MSc in Criminology and Criminal Justice

Michaelmas Term 2016
Crime and the Family

DR RACHEL CONDRY
Room 348, Manor Road Building
rachel.condry@crim.ox.ac.uk

This option runs on Tuesdays from 10.30 – 12.00 in Seminar Room E, Manor Road Building.

Academic Justification

Background and Aim of the option

The aim of this course is to explore the relationship between crime and one of the major institutions in society, the family. Through the analysis of empirical research and theoretical debate the course will provide a systematic examination of some of the intersections between the family and crime and punishment. The aim will be to interrogate common-sense understandings of the relationship between crime and the family and to explore just who is affected by crime and how they are affected, whether as primary or secondary victims of crime, or as parents, children, spouses or other kin of offenders.

The relationship between the family and the state and the ways in which the state intervenes into family life take particular shape around the problem of crime. We will explore how the family is constructed in both formal policy responses to crime and informal responses such as stigmatization and shaming. The course will consider the role of the family in criminological theory and in criminal justice policy and aim to unravel some of the complexities, tensions and implications inherent in contemporary constructions of the family and family life in these contexts.

Relation to Learning Outcomes

Students who take full advantage of the opportunities afforded by this option will be able to:

(a) identify and analyse a range of theoretical and empirical approaches to crime and the family and critically appraise these approaches

(b) identify and analyse a range of different intersections between crime and the family and critically assess the extent to which current criminological thinking is equipped to make sense of these relationships.

Assessment

This option will be assessed at the end of the term by an assessed essay of 3,500 – 5,000 words. As with other options on the MSc, the students will choose one title from a choice of three.
Schedule of seminars

1. The family in youth justice: punishing parents for the crimes of their children
2. The family as a site of crime (a) intimate partner violence
3. The family as a site of crime (b) adolescent to parent violence
4. Prisoners’ families: punishment extending beyond the legal offender?
5. Families of offenders and vicarious shame
6. Maternal imprisonment (with Shona Minson)

Reading

Everyone should come to seminars ready to engage in discussion with the same level of knowledge of the subject. Therefore you should read all of the essential pieces. The additional readings provide the keen students with extra work and further reading for assessed essays.

The introductory paragraph to the readings for each week provides a guide to the key issues you should be considering when preparing for class. However, as with most of your studies at graduate level, you should also formulate your own questions as you do the reading, and raise these in class for discussion.

Academic research and publications in the field of Crime and the Family have tended to compartmentalise and there is no single text or edited collection covers the topics in the course. The following texts will provide good preparatory reading for the course and an introduction to thinking critically about the intersections between crime and the family and the elastic boundary of state intervention into family life:


Seminar 1: The family in youth justice: punishing parents for the crimes of their children

The ‘parenting order’ which makes parents accountable for the crimes of their children was introduced in the Crime and Disorder Act of 1998 and rolled out in 2000. The parenting order continues to be used and various other measures to hold parents accountable have developed, the most recent incarnation being the Troubled Families Programme. Making parents accountable is not a new phenomenon and has a long history. In this session we explore how ideas about parental accountability and punishing parents have developed. We examine the research on family risk and protective factors in developmental criminology which has informed many of the new policies in youth justice. In the contemporary context, we explore debates about the aims and justifications of punishing parents and whether these measures can be said to meet their objectives. We also consider the importance of gender and discuss why it is mothers that tend to be in receipt of parenting measures in youth justice.

Making parents accountable


**Family risk and protective factors**


**Further reading**


Seminar 2: The family as a site of crime (a) intimate partner violence

For the next two weeks of the course we turn to the family as a site of violent crime, focusing on intra-familial crime - when family members are themselves primary victims. In this session we explore how criminological thinking about domestic violence, and more specifically intimate partner violence, has developed in recent decades. Questions we will discuss include: how has intimate partner violence been understood and theorised within criminology? How has this type of violence been constructed within criminal justice and voluntary sector policy? How have different accounts of intimate partner violence addressed the dynamics of gender, power and control? How are the perpetrator, the victim, and other family members constructed in criminal justice policy, and what does this tell us about the ways in which intra-familial violence is understood and responded to?

