

Masculinities and crime

Early feminist approaches in criminology highlighted the neglect of women in criminological theory. At the same time they paved the way for a consideration of how masculinity could help in explaining crime. While men have written traditional criminological studies about men and (arguably) for men, few have explicitly examined the links between masculinity and crime. They have tended to concentrate on crimes committed by males and ignore crimes committed by females, but have not considered what it might be about masculinity which leads to an apparently higher crime rate.

The few studies that have made links between masculinity and crime have tended to use very simple models. Thus, Tim Newburn and Elizabeth A. Stanko (1994) argue that 'the dominant theoretical models have rarely gone beyond the simple association of masculinity with, say, machismo'.

Theorists such as Walter Miller (1962) did relate crime to a working-class, male-dominated culture of toughness, but Miller's analysis remained unsophisticated. Others, such as Lombroso and Ferrero (1958), who first published their work in the 19th century, related gender differences in crime to biological differences. However, quite apart from their other faults (see pp. 401 for a discussion), such theories completely ignore how social factors shape what it means to be thought of as a 'real man' or a 'real woman'.

Of the increasing number of attempts to discuss the relationship between criminality and masculinities, James W. Messerschmidt's study is perhaps the most influential.

James W. Messerschmidt – Masculinities and Crime

Messerschmidt (1993) notes that males commit most crimes and therefore any study of crime must include a detailed study of masculine values. He begins his analysis by criticising what he sees as the failure of previous criminology to deal with the relationship between masculinity and crime. Previous attempts to address this issue have been based either on biology or on what Messerschmidt calls **sex-role theory**, in which it is argued that male and female roles are taught in childhood and define the person's behaviour for the rest of their life.

Messerschmidt rejects both these approaches – biological accounts on the grounds that cross-cultural comparisons do not reveal any universal masculine characteristics, and sex-role theory on the grounds that it portrays men and women as being far too passive. He says, 'men and women are active agents in their social relations'. They do not simply act out the roles they have been taught, but make active decisions about how to behave as circumstances change.

Thus Messerschmidt believes that a theory explaining why men commit crimes should take account of different **masculinities** – the different ways in which people have perceived being masculine. Different conceptions of masculinity tend to lead to different social actions, in general, and different types of criminality, in particular.

Messerschmidt's approach

Messerschmidt adopts a version of Anthony Giddens's **structuration** theory (see pp. 985–7) as a theoretical approach for understanding gender and crime. Like Giddens, he believes social structures exist, but he maintains that they

only exist through structured social action. In other words, people's actions are needed to reproduce social structures. If they change the way they behave, the structures change. For example, patriarchal structures will change if men and women start behaving differently in families and sharing housework equally.

On the other hand, pre-existing structures do shape social action. For example, the relatively low wages available to most women in a gendered labour market encourage those women who are involved in partnerships with men to concentrate on domestic tasks, because their partner can earn more through paid employment.

Accomplishing masculinity

Gender is something people do, something they **accomplish**. In everyday life they try to present themselves in their interactions as adequate or successful men or women. They constantly monitor and adjust their social actions in the light of the circumstances.

Masculinity is accomplished; it is not something done to men or settled beforehand. And masculinity is never static, never a finished product. Rather, men construct masculinities in specific social situations (although not in circumstances of their own choosing); in doing so men reproduce (and sometimes change) social structures. Messerschmidt, 1993

From this viewpoint, a man chatting with his mates at a bar, a man having sex with his girlfriend, or a man playing football, are all trying to accomplish masculinity.

However, men do not all construct the same type of masculinity. An individual's situation may or may not provide easy access to dominant forms of masculinity. Some men are not in a position to accomplish certain highly valued types of masculinity and must try to find alternative ways to be real men. Messerschmidt says, 'Although masculinity is always individual and personal, specific forms of masculinity are available, encouraged, permitted, depending on one's class, race, and sexual preference.'

Hegemonic and subordinated masculinities

Following the work of Connell (see pp. 150–3), Messerschmidt divides masculinity into two main types: hegemonic and subordinated masculinities. **Hegemonic masculinities** are the dominant and most highly valued types of masculinities. **Subordinated masculinities** are less powerful and carry lower status – examples include homosexual masculinity and the masculinity of African Americans.

