

Failed Constructions



Addressing White-Collar Crime in the Media

SOCI0067 Crime and the Media
Lecture 12

1

Acknowledgements

A very special thank you to
Dr Cho
for this rare opportunity to share my passion

•

This lecture also drew inspiration from

Jenny Ng's

SOCI0041: Social Problems Term Paper

Child Neglect: The Social Problem that Could have Been

2

Understanding White-Collar Crime

3

What We Know

- ❖ Mainly economic
- ❖ Mundane when compared to street crime
- ❖ Isolated to a few corporations
 - ▶ Industry regulators keep a close watch
- ❖ Non-violent and not very serious

So why study white-collar crime?

4

Fact *or* Fiction?

5

Scenario 1

Year of Discovery: 1982

Summary of Events:

In 1967, a science company was bidding for a U.S. government arms contract to supply anti-personnel equipment to the military. The prototype weapon they had initially created however, seemed unstable and required field testing to tweak and perfect.

To accomplish this, the company managed to garner the army's support and had them send over fresh recruits who were meant for Vietnam to an underground test facility. Both the army and company understood that there was no intention that these men survive the tests as the weapon concerned technology of a highly sensitive nature at the time.

Outcome of Events:

The tests were unveiled because one of the participants managed to escape the laboratory and brought the story to the press.

When this was revealed, the company was stripped of its business privileges and the results of the research were confiscated. Afterwards, the military and government initiated a major cover-up operation, but the on-going war in Vietnam proved enough of a diversion and this incident is now a mere footnote in military history.

6

Here, I wanted to draw upon people's common conception of white-collar crime—to bait them into thinking that white-collar crime really is just a bunch of people sitting in offices pushing on calculators.

I must note that I fudged this a little because the game was set in a different universe and a different time, but it was a fun experimental case since it seemed very "likely". More than that, it's not too far from the reality that Britain tested the effects of nuclear radiation with its own soldiers. For more information, look up the British Nuclear Test Veterans Association.

Scenario 1: FICTION

The story is the premise
behind the video game,
Portal.

7

Scenario 2

Year of Discovery: 1972

Summary of Events:

In 1932, a longitudinal study was commissioned by the American Public Health Service (PHS) to track the natural progression of a degenerative disease in human subjects.

Partway through the study, an effective cure was found for the disease, but the study's participants were actively prevented from seeking the treatment. This was because the study aimed to understand how the disease advanced naturally in humans, and more importantly, the participants were more useful dead than they were alive.

Outcome of Events:

The discovery in 1972 occurred when a whistleblower took the story to the press.

As a result, the PHS and other government health agencies appointed an advisory panel to review the study, which then led to its official termination. By this time, 81% of the participants were dead.

8

Scenario 2: FACT

The study was known as the

*Tuskegee Study of
Untreated Syphilis in the
Negro Male*

9

This study is infamous and appears in almost all research ethics textbooks. In fact, it was because of this study that research ethics gained such a powerful position in academia. It paved the way for the Belmont Report, which was then adopted by other fields involving human research.

Scenario 3

Year of Discovery: 1975

Summary of Events:

In 1966, the British and American governments agreed on a trade with one another. The British would cede control of a small island in exchange for two American-built nuclear submarines. The islands were of strategic importance because of its proximity to other major nations.

To fulfill their end of the bargain, the British changed the official status of the island from “inhabited” to “uninhabitable”. They then used various methods of intimidation, including the slaughter of all the islanders’ pets, to forcibly remove them. The Americans delivered the two agreed submarines and all was well.

Outcome of Events:

The discovery of these events occurred as a result of a journalist hearing of these incidents and investigating the matter in-depth.

Her Royal Highness, Queen Elizabeth II, has not said anything of this incident.

10

Scenario 3: FACT

The island is called Diego Garcia and the islanders are known as the Chagossians.

The British courts ruled the government had acted illegally in 2000.

The battle between the judiciary and government continues to rage with the last government decree overturning the latest court ruling in October 2008.

