways females become labelled?

Keywords

1. Ethnographic - a small scale study of people usually involving the method of observation.

What do more recent theories of criminology say about crime?

Feminist Theory on Crime

Bullets

- Adler saw the growth in female crime as stemming from the liberation of women.
- Carlen challenged this arguing that female crime had more to do with the breakdown of the class deal and the gender deal' women are controlled by.
- Smart argues there can be no single theory that can explain all crime.
- Feminism has a key role to understanding female crime and female victims by challenging male orientated theories rooted in positivism and patriarchal assumptions.
- Crime can only be understood in the context of individuals with fragmented identities located in a multitude of social contexts and experiences.

Text

Understanding culture (Education)

Freda Adler (1975) was one of the first to apply a feminist perspective to crime. She explained the growth in female crime as stemming from women's liberation resulting in women copying men in all activities including criminal acts. However, such reasoning has come in for criticism since most female crime is committed by working class women the class least affected by women's liberation. Pat Carlen (1988) offered an alternative explanation arguing that women are controlled by the 'class deal' and the 'gender deal'. When these break down the outcome may be criminal behaviour. The respective deals offer firstly a reasonable job and secondly a family relationship with a man, but for working class women a poor education often means dead end jobs perhaps making crime an attractive strategy. For girls brought up in care, evicted or who have run away from home, or abused in the family, the gender deal has broken down. Carlen noted that a lot of female criminal activity is committed by those who have been in care or have come from broken homes.

Different types of feminism put a different focus upon crime. Liberal feminists, for example, focus upon the methodological exclusion of women in criminal research and advocate a new feminist theory of crime that covers both genders. In particular they seek a theory that no longer excludes or renders females invisible. Radical feminists focus more on the issue of women as victims and see men as a threat. Therefore the starting point of any feminist theory for them is the recognition of the threat from men. Marxist feminists argue that crime for both men and women (whether as offenders or victims) can only be understood within the context of the capitalist system. Postmodernist Feminists argue that the problem with traditional criminology was that it lacked reflexivity and was written and conceived from a male standpoint. To them a feminist theory of crime therefore needs to reflect upon how women are disadvantaged by a variety of procedures and processes.

Carol Smart says that feminist empiricism starts from the premise that most research is 'malestream@. It is written by men for men, resulting in women either being ignored or patronised. Smart argues, however, that feminism can address this issue. Because most traditional criminology is rooted in modernist theory that adopts a quantitative methodology, she argues its analysis is too narrow and only develops understanding by a limited amount. Instead she advocates standpoint feminism which believes that true knowledge can only be obtained by listening to the oppressed and disadvantaged. For example, Smart argues that the accounts of women victims of rape, harassment and domestic violence have far greater value than the dominant accounts of such crimes derived from men. However, Smart notes that this still can neither explain why men become involved in such crimes nor develop an understanding of masculinity. She therefore advocates a feminist postmodernism standpoint of recognising the diversity of people's background and identities. The logic of this argument is that crimes are by their nature different acts committed by different people for different reasons. Therefore the grand theories of crime have little value in explaining the huge diversity of crime and need to be 'taken apart'.

Carol Smart's ideas take feminism forward by borrowing from the work of Michel Foucault who argued that power exists in all relationships. Smart therefore argues that the power of men can only be challenged by resistance each time and in each place it is used. She challenges some of the traditional assumptions that exist in rape trials such as women in short skirts are asking for it, or that men cannot control their sexual urges. These are ways by which power is exercised over women.

Pat Carlen (1992), is sympathetic to a lot of Smart's ideas. A lot of criminology derived from men is sensitive to the interests of women and can be used in support of progressive policies to tackle injustices and social problems. Therefore the conclusion is that while Smart advocates a feminist theory based on postmodernism and Carlen favours more traditional theories, they both support the need for a feminist criminology that can be used to promote social justice between the genders.

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Questions

- 1. How do feminists reject male accounts of crime?
- 2. What contribution has feminist theory made to an understanding of women as victims?

Keywords

1. Reflexivity: a person's ability to think back about something and perhaps develop or change meaning.

Right Realism

Bullets

- Right Realism shares some of the ideas of functionalism such as the importance of the community and punishment to controlling crime.
- There is an assumption that offenders are typically young, male and working class.
- It therefore ignores corporate and white-collar crime.

Text

Although Right Realism has many similarities to the functionalist perspective, it developed as a critical response, by the New Right, to the failings of sociological theory to explain and cure the problem of crime. They adopted the term 'realism' to emphasise that previous sociology had been too theoretical and out of touch with real life. Dominated by New Right thinking, it shares Thomas Hobbes' view of humanity as selfish and greedy. It supports Durkheim's view of the need for punishment as a means of maintaining social control. In addition, the Right Realists see underclass subcultural values as a key factor behind crime.

Right Realism originated in the 1970s with the work of James Q. Wilson (1975) and Ernst van den Haag (1975). Besides adopting a very negative view of human nature it also assumes that people choose their own actions. They can be controlled by weighing up the consequences of their own behaviours so that if the punishment for an action is too serious, people won't commit the act (also known as costs/benefits). It is essentially an agency based theory in contrast to the structural theory of Left Realism. Right realists particularly oppose any connection between crime and poverty, pointing out that as affluence has increased since the 1950s crime rates have soared. In addition, they see the development of the welfare state as contributing to a subculture of dependency supplemented by criminal activities.

James Q Wilson (1975) adopts a Durkheimian approach to communities, seeing them as a key factor in controlling crime through the promotion of social order and communal action. In contrast, he argues, that societies where communities are weak, or absent altogether, leading to an increase in crime. He calls upon people to become 'active citizens' to effectively police their communities themselves. If people do not feel safe on the streets and uncomfortable about challenging anti-social behaviour they will move away. Wilson and Kelling refer to this as 'broken window thesis' arguing that if minor crimes (graffiti, noisy behaviour, litter and vandalism) which they call 'incivilities' are left unchallenged this will encourage more serious crimes.

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Wilson also argues that changes to the way we police the streets could reduce crime levels. He advocates the policy of 'zero-tolerance', whereby all crimes including minor ones are taken seriously and punished. A clear-cut message is conveyed to society that criminal behaviour will not be tolerated and the law is being enforced. Hopefully this avoids a decline in behaviour. Zero-tolerance was successfully introduced into New York by the Mayor Rudy Giuliani and had the effect of significantly reducing the crime rate. However, critics argue that the crime rate generally has fallen everywhere and where zero tolerance is used it simply shifts crime into neighbouring areas as was found when it was tried in the Kings Cross district of London. Wilson believes that much policing is wasteful and advocates proactive policing, clearing the streets of youths, drunks. He argues that if people felt safer on the streets, they would police themselves.

