



Unit 1 Tutorials: Concepts of Crime, Crime Typologies, and Criminology

INSIDE UNIT 1

What Is Crime?

- Crime in Context
- Framing Crime
- The Relationship Between Crime, the Media, and the Public
- How the Media Frame Portrayals of Offenders, Victims, and the Police
- Measuring Crime

Typologies and Patterns of Crime

- Typologies and Patterns of Crime
- Violent Crimes: Definitions and Patterns
- Nonviolent Crimes: Definitions and Patterns
- Crimes of Morality and Public Order: Definitions and Patterns
- Hate Crime, Extremism, and Terrorism
- Cybercrime
- Transnational and Organized Crime
- White-Collar Crimes

The Classical School vs. The Positivist School

- The Classical School and Early Theorists
- Deterrence
- Case Analysis: Nonviolent Crimes
- The Positivist School
- Case Analysis: Violent Crimes
- Critiques of the Classical and Positivist Schools

Crime in Context

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn how to define the concepts of crime and criminology and explore several different models of crime. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

- 1. Introduction to the Course**
- 2. Defining Crime and Criminology**
 - 2a. What Is Crime?**
 - 2b. What Is Criminology?**
- 3. Crime in Context**
 - 3a. The Consensus Model Versus the Conflict Model**
 - 3b. Crime as a Social Phenomenon**

1. Introduction to the Course

Welcome to Criminology! Throughout this course, you will learn about many topics related to crime and criminology. We will discuss the types of crime, the patterns of crime, and criminological theories, or ideas, about why people commit crime. Criminologists have used different theories to explain crime over time and place. Later in this unit, you will begin to explore the origins of criminology, where you will learn about the ideas behind the classical and positivist schools of criminology. In the second unit, you will learn about the different sociological theories related to crime. The third unit will explore biological and psychological reasons people commit crimes. That unit will also examine critical theories of criminology, which factor inequalities into why people commit crimes. Lastly, the fourth unit will look at criminology from the lens of the victim, or the person harmed as the result of the crime. That unit will also explore feminist criminology and the role of women in various topics related to crime and criminology. Throughout the course, you will have the opportunity to critique these theories and to apply them to case studies.

At Sophia, we want everyone to feel safe and comfortable with what they are learning, so we try to be mindful when choosing material. However, because this course covers crime and criminology, some of the material in this course is related to sensitive topics and may be difficult to read about. That is never our intention, and we will revisit any concerning material identified by a student.

With that said, let's begin our journey by learning about the building blocks of this course. The first Challenge examines, "What is Crime?" Thus, the first few lessons are intended to provide a context of crime over time and

in different locations, as well as how crime is framed in the media. In the next Challenge, the lessons will examine different types of crimes, giving you an opportunity to dig deeper into the context and framing of specific crimes. Following that Challenge, we will examine different criminological theories and how they apply to those specific crimes. Let's get started and take a look at how we define crime and criminology.

2. Defining Crime and Criminology

Each of us comes to criminology with our own understanding of what constitutes crime. In this lesson, you will learn how criminologists define crime and the different ways societies respond to criminal behavior. We will consider how crime was explained in the classical period of criminology and compare these ideas with views of law and justice. We will also consider the relationship between law and social constructionist approaches to crime and how criminological theories can be classified into consensus versus conflict-based perspectives.

2a. What Is Crime?

The term “**crime**” is derived from the Latin word *crīmen*, which means “judgment” or “offense” (Simpson & Weiner, 2022). Many people take crime to mean a violation of criminal and codified law, but in English, the term has always carried broader meanings and has never been restricted to legal codes.

→ EXAMPLE Early Christian writers frequently used the word “crime” as a synonym for “sin” regardless of secular laws, and English speakers have commonly used the term to talk about any offense or shameful act, such as committing a “fashion crime” (Simpson & Weiner, 2022).

While criminologists do not concern themselves with fashion, the types of behaviors studied can range from minor acts of deviance to serious violations of criminal law.



TERM TO KNOW

Crime

An action or omission that constitutes an offense that may be prosecuted by the state and is punishable by law.

2b. What Is Criminology?

Criminology, the discipline with crime as its object of study, first emerged within Europe in the late 19th century (Reid & Boyd, 2015). Of course, people had been dealing with crime and deviance long before this time, including within societies around the world. Criminology as an academic discipline, though, was the product of something new—the scientific revolution. Science provided a powerful tool for understanding the nature of criminal behavior and new methods for studying crime in society. However, it also encouraged the view that the distinct ways Europeans thought about crime were universal and objective, rather than the ideas of people living in a particular place and time.

IN CONTEXT

We can see the Eurocentric nature of these views in the way criminologists applied the new idea of

evolution during the classical period. Early European criminologists, including the followers of **Cesare Lombroso**, believed crime was something rooted in our evolution or, more specifically, in the failure of criminals to develop adaptive traits like empathy and honesty (Garofalo, 1914). The Lombrosians saw crime as something abnormal—something that could be tracked down and rooted out, with the help of criminologists, of course. By identifying and eliminating enough criminals, these pioneering criminologists believed we might be able to get rid of crime altogether.



This approach provided a new way of thinking about crime, yet critics were quick to point out that the Lombrosians misunderstood both the roots of criminal activity (i.e., why people engage in criminalized behavior) and its function (i.e., what crime does for society; De Cleyre, 2020; Durkheim, 1982). The French sociologist **Émile Durkheim** was one such critic. He argued that crime, in fact, is a normal part of every society and something that can never really be eliminated (Durkheim, 1982). He also told us that crime performed an important function for society in that it established the norms for what is acceptable behavior. Durkheim recognized that all societies develop their own moral boundaries and that the resultant norms are important for both personal and social well-being. You will learn more about the ideas of Lombroso and Durkheim in future lessons.



While crime is a universal social phenomenon, what counts as crime is particular to each society. What makes something a crime for Durkheim (1933) is that it “offends certain collective feelings which are especially strong.” Crime is not, however, just anything that offends a person’s sense of proper behavior. Crime represents a form of deviance that calls forth a strong reaction from society, a reaction that can include punishment or other forms of social censure.

Understanding crime in this way helps us avoid some of the mistakes people make when they think of crime as something that can be permanently eliminated from society, like impurities from water.

☞ **EXAMPLE** Such a view of crime has led to some rather horrific social experiments, including the eugenics movement, which saw the sterilization of thousands of people during the early part of the 20th century, a disproportionate number of whom were racial minorities.

Acknowledging crime as normal is not the same as saying it is good, nor does this view indicate why a particular person might commit a crime (e.g., it could well be the psychology of the individual). Understanding crime as normal means that what comes to be seen as crime is a product of the society in question, rather than something that resides within an individual; in that regard, it constitutes a normal part of social dynamics.



TERM TO KNOW

Criminology

The scientific study of crime and criminals.

3. Crime in Context

If crime is the product of a society's moral boundaries, how are we to understand crime in a complex, multicultural place such as the United States? Specifically, how can we understand crime in a place where significant differences exist between understandings regarding how to best respond to it?

Like everyone, our own views of crime are shaped by the society we grew up in. We are influenced by the region of the country we grew up in, as well as the cultural traditions of our ancestors, who brought with them their own systems of law and their own understanding of what counted as crime. Moreover, immigrants adapt to the legal system of the place they relocate to, while settlers impose their own system on colonized populations (Carlson-Manathara & Rowe, 2021).

IN CONTEXT

Crime and law existed across what came to be known as the United States long before any Europeans migrated to its shores. It is impossible to capture in a short piece the richness and variety of approaches to justice and law that have existed across the United States, but some broad characteristics can be observed, and these can be compared with some of the shared understandings observable in European criminal justice systems.

Early European settlers were too naïve to see the methods for dealing with crime within Indigenous societies as complex justice systems, in part because they understood law as something written down and justice as a form of vengeance enacted upon individual perpetrators.



HINT

The criminal justice system and the law have evolved over time. As we begin to understand crime and criminology, we will allude to how criminology fits into the criminal justice system throughout this course. The criminal justice system consists of the network of institutions responsible for enforcing the law, determining the guilt or innocence of defendants, and supervising individuals who have been convicted of a crime. The three primary institutions of the criminal justice system are law enforcement, the courts system, and the corrections system.

Components of the Criminal Justice System



Law Enforcement

Police patrol communities to help prevent crimes, to investigate incidences of crime, and to arrest people suspected of committing crimes.



Courts System

The court system consists of attorneys, judges, and juries, as well as ancillary staff. The guilt or innocence of a suspect is determined in court.



Corrections System

The corrections system incorporates all forms of sentencing and punishment. It includes incarceration and probation.

3a. The Consensus Model Versus the Conflict Model

We need laws to dictate which acts are criminal. There are two views regarding how this type of law is made: the consensus model and the conflict model.

The **consensus model** assumes that the members of a society agree on what is right and wrong. These values then become law. Think about laws prohibiting homicide. Most people in our society would agree that homicide is wrong. Wouldn't you agree? These laws come from English common law, which the Pilgrims brought with them when they landed at Plymouth Rock.

According to the **conflict model**, however, people with economic and political power make laws to protect their own interests, keeping the poor at a disadvantage. For instance, the conflict model explains why laws governing corporate and environmental crimes are not enforced as harshly as street crimes. This is because corporations have more money and power and are thus likely to influence lawmaking.



THINK ABOUT IT

Do you agree more with the consensus model or the conflict model? How did you come to your decision?



TERMS TO KNOW

Conflict Model

A model of crime in which the people in economic and political power create laws to protect their own interests.

Consensus Model

A model of crime in which the majority of citizens in a society share the same values and beliefs.

3b. Crime as a Social Phenomenon

The conflict model views laws as being **socially constructed**; that is, issues become social problems because groups and organizations in power define these issues as problematic. The same organizations also provide solutions to these problems through laws. Often, these problems are exaggerated by the media, and more attention and resources are used on particular problems.

☞ **EXAMPLE** Consider the crack epidemic in the 1980s. The media portrayed crack as the most addictive substance known to human beings, making users abnormally violent. Additionally, this media coverage created the belief that the drug had spread to every sector of society. We now understand that many of these claims were exaggerated.



TERM TO KNOW

Social Construct

A concept that reflects shared ideas or perceptions that exist only because people in society accept that they do.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you first received an **introduction to the course** and looked to **define crime and criminology**. You learned that a **crime** is an act that violates societal rules as interpreted and expressed by criminal law. What is deemed criminal reflects public opinion, cultural values, and the viewpoint of people in social and political power. People who violate these rules are subject to sanctions by authority and social stigma. **Criminology** is the academic discipline that studies crime and criminal behavior. It uses science to examine the reasons people commit crimes. These reasons change over time, and they also vary by geographic region. It is important to understand why people commit crimes so that we have a better understanding of how to prevent it, keep society safe, and help individuals not engage in future crimes.

You also learned about **crime in context**, or that crime is influenced by contextual factors. We are all influenced by our own backgrounds and what we consider to be crime. Furthermore, crime is viewed in society by the **consensus model and the conflict model**. While the consensus in society is that most violent acts should be criminal, other acts are only against the law because people in power have decided that these behaviors should be criminalized. Oftentimes, **crime can be seen as a social phenomenon** and is socially constructed, or it is determined to be so because society has decided that certain acts should be against the law. You can see that crime is a complex subject, and we use criminology to study crime over time and across locations. In the next lesson, you will learn how the media and other factors influence crime.

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ATTRIBUTIONS

- **Cesare Lombroso** | Author: This file comes from Wellcome Images, a website operated by Wellcome Trust, a global charitable foundation based in the United Kingdom. | License: CC
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TERMS TO KNOW

Conflict Model

A model of crime in which the people in economic and political power create laws to protect their own interests.

Consensus Model

A model of crime in which the majority of citizens in a society share the same values and beliefs.

Crime

An action or omission that constitutes an offense that may be prosecuted by the state and is punishable by law.

Criminology

The scientific study of crime and criminals.

Social Construct

A concept that reflects shared ideas or perceptions that exist only because people in society accept that they do.

Framing Crime

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn how the media and other cultural factors influence our perceptions of crime. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

1. Framing Crime

1a. Legalistic View Versus the Social Constructionist View

2. Crime, Media, and Popular Culture

2a. Merging Reality and the Virtual World

2b. Effects of Violent Video Games

2c. The Spiral

1. Framing Crime

The media influences how the public perceives crime (Surette, 2011). The media amplifies particular threats, sometimes to the point of generating **moral panics** and constructing representations of groups (e.g., youth and racialized communities) as posing a threat to public well-being. As the media is largely privately owned, crimes of the upper classes (e.g., insider trading and fraud) are often overlooked. The media plays a role in establishing a distance between “us” and “them” through a process of **othering**, in which criminals are depicted as fundamentally different from the rest of the population and deserving of punishment.

IN CONTEXT

An example of a moral panic is the “**Satanic Panic**” that occurred in the United States during the 1980s and early 1990s. The Satanic Panic was characterized by widespread fear and hysteria surrounding allegations of Satanic ritual abuse and cults engaging in horrific crimes, such as child molestation, human sacrifice, and cannibalism. This moral panic led to a number of false accusations, prosecutions, and sensational media coverage.

Ultimately, the Satanic Panic was largely discredited, and many of those accused were later exonerated. Criminologists have studied the Satanic Panic as an example of a moral panic, illustrating how societal fears, fueled by media coverage and other factors, can lead to irrational and unjustified

responses. This phenomenon highlights the importance of critical thinking and skepticism when evaluating claims related to criminal activity and societal threats.



TERMS TO KNOW

Moral Panic

A widespread feeling of fear, often an irrational one, that some evil person or thing threatens the values, interests, or well-being of a community or society.

Othering

Viewing people as intrinsically different from the rest of the population.

Satanic Panic

Widespread fear and hysteria surrounding allegations of Satanic ritual abuse and cults engaging in horrific crimes.

1a. Legalistic View Versus the Social Constructionist View

Throughout this course, you will see crime approached in both a legalistic way and as a social construct, which we introduced in the previous lesson. These two views are not mutually exclusive. Criminal law itself is a social construct, and the process of creating crime and criminals is dependent on law. However, the two ways of thinking about crime come into play in different ways depending on the topic or theory you are learning.

The **legalistic view** emphasizes the importance of established laws and regulations in defining what is considered criminal behavior. It sees crimes as objective, concrete actions that violate the law. Punishments for criminal behavior are based on a rational and consistent application of legal principles.

⤓ EXAMPLE Someone caught stealing from a store is arrested and charged with theft. The legalistic view focuses on the act itself and the existing legal statutes that classify this behavior as a crime. The punishment for theft is typically defined by law and is applied to anyone who commits this offense.

The **social constructionist view**, on the other hand, argues that what is considered criminal is not solely determined by the objective nature of the act but is influenced by societal norms, values, and those in power. It contends that the definition of crime is a product of social and cultural forces, and it can change over time.

⤓ EXAMPLE The recreational use of marijuana is legal in some U.S. states but not others. It is also illegal at the federal level. According to this view, the criminalization of marijuana use is not inherently tied to the harmfulness of the substance itself but is influenced by cultural, political, and economic factors.



TERMS TO KNOW

Legalistic View

A view emphasizing the importance of established laws and regulations in defining what is considered criminal behavior.

Social Constructionist View

A view in which what is considered criminal is not solely determined by the objective nature of the act but is influenced by societal norms, values, and the power structures at play.

2. Crime, Media, and Popular Culture

Media and pop culture are important sites for criminology to analyze the collision of culture, crime, and control. Cultural criminology asserts that reality and representation can no longer be analyzed separately. In this world, the street scripts the screen, and the screen scripts the street. There is no linear sequence but a shifting interplay between the real and the virtual (Ferrell et al., 2008). Previously, cultural meaning was thought to be linear. In other words, reality came first, and its representation in the media came second.

2a. Merging Reality and the Virtual World

A crime takes place, and then the media reports the facts of that crime. But what if this linear order of meaning was disrupted?

IN CONTEXT

Kohm (2009) showed how the popular NBC TV news magazine *Dateline NBC: To Catch a Predator* staged phony criminal situations to entrap men chatting online with actors pretending to be minors. The program not only created the story it would later broadcast as "news," but TV producers also choreographed police officers on the scene to ensure dramatic arrests for the camera.



LEARN MORE

UPDATE To Catch a Predator: The Lonely Predator

This example shows that it is no longer easy to think of meaning in a straightforward way.

Nowadays, news and entertainment mix together, creating what we call "infotainment." News shows make their own news instead of just reporting it. Thus, the old idea of "meaning being straightforward" does not fit the complexity of today's world.

Cultural criminologists employ the concept of **loops** to encapsulate the complex and nonlinear way meaning flows through media and popular culture. They describe "an ongoing process by which everyday life recreates itself in its own image" (Ferrell et al., 2008). Ferrell (1999) describes this state of affairs as akin to a "hall of mirrors." If you can imagine the disorienting effect of a fun house filled with multiple mirrors, reflected images, and images of images, you get a sense of the loops that characterize modern life. When a crime or a reaction to a crime is taken up by the media, the effect is to "amplify, distort, and define the experience of crime" (Ferrell et al., 2008). Nowhere is this more evident than in reality TV.

IN CONTEXT

Several reality programs used footage from ride-alongs with police, claiming to depict crime and urban policing realistically. The long-running series *Cops* is the best known of these reality TV police programs. There is another program, *To Serve and Protect*, that was rebranded and rereleased on Netflix in 2017 as *Under Arrest*. To bolster its claim to reality, each episode begins with a voiceover: “This program contains actual police footage. No reporters, no recreations,” along with the caveat that “Any suspects shown are innocent unless proven guilty in a court of law.” However, once a suspect is captured on camera, any distinction between innocence or guilt becomes a moot point as people with blurred faces are tackled and violently subdued by uniformed officers who speak directly to the camera claiming the righteousness of their actions.

As Doyle (2003) points out, reality TV police programs are far from reality and depict policing from the point of view of law enforcement, who exercise control over the content of the program. However, these programs result in a looping effect whereby police, suspects, and the public come to believe that “appropriate law enforcement correlates with high-speed chases, blocking and tackling, drawn weapons, and a shoot-first, think-later mindset” (Ferrell et al., 2008).



TERMS TO KNOW

Cultural Criminologist

A criminologist who focuses on how culture influences crime.

Loop

A concept encapsulating the complex and nonlinear way that meaning flows through media and popular culture.

2b. Effects of Violent Video Games

Violent video games such as those offered by Rockstar Games—including *Manhunt*, the wildly popular *Grand Theft Auto* series, and *True Crime: Streets of LA*—have captured the attention of cultural criminologists (Fawcett & Kohm, 2020). For decades, video games have been a source of moral panic about the presumed corrosive effects of violent media on youth (Rowlands et al., 2016). As Ferrell et al. (2008) point out, the moral panic about video games follows many features of Stanley Cohen’s (1972) classic model.

Rather than something to be avoided, the logic of capitalism in modern times sees benefit in harnessing the media attention spawned by a moral panic because, as the old adage goes, there is no such thing as bad publicity. Today, “panic-inducing images of crime and deviance are now prime marketing tools for selling products in the youth market” (Ferrell et al., 2008), a process identified in earlier time periods but that is accelerating in modern times with the increase of digital technologies and social media.

↗ EXAMPLE Hier (2019) suggests that digital media logic produces a new kind of panic akin to a wildfire or firestorm that burns intensely but ends quickly.

Video games like *Grand Theft Auto* exemplify the broader trend toward the commodification of violence and the marketing of transgression (Ferrell et al., 2008). Some theorists, such as Atkinson and Rodgers (2016), argue that violent video games are appealing in modern times because of the longstanding historical trend toward the civilizing process. Over time, violence has moved from being a visible and commonplace part of our lives to being largely invisible and in the domain of state authorities.

⤳ EXAMPLE Foucault (1977) described this shift, which begins with a description of the public torture, dismemberment, and execution of a criminal in France. However, just a few years later, Foucault showed that punishment had been transformed.

No longer a public spectacle, punishment moved behind the walls of newly developed penitentiaries, and rituals of violence were replaced by self-regulating forms of discipline enforced by new surveillance technologies. Some theorists argue that as life has become more sanitized, safe, and free of the threat of everyday violence, new forms of entertainment, such as violent video games, have become an outlet for repressed violent impulses.

The cultural industries have responded by offering a wide variety of products that play on our interest in participating in or witnessing forms of violence and humiliation that were once a common feature of public life. Thus, while public executions are long gone, some criminologists suggest that these public rituals have been replaced by violent video games.

2c. The Spiral

Another concept employed by cultural criminology to describe the dynamic interplay between crime, control, and media representation is that of the **spiral**.



As far back as the early 1970s, sociologists documented the interplay between media, moral entrepreneurs, and subcultural groups, resulting in a **deviance** amplification spiral that, in effect, caused those labeled “deviant” to become more entrenched in behavior deemed troubling by authorities and news reporters (Cohen, 1972). We can think of media loops building over time into a spiral that feeds back into society through politics, public opinion, and the actions of criminal justice practitioners.

While the contemporary spiral resembles the moral panic of the early 1970s, cultural criminologists, like Ferrell et al. (2008), claim that modernity fosters the conditions for a sustained spiraling panic that is ongoing rather than in short-lived episodes. Whether conceived as a moral panic or a spiral of media representation, cultural criminology continues the analytical tradition begun 50 years ago to explain the seemingly irrational effects when crime, media, and culture collide.



TERMS TO KNOW

Deviance

The fact or state of departing from usual or accepted standards, especially in social or sexual behavior.

Spiral

A concept describing the dynamic interplay between crime, control, and media representation.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned how the media and cultural factors influence our perceptions of crime. You learned how the media **frames crime** and broadcasts moral panics, such as the Satanic Panic, that create widespread hysteria and irrational fear about certain topics.

You also learned how the **legalistic view and social constructionist view** shape how we think about crime. The legalistic view emphasizes the importance of established laws when defining what is considered criminal behavior. The social constructionist view considers how cultural norms and values influence behavior that is considered criminal.

Then, we looked at how **crime, media, and popular culture** are studied. Specifically, we looked at how violent video games and reality shows about the police influence our perceptions of crime and have **merged reality and the virtual world**. Some researchers suggest that these **effects of video games** and television programs have become an outlet for our repressed violent urges. Furthermore, they suggest that these games and shows create loops that encapsulate the complex way that meaning flows through the media. In modern times, our views of reality are increasingly influenced by what we see in the media.

Cultural criminologists also reference **the spiral**, or the dynamic interplay between crime, control, and media representation. This spiral causes those labeled “deviant” to become more entrenched in the criminal justice system and more highly scrutinized by the media. In the next lesson, you will learn about some of the theoretical perspectives that are used to explain the relationship between the media, crime, and the public.

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TERMS TO KNOW

Cultural Criminologist

A criminologist who focuses on how culture influences crime.

Deviance

The fact or state of departing from usual or accepted standards, especially in social or sexual behavior.

Legalistic View

A view emphasizing the importance of established laws and regulations in defining what is considered criminal behavior.

Loop

A concept encapsulating the complex and nonlinear way that meaning flows through media and popular culture.

Moral Panic

A widespread feeling of fear, often an irrational one, that some evil person or thing threatens the values, interests, or well-being of a community or society.

Othering

Viewing people as intrinsically different from the rest of the population.

Satanic Panic

Widespread fear and hysteria surrounding allegations of Satanic ritual abuse and cults engaging in horrific crimes.

Social Constructionist View

A view in which what is considered criminal is not solely determined by the objective nature of the act but is influenced by societal norms, values, and the power structures at play.

Spiral

A concept describing the dynamic interplay between crime, control, and media representation.

The Relationship Between Crime, the Media, and the Public

by Sophia



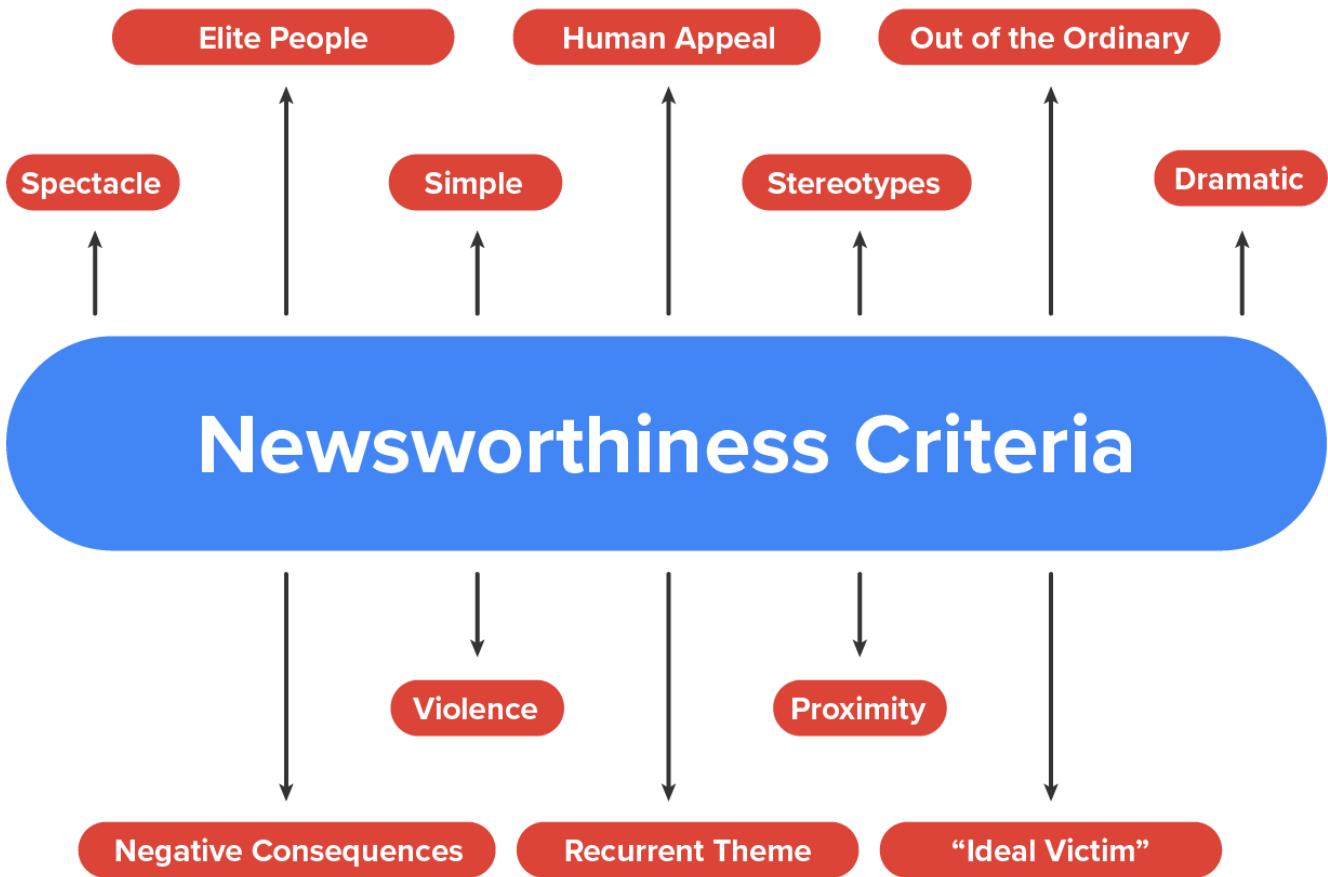
WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about the complicated relationship between crime, the media, and the public's perceptions of crime. You will also learn about several models that try to explain this relationship. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

- [1. The Relationship Between Crime, the Media, and the Public](#)
 - [1a. The Market Model](#)
 - [1b. The Public Sphere/Social Responsibility Model](#)
 - [1c. The Propaganda Model](#)
 - [1d. The Organizational Model](#)
 - [1e. The Cultural Studies Perspective](#)

1. The Relationship Between Crime, the Media, and the Public

It is not possible for the media to tell us about everything that happens in the world, the details of every crime committed, the harm done to every victim, the behavior of every law enforcement officer, the decision of every court, or the rehabilitation of every offender. There is necessarily a selection process, a filtering of the range of stories available to determine which ones are “news.” As shown in the following image, theorists from different perspectives argue that the stories that become news normally carry one or more features called **news values of newsworthiness criteria**.