11

Where Was the Media?

They have been
following
the story since
September **1975**

The real question is:
**Where was the
audience?**

12

This was placed in here to demonstrate the ridiculous nature of white-collar crime. I had already known the abuses of power by the time I came across this case, but this one really shook me very hard. Another inexplicable case that I originally wanted to share was the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Uncovering the truth of these cases really puts things in perspective.

So really, what is
white-collar crime?

13

Limitations

- Swatting flies instead of beating tigers
- Beating dead tigers

To which, some people argue back:

“The tigers may look scary but
it is the flies that annoy you everyday!”

14

A fly will pester you and
test your patience,

15

I really wanted to address this point and it was from here that I hoped to demonstrate that we, as a people, make ‘innocent’ rationalisations that have serious and adverse consequences. The nice thing about globalisation is that we don’t see where the excesses of our innocent rationale is exported to. We all have a part to play in this mess called white-collar crime.

But it is a tiger that will
devour your entire family.

16

“Was für ein Glück für die Regierenden,
dass die Menschen nicht denken.”

How fortunate for leaders
that men do not think.

—Adolf Hitler, *Führer of Nazi Germany*—

17

This was a deleted slide that I brought back for this PDF. This is one of my favourite quotes because it demonstrated that the simple act of “not thinking” was enough to kill over a million people and lead a country down the path of war (this is still true today, the invasion of Iraq in 2003, is a good example). I planned to use it to bolster the position of the tiger and fly analogy and place my finger on the aim of beating the tiger.

A Load of Myths

- ❖ Mainly economic
- ❖ Mundane when compared to street crime
- ❖ Isolated to a few corporations
 - ▶ Industry regulators keep a close watch
- ❖ Non-violent and not very serious

18

Here is the common conceptions of white-collar crime again. But this time, they are revealed as myths.

The Economic Myth: A Definitional Dilemma

- ❖ Misconception fueled by definitional difficulties of white-collar crime
- ❖ Sutherland's definition:
 - ▶ *A crime committed by a person of respectability and high social status in the course of his occupation* (1983:7)
- ❖ Criminological rift that became known as the Sutherland-Tappan debate

19

The Economic Myth: A Definitional Dilemma

- ❖ Tappan instead,
 - ▶ Argued that white-collar crime take its cue from law—like all other crimes
 - ▶ White-collar crime should be understood by type of crime, instead of type of criminal

20

The Economic Myth: A Definitional Dilemma

- ❖ Better yet, consider Hong Kong's primary white-collar-crime-fighting agency
 - ❖ Nothing says that white-collar crime should be associated to "type of crime" more than the ICAC's name

21

The Economic Myth: A Definitional Dilemma

- ❖ It is necessary that law enforcement agencies understand white-collar crime as a type of crime
- ❖ Why should criminologists stop at such a simplistic understanding of crime?
 - ▶ Neo-Marxist Criminology (Conflict School)
 - The law serves the interests of power

22

I begin to distant myself from the legal interpretation of white-collar crime simply because the law promotes and propagates the inequality. To demonstrate, consider how Hyundai CEO, Chung Mong-Koo, was given a full presidential pardon for embezzling US \$106 million (yes, you are reading this correctly). The reason? Chung is too important for the South Korean economy for the law to intervene. See? White-collar crime can make you a hero too! YAY!

The Economic Myth: A Definitional Dilemma

- ❖ White-collar crime research redefines crime and challenges contemporary criminological theory
 - ▶ Criminologists cannot ignore the abuses and exploits of legal industries
 - ▶ Operational definition of white-collar crime:

Misconduct that entails avoidable and unnecessary harm to society, is serious enough to warrant state intervention, and resembles other kinds of acts criminalised in the countries concerned or by international law.

(Passas, 1999)

23

Enough is enough, we need a new definition for crime as criminologists because we cannot continue to allow for these abuses to go unnoticed—or rather, undefined.