In a later writing, Wilson and Herrnstein (1985) controversially argued that a biological link remains with crime and that some people are born with a predisposition towards criminal activity. This predisposition is likely to materialise if the individual is not properly socialized. Adopting common New Right themes, they argue that lone-parent families with absent fathers particularly result in inadequate socialisation. Wilson and Herrnstein also support Clarke and Coleman's Rational Choice Theory (see next section), arguing that people have free-will and will choose whether to commit crime by evaluating the costs and benefits. Adopting the view that it is too easy to live off welfare, they conclude that for many the benefits of crime outweigh the costs, therefore explaining the rise in crime over the second half of the last century.

Questions

- 1. Why is right Realism seen as a critical response to the sociology of crime?
- 2. How Wilson and Herrnstein see the criminal behaviour of the underclass reproducing itself again and again over successive generations?

Keywords

1. Agency: Self-motivated behaviour. This is in contrast to behaviour shaped by wider structures we belong to which influence how we behave.
2. Incivilities: Minor acts of deviance, of an offensive or irritating nature.
3. Zero-tolerance: when there is clampdown on all crimes in an area including incivilities.

Administrative Criminology and the application of right realist Ideas

Bullets

- Administrative criminology is less concerned with why people commit crime than what can be done to reduce it.
- Rational choice theory argues that criminal activity stems from an evaluation of the costs and benefits of crime.
- Right realism places a strong emphasis upon punishment as the key deterrent to crime.
- Right realism, has been an important influence on social policy.
- Given the New Right's support for individual enterprise, to some it is not surprising that people will seek to achieve this illegitimately.

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Text

A practical application of Right Realist ideas can be seen in the work of Jon Clarke who advocated that the Home Office should adopt a policy of 'target hardening'. This approach, known as Administrative Criminology, is not interested in why people commit crime but rather how to reduce the opportunities for crime. It is summed up in the government advertising slogan: 'crime together we can crack it' and argues that protection of property and the use of good locks, burglar alarms, CCTV have all led to a reduction in crime rates. This approach is victim-blaming, arguing that if people do not protect their property sufficiently then they are partly responsible if it is stolen. The responsibility on the government for tackling crime rates is thus conveniently reduced.

Working with James Coleman, Clarke developed 'rational choice theory' (Clarke and Coleman, 1980) which borrows ideas from the philosophical idea of utilitarianism. They argue that given the fact that human behaviour (including crime) is driven by an evaluation of costs and benefits, the solution to crime is two-fold: increasing its costs (chances of being caught and subsequent punishment) and reducing its benefits (status, monetary gains, etc.). It therefore comes as no surprise that supporters of Right Realism advocate tougher punishments such as corporal (physical) and capital (death) punishment as a deterrent to criminal activity and are in favour of naming and shaming criminals.

A Right Realist supporter of strong and public punishments is Ernst van den Haag (1975) who argues that the main aim of the law should be deterrence. Applying familiar New Right themes of lack of discipline from inadequate socialisation, problem families, liberal education and the decline of moral rules, he advocates heavy penalties, especially to repeat offenders. Publicity is therefore important in order to point out to others what happens when the limits of acceptable behaviour are breached. Such ideas are similar to Durkheim's views on the functions of punishment. Since crime and deviance is the breaking of society's collective rules, punishment serves society's need for vengeance since crime threatens to undermine social stability and collective morality.

The New Right theorist Charles Murray argues that a lot of crime derives from the moral decline and deviant values of the underclass who live 'outside society'. He means by this a clearly distinguishable group of people with their own values living at the bottom of society. By focusing upon the deviant sub cultural values of this underclass, his work may be viewed as a mixture of subcultural theory and Right Realism. Murray notes how the values of the underclass are centred on welfare dependency, childbearing outside the traditional family and a subculture where young men prove their masculinity through violence.

For Murray the problem of crime results from lone-parent families headed by women. Young males grow up out of the control of their mothers because they lack a father role model. Such boys, in the underclass, typically leave school with few, if any, qualifications and end up unemployed or in dead end jobs. They therefore offer little long-term prospect of being decent breadwinners. If they get females pregnant, the short-term nature of their sexual liaisons discourages them from taking responsibility for their offspring. Thus another generation of lone-parent mothers is created repeating the cycle and resulting in further crime and deviance. However, the work of Murray has been challenged as dogmatic and overcritical of those unfortunate to be at the bottom of society. Marxists would criticise Murray for ignoring crimes of the rich such as corporate crime and fraud. Ellis Cashmore challenges the existence of a culture of dependency amongst the poor arguing that for most people the phase of dependency on benefits is temporary.

Right Realism has come in for a number of criticisms. Marxists argue that by concentrating upon crime within the underclass it ignores the significant amount of corporate and white-collar crime. Feminists argue that Right Realists ignore gender issues entirely, other than to criticise lone mothers and to blame crime on unsocialised young males. Although it is

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the most influential theory of criminology on Government policy it has failed to reduce the crime rate in the USA where crime levels continue to rise.

Questions

- 1. Who are the underclass?
- 2. How does Murray link the underclass and crime?
- 3. What arguments are used against Right Realism?

Keywords

1. Target hardening: the identification and targeting of likely pockets of crime or deviant/criminal groups.
2. Recidivists: repeat offenders.
3. Underclass: Group of highly deprived people, at bottom of society, who constitute a class in their own right.

Left realism

Bullets

- Jock Young helped develop Left Realism by distancing himself from his previous political Marxist analysis of Radical Criminology which he subsequently described as 'left idealism'.
- Left realism takes the view that crime is a real problem, especially to the poor and deprived, minority ethnic groups and inner-city residents.
- It recognises that crime rose sharply in the last half of the twentieth century and that this cannot simply be explained by changes in reporting and recording of crime.

Text

Left Realism was developed by Jock Young, John Lea and Roger Matthews in the 1970s. Young had been one of the founders of 'Radical criminology' (Taylor, Walton and Young) that had introduced elements of interactionist theory into Marxism in order to develop a 'fully social theory of deviance'. However, Young became so disenchanted with this Marxist approach with its claim that criminals should be seen as victims of the capitalist system, that he subsequently called it 'Left Idealism'. Left Realism also developed as an angry response to right realism which argued sociologists could neither explain nor solve the problem of crime. Left Realism was therefore a sociological attempt to show that sociologists could also look at the causes of crime realistically and offer practical solutions. In a series of local victim studies (including the 'Islington Crime Survey') Left Realists identified the real victims of crime as the poor and powerless.

The starting point of Left Realism is that crime is a real problem to ordinary people and therefore must be taken seriously. Its growth has had a significant impact upon ordinary people's lives and therefore one important contribution of left realism has been the shift of emphasis from offender to victim. They noted that victims of crime are disproportionately located within the working-class and concentrated in the inner-city and large housing estates. For some groups (the poor, ethnic minorities and inner-city residents) crime has become an endemic feature of their everyday lives.

