

# The Concept and Measurement of Violent Crime

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# Introduction

- What is violence
  - What is violent crime?
- What causes violent crime
- Testing and building theory; testing 'what works' to prevent violent crime → **measure violent crime**
  - Data
  - Case Study: *Is Violent Crime Increasing or Decreasing? The Importance of Measurement*



# What is Violence?

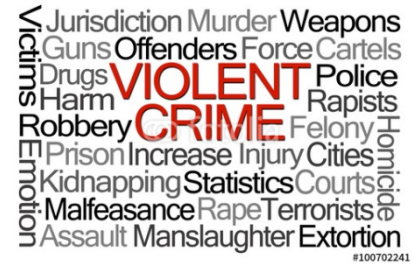
**Is violence always physical contact?** Should it be defined by a corporeal experience involving the collision of bodies, the transgressing of bodily boundaries through the use of hands, feet, fists, or weapons? (Walby; Collins; Fanon)

**Is violence more than just physical?** Should it be defined more broadly including for example coercive control (Kelly; Stark); symbolic or cultural violence (Žižek; Bourdieu; Galtung)

*Is violence a distinct phenomenon, a non-reducible form of power in its own right?*

*Or is it contained within other categories, especially as an instrument of other forms of power?*

# What is Violent Crime?



Three elements to a crime (England and Wales)

1. Act
2. Intent
3. Harm

Violent crime: where an **offender** uses or threatens to use **force** against a **victim**. The violent act can be the object of the crime, e.g. murder, or the means to an end e.g. armed robbery.

Violent crimes include those acts committed using a weapon e.g. knife or gun, as well as direct bodily contact, e.g. fist or foot

# Theory of Change



## **Violence matters:**

- It wrecks lives
- Is a serious human right's violation
- A key cause of injury and is a significant risk factor for short and long-term physical, psychological and other health-related problems
- It impacts on the economy and on society
- It reduces people's economic, social, political and creative capacity and their ability to fully participate in society

Research is needed to ***untangle the social processes generating violent crime in order to work towards the elimination of violent crime.***

***Need to be able to measure violent crime in order to test and further develop theories about its causes and to test 'what works' to reduce it.***

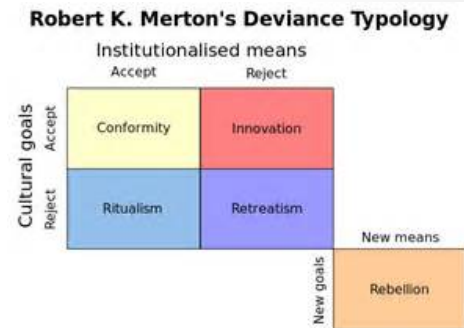
# What Causes Changes in Violent Crime?

- Merton: **Socio-economic inequality cause crime**
- Cole and Gramajo; Pridemore; van Wilsem: **Poverty and inequality cause violent crime, but it's complicated**
- Wolfgang and Ferracuti: **Violence as a subculture**
- McLaughlin et al; Ray: **the heritage of Merton and beyond**
- Kalmuss and Straus; Lloyd; Panda and Agarwal; Vyas and Watts: **Gender inequality cause and consequence of VAW**
- Wacquant: **Institutional racism**
- Crenshaw: **Intersecting inequalities**

**Theme of inequality causing crime found in much criminology, positioned within a wide variety of different theoretical frameworks**

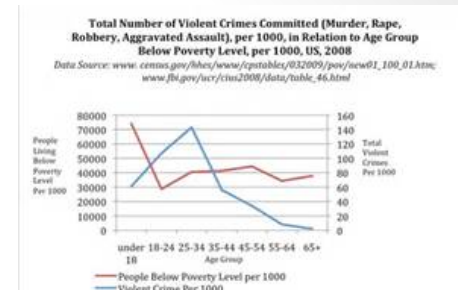
# Merton: Social Structure and Inequality

Merton (1938) 'Social structure and anomie',  
*American Sociological Review*, 3 (5): 672-682.



