

objectives

AFTER COMPLETING THIS LESSON, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Explain hate crime as a form of perpetration resulting from a “politics of hate”;
- Understand how we think about moral entrepreneurs and moral panics;
- Identify the indicators that suggest the presence of a moral panic;
- Discuss how we can explain the occurrence of a moral panic;
- Know what moral panics typically involve;
- Understand how we can think about social movements such as the white supremacy movement and the anti-hate crime movement as the most visible brokers of hate crime politics in the United States; and
- Discuss how we can understand the white supremacist movement in the United States.



Please do the following required reading for Lesson Seven:

- *Rebranding Hate in the Age of Obama*, by Eve Conant
- Defenders of the Faith: Hate Groups and Ideologies of Power, Chapter 21 of *Hate and Bias Crime: A Reader* (BP)
- A Poison Squad of Whispering Women, Chapter 5 in *Women of the Klan* by Kathleen Blee
- Becoming a Racist: Women in Contemporary Ku Klux Klan and Neo Nazi Groups, Chapter 23 of *Hate and Bias Crime: A Reader* (BP)
- *Negotiating White Power Activist Stigma*, by Pete Simi and Robert Futrell.

How can we explain hate crime as a form of perpetration resulting from a “politics of hate”?

In the last lesson you learned that the relationship between economic discontent (as well as other sources of real and imagined social strain) and intergroup aggression may hinge upon the ways in which political leaders, their organization, and their followers frame grievances and mobilize action. That is, we have to think in terms of “the politics of hate” in order to understand how perpetrators are encouraged to aggress on those who are deemed the enemy, a threat, or a source of social strain. This requires that we think about moral entrepreneurs as claimsmakers who act as “brokers” in a larger politics of conflict, hate, and aggression. That is the subject we will address in this lesson.

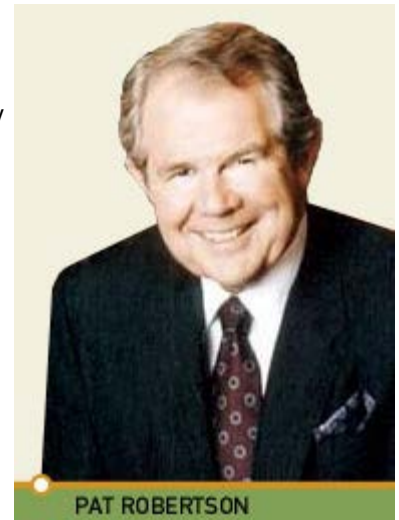
To think about political theories of crime requires us to think about the politics of moral entrepreneurs and moral crusades. Let's begin by defining our terms.

"Moral entrepreneurs" are people who are in the business of creating and enforcing moral rules in order to persuade others to adhere to a specific symbolic-moral universe. "Moral rules" - ideas about what is appropriate and inappropriate - are the product of someone's initiative. We can think of people who exhibit such enterprise as moral entrepreneurs.



The prototype of the rule creator, but not the only variety, is the crusading reformer. Crusading reformers are interested in the content of rules. The existing rules do not satisfy them because there is some evil that profoundly disturbs them. They feel that nothing can be right in the world until rules are made to correct it. They operate with an absolute ethic: What they see is truly and totally evil, with no qualification. Any means is justified in doing away with it.

Crusaders are fervent and righteous, often self-righteous. Moral crusaders are meddling busybodies, interested in forcing their own morals on others. Moral entrepreneurs are often committed to undertaking and sustaining moral crusades.



Thus analytic attention should be focused on how moral entrepreneurs typically start moral crusades aimed at transforming the public's attitude toward specific issues, trying to change legislation or public policy, or attempting to deviantize and problematize a group of "others" deemed responsible for a social problem.

As Victor explained in a recent review of the literature on "Moral Panics and the Social Construction of Deviant Behavior":

"The past offers numerous examples of collective behavior during which widespread, fearful rumors and accusations about dangerous deviants resulted in false accusations of crime against innocent people. Various terms have been used to label this form of collective behavior: persecution, witch-hunt, scare, and panic. In some cases, the widely feared deviants are products of ethnic, racial, or religious stereotypes."



Please read the following:

"Moral Panics and the Social Construction of Deviant Behavior"

Victor continues: "The most familiar example is that of anti-Semitic persecutions, including the Nazi program of genocide. In other cases, the invented deviants are creations of pure imagination. The classic example is the European witchhunt, during which perhaps over one hundred thousand people were executed because they were believed to possess evil magical powers. In still other cases, the deviants are stereotypes of members of groups that are widely believed to be a political threat in a society. An example is the anti-communist 'red scare' in the U.S. of the 1950s, during which many thousands of Americans were labeled subversive and lost their jobs. In his article, I suggest a rationale for classifying all these forms of collective behavior together as moral panics" (1998:541-2).



