Crime and Deviance

3. The relationship between deviance, power and social control.

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The relationship between deviance, power and social control.

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The relationship between deviance, power and social control

In previous sections we've necessarily touched on some aspects of the relationship between deviance, power and social control (in terms, for example, of thinking about who makes rules and how they are enforced) and in this section we're going to develop these ideas by looking more explicitly at concepts of power and control, beginning with an outline of how these two concepts are related.

Power and Control: Observations

Power is an important concept in the sociology of deviance given that most sociological explanations for crime and deviance (from functional consensus, through critical criminology, to social constructionism) draw on the concept at some point as a way of explaining rule creation, rule enforcement and, occasionally, rule-breaking.

Social control: Sociologically, deviance is both a product of social interaction and something that cannot exist without the power to proscribe and control social behaviour; concepts of *power*, *control* and *deviance* are, in this respect, *symbiotic*. In other words, for deviance to be identified, someone has to establish where the normative behavioural line should be drawn (power) and then take action to defend that line (control).

Pfohl (1998) expresses this idea neatly: 'Imagine *deviance* as noise – a cacophony of subversions disrupting the harmony of a given social order. *Social control* is the opposite. It labours to silence the resistive sounds of deviance . . . to transform the noisy challenge of difference into the music of *conformity.*'

"The music of conformity" - think of it as a bit like a Queen album with all the interesting bits taken out (that would be a Queen album then...)

On this note (pun intended), we can identify two basic types of control:

1. Formal controls relate to legal/organisational codes of behaviour, operate at the overt, usually written, level and involve a formal *enforcement mechanism* – a police or security force, for example. Formal control systems involve formal prosecution procedures. In the case of crime these may entail arrest, charge and trial, whereas in an organisation such as a school or business some sort of disciplinary procedure will be in place.

Sometimes a look is all it takes...

2. Informal controls operate between people in their everyday, informal, settings (the family or school, for example) and don't involve written rules and procedures. Consequently, these controls work through *informal enforcement mechanisms*, the object of such controls being the type of informal normative behaviour we might find going on between family members, friends or indeed strangers (such as the normative behaviour that occurs when you buy something from a shop).

Both types of control have a couple of things in common: They can, for example, operate:

Directly: Here, the objective is to regulate a rule (normative standard). If you break the rule, you lay yourself open to punishment (or *sanction)*. If you break the law, you might be fined or imprisoned; if you're cheeky to a teacher you might be given detention.

Indirectly: As socialised individuals we don't need to be told constantly where boundaries lie because we learn (from personal experience or from others) the nature of norms and what might happen if we break them. For example, if you continually skip your sociology class you may be asked to leave the course and, since you don't want this to happen, you (indirectly) control your behaviour to obey the norm.

Blalock (1967) suggests two further forms of control:

1. Coercive involves the attempt to make people obey through the exercise of some form of *punishment* (imprisonment, for example).

2. Placative involves control through some form of *reward* (giving a child a sweet, for example, to stop it crying).

Finally, both formal and informal social controls involve the concept of:

Sanctions: These, as we've suggested, may be *positive* (rewarding people for conformity) or *negative* (punishments for deviance).

Although it's tempting to think about dimensions of control solely in terms of sanctions, there are other, less obvious ways it is exercised.

• **Time**: Different parts of the day are divided into different time periods during which we are expected to do different things (travel, work, eat, play, sleep). **Shaw et al.** (1996) noted how the 'free time' of young people (especially young women) was 'controlled or structured by the dominant adult culture'.

• **Mind**: While 'mind control' is probably too strong a term to use (although experiments have been conducted in clinical psychiatry into 'behaviour modification' through both chemical means and brain surgery), one way control reaches into the realm of thought is through:

• **Language**: The use of language (in everyday talk, for example) is significant in terms of how we classify people. Think, for example, about the way different accents are taken to indicate different levels of sophistication, intelligence and class. Language, therefore, involves the power to both shape how we think about something and influence how we react to it. Language, for example, is linked to sexuality and social control through concepts like 'stud' and 'slag' (something that reflects the power of language to glorify or stigmatise).

Types of Space

The *patrol* and *control* of different types of space is an interesting aspect of power and social control:

• **Private space**, for example, represents areas of individual control, such as the private spaces in your home.

• **Public space**, meanwhile, signifies areas where access and activities are socially controlled. In other words, when someone enters these spaces they become liable to a range of control mechanisms (CCTV observation being a simple example).

The power to control public space is significant because it involves the ability to define the deviant use of space. An employer owns and controls the space occupied by their workforce and is consequently able to specify behaviour in such space. **White** (1993), among others, has noted how conflict between the police and youth is frequently based on differing interpretations of the purpose and use of public space (such as shopping precincts and malls).

Changing rooms are generally seen as public spaces in our society, although gender segregation is the norm in our society (male and female changing rooms, for example).

Controlled space involves the idea that institutions (prisons, mental asylums and hospitals, for example) regulate space in ways that relate to the control of things like body and language. In terms of the latter, for example, a relatively modern development is the concept of:

The home is generally considered a "private" space in our society (although different rooms have public and private connotations - bedrooms, for example, are private family spaces whereas kitchens are public family spaces).

Medicalisation, a situation in which deviant behaviour is defined and treated as a physical or mental illness. This idea of deviance being defined, in some situations and contexts, as an "illness" for which the individual should not be held responsible is an interesting example of the way social control can be linked to:

The Body - and the relationship between bodies and social control works in a couple of ways:

1. Personal control relates, in part, to what we do with our bodies in terms of individual adornment, display, and so forth (although these choices will be conditioned by social norms governing such things as nudity).

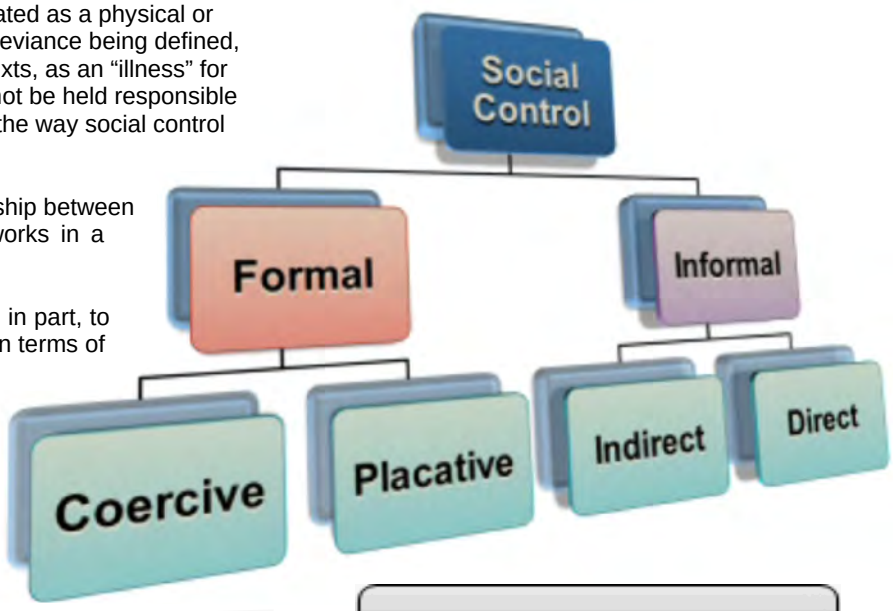
2. Public control relates to ideas about gender and sexuality (the social meaning of being male or female, for example, and decisions about different types of sexuality) that are, in no small measure, governed by social norms and controls. Our society, for example, generally views monogamous, heterosexual attraction as the norm. Public control also extends into areas such as:

- **Body image** – what size and shape the body should be, for example – and

- **Attitudes** to areas like physical disability and less tangible notions of patriarchal ideas and practices.