Young claimed that through Left Realism they were offering a sociological criminology

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that offered governments practical solutions to the problem of crime. Given his neo-Marxist past as a Radical Criminologist, many criticised this approach. Marxists, for example, argue that the solution to crime lies in eradicating the capitalist system which governments help maintain. Young's response was to describe Marxist criminology (especially his own Radical Criminology) as 'Left Idealism' suggesting it was ideological but offered few practical solutions in the real world. Left Realism claims to take all crimes equally seriously and recognises corporate crime and the dark side of unreported and unrecorded crimes to the person like sexual assaults, harassment and racially motivated crimes.

Left realism tackles the controversial area of black criminality head on. On one hand they identify the institutional racism of the criminal justice system such as the 'canteen culture' of the police and discriminatory practices such as stop and search applied disproportionately to blacks. On the other hand they openly talk about a real increase in crimes (especially robbery) committed by young black males. The task of left realism, they argue, is to explain why black youth in particular is driven to crime. For example, they are critical of the 'left idealist' Paul Gilroy, whose focus upon racism and an anti-colonial struggle, complicates the explanation. Left realists argue that it's more likely be unemployment and marginalisation that results in black minorities committing more street crime than others.

Left Realists see black youth as having particularly high aspirations for material goods compared to their parents - yet the reality of their life in Britain is poor education, unemployment or dead-end jobs. However, critics argue that this cannot explain why only a small proportion of young blacks engage in crime. Left realism notes that stop and search policy (what they term 'military policing') can serve to unite the whole of the black community against the police. When this manifests itself into widespread reaction such as rioting, Lea and Young call this 'obligation of bystanders'.

Questions

- 1. Explain Left Realism.

Keywords

1. Canteen culture: A form of culture reflecting the attitudes of the police. This culture is seen to be sexist and racist.

Left realism and the causes of crime

Bullets

- Left realism accepts crime is committed by young, male, working class and disproportionately black. They explain this in terms of relative deprivation, marginalisation and subcultures.
- Left realists have carried out victim studies to discover a widespread fear of crime, with many (such as elderly, women and some ethnic groups) altering behaviour.
- Whilst playing down the significance of white-collar and corporate crimes, left realists claim to take all crimes seriously including sexual assaults and harassment.

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Text

Left realism specifically explains the origins of juvenile delinquency particularly amongst black males as three fold: subculture; relative deprivation and marginalisation. We will examine each of these in turn. Lea and Young claim that the sub-culture of young blacks is distinct from that of their parents and grandparents and derives more from the expectations and aspirations of British society than from any hangover from Caribbean society. It is precisely this similarity which causes crime. Lea and Young argue that it is precisely because of the acceptance of British society's material goals that young blacks, for example, feel deprived.

According to Lea and Young, delinquent youth feel a sense of relative deprivation because of the gap between their high expectations and the reality of what they can actually obtain, given the alternatives of unemployment, training schemes or low wage jobs (once bluntly described by Stuart Hall as 'white man's shit work') which are often the only realistic choices on offer. They argue that working class youth accept on the whole the dominant values of society, but their behaviour is modified by the circumstances in which they find themselves; often at the bottom of the heap. Therefore, they develop strategies to enable them to solve their problems, and this can involve deviant and criminal behaviour.

The claimed strength of their approach is its ability to explain why some young people appear more prone to juvenile delinquency than others, reflecting their degree of marginalisation from mainstream society.

Marginalisation means the process by which groups find themselves on the edge of society, in both an economic and political sense. Young points out that black and white youth in the inner city and sink estates are unsuccessful in the education system resulting in the blocked opportunities described above. In addition, they often feel marginalised by the actions of the agencies of the State (schools, police, courts). Black male youth subject to repeated stop and searches (what left realism calls 'military policing') can be the trigger for cultural and economic marginalisation to be transferred into crime.

Left realism identifies a number of problems with contemporary policing such as a low clear-up rate which does not deter criminals. In addition, in areas with a significant black population the community's cooperation and confidence in the police is low causing the police to resort to 'military policing' which alienates the community even further. Left realists argue that the public should have more say in shaping police policy, and the police themselves should spend as much time as possible actually investigating crime.

The strength of left realism clearly lies in the breadth of its analysis as illustrated in their concept of the 'square of crime' that looks at crime from the standpoint of offenders, victims, role of the state and informal controls. It not only attempts to explain juvenile offenders but the likelihood and type of victims too. However, critics argue that explaining crime in terms of subculture, relative deprivation and marginalisation fails to explain the causes of crime in terms of offender's motives. Many people who are marginalised and suffering relative deprivation do not turn to crime. Although left realism claims to take all crimes equally seriously, Marxists would criticise them for being too soft on corporate and white-collar crime.

Questions

- 1. What is marginalisation?
- 2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of Left realism?

Keywords

1. Military policing: policing approach based upon stop and search.

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Postmodernism

Bullets

- Postmodernists see traditional theories of criminology as rooted in a modernist framework.
- Since Postmodernists view each criminal act as unique.
- The individualism and choice of Postmodern society is the key factor as why people become criminals.
- John Lea finds most support for Postmodern theory in its explanation of informal controls in postmodern society.

Text

The drive towards a Postmodernist attempt to make sense of crime was influenced particularly by feminist thinkers like Carol Smart. Such writers encouraged a reflexive approach to understanding both offenders and victims. Shearing and Stenning (1984), in contrast, adopt a very negative view of society, regulated through the soft social-control of ordering through consumerism and surveillance. They believe that the pressures of consumerism exert such a strong influence upon society that it acts as a major form of social control together with Michel Foucault's concept of surveillance resulting in regulation acting as another form of control.

Redhead (1991) challenges the usefulness of traditional subcultural theory with its attempt to make sense of crime by probing beneath the surface to get to the real factors driving anti-social behaviour. He argues that given the superficiality and shallowness of postmodern society any attempt at developing what he terms 'depth models' is no longer valid and quite inappropriate.

However, the emphasis that reflexivity in criminology is something new introduced by postmodernists has been challenged by Heidensohn and Silvestri (1995) who point out that many modern theories of crime drew upon and adapted previous theories. For example, the 'fully social theory of deviance' of Taylor, Walton and Young (1973) was a blatant synthesis of the structuralism of neo-Marxism and the social processes that lay behind interactionism and labelling theory. Right realism has obvious roots in both control theory and the philosophical concept of utilitarianism. Both Ken Plummer (1990) and Jock Young (1999) have recognised a common thread running between symbolic interactionism and postmodernist analysis. For example, the interactionist preoccupation with the social construction of statistics, labels, has much in common with the Postmodernist approach of 'deconstructionism'.

The problems of crime and delinquency are obvious sources of social anxiety and unease. Preferring the term late modernity to postmodernity, Jock Young (1999) notes how the mismatch between people's aspirations and the realities of life helps generate what he terms the 'Hobbesian jungles' of the urban poor. A consequence of this has been to project our fears onto 'others'. The 'other' group serves as a convenient scapegoat to blame for the troubles of wider society. Young notes how the underclass have been constructed, especially by the New Right, as an other group; made up of single mothers and feckless fathers living in idleness and crime.