But to be corrupted by
totalitarianism
one does not need to live in a
totalitarian country.
The mere prevalence of
certain ideas can spread a kind of
poison that makes one subject after
another impossible for
literary purposes.

—George Orwell, *British author*—

24

Another one of my favourite quotes from one of my favourite authors. I use this quote to show how Orwell understood that ideas—just ideas alone—are powerful enough to mislead an entire population to serve other interests.

The Economic Myth: A Definitional Dilemma

White-collar crime opens up the door to another dimension on the question of deviance—a dimension that holds an uncomfortable realisation beyond the economics of white-collar crime.

25

Beyond the simplicity and fascination with street crime lies a world that is often unseen by the public. Street crime may be backstage behaviour, but white-collar crime is the stage you are looking at and theatre you are sitting in to watch the play of life. White-collar crime is not just economics, it is a part of our neoliberal capitalist culture; in other words, it is a part of us.

A Load of Myths

- ❖ ~~Mainly economic~~
- ❖ Mundane when compared to street crime
- ❖ Isolated to a few corporations
 - ▶ Industry regulators keep a close watch
- ❖ Non-violent and not very serious

26

Oh Mundane Crime, Why Doth Thou Spite Thee?

- ❖ So what if we can “open up the field” to different types of crime?
 - ▶ It’s still not as cool as the serial murder cases I’ve been talking with my friends about
- ❖ White-collar crime is more a part of everyday life
 - ▶ All of us have been touched by white-collar crime in some way or other
 - ▶ All of us have helped in encouraging it
- ❖ Consider the following, seemingly unrelated, example:

27

In this slide, I wanted to emphasise that we are all part of the problem. Our ideas and rationalisations that defend corporate culture and the ideals of power sustain these systems and allow for these crimes to become non-crimes. Consider the “economic tsunami” today and turn to page 14 of your Passas reading regarding “Undermining Economic Growth”. The last few words of that passage seem all the more cryptic at this moment, don’t they?

The NASA Challenger Accident?

- ❖ January 28, 1986
- ❖ Millions of Americans witnessed the launch of Challenger on live television
- ❖ This was NASA's 25th Space Mission, which up until that day had not suffered too many problems.

28

Criminal Negligence

- Two parts to definition of accident:
 - Unintended
 - Unexpected
- NASA knew of the problem in 1977 that's 9 years before the disaster.
- The night before the fateful launch, engineers' reported to NASA that their findings were:

INCONCLUSIVE

29

Just on a side note, while some disciplines like to use the incident to demonstrate the concept of "group think", white-collar criminologists generally use Merton's strain and anomie theory instead. The event was a result of organisational pressures influencing the decision-making process, which ultimately forced managers to adapt.

Oh Mundane Crime, Why Doth Thou Spite Thee?

- ❖ White-collar crime is extremely mundane
 - ▶ So mundane that we are blind to it
- ❖ White-collar crime is a product and function of our culture
 - ▶ Economic institution over-powered all other social institutions
 - ▶ Ideology provides rationalisations to neutralise abuses and exploitation of others
 - ▶ No conspiracy, no intent—simply a logical outcome

30

In this slide, I really wanted to show that the way we think is itself a part of the problem. Our minds are not capable of understanding these things as crimes—our rationales automatically do not consider them criminal and, following the path of logic, can understand how they reached their conclusions to do the things they did.

Oh Mundane Crime,
Why Doth Thou Spite Thee?

White-collar crime brings us face-to-face with the uncomfortable truth that our harmless thoughts, rationalisations and actions as individuals has real and painful consequences.

31

We always think that we are “small fish” and there is nothing we could do about anything anyway, so why try? Well, it’s because we think we could do nothing that we do nothing and allow for this to go on. We can only think comfortably and sleep well at night because we feel that our thoughts and way of life have nothing to do with the pain and suffering of others. This is, unfortunately, a serious falsehood.

Not ignorance,
but the ignorance of ignorance
that is the death of knowledge.

—Alfred North Whitehead,
*British mathematician
and philosopher*—

32

Another one of my favourite quotes. Here, it notes that it’s okay not to know the state of things, but what is not acceptable is when you refuse to know.