The nature of hegemonic masculinity varies from place to place and time to time, but it is generally based upon the subordination of women. Hegemonic men benefit from their power over women. Men with less dominant forms of masculinity may also try to get benefits from power over women, but it is less easy for them to do so.

The importance of this for crime is that criminal behaviour can be used as a resource for asserting masculinity. Indeed, Messerschmidt goes so far as to argue:

Crime by men is a form of social practice invoked as a resource, when other resources are unavailable, for accomplishing masculinity. By analysing masculinities, then, we can begin to understand the socially constructed differences among men and thus

explain why men engage in different forms of crime.
Messerschmidt, 1993

Using a wide variety of research findings, largely from other sociologists' studies, Messerschmidt explores why different groups of males turn to different types of crime in attempts to be masculine in different ways.

Masculinities and crime in youth groups

White middle-class boys tend to enjoy educational success and frequently also display some sporting prowess. In these ways they are able to demonstrate the possession of some characteristics of hegemonic masculinity. However, this is achieved at a price. Characteristics such as independence, dominance and control largely have to be given up in school. In order to achieve success, white middle-class boys are, to an extent, **emasculated** – their masculinity is undermined. They have to act in relatively subservient ways to school teachers.

However, outside school white middle-class boys try to demonstrate some of the characteristics that are repressed within school. This involves engaging in pranks, acts of vandalism, excessive drinking and minor thefts. Because of their background, these boys are usually able to evade becoming labelled as criminals by the authorities.

Such young men adopt an **accommodating masculinity** within school. This is a 'controlled, cooperative, rational gender strategy of action for institutional success'. Outside, they adopt more of an **oppositional masculinity**, which goes against certain middle-class norms but asserts some aspects of hegemonic masculinity they are denied in school.

White working-class boys also experience school as emasculating. However, they have less chance of academic success and so cannot easily access the type of masculinity based on academic success available to middle-class youth. They therefore tend to construct masculinity around the importance of physical aggression. It is important to be tough or hard and to oppose the imposition of authority by teachers and others. Theirs is an oppositional masculinity both inside and outside school. Messerschmidt quotes the 'lads' in Paul Willis's study of anti-school peer groups as an example (see pp. 668–70 for details of this study).

A third group, lower working-class boys from minority ethnic groups, have great problems finding reasonably paid, secure employment. They do not expect to be able to express their masculinity as breadwinners by holding down a steady job and supporting a family. Their parents may be too poor to buy them consumer goods with designer labels that confer status. With little chance of asserting their masculinity through success within school or work, the focus of these young men's lives is the street. They are unable to access the advantages of hegemonic masculinity through legitimate means and instead turn to violence and crime. They use violence inside and outside school to express their masculinity. They become more involved in serious property crime than white working-class youths. This at least offers some possibility of the material success associated with hegemonic masculinity.

Messerschmidt quotes a number of American studies showing how robbery is used to make the offenders feel more masculine than their victims, how gang and turf warfare is part of an attempt to assert masculine control,

and how rape is sometimes used to express control over women.

Messerschmidt describes the particularly horrific case of the 'Central Park Jogger Rape', which took place in New York in 1989. Four adolescent African Americans beat and repeatedly raped a young, white, female jogger, before dragging her unconscious to a ravine and leaving her for dead. Messerschmidt says, 'Such group rape helps to maintain and reinforce an alliance among the boys by humiliating and devaluing women, thereby strengthening the fiction of masculine power.'

Of course, men in such groups do not necessarily resort to rape. They may be able to establish their masculinity through consenting sexual conquests instead. Like their white middle-class and working-class counterparts, lower working-class, minority ethnic males 'do' masculinity within the limits of the social structures that constrain them. Their recourse to a more violent and aggressive form of masculinity reflects the 'social conditions of poverty, racism, negated future' which limit their options.

Examples of links between different types of masculinity and crime

Messerschmidt also discusses how different types of masculinity can be expressed by different adult males in a variety of contexts leading to crime.

Pimping

On the street, pimping is one way to express masculinity. Pimps usually exercise strong control over the prostitutes they 'run'. By getting the women to turn most of their earnings over to them, they can also enjoy a degree of material success. They have more chance of expressing their masculinity in this way than by struggling to find and keep low-paid work. Furthermore, they can assert their masculinity by adopting 'the cool pose of the badass', which involves 'use of "poses" and "postures" that connote control, toughness and detachment'.