Young also notes how postmodern anxieties are also perpetuated by politicians who advocate a respect agenda and appeals for people to embrace citizenship in a society of sinking moral values. According to McQuire (1997) governments construct a nostalgic and re-packaged history, which the present cannot compare to, resulting in calls for more reactive policing, more laws and harsher punishments'. Interestingly the criminal policies of Conservative and New Labour governments are seamless and identical in Postmodern society.

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John Lea (1998) has offered the most coherent critique of postmodernist criminology. He notes how deconstruction is a crucial tool for Postmodernists to understand the nature of crime, but rightly points out deconstruction is not new being a central feature of labelling theory. Lea equally finds the Postmodern view of each criminal act as a unique event unsatisfactory. Firstly this renders any attempt at grand theory or metanarrative meaningless and secondly if entry into criminal activity is a reflection of choice, then Postmodernists cannot explain why some people choose to be criminals and others not, or why some people choose one form of crime rather another. However, he supports the Postmodern focus upon informal controls and notes the abundance of examples such as gated communities, bouncers outside pubs and private security guards patrolling shopping malls as how control has shifted from the police to the private sector. As society becomes increasingly segregated Lea notes an almost Postmodern celebration of difference but feels those marginalised will come to feel increasingly socially excluded.

Questions

- 1. What is postmodernism?
- 2. Postmodernist criminology emphasises its difference to all earlier theories, but what similarities and continuities link it to earlier theories of criminology?

Keywords

1. Hobbesian jungle: the philosopher John Hobbes argued people are naturally greedy and selfish. If we behaved as nature intended then it would be survival of the fittest and life would be like a jungle.
2. Surveillance: term associated with Michel Foucault reflecting the trend of monitoring of people in society, operating as a key form of social control.

What is the relationship between the state and crime?

What is the relationship between the state and crime?

Bullets

- The role of the state is to create law
- Many religions believe that laws embody the will of their Gods.
- In Europe this idea was challenged during the C18th
- Early sociologists rejected religious belief, but recognised that it was a major force for creating social order.

Text

A state is a single political area with laws and a government system. People are citizens of a state, so that their state issues them with a passport to visit other countries, or states. The state that people living in Britain belong to is known as the UK or United Kingdom and it is governed by a monarch, so all laws are made in the name of that monarch, currently the queen. The relationship between the government system, or state and crime is essential to an understanding of the sociology of crime because it is the state which

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defines an act as criminal, which administers the criminal justice system, which funds the police force and which punishes people if they are seen to have broken the law.

There is a fundamental belief in most or all societies that people are generally selfish, and self-serving. They require laws to regulate their behaviour, thus, there are no laws required for things that people do not actually do or have not done in the past in that culture. Laws are basic guidelines to the appropriate behaviour of a culture, but they are more than that, they are written into a system so that if the rules are broken the individual can be punished, not by those around him or her by informal sanctions, but by a formal system that is impartial and fair to everyone. As society changes, so legal systems have to change. Thus it is the role of the government to create new laws and to repeal old and bad laws.

Many religions believe that laws are made by God. In Christianity, this philosophy was proposed by St Thomas Aquinas in the C13th who claimed that divine law is revealed in the Bible. This thinking is common to Islam, where many believe that the Quran is the divine word of God and that people should follow the directions of the Quran. Divine law in many religions governs not only public life, but personal life as well. Jewish and Islamic laws forbid the eating of pork and St Thomas believed that God willed it so that people should only be allowed one sexual position.

In Christianity, the corruption of the established Church prompted the breakdown between Roman Catholics and the Protestants in the early C16th. This split between the two leading Western forms of Christianity led to the huge number of wars, social and religious upheavals that occurred in European history throughout the C16th - 17th. Direct challenges to the idea of God-given laws came during the 'Age of Reason' during the C18th when people challenged established religion. This revolutionary challenge to the idea of law as being God-given is what made it possible for Karl Marx to assert that laws were made to force poor people to do the bidding of the rich and for Durkheim to claim that laws represent the deepest values of a culture and establish the rights of individuals in a culture and to reject religion as being anything other than a basic social mechanism to create order among humans in society.

Questions

- 1. What is law?
- 2. What is the role of government?
- 3. Do we need laws?

Keywords

1. Roman Catholic - Christian who believes the Pope in Rome is the leader of the Christian faith
2. Protestant - Christian who believes that the Bible is the source of faith
3. Quran - Holy Book of Islam
4. Repeal - to cancel an out of date or useless law
5. Monarch - single ruler of a country, a king or a queen
6. State - a country with a government and laws of its own

What is the criminal justice system?

Bullets

- The state has a complex system for dealing with offending behaviours that employs thousands of people.
- The police are responsible for preventing crime and protecting the public

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- The courts try people and decide on appropriate punishment
- There are a huge number of agencies dealing with offenders such as the prison system and charities

Text

This is the whole of the state system for the management and control of crime. There are a number of basic areas in which it operates; it concerns the policing and management of crime and crime reports, the courts and the legal system, sentencing and appeal and the rehabilitation and treatment of offenders.

The police are agents of the state. Their role is to prevent crime, catch those who commit crime and to protect the public. New Labour policy has stressed the importance of two different types of police activity which they term as Reactive Policing and which focuses on crime prevention and Proactive Policing which involves community initiatives such as Neighbourhood Watch. They have no responsibility for punishing criminals; that is the role of the courts. However, they often deal with offenders themselves and can issue a range of penalties for minor offences including: simple cautions, conditional cautions, cannabis warnings, penalty notices for disorder and fixed penalty notices (for driving offences). For those aged 10 to 17, the options include: reprimands, final warnings and penalty notices for disorder. An official caution is a simple warning that behaviour is unacceptable and that if you are caught again, you will be sent to court for a trial and punishment. The caution is used to prevent people reoffending and is issued at the discretion of a senior police officer. Considerable efforts are made by the police to keep young offenders out of the court system because it is known that although many people grow out of criminal behaviours, time in prison tends to set a pattern of further offending.

The courts are part of a system known as the judiciary or judicial system. Minor offences and non-indictable offences are dealt with in a Magistrates Court. This is for people who plead guilty to the crimes of which they are accused. Those who plead 'not guilty' or who are charged with the more serious or indictable crimes are sent to Crown Court where they are tried in front of a judge and a jury. If people wish to challenge their sentences or claim that the court treated them unfairly, they are entitled to appeal to a Higher Court. It is the role of the court to find people guilty or not guilty and to set a punishment. It is worth noting too, that in this context, the highest court in the land is the House of Lords, which forms part of the Parliamentary system of the UK. If a person wishes to challenge a decision made by the House of Lords, then they have to go to European Courts of Justice.

The treatment and rehabilitation of offenders is undertaken by a number of agencies such as the prison system, probation service, a variety of charities such as Nacro, drug and mental health agencies and youth offending teams. Careers agencies, training agencies and social services are all involved in supporting offenders and reducing recidivism. Many hundreds of people are involved in work with offenders and prevention of offending behaviour.

