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CRIME

Crime refers to acts forbidden by and subject to sanctions from the state. In modern societies, the term refers to violations of the criminal law that are punishable by the criminal justice system. The concept predates sociology and has been much studied since the discipline's beginnings. Sociological theories of crime can be divided into those that seek to explain why some individuals commit crimes and those that try to understand crime's place in the larger society.

ACCOUNTING FOR CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR

Some theories argue that criminals are different from law-abiding people. The nature of this difference depends on the dominant scientific models of the time. During criminology's long history, theorists from a great variety of disciplines have speculated that criminals have distinctive racial characteristics, body types, personality types, intelligence levels, or genetic predispositions. Although these theories have attracted some sociological interest, most sociologists have resisted interpretations rooted in the criminal's biology, in favor of explanations that focus on social experiences.

Sociological theories of criminality can be divided into two major schools. The approach now known as *control theory* had it roots in the classical criminology articulated by Cesare Beccaria in the eighteenth century. It argues that crime is an expression of natural, short-term self-interest. In this view, taking what one wants or striking out in anger, the sorts of acts that tend to be defined as crimes, are normal reactions of most organisms. What is remarkable is that most people, most of the time, do not give in to raw self-interest. Rather, socialization leads to self-control; at an early age, most children learn to reign in their self-interested impulses in order to gain adult approval. The contemporary version of this approach, control theory, argues that criminals have had ineffective, erratic socialization, and as a result, they lack self-control and therefore commit crimes.

Social networks play key roles in socializing individuals. During early childhood, the family is the central arena for teaching these limits; parents who love their children, pay attention to them, and offer firm, consistent discipline to instill self-control. Older children influence one another; Edwin H. Sutherland's *theory of differential association* suggested that individuals whose social contacts are mostly law abiding will become law abiding, but that those whose associates are involved in criminality will commit crimes themselves. The expectations of a partner in a stable, loving relationship, typically involving marriage and family formation, also can constrain criminality. In addition, other social institutions can foster self-control. School tends to reward students who display disciplined learning habits; later in life, the demands of steady work or military service discourage criminality. Thus, the conventional life course—childhood in a nurturing family, youth spent among peers in school, followed by an adulthood focused around work and a family of one's own—provides a web of social control. To the degree that individuals are deeply enmeshed in this web, they are unlikely to become criminals, but to the degree that individuals have only loose ties to conventional life, the lessons of self-control are less likely to be learned, and crime becomes more likely.

The second major sociological approach to explaining individuals' criminality is *strain theory.* In this model, society places some individuals under strain, and they respond by turning to crime. Thus, individuals who find themselves in difficult circumstances, raised in poverty or in broken families, victims of racial discrimination or class

prejudice, or given few opportunities for education or employment, are more likely to become criminal. Key to strain theory is the notion of blocked opportunities. Rather than viewing crime, as control theory does, as an expression of normal human impulses, strain theory suggests that individuals turn to crime only because they find their access to respectability blocked. In this view, the familiar inverse relationship between social class and criminality is evidence of the blocked opportunities created by inequities in the class system.

The social environment plays a central role in strain theory. Subcultural explanations of delinquency, for example, suggest that lower-class culture celebrates values, such as toughness and fatalism, that make lawbreaking seem more attractive. Similarly, human ecology emphasizes urban geography's role in shaping criminality. Researchers associated with Chicago School sociology demonstrated that crime and other social problems tended to be concentrated in particular areas within the city. Before the Second World War, these patterns were usually explained in terms of social disorganization: In a city characterized by diversity, some neighborhoods might be dominated by the coherent moral codes of particular ethnic groups or social classes, but others, which lacked this sort of moral cohesion, became scenes of crime and disorder. The problem with social disorganization as a concept was that it proved all too easy for ethnographers to describe the culture and social organization of the allegedly disorganized areas.

Modern analysts of crime's spatial distribution tend to focus on both external and internal forces that shape areas. For example, analysts such as William J. Wilson argue that economic forces have fostered contemporary urban ghettos. As the economy provides fewer well-paying manufacturing jobs for individuals with modest educational credentials and as those jobs shift away from central cities, poverty becomes increasingly concentrated in urban areas, with predictable results: Fewer young couples marry; fewer children grow up in two-parent families; and more people turn to illegal activities for income. Such models identify a wide array of ways opportunities can be blocked, fostering strain and thereby making crime more likely.

Recent approaches have explored other ways in which space shapes crime. *Routine activity theory* begins with the observation that crime requires offenders but also prospective targets and the absence of social control. Analysts suggest that these conditions emerge at some times and places due to patterns in people's routine activities. Thus, as the proportion of wives employed outside the home grows, more homes are left vacant during the daytime, creating greater opportunities for residential burglaries. *Broken windows theory* suggests that a neighborhood's tolerance of minor forms of public disorder, such as an unrepaired broken window, signals to potential offenders that there is no strong social consensus opposing crime and disorder and thereby invites misbehavior. There are, then, a range of theories explaining how social environments shape criminality.