Rev. Falwell died in 2007.
[See his obituary](#) for a retrospective on his life.

Moral entrepreneurs undertake moral crusades to create what Cohen calls "moral panics": "a condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians, and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved, or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible" (1972:9).



Critical Thinking

Moral panics might include such examples as abortion, child abuse, the cruel and inhumane treatment of animals, acquaintance rape, and so forth. What other examples can you think of?



Discuss some examples of moral entrepreneurs and moral panics in the modern era that you have thought of.



To participate in the discussion, select OUTLINE from the TOOLS menu. Once you are back at the OUTLINE, select the appropriate FORUM from this lecture.



Recognizing that moral panics are difficult to identify when one is in the midst of one (and much easier to identify "after the fact"), Goode and Ben Yehuda have suggested the following indicators of a moral panic:

- Volatility: The sudden eruption and subsiding of concern about a newly perceived threat to society from a category of people regarded as being morally deviant;
- Hostility: The deviants are regarded with intense hostility as enemies of the basic values of the society and attributed stereotypes of "evil" behavior;
- Measurable Concern: Concern about the threat is measurable in concrete ways, such as attitude surveys, punitive reactions, and so forth;
- Consensus: There is consensus in significant segments of the population that the threat is real and serious; and
- Disproportionality: Concern about the numbers of moral deviants and the extent of the harm they do is much greater than can be verified by objective, empirical investigations of harm.

In brief, "a moral panic is a form of collective behavior characterized by suddenly increased concern and hostility in a significant segment of society, in reaction to widespread beliefs about a newly perceived threat from moral deviants" (Victor 1998:542). Notably, careful empirical examination at a later time often reveals that the perceived threat was greatly exaggerated or nonexistent.

Critical Thinking

Can you think of a situation in which the threat around a moral panic was later revealed to be greatly exaggerated or nonexistent?



Before you proceed to the FORUM discussion on the next screen, read Jenness's review of Philp Jenkins's *Moral Panic*



Please read the following:

["Moral Panic: Changing Concepts of the Child Molester in Modern America"](#)

To what degree does contemporary concern around the "child molester" constitute a modern moral panic?

[Visit California's Sex Offender Registry.](#)

To participate in the discussion, select OUTLINE from the TOOLS menu. Once you are back at the OUTLINE, select the appropriate FORUM from this lecture.

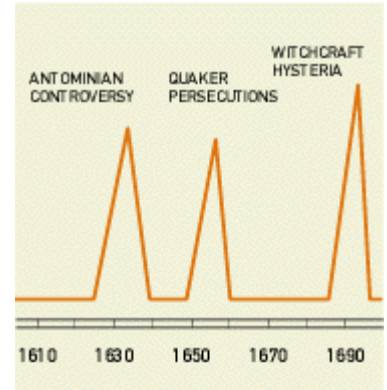


A central question in the study of moral panics is "why do they occur" when they do? The literature suggests three models of moral panics: the grassroots model, the interest group model, and the elite engineered model.

Model 1: The Grassroots Model

This model suggests that a moral panic arises spontaneously across a broad spectrum of a society's population. The concern and anger about the threat from perceived moral deviants is a response to persistent and widespread social stress. Anxieties arising from these social stresses are not able to gain direct expression. Instead the anxieties are displaced and directed toward social deviants, who become regarded as the cause of concern. An example of this is the return to the witch hunts in Massachusetts Bay Colony, as described by Kai Erickson in *Wayward Puritans*.

"Crime Waves" in the Massachusetts Bay Colony (17th Century)



What other examples of moral panics with grassroots origins can you think of? Do a little informal research on your own to inform your contribution to the Forum discussion on the next screen



Share with your cohort some other examples of moral panics that have had "grassroots" origins.



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Model 2: The Interest Group Model

This model suggests that moral panics are an unintended consequence of moral crusades launched by specific interest groups and their activists, who attempt to focus public attention on moral evils that they perceive to be threats to society.

What other examples of moral panics can you think of that have been launched by specific interest groups and their activists? Do a little informal research on your own to inform your contribution to Forum discussion on the next screen.



Share with your cohort some other examples of moral panics that have been launched by interest groups.

To participate in the discussion, select OUTLINE from the TOOLS menu. Once you are back at the OUTLINE, select the appropriate FORUM from this lecture.