Morcillo (2005) suggests public controls extend into areas such as attitudes to youth and ageing, reproduction and *cyberbodies* (the idea that computer technology allows us to create private and public images in the relative anonymity of cyberspace).

A further dimension here is the question of physical public control over both body and space involved in ideas like *incarceration* (prisons, mental institutions and, in some respects, schools) and the various forms of punishment that can be (legally and, in some instances, illegally) directed against the body.



Power and Control: Explanations

We can apply some of the ideas we've just outlined to an understanding of crime control in contemporary societies in a range of ways. According to **Cohen** (1979a), contemporary systems of deviancy control in our society developed at the end of the eighteenth century around three basic ideas:

The state as a centralised, coordinating structure (considered in terms of definitions of crime, law creation and the construction of law-enforcement agencies).

Differentiation between *criminal deviance* (involving punishment) and *dependent deviance* (such as mental illness) that involved care.

Institutionalisation – the separation of deviants from non-deviants in prisons, asylums and hospitals.

Are attitudes to youth and ageing in our society different now to attitudes 50 years ago?

In conventional terms, therefore, societal control has been underpinned by three ideas that we can loosely term '***traditional penology***' (to differentiate it from **contemporary penology**):

1. Reactive control: Social controls are applied 'after the event' – following a crime, the offender is identified and processed through the judicial system on the basis of 'what they've done'.

2. Difference: This involves the idea that 'deviants are different to non-deviants', something expressed in terms of:

Identification – the objective ways deviants differ from non-deviants in terms of, for example, their:

• **Biology**: **Lombrosso** and **Ferrero** (1895) attempted to identify the physical signs of criminality – 'a comparison of the criminal skull with the skulls of normal women reveals the fact that female criminals approximate more to males'.

• **Psychology**: Traditional forms of analysis focused on the idea of crime as *pathological* (mental disturbance) or, as **Lagassé** (2005) notes, the result of 'emotional disorders, often stemming from childhood experience and personality disorders'.

• **Sociology**: **Box** (1983) notes how social factors (such as poverty) have traditionally been *correlated* with official crime statistics to produce a composite picture of 'the criminal offender'.

3. Quantification – the idea that once the specific origins of deviance are established we can quantify *causality* (whether in terms of chemical imbalances in the brain, family upbringing, social conditions or whatever) that serves as the basis for:

Treatment, considered in terms of punishment and / or care.

Traditional Penology

As an example of traditional penology we can note how different control roles are played out at the institutional level of society.

1. The state, for example, has played a traditionally reactive role in terms of both the way laws are created (largely 'after the event') and applied.

2. The police role was also traditionally interpreted as a reactive one ('catching offenders'). This involved different styles of policing, traditionally interpreted in three (idealised) forms:

Consensus policing involves formal control agents being integrated into the community they police. Their role, in effect, is one of policing with the cooperation and consent of the community.

Patrol policing involves the use of technology (fast cars, mobile communications and the like) to patrol areas in a *semi-consensual* way. There is little day-to-day interaction between the police and the community, but relations between the two are not necessarily antagonistic.

Military (or occupation) policing involves the police playing an occupying and pacifying role, one that involves imposing order on a population, usually through a physical show of strength. In this type of policing the 'consent' of the community is neither sought nor freely given.

3. The courts: In terms of traditional penological perspectives punishments given out through the courts and judicial system are:

• **Based** on what someone has done (rather than who they are, for example).

• **Objective,** in the sense they follow agreed procedures and practices.

• **Delivered** according to certain rules and tariffs. The penalty for murder in the UK, for example, is greater than the penalty for theft but both types of penalty are delivered according to a set of politically-defined criteria. Although the judiciary has a great deal of leeway, under the UK system, to set various types of penalty, in the case of something like murder, for example, there is a mandatory sentence (a minimum of 25 years in prison) and, unlike in some counties (such as China or parts of America) judges cannot deliver a death sentence for murder.

• **Impartial** – regardless of social characteristics (such as class or gender).

Despite the best efforts of some newspapers, the judiciary no-longer have the ability to sentence people to death in the UK. The last execution was in 1964.

New Penology

If the above represents a basic outline of 'traditional penology', what **Feely** and **Simon** (1992) call the:

New penology involves subtle changes of emphasis in the roles played by control agencies in contemporary societies. We can outline these in terms of three related categories:

1. **Extent of control**: **Cohen** (1979a) suggests three ways to think about how social controls have gradually been extended in modern societies:

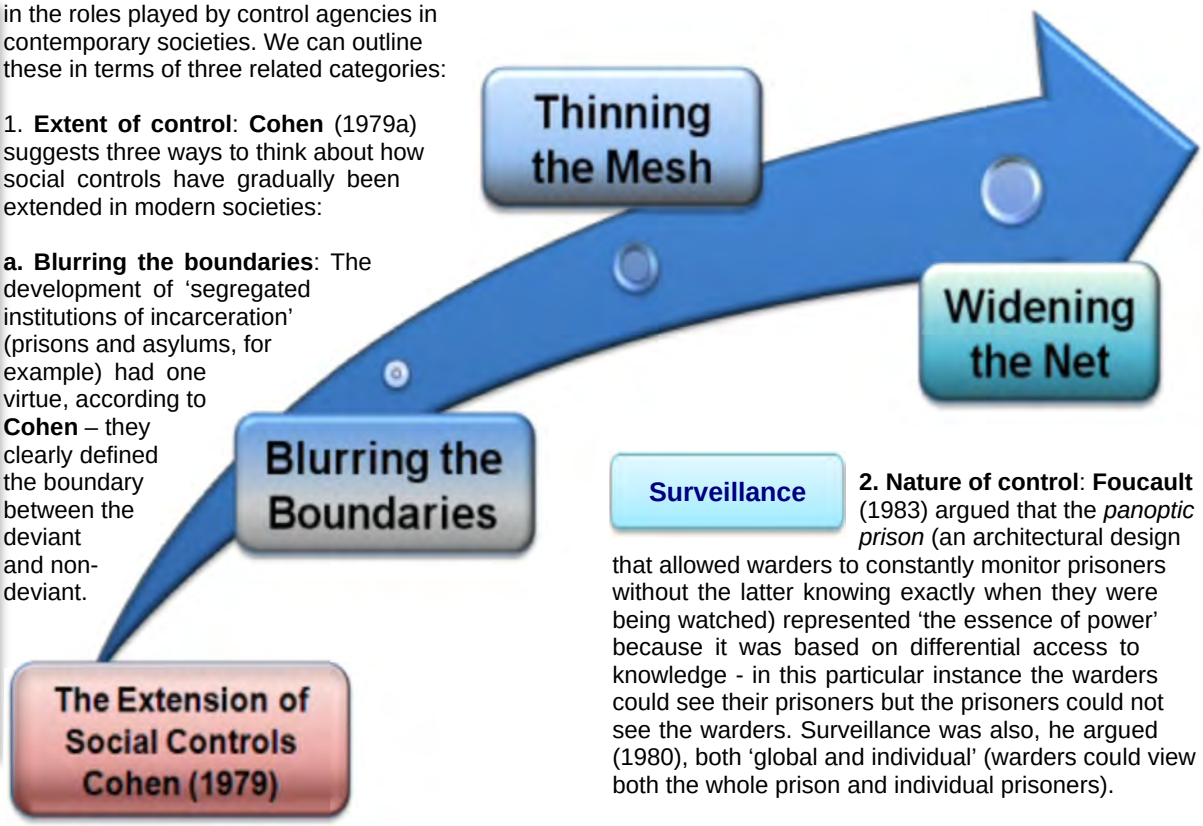
a. Blurring the boundaries: The development of 'segregated institutions of incarceration' (prisons and asylums, for example) had one virtue, according to **Cohen** – they clearly defined the boundary between the deviant and non-deviant.