Questions

- 1. Why do we need to deal with offenders as a society and not at an individual level?
- 2. Why do the police try and keep young offenders out of the criminal justice system?
- 3. Should the police keep young people out of the prison system?

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Keywords

1. Recidivism - reoffending and lapsing back into criminal activity
2. Caution - police warning not to repeat behaviour
3. Indictable crime - a crime for which the usual penalty is a prison sentence, a serious crime
4. Non-indictable crime - minor offence
5. Judiciary - system of courts
6. Rehabilitation - getting someone back into society
7. Reactive Policing - Crime prevention
8. Proactive Policing - policing that involves the whole community, such as Neighbourhood Watch schemes

What is recent state policy on crime in the UK?

Bullets

- New Labour have attempted to tackle anti-social communities through the Respect Agenda
- Schemes are in place to curb nuisance neighbours
- These appear to have had some success
- However, much criminal behaviour is related to poverty and deprivation and these underlying problems have not been tackled as effectively.

Text

Crime and punishment has been a major part of the Labour government agenda since 1997. When Tony Blair was elected. The Conservative Party was traditionally seen as the party of law and order, and Labour were thought to be softer on criminals. However, as a reaction to this perception of the Labour Party as being weak in confronting criminal behaviour, they took as their slogan for the 1997 election, 'Tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime'. Each Home Secretary in turn was desperate to be seen as hard on criminals, and this has affected the criminal justice system and state policy with regard to crime. A number of different and often ineffectual and quickly forgotten strategies were employed, including three strikes and out, on-the-spot fines, night courts, drugs tsars, and twelve different criminal justice bills. Many commentators have claimed that the government responded to particular problems with sudden new initiatives which aimed at grabbing headlines rather than addressing serious problems.

Key themes of New Labour thinking have been the Respect agenda, reparation schemes where offenders pay victims back, mediation where the offender meets the victim, and reintegrative shaming where offenders are faced with the consequences of their actions.

The Respect Agenda is based firmly on the Broken Windows thesis so that the government is pledged to support community action on anti-social behaviour. In 2009, their website claimed that 'the priority is tackling anti-social behaviour - noisy neighbours, litter, fly-tipping, groups hanging around or graffiti and criminal damage. All these really impact on people's quality of life and weaken communities' The Respect Agenda included a whole range of policies including summary powers to fine people without going to court and local schemes to name and shame nuisance neighbours. There have been evictions of criminal tenants and court orders have been made to tackle aggressive behaviour. Specific schemes and strategies have included Anti-Social Behaviour Orders for youths over 10 years who have acted anti-socially (for example, vandalism, graffiti, loutishness). These have been controversial as some have been used

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against people with specific mental problems such as Asperger's Syndrome. Parenting Orders give courts the power to order parents of 'anti-social' children to attend counselling and the Child Curfew Scheme is where Local Authorities can prevent children being in public places during specified hours.

Welsh Assembly Government, which is also Labour dominated, has been less enthusiastic about the Respect Agenda, although it has implemented some of the strategies such as parenting lessons and programmes for very young children. Gordon Brown, who succeeded Tony Blair as Prime Minister has also adopted the Respect Agenda, but it has been given a different title, "Fair rules for strong communities".

There is some limited evidence that the Respect Agenda has been successful as crime rates have reduced overall. However there are some areas of Britain and some estates where criminality is still endemic. Many argue that this is due to rising poverty and inequality. Wilkinson, for example has claimed that there is a serious psychological consequence of being at the base of the income and status hierarchy: people feel worthless. Their anger reveals itself in alcoholism and drugs, or in violence against other people. Social disorder, he claims, has multiple roots and affects whole families. It is worse in inner-city estates where children are excluded from school and terrorise neighbours, and adults experience domestic violence, alcoholism or drugs.

Questions

- 1. Why did the Labour Party promise to be tough on crime?
- 2. What is the Respect Agenda?
- 3. What anti-crime strategies have been associated with the Respect Agenda?
- 4. To what extent have these strategies been successful?

Keywords

1. Mediation - a form of dispute resolution whereby two arguing people talk to a third person about their problems
2. Broken windows theory - the idea that areas go downhill very quickly when the first random damage occurs
3. Reintegrative shaming - where offenders are faced with the consequences of their actions
4. Endemic - a characteristic of something

How effective has government policy on crime been?

Bullets

- Crime rates are falling generally, but people have little trust in them and believe crime to be rising.
- Violent crimes are rising, and there have been moral panics about knife crime
- Right wing groups suggest that the government is soft on crime despite the increasing over-crowding of prisons
- Left wing groups claim the government needs to spend more on early intervention programmes and keep people out of prison.

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Text

There has been considerable debate as to the impact of the Respect Agenda and over government initiatives on crime. In 2003, the Home Office criticised the newspapers for encouraging the public to fear crime. The British Crime Survey (BCS) of that year found that 43% of tabloid readers thought the national crime rate had increased significantly, compared with 26% of broadsheet readers. The Home Office claimed that the tabloid newspapers such as the Sun and the Daily Mirror were encouraging public fear of crime. 75% of people thought that crime rates were increasing despite the survey suggesting that there was a drop in overall crime rates. The Home Office says the risk of being a crime victim is historically low. However, Lockhart has pointed out that despite high spending on policing, courts and prisons, England and Wales still have a recorded crime rate twice that of the European average.

But, whilst overall crime rates are falling, there is an increase in crimes of violence and this has led to public debate and concern. There have been some well-publicised moral panics over crime, so in 2008, there was serious concern over knife attacks in some parts of London. Twenty seven teenagers were killed in London that year, and most were the victims of gang crime. It appears that knives are the weapons of choice among some gang members because a gun murder will attract a heavier sentence and there is more noise associated with gunshot, so it attracts attention. Downs, in 2001, point out that violent crime had been rising for over a decade and that it is associated with areas of deprivation, falling employment and a macho culture.

Government policy has seen a massive increase in the numbers in prison. In 2007, the prison population was almost 81,500, the highest figure on record and an increase of more than 20,000 in a decade. The Government is now planning for the prison capacity to rise to 96,000 by 2014. There is a shortage of prison places and a number of new 'super-prisons' are being planned to provide places for the shortfall of 6,000 prisoners in 2009. For every 100,000 of the population of England and Wales, 148 people are in prison, compared with 85 per 100,000 in France and 93 per 100,000 in Germany. The number of women inmates has increased from less than 2,000 in 1995 to 4,510 today. Of these, a disproportionate numbers of prisoners are drink or drug addicts, with 70 per cent of new prisoners having a drug problem and 63 per cent admitting to heavy drinking. In addition, the suicide rate for prisoners is exceptionally high, especially for young men.

These figures do not take account of differences each year in how crimes are treated by the courts. Right wing policy bodies such as Civitas claim that the government has been kind to criminals. Civitas claim that there has been a reduction in public order. In the peak year of sentencing in 2002, 85,151 criminals were sent to jail for indictable crimes. They say that in 2007 only 74,037 people were imprisoned. If the sentencing standards in force in 2002 had been applied in 2007, well over ten thousand criminals would have been imprisoned. In addition, a Home Office survey in 2000 asked offenders about to begin a term in prison how many crimes that they had committed in the previous year. The average was 140 and for those with drug problems, 257 offences.

