

Crime is Normal

Spring 2012



Notes

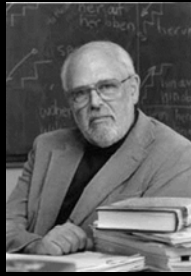
- Sampling on DV
- Talking about readings
- Flashcards
- Good essays
 - Structure
 - Tell me what you'll tell me
 - Tell me
 - Tell me what you told me
 - Topic sentences
 - Based on readings, use ideas, properly cite
 - Proofread

Flash Cards

- Examples conservative, liberal, radical theories
- Erikson definition
- Crime is normal v. pathological
- Shape of crime rates since 1960
- Emic/etic
- Relativism
- Evidence for CIN
- Donut
- SC "selects" one behavior and converts to identity
- "It is not crime..."
- Centripetal v. centrifugal social forces
- Deviance creates fellow feeling
- Society of angels with examples

Ten Claims about Social Control

1. **Crime is normal and deviance is relative.**
2. **Social environments create deviance.**
3. **Social control can amplify deviance.**
4. **Breaking rules can be good for society.**
5. **Deviance can be a form of conflict resolution.**
6. **Every rule is somebody's rule.**
7. **Social control is the dependent variable.**
8. **Legal social control is rare.**
9. **Organizations present special problems.**
10. **Social Control can get out of hand.**

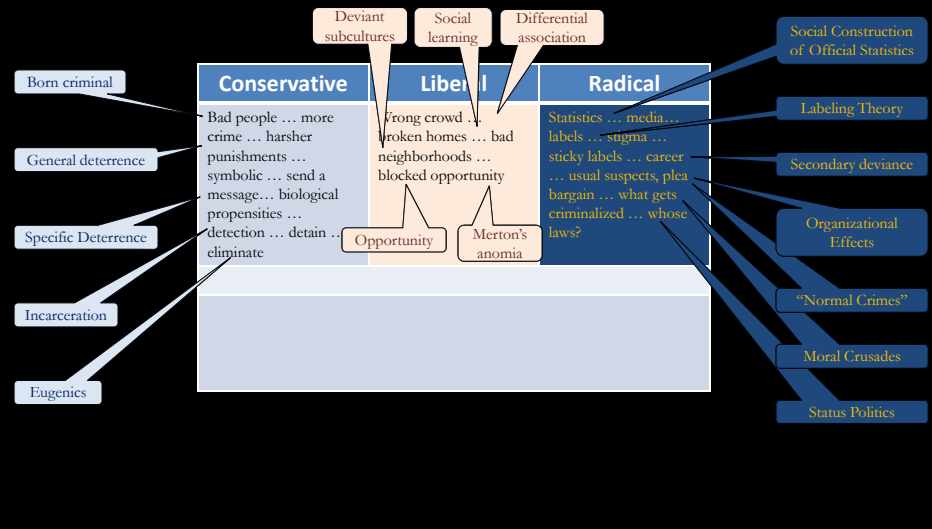


Readings

- Kai Erikson, "Notes on the Sociology of Deviance" from *Wayward Puritans* (1967)
- Randall Collins, "The Normalcy of Crime" in *Sociological Insight: An Introduction to Nonobvious Sociology* (1982)
- *Wikipedia* Sociological Relativism



