

Crime, Deviance and Social Control

Lecture 21

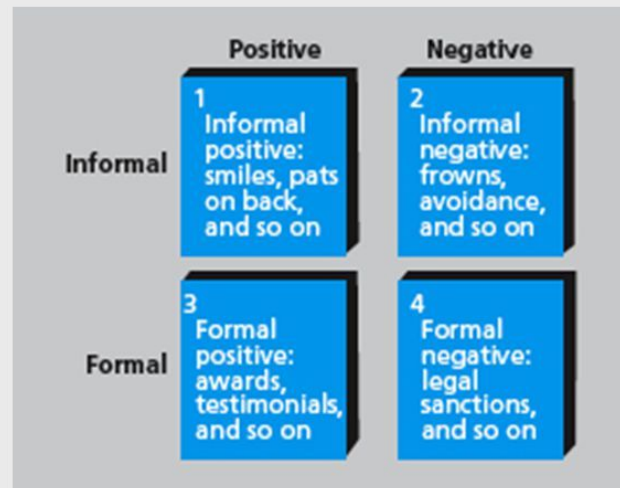
Crime and Deviance

- Modern World – Ridden with Crime
- It is everywhere – Television, Newspapers, Media, Drawing room discussions, Political agendas
- Some crimes- quite global – Human and Drug Trafficking ; others may not be
- But it is so omnipresent that humans devise their everyday lives around not falling prey to crimes/criminals
- Anxieties about crime-evident not just in individual behavior but also in changing penal responses
 - (Think of how new forms of crimes lead to creation of new forms of repressive control mechanisms)
 - Obsession with recording Crime Rates (India has NCRB whose task is precisely this)
- ‘Crime control’ – Center of state agenda, election manifestos and arguments
- Crime is definitely deviant behavior but all deviant behavior is not crime!

So What separates 'Normal' from
'Deviant' Behaviour?

- To define anything as deviance we need to know not just what happened but who did it and in what context they are placed.
- Deviant behavior is behavior that fails to conform to the rules or norms of the group in question –Deviance then involves recognized violation of cultural norms
- Deviance- not necessarily negative! – Deviance sometimes can also signify creativity. It can have both functions and dysfunctions for society.
- Social Control- mechanism for controlling deviance. It is the tool for making behavior conform to societally acceptable norms
 - Social Control can be Internal (Acceptance / internalization of acceptable behavior)
 - It can also be External (In the form of Sanctions- rewards or punishments)

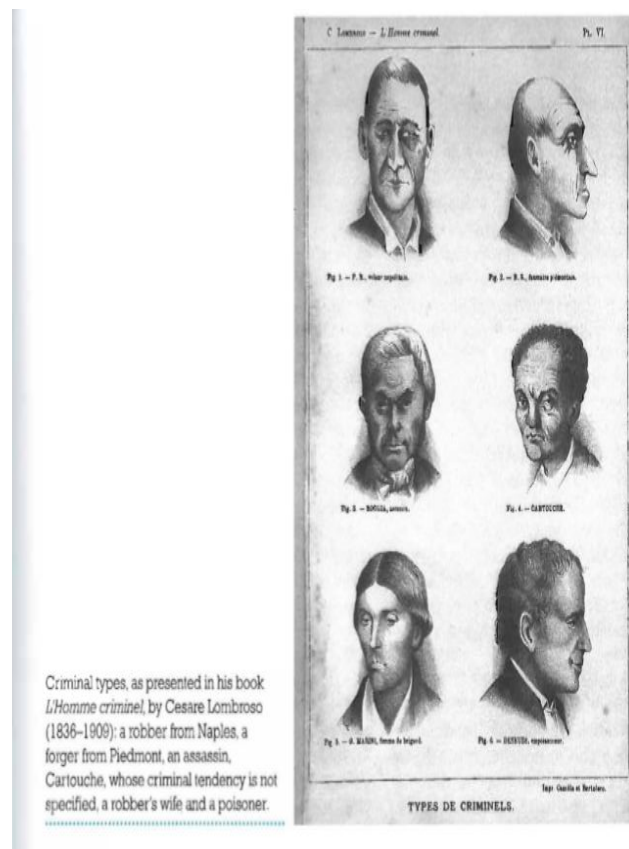
Types of Social Sanctions



- Typology of Sanctions (positive, negative, formal, informal) – can happen in combination of twos
- Crime is deviance for which society enacts formal sanctions in the form of criminal law