On the other hand, Irwin Waller (2009) claimed that the UK government crime policy had focused on enforcement - police, courts and prisons - and neglected crime prevention measures. His study suggested that crime would cost the UK £78bn in 2009, which is equal to £3,000 per home. He argued that preventing offenders from going to prison would save considerable amounts of money. He argues that there is a need for reducing opportunities for crime and that supporting church groups, the YMCA, schools and parks will reduce criminal activity. It is acknowledged that such approaches will have little impact on domestic abuse and personal crime.

Questions

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- 1. Why is there concern about the amount of crime in Britain?
- 2. What could the government do to reduce the numbers of people in prison?

Keywords

1. Broadsheet newspapers - Papers such as the Independent, the Daily Telegraph and the Guardian which open to a large size
2. Tabloid newspapers - Papers such as the Daily Express and the Sun which are aimed at working class readers
3. Super-prisons - very large prisons with large numbers of inmates

What impact has crime prevention had on civil liberties in the UK?

Bullets

- People are entitled to rights in a democracy. These rights are known as civil liberties
- In the fight against crime and terrorism, civil liberties have been lost
- The police and courts have over-reacted to demonstrations and complaints
- The Home Office has detailed records on people who have not been charged with a crime and intends to develop these records through an ID card system
- Post-modernists such as Foucault claim that Britain is turning into a surveillance society because of the amount of control exerted over citizens.

Text

Civil liberties are the rights that a citizen has in the state. These liberties are what makes Britain a democracy and they include the right to a fair trial and the right not to be put in prison without a trial. It is claimed by some Parliamentary critics of New Labour that there have been more than 50 changes to the law since Labour came to power, and these changes reduce people's freedoms to do as they wish. This government has created more the 440 new offences including 98 offences that can result in imprisonment. One of the most controversial was the ban on smoking in public places which was introduced as a health measure in 2007 and which carries heavy penalties including a £1,000 fine.

As a result of the impact of terrorist activities in the UK in the wake of the 9/11 attack, there has been some erosion of civil liberties in the UK. For example, Control Orders, which were established in 2005, allow terrorism suspects to be tagged, confined to their homes and banned from communicating with others indefinitely without charge or trial. There have been a number of possible human rights abuses as well, with British terrorism suspects being held in Guantanamo Bay by the USA government without trial and being subject to torture whilst captive. Nine British citizens have been held by the USA; two of those people, Feroz Abbasi and Moazzem Begg have done nothing that they could be charged with under British law. The British Home Secretary in 2004, David Blunkett wanted to make it easier to convict British terrorism suspects by lowering the standard of proof required by a court. Over 1,000 people have been arrested under anti-terrorism laws since 2001, but less than a half were charged with any offences by 2007.

Understanding culture (Education)

There have been some notorious cases whereby the police and courts have over-reacted to demonstrations against government actions. In December, 2005 a peace campaigner was arrested for reading out names of soldiers killed in Iraq within half a mile of Westminster. In June, 2006 Steven Jago was arrested for carrying a placard without permission bearing a George Orwell quotation: "In a time of universal deceit telling the truth is a revolutionary act". Under the Terrorism Act 2000, the police were provided with broader powers to stop and search people so that officers, with authorization from a senior officer, are allowed to stop and search anyone to prevent terrorism. Statistically, Asian and black people are respectively four and five times more likely to be stopped than white people under this Act.

Despite a European Court ruling which claimed that it is illegal to keep the details of innocent people, the government carries the DNA of large numbers of people who have never been convicted of any offence on its database and believes it will be over 12 years before that DNA can be removed. In addition, Britain has one of the highest numbers of CCTV cameras in Europe and there is a very determined attempt by the government to introduce identity cards for all adults, despite strong public opposition to both the expense and the need for the scheme. The Home Office said that from 2008 biometric identity cards will be compulsory for foreign nationals who come to the UK to work and study. By 2011, all new migrants arriving in the UK will be issued with a card. From 2009, ID cards will be issued to airport workers. ID cards will also be available to young people on a voluntary basis from early 2010 and to the general public in late 2010. In 2011 all new passports will be entered on the National Identity Register either through ID cards or biometric passports. The Home Office intends to impose compulsory ID cards through Britain by 2017.

Foucault has written extensively about the development of a surveillance society which he termed the Panopticon after a famous prison designed by Bentham, but which was never built. Foucault says that we are living in a society where we are constantly watched and where people are frightened to misbehave or show unusual habits because they never know if they are being watched and if their actions will be misinterpreted. Commentators have claimed that the extensive use of government monitoring and record keeping is turning British society into a panopticon.

Questions

- 1. Why do people need civil liberties?
- 2. Is it correct to lose civil liberties to protect people against terrorism and crime?
- 3. Do we need an identity card system in the UK?

Keywords

1. Civil liberties - rights under the law
2. CCTV - closed circuit television

Can a government act illegally?

Bullets

- Governments are expected to obey laws set by international treaties
- Despite this, many governments are guilty of illegal acts towards their own populations or other states.

Understanding culture (Education)

- Many people believe the invasion of Iraq by the USA and UK in 2003 to have been an illegal act.

Text

There are various treaties and international organisations that create laws that governments themselves should follow in their dealings with other nations. A state crime is an activity or a failure to act that break the state's own criminal law or public international law. Many governments break laws with regard to their own populations, so that people are imprisoned illegally or members of the population are placed in serious danger for one reason or another. For example, Saudi Arabia has a death penalty and people under the age of 18 have been sentenced to death for crimes, despite Saudi Arabia signing the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which prohibits the execution of children or those who committed crimes whilst still children. The government of Malaysia has arrested journalists who have criticised the state. Some state actions are relatively minor, so that Nigeria is famous for government corruption whereas other states have been engaged in serious acts of illegality, criminality or immorality. It is widely believed for example, that the Rwandan government was implicated in the genocide of Tutsi people by the Hutu ruling classes.