Therefore, even if we adhere to the belief that news reporters are impartial and objective truth-tellers, we must still accept that there will always be parts of the story that are left out and some stories that are never told. The question here is “Who decides on which stories to tell and how to tell them?” The theoretical perspectives discussed in this section offer different views of the filtering process that leads to the creation of crime news content.



TERM TO KNOW

News Values of Newsworthiness Criteria

The aspects of stories used by news media to determine which stories will be deemed of interest to the media audience and, thus, reported on.

1a. The Market Model

The **market model** suggests that the basis for deciding which stories become crime news is market demand. What does the public want to see/hear/read about? What interests them? This model is premised on the idea that the media is a business, and their focus is on profitability. For the media to be profitable in a competitive marketplace, they must publish the stories that will attract the largest audience to maximize advertising revenue (Buckler, 2015).

The proponents of this theory suggest that if media content is dominated by stories about violence, sex, money, and celebrities, it is due to audience preference. There is, therefore, no need for media regulation that requires

media businesses to report information that may be less entertaining but serves public interests.



TERM TO KNOW

Market Model

The theoretical perspective that views the media as a business that delivers a product intended to meet market demand.

1b. The Public Sphere/Social Responsibility Model

While the market model suggests the media gives the public what it wants, the **social responsibility model** argues that the media should give the public what it needs. The media is one of the main pedagogical tools through which the population can become informed about the events and issues taking place in society. In the public sphere/social responsibility model, the media has a responsibility to serve the interests of democracy (Manning, 2001). The media benefits from certain protections in carrying out their duties; for instance, the First Amendment guarantees the freedom of the press. However, because the media is also seen as a public resource, media industry regulations and codes of ethics are in place to ensure a diversity of content that is not necessarily based on popularity alone (as the market model suggests; Buckler, 2015).

Within this model, news media is viewed as playing a key role in keeping the public informed about what is happening in society and, in particular, holding authorities accountable for their decisions and actions. For instance, the media raises awareness about political and judicial decisions that may otherwise go unnoticed by most members of the public.



TERM TO KNOW

Social Responsibility Model

The theoretical perspective that views the media as playing an important role in upholding democracy, ensuring the citizenry is informed, and shining light on abuses of power.

1c. The Propaganda Model

The **propaganda model** (also called the manipulative model) suggests that media content is determined by those who own the media. It is their prerogative, as owners, to determine the editorial line, the types of stories reported, and the perspectives used. Further, this model argues that media owners will select stories according to what serves their best interests. They will present a distorted version of reality to shape public views; however, there is a need to avoid the overt appearance of bias as the audience will question the credibility of the media if the bias is too obvious.

Nevertheless, according to this model, powerful elites can use the media to filter out certain events and perspectives in favor of those that the government and powerful elites wish to disseminate (Hackett & Gruneau, 2000). In doing so, they divert the public's attention away from certain issues, such as political maneuvering and corporate wrongdoing, and on to stereotypical street crimes, for example.

The media can thus be described as a tool and source of narrative control that can, at times, perpetuate stereotypes and misrepresentations of minority groups. The propaganda model reflects the balance of power in the media, and people who are not in power are not in control of mainstream media content.

IN CONTEXT

In the mainstream media, protests against the development and extension of pipelines, for instance, have tended to receive minimal coverage until the protests turn into physical confrontations. Focusing on the protests only once they turn into violent clashes tends to legitimize the authorities and cast the protesters in a negative light, thus leading to a lack of serious consideration of the reasons for protesting in the first place (Corrigall-Brown & Wilkes, 2012).

Also, the media often portrays these protesters as “environmentalists” while overlooking that many of the protesters are Indigenous peoples (Clark, 2014). By neglecting to emphasize the Indigenous peoples’ actions when upholding their rights, the media also fails to provide reasons, other than environmental motivations, for why these events are happening. The media may overlook the destruction and damage to territories and waterways that Indigenous peoples rely on in the exercise of their rights to a way of life that includes hunting, fishing, trapping, and other cultural ceremonial and traditional practices; the violation of treaty rights and other agreements; unsettled land claims; and self-determination (Crosby, 2021). This failure of the mainstream media to provide a decolonizing context for Indigenous peoples’ assertion of rights and awareness-raising efforts in attempts to protect lands and waters serves to perpetuate and reinforce stereotypes and prevent Indigenous voices from controlling the narrative.



TERM TO KNOW

Propaganda Model

The theoretical perspective that views the media as intentionally manipulating news content so that it aligns with the interests of the media owners and other powerful individuals or groups in society.

1d. The Organizational Model

Another model suggests that neither market demand nor social responsibility or media ownership can have as much influence on the content of news as the routines of day-to-day news production. The **organizational model** is more pragmatic in pointing out that the constant need for news material and the pressure of deadlines in the news cycle lead to certain media practices that shape news content. News media will favor stories that have been previously reported upon and have an established background, such that they do not need to constantly start from zero in shaping a story the audience can understand.

This habit of favoring stories that have already been reported upon is connected to the use of simplification, personalization, and stereotyping (Buckler, 2015). **Simplification** stems from the inability of media institutions to do extensive research before producing a news story due to deadlines. The tendency in news stories is to stay away from explanations, particularly ones that may be complex.

☞ EXAMPLE Stories about homelessness will rarely examine the structural causes of homelessness, but rather they will focus on individual factors (Schneider, 2014).

Personalization relates to the dramatization of news:

- How did people feel when this event happened?
- How would you feel if it happened to you?

Making a story relatable makes it easier for the audience to understand.

☞ EXAMPLE Journalists reporting on homelessness indicate that they try to bring individual stories to light to help readers understand the types of challenges underhoused people experience.

Stereotypes, socially constructed labels that rely on generalized assumptions, are also easily understood by audiences.

☞ EXAMPLE The stereotypes of homeless people as being mentally ill, drug addicted, unwilling to work, and engaged in criminal behavior are commonly circulated in society (Schneider, 2014).

Media stories that resonate with these stereotypes are easy for the audience to understand as they do not challenge their views. Not everyone will necessarily interpret a news story the way the media producer intended. The media may suggest an interpretation that many will accept, but the audience retains autonomy in terms of interpreting the content.

IN CONTEXT

A story about police use of force may be interpreted by different segments of the population as follows:

1. A legitimate exercise of force required in the course of police carrying out their duties
2. An instance of a “bad apple” police officer who abused their authority, which is not reflective of how most officers would have handled the situation
3. An example of the corrupting influence of power in the hands of an institution that routinely abuses its authority

This example of various interpretations based on a single story points to the fact that the media does not dictate how we are to think. The media “leave[s] space for different moral readings by diverse audiences” (Erickson, 1991, p. 231). It provides us with information that allows us to form our own interpretations based on our beliefs, sensibilities, and perspectives shaped by our personal and social experiences. Thus, individuals or groups who have had negative interactions with police may lean more toward the third interpretation, whereas those who have not may favor one of the first two interpretations.

The reason the dominant meanings may be more in line with those of the authorities can be found in the voices selected for defining news stories. Becker (1967) describes a **hierarchy of credibility**, whereby certain individuals are more readily accepted as being “in the know” and more readily given a voice in news coverage

(e.g., government officials, police, and academic experts). Ironically, the more widespread reporting of what these sources have to say lends them even greater credibility, and it legitimizes and reinforces their views as the ones most likely to be relevant for further reporting. While the propaganda model might view the over-accessing of people in positions of authority as an indication that the news is purposely trying to have these voices influence the public, the organizational model views the preference for these sources from a different perspective.

Here, again, it is the routines of news production that contribute to the over-accessing of these sources.

- Journalists report on various topics about which they may have little expertise. For their reports to appear legitimate, they must cite people who are or appear to be credible and legitimate sources.
- Journalists must appear to be unbiased and objective in their reporting. They can do so by reporting on what these seemingly knowledgeable sources have to say about the topic, instead of sharing their own thoughts.
- The authorities are more organized and available to reporters. When reporters work with a deadline, they will rely on sources who take their calls/emails, who answer their questions in a direct way, and who are prepared with a sound bite on the topic in question.

Many organizations, such as police departments, have developed media relations strategies with specific personnel dedicated to that purpose (Schulenberg & Chenier, 2014). Police are a steady source of crime news stories, so the media has an interest in maintaining a good relationship with them to continue to have access to this source. Police also have an interest in building good relationships with the media, as media representations can contribute to the public image of police. In this way, we can see a **symbiotic relationship** that exists between the media and the police.

The overuse of authorities as sources does not mean that other sources cannot be included. Criminologists, like Becker (1967), describe the authorities as **primary definers** of the news. Other sources (e.g., community organizations, protesters, victims' rights advocates, and criminal offenders) may be **secondary definers**, meaning that their voices can be included but usually as a response to the ways the primary definers have established the parameters of the issue at hand. Secondary definers are not given the status of being able to set the tone or construct the issue. They can merely argue against or offer an alternate interpretation of the problem as defined by the primary definers.



TERMS TO KNOW

Organizational Model

The theoretical perspective that views the routines of day-to-day news production as the most significant factor in shaping news content.

Simplification

The process of making something easier to understand, which also results in a loss of detail and complexity.

Personalization

The process of making something personally relatable to the audience.

Stereotype

A socially constructed category or label relying on generalized assumptions about people, behaviors, or situations based on a specific characteristic (such as race, ethnicity, culture, nationality, neighborhood, gender, or social class).

Hierarchy of Credibility

The preference shown by journalists toward sources in powerful positions, casting them as primary definers whose opinions and ideas are portrayed as inherently more credible than those of others who might wish to comment upon a story.

Symbiotic Relationship

An interaction between two individuals or groups that is mutually beneficial.

Primary Definers

Individuals whom the media turns to first to help define and explain a situation, who are perceived as having more specialized knowledge due to their institutional affiliation or professional position and, thus, as more credible sources (government officials, criminal justice system personnel, academics, etc.).

Secondary Definers

Those individuals who have the task of responding to the definition of a situation as set out by the primary definers (including journalists who reproduce and/or filter what the primary definers have stated, as well as oppositional definers whom journalists may include to provide a counterpoint to what the primary definers have stated).

1e. The Cultural Studies Perspective

The **cultural studies perspective** views media production as a cultural practice saturated with meaning. Theorists from this perspective are particularly focused on the work of **representation** that takes place within the sphere of the media and how this meaning can be deconstructed and resisted. They examine the ways in which individuals and groups are portrayed and the impacts these portrayals have on the individuals and groups themselves as well as on the media audience. They are interested in how some people come to be constructed as dangerous or risky and how some issues come to be constructed as one type of problem (e.g., a crime problem) rather than another (e.g., a health problem).

One major contribution to our understanding of media representations of crime and other social problems is the moral panic theory, which we introduced in the last lesson.



DID YOU KNOW

The term “**moral panics**” was originally used by Stanley Cohen, who developed it in his work *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers* (1972). He examined the frenzied news coverage of fights that had taken place between two youth groups, the “mods” and the “rockers,” identified through their stylistic choices. Cohen (1972, p. 9) defined a moral panic as when “a condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests.”

Moral panics occur when there is a gap between people’s perceptions of a problem and the reality of the problem, and the difference can be explained ideologically. Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994) further clarified that an episode can be defined as a moral panic based on five crucial elements:

1. Heightened concern about an issue or group
2. Increased hostility toward those portrayed as being responsible for the problem
3. A rapidly emerging consensus about the problem
4. The disproportionality between the perceived threat and the actual threat posed
5. A volatility in that the panic subsides quickly without any necessary resolution

The term “**folk devils**” was used within this theory to refer to people or groups presented in media as deviant outsiders and the cause of social problems. As was the case in the moral panic described by Cohen, youth often find themselves cast in the role of folk devils. Other groups have also been constructed as folk devils at different times.

☞ EXAMPLE Following the terrorist attacks on 9/11, Muslim people came to be targeted as folk devils, despite the attacks being the work of a small group of extremists (Morgan & Poynting, 2012). More recently, during the COVID-19 pandemic, people from China and Asia faced hate crimes and xenophobic attitudes in reportedly greater numbers (Capurro et al., 2022).

Another key concept within the moral panic theory is the **moral entrepreneur**, a term used to refer to individuals or groups who attempt to draw attention to and impose their moral perspective on behaviors they deem deviant or criminal to advance their own interests or political agendas. Becker (1963) divided moral entrepreneurs into two groups:

1. Rule creators who advocate for legal change to have their moral views reflected in law
2. Rule enforcers who work to ensure the new laws are followed, such as police and enforcement agencies

To the extent that moral entrepreneurs can access the media, their position is reinforced and legitimized.

☞ EXAMPLE Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) is a classic representation of moral entrepreneurs engaging in awareness-raising campaigns about the harms of driving while drunk and advocating for legal changes to reflect more serious punishments for those who engage in such behaviors.

In terms of the timing of moral panics, Cohen (1972) suggested that they can arise at any time if there is nothing of greater interest going on at a particular moment. In other words, the timing has more to do with a slump in the news than with any objective reality of the threat posed by the folk devils. Timing, particularly with regard to moral panics about youth crime, has more to do with the economic and political context, diverting public attention to these ready-made targets at strategic moments.



BIG IDEA

Here is a table to summarize how the different perspectives and models view the influences of media on crimes and criminal behavior:

Market	Social Responsibility	Propaganda	Organizational	Cultural Studies
The media is a business.	The media is a tool for developing an informed citizenry.	Media content reflects the interests of the powerful.	The content of news is dictated by the routines of news production.	Media content is a cultural product that serves to socially construct meaning.
Crime news is				

a product that meets the market demand.	People should be aware of crime in their community and what is being done about it.	Street crime news serves to divert attention away from other more serious matters.	There is a reliance on established sources and storylines.	Media representation may produce and reproduce social constructions and may be contested.
There is no need to regulate the media.	The media requires regulation.			



TERMS TO KNOW

Cultural Studies Perspective

The theoretical perspective that considers the role of the media in producing and reproducing culturally relevant and socially constructed meanings.

Representation

The process of socially constructing images and attaching significance/meaning to them.

Moral Panics

Period of intensified or frenzied public concern, the level of which is out of proportion with the actual threat posed by the object of concern.

Folk Devils

In the context of moral panics, these individuals or groups are the perceived menace upon which the public concern is focused.

Moral Entrepreneurs

Individuals or groups who attempt to draw attention to and impose their moral perspective on behaviors they deem deviant or criminal in order to advance their own interests or political agendas.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned more about **the relationship between crime, the media, and the public**. The media heavily influences how we view crime, and there are different models that try to explain this relationship. The **market model** suggests that what we see in the media is based on market demand. That is, the media broadcasts stories that the public wants to hear about. On the other hand, the **public sphere or social responsibility model** argues that the media should give the public what it needs rather than what it wants.

Meanwhile, the **propaganda model** suggests that media content is determined by people who own the media, giving them the power to broadcast what they want the public to know. In the **organizational model**, it is argued that it is the constant need for news material and the pressure of deadlines that shape media practices and the content we see. Under this model, it is assumed that the media favors

previously reported stories so they do not need to start from square one.

Lastly, the **cultural studies perspective** views media production as a cultural practice filled with meaning. This perspective examines how some people are portrayed in the media and how this portrayal impacts the individuals, themselves, as well as the public. Moreover, this perspective is interested in how some people or issues become associated with crime. In the next lesson, we will continue looking at the relationship between the media and crime; however, we will shift our focus to how the media portray offenders, victims, and police.

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ATTRIBUTIONS

- https://medium.com/@climate_storytelling/how-to-mend-the-gap-between-indigenous-rights-the-green-economy-6f3a9577bff9



TERMS TO KNOW

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A socially constructed category or label relying on generalized assumptions about people, behaviors, or situations based on a specific characteristic (such as race, ethnicity, culture, nationality, neighborhood, gender, or social class).

Symbiotic Relationship

An interaction between two individuals or groups that is mutually beneficial.

How the Media Frame Portrayals of Offenders, Victims, and the Police

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about how the media frame the portrayals of different people involved in the criminal justice system, such as offenders, victims, and members of law enforcement. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

- [**1. How the Media Frame Portrayals of Offenders, Victims, and the Police**](#)
 - [**1a. Framing**](#)
 - [**1b. Crime, Criminal Offenders, and Deviant “Others”**](#)
 - [**1c. Crime Victims**](#)
 - [**1d. Law Enforcement**](#)

1. How the Media Frame Portrayals of Offenders, Victims, and the Police

In order to examine some of the ways in which crime and justice are constructed in media representations, we will begin by discussing framing, a key concept in media studies. We will then look at some examples of ways in which criminal offenses and offenders, victims of crime, and criminal justice personnel and their actions are framed in media coverage.

1a. Framing

Think of a picture in a frame. The frame sets the limits of what you can see, and you do not necessarily know the context outside of what appears in the image within the frame. You do not have access to the broader background. You do not know if there are more people present than those you see within the frame. You rely on the facial expressions of those in the picture to understand how it feels.

Likewise, in media **framing**, the media offer the audience a snapshot of events, and there is always something left out of the frame.

"To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described."

Entman (1993)

Frames are the focus (a parameter or boundary) for discussing a particular event. Frames focus on what will be discussed, how it will be discussed, and, above all, how it will not be discussed. Framing is not neutral:

"More specifically, a media gaze reflects a tendency by a mainstream media to frame the social reality from an institutional point of view (i.e., predominantly straight, White, middle-aged, middle-class, male) as natural and normal, while dismissing other aspects as inferior and irrelevant, in the process drawing audiences into seeing like the media as if this seeing did not involve any perspective or bias."

Fleras (2011)

Here are some of the ways in which stories can be framed to give them greater prominence in newspapers:

- Covering them in the first place
- Covering them intensely/repeatedly
- Placing them on the front page, at the top of the page
- Using bold headlines
- Including color, photographs, or other visuals
- Having longer articles
- Using language that evokes emotion

Framing can also be episodic or thematic. Episodic frames discuss crimes as individual events generally unrelated to other events or any broader context. Episodic frames are the most commonly used type of framing in crime reporting. They are simple and easy to understand.

⇒ EXAMPLE A man killed his wife. He was upset about their impending divorce. He used his weapon. The police have arrested him.

In contrast, thematic frames discuss events in their broader context.

⇒ EXAMPLE An instance of a man killing his wife could be discussed as part of a broader pattern of violence against women in society or, at the very least, as the culmination of a pattern of abuse within their relationship. Such a story is more complex and meaningful in terms of understanding why such events take place in our society.

Research on the media coverage of domestic homicides suggests that the media rely on episodic formats, blame victims for the incident (e.g., arguments they had with the perpetrator, what the victim did to provoke the attack, promiscuous behavior, or why the victim did not leave), provide excuses for the perpetrators' behavior (e.g., mental state, financial problems, intoxication, or inability to control their emotions), but they fail to convey

the broader context. Domestic homicides are generally deemed less newsworthy and tend to receive less coverage and less striking coverage than non-domestic homicides (Wong & Lee, 2018).



DID YOU KNOW

Fairbairn and Dawson (2013) compared news coverage from the late 1970s to coverage at the turn of the 21st century and found some improvements over time in the frequency of reporting on a history of intimate partner violence preceding domestic homicides. However, only 18% of stories reported on this background factor.



TERM TO KNOW

Framing

Fitting a story into a ready-made social construction such that it is easy for the audience to understand and interpret.

1b. Crime, Criminal Offenders, and Deviant “Others”

Following the idea that news stories are selected based on the newsworthiness criteria, a clear tendency emerges with respect to crime news: The rarest crimes receive the most coverage, while the most common crimes rarely receive coverage. As such, violent crimes, and especially murders or violent crimes committed by women, are vastly overrepresented in crime coverage and in the media, whereas the much more prevalent property crimes are underrepresented.

In addition, crimes that are particularly dramatic, sensational, or bizarre are more likely to be covered in the media. This situation leaves the audience (who rely on media for information) with a distorted picture of crime that is practically the opposite of the reality of crime occurring in our society—this is referred to as the **backward law**.

Not only is the crime portrayed in the media out of proportion to its actual occurrence in society, but there is also an emphasis on particular groups of offenders and victims:

- Visible minorities
- Gangsters
- People separated by class

Visible minorities are more likely to be portrayed as offenders than White people; however, they are less likely than White people to be portrayed as victims or as law enforcement personnel (Intravia & Pickett, 2019). Also, the concept of the **racialization of crime** raises the idea that when racial minorities are responsible for crimes, the cause of their criminality is linked to their cultural origins, whereas White people's crimes are not blamed on their Whiteness (Chan & Mirchandani, 2002). Race, in fact, is rarely explicitly stated in media coverage; therefore, it may be more noticeable when it is mentioned, particularly in contexts where the racial identification matches racial stereotypes.

Another common media frame is the “gangster.” Media tend to portray gangs as having well-established leaders and being highly organized and hierarchical, violent, and sophisticated in the drug trade, all of which are at

odds with what is known about most gangs. It may serve police interests, however, to portray gangs as more organized than they actually are when it comes to seeking more resources in their fight against gangs.

⤳ EXAMPLE Gushue et al. (2018) examined newspaper coverage pertaining to Jamie, Jonathan, and Jarrod Bacon from 2004 to 2015. The coverage generally portrayed them as sophisticated and powerful gang members who posed a significant public safety risk because of their dangerous enemies. The most commonly occurring keyword in the coverage was “brother,” and the coverage portrayed the brothers as a family, not as individuals. Information about different brothers was mentioned in articles about a single brother, even when this information was irrelevant. Shows of family support were also emphasized, creating the image of a Sopranos-like crime family.

They may have been considered more newsworthy due to a lack of fit with the stereotype of ethnic minority youth gangs than due to their actual criminality: They were from a homegrown “normal” family, and they fit into the popular narrative of “crime families.”

The framing of issues along lines of race can also be observed in the media coverage of opioid overdose deaths, as can the framing of issues along lines of class. Criminologists Webster et al. (2020) argue that White and middle-class people who become addicted are portrayed as innocent victims, and efforts are made within the coverage to distinguish these users from “street users.” The focus of the coverage is on “normal,” White, middle-class young people from “good families” who overdose.

⤳ EXAMPLE These stories include photographs and interviews with family and friends. These young people are portrayed as innocent victims of evil drug dealers and foreign drug manufacturers.

On the other hand, such coverage ignores the severity of the problem among other populations. Opioid addiction in minority communities is presented as a chronic community issue, and few personal stories or photos are used.



TERMS TO KNOW

Backward Law

The idea that the way in which the media present crime and justice issues is the opposite of the way in which these phenomena occur in real life.

Racialization of Crime

The assumption that the crimes committed by racial minorities can be explained by their race.

1c. Crime Victims

Just as media portrayals of offenders rely on stereotypes, so too do portrayals of victims. Christie (1986, p. 18) argued that there are certain types of people who “when hit by crime—most readily are given the complete and legitimate status of being a victim.” He referred to being given this status at the societal level, but we certainly see the ideal victim stereotype play out in the media as well. He described an **ideal victim** as one who would be perceived as weak, was confronted by a “big and bad” offender, was engaged in respectable activities, could not possibly be blamed for their victimization, was unacquainted with the person who harmed them, and had sufficient social power to have their victim status recognized and to receive sympathy.

⤳ EXAMPLE Kilty and Frigon (2016) examined the extensive media coverage of serial killers Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo's three known victims: Tammy Homolka, Leslie Mahaffy, and Kristen French. Although all three victims were young White women, Kristen French, who was kidnapped while walking home from school, most closely conformed to the ideal victim stereotype. During the period they studied, they found over five times more articles about the murder of Kristen French than about the murder of Tammy Homolka, who was related to her attackers. There were also about 20% more stories about Kristen French than about Leslie Mahaffy, who was coming home past curfew on the night she was abducted by Homolka and Bernardo.

In contrast to these young White victims, some victims do not receive nearly as much, if any, media coverage of their assaults, sexual assaults, disappearances, and murders. A large number of Indigenous women and girls have gone missing and been murdered in the United States and Canada over the last several decades. The media have been slow to cover these cases, and the coverage has been underwhelming.