Modern forms of penology blur these boundaries, through various programmes and treatments, to create a '*continuum of control*', involving a range of preventative, diagnostic and screening initiatives, from 'pre-delinquents' (those who haven't 'as yet' committed an offence) at one extreme, to high risk populations (persistent offenders) at the other.

b. Thinning the mesh involves the idea of 'interventions to combat crime' by catching deviance *before* it develops and treating offenders *before* they develop deviant careers.

We can think in terms of crime control being a net – the larger the holes, the more fish (deviants) escape; by making the holes smaller (thinning the mesh), more people are brought into the overall crime control programme. One effect of this is to:

c. Widen the net by increasing the total number of people processed through various programmes (including prison). New forms of offence and the increased application of current laws also draw more and more people into the social control net.



Surveillance

2. Nature of control: **Foucault** (1983) argued that the *panoptic prison* (an architectural design that allowed warders to constantly monitor prisoners without the latter knowing exactly when they were being watched) represented 'the essence of power' because it was based on differential access to knowledge - in this particular instance the warders could see their prisoners but the prisoners could not see the warders. Surveillance was also, he argued (1980), both 'global and individual' (warders could view both the whole prison and individual prisoners).

The "panopticon prison" - originally the idea of Bentham in 1887 - describes a circular building with a central tower. Each glass-fronted cell faces the inside of the circle and can be seen from the central tower.

Shearing and **Stenning** (1985) develop this idea in the context of the kind of processes described by **Cohen** when they describe postmodern forms of surveillance in terms of:

Disneyfication: Disney World, they argue, is a clever system of social control (what you can do, where you can do it), designed to keep people moving through the theme park without an awareness of being controlled. Control, in this respect, is disguised as being 'for the safety of the consumer'. In other words, controls in postmodern society, like those in Disney World, are:

• **Pervasive** – covering all areas of life.

• **Invisible** – there is little awareness of being controlled.

• **Embedded** – in 'other, less alarming, structures' (such as safety issues).

• **Seamless –** they have no beginning or end.

Shearing and **Stenning** argue that this creates a situation where control is *apparently consensual* because people willingly participate in their own control (as with, for example, the use of CCTV cameras in shops and arcades). This type ofsurveillance is, they argue, indicative of:

3. **Changes in control** expressed, on one level, by *proactive* procedures designed to prevent crime by taking action *before* an offence is committed, which leads **Feely** and **Simon** (1992) to suggest another level, the idea of:

'At risk' populations – people who, on the basis of known probabilities, are the most likely to commit offences 'at some time in the future'.

The development of computer technology and databases has made it easier for social control agencies (such as the police, social workers and teachers) to gather, store and cross-reference data on individuals. Variable analysis can then be used to identify those individuals and social groups who are most "at risk" of committing crimes at some point in the future. As the head of the Metropolitan Police's violent crime directorate Commander Mark **Simmons** argues, computer databases are "a powerful tool in the long-term struggle to counter youth violence…The principle is about sharing information with other agencies so we get a picture of the circumstances surrounding a young person". In London alone, for example, the number of "at risk" children currently being identified amounts to upwards of 7,0000 per week.

More-recently, however, the concept of "at risk populations" has itself been widened, as the example of contemporary (2009) moral panics about knife crime suggests. Here the concept of "at risk" itself has been subtly widened and changed to mean not just identifying those who, for whatever reason, carry knives - "A lot of the stuff we are doing around knife crime is enforcement and dealing with it once it has manifested" – but also to identify those who are "at risk" of carrying knives. As Commander Simmons eloquently puts it "We are also trying to get upstream in the longer term…to identify people at risk early on, so potentially it is very useful".

The objective here, therefore, is to take preventative steps (or "interventions" if you prefer) to stop these identified individuals embarking on a deviant career – in some cases before any evidence of crime has been established. This type of development suggests that **Cohen's** (1979b) arguments have some application and validity here.

Economic Approaches

This position, **Feely** and **Simon** argue, represents a 'new discourse' surrounding how we view crime, one that replaces 'traditional' moral or medical descriptions of the individual with an:

Actuarial Approach

This approach involves probabilistic calculations and statistical distributions applied to populations' (actuaries calculate things like 'early death' probabilities for life insurance companies – they mathematically calculate levels of *risk*). This 'economic approach' to crime and social control involves:

• **Identifying** and **managing** 'unruly groups' with high probabilities of criminal involvement.

• **'Low-cost'** forms of control (such as electronic tagging).

• **Managing** criminal activity through risk assessments (identifying possible situations and areas that require additional surveillance or police resources).

• **Resource targeting**: Some groups, such as young, working-class men, are statistically more likely to offend than others, and by concentrating police resources in the areas where these groups live, offending can be reduced.

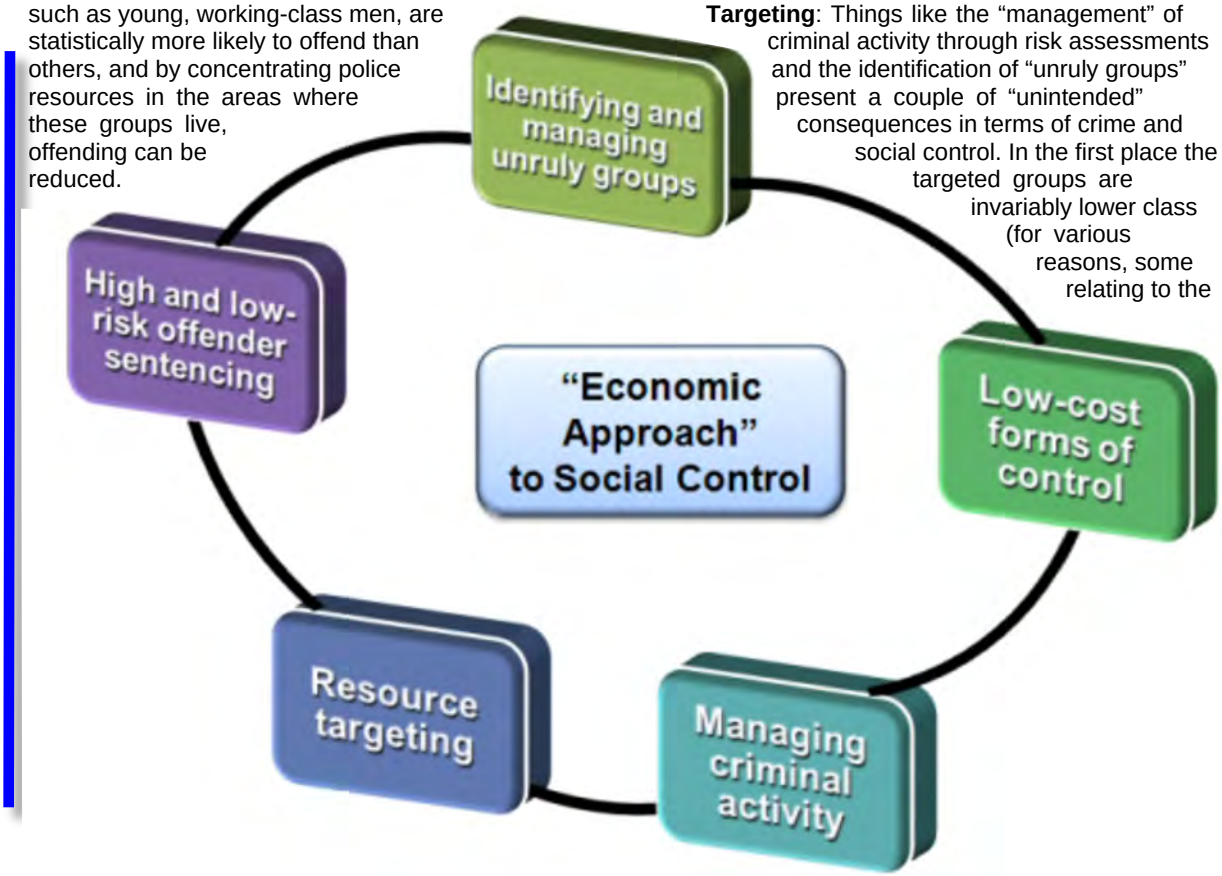
• **Sentencing according to risk**: Incarceration in prisons doesn't reform offenders, but when people are in prison they can't commit further crimes. Rather than sentencing offenders for what they've done, therefore, sentencing should reflect the 'risk of reoffending'; habitual offenders, a high-risk category, should be given longer sentences than low-risk offenders.