William Chambliss (1988) suggested that governments often engage in smuggling (arms and drugs), assassination conspiracies, terrorist acts, and other crimes in order to further their foreign policy objectives. Many people viewed as dictators or tyrants were initially supported by Western governments in their road to power, so that Ho Chi Minh (Vietnam) and Saddam Hussein (Iraq) had been supported by the USA before they then turned on their former supporters. The scale of state crime can be horrific. Rummell, (1994) estimated that between 1900 and 1987, some 169 million people had been killed by governments, even without those killed in wars. Sani Abacha, the dictator of Nigeria is estimated to have stolen something in excess of £3 billion from his country while ordinary people live lives of extreme poverty

Probably the best known examples of state crimes would be those of the Nazis against the Jews and other German citizens during the 1930s and 1940s. Europe was catapulted into WW2 when the Germans invaded Czechoslovakia and then later, in 1939, Poland. More recently, in 2003, the governments of the USA and UK decided to attack the state of Iraq. The dictator of Iraq, Saddam Hussein was known to have treated many of its population with cruelty, including organising the mass murder of citizens. Nevertheless, the reason given for the invasion was said to be that there were weapons of mass destruction threatening the West and that the government of Iraq had been engaged in terrorist activities. In fact, no weapons of mass destruction were ever found and there was very little evidence of terrorism against the West. In 2004, The United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan told the BBC the US-led invasion of Iraq was an illegal act that went against the UN. He said the decision to take action in Iraq should have been made by the Security Council, not unilaterally. In 2005, the Central Intelligence Agency released a report saying that no weapons of mass destruction had been found in Iraq. In 2006 Tony Blair said that the invasion of Iraq by the United States and Britain had been a "disaster".

Questions

- 1. Why do states need to abide by treaties?
- 2. What are the consequences of state crime?

Keywords

Understanding culture (Education)

1. State crime - an illegal act by a government
2. Genocide - the murder of a large number of people of an ethnicity
3. Weapon of mass destruction - weapon capable of killing very large numbers of people, for example a nuclear weapon
4. Unilaterally - on one's own and without regard to other people

Policing and Social Control

The Police in Britain

Bullets

- The police are an important social institution employing thousands of people in the UK and serving huge populations.
- There is a debate as to the role of the police in British society.
- Functionalists and pluralists argue that the police reflect the communities they serve
- Marxists suggest that they are an agency of social repression and control.

Text

The first UK police force was set up in 1829, though there were various formal and informal organisations concerned with social control before that date. There are now a number of different bodies concerned with policing in the UK and each force has a separate Chief Constable. Territorial Police Forces govern certain areas; so for example, the South Wales Police covers an area including both Cardiff and Swansea, as well as the Valleys. Over a million people are served by the South Wales Police. All territorial police forces have websites; this is a legal requirement and you can find out more about their work by looking at those sites. In addition to territorial police forces, there are other agencies such as the British Transport Police and the Ministry of Defence Police.

In sociology there are a number of debates relating to the police and the control of anti-social or criminal behaviour. One of the most significant is the role of the police as an agency of control: do they represent the community as a whole or do they represent the authority of governments? Pluralists and functionalists would suggest that they reflect the views of the community but Marxists are clear that the police are an agency of repression reflecting the interests of the rich and powerful.

Reith (1956) and Critchley (1978) have both stated that early police forces derived power from the community and not the state. The Scarman Report of 1981 claimed that there was a long tradition of popular support for the work of the police in Britain; it was referred to as 'consensual policing'. On the other hand, Cohen (1994) has said that there is a long history of dislike for the police in working class areas, despite the admiring and affectionate views of the police that were offered in the television and films of the 1940s and 1950s. Miller (1979) said that the police were an agency of government and control because they arose in a period of intense social unrest due to industrialisation. There was much popular antagonism towards the police when Miller was writing in the 1970s.

Questions

- Why do we have a police force?
- Do we need to have the police? Give reasons for and against.

Understanding culture (Education)

- What roles do the police perform in society?

Keywords

1. Consensual - agreement and shared values
2. Pluralists - people who suggest that the state is composed of different interest groups
3. Territorial - regional or geographical areas

Reasons for concern with the police

Bullets

- Concern with the role of the police in society emerged in the 1960s and 1970s.
- Many of those concerns centred on the police and their activities in controlling political and social discontent.
- Recent cases suggest that there are still serious issues with how the police conduct themselves

Text

The pressure to investigate the police tends to come from those people who are concerned with political issues of democracy, freedom, human and civil rights. Research into the way that the police work really began in earnest in the 1970s and 1980s. It came about because of a series of scandals, obvious miscarriages of justice and illegal activities. These debates have continued and are still current in the media; for instance there has been concern about police tactics when dealing with popular demonstrations against government activities.

In the 1970s, there were serious concerns relating to police corruption and crime. Certain police forces and groups were notorious for involvement in organised crime such as drug dealing, pornography and bribery. Since then the police appear to have dealt with many issues, but as recently as February 2010, the Serious and Organised Crime Agency raised concern about corruption. The Agency alleged that police officers made themselves vulnerable to organised criminals through social networking sites, dealing in steroids and performance enhancing drugs and information trafficking through the hacking of IT systems.

In the 1970s, crime rates appeared to be rising, while conviction rates were falling. This pattern has currently changed and crime rates appear to be falling. There have been allegations of 'cuffing' whereby official statistics can be made to look better than they really are. But it is still the case that many minor crimes are under-reported because of a belief that nothing can or will be done. In addition, the police became removed from their communities by the use of cars, mobile radios. Police forces have taken active steps to sort out these perceptions, but mistrust remains.

Of genuine significance is the role of the government in directing the police to control anti-government demonstrations and industrial action. The Thatcher government used the police against political and social unrest in the 1980s. As a result, the miner's strike of the early 1980s became famous for the way the role of the police changed. They were seen by sections of the community as agents of an unpopular government. Recent cases have highlighted similar problems. The Ian Tomlinson Inquest (2011) has revealed that a person completely unconnected with the G20 demonstrations died, possibly as a result of police

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violence. The use of undercover police officers to provoke minority political groups into criminal action was highlighted by the Mark Kennedy case (January 2011).

In the 1970s, IRA terrorism took place on mainland Britain and some very violent bombings occurred. The media put tremendous pressure on the police for results and there were a number of quick arrests that later lead to charges of miscarriages of justice such as the Birmingham Six (filmed as *The Name of the Father*), the Guildford Four and the Maguire Seven. Today, there is equal concern with terrorism, but police activity is interested in Moslem terrorism. In addition, many middle class young people became politicised and/or criminalised as a result of student unrest through the late 1960s. The police came to be seen as oppressive and reactionary against ordinary people. Today, the same issues have arisen out of demonstrations against the imposition of university loans. Of particular note has been police use of tactics such as 'kettling'.

Questions

- List reasons for discontent with the police
- Have the police improved their record with respect to relationships with the public?

Keywords

1. Kettling - holding a group of people in a police cordon, sometimes for many hours at a time
2. Reactionary - over-responding to a situation
3. Politicised - made aware of the importance of politics in human relationships
4. Inquest - enquiry into a sudden or unexplained death
5. Miscarriage of justice - obviously unfair or incorrect treatment by the courts and police force against the innocent who are accused of crime

Recent police tactics

Bullets

- The police have responded to criticism, but also complain that they are being hampered in their work by government initiatives.
- They are accused of becoming more distant from the public and not having community support.
- The police feel pressurised and lacking in support from government or the public.

Text

In the 21st century the police have been accused of becoming more and more distant from the rest of the population. They have come in for a lot of criticism of late especially over their effectiveness in dealing with crimes and the way in which they deal with the population in general. It has been argued that they have not dealt with crime and the victims of crime effectively. The police have responded with a number of tactics. In particular, the press have praised the return of the 'beat bobby' to patrol the streets of our towns and cities to help deal with crime and criminal behaviour. How successful this is in combating crime is debatable, although it does tend to reassure the public.