⤳ EXAMPLE In examining the coverage of the missing and murdered women from Downtown Eastside in Vancouver, Canada, Jiwani and Young (2006) explained that these victims did not conform to the ideal victim stereotype: They were minority women in the wrong place at the wrong time and engaged in activities that would not be considered “respectable.” The examination of the limited news coverage (128 stories) of these cases found that these stories were framed for viewers as:

- Missing women who were mostly Indigenous drug-addicted sex trade workers
- One deviant man’s actions
- Inadequate and ineffective police action
- A horror story about a pig farm and contaminated meat

Such frames offer very little understanding of what happened and why. The authors describe what was virtually absent from the coverage: the larger structural context of these women’s lives, colonialism, racism, sexism, the condition of the women’s homes and communities, and the broader issue of violence against women.

IN CONTEXT

Gilchrist (2010) examined press coverage of six missing and murdered women, none of whom were known to be involved in the sex trade and none of whose families believed had run away. Three of them were Indigenous women, and three were White women. There were 3.5 times fewer stories about the disappearances and deaths of the Indigenous women. Not only were the White women’s cases mentioned much more often, but they also included lengthier articles, were more likely to appear on the front page and in the front sections of the newspaper, the headlines referred to them by name, included emotional messages from family and friends, and were accompanied by more and larger photographs.

Victim-blaming discourses, with regard to the Indigenous women, were included in the coverage and often blamed the victims for their behaviors or attributes (e.g., how they were dressed, where they

were, and what they were doing) such that any empathy the public may have felt for the Indigenous women was somehow muted.

The term “**missing White woman syndrome**” refers to the phenomena described in the last example. Certain people who go missing are more likely to have their cases reported in the media and more likely to receive extensive coverage. The intersectionality of race, gender, and class appears to enter into the differential valuation of various victims. The message the media send with such discrepancies in coverage is that some lives are more valuable than others and the audience will care more about certain victims than others. It also signals to perpetrators which targets are easier and that some victims are more deserving of our collective sympathy and (search/police) resources.



TERMS TO KNOW

Ideal Victim

The socially constructed victim who is seen as weaker than their attacker and blameless and with whom the audience will readily sympathize.

Victim-Blaming Discourse

A way of talking about victims and victimization that places at least part of the responsibility for the harm done to the victim on their own behavior or attributes (e.g., how they were dressed, what they said, where they were, what they were doing, and which measures they took to defend themselves).

Missing White Woman Syndrome

Researchers generally attribute this term to Gwen Ifill, PBS news anchor, referring to the far more frequent and intense news coverage of instances where White women or girls go missing compared to instances where the missing persons are not White or not female.

1d. Law Enforcement

As noted earlier, the police and media have a mutually beneficial relationship that allows the police to be the primary definers of crime news. Their views will be presented first, more regularly, and with authority. Those who come into conflict with the police may have a difficult time having their views represented in mainstream media.

However, in recent years, we have seen instances in which the hierarchy of credibility shifts away from the police, particularly when police misbehavior is captured by “citizen journalists” and disseminated to the public. Images and video of the deaths of citizens at the hands of police can indicate to the public that the police are the problem. When people post videos on social media, police behaviors are depicted as “brutality” and in violation of civil rights.

Such shifts in representations of police behavior may also depend on the political orientation of the news outlets publishing the information.

IN CONTEXT

Chama (2019) compared the views of readers of two New York tabloids on their representation of

instances of police brutality and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement more generally. The *New York Post*, criticized for being highly sensational and displaying conservative bias, was felt by readers to offer a generally more unfavorable portrayal of BLM.

The newspaper blamed the movement for confrontations with the police and tended to portray Black people as criminals, White people as victims, and the police as good people who were justified in their actions against Black people. The *New York Daily News*, while also quite sensational, was seen by readers as offering more positive representations of African Americans and a more positive view of BLM, while portraying the police as racist and dysfunctional and questioning police behavior.



We can also see negative and distorted images of the police in entertainment media, where the police have little influence over media content.

There are three main stereotypes of the police that have been developed in crime films over time:

- “Lampooned police” (satirical representations of the police as bumbling and incompetent)
- “G-men” (professional and efficient crime fighters)
- “Cops” (hypermasculine aggressive crime-fighting soldiers, with subtypes emerging as time moves forward)

As with most stereotypes, these representations fail to capture all or even most police officers’ realities and come with negative consequences, such as discrediting the police as incompetent or creating a restrictive image of policing that excludes women.

☞ EXAMPLE Huey and Broll (2015) interviewed 31 police investigators about the ways in which certain aspects of their job were portrayed in television crime shows. While some acknowledged that the media portrayals of police work did contribute to their career choice, they also admitted that the reality of their work had little to do with the sanitized, glamorous, exciting image of police investigations seen in shows such as *CSI*. The officers interviewed talked about bad smells, combing through trash, being sleep deprived, being covered in grime from blood and fingerprinting dust, having to wear masks and other protective equipment, and being sweaty and uncomfortable.

These behind-the-scenes aspects of the reality of police work may not be as appealing to the media audience without first being “cleaned up” by the media producers.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned about **how the media frame portrayals of offenders, victims, and the police**. The media engage in **framing**, which means they provide the audience with a snapshot of events, but

there is always something left out of the bigger picture. Most often, the media frames reality from an institutional point of view, dismissing other perspectives.

Next, you learned that the media have certain ways in which to frame **crime, criminal offenders, and deviant “others”** involved in criminal activity. For instance, violent crime happens infrequently, but it is overexaggerated in the media, making it appear as occurring more frequently than it actually does. Furthermore, the media often racialize crime by overbroadcasting stories with non-White offenders, perpetuating stereotypes that people of color commit more crimes.

Similarly, the media frame how we portray **crime victims**. You learned about how the media frame the ideal victim as someone who was perceived as weak, was confronted by a “big and bad” unknown offender, was engaged in respectable activities, and could not be blamed for their victimization. You also learned about **missing White woman syndrome**, which refers to the fact that when a White woman goes missing or is killed, it is broadcast in the media much more than non-White women or men.

Lastly, this lesson discussed how the media frame portrayals of **law enforcement**. Generally, the views of law enforcement are typically presented with more authority in the media than those who come into contact with law enforcement. However, the police engaging in acts of misconduct are often broadcast on new outlets, depending on the political orientation of the outlet. In the next lesson, we will shift our focus away from the media and crime and turn to the ways in which we measure crime and crime patterns over time.

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ATTRIBUTIONS

- Members of the Blacks Lives Matter Movement hold a banner at an event. | License: CC



TERMS TO KNOW

Backward Law

The idea that the way in which the media present crime and justice issues is the opposite of the way in which these phenomena occur in real life.

Framing

Fitting a story into a ready-made social construction such that it is easy for the audience to understand and interpret.

Ideal Victim

The socially constructed victim who is seen as weaker than their attacker and blameless and with whom the audience will readily sympathize.

Missing White Woman Syndrome

Researchers generally attribute this term to Gwen Ifill, PBS news anchor, referring to the far more frequent and intense news coverage of instances where White women or girls go missing compared to instances where the missing persons are not White or not female.

Racialization of Crime

The assumption that the crimes committed by racial minorities can be explained by their race.

Victim-Blaming Discourse

A way of talking about victims and victimization that places at least part of the responsibility for the harm done to the victim on their own behavior or attributes (e.g., how they were dressed, what they said, where they were, what they were doing, and which measures they took to defend themselves).

Measuring Crime

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about how we measure crime in the United States using three primary methods. You will also learn about crime patterns over time and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on crime in the United States. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

1. Measuring Crime

1a. Uniform Crime Reports

1b. National Incident-Based Reporting System

1c. National Crime Victimization Survey

1d. Self-Reporting Studies

2. Crime Patterns Over Time

2a. COVID-19 and Crime Patterns

1. Measuring Crime

It is important to measure crime for a couple of reasons. First, measuring how much crime we have allows us to see where we stand and where we are going with respect to different social problems. It is also important to determine the nature and extent of these issues to allocate criminal justice resources accordingly.

↗ EXAMPLE If police data indicate that violent crime has skyrocketed in parts of the country, we would want to direct our resources toward preventing and stopping these crimes.

Measuring crime also helps researchers analyze variables related to crime. The tools that we will discuss in this lesson allow us to examine offender characteristics, victim characteristics, different crime categories, and many other factors that are useful when studying crime. Let us now look at the primary ways we measure crime in the United States.

1a. Uniform Crime Reports

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) established the **Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program** in 1930 as a way to collect **official crime data**. Having these data allow us to look at crime during a given year and to see how crime patterns change over time. These data are

crucial for police departments, because the data allow them to determine how to allocate resources most effectively.

The UCR Program was the primary way to capture official crime data from 1930 until 2021, when the National Incident-Based Reporting System, which we will discuss next, took over. Under the UCR Program, over 18,000 police departments reported crime data to the FBI.

The UCR Program collected information on the eight Part I offenses (also known as index crimes):

- homicide
- forcible rape
- robbery
- aggravated assault
- burglary
- larceny
- motor vehicle theft
- arson

Moreover, the UCR Program also collected just arrest data for Part II offense crimes, which include:

- forgery
- fraud
- embezzlement
- stolen property
- vandalism
- prostitution
- drug abuse violations
- gambling
- driving under the influence
- other offenses



HINT

The first four Part I crimes (homicide, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) are considered violent crimes, while the other four (burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft, and arson) are considered property crimes. We will look at the definitions and typologies of crimes later on in this unit.

The UCR Program measured offenses reported to the police, the number of offenses, the number of offenses solved by an arrest, and demographic information about the people who were arrested. The UCR Program also collected data with detailed information on each recorded case of homicide, including information on the victims, weapons used, victim and offender characteristics, and other circumstances related to the homicide.

It is important to note that other than homicide, the UCR Program did not report information on specific cases related to other crimes. The numbers were aggregated, meaning that they included the total number of crimes

rather than details on individual cases. Therefore, the UCR Program did not provide information on each individual case but a summary of activity for particular crime types.

Another limitation of the UCR Program was that it was subject to what is known as the **hierarchy rule**. The hierarchy rule requires that only the most serious crime be counted if more than one crime was committed at a particular incident. This was one of the biggest drawbacks of the UCR Program.

⇒ **EXAMPLE** If a rape and robbery occurred during the same incident, only the rape would be counted, because it was considered more serious than the robbery.

The UCR Program was officially replaced by the National Incident-Based Reporting System on January 1, 2021.



TERMS TO KNOW

Hierarchy Rule

A rule in the UCR Program requiring that only the most serious crime occurring at an incident gets counted.

Official Crime Data

Crimes brought to the attention of law enforcement.

Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program

A nationwide, statistical effort of more than 18,000 law enforcement agencies reporting data on crimes brought to their attention.

1b. National Incident-Based Reporting System

The **National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)** was first created in 1989 to be an improvement upon the UCR Program. As noted above, it is now the primary way we collect official crime data in the United States. It was intended to capture information on all **incidents** rather than just summary counts of crime. Incidents are one or more offenses committed by the same offender or group of offenders at the same time and place. In NIBRS, one incident can have up to 10 offense types, 999 victims, and 99 offenders.

In addition, NIBRS collects detailed information on 52 offenses in 24 categories. It collects information related to the victim, victim–offender relationship, use of weapon, type of injury, time, and location of the incident. NIBRS also eliminated the hierarchy rule. Therefore, all crimes committed at the same incident would be counted.



DID YOU KNOW

Despite these improvements to the UCR Program, NIBRS has some limitations. Not all of the country's police departments have implemented NIBRS. As of 2022, only two thirds of police departments reported NIBRS data to the FBI ([bjs.ojp.gov/national-incident-based-reporting-system-nibrs](https://www.bjs.gov/national-incident-based-reporting-system-nibrs)). Agencies must become NIBRS certified in order to participate in the program, and because the process is rigorous, many agencies do not participate.

Because NIBRS collects details on so much information, police departments do not always report everything. This gives rise to a lot of missing data. NIBRS also has the capability for police officers to update information once it becomes known. However, since there is little incentive to update information, not all officers do.

Another drawback to NIBRS is that many large agencies do not participate. Much of our nation's crime occurs in metropolitan areas, but because these agencies are not reporting to NIBRS, we are not always getting an accurate representation of crime nationwide.



TERMS TO KNOW

Incidents

One or more offenses committed by the same offender or group of offenders at the same time and place.

National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)

A system used by law enforcement agencies in the United States for collecting and reporting data on crimes.

1c. National Crime Victimization Survey

The **National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)** is another major source of information to help measure crime, and it is sponsored by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) and the U.S. Census Bureau. Because it is a survey, it relies on interviews rather than data reported to police. One of the main purposes of the NCVS is to get an idea of crime that occurs, which is both reported and not reported to the police. Therefore, it usually indicates higher crime rates than what we see in NIBRS.

Crimes that go unreported are known as the **dark figure of crime**. It is estimated that half of all crimes go unreported to the police. Crimes can go unreported for a variety of reasons, and the decision to report a crime or not often depends on the individual circumstances and the people involved.

Some common reasons why crimes go unreported include the following:

- A fear of retaliation from the offender
- Lack of trust in law enforcement
- Embarrassment
- A belief that nothing will happen

Furthermore, undocumented immigrants fear deportation if they report crime, and people engaging in illegal activity rarely report victimizations for fear of getting in trouble themselves.

Regarding the methodology, the NCVS collects victimization data from a nationally representative sample of people 12 years and older from about 150,000 households. Typically, the first interview is conducted in person, but subsequent interviews are conducted using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). Households are kept in the sampling rotation for 3 years and are interviewed every 6 months.

The NCVS gathers details on each incident, including the characteristics of the victim, characteristics of the offender, victim–offender relationship, time and location of the crime, consequences of the victimization, whether the crime was reported or not, and whether a weapon was used.

The NCVS initially started out as the National Crime Survey in 1973 but went through a redesign in 1992, at which point it was called the NCVS. During the redesign, the survey implemented several changes that were meant to capture more victimizations. It improved screening techniques so that respondents knew what was

considered victimization. Interviewers also wanted to make sure that people recognized domestic violence as a crime. They also asked more questions about sensitive crimes, such as rape and sexual assault.



DID YOU KNOW

The NCVS went through another redesign in 2024. It includes a new instrument to improve the measurement of victimization and incident characteristics. It also includes new questions related to police performance and community safety.

Because the NCVS is a sample, it is subject to **sampling error**. Whenever we are not looking at an entire population, we look at a sample. It is impossible to determine if the sample is exactly the same as the population. That is, we cannot be 100% sure that the victimizations experienced by the households in the NCVS's sampling frame are representative of the victimizations in the entire country.

Additionally, because we are dealing with people, there are bound to be some errors, such as those due to difficulty remembering when something occurred. Therefore, interviewers have respondents recall only victimizations that occurred within a 6-month time frame.



HINT

It is important to note that the NCVS and NIBRS should be seen as complementary rather than competing systems. They both have their strengths and weaknesses, but they measure different phenomena. The NCVS measures victimizations, whereas NIBRS measures crimes reported to the police. Both sources continually improve upon their methods to give us a more accurate picture of crime. When used together, they give us a more complete picture of crime in the United States.



TERMS TO KNOW

Dark Figure of Crime

Crime that goes unreported to police.

National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)

A survey that measures criminal victimization in the United States.

Sampling Error

An error that occurs because the statistical characteristics of a population are estimated from a sample of the population.

1d. Self-Reporting Studies

Self-reporting studies are another way to measure crime. In this type of study, participants provide information about their own behaviors or experiences with a particular phenomenon. For criminology, self-reporting studies may ask respondents how often they engage in criminal or deviant activities or how often they use illegal substances. Self-reported data can be collected through various methods, including surveys, questionnaires, or interviews.

Self-reported data can be useful to determine how often people engage in crime; however, it is not without limitations. For one, participants are asked to describe their own experiences, which may be influenced by

factors such as memory, perception, and personal biases. Participants may also provide inaccurate or biased information due to social desirability.

⇒ **EXAMPLE** They may not want the researcher to think they engage in behavior that society frowns upon, so they may underreport how often they engage in certain activities.



TERM TO KNOW

Self-Reporting Study

A study in which participants provide information about their own behaviors or experiences with a particular phenomenon.

2. Crime Patterns Over Time

In the 1950s, crime rates were relatively low, and people felt relatively safe. Economic opportunities were easily accessible, and there was newfound wealth in North American society. In the 1960s, crime rates started to climb along with levels of social and political unrest.

During this time, crime patterns changed significantly; specifically, household theft and burglaries dramatically increased for two main reasons:

1. More homes were left unattended during the day because more women were working away from home and going to school.
2. There was a large reproduction of high-value, lightweight household appliances and other smaller electronic items because of technological innovation.

Theft thus became easier, more profitable, and more attractive to people (Cohen & Felson, 1979). The rates of most crimes increased throughout the 1980s, and then rather suddenly, in the 1990s, they started to decrease significantly.

Numerous explanations for these decreases include the following:

- Stricter gun-control laws
- More jobs
- Economic opportunities
- Increases in access to abortion
- The reduction of lead in the environment

Some have argued that greater access to abortions and other forms of birth control have led to a drop in unwanted and neglected children who would have been at a greater risk for involvement in gangs and other criminal activities. Additionally, regular exposure to and ingestion of lead are known to cause developmental and cognitive issues, especially at early ages—these issues can result in a higher number of individuals at risk for criminal activities. Consequently, some believe that policies, such as the widespread adoption of unleaded

gasoline across the automobile industry, which significantly reduced the amount of lead commonly found in the environment, may contribute to lower rates of criminal behavior. A significant part of this crime rate drop, however, was due to a massive shift in crime patterns.

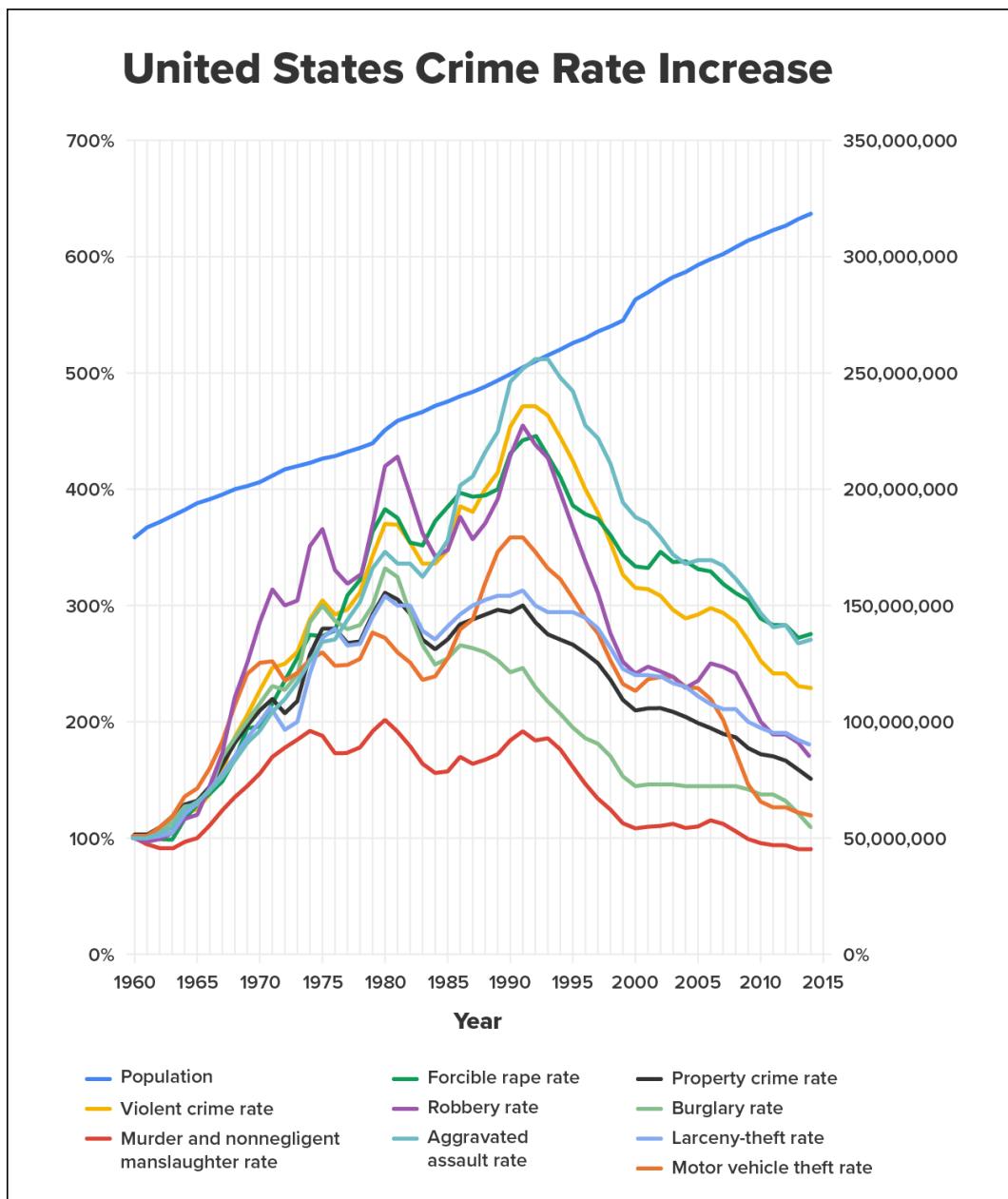
During the 1990s, the internet grew at a staggering pace, and this created many new opportunities for crime and changed how people committed crime (Byrne & Kimball, 2017). Face-to-face robberies to obtain money and items were replaced with more low-risk activities that involved cons and scams that were much more difficult to detect and prosecute. Some argue that the internet and other technological shifts (e.g., the proliferation of cell phones) have increased the dark figure of crime, while driving official crime rates down (Hall, 2014).



THINK ABOUT IT

Why would someone steal a DVD from Walmart when they can illegally download it with much less risk of getting caught?

In recent years, the United States has seen some increases in certain types of crime (mostly property related), which may be partly attributable to growing political and social unrest. Similar trends, as illustrated in the graph below, were seen in the 1960s, which was another time of great conflict and social change that saw increases in certain forms of crime and violence. The parallels between these two eras lend credence to the principal suggesting that crime occurs in cycles over long periods of time (Zimring, 2007).



2a. COVID-19 and Crime Patterns

Few events will happen in our lifetimes that will have the monumental impact of the emergence of COVID-19. Because our response to the pandemic required lockdown orders in many Western countries, this pandemic affected almost every aspect of daily life and our activities on a societal level, which has had a huge effect on the patterns of crime. Indeed, some criminologists have referred to this as “the largest criminological experiment in history” (Stickle & Felson, 2020).

Initial data suggested that there was little change in serious violent crimes, while a small reduction in residential breaking and entering and motor vehicle thefts in some cities was found. Criminologists like Boman and Gallupe (2020) argue that these decreases in certain crime rates were driven by a drop in crimes typically committed in groups. At the same time, rates of violent offenses committed alone, such as homicide and sexual assault, remained largely unchanged during the pandemic.

Many speculate that the rates of drug use (including alcohol consumption) also spiked during this period, and these changes could have affected crime rates and patterns. It is too early to understand the overall effect that the pandemic has had on crime patterns, but this will surely be a period that receives a great deal of attention from researchers.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned why it is important to **measure crime**. We first started measuring crime reported to law enforcement in the United States using the **Uniform Crime Reports** in 1930, but the primary way that law enforcement now measures crime is through the **National Incident-Based Reporting System**. This system improved upon the UCR Program by capturing more specific data related to specific crime incidents. While only two thirds of police departments are currently using NIBRS, the system continues to improve to provide us with a more accurate picture of official crime statistics across the country.

You also learned that a lot of crime goes unreported. In order to capture the dark figure of crime, we use an instrument known as the **National Crime Victimization Survey**. With this survey, researchers are able to ask a sample of people across the country about their victimizations and whether or not they reported them to the police. Moreover, **self-reporting studies** can be another useful tool to determine how much crime participants engage in themselves.

Additionally, you learned that **crime patterns over time** are always changing. The UCR Program, NIBRS, and NCVS allow us to see these trends in crime over time and place and how variables and social factors influence crime patterns from year to year. Lastly, you learned about the unique ways that the recent **COVID-19 pandemic impacted crime and crime patterns**. Next, we will dive deeper into crime patterns, looking at how patterns change based on different types of crimes.

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TERMS TO KNOW

Dark Figure of Crime

Crime that goes unreported to police.

Hierarchy Rule

A rule in the UCR Program requiring that only the most serious crime occurring at an incident gets counted.

Incidents

One or more offenses committed by the same offender or group of offenders at the same time and place.

National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)

A survey that measures criminal victimization in the United States.

National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)

A system used by law enforcement agencies in the United States for collecting and reporting data on crimes.

Official Crime Data

Crimes brought to the attention of law enforcement.

Sampling Error

An error that occurs because the statistical characteristics of a population are estimated from a sample of the population.

Self-Reporting Study

A study in which participants provide information about their own behaviors or experiences with a particular phenomenon.

Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program

A nationwide, statistical effort of more than 18,000 law enforcement agencies reporting data on crimes brought to their attention.

Typologies and Patterns of Crime

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about how different crimes are classified and review the patterns of various types of crime in different contexts of time and place. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

1. Thinking About Crime: Classification and Typologies
2. Crime Patterns
3. Typologies of Crime Patterns

1. Thinking About Crime: Classification and Typologies

Recall from the first lesson that crime is an act that may be prosecuted by the state and is punishable by law. Before we examine crime patterns, we must first consider the social nature of crime and the law. While many people take the definitions of crime for granted, it is important to remember that crime is essentially a social construct. In other words, through various social processes—such as voting, political action, cultural practices, and media debates—society collectively decides which types of behavior are considered harmful or criminal.

Definitions of crime and criminal law change over time in response to things like shifting cultural attitudes, significant events, and even technological progress.

↗ EXAMPLE In the United States, there have been several changes in the past decade affecting the legality of same-sex marriage, cannabis use, cyberbullying, and hate speech.

Finally, criminal law is also influenced by politics and ideology. Given this, some acts that are quite harmful to society (e.g., the credit default swaps that caused the 2008 financial crisis) are perfectly legal, while other acts that cause minor harm (e.g., occasional drug use) are considered criminal offenses.

Although there are disagreements and changing public attitudes about some laws, most people agree that certain acts should be illegal.

↗ EXAMPLE Murder is viewed as a crime with few exceptions—no one wants to live in a world where people can randomly kill each other and get away with it. Similarly, most agree that there should be laws that protect against theft of property and assault.