Evaluation

Offender profiling: A major problem here, according to **Dabney** et al (2006), is that although there is nothing particularly wrong, in itself, with using "past experiences and information about known offenders to identify behavioural and demographic correlates that can then be applied to a given population of offences or offenders" the reliability and validity of the process rests on the assumption that such data are free of bias**.** Drawing data from "an observational study of shoplifting…to assess this assumption systematically" **Dabney et al** concluded that "trained observers" tended to over-sample shoppers on the basis of race, gender, and perceived age, thus misrepresenting these factors as predictors of shoplifting behaviour".

In other words, although this kind of actuarial approach to crime has the appearance of objectivity - in terms of the data that are collected and used to create offender profiles and predictions about future behaviour - this may not, in reality, be the case. The data runs the risk, in short. of reflecting the prejudices and assumptions of those who collect it. If this is the case in terms of "trained workers" how reliable and valid is data likely to be when drawn from "untrained workers" (such as police officers, social workers and teachers)?

Targeting: Things like the "management" of criminal activity through risk assessments and the identification of "unruly groups" present a couple of "unintended" consequences in terms of crime and social control. In the first place the targeted groups are invariably lower class (for various reasons, some relating to the



type of criminal activity that is policed - such as low-level opportunistic crimes, which is far easier to "target" and "manage" than more sophisticated forms of crime - and some relating to the power of various social groups to resist "crime management").

Secondly, the economic management of crime becomes an exercise in its own justification. That is, where the "success" of these strategies is measured in terms of the numbers prosecuted, imprisoned and so forth the targeting of certain groups and particular types of crime will result in higher levels of prosecution – a "result" that justifies the targeting. The problem here, however, is that the outcome is itself a product of the process – in basic terms, the closer you look at people's behaviour the more evidence of "crime" you will find (something that relates to the idea of the "**Iceberg effect**" or dark-figure of crime – far more crimes are committed in our society than are actually prosecuted. The more you look for these crimes the more you find and the greater the number drawn into the criminal justice system).

Definitions of "crime" become blurred – people are brought into the criminal justice system more for what they "might do" at some point in the future than what they actually do. There are two basic problems here. Firstly, where does this process end, in terms of controls on behaviour (the ultimate logic of this process is that "everyone" is "at risk" of committing crimes and, in consequence, should everyone's behaviour be excessively policed "just in case"?)?

Secondly, where decisions about criminalising individuals are based on the assessments of (middle class) professionals we reach a situation where the lower classes are effectively policed and criminalised on the basis of who they are (their social class or gender) than what they have actually done.

Sentencing: One obvious problem with sentencing people on the basis of the "risk of reoffending" rather than on the basis of the crimes they've actually committed runs the risk of punishing persistent, minor, offenders more than serious occasional offenders.

We can complete this section by looking at a couple of different theories of crime and deviance that illustrate the relationship between power and social control. The first type (**administrative criminology** and **New Right realism**) is related to *ecological theories,* while the second (**New Left realism**) has a connection to the strain and subcultural theories we outlined earlier.

Administrative Criminology

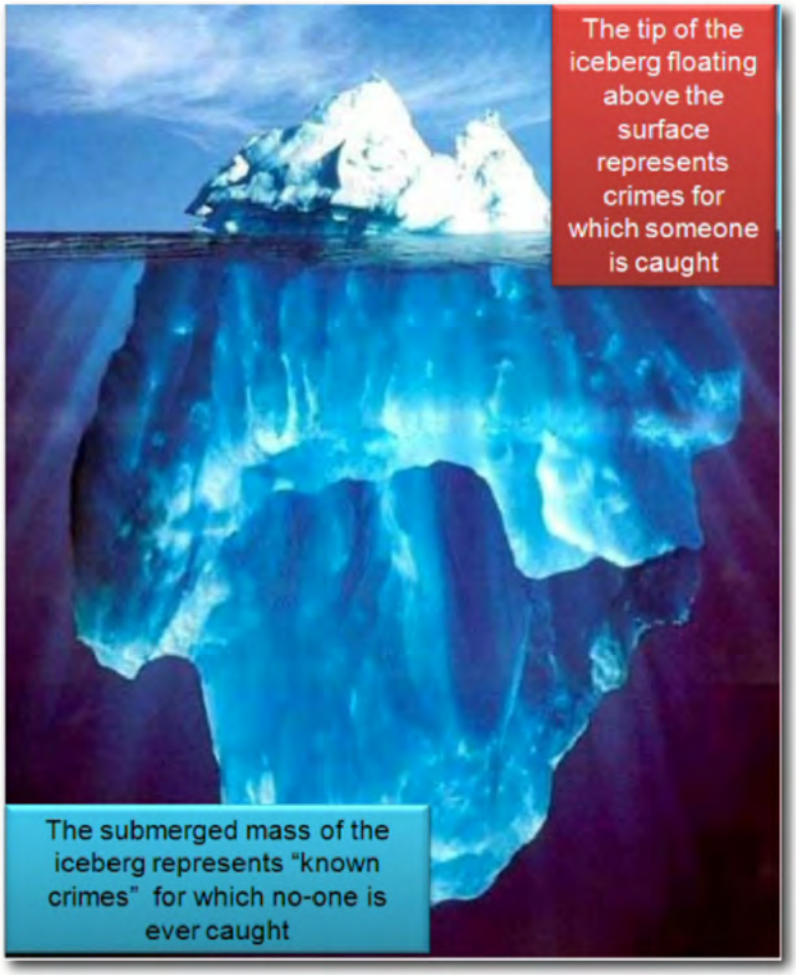
This is an umbrella term for a range of theories that draw on *ecological* ideas about people's relationship to their immediate environment and its impact on their behaviour. Although there are a number of different strands to this form of analysis, we can note that, as with its *human ecology* predecessor, administrative criminology focuses on the relationship between two areas, cultural and physical environments.

