

## CHAPTER 1

### *Crime and Criminology: An Integrative Perspective*

#### OVERVIEW

As computers have sped up the flow of 'information', people increasingly attend to 'factoids', news 'McNuggets' and decontextualized bits/bytes. In higher education, people adapt to the frenetic growth of information by becoming ever more specialized, as reflected in the joke that they know more and more about less and less until they know everything about nothing. The less charitable version likens the process to a bird flying in ever tighter circles until it disappears up its own anus. Textbooks (written by specialists) tend to become catalogs of more detailed pictures of various species flying in different arcs at various speeds.

This chapter critiques the fragmented state of knowledge and the disciplinary forces exercised by the academic disciplines engaged in criminology. Barak advocates mergers, not just of theories within a discipline, but of bodies of knowledge in all disciplines concerned with the study of society and human nature. In this way, we can start to avoid sterile backwaters of disciplinary criminology and appreciate the complexity of the human condition. Only by including nature and nurture can we create comprehensive understandings. Only by including modern/positive and postmodern/deconstructive perspectives can we get a full sense of what criminology is about -- not just 'why do criminals do it?', but the relation of criminology to political, economic and cultural development in a world being changed by global capitalism and mass-communications.

#### OUTLINE

##### **I In search of Criminology**

- A. Survey of terms by Radzinowicz [1962] and Barak [1994]

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\* The Instructor's Manual for *Integrating Criminologies* is available as a downloadable Adobe .pdf file by chapter or in complete form through <http://paulsjusticepage.com/IntegratingCrim/index.htm>. The author's website is <http://greggbarak.com>. The website for [Amazon.com](#) has additional information about the book, and the [publisher's website](#) accepts requests for academic desk copies.

- B. Criminologists prefer to concentrate on few 'strands' rather than pursue breadth
- C. Need for interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary criminology that incorporates the 'social facts of crime' with the 'why do criminals do it?'
  - 1. Need to reverse fragmentation that occurs in postmodernism
  - 2. Need to re-order criminology away from penal-administrative forms toward more social-democratic ones
- D. Integrate knowledges by confronting the social-structural interaction of minds, cultures and bodies

## II What is Criminology?

- A. Three positions on the nature of the field
  - 1. Sociological traditionalists: criminology as subdiscipline of sociology
  - 2. Multidisciplinary specialists: elevate own (non-sociological) discipline's importance for study of criminology
  - 3. Interdisciplinary generalists: knowledges from broader range of fields
- B. Need for interdisciplinary mergers of knowledge between 'equals' with no privileged ranking of knowledges.

## III The Need for Integration

- A. Stems from:
  - 1. Wide dissemination of criminological knowledge, esp. through mass media
  - 2. Production by non-experts
  - 3. Disciplinary academic structures (including departments) have own economies of value; they artificially shape knowledge through their discourses (including textbooks) and reproduce themselves
  - 4. Lack of awareness that criminology is the result of power and cannot be separated from the dominant values of a society
- B. Why Integrate?
  - 1. Helps expose narrowness and sterility of knowledge produced by single disciplines
  - 2. Emphasizes complex nature of reality and people as both determined and determining
  - 3. Expands utilitarian knowledge base of social control
  - 4. Criminological Inquiry
    - a. Importance of paradigms and disciplinary structures that influence where investigators look for facts, the observational instruments they select, and the interpretations they make
    - b. Everyone operates from some paradigm, so there is no neutral paradigm- (value-)free criminology
    - c. Integrate for comprehensiveness, but argue about (single) 'correct' paradigm
  - 4. Criminological Pedagogy

- a. Students interested in criminal behavior and familiar with it
  - b. Use enthusiasm to create opportunity for critical thinking and examination of implicit assumptions
- C. What Should Criminology Integrate?
- 1. Goals
    - a. Conventional: etiology, prediction, falsification of theories, crime control
    - b. Critical: understanding, peace, emancipation, amelioration of suffering
    - c. Be open to new goal of integrating both, which unsettles existing assumptions about crime and research processes
  - 2. Types of integration
    - a. Modern integration of theories: positivistic emphasis on theory and 'causal models'
    - b. Postmodern integration of knowledges: emphasis on ever-changing voices of plurality that provide meaning for the local sites of crime, justice, law and community; relational, positional and provisional interpretation
  - 3. Ingredients
    - a. Human agency
    - b. Socialization and identity formation
    - c. Social structure and institutional order
    - d. Discourse, knowledge and mass communication
    - e. Social and cultural change
- D. How Should Criminology Proceed?
- 1. Interdisciplinary studies questions about crime and culture, gender, ethnicity, media, and policy
  - 2. Recognize
    - a. Modernist contribution of measurement and observation of tangible things -- what the reality is
    - b. Postmodern contribution of appreciating imagination and the subjective -- the perceptual and conceptual systems of human minds that shape how reality is understood

#### **IV Definitions of Crime**

- A. Reveal that definitions are somewhat arbitrary, non-objective, changing, and related to political, economic, social, and ideological structures
- B. They include
  - 1. A form of normal behavior
  - 2. A violation of behavioral norms
  - 3. A form of deviant behavior
  - 4. Legally defined behavior
  - 5. A universally condemned behavior
  - 6. A violation of human rights

7. A social harm
8. A social injury
9. A form of inequality
10. A limit on one's ability to make a difference

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1] Introduce students to the wide range of issues, questions and theories that fall under the domain of criminology. Professors and students should start to become more aware of their own disciplinary perspectives and prejudices.

2] Emphasize the constructed nature of both reality and knowledge; academic disciplines arbitrarily divide up this knowledge, and exert a continuing disciplinary power that shapes knowledge and keeps it fragmented.

## IDEAS FOR LECTURES & DISCUSSION

The instructor should think about her/his own disciplinary biases and start the class thinking about theirs. Ask them what seems to be the most important questions and why. This discussion could help illustrate the breadth of criminological inquiry and/or the extent to which they may be sociological traditionalists.

For more information on disciplining effects of disciplines, see Ball 1990. The title makes this volume seem a little more relevant than it might actually be for helping prepare lecture material, but the introduction in particular provides a concise overview of Foucault. Fillingham (1993)\* is also a good overview of Foucault's work. While his book *The Order of Things* is not generally recommended reading (especially as an introduction), the classification system Foucault starts with would be good to facilitate a discussion of how even arbitrary classification systems shape the way people think and the problems they study. (The example divides up the animal kingdom, including categories of imaginary animals and those belonging to the emperor, etc.)

Berry's (1994)\* discussion of 'artificiality' in the production of criminological knowledge is an excellent read on how disciplinary forces -- including funding sources and journal review -- produce irrelevant or biased 'knowledge'.

Barak suggests that the instability of 'crime' -- the politics of harms that do or do not become criminalized -- naturally leads students to asking questions that cross disciplines. Use this strategy and any enthusiasm the students bring to class to set up the discussion of definitions and measurement in Chapter 2. Find out their reactions to the series of vignettes at the end of the chapter and their thoughts

about the range of definitions he presents. Finding out which definitions they like or do not agree with will help get a fix on the perspective of the class.

## REFERENCES

Ball, Stephen (ed). 1990. *Foucault and Education: Disciplines and Knowledge*. London: Routledge.

Fillingham, Lydia Alix. 1993. *Foucault for Beginners*. N.Y.: Writers and Readers.

Berry, Bonnie. 1994. "Artificiality in the Construction of Crime, Criminal Justice, and Criminology". *Free Inquiry in Creative Sociology*, v 22 #1, p 33-43.