Why do people commit crimes? – Biological Explanations

- Numerous explanations proposed
- In 1870s, Cesare Lombroso (linked crime to physical characteristics and anatomical features)- physicist who worked in Prison
- Argued Criminals have low foreheads, prominent jaw and cheekbones, protruding ears, excessive body hair, unusually long arms (like apes) (almost saying criminals are less evolved humans)
- Lombroso's ideas were thoroughly discredited – lack of evidence / restrictive sample
- Later theory linked crime to body type.
- It argued that Muscular active body types (mesomorphs), tend to be more aggressive and physical, and therefore more likely to be delinquent than those of thin physique (ectomorphs) or more round, fleshy people (endomorphs) (Sheldon 1949; Glueck and Glueck 1956)



Psychological explanations

- Psychological approaches to criminality have searched for explanations within the individual, not society.
- Psychological views concentrate on personality types, not physical features
- Assumed that seeds of deviance are sowed in childhood through parenting and early socialisation.
- Early research largely done in total institutions- Focus on traits like 'feeble-mindedness' and 'moral degeneracy' , 'psychologically sick'
- Hans Eysenck (1964) suggested abnormal mental states can lead to criminality or improper socialization.
- Psychological theories of criminality can at best explain only some aspects of crime.
- Some criminals may possess distinct personality characteristics from larger population, it is highly unlikely that the majority of criminals do so.
- Crimes themselves so different in nature so it is even more unlikely that criminals will possess similar personality traits.

Crux of the Problem with these explanation

- Both approaches to criminality presume that deviance is a sign of something 'wrong' with the individual, rather than with society.
- View crime as embedded either in the body or the mind, not in individual's surrounding.
- Both theories are positivist : once we know the reason/causes of crime, we will be able to prevent crime from happening.
- These positivist explanations came under severe criticism later.
- The critiques argued that the nature of crime must be sociological, because what is crime actually is depends on the social institutions of a society.
- Think of how somethings may qualify as a crime in one society but not in other.
Ex: Parents thrashing children Or Shouting at them? – Common in many countries (part of parenting) ; Criminal in other countries (Parents can be arrested)

Sociological Perspectives on Crime and Deviance

- Functionalist Theory (Anomic Theory- Emile Durkheim)
- Strain Theory- Robert Merton
- Interactionist Theory – Labelling

Functionalist Theory (Anomic Theory)

- You may remember functionalist paradigm (from Stratification discussion)
- Deviance too in this perspective are functionally important for society.
- Emile Durkheim – proposed several reasons why Deviance may be functional
- 1) Social Regulation- Deviance can help a society clarify its moral boundaries.
- 2) Social Integration- Deviance promotes social cohesion (one of functionalism's valued ideals); people can be brought together as a community in the face of crime or other violations.