- **Cause of crime lies in social structure**
  - 'some social structures exert a definite pressure upon certain persons in society to engage in nonconformist rather than conformist conduct' p. 672
- Two types of social structure
  - Culture goals: 'frame of aspirational reference'; 'culturally defined goals, purposes and sentiment'
  - Institutional norms: 'acceptable modes of achieving these goals'
- '**malintegration**' of two types of social structure leads to '**anomie**'
  - 'Aberrant conduct, therefore, may be viewed as a symptom of dissociation between culturally defined aspirations and socially structured means' p.674

# Poverty and Inequality



Comparing homicide rates between countries

- **van Wilsem**

- **Income inequality the most important correlate of homicide**
- Richer countries (GDP per capita) have lower homicide rates
- Situational factors less important

- **Pridemore**

- Distinguishes between poverty and inequality
- **Poverty more important than inequality**

- **Cole and Gramajo**

- Consider age, urbanisation, inequality, poverty, population density, ethno-religious heterogeneity, education, governance across 91 countries
- **Inequality (measured by Gini) more important than poverty**
- Heterogeneity and governance matter: institutions are important

*The measures (or proxies) of poverty and inequality matter*



# Subculture



## Wolfgang and Ferracuti

- **Violence as a subculture**, not main culture
- Structural strain generates subcultures
- Subcultures develop alternative cultural meanings and support these; partially separated from the rest of the world which is still a partial source of reference
- Embrace of alternatives that offer validation and resources
- Violence linked to working class masculinity e.g. EDL, football firms

# Criminology



- **More traditional, mainstream criminology, from functionalism (Merton) to Left realists (Young)**
  - socio-economic inequality generates crime and violence
  - Penal welfare; reform and rehabilitate offenders
  - Attempted social inclusion e.g. Finding jobs for ex-prisoners
- **Contemporary criminology**
  - Rational choice of a criminal; punitive punishments as deterrence
  - Social exclusion of criminals
  - Criminogenic situations: target hardening, securitisation

# Violent Crime: Other Forms of Inequality

## Gender

- **Kalmuss and Straus:** Severe violence against wives linked to non-unemployment, small children in household and husband who earns 75% or more of household income
- **Lloyd:** Domestic violence reduces women's capacity for employment
- **Towers:** Leaving a violent partnership makes women poorer

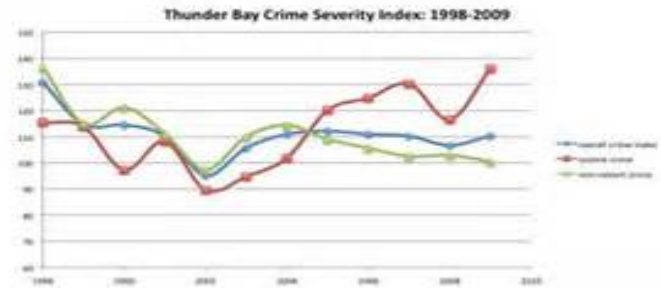
## Race

- **Waquant:** 'Carceral continuum': prison as a judicial ghetto and the ghetto as an extrajudicial prison

## Intersecting inequalities

- **Crenshaw:** intersecting inequalities (*intersectionality*)  
*Everyone finds a correlation between inequality and violence BUT the causal pathways are contested.*

# Evidencing Violent Crime



*How much violence is there? Is this changing over time?*

- The amount of violence depends on the **concept, definition and methodology** in use.
- The **choice of measurement methodology can systematically bias the estimate of some forms of violent crime** compared to others (*case study*): what are the consequences for evidence-based policy and practice?
- The *measurement of violence is contested* in social theory and public policy: **Different policy actors and policy fields measure it differently**, even within the criminal justice system e.g. police and courts.