Theory Allusions in Collins



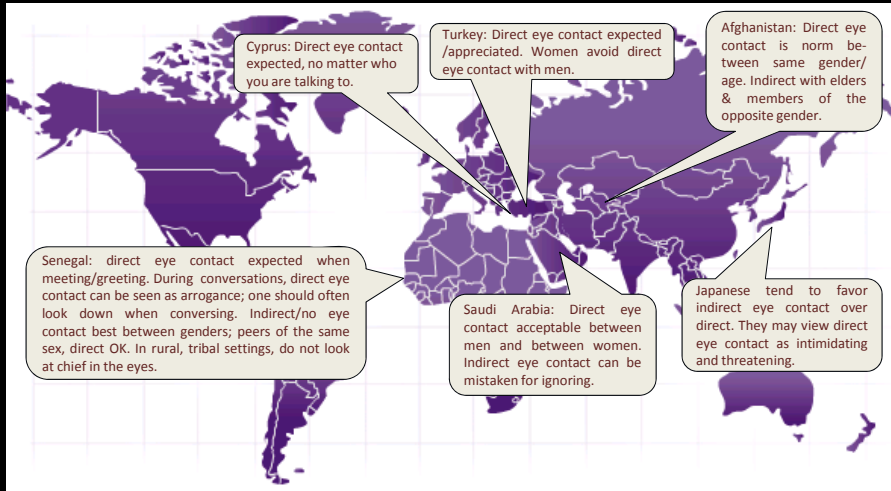
Radical Theories

- Marxist
 - BUT: “Crime is too individualistic to be straightforward class struggle. But it is the system of class stratification that eliminates the conditions for solidarity in the most depressed sectors of society” (Collins 1982, 105)
- Labeling
- Constructionist

Five Observations

- Spatial Variation
- Temporal Variation
- Behavioral Ranges
- Selection/Weighing
- Response not about being effective

Norms Vary Across Socio-Cultural Space



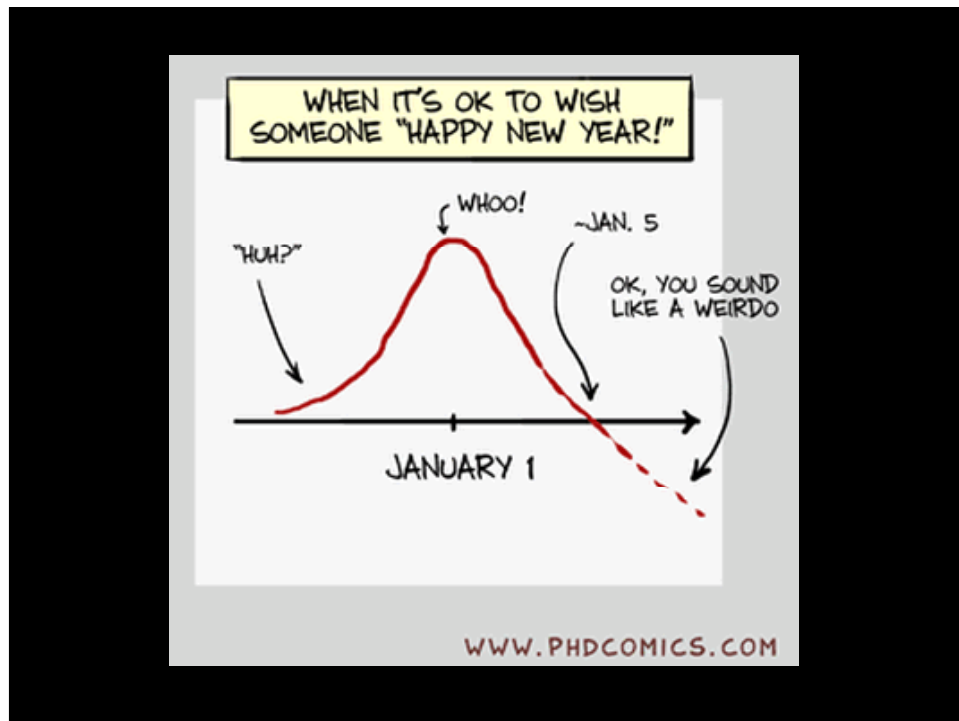
<http://www.culturecrossing.net/>

Norms Vary Across Time



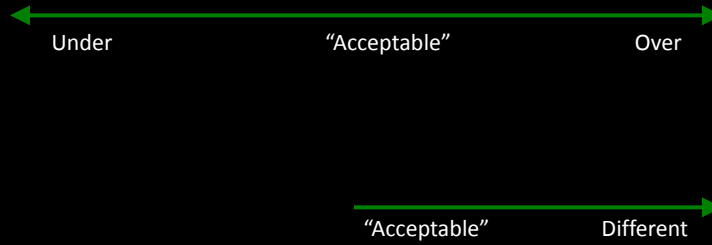
Relativism – Anthro/Soc

- **methodological** stance
- bracket one's own cultural biases
- avoid ethnocentrism -- applying own standards
- "emic" vs "etic"
 - emic = insider account of behavior
 - what elicits social control in this place/time?
 - etic = outsider account
 - using neutral/abstract conceptual frame of social science