Cultural Environment

This focuses on the development of general theoretical ideas about the 'nature of criminal behaviour' in terms of thinking about *why* people offend (a theoretical analysis of crime and its causes) and *how* to prevent offending (a practical analysis that forms the basis of the type of *situational analysis* of crime prevention discussed below). In this respect, **Clarke** (1980) argues that crime theory should focus on a:

Realistic approach to crime prevention and management that *rejects* traditional ways of viewing criminal behaviour as:

Dispositional: Crime has traditionally, according to **Clarke**, been theorised in terms of 'criminal dispositions'; the idea, in short, that some people are predisposed to crime for biogenetic, psychological or sociological reasons (boredom, poverty, social exclusion and the like).



The Iceberg Effect

Evaluation

These ideas have been questioned in various ways.

Genetic predispositional theories, for example, ignore the weight of evidence suggesting that the behaviour of offenders changes over time. Most crime in the UK is committed by young males, which suggests that, as they get older and take on a range of personal and family commitments, their behaviour is modified by social factors.

Sociological explanations focusing on areas like poverty as 'causes of crime' are also questioned because people from similar social environments behave in different ways – some choose to offend whereas others do not. **Clarke** argues, therefore, that theoretical difficulties can be avoided by seeing crime "…as the outcome of immediate choices and decisions made by the offender" – something that leads neatly into a range of 'preventative options' to either limit the possible choices available to 'potential offenders' or make the consequences of 'choosing to offend' outweigh the possible benefits.

Part of the 'realistic approach' advocated by writers such as **Clarke** stems from the observation that 'crime' is *not* an:

Homogeneous category: Criminal behaviour comes in many shapes and sizes – property theft, for example, is very different to rape – and it makes little sense to assume that just because they share a common label (*crime*) they have similar causes or outcomes. **Clarke** argues that just as we don't view 'illness' in an *undifferentiated* way (a doctor would see a heart attack and a cold as having different causalities), we should similarly see crime as being *differentiated*. If this is the case, different types of crime respond to different forms of 'treatment'. In particular, there are two basic characteristics of crimes, both of which fit neatly with the idea of *rational choice,* that make them amenable to various forms of prevention:

Opportunity: The majority of crimes in our society are those of *opportunity* – as **Felson** and **Clarke** (1998) argue, 'no crime can occur without the physical opportunities to carry it out' – and *opportunism*. In other words, many crimes are unplanned; offenders don't particularly look to commit crimes, but if an opportunity occurs (a purse left unattended, for example) they may be tempted to offend if the chances of being detected are less than the likely benefits.

The explosion in mobile phone ownership has opened up a whole new world of opportunistic crime...

Territoriality: Most crime, according to **Wiles** and **Costello** (2000), is *local* to the offender. Their research showed the 'average distance travelled to commit domestic burglary was 1.8 miles', which confirmed **Forrester et al.'s** (1988) research into patterns of burglary in Rochdale.

These ideas are linked, within **administrative criminology**, in two ways:

First, offences committed *outside* the offender's local area are mainly related, as **Wiles** and **Costello** argue, to opportunities presenting themselves 'during normal routines', rather than being consciously planned. Second, if measures can be taken to reduce opportunities for crime in a particular area, crime rates will fall, since the denial of opportunity, allied to territoriality, means the majority of crimes will *not* be *displaced* to other areas (there are exceptions – activities like drug smuggling and prostitution, for example, are sensitive to displacement).

Physical Environment

Where administrative criminology rejects the idea that there is anything unique about offenders – just about anyone, given the right conditions, is capable of offending – crime can be limited by a variety of measures designed to make it more difficult, less attractive and ultimately more costly for the potential offender. Examples of crime prevention strategies include:

Crime awareness – making people more aware of opportunities for (mainly low level) crime. Advertising campaigns, for example, focus attention on simple ways people can protect their property ('Lock It or Lose It') or be more aware of crime ('Look Out – there's a thief about').

Community involvement includes initiatives to promote both 'self-policing' strategies such as Neighbourhood Watch or Crimestoppers (providing cash rewards to people for informing on offenders) and closer relations between the police and the community. The development of community support officers in the 1990s was designed to help the police develop community linkages (although **Gilling** (1999) has doubted their effectiveness in this role).

Community Support Officers - like real police officers, only different.

Built environment: A central (ecological) idea behind administrative criminology is the management of physical space, examples of which we noted earlier in **Wilcox** and **Augustine's** (2001) ideas about how people think about and relate to their physical environment (levels of street lighting, for example). A significant idea here is:

Defensible space, which involves 'structuring the physical layout of communities to allow residents to control the areas around their homes' (**Newman**, 1996). The objective here is 'to bring an environment under the control of its residents' using a mix of 'real and symbolic barriers, strongly defined areas of influence, and improved opportunities for surveillance'. 'Alleygate' projects, for example, have been developed around the UK as a means of limiting access to 'outsiders' on housing estates – gates prevent potential offenders both gaining access to houses and making their escape through a maze of alleyways. A further example is the use of CCTV surveillance.

"Alleygate" projects have increased in popularity in recent years as an effective way of "designing out crime"

On another level (quite literally) writers such as **Coleman** (1985) have criticised the replacement of 'the traditional street of houses-with-gardens by estates of flats'. The result, she argues, was not the 'instant communities' envisaged by government planners, but rather the reverse – 'problem estates'. She identified two main reasons for this:

1. Lack of community ownership of 'common space' (no one took responsibility for corridors, for example) and:

2. Freedom: The ability of non-residents to move freely – and anonymously – through blocks of flats (something Alleygate projects seek to prevent).

In terms of the impact of the physical environment on crime (and crime prevention) **Power** and **Tunstall's** (1995) longitudinal study of 'twenty of the most unpopular council estates in the country' confirms that changes suggested by writers such as **Newman** and **Coleman** do have the effect of reducing many forms of offending behaviour.

New Right Realism

Administrative criminology is, in some ways, related to a further general variation on **ecological theories**, namely **New Right** R**ealism**, a perspective that has a number of core themes:

Rational choice: This involves a general 'cost/benefit' explanation which we have outlined previously. Although some of the cruder applications of this concept suggest individuals are fundamentally *rational* in their behaviour (people *always* weigh the likely costs of crime against possible benefits), **Wilson** (1983) notes that, at the:

Individual level, this is not always possible or likely. Try calculating, for example, *your* chances of being arrested should you decide to embark on a career of crime and it's probable you'll have little idea what these chances might be, which suggests rational choice can operate only at a:

General level, where beliefs about arrest chances are propagated through the media, family and peer group – people whom, **Wilson** suggests, 'supply a *crudely accurate* estimate of the current risks of arrest, prosecution, and sentencing'. In this situation – where knowledge is, at best, rudimentary – potential offenders are unlikely to be deterred by things like length and type of possible punishment; they are, however, likely to have a good working knowledge of:

Situational variables: That is, the best places and times to commit crimes with the least possible chances of being detected or caught. **Wiles** and **Costello's** (2000) research supports this idea when they note *convicted offenders* gave three main reasons for their choice of place to burgle:

1. Poor security
2. Unoccupied
3. Isolated / quiet.

Tower blocks offer a perfect environment for crime - high density occupation, easy access and plentiful escape routes, public corridors, anonymity...