The agreement about these values is referred to as **consensus**, which you might recall from an earlier lesson. Given that criminal law is a socially constructed political entity, it is wise to take a critical-thinking approach when examining the patterns of crime. We must always consider how some forms of behavior become defined as crimes and how the frequency and severity of crime are measured when we are studying phenomena such as the changing rates, seriousness, or nature of criminal activity in a society.



TERM TO KNOW

Consensus

Societal agreement on shared values and norms.

2. Crime Patterns

Crime can be conceptualized in several ways. The most common way people view crime is as harmful acts that are “against the law.” However, many criminologists take a more complex view of the matter and caution that it is unwise to simply see crime as a violation of the law (Beirne & Messerschmidt, 2011). As explained above, the law is technically a social construct, and many acts that cause significant harm are legal, while other acts that cause minimal harm are criminalized.



HINT

If criminologists only focus on acts that are violations of criminal law, they miss harms that fall outside of the law, and they risk viewing relatively harmless behavior as a problem simply because it is illegal.

To address these gaps, some criminologists suggest that we view crime as a violation of **conduct norms**. In other words, it is important to consider what a culture or group deems to be normal or deviant behavior, as this may vary based on geographic location, history, and a variety of other factors. Thus, **deviance** refers to behaviors that depart from or violate social norms. These behaviors are not necessarily deviant in the literal sense and may not even be criminalized, but these acts may be criminalized in the future due to cultural changes.

☞ **EXAMPLE** Adultery (or “cheating on someone”) is considered a deviant act in cultures where monogamy is the norm, but it is rarely criminalized.

Thinking about the relationship between crime and deviance can shed light on why some acts were criminalized in the first place. We can see, then, that the definitions of crime and deviance change over time and differ from culture to culture. In an effort to apply a more systematic and objective (i.e., “scientific”) approach to the study of crime, criminologists have developed typologies and other classification systems to organize their thinking about criminal acts.



TERMS TO KNOW

Conduct Norms

Specifications of proper and appropriate behavior generally supported and shared by members of a group. Societies contain different groups whose conduct norms are to some extent divergent.

Deviance

Behavior that departs from or violates social norms.

3. Typologies of Crime Patterns

The National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) has a **typology** or special system for classifying different types of crime:

- Violent crime
- Property crime
- Other crime
- Traffic offenses
- Federal drug offenses
- Other federal law violations

Another common approach is to divide criminal acts into victimless crimes (e.g., drug use, prostitution, and illegal gambling) and crimes where there is a clear victim (e.g., robberies and physical assaults). Alternatively, criminologists and other commentators may use the categories of street crime or blue-collar crime (e.g., the more common types of property and minor violent crime) and suite crime or white-collar crime (e.g., financial and occupational forms of crime committed by those with status or power in society, such as politicians, legal officials, corporate executives, celebrities, and famous athletes).

While these classification systems are clearly useful, most typologies fail to capture all types of crime and conceptualize them in a way that is helpful to students new to criminology. To address these concerns, this section will review crimes that receive the most attention from criminologists.

We will use the following system of classification throughout the course:

Type of Crime Pattern	Examples
Violent crime	Homicide, sexual assault, assault, and robbery
Property crime	Larceny, arson, motor vehicle theft, vandalism, and burglary
Crimes of morality or public order	Drug use, prostitution, and gambling
Hate crime and terrorism	Hate crimes, domestic terrorism, and international terrorism
Cybercrime	Hacking, malware, and cyberbullying
Transnational or organized crime	Drug trafficking, human trafficking, and money laundering
White-collar or corporate crime	Securities fraud, health care fraud, tax fraud, and embezzlement

The following lessons will review the definitions of the types of crime listed in the table above and the ways they are considered to have different levels of severity. In addition, some observations will be made about the situations in which these types of crimes occur and any patterns that can be identified.



TERM TO KNOW

Typology

A system of classification.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned how different crimes are classified. First, you looked at ways to **think about crime using classifications and typologies** and how acts that are considered “crimes” vary across time and place. Depending on what is going on politically and socially, different acts will be considered crimes.

Moreover, in order to think about **crime patterns**, you learned how deviance refers to behaviors that depart from or violate conduct norms. While these behaviors are not against the law, they are often frowned upon by society. Depending on who is in power, deviant behaviors could be criminalized in the future.

Lastly, you learned how crimes are classified by NIBRS. This classification system puts different crimes into **typologies of crime patterns** so that criminal justice practitioners and criminologists have a better idea of the types of crimes people are engaging in at a certain point in time. Throughout the course, we will be defining and examining each of these typologies in greater depth. In the next lesson, we will begin our deep dive by examining the crimes that are considered violent, such as homicide, sexual assault, physical assault, and robbery.

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TERMS TO KNOW

Conduct Norms

Specifications of proper and appropriate behavior generally supported and shared by members of a group. Societies contain different groups whose conduct norms are to some extent divergent.

Consensus

Societal agreement on shared values and norms.

Deviance

Behavior that departs from or violates social norms.

Typology

A system of classification.

Violent Crimes: Definitions and Patterns

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about violent crimes in order to define the crimes that fall under this typology and understand their patterns. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

1. Violent Crimes: Definitions and Patterns

1a. Homicide

1b. Sexual Offenses

1c. Assault

1d. Robbery

1. Violent Crimes: Definitions and Patterns

In the last lesson, we discussed how there are different crime typologies to classify crimes. We will now define and look at patterns for violent crimes, including homicide, rape and sexual assault, physical assault, and robbery. Some of the material in this lesson is related to sensitive topics and may be difficult to read about. At Sophia, we never want students to feel uncomfortable, so please be aware of the nature of this content before you continue on.

1a. Homicide

Homicides tend to be among the most well-reported types of crime. After all, at least one person will usually notice and care if someone vanishes. Because homicides are usually reported, they are less likely than other types of crime to be susceptible to the **dark figure of crime** (Tonry, 2004). Recall from a previous lesson that the “dark figure of crime” refers to the number of crimes that are not counted in official statistics, because nobody notices or reports them.

↗ EXAMPLE A stroll through downtown San Francisco at any time of the day will reveal a great deal of unreported drug crimes—there are obviously many cases of drug possession and trafficking that go unnoticed and unreported because both participants in the crime are willing parties.

In other words, a “criminal” act is not necessarily a “deviant” act if it is typical, “normal” behavior among the local population. Homicide is usually associated with murder in everyday conversation and in television and movies.



HINT

It is important to remember that **homicide** is an umbrella term that refers to one human killing another, while **murder** is a specific type of intentional homicide.

There are several levels of murder that are sorted according to the offender's culpability and intention to do harm:

- **First-degree murder** is planned and deliberate.
- **Second-degree murder** may be intentional, but it lacks the element of preplanning and may occur in the heat of the moment.
- **Manslaughter** is nonintentional homicide resulting from intoxication, recklessness, or negligence (e.g., two people in a bar get in a fight, and one kills the other by accident).

In 2022, there were 21,156 reported cases of homicide in the United States. That means that the homicide rate was 6.3 per 100,000 people, a decrease from 6.8 in the previous year. This rate is still relatively low if the rates over 30 years are examined. In 1991, the homicide rate was about 9.7 per 100,000 people (Statista Research Department, 2023a). It is important to remember, however, that the overall homicide rate alone reveals little about trends among types of victims.

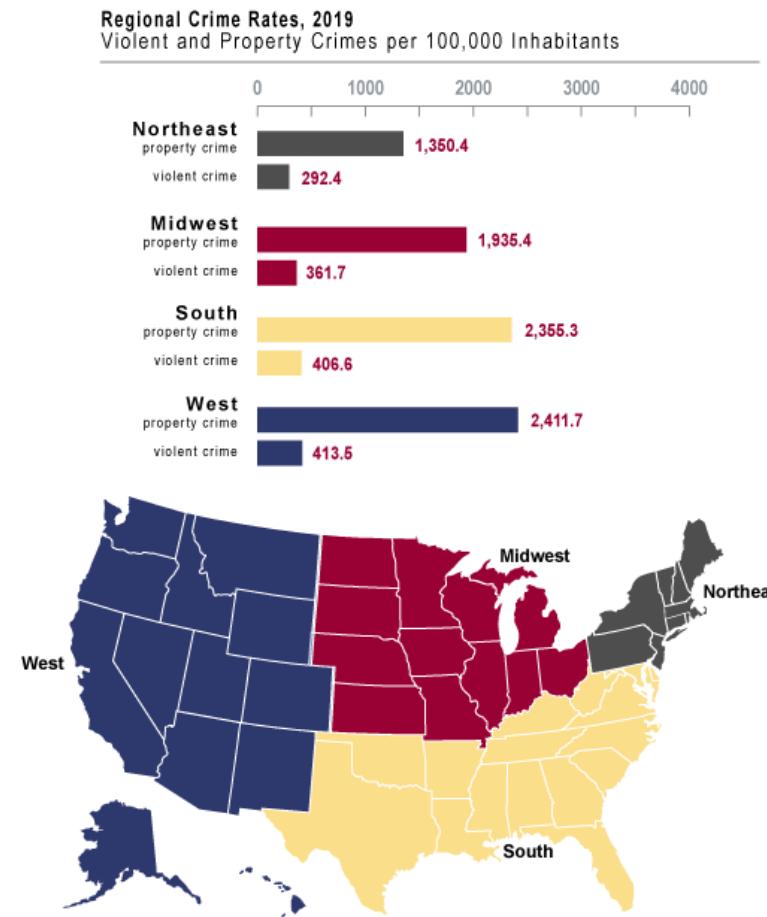
↗ EXAMPLE In 2022, over half of the homicide victims were African American, yet African Americans make up only a little more than 13% of the U.S. population. This means that there is a disproportionate number of African Americans who are the victims of homicide compared to victims of other races.



DID YOU KNOW

In the United States, the Southern and Western regions tend to have higher rates of violent crime and homicides compared to the Northeast and Midwest. There are no conclusive explanations for why crime rates are higher in the South and West, and little research has been done in this area (Andresen, 2009).

Regional Crime Rates Figure



A mundane factor may simply be the weather—as one goes South or to the West, temperatures become milder, and winters are less harsh, providing more opportunities to commit crime (e.g., more people leave their homes unoccupied in warmer weather, increasing opportunities for burglary). Some scholars argue that these variances may, in fact, be an illusion caused by differences in reporting and recording crime among the regions (Andresen, 2009).

The offending behavior of people who commit intentional homicides can fall into certain well-known patterns, such as serial murder and mass murder:

- **Serial murder** refers to the killing of several victims in three or more separate events.
- **Mass murder** refers to the killing of more than three people in a single event.

The public perceptions about the frequency of these types of murder are often inflated, because these events receive a great deal of attention from news outlets and other mass media.

☞ EXAMPLE Consider the variety of murder documentaries available on streaming platforms, such as *The Jinx: The Life and Deaths of Robert Durst*, *Don't F**k With Cats: Hunting an Internet Killer*, and *Night Stalker: The Hunt for a Serial Killer*.

However, these high-profile cases tend to be statistically rare, and it is important to realize that serial homicide accounts for less than 1% of all murders (Bonn, 2014).



TERMS TO KNOW

Dark Figure of Crime

The number of crimes that are uncounted because nobody notices or reports them.

Homicide

The killing of one person by another.

First-Degree Murder

Planned and deliberate homicide.

Second-Degree Murder

Intentional homicide that lacks the element of preplanning and may occur in the heat of the moment.

Manslaughter

Nonintentional homicide resulting from intoxication, recklessness, or negligence (e.g., two people in a bar get in a fight and one kills the other by accident).

Serial Murder

Murder in which a person kills several victims in three or more separate events.

Mass Murder

Murder that involves the killing of more than three people in a single event.

1b. Sexual Offenses

Sexual offenses refer to sexual acts directed against another person without the consent of the victim, including instances where the victim is incapable of giving consent. The National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) identifies several types of forcible sexual offenses, including the following:

- Forcible rape
- Forcible sodomy
- Sexual assault with an object
- Sexual fondling

Let us look at the most recent definitions of sexual offenses given by the NIBRS:

Offense	Definition
Forcible rape	The penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person without the consent of the victim (U.S. Department of Justice, 2017)

	*This new definition considers that men are also victims of rape or that women can rape other women.
Forcible sodomy	Oral or anal sexual intercourse with another person, forcibly and/or against that person's will or not forcibly or against the person's will in instances where the victim is incapable of giving consent because of their youth or because of their temporary or permanent mental or physical incapacity
Sexual assault with an object	The use of an object or instrument to unlawfully penetrate, however slightly, the genital or anal opening of the body of another person, forcibly and/or against that person's will or not forcibly or against the person's will in instances where the victim is incapable of giving consent because of their youth or because of their temporary or permanent mental or physical incapacity
Forcible fondling	The touching of the private body parts of another person for the purpose of sexual gratification, forcibly and/or against that person's will or not forcibly or against the person's will in instances where the victim is incapable of giving consent

In 2022, the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) reported that the rate of sexual offenses was 1.9 per 1,000 people. This was lower than the rate of 2.7 per 1,000 people in 2018 (Thompson & Tapp, 2023).

Sexual offenses are crimes that often go unreported. The reasons for the underreporting of sexual offenses include guilt, shame, hesitancy to have one's past made public in a court case, and the fact that in 70%–80% of cases, the victim knows the offender as an acquaintance, friend, or family member (Schmalleger & Volk, 2013). In some cases, victims may blame themselves because they were drinking or see the incident as a result of cultural issues, peer pressure, or mental health-related issues.

Recently, much attention has been paid to the rates of sexual assault on college campuses and their association with athletics, particularly football (Wiersma-Mosley & Jozkowski, 2019).

IN CONTEXT

John Krakauer's (2015) book *Missoula: Rape and the Justice System in a College Town* chronicles widespread cases of nonstranger sexual assault on campus and explains how some of these cases were mishandled by the university and the criminal justice system. Victims were treated with indifference and disrespect by the local police, claims were not believed or taken seriously, and there is also evidence that the accused players on the high-profile football team were allowed to flee the state (Montana) before charges could be filed against them. As a result, the university has taken steps in recent years to address these issues. This story demonstrates how the reporting and prosecution of crimes can be affected by the interests of powerful institutions.



TERMS TO KNOW

Sexual Offense

A sexual act directed against another person without the consent of the victim, including instances where the victim is incapable of giving consent.

Forcible Rape

The penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person without the consent of the victim.

Forcible Sodomy

Oral or anal sexual intercourse with another person, forcibly and/or against that person's will or not forcibly or against the person's will in instances where the victim is incapable of giving consent because of their youth or because of their temporary or permanent mental or physical incapacity.

Sexual Assault With an Object

The use of an object or instrument to unlawfully penetrate, however slightly, the genital or anal opening of the body of another person, forcibly and/or against that person's will or not forcibly or against the person's will in instances where the victim is incapable of giving consent because of their youth or because of their temporary or permanent mental or physical incapacity.

Forcible Fondling

The touching of the private body parts of another person for the purpose of sexual gratification, forcibly and/or against that person's will or not forcibly or against the person's will in instances where the victim is incapable of giving consent.

1c. Assault

Assaults refer to unlawful attacks by one person upon another. They can be classified as simple and aggravated assaults:

- **Simple assault** is less serious than aggravated assault and is the unlawful physical attack by one person upon another where neither the offender displays a weapon nor does the victim suffer obvious severe or aggravated bodily injury involving apparent broken bones, loss of teeth, possible internal injury, severe laceration, or loss of consciousness. It usually involves punching, pushing, shoving, or threats by act or gesture, but no serious harm is involved.
- **Aggravated assault**, on the other hand, is more severe and involves serious bodily harm. It is defined as an unlawful attack by one person upon another wherein the offender uses a weapon or displays it in a threatening manner, or the victim suffers obvious severe or aggravated bodily injury involving apparent broken bones, loss of teeth, possible internal injury, severe laceration, or loss of consciousness. It can also include assault with disease, which can occur through biting or spitting at the victim.

In 2021, the rate of aggravated assaults in the United States was 271 per 100,000 people, and the rate of simple assaults was 524 per 100,000 people (Statista Research Department, 2023c). The rates of assaults have been decreasing over time. They often occur at night and in the presence of alcohol or in and around establishments that serve alcohol. Most assaults are also highly emotional, impulsive events and tend to be unplanned or involve little planning (Felson & Eckert, 2018).



TERMS TO KNOW

Assault

An unlawful attack by one person upon another.

Simple Assault

The unlawful physical attack by one person upon another where neither the offender displays a weapon nor does the victim suffer obvious severe or aggravated bodily injury involving apparent broken bones, loss of teeth, possible internal injury, severe laceration, or loss of consciousness.

Aggravated Assault

The unlawful attack by one person upon another wherein the offender uses a weapon or displays it in a threatening manner, or the victim suffers obvious severe or aggravated bodily injury involving apparent broken bones, loss of teeth, possible internal injury, severe laceration, or loss of consciousness.

1d. Robbery

Robbery refers to when an offender uses force or violence (or threats) during the commission of a theft. People seem to confuse robbery with breaking and entering or other forms of property theft. This may arise from the common phrasing “my house or car was robbed”; however, it is important to remember that, legally, one robs a person, not an object. This leads to the misconception amongst people that robbery is a property crime when it is, in fact, a violent crime due to the use or threatened use of force.

In the United States, there were about 66 robberies per 100,000 people in 2022 (Statista Research Department, 2023b). Like most other crimes, robberies tend to occur later at night and are much more common in urban settings. Research from criminologists Wright and Decker has revealed that commercial and street robberies are committed by two different types of offenders:

- Commercial robbers, who commit robbery in a place of business, such as a bank or a convenience store, tend to do more planning and research and are less impulsive.
- Street robbers, on the other hand, are more likely to use force and act based on opportunity.



TERM TO KNOW

Robbery

The use of force or violence during the commission of a theft.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned about the **definitions and patterns of violent crimes**. First, you learned about the different types of **homicides** and how they are classified depending on premeditation. You also learned that while serial killings are often publicized in the media, this type of homicide is rare.

Next, you learned about various types of **sexual offenses** to understand the differences between them. You then learned that there are different types of **assaults**, with aggravated assault being more serious than simple assault. Finally, we covered the crime of **robbery** in this lesson. Although robbery is often thought of by the public as a property crime, you now know that it is actually a violent crime, because it

involves violence during a theft.

In the next lesson, we will continue looking at crime typologies, but we will turn our attention to nonviolent property crimes. We will examine crimes such as larceny, arson, motor vehicle theft, and burglary.

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ATTRIBUTIONS

- [Crime in the United States, by Region, Geographic Division, and State, 2018–2019. FBI.](#)



TERMS TO KNOW

Aggravated Assault

The unlawful attack by one person upon another wherein the offender uses a weapon or displays it in a threatening manner, or the victim suffers obvious severe or aggravated bodily injury involving apparent broken bones, loss of teeth, possible internal injury, severe laceration, or loss of consciousness.

Assault

An unlawful attack by one person upon another.

Dark Figure of Crime

The number of crimes that are uncounted because nobody notices or reports them.

First-Degree Murder

Planned and deliberate homicide.

Forcible Fondling

The touching of the private body parts of another person for the purpose of sexual gratification, forcibly and/or against that person's will or not forcibly or against the person's will in instances where the victim is incapable of giving consent.

Forcible Rape

The penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person without the consent of the victim.

Forcible Sodomy

Oral or anal sexual intercourse with another person, forcibly and/or against that person's will or not forcibly or against the person's will in instances where the victim is incapable of giving consent because of their youth or because of their temporary or permanent mental or physical incapacity.

Homicide

The killing of one person by another.

Manslaughter

Nonintentional homicide resulting from intoxication, recklessness, or negligence (e.g., two people in a bar get in a fight and one kills the other by accident).

Mass Murder

Murder that involves the killing of more than three people in a single event.

Robbery

The use of force or violence during the commission of a theft.

Second-Degree Murder

Intentional homicide that lacks the element of preplanning and may occur in the heat of the moment.

Serial Murder

Murder in which a person kills several victims in three or more separate events.

Sexual Assault With an Object

The use of an object or instrument to unlawfully penetrate, however slightly, the genital or anal opening of the body of another person, forcibly and/or against that person's will or not forcibly or against the person's will in instances where the victim is incapable of giving consent because of their youth or because of their temporary or permanent mental or physical incapacity.

Sexual Offense

A sexual act directed against another person without the consent of the victim, including instances where the victim is incapable of giving consent.

Simple Assault

The unlawful physical attack by one person upon another where neither the offender displays a weapon nor does the victim suffer obvious severe or aggravated bodily injury involving apparent broken bones, loss of teeth, possible internal injury, severe laceration, or loss of consciousness.

Nonviolent Crimes: Definitions and Patterns

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about nonviolent property crimes in order to define the crimes that fall under this typology and understand their patterns. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

- 1. Nonviolent Property Crimes: Definitions and Patterns**
 - 1a. Burglary**
 - 1b. Larceny Theft**
 - 1c. Motor Vehicle Theft**
 - 1d. Arson**

1. Nonviolent Property Crimes: Definitions and Patterns

In the last lesson, you learned about violent crimes, which typically target people. You will now learn more about the definitions for nonviolent crimes that target property, including burglary, larceny theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

1a. Burglary

Burglary, often referred to as breaking and entering, involves entering someone else's property with the intention of committing a felony (e.g., theft or destruction of property). Burglary typically involves entering a building or structure, which can include houses, apartments, businesses, and other enclosed spaces. Vehicles, such as cars or boats, may also be included depending on local laws. The person entering the premises must have the intent to commit a crime inside, such as theft, vandalism, or assault. The mere act of trespassing may not constitute burglary without the intent to commit a crime.

In 2022, the rate of burglary violations in the United States was 270 per 100,000 people (Korhonen, 2023c). The overall trend in the United States shows a decline in burglary rates over the past several decades. In general, burglars tend to look for homes that are unoccupied for long periods of time. While they prefer to work at night, burglars will target homes during the day if they know many of the people in the area are at work (Felson & Eckert, 2018).

Police departments often see spikes in burglaries during the summer months when people are away on vacation and because they are more likely to leave windows and doors open. Research indicates that these offenders do not necessarily target wealthy homes—in fact, they may see these as targets with too much security that would attract unwanted attention from the police. Instead, they tend to look for homes in upper-middle-class neighborhoods that may lack security but still contain valuable items, such as money, jewelry, or electronics (Wright & Decker, 1994).



TERM TO KNOW

Burglary

The act of entering someone else's property with the intention of committing a felony.

1b. Larceny Theft

Larceny theft is the “unlawful taking, carrying, leading, or riding away of property from the possession or constructive possession of another person” (National Incident-Based Reporting System, 2012). There are different types of larceny theft, including the following:

- Pickpocketing
- Purse snatching
- Shoplifting
- Theft from a building
- Theft from a coin-operated machine
- Theft from a motor vehicle

In 2022, the rate of larceny theft in the United States was 1,402 per 100,000 people (Statista Research Department, 2023). Similar to most crimes, the rate of larceny theft has been decreasing in the United States over the past 30 years. There have been improvements in security technology, such as surveillance cameras, alarm systems, and other protective measures, which act as deterrents and make it more difficult for individuals to commit theft.

When compared to other forms of crime, theft cases involving women tend to make up a large proportion (but still the vast minority) at 33% (Schmalleger & Volk, 2014). Most theft, especially minor theft, is based on easy opportunities and can often be remedied through crime prevention tactics, such as those related to security that were listed above.



TERM TO KNOW

Larceny Theft

The unlawful taking, carrying, leading, or riding away of property from the possession, or constructive possession, of another person.

1c. Motor Vehicle Theft

Motor vehicle theft is the criminal act of stealing or attempting to steal a motor vehicle. In 2022, there were 283 reported cases of motor vehicle theft out of every 100,000 people in the United States. This was a small

increase from the previous year, but rates of motor vehicle theft have been decreasing since 1990, when the rate was 658 per 100,000 people (Korhonen, 2023a).

There are different ways that people try to keep their vehicles safe from theft.

☞ EXAMPLE Many modern vehicles are equipped with security features such as alarms, immobilizers, and electronic key systems to deter theft. Moreover, some vehicles have physical deterrents like steering wheel locks to make it more difficult for thieves to steal the vehicle. It is also important to park in well-lit and populated areas to discourage thieves.

Some vehicles are more likely to be targeted than others.

☞ EXAMPLE Older vehicles might lack modern security features, making them more susceptible to theft, while other vehicles are targeted more frequently because of their popularity or the value of their parts on the black market. Furthermore, motor vehicle theft rates are often higher in urban areas due to the greater concentration of vehicles and potential for anonymity.



TERM TO KNOW

Motor Vehicle Theft

The theft of a motor vehicle.

1d. Arson

Arson is the unlawful and intentional damage of, or attempt to damage, any real or personal property by fire or incendiary device. In 2022, the rate of arson in the United States was approximately 10.9 per 100,000 people (Korhonen, 2023b).

Arson often results in damage to property, ranging from minor destruction to complete devastation. The severity of charges often depends on the extent of the damage.

Arson investigations are typically conducted by specialized professionals, including fire investigators and law enforcement. They use various techniques such as forensic analysis, interviews, and examination of fire patterns to determine the cause of the fire and gather evidence for prosecution.

Arsonists may have different motivations:

- Some commit arson for financial gain, such as insurance fraud.
- Others may engage in arson as a form of revenge or to satisfy a psychological compulsion.

Arson is a significant concern because of the potential danger it poses to human life, as well as the economic and emotional impact on individuals and communities. Fire safety measures, building codes, and public awareness campaigns are often implemented to reduce the risk of arson and mitigate its consequences.



TERM TO KNOW

Arson

The unlawful and intentional damage of, or attempt to damage, any real or personal property by fire or incendiary device.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned about **the definitions and patterns of some of the more common nonviolent property crimes**, which have all been seeing lower rates than they did 30 years ago. First, you learned about **burglary**, which involves breaking and entering into someone else's property with the intention of committing a crime. **Larceny theft** is the unlawful taking of someone else's property, and it often includes shoplifting, pickpocketing, and other forms of theft. You also learned about **motor vehicle theft**, which is the theft of a motor vehicle.

Finally, you learned about **arson**, which is different from the other property crimes we discussed since it does not actually involve theft of property. However, it is a property crime because it involves the damage of property by intentionally setting a fire.