# Evidence / Data

Two main sources of data on violent crime in England and Wales:

## Official Statistics

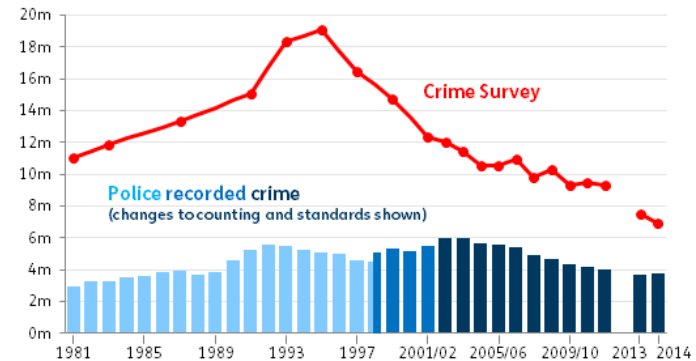
**Police recorded crime:** incidents reported to the police and recorded by them as criminal acts

## Survey data

**Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW):** annual crime victimisation survey that interviews a representative sample of the population about their experience of being a victim of crime in past 12 months

## Crime in England and Wales

Offences estimated by Crime Survey for England and Wales and recorded by police



\* Police recorded crime: old counting rules pre-1998, National Crime Recording Standard post-2002

Source: ONS Crime Statistics, year ending December 2014

Full Fact

# Police Recorded Crime 2015

Police Recorded Crime in England and Wales, Jan 2015-Dec 2015

	No. recorded crimes
Violence against the Person	939,518
<i>Of which Homicide</i>	573
<i>Of which Violence with injury</i>	418,261
<i>Of which Violence without injury</i>	520,684
Sexual Offences, including rape	103,614
<i>Of which against women &amp; girls</i>	65,559
<i>Of which against men &amp; boys</i>	9,678
<b>All Recorded Offences</b>	<b>4,435,447</b>

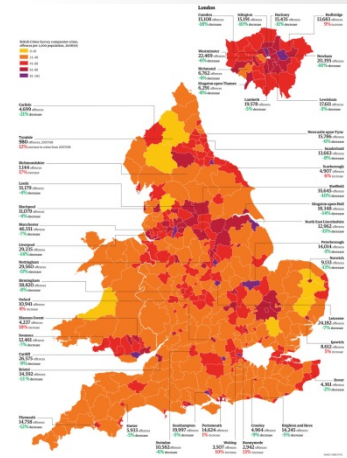
Together Violence against the Person and Sexual Offences were just under a quarter (23.5%) of all recorded offences in 2015.

# Challenges with Police Recorded Violent Crime Data

- Only data on those incidents which come to the **attention of the police** and are then **recorded as a crime**.
  - Police recorded crime is subject to change in **police recording practices and public reporting practices** -> *distinguishing between an increase or decrease in violent crime caused by changes in practices or by 'real' change in the rate of violence (or some complex combination of both) is extremely challenging*
  - Police statistics in England and Wales lost the UK Statistic Authority quality kite mark 'national statistics' status 2014
  - Not all forms disaggregate by **gender** of victim
  - No forms disaggregate by **relationship** between victim and perpetrator
- > so identifying domestic violence is extremely challenging: key focus for many forces

# Crime Survey for England and Wales

- Annual, nationally representative crime victimisation survey
  - data from CSEW can be used to make estimates for national population
- Overseen by Office for National Statistics (ONS)
- UK Statistics Authority: 'kitemark' for quality
- Victim Form module for 'single' or 'series' crimes
- Respondent can report up to 96 crimes in up to 6 victim forms
- Coded by expert coders as 'crimes' or not
  
- Much less likely to be affected year-to-year by changes in recording practices or willingness to report





# Other Sources of Data...

## Global Crime

- **UNODC Crime Statistics:** <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime.html>

## Femicide

- **Femicide Census (Counting Dead Women):**  
<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/campaigning-and-influencing/femicide-census/>

## Hate Crime

- **Tell Mamma:** <http://tellmamauk.org/>
  - <http://tellmamauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/low-res.jpg>

## Injuries from violent crime

- **NHS A&E data:** <https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/tag/ae/>