A Load of Myths

- ❖ ~~Mainly economic~~
- ❖ ~~Mundane when compared to street crime~~
- ❖ Isolated to a few corporations
 - ▶ Industry regulators keep a close watch
- ❖ Non-violent and not very serious

33

Rotten Apples? A Small Sample of White-Collar Criminals

- ❖ Ford introduced to the market in September 1980
- ❖ Aimed for three qualities:
 1. Subcompact size
 2. Affordability
 3. Product superiority
- ❖ Strictly kept production cost of Pinto under US\$2,000

34

Rotten Apples? A Small Sample of White-Collar Criminals

- ❖ Ford knew Pinto was firetrap before it was released
- ❖ Using cost-benefit analysis, Ford concluded that:
 - Paying compensation on lawsuits costs less annually than implementing safety measures
- ❖ From Ford, I learnt that:
 - Preventive measures = US\$11
 - Life of a human = US\$200,000
 - Est. annual fiery Pinto deaths = 180

35

I love this case simply because of the wonderful demonstration of how, by putting everything into an economics formula and in our pursuit of greater profits, we can forget that our actions have human consequences—even when they seem so obvious!

Rotten Apples: Society, Culture and a Moral Backbone

- ❖ As for those regulatory agencies we were talking about...
 - They can be influenced in many different ways, for example, from the Pinto case
 - Crafting an intellectual argument that places blame on the driver and government road maintenance
 - Talking directly to top tier government officials to put your point forward
 - Lobbying to change or prevent laws to your own advantage

36

Rotten Apples: Society, Culture and a Moral Backbone

White-collar crime requires us to think again about our priorities as a society and reconsider whether our way of life is sustainable.

37

A Load of Myths

- ❖ ~~Mainly economic~~
- ❖ ~~Mundane when compared to street crime~~
- ❖ ~~Isolated to a few corporations~~
 - ▶ ~~Industry regulators keep a close watch~~
- ❖ Non-violent and not very serious

38

Shiva, the God of Death: White-Collar Crime, a Killer?

- ❖ So people die every now and then when white-collar criminals work
 - ▶ So what? There's bound to be some risk in everything
 - It's not as if they meant to kill them
- ❖ Fair enough then...

39

So far I noted the side of how white-collar crime is actually a natural result of our logic and thinking, but at this point I wanted to show a more sinister side of white-collar crime. Troublemakers beware, no one gets in the way of power—no one!

Shiva, the God of Death: White-Collar Crime, a Killer?

ASSASSINATED **Name:** Anna Politkovskaya
Profession: Investigative Journalist
Specialty: Chechnya, Russian politics
3 men were arrested, but not for murder.
All were acquitted due to police mishandling of evidence.

Since 1992, **734** journalists have been killed
▶ **72.1%** were murdered, of that
● **32%** were killed by political groups
● **18.4%** were killed by politicians
▶ **88.7%** of the perpetrators escaped justice

40

This really speaks for itself, don't you think? The information was obtained from the Committee to Protect Journalists.

Shiva, the God of Death: White-Collar Crime, a Killer?

- ❖ Assassination is not the only option
- ❖ This is Ken Saro-Wiwa, a Nigerian author, TV producer and environmental activist
 - ▶ He was arrested with eight others and charged with incitement to murder
 - ▶ Defence lawyers resigned in protest because the trial was clearly rigged
 - ▶ The trial continued in spite of the lack of a defence with bribed witnesses testifying
 - ▶ Saro-Wiwa and his eight colleagues were sentenced to death by hanging
- ❖ Saro-Wiwa was executed on 10 November 1995

41

I deleted this slide from the lecture since I didn't want to dwell too much on the deliberate killings, especially if I was going to show Bhopal. This case demonstrates how the privileged can use other means to finish off 'undesirable' people—in this one, they not only killed him but had the opportunity to scold the world for trying to meddle in their system of justice. Ironic, isn't it?