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It has also been argued that the police are not managing their resources; there are few police officers on patrol at any one time. This, according to the police, is due to the increasing amount of 'red tape' and paperwork put on them by the government. Police officers complain that more time is spent in the police station filling in forms than out patrolling the streets and thus they are less able to be in a position to respond to incidents. The power of the police has also been criticised, especially when the new terrorism laws came into force in 2006. Along with these new terrorism laws came a new type of police force that appeared to increasingly carry weapons and to be heavily armoured for protection. This goes against the traditional consensual view of the police officer mentioned above.

The increasingly paramilitary appearance of police officers would, for the Marxists, reaffirm their view that they are an agency of repression. However, it should also be noted that policing in the 21st century is far more complex than in previous years. Gangs, drugs and powerful weapons are becoming ever more commonplace as are the willingness of criminals to use them. Couple this with the public's attitudes towards the police becoming increasingly hostile and the pressure from all sides placed upon them to solve crimes, it is perhaps understandable that the police feel increasingly distant from the people.

Questions

- What pressures are the police experiencing in their relationship with the government and the community?

Keywords

1. Paramilitary - like soldiers and the army
2. Red tape - pointless and time consuming paperwork
3. Beat bobby - police officers who walk around an area on patrol

The police record on ethnic minority community relations

Bullets

- There is a history of bad relationships between the police and some minority ethnic groups
- Many enquiries and research projects find that the police are institutionally racist or that individual police officers are racist.
- However, the issue may be more complex than it seems because some ethnic minorities are more likely to experience harassment than others

Text

One issue of police relationships with the public that has given rise to many hours of public and academic inquiry is how the police deal with minority ethnic groups or BME (either Black Minority Ethnicity or British Minority Ethnicity) people. Their record is very poor, in this area. Reiner (1997), Harrison (1998), Hall (1978) and others have all noted appalling relationships between the police and ethnic communities and have noted that there are extremely low recruitment rates among BME groups.

During the long hot summer of 1981, there was rioting in Brixton and in other racially mixed areas of London. The subsequent enquiry headed by Lord Scarman found that

Understanding culture (Education)

many officers were motivated by personal racial prejudice against BME people and this had led to heavy handed and provocative behaviour and the subsequent rioting. Scarman suggested that the Metropolitan Police were not racist, but that certain officers were. This became known as the 'bad apple thesis'. The idea was that the racism of certain officers set a tone for the rest of the police, an idea known as 'canteen culture'.

Robin Oakley, in 1998 suggested that there was a culture of racism in the police. He claimed it was unconscious but reflected the way that most police personnel thought. There were numerous cases where people from the BME community had noted differential treatment by the police. One of the most notorious was the way that the police used powers to stop and search to harass Black youths. Black youths were six times more likely to be stopped and searched than white youths in London.

The 1999 Macpherson Report into the murder and subsequent failure to convict the murderers of the Black teenager, Stephen Lawrence claimed that the police were institutionally racist. Racism was defined as behaviour that the victim perceived to be discriminatory. Institutional racism was defined as 'The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people'.

The picture is not clear-cut, however, and television research into police racism by journalist Mark Daly (2003) tends to support the bad apple thesis of racism despite deliberate attempts by the police to combat racism. Four officers were sacked from the North Wales Police as a result of the programme. Equally troublesome is the fact that there are lower rates of offending and arrest for Asian minorities. If the only issue was racism, then their rates would be much higher. Skidelsky (2000) suggests the issue is a combination of social class and race and Mooney and Young (1999) claim that the problem is one of class and not race.

Questions

- What evidence is there to support the view that the police are racist?
- Why is racism a problem within the police?
- How can racist attitudes within the police be tackled?

Keywords

1. Racism - deliberate discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, culture or religion as perceived by the victim
2. Institutional racism - the culture or rules of an organisation lead to discrimination on the basis of culture, ethnicity or religion
3. Stop and search - the police have the right to stop and search people they consider may be acting in a suspicious manner
4. Bad apple thesis - the problem is to do with individuals and not the Police Force as a whole.

What is canteen culture?

Bullets

- The demands of the job have led to the police developing a strong 'canteen culture'.

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- The police have recognised that this has alienated some communities and have taken active steps to change their methods
- These policies have had limited success.

Text

Because the police work shifts and are often socially isolated from the wider population, they have a powerful occupational culture with values that are sometimes different from those of people around them. This has been described as a canteen culture because it is reinforced by informal social groupings rather than through management systems.

In the UK, Southgate (1986) found that the police supported law enforcement rather than consensual policing. In addition, there was evidence of open racial prejudice. Smith and Gray (1983) found this culture to be heavily masculine; drinking, violence, misogyny and racism were typical elements of police behaviour. They claimed it was because many of the people who were attracted to careers in the police had a desire for excitement and dominance. Holdaway (1983) also suggested that power and control were part of the attraction of the work. The job of a police officer is in reality likely to be boring and yet recruitment and much media imagery tend to emphasise excitement and thrills. Much police time is devoted to bureaucracy and procedures so that very little police time is devoted to actual policing.

There have been moves to attempt to retrain the police into more acceptable attitudes. The police need to have good relationships with the public as most crime (85 -90%) is actually brought to them in reports from the public according to Hough and Mayhew (1983 and 1985). However, Abrams suggests that as communities are now fragmented, consensual policing is no longer possible. Nevertheless the police have responded by attempting to have a more visible presence on the streets.

There is a range of evidence to suggest that the police are expected to take on responsibility for the failings of society and it is not surprising that they develop certain attitudes towards crime and criminals. Henry and Mars (1978) claim that criminal behaviour is near universal and part of people's survival in low economic situations so 'fell off the back of a lorry' is very acceptable to most people although technically criminal. Moreover, Phipps (1983) suggests that the actors in most crimes are often pathetic and inadequate victim types themselves. Hall (1978) claimed that the police respond to media stereotypes of criminality and they act on them. This then becomes true to the extent of being reflected in criminal statistics.

There is an added dimension to the issue of canteen culture. Many feminists claim that it disadvantages women. Adler (1987) claimed that rape victims often feel deeply damaged and face additional and unique problems with the criminal justice system. Public debate on the issue has added to their fears. Dobash and Dobash and other feminist writers have pointed to an equally poor record with relation to domestic violence. Whilst the police have changed their procedures in the face of such criticism of their methods, conviction rates against rapists and domestic violence remain very poor indeed.

Questions

- What evidence supports the view that there is a canteen culture?
- How might police forces attempt to challenge canteen culture?
- How successful have these strategies and policies been?

Keywords

Understanding culture (Education)

1. Canteen culture - a strong workplace ethic with norms and values shared by all of the workers
2. Misogyny - hatred of women
3. Fragmented - broken up