Pimps are loud and flamboyant and display their success through using luxury consumer goods. For black pimps, this is a way 'to transcend class and race domination', because they can assert their ability to earn money through work, and their power to exercise authority and control. However, their lifestyle and flashy displays are despised by more successful, white middle-class men, and, in effect, they only end up confirming their status as inferior men.

White-collar crime

To achieve success in large-scale corporations, managers must do whatever is necessary to make their company profitable. In this sort of masculine culture it is not surprising that corporate and white-collar crimes are accepted, even encouraged, when they are the only way to guarantee profits. Messerschmidt quotes an engineer at Ford explaining why nobody questioned the continued production of the Pinto model in the USA. This car was prone to bursting into flames if it was in a rear-end collision, and a number of people died as a result, but it continued in production. The engineer explained that safety 'didn't sell', and that anyone questioning the production of the Pinto would, quite simply, have been sacked.

Domestic violence

The family is another area where men express different types of masculinity and dominance over women.

Messerschmidt argues that relatively powerless men use wife-beating, violent rape and even murder to reassert masculine control when women threaten their masculinity. Thus, much violence occurs when the man believes that his wife or children have not carried out their duties, obeyed his orders, or shown him adequate respect.

Evaluation of Messerschmidt

Messerschmidt's work provides some valuable insights into the relationship between masculinity and crime. It uses a sophisticated theoretical approach that allows for the existence of different types of masculinity and for the way that these masculinities can change. It makes plausible attempts to link different types of crime to different types of masculinity and it appears to provide a basis for explaining why men are more criminal than women.

Tony Jefferson (1997) describes Messerschmidt's work as 'a brave attempt'. However, Jefferson criticises Messerschmidt's work on a number of grounds. He argues that Messerschmidt fails to explain why particular individuals commit crimes rather than others. For example, only a small minority of African American men carry out rapes.

Other criticisms can also be made. Messerschmidt seems to advance rather stereotypical and negative views of men in general, and of working-class and non-white men in particular. There is no room in his book for men who might commit politically motivated crimes in a fight against an oppressive government, and little for men who reject the idea that being a real man involves asserting control over women.

Other writers, such as Bob Connell (1995) (see pp. 150–3), do not always portray men in such a negative light. Furthermore, perhaps Messerschmidt exaggerates the importance of masculinity in the explanation of crime. If Messerschmidt is to be believed, then nearly all crimes committed by men are an expression of their masculinity. While Messerschmidt may be right that it is difficult to understand male crime without reference to masculinities, he may be wrong to assume that it can be explained by this alone.

Masculinity and postmodernity

Messerschmidt's discussion of masculinity and crime falls, broadly speaking, within the range of theories that see society through the lens of late or high modernity. Many of these theories, including that of Messerschmidt, take Giddens's work as their starting point. However, postmodern theorists also explore gender identity and crime. One of the better-known examples of this approach is the work of Richard Collier.

Richard Collier – Masculinities, Crime and Criminology

Although Collier (1998) generally sees the work of Messerschmidt as an advance upon previous work in this area, he is still critical of aspects of Messerschmidt's approach.

First, Collier argues that the idea of hegemonic masculinity is of limited usefulness. To Collier, it is simply a list of traits that are not exclusive to men. Women can possess the same traits. Furthermore, the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity are used to explain a vast range of crimes, from burglary, rape and sexual abuse to traffic offences and corporate crime. Collier says: 'To account for

such a diversity is, clearly, asking a great deal of the concept of masculinity.'

Second, Collier claims that the use of the concept of hegemonic masculinity by Messerschmidt can be seen as tautological. Crime is regarded as the way in which criminals are expressing their masculinity, and masculinity is regarded as the cause of their crime.

Finally, Collier believes the description of hegemonic masculinity is simply based upon 'a range of popular ideologies on what constitutes ideal or actual characteristics of "being a man"'. As such, popular stereotypes are simply being reproduced in academic work.