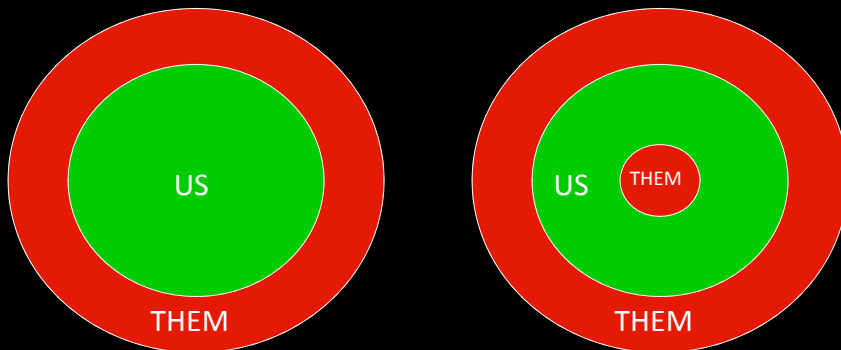


Behavior Varies; Groups Know "How we do it"

- Two possibilities



Behavior Varies; Groups Know "How we do it"



Mental Weighing

A guy in a bar...

Jot down a list of five things that could be in the sentence, "But you X one time..."

Five Observations

- Spatial Variation
- Temporal Variation
- Behavioral Ranges
- Selection/Weighing
- Response not about being effective

Today's Takeaways

- Big Concepts
 - Crime is normal.
 - Deviance is relative.
 - Groups are “boundary maintaining” entities
- Two Take-Aways:
 - deviation from norms natural social activity not social illness;
 - Response is opportunity for groups of separate individuals to merge personal sentiments in support of group solidarity

Previously, on Social Control...

Crime, deviance, evil as “anti-social”...

...suggesting, perhaps, that they represent...

...a **pathological state**...

...for groups, communities, societies

“Deviance,” that is,

- As symptom
- As indicator
- Of breakdown
- Of something less than *society*

Fundamental Point

- Deviance, rule breaking, non-conformity, and the like occur in **societies being normal**.
- We study deviance and we study social control so as to better understand **the social**

Crime as Normal and Naturalistic Fallacy

- NF = if it is normal/natural it is morally good
- **ETIC** statement: crime is normal

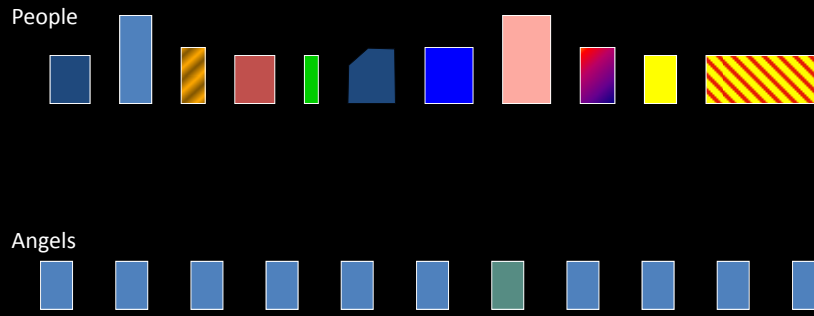
- Within given culture,
- **EMIC** designation of X as
- beyond what is acceptable is REAL

Erikson: “On the Sociology of Deviance”

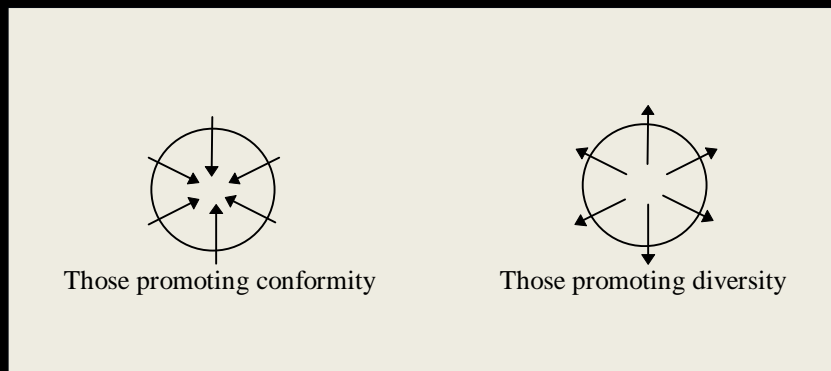
- Deviance = that which elicits social control
 - “agencies” of social control
- Selection not weighing – most behavior conformity

- Response not always about “what is harmful” to group
- Deviance: a category groups use to organize behavior
- People are organized into all manner of groups and deviance is defined relative to each one.