Most property crimes, including arson, have decreased over time as a result of improvements in security technology, such as surveillance cameras and alarm systems, which make it harder for people to commit these crimes. In the next lesson, we will learn about another type of crime—crimes of morality and public order crimes, such as prostitution and drug use.

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TERMS TO KNOW

Arson

The unlawful and intentional damage of, or attempt to damage, any real or personal property by fire or incendiary device.

Burglary

The act of entering someone else's property with the intention of committing a felony.

Larceny Theft

The unlawful taking, carrying, leading, or riding away of property from the possession, or constructive possession, of another person.

Motor Vehicle Theft

The theft of a motor vehicle.

Crimes of Morality and Public Order: Definitions and Patterns

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about crimes of morality and public order in order to define the crimes that fall under this typology and understand their patterns. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

- 1. Crimes of Morality and Public Order: Definitions and Patterns**
 - 1a. Prostitution**
 - 1b. Drug Use**

1. Crimes of Morality and Public Order: Definitions and Patterns

Crimes of morality and public order are categories of offenses that typically involve actions that society deems harmful to its moral fabric or disruptive to public peace and order. These crimes are often characterized by their focus on the broader welfare of the community.

The classification and acceptance of these crimes can vary widely across different cultures and legal systems. Additionally, societal attitudes and legal perspectives on what constitutes a crime of morality or public order may evolve over time. Here, we will examine two of the most prominent examples of these crimes: prostitution and drug use.

1a. Prostitution

The question of whether **prostitution** is considered a crime against morality is subjective and varies across different societies, cultures, and legal systems. As we know, morality is a complex and culturally dependent concept, and attitudes toward prostitution can differ widely.

In some societies, prostitution is viewed as morally unacceptable due to religious beliefs, cultural norms, or historical traditions. These perspectives often associate sex work with notions of immorality, sin, or indecency. Some argue that engaging in commercial sex may be seen as a violation of societal norms regarding sexual behavior and the sanctity of intimate relationships.

However, it is important to note that perspectives on morality can change over time, and different individuals and cultures may have varying opinions on this matter. In some places, there is a growing recognition of the need to decriminalize or regulate prostitution, emphasizing the rights and safety of sex workers.



DID YOU KNOW

In the United States, prostitution laws vary at the state level, as the regulation of prostitution is primarily a state and local matter. There is no federal law explicitly criminalizing or legalizing prostitution. Prostitution is illegal in most U.S. states, except for Nevada, meaning both the buying and selling of sex for money are criminalized. In Nevada, however, certain counties allow regulated and licensed brothels. In other states, prostitution can be a misdemeanor or a felony, depending on the state and the specific offense.

Prostitution laws are not enforced consistently throughout the United States. Prostitution is underreported, and arrest rates of sex workers are dependent on local variances in law enforcement practices. Therefore, reliable statistics for prostitution are difficult to acquire. However, we do know that 19,811 people were arrested for prostitution in the United States in 2019 (Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI], 2019b).



HINT

Laws regarding sex trafficking are distinct from those related to consensual adult prostitution. Many states have laws specifically targeting human trafficking for sexual exploitation.



TERM TO KNOW

Prostitution

The practice or occupation of engaging in sexual activity with someone for payment.

1b. Drug Use

Drug use is considered a public order crime for several reasons. First, it is associated with a range of negative consequences that can affect public safety.

☞ EXAMPLE Individuals under the influence of drugs may engage in behavior that poses a threat to themselves and others, such as impaired driving or violence.

Moreover, the use of drugs can contribute to social disruption. Communities may experience increased crime rates, disorderly conduct, and other problems associated with drug addiction. This can create a sense of insecurity and unease among the public. Thus, laws and regulations are often based on societal norms and values. Many societies consider drug use as a behavior that goes against accepted norms, leading to its classification as a public order crime.

Perspectives on drug use and its criminalization can vary widely across different societies and over time. Some argue for a shift toward treating drug abuse as a public health issue rather than a strictly criminal one, emphasizing rehabilitation and harm reduction over punitive measures. Public attitudes and legal approaches to drug use continue to evolve, reflecting changing societal views and a growing understanding of addiction as a complex health issue.

The correlation between drug use and crime is well known, well documented, and real (Bennett et al., 2008).

However, it is important to remember that **correlation** (i.e., a relationship between variables) does not necessarily mean **causation** (i.e., one variable causes the change in another variable). There are numerous variables at play when trying to understand either criminal or drug-using behavior, let alone how the two relate to each other.

Drug criminalization has been shown to be an ineffective method for controlling or preventing drug use. Evidence from the criminologists Robinson and Scherlen (2014) indicates that prohibition has exacerbated problems associated with drug use and addiction.

Criminal justice data seem to support these findings:

1. Statistics indicate that under prohibition, drug use has become much more widespread and that young people are using drugs at younger ages.
2. Drugs have steadily become more potent under prohibition.

Designer drugs are examples of drugs that are prohibited but are widely used among young people and have become more potent over time. Designer drugs refer to drugs created in underground or secret labs by changing the chemical properties of other preexisting drugs. Some examples include the following:

- MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine), or “ecstasy”
- MDA (3,4-3,4-methylenedioxymphetamine), or “molly”
- GHB (gamma hydroxybutyrate)
- Synthetic stimulants (e.g., bath salts and flakka)
- Cannabinoids (e.g., Spice and K2)
- Fentanyl

Most concerning is the fact that these drugs become increasingly potent with each generation.

Drugs naturally occurring or derived from natural substances include:

- Cocaine
- Morphine
- Codeine
- Heroin
- Cannabis

☞ **EXAMPLE** Even natural cannabis has increased in potency over time with the emergence of increasingly stronger strains and the advent of butane hash oil and other concentrates such as wax and shatter.

Finally, prohibition may also aggravate the problems some communities have with the police. When drug possession is treated as a criminal offense, both users and dealers take steps to hide what they are doing. In this situation, the demand for potent and concealable substances will be high, and there will be less interest in weaker versions of the drug. This was also true during alcohol prohibition.

➡ EXAMPLE Beer and ciders became less common during prohibition, while high-proof hard alcohol became more readily available.

Criminologists, like Owusu-Bempah and Luscombe (2021), found that there is also evidence to indicate that drug laws are enforced against racial minorities at much higher rates and with more severe consequences. Decriminalization of drug possession is thus poised to become a major issue in the future.

IN CONTEXT

Portugal and several other countries have had success with decriminalization. Contrary to the opponents of drug policy reform, criminologists Heidt and Wheeldon (2021) found that cannabis legalization and decriminalization of drug possession do not appear to contribute to increases in drug use, overdoses, mental illness, or crime. Somewhat surprisingly, areas that have decriminalized drug possession have seen addiction and overdose rates fall (Hughes & Stevens, 2010; Hughes & Stevens, 2012).

There is also no indication that young people are using more cannabis in jurisdictions that have legalized recreational cannabis. In fact, the greatest increases in use have occurred among older people. It is interesting to note that, in the last decade, rates of drug use, as recorded in official statistics, have plummeted, though this may be due to reduced enforcement rather than a true drop in drug use.

In 2019, there were 1,558,862 arrests for drug abuse in the United States (FBI, 2019a). This was a decrease from the 1,654,282 drug abuse arrests from the previous year. Because there is such a large number of people who use drugs and are involved in the criminal justice system, it is important for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to continue managing this issue in ways that help these individuals but also protect society.



TERMS TO KNOW

Correlation

A statistical relationship between variables, not necessarily causal.

Causation

When the change in one variable is the direct result of a change in another variable.

Designer Drugs

Drugs that are created in underground or secret labs by changing the chemical properties of other preexisting drugs.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned about the **definitions and patterns of crimes of morality and public order**.

These crimes are different from violent and property crimes because these acts are deemed to be crimes based on society's perceptions of how the acts violate the moral code. For instance, society's

views of **prostitution** change over place and time. Prostitution happens in every country across the globe, but it is illegal everywhere in the United States except for Nevada. However, laws against prostitution are not enforced consistently throughout the United States, so many acts of prostitution are not counted in official statistics.

You also learned about **drug use** and why it is a public order crime. Drug use is a very complicated issue that is viewed as both a public health issue and a criminal one. Similar to prostitution, it is important that researchers, practitioners, and lawmakers consider how best to manage this issue for the individuals involved and for society.

In the next lesson, we will continue examining crime typologies. Specifically, we will discuss hate crimes, extremism, and terrorism.

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TERMS TO KNOW

Causation

When the change in one variable is the direct result of a change in another variable.

Correlation

A statistical relationship between variables, not necessarily causal.

Designer Drugs

Drugs that are created in underground or secret labs by changing the chemical properties of other preexisting drugs.

Prostitution

The practice or occupation of engaging in sexual activity with someone for payment.

Hate Crime, Extremism, and Terrorism

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about the relationship between hate crime, extremism, and terrorism in order to define the crimes that fall under this typology and understand their patterns. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

- [**1. Hate Crime, Extremism, and Terrorism: Definitions and Patterns**](#)
 - [**1a. Hate Crime**](#)
 - [**1b. Extremism**](#)
 - [**1c. Terrorism**](#)
- [**2. Relationship Between Hate Crime, Extremism, and Terrorism**](#)

1. Hate Crime, Extremism, and Terrorism: Definitions and Patterns

Hate crimes, extremism, and terrorism are interconnected concepts that share some commonalities but also have distinct characteristics. In the following sections, you will learn more about these concepts and their prevalence in our society.

1a. Hate Crime

There are federal laws against **hate crimes**, or crimes committed on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability. After the Civil Rights Act of 1968, the Department of Justice started prosecuting federal hate crimes in the United States (Department of Justice [DOJ], 2023b).

Action against hate crimes is enforced through a combination of federal and state laws, as well as law enforcement agencies at various levels. The enforcement of hate crime laws involves investigation, prosecution, and sentencing. Local law enforcement agencies investigate reported incidents to determine whether they meet the criteria for a hate crime. They collect evidence, interview witnesses, and assess the motivation behind the crime. If there is evidence to support the fact that the crime was motivated by bias or prejudice, the case may be referred to prosecutors for potential hate crime charges.

In some cases, if the crime meets certain criteria, the federal government may become involved.

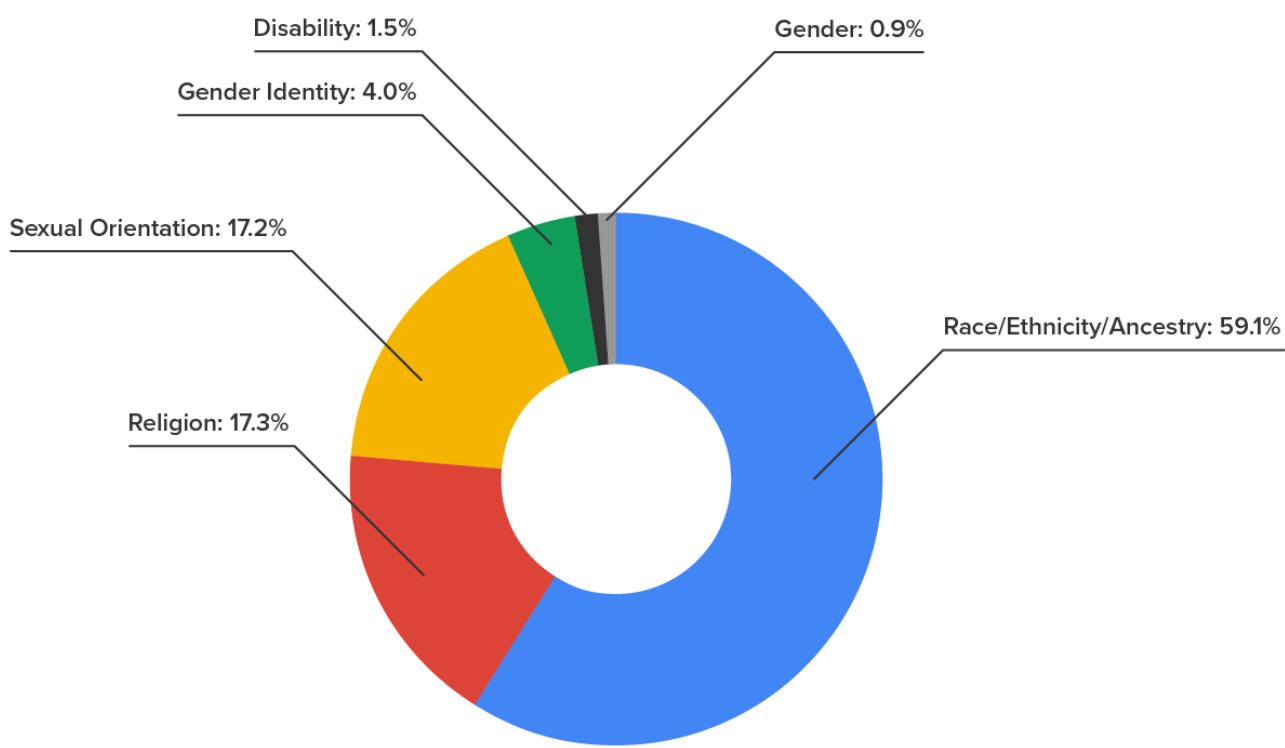


DID YOU KNOW

The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, enacted in 2009, allows the federal prosecution of hate crimes that local authorities are unable or unwilling to address. If the accused is convicted, sentencing occurs. Hate crime statutes often result in enhanced penalties, such as longer prison sentences or increased fines, compared to the penalties for the underlying crime.

Hate crimes are not easily classified as violent or nonviolent because, in some cases, hate crimes are statements. In other cases, judges may decide that hateful statements that precede physically violent incidents are, in fact, aggravating factors, thus increasing the severity of the statements in the eyes of the criminal justice system. The FBI collects and publishes annual hate crime statistics based on data submitted by law enforcement agencies across the country. In 2022, there were 11,634 hate crime incidents in the United States that were reported to the FBI (Department of Justice [DOJ], 2023a).

Here is a graph showing the breakdown of hate crimes in the United States in 2022:



Hate crimes have been increasing in recent years. One possible explanation is the recent proliferation of right-wing extremist groups in North America. Partly in response to 9/11, terror threats from abroad were given a great deal of attention by law enforcement agencies during the early 2000s. However, in more recent years, law enforcement organizations, such as the FBI, have expressed increasing concern about the threat of homegrown terrorist groups.

It is also worth noting that there have been increasing reports of violence directed at Asians in both the United States and Canada, presumably because of links to the COVID-19 pandemic. Hate crimes are sometimes associated with extremism, which we will discuss below.



TERM TO KNOW

Hate Crime

A crime committed on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability.

1b. Extremism

Extremism is the advocacy or support for extreme beliefs, views, or actions, often diverging from mainstream opinions or societal norms. It is characterized by a rejection of compromise, a willingness to use or endorse violence, and a commitment to a particular ideology or cause. Extremists typically seek radical changes in political, religious, social, or economic systems and may be driven by a sense of perceived injustice, grievance, or the desire to impose their beliefs on others.

Extremism can manifest in various forms and contexts, such as political, religious, or social extremism:

- Political extremists may advocate for radical political ideologies.
- Religious extremists may promote extreme interpretations of religious beliefs.
- Social extremists may pursue radical changes in societal norms.

The definition and understanding of extremism can vary across different cultures, societies, and academic disciplines. In some cases, what is considered extreme by one group may be viewed as legitimate by another, highlighting the subjective nature of the term.

The United States has also seen an increase in political extremism in recent years.

IN CONTEXT

The far-right extremist group, the Proud Boys, and other unaffiliated individuals assaulted the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021 (Tasker, 2021). They breached the security barricades, broke into the Capitol building, and disrupted the joint session of Congress that was in the process of certifying the Electoral College results of the 2020 presidential election. The riot resulted in violence, injuries, and the death of law enforcement officers and protesters.

These riots had significant political and legal consequences, leading to investigations, arrests, and increased security measures in and around the Capitol. It was widely condemned as an attack on democracy.



TERM TO KNOW

Extremism

The advocacy or support for extreme beliefs, views, or actions, often diverging from mainstream opinions or societal norms.

1c. Terrorism

According to the FBI, **international terrorism** is defined as “violent, criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups who are inspired by, or associated with, designated foreign terrorist organizations or nations.” It goes on to define **domestic terrorism** as “violent, criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups to further ideological goals stemming from domestic influences, such as those of a political, religious, social, racial, or environmental nature” (Federal Bureau of Investigation, n.d.).

Here, we will focus more on domestic terrorism and how it relates to hate crimes and extremism. Cases of this type of terrorism are on the rise, as well.

☞ **EXAMPLE** Recall the racially motivated incident when an individual shot and killed 10 people in Buffalo, New York, in 2022. Likewise, there was the 2018 attack on a Pittsburgh synagogue, killing 11 people. From 2010 to 2021, there were 231 incidents of domestic terrorism, which represents a 357% increase over that time period (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2023).

Domestic terrorist incidents are often targeted at the government or people of a certain race, but they can also be related to other influences, such as animal rights or abortion.



TERMS TO KNOW

International Terrorism

Violent, criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups who are inspired by, or associated with, designated foreign terrorist organizations or nations.

Domestic Terrorism

Violent, criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups to further ideological goals stemming from domestic influences, such as those of a political, religious, social, racial, or environmental nature.

2. Relationship Between Hate Crime, Extremism, and Terrorism

So, what is the relationship between hate crimes, extremism, and terrorism?

Extremism can be a precursor to terrorism when individuals or groups adopt extreme beliefs and become radicalized. Moreover, some groups are based around hate ideologies, which can contribute to **radicalization**. Hate crimes may be a manifestation of extremist ideologies, and both hate crimes and extremism can contribute to the broader issue of terrorism. Lastly, individuals or groups engaged in terrorism may share ideologies that are rooted in hate or extremism.

However, it is crucial to recognize that not all extremists or individuals involved in hate crimes engage in terrorism, and there are varying degrees of severity within each category.



TERM TO KNOW

Radicalization

The action or process of causing someone to adopt radical positions on political or social issues.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned about the **definitions and patterns of hate crimes, extremism, and terrorism**.

Hate crimes are traditional crimes that are committed based on a bias the offender has related to a victim's race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability.

Extremism is characterized by a rejection of compromise, a willingness to use or endorse violence, and a commitment to a particular ideology or cause. Similarly, **terrorism**, more specifically domestic terrorism, involves violence to further a political, religious, or social goal.

As you learned throughout this lesson, we have seen rises in hate crime, extremism, and terrorism in recent years. Furthermore, it is important to recognize the **relationship between hate crime, extremism, and terrorism**. Not all hate crimes or acts of extremism escalate to terrorism; however, individuals or groups can move from expressing extreme beliefs to engaging in violent actions, with terrorism representing the most extreme form. Addressing these issues often involves understanding and addressing the root causes, promoting tolerance, and implementing strategies to prevent radicalization and violence.

In the next lesson, we will continue looking into crime typologies, focusing specifically on cybercrime.

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ATTRIBUTIONS

- DC Capitol Storming | Author: Tap The Forward Assist



TERMS TO KNOW

Domestic Terrorism

Violent, criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups to further ideological goals stemming from domestic influences, such as those of a political, religious, social, racial, or environmental nature.

Extremism

The advocacy or support for extreme beliefs, views, or actions, often diverging from mainstream opinions or societal norms.

Hate Crime

A crime committed on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability.

International Terrorism

Violent, criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups who are inspired by, or associated with, designated foreign terrorist organizations or nations.

Radicalization

The action or process of causing someone to adopt radical positions on political or social issues.

Cybercrime

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about the different types of cybercrime and their prevalence in society in order to define the crimes that fall under this typology and understand their patterns. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

- 1. Cybercrime: Definitions and Patterns**
 - 1a. Phishing**
 - 1b. Hacking**
 - 1c. Malware**
 - 1d. Identity Theft**
 - 1e. Cyberbullying**

1. Cybercrime: Definitions and Patterns

Cybercrime refers to criminal activities that are carried out using digital technology or the Internet. These crimes can take various forms, and they continue to evolve as technology advances. There are many types of cybercrime, and we will discuss some of the more common forms in this lesson. It can be difficult to determine the amount of cybercrime due to its global nature, the lack of standardized reporting, and the ability to conceal one's identity in cyberspace, among other challenges.



TERM TO KNOW

Cybercrime

Criminal activities that are carried out using digital technology or the Internet.

1a. Phishing

Phishing is a type of cyberattack in which attackers attempt to deceive people into disclosing sensitive information, such as login credentials, personal details, or financial information. The attackers often pretend to be trustworthy entities, such as banks, government agencies, or reputable companies, to trick the victims into providing this information. Phishing is one of the most common types of cybercrime. In 2022, approximately 300,000 people in the United States fell victim to a phishing attack (Petrosyan, 2023).

Phishing attacks typically involve the use of emails, messages, or websites that appear legitimate, often replicating the look of authentic communication from a trusted source. These messages usually contain language to create a sense of urgency or fear, prompting the recipient to act quickly without thoroughly verifying the authenticity of the communication.

Phishing is a widespread and evolving threat, and people and organizations need to be vigilant to avoid falling victim to these scams. Security measures, such as using two-factor authentication, regularly updating passwords, and being cautious about clicking on links or providing personal information, can help avoid the risks associated with phishing attacks.



TERM TO KNOW

Phishing

A cyberattack in which attackers attempt to deceive people into disclosing sensitive information, such as login credentials, personal details, or financial information.

1b. Hacking

Hacking has different meanings depending on the context, but in a general sense, it refers to the act of gaining unauthorized access to computer systems or networks, typically with the goal of exploiting vulnerabilities for malicious purposes. Hacking can involve various activities, such as breaking into computer systems or networks without permission or taking advantage of weaknesses in software, hardware, or security protocols. Hacking is often associated with malicious activities, such as stealing sensitive information or disrupting operations.

↗ EXAMPLE In 2022, there was a cyberattack on Crypto.com, targeting nearly 500 people's cryptocurrency accounts. Hackers stole approximately \$18 million worth of Bitcoin and \$15 million worth of Ethereum, among other cryptocurrencies. They were able to bypass the two-factor authentication and access users' accounts. After this attack, Crypto.com reimbursed users who were affected. They also heightened security for their systems to prevent the likelihood of this type of attack happening in the future (LeClerc Sveinsson, n.d.).

It is important to note that not all hacking is malicious. There are ethical hackers who use their skills to identify and fix security vulnerabilities. They work to improve security and help protect systems from malicious hackers.



TERM TO KNOW

Hacking

An act of gaining unauthorized access to computer systems or networks, typically with the goal of exploiting vulnerabilities for malicious purposes.

1c. Malware

Malware, or malicious software, refers to any software designed to harm computer systems, networks, or users. It is often installed by hackers. In 2022, there were over 5.5 billion malware attacks around the world (Petrosyan, 2024). Malware is a broad term that encompasses various types of malicious software, each with its own set of functions and purposes. Malware can take many forms, including viruses, worms, Trojans, ransomware, spyware, and adware.

Here is a brief overview of some common types of malware:

Type	Definition
Viruses	These are programs that can replicate themselves by attaching to other programs or files. They often spread through infected files and can damage or corrupt data.
Worms	These are self-replicating programs that can spread across networks without any human intervention. They can consume a system's resources, leading to performance issues.
Trojans	These are programs that disguise themselves as legitimate software but contain malicious code. Once installed, they can perform a variety of harmful actions, such as stealing sensitive information or providing unauthorized access to a system.
Ransomware	This is a program that encrypts the victim's files and demands a ransom in exchange for the decryption key. Its attacks can have severe consequences, as they can lead to data loss and financial damage.
Spyware	This is a program that is designed to spy on the user's activities without their knowledge. It can capture keystrokes, take screenshots, and collect information, which is then sent to a remote server.
Adware	This is a program that displays unwanted advertisements on a user's computer, often in the form of popups. While not always harmful, it can be annoying and may impact system performance.

Malware is typically distributed through malicious email attachments, infected websites, and compromised software downloads. To protect against malware, it is important to use antivirus and antimalware software, keep software and operating systems up to date, and exercise caution when clicking on links or downloading files from the Internet.



TERMS TO KNOW

Malware

Software designed to harm computer systems, networks, or users.

Virus

A program that can replicate itself by attaching to other programs or files.

Worm

A self-replicating program that can spread across networks without any human intervention.

Trojan

A type of malware that disguises itself as legitimate software but contains malicious code.

Ransomware

A type of malware that encrypts the victim's files and demands a ransom in exchange for the decryption key.

Spyware

Software that spies on the user's activities without their knowledge.

Adware

A type of malware that displays unwanted advertisements on a user's computer, often in the form of popups.

1d. Identity Theft

Identity theft, or online identity theft, is a type of crime in which an individual's personal information is stolen and used for fraudulent purposes in cyberspace. This stolen information can include the person's name, Social Security number, credit card details, bank account information, passwords, and other sensitive data. The Federal Trade Commission received over 1.1 million reports of identity theft in 2022 (Lever, 2023).

⤵ **EXAMPLE** Abraham Abdallah fooled credit score companies into providing him with information in 2001. He then used the identities of some of the country's richest people, including Warren Buffet and Steven Spielberg, to steal millions of dollars (DataShield, n.d.).

People who engage in identity theft typically use this stolen information to commit fraudulent acts, such as financial fraud, medical identity theft, criminal activity, or tax fraud. Here are some ways to reduce the risk of falling victim to cyber identity theft:

- Protecting personal information
- Using strong and unique passwords
- Being cautious about sharing sensitive data online
- Regularly monitoring financial statements

Additionally, organizations often implement security measures and encryption to protect customer data and prevent unauthorized access.



TERM TO KNOW

Identity Theft

A type of crime in which an individual's personal information is stolen and used for fraudulent purposes in cyberspace.

1e. Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying refers to the use of digital technologies, social media, or smartphones to harass, intimidate, or harm individuals. It involves the use of electronic communication to bully someone, often repeatedly and with the intention of causing emotional distress or embarrassment. Young people are often on social media and other digital platforms and are the most likely to experience cyberbullying. A recent poll indicates that almost 60% of teens have been the victim of cyberbullying (Anderson, 2018).