Model 3: The Elite Engineered Model

This model suggests that powerful elite can orchestrate a moral panic. The elite use the major institutions of a society to promote a campaign to generate and sustain public moral outrage about the threat. An example is Katherine Beckett's work on "Setting the Public Agenda: 'Street Crime' and Drug Use in American Politics," which was presented earlier in this course. In it she demonstrates that politicians - as elite members of society - generate public concern about crime and punitive reactions toward criminals.

What are some other examples of moral panics that have been launched by a powerful elite?



To participate in the discussion, select OUTLINE from the TOOLS menu. Once you are back at the OUTLINE, select the appropriate FORUM from this lecture.



Once moral crusades occur, what social processes do they typically involve? Case studies of many moral crusades - from witch hunts to campaigns around child abuse to more recent investigations of the invocation of repressed memories - reveal a number of commonalities underlying the development and maintenance of a moral panic, including telling atrocity tales and moral panics evoking moral outrage.

First, we'll explore the nature of atrocity tales. Let's consider the example of child abuse, a contemporary moral crusade with which we are all familiar. In particular, consider the stories re-reported in *Horror Stories and the Construction of Child Abuse*, by John M. Johnson. The stories are not untrue, but they represent the worse case scenario, not the modal categories of child abuse in America. As Johnson argues, "These are emotionally provocative stories about violence to children" (Johnson 1995:8).

Child abuse can have tragic results as in the case of Nadine Lockwood who was found starved to death in her crib. Her mother, Carla, has been charged with the crime.



Reported in the mainstream media, atrocity stories have played a significant role in development of the child maltreatment movement in the United States. As such, they have a number of identifiable features.

1. Atrocity stories are designed to evoke negative emotionality. Consider the following reports:

- The Baltimore Police found Patty Saunders, 9, in the 23 x 52-inch closet where she had been locked for half her life. She weighed only 20 pounds, and stood less than 3 feet tall. Smearred with filth, scarred from parental beatings, Patty had become irreparably mentally retarded (*Newsweek*, October 10, 1977:31).
- Alyssa Dawn Wilson died at the age of 6 weeks in a Beauford, South Carolina, clinic. An autopsy disclosed that the infant had a ruptured liver and spleen and eye injuries, a fractured knee, 14 broken ribs, bite marks on her cheeks, bruises on her stomach and back and alcohol in her bloodstream. Her father was arrested for murder (*Newsweek*, October 10, 1977:32).

- The body of a missing 2-month-old boy was found in a pile of rubble Tuesday, hours after the infant's parents were charged in connection with his death. The Marion couple earlier told police that their son was abducted while they completed last minute Christmas shopping. The nude body was found under some dirt, leaves, and cement in the foundation of a torn down house, about four blocks from the parents' home. "The location was given to us by the father," said Detective Larry Connors. Thus far, police do not know if the death was the result of child abuse that went too far, or the result of a deliberate slaying (*Fort Wayne Journal Gazette*, December 27, 1978:3).
- A 9-year old girl was sexually molested by her father and uncle, an aunt and her brother's boyfriend over a seven-year period without any of the suspects knowing the others were involved. Each suspect had been questioned separately, and then released into the lobby of the police station in this St. Louis suburb. "You should have seen the look on their faces," said Detective Don Gultz. It was "You too?!" The four adults were charged with 53 felony counts (Overland, Missouri, United Press International, August 16, 1985).

2. Atrocity tales very rarely report the interactional sequence leading to the abuse. Instead, the story reveals what Johnson calls a "disembodiment of interaction" that, in essence makes no attempt to give the participants's perspectives. Consider the following:

- A 40-year-old man has been charged with assaulting his 15-year-old daughter by hanging her upside down by her toes and then beating her (Arizona Republic, March 18, 1979:22).
- A Tucson woman, convicted of dumping her four-year-old daughter into a tub of scalding water for telling a lie, was sentenced to three years in prison (Arizona Republic, March 9, 1978: 11).

3. Atrocity tales often take child abuse situations out of their social context. For example, consider this story:

- Dianne Devanne, age 11, had a lot to look forward to; high school, perhaps college and a career or raising a family. But she never got the chance. Police say she was beaten to death by her father and stepmother. A rare case? Hardly. In nearly every state, laws are very loose, accurate models are scarce, and society is restive when faced with terminating parental rights. Dianne Devanne returned home in August to Braintree, Massachusetts, after two years of living in foster homes and institutions. Everyday for two weeks prior to her death, she was beaten for such acts as spilling the salt or not doing the dishes quickly enough. The beatings increased to one an hour on the last day of her life. Her father, claiming she had fallen down the stairs, took her to the local hospital where she was pronounced dead from a blow to the head, a blood clot lodged in her brain. The following day, Dianne's father and stepmother were charged with murder. (*Los Angeles Times*, December 3, 1978: 34).