Collier argues that a postmodernist approach is needed to understand the relationship between masculinity and crime – one that can 'address the complexity of the multi-layered nature of the social subject'. Stereotypes and images of masculinity are important, because they do affect people's understanding of what it means to be masculine. However, they are always interpreted in particular contexts. To Collier, men do not simply try to 'accomplish masculinity', because masculinity is multifaceted, and whether crimes are perceived as related to masculinity only emerges in the 'discourse' that surrounds crime.

There is considerable uncertainty over what it means to be masculine because of 'the changing configurations of childhood, family and fatherhood, of heterosexual social practices and the sexed subject'. Collier believes it is preferable to examine the subjective expression of masculinity by individuals or groups of men through crime than it is to generalise about hegemonic and other forms of masculinity. Generalisations are dangerous because 'male "identities" are precariously achieved and never fixed'.

Collier's approach can be illustrated by his case study of Thomas Hamilton.

Masculinity, crime and Thomas Hamilton

On 13 March 1996 Thomas Hamilton shot and killed 16 primary school children and their teacher at their school in Dunblane in Scotland. He then committed suicide by shooting himself.

Hamilton was a local man who was 43 and single. He lived alone, but kept in frequent contact with his mother, who lived locally. He had been a scoutmaster but was forced to leave because of 'inappropriate behaviour'. He had failed, despite a number of attempts, to be reinstated.

Collier argues that the media tended to portray Hamilton as a 'monster' whose actions were 'grotesque'. It was implied that he might be a 'repressed homosexual' because he had an interest in children through the scout movement and because he was too close to his mother, he was single and had never been married. Hamilton was seen essentially as a failure as a man, who became violent because of his inability to express his masculinity. The media saw him as an 'inadequate nobody, a man considered unable to succeed in society – financially, socially, sexually, academically, in sport or in work'.

However, to Collier, this is an inadequate explanation of Hamilton's behaviour. It is based upon a static and generalised account of masculinity which does little to explain why Hamilton should choose to express his masculinity in such a violent way. Collier therefore tries to explain his behaviour in a more subtle way, which takes account of the multifaceted nature of his masculinity and

of the 'interface between the contexts in which Hamilton lived at the level of social structure and the specificities of his own life history'. Based upon details of Hamilton's life, Collier argues that there was no evidence that Hamilton was a predatory paedophile. It was more likely that he felt a need to control and direct young boys in order to influence their development.

However, women carry out most care of young children, and men who become involved with young children can be regarded as potential paedophiles. In this context, Hamilton had 'forcefully resisted the label "pervert"; he had "fought back", protesting his "normality" to everybody from the Queen to the Ombudsman'. Hamilton had written many letters claiming that he should be allowed to run boys' clubs or be a scoutmaster.

Thwarted in his attempts to express his masculinity by acting as an authority figure to boys, he found other ways to express it – in particular, through an interest in guns, which allowed him to draw upon 'images of hypermasculine toughness'. By attacking the school, he was asserting male authority and turning it upon the feminised world of the primary school. His murderous assault was not, therefore, a case of Hamilton losing control – it was 'a means of taking control'.

Evaluation

Collier provides interesting and perceptive interpretations of the relationship between masculinity and crime in the case of Thomas Hamilton (and in other case studies discussed in his book). He develops useful arguments about the dangers of generalising about masculinities and shows how the analysis of individuals' identities can be revealing. However, Collier himself sometimes makes generalised statements about masculinity, which are little different from those put forward by writers such as Messerschmidt, whom Collier criticises. For example, Collier sees 'learnt tendencies of aggressive heterosexual manliness' as widely shared.

Simon Winlow – *Badfellas*

Simon Winlow's study, *Badfellas* (2001), examines the changing masculinities among working-class men in northeast England. Like Collier, Winlow is interested in the relationship between masculinity and violence. However, unlike Collier, Winlow is not particularly concerned with variations in the masculinity of individuals. Rather, he is concerned with how a whole local culture has changed, along with the nature of criminal masculinity.

Winlow's study draws upon a wide variety of theoretical approaches in sociology and criminology, including the sociology of masculinity, subcultural theory, theories of modernity and postmodernity, and theories of globalisation. His study is also a richly detailed ethnographic account of crime in a particular location.