Even in a society of angels...



Contradictory Social Forces



One Piece of Evidence

- More elaborate ceremonies to put people into deviant categories than to get them out of deviant categories
- Labels very hard to remove
- Many an ex-con, but few pre-cons.
- “One drop rules” – have you EVER been convicted, hospitalized, accused, etc.

Totalizing Labels

- Even a “deviant” conforms most of the time
- Deviant details are selected from among a vast array of conformity
- Adjective that refers to an act is converted into a noun that refers to a person
- One steals, discriminates or cheats...
- and one becomes
- “a thief” or “a racist” or “a cheater”

Claims

- crime (or rather the reaction to it) concentrates the consciousnesses of community members on what it means to be in/of this community
- unless “the rhythm of group life is punctuated by moments of deviant behavior...social organization would be impossible.” (Erikson):

- "Whenever a community is confronted with a significant relocation of its boundaries, a shift in its territorial position, it is likely to experience a change in the kinds of behavior handled by its various agencies of control" (Erikson, 68.8).

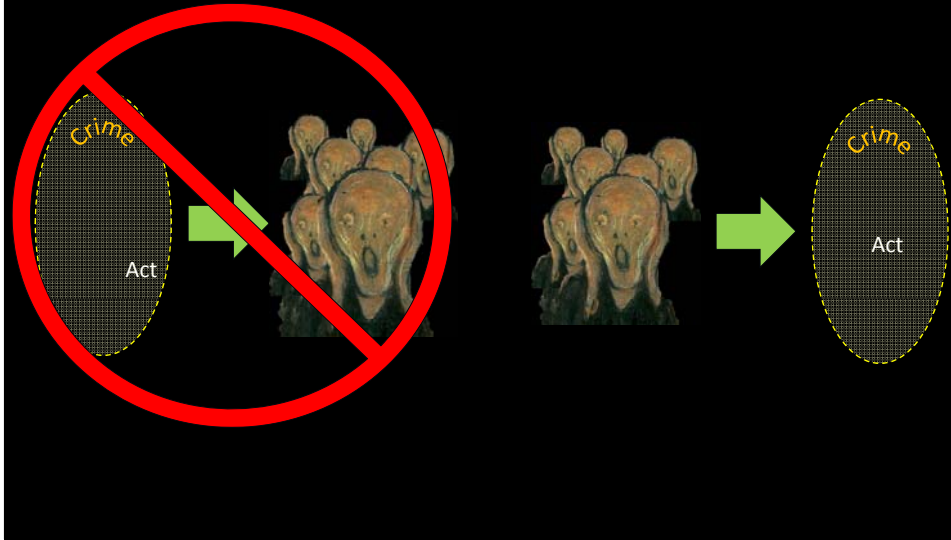
Attending to Deviance... Creates “fellow feeling”

- Recognizing and reacting to deviation
- ...as collective...
- ...provides an opportunity for separate individuals...
- ...to merge their personal sentiments...
- ...and experience group solidarity.

“It does not offend the collective because it is a crime; it is a crime because it offends the collective...”

Durkheim

In other words...



Exercise: Values and Social Control

Select from the list below an issue that is important to you.

Sexism Racism Homophobia Ecology Energy Food Smoking Child rearing Drinking Drugs

Let's say you and your comrades decide it's time to get serious about this issue. Your task is to describe a movement approach to this issue in a community like Mills. You decide you will start a "hall," "house," or "club" around this issue.

1. List the basic values of your group/organization. Five "principles."
2. Do the values of the organization suggest anything about how it should be run?
3. Who can join the group/movement? Should there be any restrictions? How will you tell who "fits"?
4. Episode I : Identify an expert within the group. Do some people have more credibility than others?
5. Episode II: An unrelated campus issue arises and group is called upon to coalition with a group whose values it opposes.
6. Episode III: A new group with very similar but slightly different purpose emerges.
7. Episode IV : Two or three semesters in, the focus of the group seems to have begun to drift. Some folks think it is time to return to basics, perhaps narrow the membership.