“Aber das ist wohl so, weil ein einzelner immer der Tod ist — und zwei Millionen immer nur eine Statistik.”

The death of one man is a tragedy,
the death of millions is a statistic.

—Erich Maria Remarque, *German author*—

42

Another lovely quote that really demonstrates how numbers have a way of removing the human dimension of certain situations. It was in understanding this that I resorted to showing a clip on Bhopal and then complementing it with numbers.

Shiva, the God of Death: White-Collar Crime, a Killer?

- ❖ White-collar crime is most devastating when it reveals itself as a mass murderer
- ❖ Recounting the Bhopal gas disaster
- ❖ The Union Carbide plant was a gift to India
- ❖ December 3rd, 1984
 - ▶ A combination of
 1. Poor upkeep of equipment
 2. Deactivated and unmaintained safety systems
 3. Union Carbide's disregard for warnings
- ❖ Led to a runaway reaction which resulted in the release of 42 tonnes of toxic gas
- ❖ The immediate death toll was placed at over **2,200** people.
- ❖ Two week's later, the figure had risen to **8,000** dead.
- ❖ Today, that number is **22,000**.
- ❖ It has been estimated that **500,000** people were exposed to the toxic gas.
- ❖ Union Carbide, now Dow Chemical, continues to deny responsibility for the incident
- ❖ Compensation was petty and even then, it took nearly **20 years** to reach the survivors
- ❖ The area is still contaminated and no one has stepped up to clean the environmental mess to this day

43

Shiva, the God of Death: White-Collar Crime, a Killer?

White-collar crime makes us take a long hard look at ourselves as a people. It redefines our very understanding and assumptions, and ultimately takes us beyond arguments of good and evil...

44

Integrity without knowledge is weak and useless, and knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful.

—Samuel Johnson,
*British author,
lexicographer and
literary critic*—

This was really an appeal to all those sitting in the lecture theatre to never allow the world to pressure you into anything unethical. When you go into the “real world”, you will realise how easy it may be to “bend the rules” depending on your line of work—it is in these situations that white-collar crimes take their baby steps and raw rationalisations begin to be formulated. Stand guard against these ideas.

45

What We Really Know

- ❖ Economics is only part of the reason
- ❖ White-collar crime is more commonplace
- ❖ Capitalist cultures tend towards criminogenesis
 - ▶ Sometimes regulators are themselves participants
- ❖ White-collar crime can be very violent

46

By capitalist cultures, I actually mean neo-liberal capitalist cultures like that of Hong Kong's. "Criminogenesis" is a word I made up to basically say that our culture tends towards the creation of criminal motivations and opportunities (yes, I love making up words (^__^)).

In the End...

- ❖ As criminologists, we cannot ignore the excesses of our capitalist environment and worldview
 - ▶ Again, it must be stressed that white-collar crime need not be a conspiracy
- ❖ White-collar crime is not always a crime technically, but criminologically there's no reason why we should give it special treatment

47

If there is one thing that all social theorists know, it is that social theory is emergent and self-evident. That is, upon enough reflection, one need not study sociology to glimpse the social structure of society. Of course, sociology facilitates in the discourse by providing us the tools and concepts of analysis but it is not a necessary part to recognise the structure of society we live in. In fact, this principle is extremely important in Marxist theory, because Marx believed that class consciousness is not attained from education, it is attained from suffering.

TIME TO
—TAKE A BREAK—

▶ Go to Break Topic: *Social Theory in Music*

48

You're listening to:

Artist:

Tupac Shakur (2Pac)

Title:

Changes

Album:

Greatest Hits

Tupac Shakur was an American rapper, songwriter, actor and social activist.

Changes was released posthumously, but in it Shakur outlines and critiques the belief that there is nothing we could do about our situation.

This belief that "this is the way of the world" is what Engels termed false consciousness. In trying to break free from those chains, Shakur talks about needing to change everything about our culture—including the things we eat.

Without such a radical aim for change, Shakur argues that this system and politics of oppression and domination will never change.