In the late 1990s Winlow conducted an ethnographic study of bouncers and associated criminal activity in the Sunderland area. Winlow was born and brought up in Sunderland. He came from the same background as many of the doormen; he knew a number of them personally, and because of this was able to obtain work as a doorman himself. He conducted a participant observation study and supplemented this with some informal interviewing and the use of secondary sources such as previous studies of the working class in Sunderland.

Social change in Sunderland and the northeast

Winlow argues that changes in Sunderland must be set in the context of social and economic change. These changes have taken on a number of key characteristics:

1. **Sunderland has experienced rapid and profound deindustrialisation.** By the late 1980s, the mainstays of the local economy such as shipbuilding and mining were no longer employing large numbers of people. Associated trades such as welding and boiler making had also largely gone. Winlow describes Sunderland as 'a perfect example of a locality firmly rooted in the industrial modern age', but, he says, it 'is currently transforming economically, socially and culturally to cope with the advent of post-industrial and postmodern society'.
2. **With the decline of heavy manual industries dominated by male full-time employment, part-time female employment has assumed more significance.** There has been a shift to a post-industrial economy in which service sector and leisure-related employment has become increasingly important. This is particularly evident in the night-time economy, where legal and illegal activities coexist. Clubs, bars, taxi services, drug dealing, prostitution, strip clubs and cheap hotels all offer services to the mainly young people determined to enjoy themselves on their nights out. They also offer both legal and illegal opportunities for employment. Winlow sees the night-time economy as reflecting key features of a move towards a postmodern society.

Drawing on the work of the postmodernist Jean Baudrillard (see pp. 989–91), Winlow argues that this is a context where images and signs become all-important in the creation of changing self-identities:

young people bond with mates and seek mates, get drunk, take drugs and seek out fun in a 'hyper-real' world where almost any hedonistic desire seems within reach, and the baggage of one's normative identity can be left at the door ... this environment is seemingly the very epitome of the postmodern. Use and sign value appear to merge in the consumption of designer beers and designer drugs, even as high fashion is donned by the majority rather than the lucky few and simulation is apparent at every turn. Winlow, 2001

3. **A third major change is the impact of globalisation.** Although Sunderland retains a distinctive locality, influenced by its own tradition and culture, it is increasingly shaped by and in contact with wider cultures. The media have a significant influence. Winlow explains how he 'witnessed young males who strive to be Robert De Niro in *Goodfellas*'. He describes how one of the men discussed in his study, Sartie, has a particular interest in rap and hip-hop music even though he has never been to the USA and has no direct contact with the black American inner-city culture out of which the music grew.

As we shall see, Winlow also found that local criminals were increasingly becoming involved in much wider criminal networks extending to other countries. In this process Winlow claimed to detect 'the merging of the global and the local to produce the contemporary cultural environment in the northeast'.

4. **The fourth major change was the increasing importance of entrepreneurship in the local economy.** With the

decline of full-time employment opportunities, especially for men, people were looking to find new ways to earn a living. High levels of unemployment encouraged more of the local men to try their luck at entrepreneurial business activities. Some took advantage of the new international or even global networks connecting the northeast to other parts of the world.

Putting all these changes together, Winlow describes and explains a major shift in masculine identities in the northeast of England.

Crime in modern industrial societies

Winlow argues that, in the modern era, prior to the decline of heavy industry in Sunderland, it was important to men to 'prove their masculinity through physical labour'. Work not only allowed men to show their physical prowess, it also meant they were 'able to keep a wife and family'. However, the prime concern was not to demonstrate their masculinity to women, but to other men. Shop-floor masculinity involved 'strength, skill, autonomy, camaraderie', and, outside work, being able to 'hold your drink' was also important.

While a full-time job and family responsibilities offered a route into working-class respectability, the culture of working-class men in Sunderland also 'incorporated violence and an "immediate aggressive style of behaviour"'. This emphasis on being able to use violence was also found in the criminal aspects of working-class culture.

Here, Winlow draws upon the work of Cloward and Ohlin (see pp. 351–2). He argues that in the modern industrial era there were few opportunities to make a living out of crime. There was little in the way of organised crime and therefore no significant illegitimate opportunities. In these circumstances a conflict subculture developed, characterised by petty crime and the use of violence to gain status. Winlow says, 'Violence was ... a crucial signifier of self-image, a reflection upon a culture that favourably judged those who maintained a credible use of force.'

