Criminology

Lecture 1

Course Overview
Part I: Crime and Its Definition

• In this section, we will talk about rules and systems of social control.

• We will define “crime” as behavioral acts that breach rules sanctioned by the state.

• We will see that there are many other types of rules, and that the simple legal definition may not be adequate.
Human Nature

• Are humans selfish, prone to breaking rules, and in general prone to criminality?
• Are humans prosocial, and often willing to follow social rules, and punish those who do not?
• We will look at some experimental evidence to address these interesting and important questions.
Law and Crime

- Why is watching (and not reporting) a woman getting stabbed and raped not a crime?

- Why did John Hinckley Jr. only go to a mental hospital for an attempted presidential assassination?

- We will look at how the American Criminal justice system defines crime
Part II: Nature, Measurement, and Distribution of Crime

- Measuring Crime (Uniform Crime Reports, National Crime Victimization Surveys, self-report surveys)
- Types of Crime (Property and Violent Crime, Extremism/Terrorism)
- Patterns associated with crime (age, gender, crime rates in through time and in different places)
The Age-Crime Curve

Arrest Rate per 100,000

Violent
Property

Age

0 500 1000 1500 2000 2500
10 12 14 16 18 20 22 24 26 28
Crime: International Perspectives

• High rates of crime in the U.S.

• What factors associated with the United States that might cause high crime rates? (culture, capitalistic economies, inequality, self-concepts)?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Homicide</th>
<th>Rape</th>
<th>Robbery</th>
<th>Burglary</th>
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<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>165.2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
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<td>7.9</td>
<td>49.2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2.6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>36.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>109.6</td>
<td>519.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>66.9</td>
<td>57.9</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Crime Rate in Selected Countries, 1998: Interpol Data \((\text{Incidents per 100,000})\)
Vicious Brits
% of people who were a victim of crime, once or more, in 1999:

**Violent crime**
- Australia
- England & Wales
- Scotland
- Finland
- Northern Ireland
- France
- Netherlands
- United States
- Spain†
- Japan

**Car theft**
- England & Wales
- Australia
- France
- Northern Ireland
- Scotland
- Netherlands
- Finland
- United States
- Spain‡
- Japan

**Burglary**
- Australia
- England & Wales
- United States
- Netherlands
- Scotland
- Northern Ireland
- France
- Spain†
- Japan
- Finland

*Including attempts  †Catalonia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City:</th>
<th>Rate:</th>
<th>Rank:</th>
<th>City:</th>
<th>Rate:</th>
<th>Rank:</th>
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<td>Kansas City, MO</td>
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<td>Virginia Beach, VA</td>
<td>5,863</td>
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<td>Tucson, AZ</td>
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<td>Atlanta, GA</td>
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<td>Dallas, TX</td>
<td>15,066</td>
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<td>St. Louis, MO</td>
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<td>Phoenix, AZ</td>
<td>9,958</td>
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<td>Sacramento, CA</td>
<td>10,098</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detroit, MI</td>
<td>12,263</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Fresno, CA</td>
<td>12,031</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>San Antonio, TX</td>
<td>12,291</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Tulsa, OK</td>
<td>8,887</td>
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<tr>
<td>San Jose, CA</td>
<td>5,364</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>Oakland, CA</td>
<td>12,186</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indianapolis, IN</td>
<td>7,357</td>
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<td>Honolulu CDP, HI</td>
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<tr>
<td>San Francisco, CA</td>
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<td>Miami, FL</td>
<td>18,394</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Baltimore, MD</td>
<td>11,371</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Pittsburgh, PA</td>
<td>8,219</td>
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<td>Jacksonville, FL</td>
<td>10,591</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Cincinnati, OH</td>
<td>9,722</td>
<td>41</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Minneapolis, MN</td>
<td>11,282</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regional Crime Patterns

Percentile Map
Homicide Rate (EBS)
1990

States

- <1%
- 1-10%
- 10-50%
- 50-90%
- 90-99%
- >99%

Scale: 0 200 Miles
Figure 12.1. Historical changes in the homicide rate in England. Each point represents an estimated homicide rate for a city or county over a few years or decades. (Modified from Gurr, 1981.)
America’s Plunging Crime Rate.
Firearms death rate by race
Death rate by firearms per 100,000 U.S. population, by race, 1979-1999

Race/Ethnicity and Crime

- African Americans, Latinos, and other minorities experience high offender and victim rates.

Is it a real Disparity or is it Discrimination?
Jail incarceration rates by race and ethnicity, 1990-2000

Number of jail inmates per 100,000 U.S. residents
African-Americans and Hispanics trust the police and the criminal justice system less than whites

How much of the time do you think you can trust the police to do what is right for you or your community? Almost all of the time, most of the time, only some of the time, or almost none of the time?

Please tell me how much confidence you, yourself, have in the criminal justice system.

Source: Princeton Survey Research / Kaiser 9/99

Source: Gallup Organization / CNN / USA Today 7/98
Questions

• Why do over 50% of homicides occur between family members and acquaintances?

• Are most robberies planned and rational?