⤵ **EXAMPLE** Nate Bronstein, a 15-year-old student in Chicago, was the victim of relentless cyberbullying by his classmates. They sent him texts and Snapchats encouraging him to kill himself. As a result, he took his own life (Hickey, 2022).

It is important to note that cyberbullying is not always a crime. However, it can escalate to criminal activity in some situations where harassment or stalking has gone too far. It can also be a crime when it is associated with hate crimes, which we discussed in the previous lesson.

Cyberbullying can have serious consequences, including emotional and psychological distress for the victims. To prevent and address this issue, it is essential to raise awareness about cyberbullying, promote digital literacy, and encourage positive online behavior.



TERM TO KNOW

Cyberbullying

The use of digital technologies, social media, or smartphones to harass, intimidate, or harm individuals.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned about the complex **definitions and patterns of cybercrime**. There are so many types of cybercrime, and it is hard to know the nature and extent of this type of crime. Moreover, it is a crime that is easy to commit, because it is easy to conceal one's identity online. Some types of cybercrime attempt to get access to people's information online. There is an overlap among many of these terms, but they are all unique in their own ways.

First, you learned that **phishing** is a type of cybercrime meant to deceive people into disclosing sensitive information, such as login credentials or other personal information. By **hacking**, individuals gain unauthorized access to computer systems or networks, usually for malicious purposes. There are different types of software that hackers use to harm computer systems, networks, or users. **Malware** can take various forms, including Trojans, worms, and adware. Additionally, you learned about **identity theft** and how people's personal information can be stolen and used for a variety of fraudulent purposes in cyberspace.

Cybercrime can also be used to harm individuals in different ways. One type of cybercrime that primarily affects young people is **cyberbullying**. Digital platforms have given people new ways to bully others, and this can have detrimental effects on young people. As you can see, cybercrime has permeated society, and it is important for people and companies to take steps to protect their accounts and passwords, install antivirus software, and keep their systems up to date. It is also important for parents to talk to their children about the harm they could face as a result of their Internet use.

In the next lesson, we will continue discussing crime typologies, but we will shift our focus to organized crime.

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TERMS TO KNOW

Adware

A type of malware that displays unwanted advertisements on a user's computer, often in the form of popups.

Cyberbullying

The use of digital technologies, social media, or smartphones to harass, intimidate, or harm individuals.

Cybercrime

Criminal activities that are carried out using digital technology or the internet.

Hacking

An act of gaining unauthorized access to computer systems or networks, typically with the goal of exploiting vulnerabilities for malicious purposes.

Identity Theft

A type of crime in which an individual's personal information is stolen and used for fraudulent purposes in cyberspace.

Malware

Software designed to harm computer systems, networks, or users.

Phishing

A cyberattack in which attackers attempt to deceive people into disclosing sensitive information, such as login credentials, personal details, or financial information.

Ransomware

A type of malware that encrypts the victim's files and demands a ransom in exchange for the decryption key.

Spyware

Software that spies on the user's activities without their knowledge.

Trojan

A type of malware that disguises itself as legitimate software but contains malicious code.

Virus

A program that can replicate itself by attaching to other programs or files.

Worm

A self-replicating program that can spread across networks without any human intervention.

Transnational and Organized Crime

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about organized crime and transnational crime and how they are related to one another in order to define the crimes that fall under this typology and understand their patterns. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

- 1. Organized Crime: Definitions and Patterns**
 - 1a. Drug Trafficking**
 - 1b. Human Trafficking**
 - 1c. Counterfeiting**
- 2. Transnational Crime**

1. Organized Crime: Definitions and Patterns

Organized crime groups may be involved in any number of illegal activities, but they are often involved in drug trafficking, human trafficking, and counterfeiting. There are a variety of organized crime groups operating in the United States, some of which are based on race or ethnicity; however, there is a new trend toward multiethnic or more diverse organized crime groups. It is important to keep in mind that organized crime groups exhibit a high level of internal organization and structure, and they should not be confused with street gangs or youth gangs that are more loosely structured and focus less on profit-making activities.

→ EXAMPLE Organized crime groups include the Italian Mafia, Japanese Yakuza, Russian Bratva, and Mexican drug cartels.

Combating organized crime is a significant challenge for law enforcement agencies worldwide, as these groups often operate across borders and exploit legal and jurisdictional complexities. International cooperation and specialized law enforcement units are essential components of the efforts to combat organized crime.



TERM TO KNOW

Organized Crime

Groupings of centralized enterprises run to engage in illegal activity, most commonly for profit.

1a. Drug Trafficking

Drug trafficking involves the cultivation, manufacturing, distribution, and sale of illegal drugs. In 2022, there were nearly 20,000 cases of drug trafficking reported to the U.S. Sentencing Commission. Nearly half of these cases involved methamphetamine. Drug trafficking is a lucrative business, and organized crime groups are drawn to it because of the potential for high profits.



DID YOU KNOW

Worldwide, it costs \$32 billion to prevent drug trafficking (United States Sentencing Commission, n.d.). Traffickers use complex networks to move drugs from production sources to distribution points. Trafficking routes can involve air, land, and sea transportation, making it challenging for law enforcement to combat. Moreover, drug trafficking has severe social, economic, and health consequences because it fuels addiction, violence, and corruption, contributing to instability in the affected regions.

Efforts to combat drug trafficking require international cooperation, intelligence sharing, law enforcement collaboration, and the addressal of the underlying socioeconomic factors that contribute to these issues. Strategies may include strengthening border controls and promoting alternative development programs in regions vulnerable to drug production.



TERM TO KNOW

Drug Trafficking

Crime involving the cultivation, manufacturing, distribution, and sale of illegal drugs.

1b. Human Trafficking

Organized criminal groups can also be involved in **human trafficking**, taking advantage of vulnerable individuals for profit. Victims are exploited for forced labor, sex, their organs, or other forms of exploitation to generate significant profits.

↗ EXAMPLE It is estimated that 17,500 people are trafficked into the United States every year (American Civil Liberties Union, 2007). Additionally, nearly 800,000 people are trafficked throughout the world each year (Office for Victims of Crime, 2005).

Organized crime networks often operate on a global scale, facilitating the movement of victims across borders. They may be involved in the recruitment, transportation, and exploitation of individuals, using tactics such as deception, coercion, and force to control and manipulate their victims. The international nature of these networks makes it challenging for law enforcement to combat trafficking effectively. Additionally, human trafficking often involves corruption within law enforcement, immigration, and other authorities. Organized crime groups may exploit these vulnerabilities through bribery or other means to ensure the smooth operation of their trafficking activities.

Furthermore, organized crime groups may establish front businesses, such as massage parlors, nail salons, or agricultural enterprises, to conceal their trafficking activities. These businesses provide a facade for illegal operations and make it harder for authorities to detect and intervene. Profits from human trafficking are often laundered (i.e., **money laundering**) through various channels to legitimize the gains. This allows organized crime groups to invest the proceeds in legal businesses and further expand their criminal enterprises.

☞ EXAMPLE La Nazionale Soccer Club in Queens, which was recently busted as an alleged front for a gambling operation, and other spots reportedly pulled in as much as \$2,000 in profits a day.

Efforts to combat human trafficking involve not only addressing the symptoms but also tackling the root causes, such as poverty, inequality, and lack of education. Thus, raising awareness, implementing effective legislation, and providing support services for victims are essential components of a comprehensive approach to combating human trafficking and its ties to organized crime.



TERMS TO KNOW

Human Trafficking

The use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex service.

Money Laundering

The process of illegally concealing the origin of money, obtained from illicit activities, by converting it into a legitimate source.

1c. Counterfeiting

Criminal organizations often engage in **counterfeiting** activities to generate illicit profits. Counterfeiting refers to the production or distribution of imitation goods, typically with the intent to deceive consumers into believing that the counterfeit products are genuine.

☞ EXAMPLE In 2022, U.S. Customs and Border Protection seized over 24.5 million shipments with intellectual property rights violations worth nearly \$3 billion if the goods had been real (U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 2023).

Fake goods, including counterfeit luxury items, electronics, pharmaceuticals, and currency, can be sold at a fraction of the price of genuine products, yielding substantial profits for criminal organizations. Counterfeit products can also include fake identification documents, passports, and currency. Organized crime networks take advantage of international trade routes and weak law enforcement mechanisms in various jurisdictions. This allows them to manufacture counterfeit goods in one location, distribute them across borders, and sell them in different markets. These groups may engage in the production and distribution of counterfeit items to facilitate other criminal activities, such as human trafficking, drug trafficking, and money laundering.

Similar to trafficking, combating counterfeiting poses significant challenges for law enforcement agencies. The transnational nature of these activities makes it difficult to track and prosecute offenders. Moreover, advances in technology have made counterfeiting more sophisticated. Criminal organizations may use high-quality printing equipment, advanced manufacturing processes, and online platforms to produce and distribute counterfeit goods, making it harder for authorities to detect and combat these activities.



TERM TO KNOW

Counterfeiting

The production or distribution of imitation goods, typically with the intent to deceive consumers into believing that the counterfeit products are genuine.

2. Transnational Crime

Transnational crime refers to criminal activities that cross national borders and involve the planning, execution, or consequences of the crime occurring in more than one country. These crimes often exploit differences in legal systems, economic conditions, and law enforcement capabilities among nations. Transnational crime poses significant challenges for national and international efforts to combat criminal activities and maintain public safety. These crimes operate on a global scale, often involving criminal organizations, networks, or individuals that conduct illicit activities across multiple countries.

We have already discussed many of the activities involved in transnational crime:

- Drug trafficking
- Human trafficking
- Cybercrime
- Terrorism
- Money laundering
- Labor trafficking
- Sex trafficking

It is difficult to determine the nature and extent of transnational crime as a result of its secrecy and the differences among various legal systems. However, it is estimated that transnational crime generates \$870 billion a year (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, n.d.).

Criminals engaged in transnational activities exploit the lack of effective borders in the digital age and can easily move goods, money, and information across national boundaries. This makes it challenging for law enforcement agencies to track and apprehend offenders. Effectively addressing transnational crime requires international cooperation among law enforcement agencies and governments. Collaboration is essential to share intelligence, coordinate investigations, and prosecute offenders. The consequences of transnational crime extend beyond individual countries and can have a profound impact on global security, economic stability, and public safety.

↗ EXAMPLE The illicit drug trade can contribute to violence, corruption, and the destabilization of entire regions.

Transnational crime and organized crime are related concepts that often overlap, but they are not synonymous. Many organized crime groups operate on a transnational scale, but sometimes, they only operate within their own country. Organized groups that operate transnationally establish networks and engage in criminal activities that span multiple countries.

↗ EXAMPLE Drug cartels may operate in several countries to facilitate the production, transportation, and distribution of illicit substances.

The globalization of communication and transportation has facilitated the growth of transnational organized crime. These groups take advantage of international connections and use sophisticated strategies to evade law enforcement in different jurisdictions. Overall, transnational crime is a broader concept encompassing criminal

activities that cross national borders, while organized crime specifically refers to criminal enterprises characterized by structure and coordination.



TERM TO KNOW

Transnational Crime

Criminal activities that cross national borders and involve the planning, execution, or consequences of the crime occurring in more than one country.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you first learned about the **definitions and patterns of organized crime**. Organized crime groups can be involved in any number of illegal activities, and they are characterized by their level of organization and structure. These groups are involved in crimes such as **drug trafficking, human trafficking, or counterfeiting**. They are often involved in more than one type of crime, as these activities can be interconnected.

Organized crime groups can operate within one country, or they can operate across borders, which is considered **transnational crime**. It is difficult to measure the nature and extent of organized crime, and it is even more difficult to measure it, prevent it, and handle it once it crosses international borders. Thus, it is important for countries to work together to manage organized and transnational crime. By sharing information and intelligence, governments and criminal justice agencies have a better chance of tackling these types of crimes.

In the next lesson, you will learn about the last crime typology we will discuss: white-collar and corporate crime.

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ATTRIBUTIONS

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TERMS TO KNOW

Counterfeiting

The production or distribution of imitation goods, typically with the intent to deceive consumers into believing that the counterfeit products are genuine.

Drug Trafficking

Crime involving the cultivation, manufacturing, distribution, and sale of illegal drugs.

Human Trafficking

The use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex service.

Money Laundering

The process of illegally concealing the origin of money, obtained from illicit activities, by converting it into a legitimate source.

Organized Crime

Groupings of centralized enterprises run to engage in illegal activity, most commonly for profit.

Transnational Crime

Criminal activities that cross national borders and involve the planning, execution, or consequences of the crime occurring in more than one country.

White-Collar Crimes

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about some of the more common white-collar and corporate crimes in order to define the crimes that fall under this typology and understand their patterns. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

1. White-Collar Crimes: Definitions and Patterns

1a. Fraud

1b. Embezzlement

1c. Insider Trading

2. Corporate Crime: Definitions and Patterns

2a. Environmental Crime

2b. Product Safety Violations

2c. Occupational Health and Safety Violations

1. White-Collar Crimes: Definitions and Patterns

The idea that the heads of corporations or people working in white-collar industries can actually be criminals is often overlooked. However, there is overwhelming evidence that ordinary people are more likely to suffer at the hands of the government or businesses than from street crime.

Criminologists use a variety of terms to describe such “crimes of the powerful,” each term referring to a subset of harmful conduct. The most widely known term, **white-collar crime**, was originally defined by the American criminologist Edwin Sutherland (1983) as “a crime committed by a person of respectability and high social status in the course of his occupation.” The important feature of white-collar crime is that the individual is able to use their occupational position and socioeconomic status to commit their offense and avoid detection.

Sutherland focused on the most senior occupational positions—business managers and executives—as they possess the power to cause the most harm. He excluded powerful people’s crimes that were not connected to their occupational role.

↗ **EXAMPLE** A corporate executive convicted of killing his spouse would be guilty of murder but not a white-collar crime.

Within his definition of white-collar crime, Sutherland included regulatory offenses as well as **civil offenses**, as he saw no reason to segregate acts that can cause as much (or even more) harm from those acts officially designated as crimes. Including these noncriminal offenses has caused some criminologists, like Thio et al. (2012), to replace the term “white-collar crime” with the concept of **white-collar deviance**.

This lesson focuses on several of the more common types of harmful behavior involving white-collar and corporate crime. In general, cases of white-collar crime in the United States have been decreasing.



DID YOU KNOW

In 2022, 4,180 white-collar defendants were prosecuted in the United States (Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, 2023).



TERMS TO KNOW

White-Collar Crime

A crime committed by a person of respectability and high social status in the course of their occupation.

Civil Offense

An offense that is initiated by a private citizen (or corporation) against a person (or corporation), in contrast to a criminal offense, where the state initiates the proceedings against a criminal defendant. Those found guilty in a civil proceeding are said to be liable for “damages.” Rather than going to prison, they pay the victim money.

White-Collar Deviance

All unethical practices, including legally delineated crimes, that high-ranking workers commit in their work.

1a. Fraud

Fraud is a form of white-collar crime that typically involves deceptive practices intended to secure an unfair or unlawful gain, often in a business or financial context. Fraud involves intentional deception or misrepresentation of facts with the aim of convincing someone to act in a way that benefits the perpetrator.

Some common types of fraud include the following:

- Securities fraud
- Mortgage fraud
- Credit card fraud
- Wire fraud



DID YOU KNOW

In 2022, consumer losses to fraud in the United States totaled \$8.8 billion, which is an increase of 30% from 2021 (The Associated Press, 2023).

The primary motive behind fraud is typically financial gain. Perpetrators engage in fraudulent activities to obtain money, property, services, or some other form of economic benefit. This can include embezzlement, insider

trading, Ponzi schemes, and other financial scams. Victims of fraud are often individuals, businesses, or even governments who suffer financial or reputational harm due to the deceitful actions of the perpetrator. Commonly, victims include investors, consumers, employees, and financial institutions.

☞ **EXAMPLE** One of the biggest Ponzi schemes in history was conducted by Bernie Madoff. He conned thousands of investors out of \$20 billion. Madoff was arrested in 2008. He was sentenced to 150 years in prison, but he died while incarcerated (Hare & Gerken, 2021).

Perpetrators of fraud can face significant legal consequences, including fines, restitution, and imprisonment. Regulatory bodies and law enforcement agencies are responsible for investigating and prosecuting cases of fraud. Civil lawsuits may also be brought against individuals or entities accused of fraud.

Investigating and prosecuting fraud can be complex due to the often-intricate financial transactions involved. Authorities may need to trace money flow, analyze documents, and interview witnesses to build a case.



HINT

Regulatory bodies, such as the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in the United States, play a crucial role in investigations and enforcing securities fraud laws.



TERM TO KNOW

Fraud

Wrongful or criminal deception intended to result in financial or personal gain.

1b. Embezzlement

Embezzlement is a type of white-collar crime that involves the misappropriation or theft of funds entrusted to an individual, often within a professional or corporate setting. This crime typically occurs when a person in a position of trust, such as a manager or executive, misuses their authority to divert funds for personal gain.

The offender takes advantage of their position to wrongfully appropriate funds or assets that have been entrusted to them. This misappropriation can take various forms:

- Altering financial records
- Creating fictitious transactions
- Diverting funds into personal accounts

Embezzlement involves a deliberate and intentional act to deceive others and personally benefit from the misappropriated funds. Moreover, the perpetrator breaches their **fiduciary duty**, which is a legal obligation to act in the best interests of another party. In the case of embezzlement, the offender violates this duty by using their position to commit theft.

☞ **EXAMPLE** In 2021, a nonprofit charity in Washington, D.C., lost \$500,000 when it found out its former chief financial officer wrote fraudulent checks to herself, forging her supervisor's signature (Eisenstein, 2021).

To prevent and detect embezzlement, organizations often implement internal controls, conduct audits, and establish checks and balances in financial processes. Additionally, legal authorities may investigate suspicious financial activities to identify and prosecute individuals engaged in embezzlement.



TERMS TO KNOW

Embezzlement

A type of white-collar crime that involves the misappropriation or theft of funds entrusted to an individual, often within a professional or corporate setting.

Fiduciary Duty

The legal obligation to act in the best interests of another party.

1c. Insider Trading

Insider trading is a white-collar crime that involves individuals who typically work in office settings, often in positions of trust and authority within a company. It specifically refers to the buying or selling of a security in breach of a fiduciary duty or other relationship of trust while in possession of material, nonpublic information about the security. That is, it occurs when someone with privileged information about a company's internal affairs uses that information to trade stocks, taking advantage of nonpublic information for personal gain. It involves individuals who have access to privileged information due to their positions within a company, such as executives, employees, or consultants.

↗ EXAMPLE The SEC charged Martha Stewart with insider trading after she sold 4,000 ImClone shares the day before the firm's stock price plummeted.

Insider trading is subject to regulatory oversight. Enforcement agencies such as the SEC actively investigate and prosecute cases of insider trading to maintain the integrity of financial markets and protect investors. Individuals found guilty of insider trading can face severe legal consequences, including fines, imprisonment, and civil penalties.



DID YOU KNOW

In 2022, the SEC brought forth 43 insider trading cases, ranging from \$4,995 to \$49 million (U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, 2022). This number was double what the SEC brought forth in 2021.



TERM TO KNOW

Insider Trading

The illegal practice of trading on the stock exchange to one's own advantage through having access to confidential information.

2. Corporate Crime: Definitions and Patterns

Corporate crime refers to illegal activities committed by corporations, often for the benefit of companies and at the expense of the law, ethical standards, or the well-being of society. These crimes can take various forms and

may involve actions by executives, employees, or the organization as a whole. The federal government only prosecuted 110 criminal cases against corporations in 2022, the lowest number since 1994 (Claypool, 2023).

HINT

Corporate crimes and white-collar crimes are closely related concepts, but there are some distinctions between the two. Specifically, corporate crimes typically benefit companies, while white-collar crimes are more likely to benefit individuals.

TERM TO KNOW

Corporate Crime

Illegal activities committed by corporations, often for the benefit of companies, at the expense of the law, ethical standards, or the well-being of society.

2a. Environmental Crime

Environmental crime is a form of corporate crime, because it involves the breach of laws and regulations designed to protect the environment. Countries have established a range of environmental laws and regulations to ensure the protection of natural resources, ecosystems, and public health. Violations of these laws by corporations constitute criminal behavior, as they involve the disregard for legal requirements.

Environmental violations often result in harm to the environment, such as pollution of air, water, or soil. This harm can have direct consequences for public health, wildlife, and ecosystems. In some cases, corporations may engage in environmentally harmful practices as a means to cut costs or increase profits. By avoiding the expenses associated with environmentally friendly practices, corporations may gain a competitive advantage in the short term but at the expense of environmental and social well-being. Environmental violations can lead to social costs that include increased health care expenses, loss of biodiversity, and the degradation of natural resources.



Holding corporations accountable for environmental violations is crucial for maintaining a balance between economic development and ecological sustainability. Prosecuting corporations for environmental crimes helps deter future violations and promotes a sense of responsibility within the business community.

DID YOU KNOW

In 2022, defendants in environmental crime cases paid nearly \$150 million in fines and restitution (United States Environmental Protection Agency, 2023).

TERM TO KNOW

Environmental Crime

Illegal activities that directly harm the environment.

2b. Product Safety Violations

Product safety violations are a type of corporate crime that involves illegal or unethical actions by a corporation or its representatives resulting in harm to consumers or the public. Corporations have a responsibility to ensure the safety of their products. However, failure to exercise reasonable care in designing, manufacturing, or distributing products can lead to harm, and such negligence can be considered a criminal offense.



HINT

In some cases, corporations may intentionally cut corners or ignore safety regulations to maximize profits.

This intentional disregard for safety can be seen as a criminal act.

Corporations are subject to various regulations and standards set by government agencies to ensure the safety of products. Violating these regulations, whether through ignorance, negligence, or willful intent, constitutes a criminal offense.

When unsafe products reach the market, they can cause harm to consumers, such as injuries, illnesses, or even fatalities. Corporate actions that lead to harm to consumers violate the basic principle of ensuring public safety. Legal systems have established mechanisms for holding corporations responsible for product safety violations.

⇒ **EXAMPLE** In 2009, Fisher-Price, which is owned by Mattel, was ordered to pay a \$2.3 million civil penalty for violating the federal lead paint ban (Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute, 2009).



TERM TO KNOW

Product Safety Violation

An illegal or unethical action by a corporation or its representatives that results in harm to consumers or the public.

2c. Occupational Health and Safety Violations

Occupational health and safety violations are considered corporate crimes because they involve the breach of laws and regulations that are designed to protect the well-being and safety of workers within a workplace. These violations can have serious consequences, both for the individuals affected and for the broader community.

Most jurisdictions have specific laws and regulations governing occupational health and safety standards, outlining the obligations of employers to provide a safe working environment for their employees.



HINT

Employers are responsible for taking reasonable steps to ensure a safe workplace. Failing to fulfill this duty, either through negligence or willful disregard for safety regulations, can result in criminal charges.

Occupational health and safety violations can have broader societal implications, as they may lead to workplace accidents, injuries, or even fatalities. Treating these violations as corporate crimes helps deter companies from neglecting safety standards. Holding corporations accountable for violations through legal consequences sends a message that the disregard for employee safety will not be tolerated. It also helps prevent the exploitation of workers by companies that may prioritize profit over the well-being of their employees.

⇒ EXAMPLE The Deepwater Horizon incident is arguably the worst occupational health and safety violation of all time. In 2010, 11 workers died as a result of an explosion on the drilling rig in the Gulf of Mexico. Moreover, thousands of animals were affected by this event. After committing over 250 occupational health and safety violations, BP had to pay over \$81 million in penalties (Frontline Data Solutions, n.d.).



TERM TO KNOW

Occupational Health and Safety Violation

A breach of laws and regulations that are designed to protect the well-being and safety of workers within a workplace.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned about the **definitions and patterns of white-collar crimes and corporate crimes**. These types of crimes are committed by people in power, and they have large impacts on communities, yet we do not hear about them nearly as much as we do street crime. There are many specific acts that are considered white-collar crimes and corporate crimes, but we just covered some of the more common ones in this lesson.

First, you learned that **fraud** is a type of white-collar crime that typically involves deceptive practices to secure an unfair or unlawful gain, often in a business or financial context. Examples of fraud include securities fraud or wire fraud. **Embezzlement** is similar to fraud and involves the misappropriation or theft of funds entrusted to an individual, often within a professional or corporate setting. With embezzlement, the offender breaches their fiduciary duty, or their legal obligation to act in the best interest of another party. **Insider trading** is another type of white-collar crime that occurs when someone with privileged information about a company's internal affairs uses that information to trade stocks, taking advantage of nonpublic information for personal gain.

There are also several types of corporate crime. **Environmental crime** involves the breach of laws and regulations designed to protect the environment. Moreover, **product safety violations** involve illegal or unethical actions by a corporation or its representatives resulting in harm to consumers or the public. Lastly, **occupational health and safety violations** involve the breach of laws and regulations designed to protect the well-being and safety of workers within a workplace.

Next, we will move away from discussing crime typologies to begin looking at different theories that explain the types of crimes we have been discussing. The next lesson will examine the origins of criminology and some of the early theories used to explain crime.

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TERMS TO KNOW

Civil Offense

An offense that is initiated by a private citizen (or corporation) against a person (or corporation), in contrast to a criminal offense, where the state initiates the proceedings against a criminal defendant. Those found

guilty in a civil proceeding are said to be liable for “damages.” Rather than going to prison, they pay the victim money.

Corporate Crime

Illegal activities committed by corporations, often for the benefit of companies, at the expense of the law, ethical standards, or the well-being of society.

Embezzlement

A type of white-collar crime that involves the misappropriation or theft of funds entrusted to an individual, often within a professional or corporate setting.

Environmental Crime

Illegal activities that directly harm the environment.

Fiduciary Duty

The legal obligation to act in the best interests of another party.

Fraud

Wrongful or criminal deception intended to result in financial or personal gain.

Insider Trading

The illegal practice of trading on the stock exchange to one’s own advantage through having access to confidential information.

Occupational Health and Safety Violation

A breach of laws and regulations that are designed to protect the well-being and safety of workers within a workplace.

Product Safety Violation

An illegal or unethical action by a corporation or its representatives that results in harm to consumers or the public.

White-Collar Crime

A crime committed by a person of respectability and high social status in the course of their occupation.