4. Atrocity tales also reveal a reliance on official sources. The following story is interesting because it shows the use of four official sources in writing the story:

- Allen Madden was pummeled for perhaps four hours before he died, at times with fists, at times with a wooden club wrapped with gauze and labeled "The Big Stick." He was five years old. Police found his frail body on the living room floor, his blond hair red with blood, his hands bruised from trying to deflect the blows. "Probably, he did something an average little kid does, write on the wall or something. That's all it takes," said a former social worker who had urged that the shy kindergartner not be returned to home because she feared "there's going to be a dead kid." Allen died January 10. His mother and boyfriend are charged with murder. Allen's mother, Pam Berg, quit high school, married a sometime factory worker, Gerald Madden The Madden marriage ended shortly after Allen was born, each parent accusing the other in court of beating the children (Quincy, Illinois, Associated Press, January 22, 1979:1).

5. Finally, according to Johnson, atrocity tales of child abuse express an "Individualization of Casual Agent," which means that the individual(s) in the story bear total, absolute responsibility - there is very little attention given to external factors like a stressful situation. For example:

- "Filth of just about any kind of description" throughout a Huron Street house prompted City County Health officials to charge a woman Thursday morning with neglect of a dependent child. It was the second time this year that Westerman was charged with neglect of the children. Allen Family Relations Court suspended a 1-year sentence August 20 after a March 8 arrest because of similar conditions in the two-story house, Holly said. Neglect of a dependent is a felony. Health officials said they found the house filled with rubbish, garbage, and excrement. Holly explained that he and Bonnie Rafert, a health inspector, went to the residence Thursday morning with a Board of Works crew to clear rubbish and garbage from the yard. The Health Department has received numerous complaints about the yard, he said. Westerman has been charged at least seven times since 1974 because the condition of the yard violated city ordinances. While Rafert was supervising the removal of the rubbish-filled van from the property, Westerman swung a bat at her, causing a door of the van to slam in front of her, Holly said. When Holly attempted to arrest, she ran into the house. Holly said he called the police for assistance. When he and the officers entered the house to make an arrest, the cluttered condition was evident (*Fort Wayne Journal Gazette*, September 21, 1979:B1,2).

- "Mindy Swenson was well aware that Christopher was being mistreated by Timothy Carpenter," the Allen Superior Court affidavit said. Carpenter was charged with murder, an habitual offense in the case, and lived with the mother and the child for several months prior to the death. The mother was booked at the City County lockup Wednesday and is being held at the Allen County Jail under \$2,000 bond. She had been staying at the home of Carpenter's foster father in rural Auburn, Indiana (*Fort Wayne Journal Gazette*, July 10, 1979).

It is important to note Johnson's argument that "It would be a mistake to see child abuse as merely a creation of the media. News organizations played a creative role in the process; some would argue a major role. But, just as important, news organizations responded to a sense of urgency created by other groups, agencies, and sectors of the public" (Johnson 1995: 16). This, of course, is consistent with the models of moral panics identified earlier.

Federal legislation is perhaps the capstone of moral crusades, which are not limited to child abuse. For instance, take the recent moral crusade against sex offenders. Sex offender legislation has snowballed in recent years, beginning with the Jacob Wetterling Act (1994), which mandates registration of sex offenders with law enforcement. In the years since then, the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act and the Jessica Lunsford Act have both been responses to heightened moral panic, introducing increasingly restrictive penalties for sex offenders.



What examples of atrocity tales that you have thought of have also been told by perpetrators of hate crimes? Share some of these with your cohort.



To participate in the discussion, select OUTLINE from the TOOLS menu. Once you are back at the OUTLINE, select the appropriate FORUM from this lecture.



How can we think about social movements, such as the white supremacy movement and the anti-hate crime movement, as the most visible brokers of hate crime politics in the United States?

It should be obvious at this point that social movements are the most visible form of moral crusades. Indeed, the very purpose of a social movement is to negotiate values, redistribute resources, and or authorize action (and reaction) against select groups of citizens and social issues.

In simplest terms, we can think of social movements as: "organized efforts to change social arrangements undertaken by more than one entity (that is, organization, which are different from broad currents of social change that take place without anyone's direction or efforts." Key here is the notion that social movements are comprised of multiple organizations pursuing similar goals (in a general sense).