Risk

This is a key idea here since, for **Wilson**, the way to combat crime is to increase the risk for potential offenders, something related to ideas about **deterrence**. If a community puts in place measures to deter crime, the associated risks rise. These measures are many and varied, but all ultimately devolve to another core idea, the importance of:

Community and **informal social control**, involving a number of crime prevention strategies:

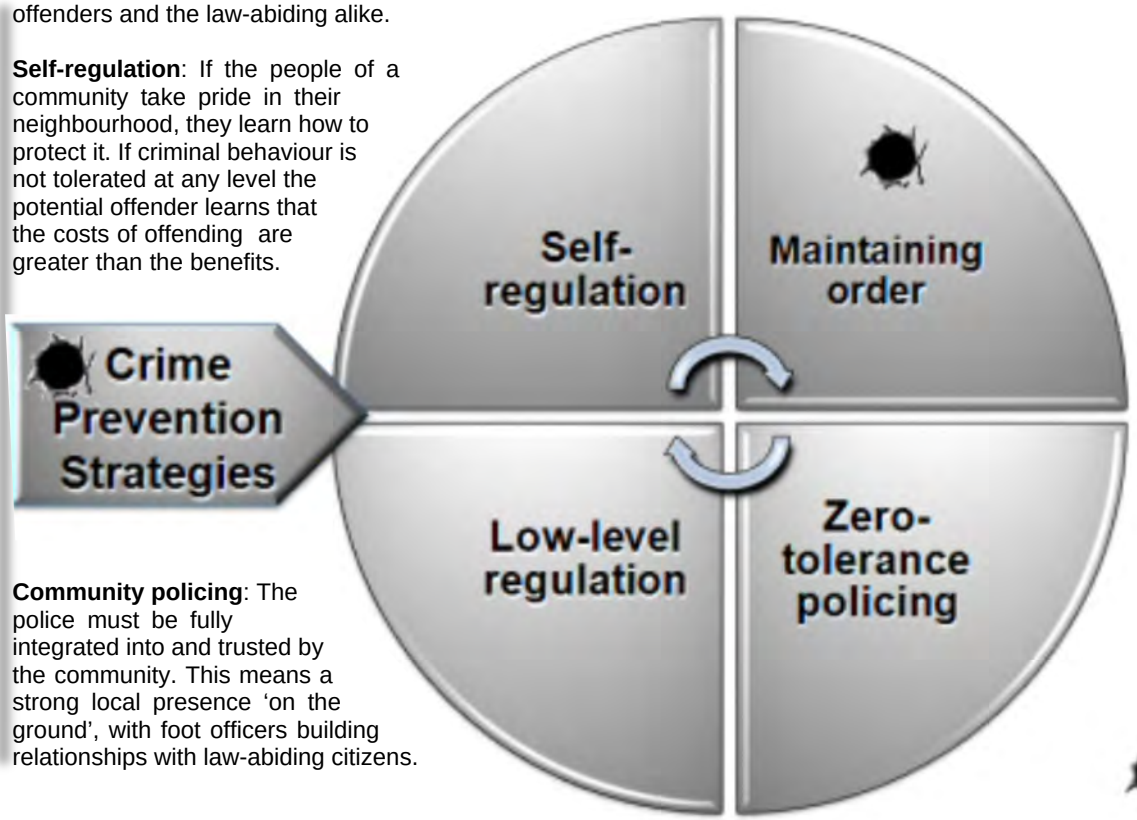
Maintaining order: Although not the first to suggest it, **Wilson** (1982) observed the *broken window* effect. If a neighbourhood is allowed to physically deteriorate it becomes a breeding ground for unchecked criminal activities. This follows because urban decay indicates the breakdown of *informal social controls* that keep crime in check – "One unrepaired broken window is a signal that no one cares". This, in turn, is related to the:

Fear of crime within a community. As **Kleiman** (2000) argues, where people fear crime they take steps to avoid it – to the detriment of community life (the streets, for example, become the preserve of lawbreakers).

Low-level regulation involves maintaining 'community defences' against non-conformity. These include things like community surveillance, such as Neighbourhood Watch in the UK, or:

Zero-tolerance policing: Every deviant or illegal act, no matter how trivial, needs to be acted on by the police and community because it sets clear behavioural markers and boundaries for potential offenders and the law-abiding alike.

Self-regulation: If the people of a community take pride in their neighbourhood, they learn how to protect it. If criminal behaviour is not tolerated at any level the potential offender learns that the costs of offending are greater than the benefits.



Community policing: The police must be fully integrated into and trusted by the community. This means a strong local presence 'on the ground', with foot officers building relationships with law-abiding citizens.

"Broken windows" have become a modern metaphor for working class crime and deviance (it should really be a similie, but it wasn't alliterative enough).

Evaluation

Administrative criminology and New Right realism share some related problems:

Displacement: While some writers (**Town**, 2001) suggest measures to combat crime (such as CCTV) do *not* result in offenders moving their activities to areas where such measures are absent. **Osborn** and **Shaftoe** (1995) argue that the evidence is not clear cut; improvements in crime rates tend to be:

• **Ineffective** – physical measures reduce the *fear* of crime rather than crime itself – and

• **Misplaced** – concentrating on areas like business and property thefts rather than areas, such as violence, that cause greater concern.

Interventions: **Osborn** and **Shaftoe** (1995) conclude that policy interventions in 'traditional areas of concern' – relieving poverty, eliminating economic inequality and supporting family life – give more effective *long-term* returns in terms of reducing crime and offending.

Self-fulfilling prophecies: Strategies such as *criminal profiling* (where the police build up a picture of *typical criminals*) result in some groups and individuals being targeted as 'potential criminals'. When the police target such groups they discover more crime (especially if a *zero tolerance* policy is being pursued), which confirms' their initial profiling and feeds into continued profiling.

New Left Realism

New Left Realism uses a three-cornered approach to understand deviant behaviour and its relationship to social control. As **Young** (2003) puts it: 'The job of realism is to tackle all three sides of the deviancy process.' In other words, where *administrative criminology*, for example, focuses on one or other of these areas, left realism focuses on both the content of each area and, more importantly perhaps, the relationship and *interaction* between them.

From this viewpoint explanations for crime and deviance have to be constructed in the light of the relationship between all three elements in the triangle – offenders, victims and social; control agencies. It is not enough simply to concentrate on one element at the expense of the others since it is only through an understanding of how each impacts on the other that we can understand the nature of crime and deviance.

This represents a 'realistic approach' in two senses:

First, 'the problem of crime' is not an academic one in that, to use **Mills'** (1959) formulation, crime is both a:

• **Private problem**, in the sense of its social and psychological effects on victims, and a

• **Public issue, in the sense of the cultural impact it has on the quality of peoples' lives and experiences.**

Second, it addresses the *multidimensional nature* of crime in terms of the relationship between *offender*, *victim* and *social reaction* – something we can understand more easily by considering each dimension in turn.

1. Offender profiles suggest the majority of crime in our society is committed by young, working-class males. Although there may be areas of *overrepresentation* (black youths, for example, figure disproportionately in official crime statistics) and *under-representation* (in terms of the extent of middle-class or female criminality, for example), the statistical picture is, for left realists, *broadly accurate* – there is not, for example, a vast reservoir of undetected 'crimes of the elderly'.