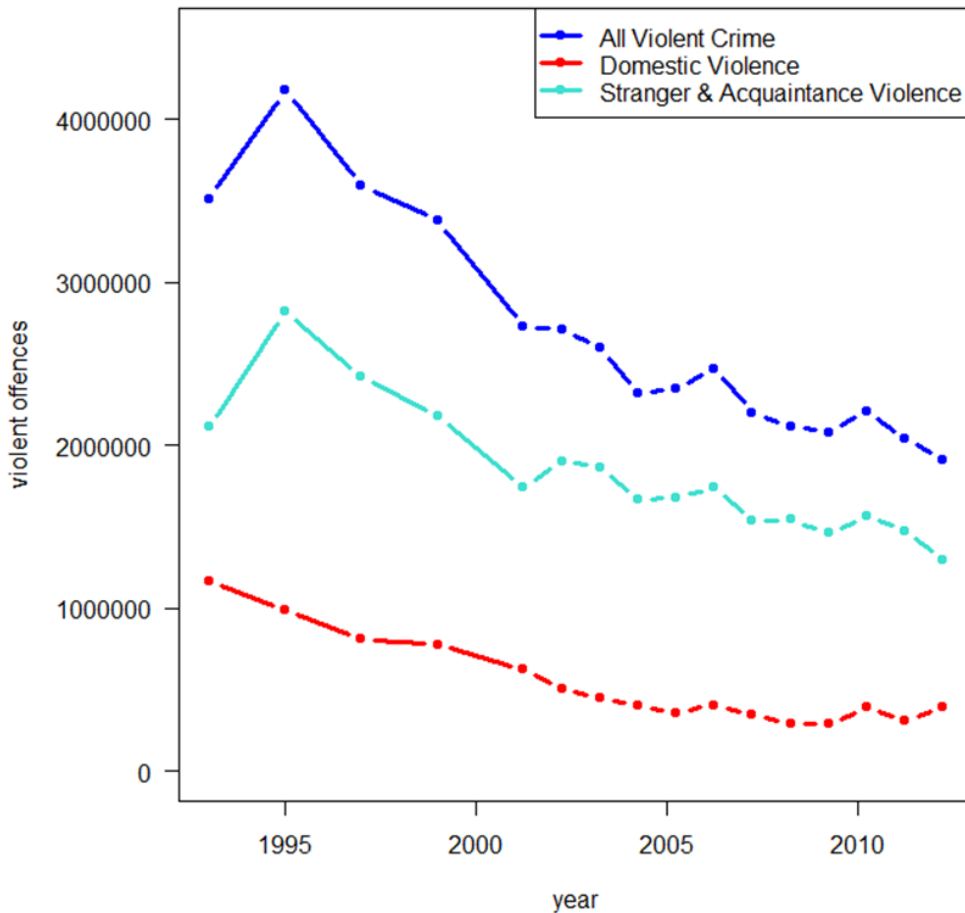
## Terrorism

- **Security Project on Security and Terrorism (suicide terrorism):**  
[http://cpostdata.uchicago.edu/search\\_new.php](http://cpostdata.uchicago.edu/search_new.php)
- **Global Terrorism Database:** <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/>

# **Case Study**

**Is Violent Crime Increasing  
or Decreasing? The  
Importance of Measurement**

# Is the Rate of Violent Crime Increasing or Decreasing?



Overall, **published rate** of violent crime using the Crime Survey for England and Wales is falling; but fall in rate of domestic violence (DV) appears to have stopped

# Examining the Evidence / Data

A close comparison of raw data with published findings found a difference in the number of incidents (crimes): ***not all incidents reported to the survey are included in published statistics***

- This is due to the treatment of respondents who report a high number of incidents (greater than five) in a 'series' offence
- Respondents can report between 2 and 96 incidents in a series; official estimates only count the first five (known as **capping**): why?