**Intimate partner violence**


**Further reading**


See also the *Journal of Family Violence, Journal of Interpersonal Violence,* and *Violence Against Women.*
Seminar 3: The family as a site of crime (b) adolescent to parent violence

In this week we will examine the topic of adolescent to parent violence. In the UK this is a form of family violence which is rarely discussed within the fields of domestic violence, youth justice or policing. Official definitions of domestic violence have explicitly defined perpetrators as over the age of eighteen until a change in 2013 which reduced that age to sixteen. A number of studies provide evidence to suggest that adolescent-to-parent violence is a phenomenon that needs to be taken seriously, and practitioners within criminal justice and the voluntary sector acknowledge that they encounter it on a regular basis. In this session we will look at what we currently know about this form of family violence and consider which conceptual frameworks might be most useful in trying to understand it. This topic has been the focus of a recent research project within the Centre, full information available at: https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/content/adolescent-parent-violence

Adolescent to parent violence

And the other articles in the ‘Themed Section on Exploring Parent Abuse’. 11, 2: 211-303


Further reading


Seminar 4: Prisoners’ families: punishment extending beyond the legal offender?

This week we will look at the broad impact of imprisonment and the difficulties faced by prisoners’ families. Research from the US has looked at the impact of imprisonment on families of prisoners and on communities (and how this impact is unevenly distributed, particularly hitting African-American communities). This body of work draws our attention to a wide range of ‘collateral consequences’, although there is some debate as to whether this term fully captures the complex experiences of those most affected by the massive expansion of imprisonment. In this session we will discuss whether punishment can be said to extend beyond the legal offender and the meaning and implications of this claim. We will review evidence from the UK and the US to draw out continuities and disparities in the experiences of prisoners’ families in each country.

**Prisoners’ families in the UK & Europe**


**Prisoners’ families in the US**


**Further reading**


Seminar 5: Families of serious offenders and vicarious shame

Somewhat controversially, relatives of serious offenders are sometimes claimed to be the ‘other victims’ of crime, suffering from the fact of the serious offence itself and from the consequences that follow. These relatives describe experiencing considerable distress, grief and feelings of loss and are often blamed and stigmatized. In this session, we explore the concept of vicarious shame which has received some attention in psychology but has rarely been considered within criminology. What does it mean to experience shame for the actions of another? Why might blame and shame extend to the kin of serious offenders? How might vicarious shame operate at the level of the individual, the family, or a large scale ‘in-group’ such as a community or society, and what might be the implications for criminological thinking of conceptualising shame in this way? We will also discuss the particular resonance that vicarious familial shame has in contemporary criminological theory because of the important role it plays in Braithwaite’s theory of reintegrative shaming.

On relatives of serious offenders


On vicarious shame, shame and reintegrative shame


Further reading


Condry, R (2006) ‘Stigmatised women and the broader impact of crime’ in


Seminar 6: Maternal Imprisonment (with Shona Minson)

In this seminar we will explore how maternal imprisonment impacts upon children and those who care for them during their mother’s imprisonment, within the context of the wider societal impacts of imprisonment. The readings will raise a number of questions: Is maternal imprisonment more harmful to children than paternal imprisonment? If the impacts of maternal imprisonment are harmful to children or carers how should we classify and justify them? How is the experience of dependents understood by the judiciary who, as the agents of the state, impose the sanction of imprisonment on women who are mothers? Should dependent children be considered in sentencing decisions? Is there justification for the harms suffered by children of offenders, or should punishment be modified to take into account the needs of dependents? The readings include literature on women in prison, parental and maternal imprisonment, and sentencing.

Women in prison


Impacts of parental imprisonment


Impacts of maternal imprisonment

On children


On carers


Sentencing of mothers


Further Reading


Seminar 7: Families of victims and ‘secondary victimization’: the case of domestic homicide

In this seminar we explore the concept of ‘secondary victimization’ as it applies to the relatives of victims of serious crime such as homicide, rape and sexual assault. Can criminology make sense of the experiences of these relatives? What does it mean to lay claim to the status of ‘secondary victim’ and what are some of the implications of acknowledging the indirect impact of crime on victims’ families?

We then explore the topic of domestic homicide, focusing particularly on intimate partner homicide. Domestic homicide is strongly gendered and sometimes described as ‘femicide’. In the UK, two women a week are killed by a partner or former partner. The relatively high rates of men’s fatal violence against women has attracted recent attention and campaigns, in particular Counting Dead Women which tracks these cases and ensures they are kept on the public agenda, see http://kareningalasmith.com/counting-dead-women/ [Please note – content warning – this site contains vivid descriptions of homicide].

We will consider what we know about partner homicide and its prevalence; the government response to the problem, including domestic homicide reviews; the findings of research on the context and explanations for partner homicide; risk factors and the relationship to non-fatal domestic violence. We will return to the question of whether the concept of ‘secondary victimization’ is useful to understand the experiences of surviving relatives of homicide victims.

Relatives of victims of serious crime


Further reading


Domestic homicide

Please read the AAFDA [http://www.aafda.org.uk/] and Counting Dead Women websites. AAFDA is an organisation that works across England and Wales providing peer support and expert specialist help to families affected by fatal domestic abuse.


Further Reading