• What do criminologists know about the causes of terrorism?
Part III: Theory: Evaluating Theories on Four Criteria

1) Assumptions of human nature
2) Factors that cause crime
3) Empirical support
4) Implications for public policy
Deterrence Hypothesis

- Hypothesis: When the certainty, severity, and celerity of criminal sanctions are high in a population, criminal behavior will be low.
Questions

• Do criminal sanctions deter murderers?
• Are bigger males more likely to be criminals?
• Can we blame American crime on the “American Dream”?
• Does capitalism cause crime?
Part IV: Controlling Crime: Criminal Justice Institutions and Policy

• Informal institutions – Non-state institutions (vigilante organizations, “cultures of honor”)

• Political ideology (conservative and liberal)

• Guns, drugs
Informal Institutions of Social Control
Outcomes of Incarceration Policy

• Rehabilitation or Punishment???

• Three strikes and you are out!!
Figure 1.A  Incarceration rates for selected nations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nation</th>
<th>Rates of incarceration per 100,000 population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>England/Wales</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
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<td>Germany</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Number of State and Federal Prisoners
Sentenced, 1925 to 1997
Prisoners on death row, 1953-2000
Executions

Number of people executed in the United States, 1977-2001

Costs and Benefits of Incarceration

- 6% of offenders commit about half of the total crimes committed each year.
- RAND institute: Reduce crime by 28% by locking up chronic offenders; Cost: 16,000$ for every crime
- Does this work?
Questions

• Do “three strikes laws” deter criminal behavior?

• Should we decriminalize drug use?

• What is the purpose (and effectiveness) of declaring war on crime?
Introduction to Concepts in the Field of Criminology

Part I: The Field of Criminology
Part II: What is a Crime?
Part III: How do criminologists view crime?
Part I: The Field of Criminology
What is Criminology?

• Criminology is the scientific approach to the study of criminal behavior.

• Criminology is an interdisciplinary field. Although criminology’s 20th century orientation has been sociological, today it can be viewed as integrated approach (e.g. biology, psychology, history, economics)
Brief History of Criminology

- **Middle Ages (1200-1600)** – superstition and fear of devil dominated thinking

- **Classical Criminology – mid-18th century**
  - Rational approach and free will
  - Relate punishment to crime

- **Positivism – 19th century**
  - Behavior as a result of many forces
  - First scientific approach to crime
  - Biological determinism
History of Criminology (cont)

Sociological Criminology – 20th century
- Impact of environment on social development and behavior
- Crime is a failure of socialization

Conflict Criminology – late 20th century
- Relates economics to crime

Now = behavior is a result of many factors that interact with environment
Criminology and Criminal Justice

• Criminology – explains the origin, extent, nature of crime in society

• Criminal Justice – evaluates agencies of social control that deal with criminal offenders (and victims)

• Theses are related topics that should be considered together (we will cover both).
Criminology and Delinquency

- Delinquency generally refers to “deviance” among young offenders (e.g. < 18 years of age)
- Juveniles receive different treatment under the American criminal justice system
- The study of the nature of younger and older offenders have used similar theories. Thus, the study of criminology and delinquency are often very similar.
Part II: What is Crime?

A Crime is a Violation of a Legal Rule

To understand the difference between legal rules and other types of rules we need to define systems of social control.
Systems of Social Control

• **Rules**: definitions of behavior that should be followed

• **Sanctions**: rewards and punishments

• **Actors** (enforcers)
Categorizing Rules by the Type of Actors that Enforce Them

**Laws:** Rules sanctioned by the State

**Societal norms:** Rules sanctioned by communities or citizens themselves who do not hold formal positions in the legal system
Example of Laws

- Homicide, Rape, Robbery
- Embezzlement, Theft
- Many behaviors violate our morals (e.g., not saving a drowning person) but are not violations of laws
Examples of Societal Rules (Norms)

- ATM lines
- Bathroom norms
- Eating etiquette
Problems with Legal Definition of Crime

1.) Laws vary in different places and times. If the law does not exist, is a behavior still a crime?

2.) Should deviant behavior (violating norms) be included to understand the nature of crime?
Criminology and Deviance

• Deviant Behavior – behavior that departs from social norms
• Criminal Behavior - behavior that departs from legal rules, or LAWS
• Complex relationships between deviance and crime.
How is deviance defined?

• Conflict perspective. The norms of society reflect the interests of the rich and powerful—deviant labels are applied to people who interfere with the operation of capitalism.
  – Behaviors that threaten capitalist operations are more likely to be considered deviant
Part III: How Do Criminologists View Crime?

Different assumptions about how laws emerge
Criminalization: How Laws Emerge

• The process whereby criminal law is selectively applied to social behavior.

• Process involves 1.) enactment of *legislation* that outlaws certain types of behavior, 2.) *monitoring and policing* of that behavior, and 3.) if detected, the *punishment* of that behavior.
What Forces Influence the Generation of Laws?

- **Loss and Harm**: People lose property or are injured.

- **Power and Interests**: Controlling some types of behavior can benefit some parts of society but not others.

- **Imposition of Morals**: Controlling some types of behavior can improve social life.
Forces Believed to Generate Laws Influence Perspectives on Crime

- Loss and Harm: rules emerge by consensus

- Power and Interests: rules emerge by conflict (the powerful impose rules to protect their interests).

- Morals and Common Good: rules created by “moral crusaders” (e.g., laws against pornography, prostitution, drugs)?