Winlow illustrates these arguments with a case study about Tommy, a 58-year-old former 'hard man', now too old to be a physical threat to younger hard men, but in his day a respected and feared man in Sunderland. Tommy worked in the local shipyards, but in his spare time he worked as a doorman at local dancehalls such as the Palladium. He also sometimes acted as a minder for local pubs. However, he never earned much money for these services. He was more likely to be rewarded with free beer than significant payment. Furthermore, his career as a doorman was cut short by his tendency to drink excessively and to start fights rather than prevent them. Nevertheless, his role gained him a local reputation, the admiration of some young women and status in the subculture.

Masculinity in post-industrial society

By the late 1990s the nature of masculinity in Sunderland was changing, as was the nature of local crime. For many unskilled working-class men, there was little prospect of finding reasonably secure full-time employment. With an increase in the number of women working, the traditional role of men as the main breadwinner in a family had been undermined. Because of such changes, 'males become undesirable marriage partners' and the number of female-headed households increases. In this situation, traditional masculinities adapt to new circumstances. Winlow says:

As a shop-floor masculinity is now out of reach, its component parts are sifted, sorted and evaluated and those that can be moulded to fit in with the new post-industrial and postmodern cultural habitat are translated and made to work in this new environment.

One aspect of traditional masculinity that is retained is the emphasis on violence. Being a hard man continues to be a way of gaining status. However, in the changed circumstances it assumes a new significance and becomes a way of earning a living, an entrepreneurial activity, as well. Working as a doorman, Winlow found that the other doormen increasingly saw their work as more of a career than a hobby. They were paid for their efforts in maintaining order and used it as a springboard for getting involved in potentially rewarding criminal activities. For example, some doormen started selling drugs, or importing and selling cheap duty-free beer and spirits to licensees and publicans.

Another criminal activity involved protection rackets. Some bouncers were involved with criminals who were paid by pub owners for ensuring there was no trouble on their premises. On one occasion, Winlow witnessed a violent attack by those involved in a protection racket on a man who had started a fight in one of the pubs they were minding. There was a degree of rivalry between different groups who minded pubs in different parts of the city. This could sometimes give rise to violent confrontations as one group tried to muscle in on pubs in another group's area.

To sum up, Sunderland had now developed a thriving criminal subculture in which crime was not just important for status, but also as a way of earning a living. There was a considerable degree of organisation in this subculture, with various legal businesses and illegal activities being interlinked. For example, legitimate security firms were connected to protection rackets and apparently legal businesses were used to launder money from illegal activities.

The criminal subculture was developing international and global connections, particularly those related to importing cheap alcohol and drugs. For those involved in these activities, it was vital that they maintained their reputation as hard men. Any sign of weakness could encourage rivals to challenge them. With little in the way of legitimate job prospects, the men involved used their **bodily capital** to earn a living. Many of the doormen and other hard men would actively try to develop their physique through body building.

However, success in the criminal subculture involved more than just being big and muscular. Winlow says, 'Just as important as the physical ability to carry out one's job is the sign value of one's body, speech and body language, facial expression and demeanour.' You had to look intimidating to discourage people from challenging you, as well as maintain your reputation and actually win fights. Ideally, you would also try to advertise your apparent success by wearing 'Ralph Lauren shirts and fake Rolex watches'. Thus, to Winlow, even the violent world of Sunderland's criminal subculture is a postmodern world where signs are an important commodity.

Conclusion and evaluation

Winlow concludes that the nature of masculinity and criminality in the Sunderland area has changed along with the nature of opportunities in the area. Without

access to a stable masculine identity derived from long-term employment in heavy industry, crime becomes an appealing career option, along with the chance to enjoy 'the immediacy of one's own lived existence and the chance to live "life as a party"'.

Winlow accepts that not all crime in Sunderland is professional. However, even non-professional crime can act as preparation for a criminal career. He says, 'Petty crime and non-profit-making crime will not disperse with the arrival of a criminal entrepreneurial ethic. Car crime, burglary, shoplifting, vandalism, violence and other assorted crime are, in themselves, all potential testing grounds for formative and potentially fragile masculinities.' Some of those involved will go on to professional crime.