*'The restriction to the first five incidents in a series has been applied since the CSEW began in order to ensure that the estimates are not affected by a very small number of respondents who report an extremely high number of incidents and which are highly variable between survey years'* ONS (2013)

# The Effect of Capping

Volatility between years which risks introducing 'noise' instead of identifying 'signal' change and should be avoided

*Is the appropriate solution to cap at 5 incidents?*

Effect of capping:

- Under estimation of violent crime
- Skew the patterning of violent crime by rendering invisible high frequency victims
  - ***Hypothesis: capping will especially impact on victims of domestic violence. The majority of victims of domestic violence are female thus capping could also especially impact on violence against women***

# Counting all Reported Incidents versus Capping

Removing the cap to count all incidents reported:

- **Increases** the estimated number of violent crimes by **60%**

This *increase is not evenly distributed*: it is lowest among violent crime committed by strangers and higher among violent crimes committed by someone known to the victim:

- **Stranger violence increases by 20%**
- **Domestic violence increases by 70%**
- **Acquaintance violence doubles (increases by 100%)**

The increase is not evenly distributed by sex of victim:

- **Violence against women increases by 70%**
- **Violence against men increases by 50%**

# Cap or Count all Reported?

Counting all reported incidents:

- reveals **alternative patterns in violent crime**
- demonstrates that **high frequency violence is unevenly distributed towards women**
- demonstrates that **high frequency violence is unevenly distributed to those victimised by domestic relations and acquaintances** rather than by strangers

Year-to-year volatility is not problematic in cross-sectional analysis; all reported crimes can be analysed

BUT counting all reported incidents ***increases volatility to an unacceptable level in trend analysis***: **does this justify excluding high frequency victims?**

- If number of incidents falling / rising is evenly distributed across the population may not be problematic
- If changes in trends of violence are driven by changes in specific groups of victims e.g. high frequency victims, then it is problematic

# Trends in Violent Crime

**New methodology** for assessing trends in violent crime in England and Wales using CSEW data:

- **Counting all incidents** reported to the CSEW victim form module
- **Using three year rolling averages** to bring volatility into line with the official method
- Using the **Davies test and segmented regression modelling** for trends rather than comparing two (random) points in time

*Hypothesis: **capping will especially impact on victims of domestic violence. The majority of victims of domestic violence are female thus capping could also especially impact on violence against women***



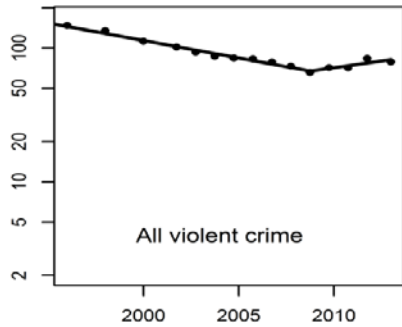
# Findings in Violent Crime Trends

- The rate of **domestic violent crime** has been **increasing since 2009**
  - Domestic violent crime against women increasing
  - Domestic violent crime against men has stopped falling
- The rate of **violent crime against women** has been **increasing since 2009**
  - Rate of domestic violent crime against women increasing
  - Rate of violent crime against women by acquaintances increasing
  - Rate of violent crime against women by strangers unchanged since 1994
- The rate of **violent crime against men continues to fall**
  - Rate of violent crime against men by acquaintances falling
  - Rate of violent crime against men by strangers falling
  - Rate of domestic violent crime against men has stopped falling

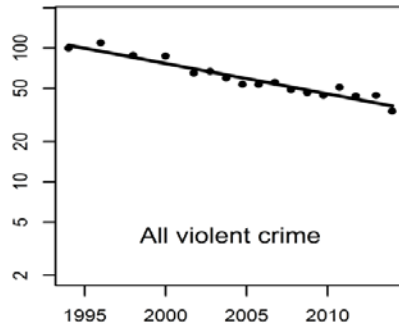
***The overall rate of violent crime has been increasing since 2009***