White-Collar Deviance

All unethical practices, including legally delineated crimes, that high-ranking workers commit in their work.

The Classical School and Early Theorists

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about some of the early theories related to the classical school of criminology. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

1. Demonology
2. Classical School of Criminology
 - 2a. Cesare Beccaria
 - 2b. Jeremy Bentham

1. Demonology

Before the emergence of the classical school of criminology, which gained prominence in the 18th century, discussions on **demonology** shaped perspectives on crime and deviance. Demonology refers to the study of demons or supernatural beings and their influence on people's behavior. In the context of crime and punishment, demonology was often related to religious beliefs and was used to explain criminal behavior (Rahimzadeh, 2015).

☞ EXAMPLE During medieval times, European societies relied on religious explanations for many phenomena, including crime. Demons were seen as forces that possessed people and made them commit crimes. The idea of demonic possession was often used to explain behaviors that deviated from societal norms.

The legal and judicial systems of these early times reflected these beliefs, leading to harsh punishments for people accused of being possessed by demons or engaging in witchcraft. During this period, witch trials were often conducted. These types of trials often resulted in the execution of people believed to be influenced by demons.

☞ EXAMPLE During the Salem Witch Trials in Massachusetts, nearly 20 people were executed (Berkshire Law Library, 2015).

During this period, the fear of demonic forces significantly shaped the legal landscape and responses to criminal behavior.



TERM TO KNOW

Demonology

The study of demons or supernatural beings and their influence on people's behavior.

2. Classical School of Criminology

The transition from demonology to the **classical school of criminology** marked a shift toward more rational explanations for criminal behavior in the 18th century. The classical school of thought emphasized the importance of people's free will and rationality to understand why people commit crimes rather than demonic forces playing a role in criminality. It also introduced ideas related to **deterrence** to prevent people from engaging in crime (Siegel, 2018).

Apart from moving away from supernatural explanations of crime, the classical school also called for a more systematic and humane approach to looking at crime. Early theorists within this school, such as Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham, laid the foundation for new perspectives on crime. While Beccaria and Bentham shared common principles, there were nuances in their theoretical ideas, as we will discuss below.



TERMS TO KNOW

Classical School of Criminology

A school of thought in the field of criminology that explains criminal behavior from a rational perspective.

Deterrence

The act of discouraging an action or event by instilling doubt or fear of the consequences.

2a. Cesare Beccaria

Cesare Beccaria was an Italian philosopher who significantly impacted the classical school of criminology through his groundbreaking work *On Crimes and Punishments* in 1764. Most importantly, his ideas challenged prevailing notions of criminal justice and punishment during his time.



He advocated for a more humane and rational approach to punishment, emphasizing that it should be proportional to the severity of the crime committed. He also advocated that punishment should be carried out quickly after a crime occurs so that individuals know what they are being punished for. Furthermore, he stressed the importance of the certainty of punishment so that people know that punishment will always be associated with certain acts. We will discuss these ideas in further detail in the next lesson.

Beccaria also believed punishment should be based on the economic principle of **utility**, which seeks the greatest good for the greatest number of people (Robinhood, 2022). This idea laid the foundation for the utilitarian approach to criminal justice, which you will learn more about in the next section.

Additionally, Beccaria's work contributed to the development of **deterrence theory**, which suggests that people will be less apt to commit a crime if there is a punishment associated with committing the crime. He also argued

that the severity, certainty, and swiftness of punishment were crucial components in preventing people from committing crimes. Deterrence theory and its components will be discussed in further detail in the next lesson.

Beccaria advocated for legal reform and the **codification** of laws to ensure that legal systems were clear, just, and applied equally to everyone. He argued that the justice system of the time was arbitrary and discriminatory, and it was necessary to write laws down so that people knew what acts were against the law and the associated punishments (Cadoppi, 2015).



DID YOU KNOW

Beccaria emphasized the presumption of innocence until proven guilty, which is the foundation of our modern legal system.

Similarly, he argued against torture and coerced confessions, advocating for fair trials and the protection of individual rights within the criminal justice system. As you can see, Beccaria's ideas have had a lasting impact on legal systems in the United States and throughout the world. His principles of proportionate punishment, deterrence, and legal equality influenced the development of many criminal justice systems, and his work is cited as a cornerstone in the evolution of modern systems.



TERMS TO KNOW

Utility

The principle of seeking the greatest good for the greatest number of people.

Deterrence Theory

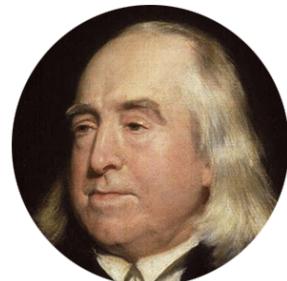
The theory that people will be less apt to commit crime if there is a punishment associated with committing the crime.

Codification

The process of arranging laws according to a system.

2b. Jeremy Bentham

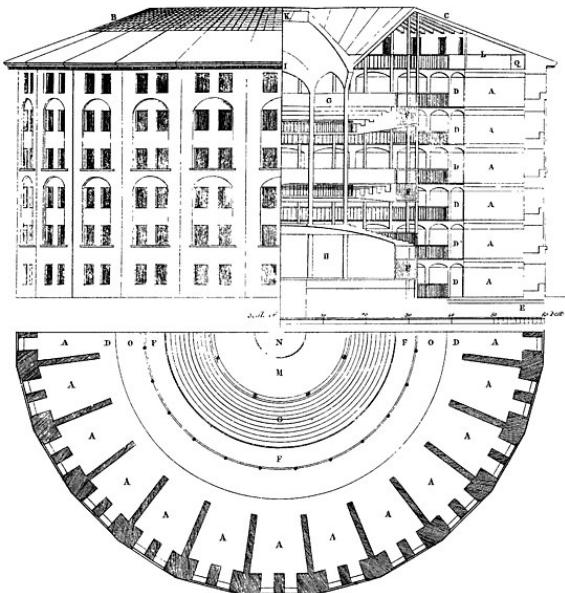
Jeremy Bentham was another salient figure in the classical school of criminology. Bentham expanded upon Beccaria's ideas on utility and is often regarded as the founder of **utilitarianism**. Utilitarianism is a moral and ethical theory that suggests that actions should be judged by their utility in maximizing happiness or pleasure and minimizing pain or suffering (Siegel, 2018).



Central to Bentham's utilitarianism is the concept of **hedonistic calculus**, which is a method for determining the moral worth of an action based on the amount of pleasure or pain it produces. According to Bentham, people are motivated by the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. He also believed that pleasure and pain could be measured and compared. He suggested that people can evaluate the overall happiness or unhappiness resulting from an action by considering factors such as the intensity, duration, certainty or uncertainty, and extent of the pleasure or pain involved (Siegel, 2018).

In the context of criminology, Bentham applied utilitarian principles to understanding criminal behavior and the legal system. He argued that the law should aim to maximize the overall happiness of society by effectively

deterring criminal behavior.



rational choice theory in more detail.

One of Bentham's most influential ideas was the concept of the **panopticon**, a design for a prison that he proposed in the late 18th century (Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology, 2009). The panopticon was designed to allow a single guard to observe all inmates without the inmates being able to tell whether they were being watched. The panopticon aimed to create a sense of constant surveillance, which Bentham believed would lead to self-discipline among people housed in prisons. This idea had a significant impact on the design and philosophy of modern prisons.

Bentham's ideas also laid the groundwork for **rational choice theory** in criminology. This theory posits that individuals make rational decisions to engage in criminal behavior based on a cost–benefit analysis of the potential risks and rewards of committing a crime. In a future lesson, we will discuss modern rational choice theory in more detail.

Like Beccaria, Bentham also argued for the codification of laws to make them more understandable and predictable.

This approach aimed to create a legal system that would deter criminal behavior by ensuring punishment for acts that people knew were against the law.

Overall, Bentham's ideas have had a lasting impact on the philosophy of law and the design of prisons throughout the world.



TERMS TO KNOW

Utilitarianism

A moral and ethical theory suggesting that actions should be judged by their utility in maximizing happiness or pleasure and minimizing pain or suffering.

Hedonistic Calculus

A method for determining the moral worth of an action based on the amount of pleasure or pain it produces.

Panopticon

A prison design allowing one guard to watch all prisoners without the prisoners knowing whether they are being watched or not.

Rational Choice Theory

A theory suggesting that people are rational actors and weigh the pros and cons of committing a crime.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that **demonology** was the predominant way that society described criminal activity prior to the 18th century. However, the **classical school of criminology** originated in the 18th century and was shaped by early theorists like **Cesare Beccaria** and **Jeremy Bentham**.

This school stressed the importance of rational decision-making, free will, and deterrence through proportionate punishment. The ideas of Beccaria and Bentham laid the groundwork for modern criminal justice systems and continue to influence ideas on punishment and crime prevention.

In the next lesson, you will learn more about deterrence theory.

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ATTRIBUTIONS

- [Cesare Beccaria](#) | Author: Wikimedia Commons | License: CC
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- [Plan of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon prison, drawn by Willey Reveley in 1791.](#) | Author: Plinio the Elder | License: CC



TERMS TO KNOW

Classical School of Criminology

A school of thought in the field of criminology that explains criminal behavior from a rational perspective.

Codification

The process of arranging laws according to a system.

Demonology

The study of demons or supernatural beings and their influence on people's behavior.

Deterrence

The act of discouraging an action or event by instilling doubt or fear of the consequences.

Deterrence Theory

The theory that people will be less apt to commit crime if there is a punishment associated with committing the crime.

Hedonistic Calculus

A method for determining the moral worth of an action based on the amount of pleasure or pain it produces.

Panopticon

A prison design allowing one guard to watch all prisoners without the prisoners knowing whether they are being watched or not.

Rational Choice Theory

A theory suggesting that people are rational actors and weigh the pros and cons of committing a crime.

Utilitarianism

A moral and ethical theory suggesting that actions should be judged by their utility in maximizing happiness or pleasure and minimizing pain or suffering.

Utility

The principle of seeking the greatest good for the greatest number of people.

**PEOPLE TO KNOW****Cesare Beccaria**

Italian philosopher associated with the classical school of criminology.

Jeremy Bentham

British philosopher associated with the classical school of criminology.

Deterrence

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about deterrence theory and its importance in the field of criminology, as well as the different types of deterrence. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

1. Deterrence Theory

1a. Certainty

1b. Severity

1c. Swiftness

2. Specific Deterrence

3. General Deterrence

1. Deterrence Theory

Deterrence theory is a concept in criminology that suggests that the threat of punishment can effectively prevent people from engaging in criminal activity. The underlying assumption is that potential offenders weigh the potential costs and benefits of their actions, and if the perceived costs (punishments) outweigh the benefits (gains from committing a crime), they will be less likely to engage in criminal behavior (Siegel, 2018).

In the last lesson, we introduced the concept of deterrence and how it originated in the classical school of criminology. We will now discuss the three components needed to make deterrence theory effective: certainty, severity, and swiftness. We will also discuss the two types of deterrence: specific deterrence and general deterrence.



TERM TO KNOW

Deterrence Theory

The threat of punishment can effectively prevent people from engaging in criminal activity.

1a. Certainty

Certainty is a key factor in effective deterrence, and it refers to the likely probability that punishment will occur if a certain behavior is exhibited. High certainty means there is a strong likelihood of consequences, and a potential offender would be less apt to take the risk of getting caught. However, if the potential offender

believes there is a low likelihood of being caught or facing the consequences, they will be more apt to engage in criminal behavior (National Institute of Justice, 2016).

HINT

In criminal justice, the effectiveness of law enforcement in consistently apprehending and prosecuting criminals contributes to the certainty of punishment, enhancing the deterrent effect.

TERM TO KNOW

Certainty

The likely probability that punishment will occur if a certain behavior is exhibited.

1b. Severity

In the context of deterrence, **severity** refers to the degree or level of punishment associated with a particular action. This concept is tied to the idea that people will be less likely to engage in undesirable activities if they believe the potential costs or penalties are significant and outweigh the behavior's benefits (Siegel, 2018).

Severity in deterrence involves making the consequences for such actions more severe or punitive to discourage potential offenders.

HINT

In the criminal justice system, the determination of the appropriate level of severity in punishment involves considerations of fairness, proportionality, and the goals of rehabilitation and public safety.

Policymakers must strike a balance between deterring criminal behavior and ensuring a just legal system.

TERM TO KNOW

Severity

The level of punishment associated with a particular action.

1c. Swiftness

Swiftness involves the promptness with which the punishment or response is delivered after the unwanted behavior occurs (Carter, 2019). Swiftness is important in deterrence for several reasons:

1. When punishment is swift, individuals are more likely to associate their actions with the consequences. This immediate feedback reinforces the idea that engaging in criminal behavior leads to quick and unpleasant results.
 - a. You can equate swiftness and deterrence to when you are trying to potty train your new pet. If you let your pet know that an accident is undesirable immediately after it happens, your pet will be more likely to associate the accident with a penalty.
2. The immediacy of punishment has a strong psychological impact on individuals. People tend to be more influenced by immediate consequences than by those that are delayed (Cherry, 2023). Therefore, swift

punishment creates a stronger connection between the act and its repercussions, making people think twice before committing a crime.

3. Swiftness in punishment reinforces societal norms and expectations. It sends a clear message that certain behaviors are unacceptable and will be met with immediate consequences. This reinforcement of social norms contributes to order within society.



TERM TO KNOW

Swiftness

The promptness with which the punishment or response is delivered after the unwanted behavior occurs.

2. Specific Deterrence

Specific deterrence focuses on the individual offender. The idea is that punishing an offender will deter that specific individual from committing future crimes. The punishment serves as a direct consequence for the criminal act, aiming to discourage the individual from repeating the behavior (Siegel, 2018).

With specific deterrence, the punishment imposed on an offender should be severe enough to create a lasting impression and discourage them from engaging in similar criminal behavior in the future. Thus, if an offender experiences significant negative consequences for their criminal behavior, they are expected to be less likely to repeat the same actions.

↗ EXAMPLE If someone has already been incarcerated for committing aggravated assault, they know the consequences of engaging in aggravated assault. Therefore, according to specific deterrence, that individual should be less apt to commit another aggravated assault to avoid going to prison again.



TERM TO KNOW

Specific Deterrence

The use of punishment for criminal activity intended to discourage a specific individual from re-offending.

3. General Deterrence

General deterrence is broader than specific deterrence, and it aims to deter others in society from committing crimes by witnessing the punishment of offenders. The idea is that the threat of punishment for criminal behavior serves as a deterrent for potential offenders who observe the consequences faced by those who break the law (Siegel, 2018).

General deterrence thus focuses on preventing crime by instilling fear of punishment in the general population and making examples of specific individuals who are punished for their crimes.

☞ EXAMPLE If your neighbor was arrested for drunk driving at a checkpoint in town, general deterrence would posit that you would be very mindful not to drink and drive. Knowing someone who was arrested or convicted for a crime makes others less apt to want to engage in similar behavior for fear of punishment. For general deterrence to be effective, the punishment and legal consequences of criminal behavior must be widely known and understood by the general public. This awareness is meant to influence people to refrain from criminal acts due to the anticipated negative consequences.



HINT

The legal system communicates the consequences of criminal acts through various means, including laws, policies, and publicized trials.

Publicizing criminal cases and their outcomes is a way to showcase the consequences of illegal actions and reinforce the idea that crime will be punished.



TERM TO KNOW

General Deterrence

The impact of the threat of legal punishment on the public at large.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned about **deterrence theory**. The main idea behind this theory is that people will be less apt to engage in crime if there is punishment associated with a particular act. For deterrence to be effective, it must adhere to the **certainty** of punishment. That is, people must feel that the likelihood of getting punished for engaging in a particular act is very high; otherwise, they would engage in the act. You also learned the importance of **severity**, or the level of punishment associated with a particular action. Punishment must be severe enough for people to fear it but not so severe that it is unjust. You then learned the role of **swiftness** with regard to punishment: Punishment must be applied soon after a crime so that people know why they are being punished.

Additionally, this lesson discussed the two types of deterrence. **Specific deterrence** is intended to deter a specific individual who has already engaged in criminal behavior from repeating such actions by making the consequences of their actions significant enough. In contrast, **general deterrence** aims to deter others in society from committing crimes by witnessing the punishment of offenders.

In the next lesson, you will have an opportunity to see how deterrence theory applies to a case involving a nonviolent crime.

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TERMS TO KNOW

Certainty

The likely probability that punishment will occur if a certain behavior is exhibited.

Deterrence Theory

The threat of punishment can effectively prevent people from engaging in criminal activity.

General Deterrence

The impact of the threat of legal punishment on the public at large.

Severity

The level of punishment associated with a particular action.

Specific Deterrence

The use of punishment for criminal activity intended to discourage a specific individual from re-offending.

Swiftness

The promptness with which the punishment or response is delivered after the unwanted behavior occurs.

Case Analysis: Nonviolent Crimes

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn how to look at the theory of deterrence through the lens of a specific nonviolent crime. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

1. Rolling Hills PD Explores a Nonviolent Crime
 - 1a. Steal from the Rich
 - 1b. The Debrief

1. Rolling Hills PD Explores a Nonviolent Crime

Alicia Henson just moved to the metropolis of Rolling Hills from the DC cybercrimes office. As a cybercrime investigator, she had gathered the necessary information to stop cybercriminals from continuing their nefarious activities. Now, she's been transferred here to help with some cases that need an "extra set of eyes." She's heard from other colleagues in DC that Professor Joon, the criminologist in Rolling Hills, isn't easy to work with and has his own way of doing things. Still, she's excited about the opportunity to learn from an experienced criminologist.

To prepare, she's been studying up on some of the early theories and schools of thought on criminology . . .

Click the plus sign to review the classical school of criminology:



The classical school of thought emphasized the importance of people's free will and rationality to understand why people commit crimes, rather than demonic forces playing a role in criminality. It also called for a more systematic and humane approach to looking at crime.

Click the plus sign to review the theory of deterrence:



The idea of deterrence is that the threat of punishment can prevent people from committing crimes. The theory assumes that people are rational and weigh the costs and benefits of their actions. If the

costs (such as the probability and severity of punishment) outweigh the benefits (such as the pleasure or profit of the crime), then people will refrain from breaking the law.

Alicia pulls into the small agency.

CONVERSATION BETWEEN COWORKERS

I had a long drive into Rolling Hills . . . nearly 16 hours from DC. But if I'm going to become an expert in this field, working with Kang Ji Joon is the way to learn. "Okay, Alicia, you can do this."



Alicia enters the small station of Rolling Hills PD. The officer at the front desk directs her to take the stairs to the right that lead to Professor Joon's office. The officer chuckles, "Good luck."

Alicia knocks before opening the door. "Hello, Professor Joon?"



Kang Ji Joon stands from the desk overflowing with case files and evidence boxes. While he's glad that he has someone to handle the workload with, he doesn't like others quite that much.

"Good morning," he says. "Kang Ji Joon."

"Nice to meet you. I'm Detective Alicia Henson, recently from DC. I'm here to help with some cases?"



"Let's begin with the jewelry heist."



1a. Steal from the Rich

Watch and listen as Detective Henson and Professor Joon look into the case of jewelry theft.



WATCH

1b. The Debrief

Let's look at how this story fits in with the elements and theories in the classical school of criminology:

CONVERSATION BETWEEN COWORKERS

"Well, let's see, it seems like in this case the burglar, whom we now know as Daisy, did not think about the punishment involved in the crime."



"You know, I think she *did* consider the consequences of her actions. After the first couple of thefts were successful, she became overconfident and arrogant. She only thought of the benefits."

"She made a choice to continue."



"She ended up going to jail for it.
Did Daisy regret her actions?"

"Daisy probably will not burglarize in the future."



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you saw how **Rolling Hills PD explored a nonviolent crime**, an attempt to **steal from the rich**, and how that case fits into the theory of deterrence made famous within the classical school. The theory of deterrence assumes that the burglar acts rationally and knows the consequences of their actions.

While looking at the **debrief** with Professor Joon and Detective Henson, you found that the burglar only regretted breaking into the mansion after she was caught. In the next lesson, we will look at a different school of thought that can help analyze criminal behavior: the positivist school.

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The Positivist School

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about the origins and ideas related to the positivist school of criminology. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

1. [The Positivist School of Criminology](#)
2. [The Scientific Method](#)
3. [Biological Positivism](#)

1. The Positivist School of Criminology

The **positivist school of criminology** is a perspective within the field of criminology that emerged in the late 19th century as a reaction to the classical school of criminology. While the classical school focused on free will, rational choice, and deterrence, the positivist school shifted the emphasis to the scientific study of criminal behavior (Siegel, 2018).

A key feature of this school is **determinism**, which rejects the notion of free will (Mazzarello, 2011).

Determinism argues that human behavior, including criminal behavior, is determined by factors that are largely beyond an individual's control. In positivism, these factors are typically biological, but they could also be psychological or sociological in nature.

You will now learn about the role of science in positivism, as well as some of the people who played a key role in the development of this school of criminology.



TERMS TO KNOW

Positivist School of Criminology

A school of thought in the field of criminology that focuses on the scientific study of criminal behavior.

Determinism

A doctrine stating that all events, including human action, are ultimately determined by causes external to the will.

2. The Scientific Method

Positivist criminologists advocate for the use of **scientific methods** to study and understand criminal behavior. They are interested in empirical research, data collection, and statistical analysis to identify patterns and correlations in criminal behavior. They recognize that science plays a crucial role in shaping and advancing our understanding of society and human behavior (Dudovskiy, 2010).

Positivism stresses the importance of observation and measurement. Scientific methods involve gathering data through the systematic and objective observation of the real world. The emphasis on empirical evidence distinguishes positivism from the classical school, which dealt more with philosophical ideas about free will.

Similarly, positivism seeks to maintain **objectivity** when studying social phenomena. Objectivity implies a commitment on the part of the researcher to be unbiased and impartial when observing and interpreting data. Thus, scientists following the positivist approach strive to minimize personal biases and subjective influences in their research (Dudovskiy, 2010).



TERMS TO KNOW

Scientific Method

A procedure consisting of systematic observation, measurement, and experimentation.

Objectivity

The state of being unbiased and impartial while not letting personal beliefs influence one's research.

3. Biological Positivism

Many early positivist criminologists focused on **biological factors** as contributors to criminal behavior. Early positivists, such as Cesare Lombroso, proposed the idea of a “born criminal” and suggested that certain physical traits or anomalies were indicative of a predisposition to criminality. Lombroso was one of the first criminologists to use the scientific method, as discussed in the previous section.



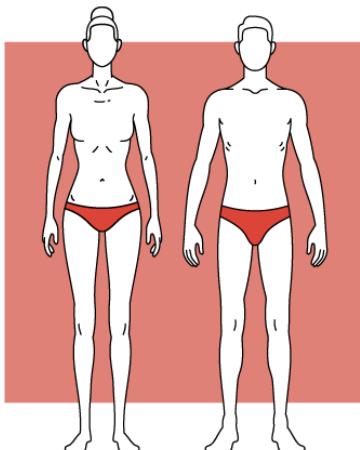
Lombroso’s significance lies in his attempt to link criminal behavior to physical and biological traits. His most influential work, *L’Uomo Delinquente (Criminal Man)*, published in 1876, outlined his theories and had a significant impact on the field of criminology (Holland, 2011).

Lombroso’s theory of **atavism** was based on the assumption that criminals were biologically distinct from noncriminals and that criminality could be inherited. He believed that criminals were “atavistic,” representing a throwback to earlier stages of human evolution. According to Lombroso, features such as a sloping forehead, large jaws, high cheekbones, and other physical anomalies were indicative of criminal tendencies (Siegel, 2018).

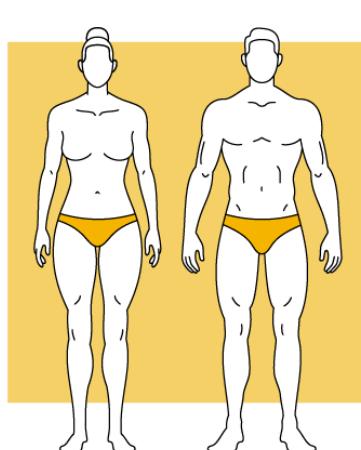
Lombroso’s work laid the foundation for the development of modern criminology. It prompted further research into the causes of criminal behavior and influenced subsequent generations of criminologists to consider a multidimensional approach to understanding crime. His impact on criminology stimulated ongoing debates and

discussions about criminal behavior. However, in an upcoming lesson, we will discuss some of the critiques related to the positivist school of criminology and Lombroso's work.

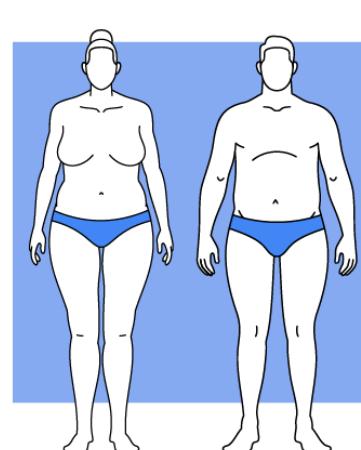
William Sheldon is another researcher who is often associated with biological positivism. Sheldon is most known for developing **somatotypes**, a classification system that categorizes individuals into different body types based on physical characteristics. According to Sheldon, there are three primary somatotypes: endomorphs, mesomorphs, and ectomorphs. Each is associated with specific personality traits and tendencies (Siegel, 2018).



Ectomorph



Mesomorph



Endomorph

- **Endomorphs** are characterized by a round physique with a higher percentage of body fat. They are associated with being sociable, relaxed, and comfortable. Thus, they are more inclined toward a laid-back lifestyle.
- **Mesomorphs** are characterized by a muscular and athletic build, with a naturally higher percentage of lean body mass. They are often described as assertive, competitive, and energetic. They may be more predisposed to physical activities and sports. Furthermore, according to Sheldon, they are also the type most likely to be criminals.
- Lastly, **ectomorphs** have a lean and slender physique with a lower percentage of body fat and muscle mass. They are typically seen as introverted, intellectual, and sensitive. Ectomorphs may tend to engage in activities requiring mental rather than physical effort.

While there may be some correlation between body types and certain characteristics, the idea that these characteristics are solely determined by physique is considered oversimplified and outdated in contemporary scientific understanding. You will learn more about some of the limitations of Sheldon's work in an upcoming lesson.