Mala prohibita v. mala in se

- Acts that are “wrong” simply because there is a rule but do not violate moral standards
 - e.g., zoning rules, parking, some dress codes
- Acts that are “wrong” because they offend moral sensibilities of community
 - E.g. murder

SUMMARY

“Deviance” is Relative

- Varies across time and cultural space
- Behaviors are not inherently deviant
- Deviance as property conferred upon behavior by social audience – **that which elicits social control.**

Do groups benefit from deviance?

- Helps folks see what’s OK and what’s not
- Unites group against non-conformer
- Reminds about cultural integrity – who WE are
- Trying out innovative behaviors
- A safety valve – sign that things are not right

If so, do groups produce it?

- Or at least not actually try to eradicate it?
- Who is punishment and treatment for?
- How much belief in actual rehabilitation?
- Need category “deviant” sufficiently populated

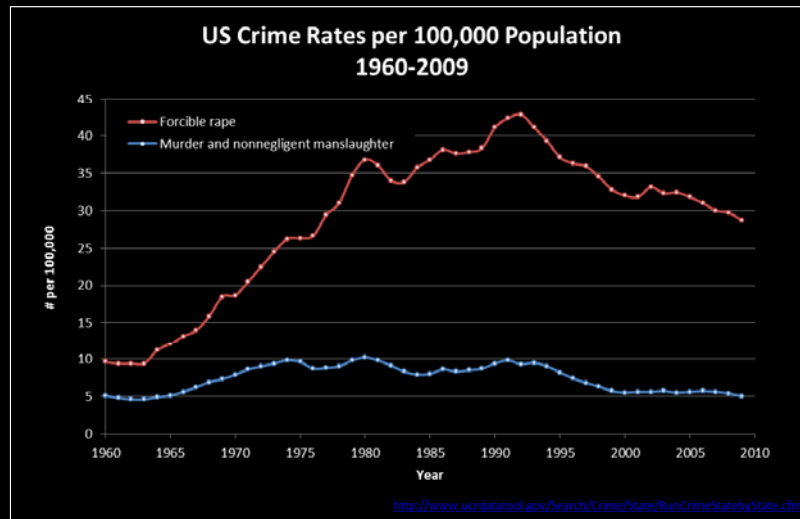
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FINIS

Crime Rates Since Collins



Review of Durkheim

- Responding to Rousseau and Hobbes
- Solidarity must precede contract
- RATIONAL actors defect
- Ritual
- “standardized, ceremonial behavior, carried out by a group of people. It involves a common emotion, and it creates a symbolic belief that binds people closer to the group. Carrying out rituals over and over again is what serves to keep the group tied together.” (110)

“Crime is Normal”

- Emile Durkheim 1895
- Contrast to crime as pathology
- “Even in a society of angels...”
- Erikson: unless “rhythm of group life is punctuated by moments of deviant behavior...social organization would be impossible.”

“It does not offend the collective conscience because it is a crime, it is a crime because it offends the collective conscience.”

- Emile Durkheim. “In this view, crime and
- its punishment are a basic part of the rituals that uphold any social structure.”

Chapter 1: All the Sociology You Need

- Boundaries

Types of “Crime”

- Property
- Passion
- Rules

Evidence

- Denmark: property crime up, violence steady
- Rules vary widely over time, across space

Fundamental Logical Flaws

- $A \gg B$ but not all A's end up B

Witch-Hunting as Normal Social Control

- Examples
 - Red Scare & McCarthyism in 1950s
 - Periodic searches for homosexuals in military or government service
 - Chinese cultural revolution
 - Soviet purges
- More Recently
 - [Surveillance and the Classroom \(LA Times 1.18.06\)](#)

“We” Do It Too

- Mobilizing to identify sexists, racists, conservatives, homophobes
- Teaching one another how to recognize
- Intense discussions of what constitutes various –isms
- Organizations with mission of stamping out x-ism
- Struggling to purify oneself of x-ism
- Including non-x-ism in job applications
- Etc.?

Contemporary Connections

- Prison and Public Policy
- Cautionary tale for ideological separatist organizations
- War on Terror
- ...