BREAK topic: Social Theory in Popular Music

49

2Pac was the figure that began my foray into the "scary" world of rap and hip-hop because as a teenager at the time, I found his lyrics to be strangely meaningful (esp. at the time when rap was strongly clamped down on). In *Changes*, Pac delivers a song that demonstrates all levels of political consciousness under neo-Marxist theory. The rap illuminates the task ahead of us if we are to change the conditions we live in and while it seems impossible, the fact is simply that change is the only constant in the world. The question is, how do you want it to change?

You're listening to:

Artist:

Ai Otsuka (大塚 愛)

Title:

LOVE MUSIC

Album:

LOVE COOK

Ai Otsuka is a Japanese singer-songwriter, pianist, illustrator, columnist, and radio talk show host.

In *LOVE MUSIC*, Otsuka discusses how each and every person has in themselves the strength to make a difference in the world. The title of the song emphasises this concept of making a difference despite our apparent insignificance by using a small "i" to reflect our feelings of self.

Through the song, Otsuka demonstrates that just as we all have the strength to each make a difference, so too do we actively choose to do nothing and let everything continue as it is.

To that end, Otsuka offers a manifesto through this song—a manifesto that we sing in one voice and one tongue, united, to make that difference for a more peaceful tomorrow.

BREAK topic: Social Theory in Popular Music

50

Ai is one of my favourite artists because of her extremely varied and deep discussions on human emotion through her music. *LOVE MUSIC* caught my attention because I am a sucker for songs that call for peace. My love for this song was bolstered after an interview she gave that noted the Japanese and English interpretations of the "i" in the song's title ("小さな愛" for Japanese and "smallness of self" for English). Nonetheless, one verse that has stayed with me from this song is the one about "becoming your voice" where she gathers up the sentiments of the people and expresses it in this song. The idea to this song is simple, and one that is consistent throughout the first part of my lecture, we all have the power to make a difference—what difference will you make?

You're listening to:

Artist:

Ellen McLain (as GLaDOS)

Title:

Still Alive

Album:

The Orange Box OST

Ellen McLain is an American soprano, stage actress, and voice actress.

In *Still Alive*, McLain plays the role of an artificially intelligent computer by the name of GLaDOS.

Functioning purely on logic, the song is filled with seeming contradictions that are, in fact, not contradictory at all. More importantly though, it is based on these logical systems that GLaDOS undertakes her tasks and makes sense of the world.

This is very much the epitome of the modern-day corporation, where decisions come about through a series of logical rules and the human dimension is stripped of any apparent relevance.

This echoes the ideas of Weber and demonstrates how corporations take on a life of their own.

BREAK topic: Social Theory in Popular Music

51

In playing *GLaDOS*, I feel that McLain captures perfectly the image of the modern corporation as a man-made logic machine that is blind to the human dimension of its actions. Logic is itself not a bad thing, but when unmediated, we end up very much like Hitler's rampage against those that he deemed defective. If you thought carefully about his arguments, it was simply relentlessly logical. But there is more to social interactions than logic, and it is in putting forward only logical conclusions in its lyrics that *Still Alive* creates a very bizarre picture of the world; but one that we are strangely understanding of and familiar with. *Still Alive* also embodies the concept of the corporation because the fact that the corporation is more an idea than an entity means that you can't really kill it. You can arrest its directors for corruption and all these other things, but as Ford demonstrates, the corporation and everything it embodies lives on.

~END OF BREAK~

> Return to Part 2 of Lecture

52

Welcome Back to **Part 2:** White-Collar Crime and the Media

53

Revisiting Katz's Article

❖ **Central Theses:**

- ▶ The public, in general, is really just not interested in crime
- ▶ Crime is not newsworthy in itself
- ▶ Newsworthiness of street crime is derived from its ability to help us make better sense of the world

❖ **So, what makes white-collar crime newsworthy?**

I really wanted to emphasise Katz's point only because it was such an insightful reading to base our course under. The fact that many of you emphasised that you have no interest in crime demonstrates his point. Above all, it also is a message that as criminologists we know that there is no reason for you to be interested in our subject of study; still, we have our own reasons for studying the other side of society, if not to try make things better, then at least to uncover the abuses that occur when no one else is watching.