# Trends in Violent Crime

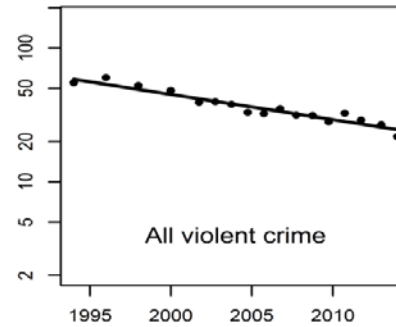
All reported crime rates  
Three year moving average



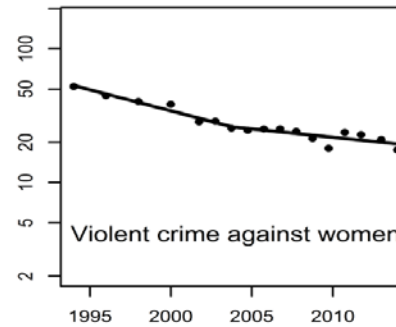
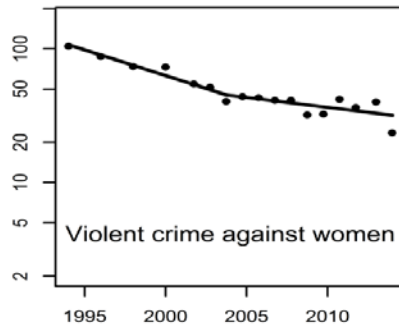
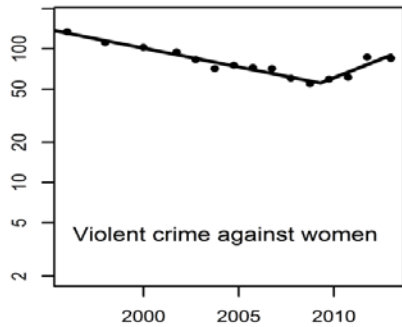
Capped crime rates  
Year by year



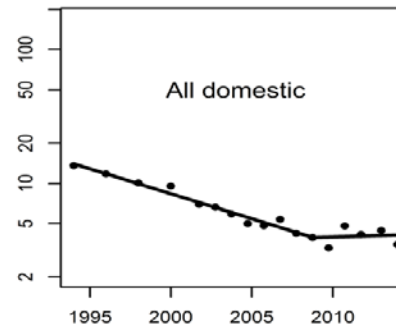
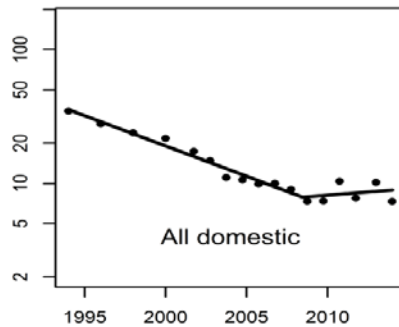
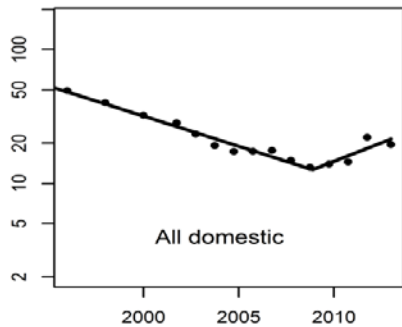
Victim prevalence rates  
Year by year



All reported violent crime per 1000 adults



All reported violent crime against women per 1000 adult females



All reported domestic violence per 1000 adults

# A Theory of Change

***How do we link these empirical findings to theories of violent crime in order to reverse the increase in domestic violent crime and violent crime against women?***

***How do we theorise the continuing fall in violent crime against men simultaneous to the increasing rate of violent crime against women?***

# Conclusion

- What is violence / violent crime?
    - **Definitions and concepts matter**
  - What causes violent crime
    - **Theories of causation and change need to be tested**
    - **Theories of causation and change inform policy and practice interventions which need to be tested**
- Requires evidence /data

The measurement framework really matters :

- Data source
- Counting / estimation methodology
- Interpretation of results – linking back to theory



# Contact Details

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