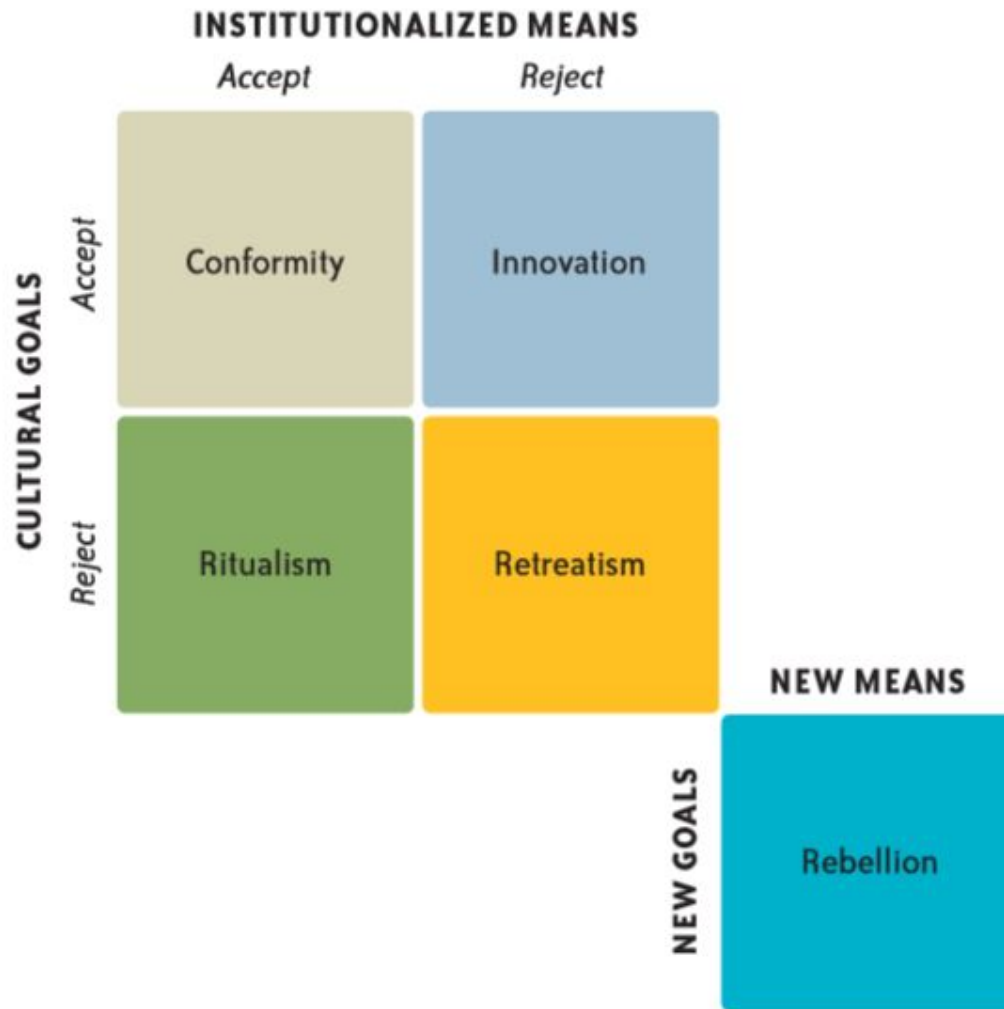
- Durkheim argued that every society has some collective conscience – diffused but widespread – “An action shocks this collective conscience, not because it is criminal but it becomes criminal because it shocks collective conscience”
- Argued that in small, simpler societies there was greater consensus and a feeling of community; **mechanical solidarity** (members joint together by common moral codes)
- Modern, developed societies- **organic solidarity** (comes from differentiation, specialization and division of labour; not from shared moral values which become less powerful now)
- In modern societies, traditional norms and standards become undermined without being replaced by new ones – people will express more ‘anomie’
- Anomie is the condition of normlessness, in which values and norms have less impact and culture no longer provides adequate guidelines for behaviour
- Anomie exists when there are no clear standards to guide behaviour, people feel disoriented and thus commit more suicide (a form of deviant behaviour)
- More room for individual choice in modern societies, it is inevitable that there will be some non-conformity or deviance (and as long as it is kept under a certain level, it will be functional for society).

Structural Strain Theory

- Proposed by Robert K. Merton.
- Like Durkheim, he too believed some deviance is inevitable in any society- theory builds on concept of 'Anomie' ; using data on crimes.
- Merton argues that an individual's position in the social structure will affect their experience of deviance and conformity
- **Social inequality can create situations in which people experience tension (or strain) between the goals of society** they should be working toward (like financial success) and **the means they have available** to meet those goals
Different combinations of goals and means to achieve them can create different outcomes.
- In this view Deviance and crime are products of strain between people's cultural values and the unequal distribution of legitimate opportunities within society.

Merton's Typology of Deviance

Each type represents a mode of adaptation by the deviant individual



Significance of Merton's theory

- Merton's theory explained why when societies become affluent, crime rates continue to rise.
- Strain between Aspirations and Inequalities – sense of relative deprivation
- Individual choices made within wider societal context



Labelling Theory

- Deviance in this approach is not a set of characteristics of individuals/groups, but a process of interaction between deviants and non-deviants.
- Emphasis on – Why some people come to be regarded as ‘deviants’ or ‘criminals’?
- People who represent the forces of law and order, or are able to impose definitions of conventional morality on others, do most of the labelling.
- Howard Becker – lead this perspective and argued 'deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label'
 - Ex: Think of how Bollywood Actors were subjected to media trial (social control for deviant behavior) for possessing drugs while it is fairly common in Benaras and done in open spaces in the name of religious offerings

- Labelling also influences self-identity.
- Edwin Lemert (1972) advanced a model for understanding how deviance can either coexist with or become central to one's identity.
- Argued that Deviance is actually quite commonplace and people usually get away with it.
- Initial act of transgression **primary deviance** – mostly these acts remain 'marginal' to the person's self-identity – becomes 'normalised'
- In cases where normalisation does not happen the person is labelled a criminal.
- This is **secondary deviance** where individuals come to accept the label and see themselves as deviant.

Criticisms of Labelling Theory

- Focusing more on secondary deviance, labelling theorists neglect the processes that lead people to commit acts of deviance in the first place.
- It is unclear whether labelling actually does have the effect of increasing deviant conduct.

Think about these

- What are the newer forms of crimes around us in the modern world?
- To what extent do you think these theories are important to understand and prevent crimes today? Are they relevant? Yes, no, why so?
- Do you think nature of social control in modern contemporary societies has altered in comparison to earlier ones? - Surveillance as a measure for controlling crime/