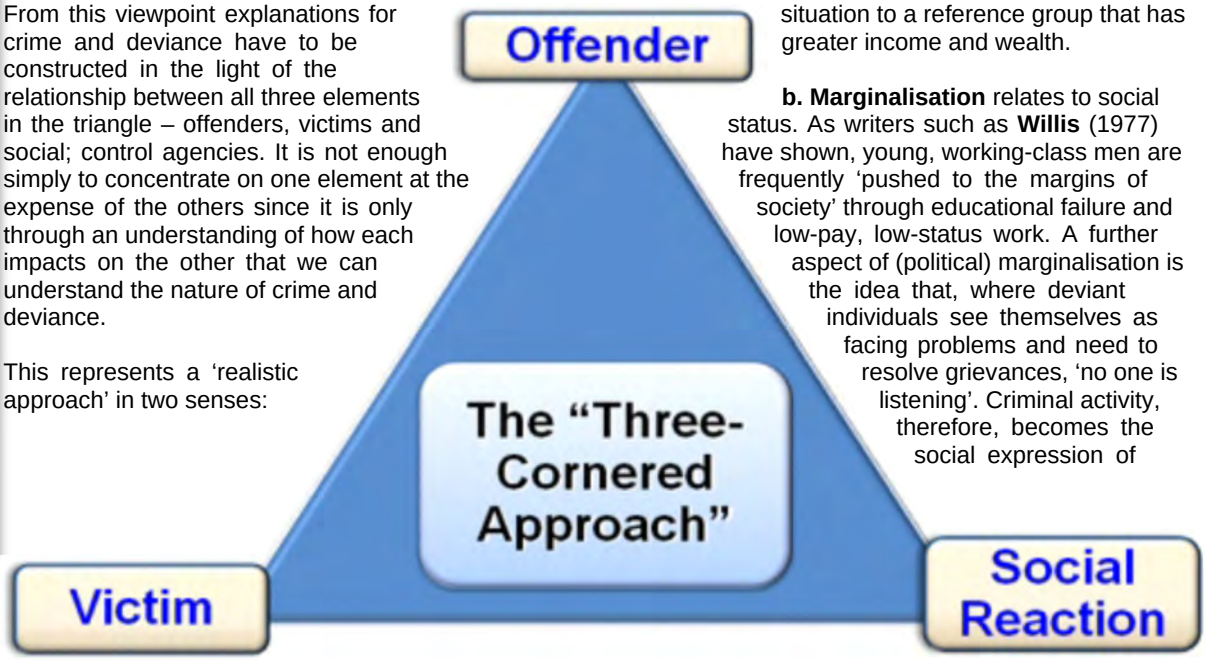
In terms of explaining crime, **Lea** and **Young** (1984) suggest that *three related factors* explain why people choose or reject criminal behaviour:

a. Relative deprivation: Concepts like poverty and wealth are subjective categories *relative* to what someone feels they should have when compared with others (a *reference group* such as 'society', peers or whatever). **Lea** and **Young** use this concept for two Reasons:

• **Deprivation** alone cannot 'cause criminality'; many poor people do not commit crimes.

• **Relativity** allows them to include the 'well-off ' or affluent in any explanation of offending. An *objectively* rich individual may, for example, feel *relatively deprived* when they compare their situation to a reference group that has greater income and wealth.

b. Marginalisation relates to social status. As writers such as **Willis** (1977) have shown, young, working-class men are frequently 'pushed to the margins of society' through educational failure and low-pay, low-status work. A further aspect of (political) marginalisation is the idea that, where deviant individuals see themselves as facing problems and need to resolve grievances, 'no one is listening'. Criminal activity, therefore, becomes the social expression of



marginalisation, especially when it combines with:

c. Subculture (although the concept of *neotribes* would probably fit just as neatly – loose conglomerations of people who have something in common). The ability to form and move around in groups is seen as a *collective response* to a particular social situation. In this instance, the form of the subcultural/tribal group is determined by feelings of *relative deprivation* and *marginalisation*. Specific subcultural values, in this respect, are not independent of the culture in which they arise and, for **Lea** and **Young**, it is precisely because working-class youths, for example, *accept* the general values of capitalist society that they indulge in criminal behaviour – the pursuit of desired ends by illegitimate means.

An important feature of Left Realism is its ability to explain middle and upper class "crimes of the powerful" - not just the "crimes of the powerless".

Once again, the strength of this general theory is that 'subcultural-type groupings' are not restricted to the young and the working class – middle-class company directors who deal illegally in shares or fix prices to defraud the public may have their behaviour supported by a (sub)culture that sees such behaviour as permissible.

2. Victim profiles: As **Burke** (1999) notes, left realism tries to bring *victims* into the picture in a number of ways:

Problematising crime: In this respect **Burke** notes 'crime is a problem for ordinary people that must be addressed' by criminologists, especially the 'plight of working class victims of predatory crime' whose views have been variously *ignored* (by radical criminologists, for example) or *marginalised* (by administrative criminology and the New Right). In this respect, left realists argue the:

Lived experiences of crime victims (or those who live in high-crime areas) need to be considered and addressed. In other words, we need to understand how 'fear of crime', for example, is related to 'lived crime rates'. That is, how the experience of crime is *localised* in the sense of affecting different individuals and groups in different ways – the chances of being a victim differ in terms of factors such as class, age, gender, ethnicity and region.

As **Burke** notes, official crime statistics suggest women are less likely to be murdered than men, but *black* women have a greater chance of being murdered than *white* men. Victim impact is similarly *fragmented*; men tend to feel anger, whereas women are more likely to report shock and fear, and such impact, **Burke** suggests, 'cannot be measured in absolute terms: £50 from a middle class home will have less effect than the same sum stolen from a poor household'. In addition, someone living on a *council* estate is more likely to experience crime than someone who owns a *country* estate, and, in a similar way to their New Right counterparts, left realists argue that part of the process of understanding and combating the effects of crime is to work with local communities to build safer environments.

Relationships: Many forms of criminology, as we've suggested, *overdetermine* the relationship between offender and victim. In other words, the two are seen as practically, and therefore theoretically, distinct and separate. Some forms of criminology *under-determine* the relationship; everyone is seen as a 'potential offender', an idea reflected in increasingly restrictive forms of social control and surveillance in the school, workplace and community. For left realists the offender–victim relationship, for many types of everyday crime, is more complex in two ways:

a. Personal: Offenders may be well known to their victims.

b. Cultural: People may be, at different times, both offenders *and* victims.

The ideas we've just noted concerning offenders and victims impact on the third corner of the left realist approach in terms of:

3. Social reactions: Unlike Interactionist sociology, which has been concerned largely with demonstrating how different forms of public reaction contribute to the 'problem of crime', left realism focuses on how different types of social relationship (between police and public, offender and victim, and so forth) create different social reactions and, more importantly, different (policy) solutions to the problem of crime.