TERMS TO KNOW

Biological Factors

Factors that contribute to the structure, functioning, and development of living organisms.

Atavism

The tendency to revert to something ancient or ancestral.

Somatotype

A category to which people are assigned based on the extent to which their bodily physique conforms to a basic type.

Endomorph

A round body type with a high proportion of fat tissue.

Mesomorph

A body type with a greater than average amount of muscle.

Ectomorph

A body type that is lean, with little body fat and little muscle.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned about **the positivist school of criminology**. In contrast to the classical school that focused on free will and rational choice, the positivist school believed that there were determined characteristics of people that could not be changed and that led them to engage in crime. The positivist school also emphasized the **scientific method**. It focused on empirical research, data collection, and statistical analysis to identify patterns and correlations in criminal behavior.

Positivism is most often associated with **biological positivism**, which suggests that biological factors play a critical role in determining if someone will be a criminal or not. Cesare Lombroso is cited as the father of the positivist school of criminology. He is best known for his ideas related to atavism and the assumption that criminals are biologically distinct from noncriminals. William Sheldon was another researcher associated with biological positivism and the development of somatotypes, a way to categorize people into different body types based on physical characteristics.

While biological positivism was important for laying the foundation for modern criminology, it also has many criticisms, which we will address in an upcoming lesson. That lesson will also critique the classical school, which you learned about previously.

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ATTRIBUTIONS

- [Cesare Lombroso](#) | Author: Wikimedia Commons | License: CC
- [William Sheldon](#) | Author: Wikimedia Commons | License: CC



TERMS TO KNOW

Atavism

The tendency to revert to something ancient or ancestral.

Biological Factors

Factors that contribute to the structure, functioning, and development of living organisms.

Determinism

A doctrine stating that all events, including human action, are ultimately determined by causes external to the will.

Ectomorph

A body type that is lean, with little body fat and little muscle.

Endomorph

A round body type with a high proportion of fat tissue.

Mesomorph

A body type with a greater than average amount of muscle.

Objectivity

The state of being unbiased and impartial while not letting personal beliefs influence one's research.

Positivist School of Criminology

A school of thought in the field of criminology that focuses on the scientific study of criminal behavior.

Scientific Method

A procedure consisting of systematic observation, measurement, and experimentation.

Somatotype

A category to which people are assigned based on the extent to which their bodily physique conforms to a basic type.



PEOPLE TO KNOW

Cesare Lombroso

Italian criminologist associated with the positivist school of criminology.

William Sheldon

Psychologist who developed the idea of somatotypes.

Case Analysis: Violent Crimes

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will determine whether or not elements made famous within the positivist school apply to a specific violent crime. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

1. Rolling Hills PD Explores a Violent Crime
 - 1a. Case of an Unprotected Witness
 - 1b. The Debrief

1. Rolling Hills PD Explores a Violent Crime

In contrast to the role of free will and rational choice that we saw in the classical school, we also examined the roles of biological factors or predetermined physical characteristics in the engagement of crime stemming from the positivist school of criminology.

[Click the plus sign to review determinism:](#)



Human behavior, including criminal behavior, is determined by factors that are largely beyond an individual's control. In positivism, these factors are typically biological, but they could also be psychological or sociological in nature.

[Click the plus sign to review biological positivism:](#)



The idea of a “born criminal” suggested that certain physical traits or anomalies were indicative of a predisposition to criminality. Criminologists within the positivist school recognize that science and the scientific method play crucial roles in shaping and advancing our understanding of society and human behavior.

[Click the plus sign to review somatotypes:](#)



Somatotypes are a classification system that categorizes individuals into different body types based on physical characteristics. There are three primary somatotypes, and each is associated with specific personality traits and tendencies:

- Endomorphs have a round physique with a higher percentage of body fat. They are associated with being sociable, relaxed, and comfortable and tend to have a laid-back lifestyle.
- Mesomorphs have a muscular and athletic build, with a naturally higher percentage of lean body mass. They are described as assertive, competitive, and energetic. They are the type most likely to be criminals.
- Ectomorphs have a lean and slender physique with a lower percentage of body fat and muscle mass. They are typically seen as introverted, intellectual, and sensitive and engage in activities requiring mental rather than physical effort.

How can these biological factors explain a violent crime case?

CONVERSATION BETWEEN COWORKERS



"Now that we are focused on the early schools of thought in criminology, here is a homicide case I think fits within the positivist school, but, you know, I'm not sure."



"How so? Do the consequences of the actions in the case not matter?"



"I don't think it was about the consequences. There were other factors in this case."



"That's too bad. So, what happened?"



"I have seen many gruesome scenes in my career, but this one was different."

1a. Case of an Unprotected Witness

Watch and listen as Detective Henson and Professor Joon look into the case of an unprotected witness.



WATCH

1b. The Debrief

Detective Henson and Professor Joon will see how elements of the positivist school fit into this case of homicide.

CONVERSATION BETWEEN COWORKERS

"The risk of being caught, convicted, and sentenced didn't stop the killer."



"Exactly, so what about the killer made him want to commit the crime? Was it some sort of biological characteristic? Or the fact that he was an addict?"



"Was it his personality? I saw from some of the reports that he was aggressive and highly competitive. Couldn't sit still in the courtroom."



"Alicia, you could be onto something. We have to uphold the law, serve the public, and honor the victim. Let's try our best to get some justice."



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you watched and listened as the **Rolling Hills PD investigated a violent crime**. Biological positivism and somatotypes explain the biological factors of human nature and the physical characteristics involved in this homicide **case of the unprotected witness**, and it could explain why the robber became a killer.

Just like Detective Henson and Professor Joon did in the **debrief**, we will review how the theories associated with the classical and positivist schools shaped future criminological theories in the next lesson.

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Critiques of the Classical and Positivist Schools

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about the limitations and critiques of the criminological theories we have discussed so far. Specifically, this lesson will cover the following:

1. Critiques of the Classical School of Criminology
2. Critiques of the Positivist School of Criminology

1. Critiques of the Classical School of Criminology

Recall that the classical school of criminology emphasized the idea of free will, rational choice, and the concept of deterrence. It expanded explanations of criminology away from thinking that supernatural forces lead people to commit crimes toward looking at other reasons. While the classical school laid the foundation for modern criminological thought, it has faced several critiques over the years, which we will discuss in this section.

First, this school assumes that people are rational.

Critics argue that the classical school's assumption of rationality is overly simplistic (Siegel, 2018). Human behavior is influenced by many factors, and individuals may not always make rational decisions, especially when emotional, psychological, or social factors come into play. Strong emotions, such as fear, anger, or excitement, can cloud judgment and lead to impulsive decision-making (Geher, 2019).

→ EXAMPLE Someone comes home to find their spouse in bed with another person, and they attack that other person. This person is not thinking rationally when they engage in the attack.

Another critique of the classical school is that it does not consider the role of social factors in relation to crime.

Essentially, it neglects all social and economic factors that contribute to criminal behavior, such as poverty, structural inequality, and social injustice, which significantly impact crime rates (Siegel, 2018). In the following lessons, you will learn about theories that discuss the role of social factors in criminality. Many modern criminological theories focus on the significance that these factors play in criminal activity.

Furthermore, the classical school advocated for the idea of proportionality and uniformity in punishment.

Critics argue that this approach does not consider individual differences, such as mental health issues, which may require a more nuanced and rehabilitative approach to justice. They suggest that punishment should be

more individualistic to treat the root causes of crime.

⇒ EXAMPLE Some people commit crimes because of their mental illness, and the classical school's one-size-fits-all approach to punishment may not work for these individuals.

Another critique is that the classical school's emphasis on deterrence assumes that individuals weigh the costs and benefits of their actions before committing a crime.

However, critics argue that the deterrent effect is not always straightforward and that the certainty, severity, and swiftness of punishment do not consistently correlate with a reduction in criminal behavior (National Institute of Justice, 2016). While deterrence is a fundamental concept in the classical school, its success depends on various factors.

Critics also argue that the classical school focused too much on deterrence but not enough on examining the root causes of criminal behavior. In other words, there is an argument that a comprehensive approach to crime prevention needs to address the root causes of criminal behavior and improve socioeconomic conditions.

In sum, it is important to note that while the classical school has been critiqued, it has also influenced subsequent criminological theories. Contemporary approaches to studying crime often incorporate a combination of classical thoughts and more recent perspectives that include social and economic factors to provide a more comprehensive understanding of criminal behavior.

2. Critiques of the Positivist School of Criminology

Remember that the positivist school of criminology emphasized the scientific study of crime and criminal behavior. It also suggested that some people were predisposed to commit crime, which contrasted with the classical school's ideas that people could choose to engage in crime. While positivism has contributed significantly to the field, it has also faced several critiques, which we will discuss below.

First, positivist criminology often relies heavily on biological factors to explain criminal behavior (Siegel, 2018).

Critics argue that this deterministic approach oversimplifies the complex nature of crime by reducing it to inherent biological traits. This oversimplification neglects the impact of social and environmental factors that heavily influence why people commit crimes (Webber, 2020). It does not recognize how economic inequality and cultural influences shape criminal behavior.

⇒ EXAMPLE Many people engage in crime because they do not have the financial means to attain society's goals. They resort to committing crimes to get what they need, which has nothing to do with their biological factors.

Similarly, positivism does not adequately address issues of power and structural inequality in society that contribute to crime.

Critics argue that the focus on individual characteristics diverts attention from systemic issues, such as institutional discrimination, which play a significant role in criminal behavior (Siegel, 2018). We discussed the conflict model in the first lesson of this course. The conflict model suggests that people with economic and political power make laws to protect their own interests, keeping the poor at a disadvantage. Thus, positivism does not recognize how people in power play a role in deciding who is labeled a criminal.

Another critique of positivism is that it contributes to the stigmatization of individuals.

Labeling people as criminals can lead them to view themselves as such, causing them to adopt deviant identities and behaviors. Critics argue that the positivist perspective may inadvertently contribute to the perpetuation of criminal behavior. We will discuss labeling theory and the effects of stigmatization in more depth in a future lesson, and you will become more familiar with the negative consequences labeling can have on people.

An additional critique is that positivism often assumes universal explanations for criminal behavior, neglecting cultural variations in defining and interpreting crime (Seidler, 2011).

Critics argue that what may be considered criminal in one culture might not be perceived the same way in another. Biological positivism does not recognize how cultural factors influence what is viewed as a criminal act or not.

⇒ EXAMPLE Some countries do not recognize domestic violence or marital rape as a crime.

In sum, like the classical school, it is essential to note that while positivism has faced criticism, it has also contributed valuable insights to the study of criminology.



BIG IDEA

Contemporary criminology often incorporates elements of positivist and sociological perspectives to offer a more comprehensive understanding of crime and the complexity of criminal behavior.

	Concepts	Proponents	Assumptions	Limitations
Classical	Free will Rational thinking	Cesare Beccaria Jeremy Bentham	People choose to commit crimes. They weigh the pros and cons of whether committing a crime will benefit them.	Not everyone is rational. This theory ignores the role that social forces play in crime.
Positivist	Science and data “Born criminals”	Cesare Lombroso	This theory stressed the importance of the scientific method (e.g., hypothesizing, gathering data, and analyzing data) when making observations about crime. There were differences	Positivism relies too heavily on biological factors, neglecting social or environmental ones. This theory does not recognize power inequalities in society that

			between “criminals” and “noncriminals.”	lead some people to commit crimes.
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SUMMARY

In this lesson, you first learned about some of the **critiques of the classical school of criminology**. All theories make contributions to the field, but they also have limitations. The classical school contributed ideas related to free will, rationality, and deterrence, but it could not explain all criminal behavior. It suggested that all people are rational, but we have learned that this is not the case.

The classical school also neglected the role of social factors and structural inequalities that are often linked to crime. Most contemporary theories consider the influence of social factors and their relation to criminal behavior. Furthermore, another critique of the classical school is that it uses a one-size-fits-all approach to punishment, which is not realistic, considering people’s individual circumstances.

You then learned the **critiques of the positivist school of criminology**. While this school contributed greatly to the scientific study of criminology, it focused too heavily on the role that predetermined factors played in criminal engagement. The largest critique of biological positivism is that it oversimplifies why people commit crimes, neglecting the role that social factors and inequalities play when examining criminal behavior. Moreover, by focusing on criminals versus noncriminals, positivism engaged in the practice of labeling people as criminals.

Overall, the classical and positivist schools of criminology set the stage for other criminological theories. Other schools have expanded upon the ideas of these early schools, but newer schools tend to look at crime as more of a complex picture, recognizing social factors and other inequalities that influence crime. In the next few lessons, you will begin to examine the sociological theories of crime causation.

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Terms to Know

Adware

A type of malware that displays unwanted advertisements on a user's computer, often in the form of popups.

Aggravated Assault

The unlawful attack by one person upon another wherein the offender uses a weapon or displays it in a threatening manner, or the victim suffers obvious severe or aggravated bodily injury involving apparent broken bones, loss of teeth, possible internal injury, severe laceration, or loss of consciousness.

Arson

The unlawful and intentional damage of, or attempt to damage, any real or personal property by fire or incendiary device.

Assault

An unlawful attack by one person upon another.

Atavism

The tendency to revert to something ancient or ancestral.

Backward Law

The idea that the way in which the media present crime and justice issues is the opposite of the way in which these phenomena occur in real life.

Biological Factors

Factors that contribute to the structure, functioning, and development of living organisms.

Burglary

The act of entering someone else's property with the intention of committing a felony.

Causation

When the change in one variable is the direct result of a change in another variable.

Certainty

The likely probability that punishment will occur if a certain behavior is exhibited.

Civil Offense

An offense that is initiated by a private citizen (or corporation) against a person (or corporation), in contrast to a criminal offense, where the state initiates the proceedings against a criminal defendant. Those found guilty in a civil proceeding are said to be liable for “damages.” Rather than going to prison, they pay the victim money.

Classical School of Criminology

A school of thought in the field of criminology that explains criminal behavior from a rational perspective.

Codification

The process of arranging laws according to a system.

Conduct Norms

Specifications of proper and appropriate behavior generally supported and shared by members of a group. Societies contain different groups whose conduct norms are to some extent divergent.

Conflict Model

A model of crime in which the people in economic and political power create laws to protect their own interests.

Consensus

Societal agreement on shared values and norms.

Consensus Model

A model of crime in which the majority of citizens in a society share the same values and beliefs.

Corporate Crime

Illegal activities committed by corporations, often for the benefit of companies, at the expense of the law, ethical standards, or the well-being of society.

Correlation

A statistical relationship between variables, not necessarily causal.

Counterfeiting

The production or distribution of imitation goods, typically with the intent to deceive consumers into believing that the counterfeit products are genuine.

Crime

An action or omission that constitutes an offense that may be prosecuted by the state and is punishable by law.

Criminology

The scientific study of crime and criminals.

Cultural Criminologist

A criminologist who focuses on how culture influences crime.

Cultural Studies Perspective

The theoretical perspective that considers the role of the media in producing and reproducing culturally relevant and socially constructed meanings.

Cyberbullying

The use of digital technologies, social media, or smartphones to harass, intimidate, or harm individuals.

Cybercrime

Criminal activities that are carried out using digital technology or the internet.

Dark Figure of Crime

The number of crimes that are uncounted because nobody notices or reports them.

Demonology

The study of demons or supernatural beings and their influence on people's behavior.

Designer Drugs

Drugs that are created in underground or secret labs by changing the chemical properties of other preexisting drugs.

Determinism

A doctrine stating that all events, including human action, are ultimately determined by causes external to the will.

Deterrence

The act of discouraging an action or event by instilling doubt or fear of the consequences.

Deterrence Theory

The theory that people will be less apt to commit crime if there is a punishment associated with committing the crime.

Deviance

Behavior that departs from or violates social norms.

Domestic Terrorism

Violent, criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups to further ideological goals stemming from domestic influences, such as those of a political, religious, social, racial, or environmental nature.

Drug Trafficking

Crime involving the cultivation, manufacturing, distribution, and sale of illegal drugs.

Ectomorph

A body type that is lean, with little body fat and little muscle.

Embezzlement

A type of white-collar crime that involves the misappropriation or theft of funds entrusted to an individual, often within a professional or corporate setting.

Endomorph

A round body type with a high proportion of fat tissue.

Environmental Crime

Illegal activities that directly harm the environment.

Extremism

The advocacy or support for extreme beliefs, views, or actions, often diverging from mainstream opinions or societal norms.

Fiduciary Duty

The legal obligation to act in the best interests of another party.

First-Degree Murder

Planned and deliberate homicide.

Folk Devils

In the context of moral panics, these individuals or groups are the perceived menace upon which the public concern is focused.

Forcible Fondling

The touching of the private body parts of another person for the purpose of sexual gratification, forcibly and/or against that person's will or not forcibly or against the person's will in instances where the victim is incapable of giving consent.

Forcible Rape

The penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person without the consent of the victim.

Forcible Sodomy

Oral or anal sexual intercourse with another person, forcibly and/or against that person's will or not forcibly or against the person's will in instances where the victim is incapable of giving consent because of their youth or because of their temporary or permanent mental or physical incapacity.

Framing

Fitting a story into a ready-made social construction such that it is easy for the audience to understand and interpret.

Fraud

Wrongful or criminal deception intended to result in financial or personal gain.

General Deterrence

The impact of the threat of legal punishment on the public at large.

Hacking

An act of gaining unauthorized access to computer systems or networks, typically with the goal of exploiting vulnerabilities for malicious purposes.

Hate Crime

A crime committed on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability.

Hedonistic Calculus

A method for determining the moral worth of an action based on the amount of pleasure or pain it produces.

Hierarchy Rule

A rule in the UCR Program requiring that only the most serious crime occurring at an incident gets counted.

Hierarchy of Credibility

The preference shown by journalists toward sources in powerful positions, casting them as primary definers whose opinions and ideas are portrayed as inherently more credible than those of others who might wish to comment upon a story.

Homicide

The killing of one person by another.

Human Trafficking

The use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex service.

Ideal Victim

The socially constructed victim who is seen as weaker than their attacker and blameless and with whom the audience will readily sympathize.

Identity Theft

A type of crime in which an individual's personal information is stolen and used for fraudulent purposes in cyberspace.

Incidents

One or more offenses committed by the same offender or group of offenders at the same time and place.

Insider Trading

The illegal practice of trading on the stock exchange to one's own advantage through having access to confidential information.

International Terrorism

Violent, criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups who are inspired by, or associated with, designated foreign terrorist organizations or nations.

Larceny Theft

The unlawful taking, carrying, leading, or riding away of property from the possession, or constructive possession, of another person.

Legalistic View

A view emphasizing the importance of established laws and regulations in defining what is considered criminal behavior.

Loop

A concept encapsulating the complex and nonlinear way that meaning flows through media and popular culture.

Malware

Software designed to harm computer systems, networks, or users.

Manslaughter

Nonintentional homicide resulting from intoxication, recklessness, or negligence (e.g., two people in a bar get in a fight and one kills the other by accident).

Market Model

The theoretical perspective that views the media as a business that delivers a product intended to meet market demand.

Mass Murder

Murder that involves the killing of more than three people in a single event.

Mesomorph

A body type with a greater than average amount of muscle.

Missing White Woman Syndrome

Researchers generally attribute this term to Gwen Ifill, PBS news anchor, referring to the far more frequent and intense news coverage of instances where White women or girls go missing compared to instances where the missing persons are not White or not female.

Money Laundering

The process of illegally concealing the origin of money, obtained from illicit activities, by converting it into a legitimate source.

Moral Entrepreneurs

Individuals or groups who attempt to draw attention to and impose their moral perspective on behaviors they deem deviant or criminal in order to advance their own interests or political agendas.

Moral Panic

A widespread feeling of fear, often an irrational one, that some evil person or thing threatens the values, interests, or well-being of a community or society.

Moral Panics

Period of intensified or frenzied public concern, the level of which is out of proportion with the actual threat posed by the object of concern.

Motor Vehicle Theft

The theft of a motor vehicle.

National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)

A survey that measures criminal victimization in the United States.

National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)

A system used by law enforcement agencies in the United States for collecting and reporting data on crimes.

News Values of Newsworthiness Criteria

The aspects of stories used by news media to determine which stories will be deemed of interest to the media audience and, thus, reported on.

Objectivity

The state of being unbiased and impartial while not letting personal beliefs influence one's research.

Occupational Health and Safety Violation

A breach of laws and regulations that are designed to protect the well-being and safety of workers within a workplace.

Official Crime Data

Crimes brought to the attention of law enforcement.

Organizational Model

The theoretical perspective that views the routines of day-to-day news production as the most significant factor in shaping news content.

Organized Crime

Groupings of centralized enterprises run to engage in illegal activity, most commonly for profit.

Othering

Viewing people as intrinsically different from the rest of the population.

Panopticon

A prison design allowing one guard to watch all prisoners without the prisoners knowing whether they are being watched or not.

Personalization

The process of making something personally relatable to the audience.

Phishing

A cyberattack in which attackers attempt to deceive people into disclosing sensitive information, such as login credentials, personal details, or financial information.

Positivist School of Criminology

A school of thought in the field of criminology that focuses on the scientific study of criminal behavior.

Primary Definers

Individuals whom the media turns to first to help define and explain a situation, who are perceived as having more specialized knowledge due to their institutional affiliation or professional position and, thus, as more credible sources (government officials, criminal justice system personnel, academics, etc.).

Product Safety Violation

An illegal or unethical action by a corporation or its representatives that results in harm to consumers or the public.

Propaganda Model

The theoretical perspective that views the media as intentionally manipulating news content so that it aligns with the interests of the media owners and other powerful individuals or groups in society.

Prostitution

The practice or occupation of engaging in sexual activity with someone for payment.

Racialization of Crime

The assumption that the crimes committed by racial minorities can be explained by their race.

Radicalization

The action or process of causing someone to adopt radical positions on political or social issues.

Ransomware

A type of malware that encrypts the victim's files and demands a ransom in exchange for the decryption key.

Rational Choice Theory

A theory suggesting that people are rational actors and weigh the pros and cons of committing a crime.

Representation

The process of socially constructing images and attaching significance/meaning to them.

Robbery

The use of force or violence during the commission of a theft.

Sampling Error

An error that occurs because the statistical characteristics of a population are estimated from a sample of the population.

Satanic Panic

Widespread fear and hysteria surrounding allegations of Satanic ritual abuse and cults engaging in horrific crimes.

Scientific Method

A procedure consisting of systematic observation, measurement, and experimentation.

Second-Degree Murder

Intentional homicide that lacks the element of preplanning and may occur in the heat of the moment.

Secondary Definers

Those individuals who have the task of responding to the definition of a situation as set out by the primary definers (including journalists who reproduce and/or filter what the primary definers have stated, as well as oppositional definers whom journalists may include to provide a counterpoint to what the primary definers have stated).

Self-Reporting Study

A study in which participants provide information about their own behaviors or experiences with a particular phenomenon.

Serial Murder

Murder in which a person kills several victims in three or more separate events.

Severity

The level of punishment associated with a particular action.

Sexual Assault With an Object

The use of an object or instrument to unlawfully penetrate, however slightly, the genital or anal opening of the body of another person, forcibly and/or against that person's will or not forcibly or against the person's will in instances where the victim is incapable of giving consent because of their youth or because of their temporary or permanent mental or physical incapacity.

Sexual Offense

A sexual act directed against another person without the consent of the victim, including instances where the victim is incapable of giving consent.

Simple Assault

The unlawful physical attack by one person upon another where neither the offender displays a weapon nor does the victim suffer obvious severe or aggravated bodily injury involving apparent broken bones, loss of teeth, possible internal injury, severe laceration, or loss of consciousness.

Simplification

The process of making something easier to understand, which also results in a loss of detail and complexity.

Social Construct

A concept that reflects shared ideas or perceptions that exist only because people in society accept that they do.

Social Constructionist View

A view in which what is considered criminal is not solely determined by the objective nature of the act but is influenced by societal norms, values, and the power structures at play.

Social Responsibility Model

The theoretical perspective that views the media as playing an important role in upholding democracy, ensuring the citizenry is informed, and shining light on abuses of power.

Somatotype

A category to which people are assigned based on the extent to which their bodily physique conforms to a basic type.

Specific Deterrence

The use of punishment for criminal activity intended to discourage a specific individual from re-offending.

Spiral

A concept describing the dynamic interplay between crime, control, and media representation.

Spyware

Software that spies on the user's activities without their knowledge.

Stereotype

A socially constructed category or label relying on generalized assumptions about people, behaviors, or situations based on a specific characteristic (such as race, ethnicity, culture, nationality, neighborhood, gender, or social class).

Swiftness

The promptness with which the punishment or response is delivered after the unwanted behavior occurs.

Symbiotic Relationship

An interaction between two individuals or groups that is mutually beneficial.

Transnational Crime

Criminal activities that cross national borders and involve the planning, execution, or consequences of the crime occurring in more than one country.

Trojan

A type of malware that disguises itself as legitimate software but contains malicious code.

Typology

A system of classification.

Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program

A nationwide, statistical effort of more than 18,000 law enforcement agencies reporting data on crimes brought to their attention.

Utilitarianism

A moral and ethical theory suggesting that actions should be judged by their utility in maximizing happiness or pleasure and minimizing pain or suffering.

Utility

The principle of seeking the greatest good for the greatest number of people.

Victim-Blaming Discourse

A way of talking about victims and victimization that places at least part of the responsibility for the harm done to the victim on their own behavior or attributes (e.g., how they were dressed, what they said, where they were, what they were doing, and which measures they took to defend themselves).

Virus

A program that can replicate itself by attaching to other programs or files.

White-Collar Crime

A crime committed by a person of respectability and high social status in the course of their occupation.

White-Collar Deviance

All unethical practices, including legally delineated crimes, that high-ranking workers commit in their work.

Worm

A self-replicating program that can spread across networks without any human intervention.

People to Know

Cesare Beccaria

Italian philosopher associated with the classical school of criminology.

Cesare Lombroso

Italian criminologist associated with the positivist school of criminology.

Jeremy Bentham

British philosopher associated with the classical school of criminology.

William Sheldon

Psychologist who developed the idea of somatotypes.