Winlow provides a detailed account of the changing nature of crime in one British city. It is particularly credible because of his closeness to the culture he is describing and because he could use his local knowledge to witness criminal violence. It draws upon a wide range of concepts from sociology and appears to make sense of changing conceptions of masculinity.

However, it is difficult to know how typical the northeast is compared to other areas of the country. Winlow's emphasis on violent and professional crime means that he says relatively little about petty and casual street crime and delinquency, and about crime that lacks a financial motive. Sometimes his attempts to link criminality to postmodernity appear a little tenuous. A street culture involving excessive drinking, drugs and the enjoyment of other hedonistic pleasures is certainly nothing new and has existed for many decades.

Socio-spatial criminology

All criminal activity is conducted within a place, and all those who engage in criminal behaviour inhabit and live out their lives in physical places. There has therefore been a long history of studying where offenders come from and where they commit their offences in order to better understand their behaviour. In recent years this study of place has also extended to very specific attempts to prevent offending.

We will start with a brief exploration of the historical approaches that related places to offending, and then explore current approaches in more depth.

C.R. Shaw and H.D. McKay – *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas*

C.R. Shaw and H.D. McKay were two researchers at the University of Chicago in the early part of the 20th century, at a time of enormous inward migration to the city. They discovered a geographical pattern to offending behaviour, based on a meticulous record of the addresses of offenders.

In their famous study, *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas* (1942), Shaw and McKay used a system previously devised by E.W. Burgess, another Chicago sociologist who had divided the city into five main concentric zones. Each of these had a different economic and social profile. There was a central business district, and then further out from this a mixed area of poor housing and industrial units, and then, moving outwards from this, three more zones of increasing affluence. The poorer district surrounding the central business zone was described as the 'zone of transition', as

it was assumed that as people became more affluent, they would move outward to the more affluent zones.

When their statistical analysis of offending was applied to this model, Shaw and McKay discovered that offending was highest in the 'zone of transition' which surrounded the central business district, and declined the further out the zone. What was even more interesting was that they found similar patterns in other US cities and that even when the population of the 'zone of transition' changed, the levels of offending still remained highest there. Therefore, there were strong grounds for linking offending with a geographical area, and not with specific offenders who lived there.

Shaw and McKay suggested that the high levels of population turnover, linked to significant levels of poverty and poor housing, all combined to create a state of social disorganisation. The influx of new immigrants prevented the development of strong and, most importantly, shared values to prevent them engaging in offending.

Shaw and McKay later amended the concept of 'social disorganisation' to mean a distinct set of values which provides an alternative, non-conformist set of values to those of the mainstream society – known as **cultural transmission theory**. This approach is one of the bases for the development of subculture theory (see pp. 350–2 for a discussion of subculture theory).

Evaluation of Shaw and McKay

Critics such as Anthony Bottoms (2007) have suggested that Shaw and McKay confused where people lived with where they committed the offences. Bottoms points out that these are two very different issues, which Shaw and McKay failed to distinguish. We will see the importance of this later in relation to policies to combat crime.

Second, Bottoms points out that the concentric zone model does not fit most European cities and certainly is inappropriate for cities where any town planning and provision of social housing by the state are implemented. Indeed, British research failed to reproduce the clear pattern of concentric circles, finding instead that, although crime rates varied by area, the patterns were far more complex.

Finally, Shaw and McKay's model of cultural transmission is simply very difficult to prove or disprove, because the proof lay in the higher levels of offending, but the higher levels of offending were also what was being explained in the first place. So the problem is also the explanation.

A tradition of mapping offending did develop, but later studies tended to focus more on where offences took place rather than on where the offenders lived.

One particularly important study by Wilkstrom (1991) examined crime patterns in Stockholm using police data on various offences and where they were committed. What Wilkstrom found was that city centres did have higher levels of offending, as did poorer districts and affluent areas adjacent to poorer districts. Crimes of violence were more likely in the poorer districts, while burglary was more likely in the affluent adjacent areas. It was possible to make even more detailed analyses – for example, levels of domestic violence were higher in some poorer areas than in others.

Neighbourhood effects and social control

However, there is evidence that suggests that where you live makes a significant difference to whether you offend or not. David Kirk (2009, cited in Bottoms, 2012) studied the effects of Hurricane Katrina on offending in Louisiana. The