UNDERSTANDING CRIME'S PLACE IN SOCIETY

Unlike theories that seek to account for individuals' crimes, other theorists try to understand crime's role in the larger society. At first glance, crime might seem to pose problems for *functionalist theory*, which views society as a system in which each element serves a purpose or function that contributes to maintaining the system. Crime seems to be dysfunctional for a system built upon moral consensus. However, beginning with Émile Durkheim, analysts have argued that crime serves functions. In *The Rules of Sociological Method* ([1895] 1982), Durkheim argued that crime was an inevitable social fact, that all societies used norms to mark their behavioral boundaries, and that the punishment of violations of those standards fostered social solidarity. Crime, then, was necessary to defining social order. In addition, functionalists often argued that crime served latent functions. For example, corruption, organized crime, and prostitution all offered efficient, albeit forbidden, markets that provided means of circumventing rigidities in the social order.

The principal macrosociological competitor to functionalism has been *conflict theory*. This approach, derived from the writings of Karl Marx, argues that society is best viewed not as a moral consensus, but as a competition among groups, particularly social classes, of different power. For conflict theorists, the criminal law is an artifact of elite interests; that is, elites arrange of the passage of laws that reflect and affirm their interests (e.g., by protecting the institution of private property), and they oversee the enforcement of those laws. In this view, crime may be viewed as rebellious, or at least as prepolitical, expressions of the discontent of the oppressed, while law enforcement is one means by which elites squelch opposition to their institutional control. Conflict theorists argue that often the criminal law ignores the abuses of elites (i.e., acts that should be considered crimes are not forbidden by the statutes) or that the criminal justice system fails to bring sanctions to bear against elite offenders. From this perspective, differences in the criminality of ethnic groups or social classes are products of a social system that disadvantages the powerless while protecting the interests of elites.

Various contemporary approaches derive from conflict theory, such as feminism, critical race theory, and postmodernism. Here, the focus tends to shift from class as the social system's central dimension to gender, race, or even the power to control discourse. In such frameworks, criminality appears as a form of either resistance to or oppression by the dominant order.

CONTROLLING CRIME

In addition to studying crime, social theorists examine the control of crime. Key topics include the creation of criminal laws and the institutions for their enforcement, and the operation of the criminal justice system (e.g., policing, courts, and corrections). Interpretations of crime's control reflect theorists' assumptions about society and about crime: Conflict theorists criticize social control as a tool for protecting elite interests, while those who assign consensus a central role in societal organization tend to accept the need to control crime. Again, this literature is rich, with multiple competing theoretical paradigms for interpreting criminal justice.

— Joel Best

See also Anomie; Conflict Theory; Deviance; Socialization; Structural Functionalism; Urbanization

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CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

Critical pedagogy is a political project that attempts to change the power structures of everyday life, especially in cultural institutions such as those in education and the media. These changes are brought about through critique, resistance, and struggle. It aims to enable people to avoid manipulation and to empower them. Critical pedagogy is closely linked with the history of cultural studies and its democratic idea of a "long revolution."

The history of cultural studies shows that this project, with its intellectual and political nature, has since its beginning been closely linked to questions of education and pedagogy. This is because it originated in the vital and intellectually varied field of adult education in the 1950s in Great Britain. In productive exchange with mature students from working classes, Edward P. Thompson, Raymond Williams, and Richard Hoggart developed their creative ideas on cultural analysis. In the context of adult education, for example, in workers' education, the roles of professor and student were not so clearly defined by hierarchy as in university. These untraditional students who had been denied access to higher education did not accept as inevitable the authority of professors, but rather applied what they learned to their own life, asked questions in class that had practical relevance to their own experience, and did not accept the borders between academic disciplines. These radical challenges not only made press, radio, and films, and so on themes alongside literature but also made it possible to bring students to view their own lives in the context of unequal social relationships. As a next step, it showed them ways in which their lives could be changed in order to create more social justice and equality. These institutions, alternatives to university, created a space for cultural studies in Great Britain.

In more recent studies, culture is described as a "network of embedded practices and representations (texts, images, talk, codes of behaviour, and the narrative structures organizing these)" (Frow and Morris 2000:316). Culture is the place where power relationships are legitimized but where they can also be challenged and changed. Cultural studies not only analyses but also has an interventionist character. Since the 1960s, the place of the working classes has been taken by new social movements, marginalized minorities, and oppressed groups whose agency ought to be increased by teaching them to socially contextualise their precise situation in life and to recognise and grasp opportunities to change.

THE WORK OF THE CCCS AND ITS PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) was first led by Richard Hoggart and later by Stuart Hall, who also came from the field of adult education and belonged to the New Left. Here, media studies, that is, the analysis of film, television, press, and so on, was an important topic. Questions of pedagogy, however, were explicitly dealt with only in passing, even when the centre became world famous for its studies of youth. There were two essential fields of research, the studies of youth with their model of incorporation and resistance, on one hand, and media research with its textual analysis critical of ideology, on the other. These do reveal characteristics that are relevant for critical pedagogy.

Thus, it is shown, both in the case of young people from the working classes as well as in the case of television viewers, that they are not "cultural dopes," but rather, they create their own culture in dealing with products or cultural texts available to them. Doubtless, in Birmingham, the focus lay on agency that is restricted by social conditions but is at least rudimentarily existent. Following Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony, popular culture becomes the "zone of contestation." The interdisciplinary investigations by cultural studies aim to increase autonomy by showing, for example, how news on television is structured ideologically and how it can be treated critically from the background of one's own interests.