54

Revisiting Katz's Article

❖ **White-collar crime news**

- ▶ Adopts legal definition of white-collar crime
- ▶ Only newsworthy because of offender's status and wealth
- ▶ But it's not actually very interesting, and few really actually bother understanding it

❖ **So, if the above is true, why do journalists bother writing about it and people try to know about it?**

55

Revisiting Katz's Article

❖ **Katz's explanation:**

Moral division of labour

- ▶ We all feel morally bound to do certain things in our various social roles
- ▶ **Readers** feel they should know about it because we must make sure everyone in society, especially our bosses, are behaving properly
- ▶ **Journalists** feel they should report on it because they must maintain their objectivity and something like this is surely important to society

56

White-Collar Crime Research Strategies

❖ **The "Oops" Factor**

- ▶ Researching white-collar crime is neither easy nor safe
- ▶ One methodology borrows from and relies on traditional investigative journalism
- ▶ This methodology is known as "accident research"

Personally, I really thought that I should have divided this part up better. Anyway, in this slide, I wanted to show that white-collar criminologists have a strange affiliation with the media in that we interact very much with investigative journalists. One of the first things I did when I got back to Hong Kong and started up my research on Fujian, China was to contact journalists for insights (I have changed my topic since, LOL). That was when I realised that Hong Kong's journalists are not quite the same as the journalists I have come to know in America and the routinisation of news has gotten so much more deeper here than I had expected.

57

White-Collar Crime Research Strategies

❖ What is “traditional” investigative journalism?

- ▶ Term became fashionable in the 60s and 70s
- ▶ Requires deep investigation of topic of interest
- ▶ A lot of time and research is placed in preparing the piece
- ▶ Investigative journalism is about uncovering truths that may have been otherwise obscured
 - In this way, some work of academics are also considered part of investigative journalism (e.g. Joy Gordon in Iraq)
- ▶ Tends to carry personal consequences

- ▶ Created to differentiate from Mainland Chinese variant of “investigative journalism”

58

Here, I really wanted to emphasise the difference between investigative journalism and Mainland Chinese investigative journalism because there are many political reasons for governments to use journalists to do their research (i.e. it happens in other countries too). One of the reasons is simply that journalists can do and access what the police and other law-bounded enforcement agencies can't by snooping around. In this way and in my personal view, investigative journalism in China seems more like an extension of law enforcement than actual journalism, and this is something I really wanted to emphasise.

Never believe anything
until it is officially denied.

—Francis Claud Cockburn,
British-Irish journalist—

59

Another quote that I so love from Cockburn. This was his comment about the “new breed” of journalist who simply accepts everything that is fed to them through official channels. In this quote I was trying to show that I was not about to absolve the media for the disinformation it gives, I don't deny it—but I did want to show that the media is not “one thing” with only “one message” through this course. Anyway, if you are interested in an extremely thorough exposé on the news media, check out the book by investigative journalist, Nick Davies, called *Flat Earth News* (it was released just this year and it's extremely merciless, LOL). If you are an aspiring journalist, trust me, read this book.

White-Collar Crime Research Strategies

❖ Accident Research 101:

- ▶ Hands-off methodology
- ▶ Assumes that information on white-collar crime is not readily available
- ▶ Requires sensitivity to a sociology of news and understanding of fundamentals of large corporations
- ▶ Accidents provide glimpses into the inner workings of what is normally hidden from view as information is more forthcoming
 - Another variant is looking into scandals
- ▶ Relies on the investigative journalists, politicians, and others as “research assistants”

- ▶ **Examples:** Exxon Valdez (pictured top right), SS Challenger, Ford Pinto, and the Bhopal disaster.