Young (1997) sketches the broad relationships involved in the understanding of social reactions in terms of what he calls the 'square of crime'. In this respect, social reactions are mediated through a range of different reciprocal relationships, such as that between the police and offenders – how, for example, the police view 'potential and actual offenders' and, of course, the reverse view, how potential offenders view their relationship with control agencies. This general relationship, and different levels of social reaction, is:

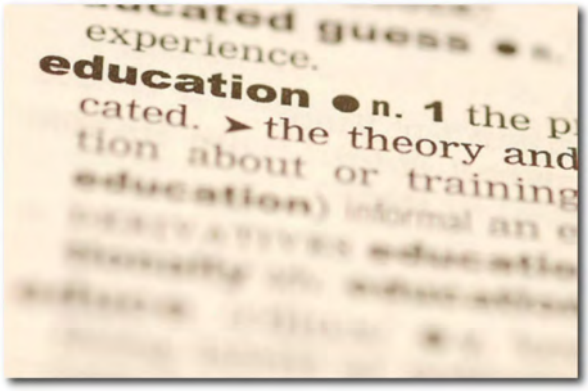
Multidimensional, in the sense that the relationship between formal control agencies and offenders will be mediated further by things like how the general public (informal control agencies) views both offenders and their victims. For example, where an offender or victim can't be easily identified, public reactions may be muted (or uncooperative), which, in turn, may hinder formal police attempts to control a particular type of offending (as may occur with complicated and opaque forms of white-collar/business crime). Similarly, in relation to 'victimless crimes' (such as illegal drug use) 'offender' and 'victim' may be the same person.

For left realism, therefore, policy solutions to crime are framed in terms of different 'forms and points of intervention' in the deviancy creation process, and such interventions occur at all levels of society. For **Young** (1997), therefore, the concept of social reaction involves reacting to 'crime' as a general behavioural category rather than simply reacting to criminal behaviour at particular moments (such as when a crime is committed).

Reactions, therefore, shouldn't just focus on what to do *after* an offence; rather, *interventions* (or acting prior to an offence) need to occur at all levels of society:

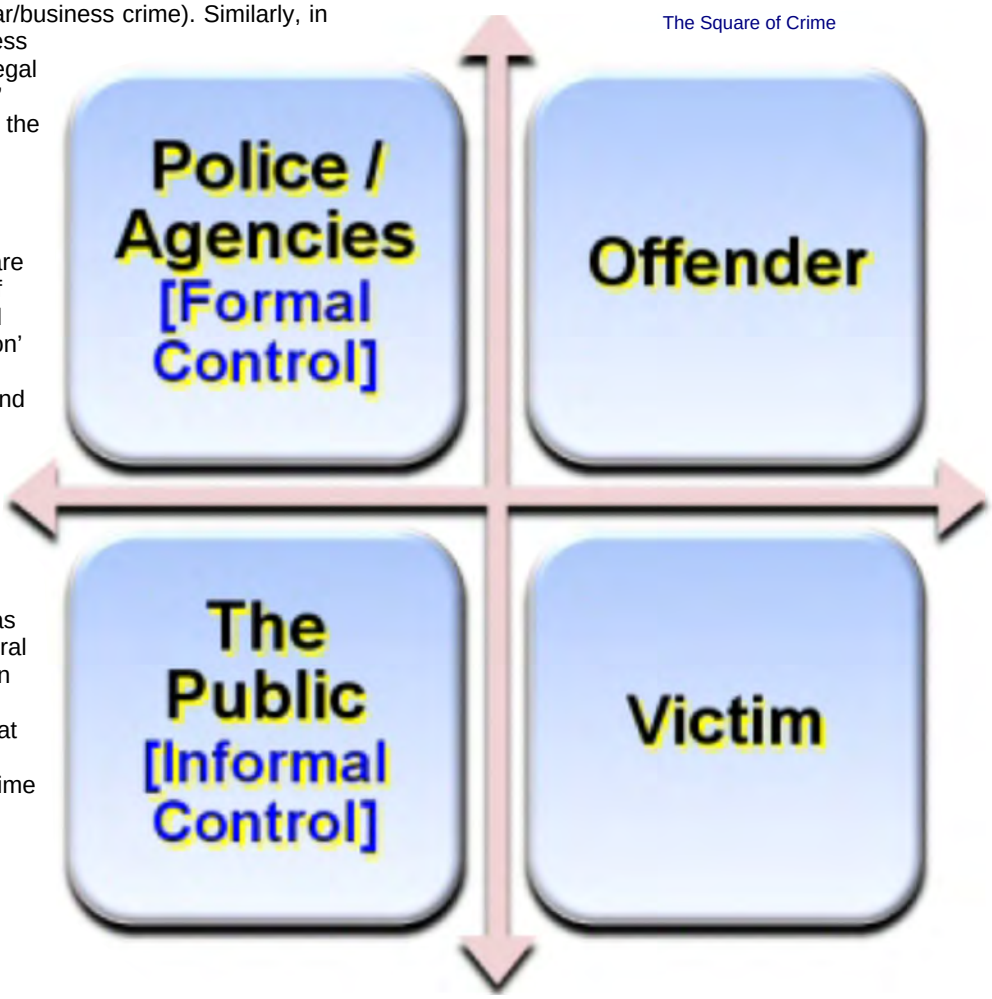
• **Cultural/ideological** in terms of improving our understanding of the causes of offending, the role and relationship of the police and public, and so forth.

• **Economic** in terms of things like educational provision and prospects, support for families, job creation and training.



• **Political** in terms of both *punitive* aspects of control (a variety of ways of dealing with different offenders) and the general climate within which offenders and victims operate (levels of tolerance over crime, for example).

The Square of Crime



Although we've isolated these ideas for theoretical convenience, they are, of course, interrelated; economic interventions (such as providing education and training) are mediated through ideological interventions (how we view different types of offender and victim, for example) and political interventions (the practical measures developed to control crime, for instance).

Evaluation

Left realism suggests the relationship between crime, deviance and social control is a complex one that, in consequence, requires complex theorising and solutions. The problem of crime is not one (as history shows) that can be solved by relatively simplistic 'solutions' (the idea that imprisonment is both appropriate for all forms of crime and that 'it works' as a deterrent rather than simply as a form of punishment, for example). 'Solutions to crime' require complex analyses that involve thinking about the genesis of deviant behaviour in terms of offenders – the social and psychological conditions that give rise to such behaviour – and control agencies (the role of the public, police and courts, etc.).We can, however, identify two problematic areas:

Operationalisation: The complexity of the left realist position makes it difficult to operationalise in its totality, and although complexity is not a criticism, it does mean that certain forms of intervention are more likely to be pursued than others. These include, for example, the types of intervention we've previously discussed in relation to both administrative criminology and New Right realism, which in some circumstances makes it practically impossible to disentangle these different types of theory. On a practical level it's difficult to see how specific concepts like relative deprivation and political marginalisation can be measured, and if we can't quantify something like 'marginalisation', how do we know it has occurred for an offender?

Imprisonment - is it part of the solution to crime - or part of

Common sense: **Mugford** and **O'Malley** (1990) argue that a significant problem with left realism is the 'overdetermination of the real'; in other words, it makes what people *believe* about crime (in terms of its causes and explanations) a central theoretical consideration.

The experiences of 'ordinary people', in this respect, are considered 'more real' than explanations produced by social scientists, and this leads to the idea that the police concentrate on working-class forms of crime because 'that is what people want'. Although this may reflect the idea that street crime, for example, is a cause for concern for people, it neglects the idea that less visible, more subtle forms of white-collar crime may have greater long term impact on the general quality of peoples' lives.

In America, for example, Bernard **Madoff**, a former chairman of the Nasdaq stock market, was arrested and charged with fraud in January 2009. He is currently free on bail accused of effectively stealing around £30 **billion** of investors' money.

Although he may look like the kind of inoffensive, charming, guy you'd trust with your life savings "Bernie" (as he was once probably known to his many friends) managed to "lose" around £30 billion pounds of his investors' money (which is either very careless of him or the largest criminal fraud the world's ever seen...).

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