For example, we can talk about a white supremacy movement as comprised of multiple organizations pursuing the general objective of promoting white supremacy (that is, enhancing the status and welfare of white people).

Of course, these groups can vary in terms of their personnel, organizational form, targets, tactics, rationales, justifications, and sources of strain to which they are responding.

Similarly, we can talk about an anti-hate crime movement, which is comprised of multiple organizations pursuing the general objective of responding to those who promote white supremacy (that is, enhancing the status and welfare of white people) and a perceived escalation of intergroup violence directed at minorities. Of course, these groups can vary in terms of their personnel, organizational form, targets, tactics, rationales, justifications, and sources of strain to which they are responding.

Exercise

Search the web for various anti-hate crime organizations and try to inventory the way in which they vary across key dimensions.



Social movement scholars have studied a variety of issues related to the emergence, structure, and success of social movements, arguing that they are central to modern day politics. This, of course, is true for modern "politics of hate." Clearly, to understand the contours of hate crime, one needs to have some familiarity with white supremacist movement organizations and the movement it sustains.

To understand the white supremacist movement, we might ask the following kinds of questions:

- What is the structure of white supremacy in the United States? Most experts on the topic agree that the white supremacist movement is comprised of a variety of organizations that can be arrayed on a continuum from violence to nonviolent and from embedded in electoral politics to not.
- What are the grievances put forth by these organizations? To get a sense of this, you can return to some of the work we've already studied.

Exercise

Do a Google search on the Internet using any or all of the following key words: "white supremacy," "hate group," "right-wing," or "Ku Klux Klan." Then visit the web pages of various white supremacist groups and see for yourself what kind of grievances they put forth.

Now ask your self the following question: What are the common grievances?



What calls for action do white supremacist movements articulate? To get a sense of this, you can return to some of the work we've already studied, including Green et al., "The Distinctive Political Views of Hate-Crime Perpetrators and White Supremacists" and Blazak, "White Boys to Terrorist Men Target Recruitment of Nazi Skinheads"; and the "[Revolutionary Recruitment Issue](#)" from the Aryan Youth Movement. Revisit the web pages you found in the exercise you just completed.

Finally, ask yourself to what degree has this movement been successful in reaching its goals? Success of a social movement is measured in a variety of ways, including:

- The degree to which organizations comprising the movement remain in existence and marshal (material and symbolic) resources to pursue their goals;
- The degree to which the social movement is recognized as a legitimate or important player in public debate (that is, to what degree do they get a hearing?);
- The degree to which the social movement gains followers and shapes public opinion about the “nature of the problem”; and
- The degree to which the social movement shapes public policy and achieves policy goals, most notably legal change in a favored direction.

Given the criteria presented above for distinguishing the relative success of a social movement, discuss with your cohort which contemporary social movements appear to have been the most successful. Why do you think those that have succeeded to the greatest extent have done so?

To participate in the discussion, select OUTLINE from the TOOLS menu. Once you are back at the OUTLINE, select the appropriate FORUM from this lecture.



summary

IN THIS LESSON YOU LEARNED:

- "Moral entrepreneurs" create and enforce moral rules in order to persuade others to adhere to a specific symbolic-moral universe. Moral entrepreneurs are often committed to undertaking and sustaining moral crusades to create what Cohen calls "moral panics."
- A moral panic is "a condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians, and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved, or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges, or deteriorates and becomes more visible."
- Goode and Ben Yehuda have suggested the following indicators of a moral panic: volatility, hostility, measurable concern, consensus, and disproportionality.
- The literature suggests three Models of Moral Panics: the Grassroots Model; the Interest Group Model; and the Elite-Engineered Model.
- Case studies of many moral crusades reveal a number of commonalities underlying the development and maintenance of a moral panic, including: telling atrocity tales; detailing the value violations inherent in the social problem or the group now deemed a threat; authorizing, implicitly or explicitly, punitive actions towards those who transgress; and mobilizing control efforts against perpetrators.
- Social movements are the most visible form of moral crusades. Indeed, the very purpose of a social movement is to negotiate values, redistribute resources, and or authorize action (and reaction) against select groups of citizens and social issues. Social movements are comprised of multiple organizations pursuing



similar goals (in a general sense).

- Success of a social movement is measured in a variety of ways, including: the degree to which organizations comprising the movement remain in existence and marshal (material and symbolic) resources to pursue their goals; the degree to which the social movement is recognized as a legitimate/important player in public debate; the degree to which the social movement gains followers and shapes public opinion about the "nature of the problem"; and the degree to which the social movement shapes public policy and achieves policy goals, most notably legal change in a favored direction.