60

I am not a big fan of accident research, but it is a legitimate research strategy. I don't like it only because it seems cowardly and lazy to have someone else do the work for you as you analyse things in the comfort of your own chair (it also propagates the ideology that sustains white-collar crime). Of course, today, the research methodology is mainly mixed between personal field investigations and looking at other sources to supplement that information.

White-Collar Crime Research Strategies

The media plays a very big role for white-collar criminologists.

In many ways, hands-on white-collar crime research is the same as investigative journalist research.

The only difference is where the paper ends up and our style of writing.

61

I say our research and their investigations are the same, but in reality there are some differences since our roles give us different access privileges and the ethical codes we are bound by also require us to approach things differently. The actual field work and the risks involved are actually quite similar. I've had one personal encounter with the face of power, LOL, and I know of other researchers (including my past mentor) that has met up with power and been severely warned as well. Wonderful, isn't it? But if they think that's going to stop us, they will have to think again, LOL.

White-Collar Crime in Pop Culture

- ▶ The media is a tool with which to propagate messages, meanings and symbols
- ▶ The media gives voice to the oppressed as well as to their oppressors
- ▶ The media element is only one segment of popular culture
- ▶ Popular culture is a participatory culture
 - Popular culture is an arena of politics

62

When I say the media is a tool, I understood it to mean that once one understands the intricacies of how the media manipulates information to fit its purposes, then one can also manipulate it to one's own purposes. Like a computer, you must understand how to use it and how it processes what you input, if you plan to manipulate it effectively (e.g. program software for it). I was also told by Allison and Eva that the word attached to popular culture is usually "consumer culture". Strangely enough, when I talked about participatory culture, I was thinking along the lines of consumption (i.e. we participate by consuming). Apparently, participatory culture actually has democratisation connotations as well in media and cultural studies—and heck, I think that works too (now that's what I call a 'fluke'), LOL.

White-Collar Crime and the Media

- ❖ If the media plays such large roles in white-collar crime, then did the social construction of its seriousness fail?
 - ▶ Remember in the beginning of this lecture, during the "fact or fiction" segment, I asserted:
The real question is where was the audience?
 - ▶ White-collar crime is extremely complicated and needs time to understand
 - ▶ Our culture, education, and overall ideology is not conducive to understanding white-collar crime
 - ▶ Conflicting definitions make it hard to pinpoint these acts as white-collar crime and fragment the discourse
 - ▶ Governmental censorship and back channels of pressure make it a risky business to unveil the "shocking truth"
 - ▶ Belief about the media as sensationalist help to discount "exaggerations" of white-collar crime portrayals

63

So many slides later and I finally address the question that I set out to answer: why does no one care about white-collar crime? This is where I am indebted to Jenny's paper on child neglect most as she wrote about failed constructions, instead of the normal discussion on successful constructions. Constructions fail for various reasons and I tried to point out some of the more major reasons I believe that white-collar crime was never properly constructed in the public consciousness.

Failed Constructions Does Not Mean Failure!

- ❖ White-collar criminologists and investigative journalists alike know that there is hope
- ❖ Ideology does not serve people, it serves its own principles
- ❖ Awareness and acknowledgement is the first step to fighting white-collar crime
- ❖ A culture is emerging that is beginning to allow for more open discussions of white-collar crime

64

After what I thought was a relatively depressing lecture, I decided that I need to instill some hope that there is the possibility of change. So long as we do not give up on it, the world is moving towards a more positive direction as more people become aware of the abuses perpetrated by these organisations and realise how their personal actions have a part to play in all of it. In this slide, I wanted all of you to know that there are things you could do, but the first thing you must do is to become aware and acknowledge this. Read about it, listen to it, and think about it and how to lessen the damage of your own actions and thoughts. You were part of the problem but because of that, you are now part of the solution.

We shall not flag or fail...



End of Lecture 12

(If you are looking at this slide, that means that by some miracle I actually managed to finish...)

Sorry for putting all of you through this! (@_@)

65

I love Churchill quotes, LOL.