24. Sisters in Crime

Freda Adler

In 1938, Clifford Shaw of the Chicago school of criminology published Brothers in Crime, a work whose title revealed his central focus on male crime. Nearly four decades later, Freda Adler (1975) signified a break with this perspective by naming her book Sisters in Crime. *Indeed, her scholarship helped to ensure that no future generation of criminologists would ignore gender in the study of criminal behavior.*

Adler's most provocative claim was that the movement to achieve equality between the sexes would result in increasing female crime, especially in domains previously dominated by men. This liberation thesis underestimated the tenacity of existing gender roles and inequality. Gender differences in socialization and opportunities were not swept away; and, in many ways, boys and girls continued to be raised in different social worlds. Accordingly, the "new female criminals" that Adler saw gathering on the horizon did not, at least in large numbers, materialize (see, however, Alarid et al., 1996).

Adler's work, however, played a major role in directing the attention of criminologists to the gender gap in crime and changes in this gap over time. Also, Adler challenged previous attempts to pathologize female offenders. Instead, she illuminated the way in which social experiences shape the life choices, including the choice of crime, that women make. She developed the case that the major barriers to females' participation in crime are not biological but social. While later criminologists, especially radical feminists, may find the specifics of Adler's liberation thesis problematic, she still deserves much credit for ushering in a feminist paradigm that shifted attention away from the supposed abnormalities of individual female offenders and toward an appreciation of the social circumstances in which women are enmeshed (Cullen et al., 2015).

Further, it may be premature to dismiss the possibility that long-term changes in gender roles will influence the criminal participation of women. A strong liberation thesis may be untenable, but it is not farfetched to theorize that the incremental transformation of gender roles—a transformation that affects the social experiences of women across class and racial boundaries—might be implicated in the amount and content of women's criminality. Indeed, several recent accounts relate female crime to the adoption of nontraditional gender roles and identities—although none of these accounts portray female criminals as "liberated." Rather, they argue that some females assume roles and adopt identities that allow for crime in certain situations (e.g., Messerschmidt, 2002; Miller, 2001). In terms of social change, Adler's Sisters in Crime *is still a "young" book. It will be interesting to revisit her ideas a half century from now to see if she has proven more prophetic than we now imagine.*

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Women are no longer indentured to the kitchens, baby carriages, or bedrooms of America. The skein of myths about women is unraveling, the chains have been pried loose, and there will be no turning back to the days when women found it necessary to justify their existence by producing babies or cleaning houses. Allowed their freedom for the first time, women—by the tens of thousands—have chosen to desert those kitchens, and plunge exuberantly into the formerly all-male quarters of the working world. . . .

In the same way that women are demanding equal opportunity in fields of legitimate endeavor, a similar number of determined women are forcing their way into the world of major crimes. . . .

It is this segment of women who are pushing into—and succeeding at—crimes which were formerly committed by males only. Females like Marge are now being found not only robbing banks single-handedly, but also committing assorted armed robberies, muggings, loan-sharking operations, extortion, murders, and a wide variety of other aggressive, violence-oriented crimes which previously involved only men. . . .

By every indicator available, female criminals appear to be surpassing males in the rate of increase for almost every major crime. Although males continue to commit the greater absolute number of offenses, it is the women who are committing those same crimes at yearly rates of increase now running as high as six and seven times greater than those for males. . . .

In summary, what we have described is a gradual but accelerating social revolution in which women are closing many of the gaps, social and criminal, that have separated them from men. The closer they get, the more alike they look and act. This is not to suggest that there are no inherent differences. Differences do exist and will be elaborated later in this book, but it seems clear that those differences are not of prime importance in understanding female criminality. The simplest and most accurate way to grasp the essence of women's changing patterns is to discard dated notions of femininity. That is a role that fewer and fewer women are willing to play. In the final analysis, women criminals are human beings who have basic needs and abilities and opportunities. Over the years these needs have not changed, nor will they. But women's abilities and opportunities have multiplied, resulting in a kaleidoscope of changing patterns whose final configuration will be fateful for all of us. . . .

Social Differences

Whatever equality may have existed between Adam and Eve before the Fall, there was a clear distinction in their social roles afterward. Adam was thenceforth required to till the soil and earn his bread by the sweat of his brow; Eve was condemned to painful childbirth and total submission to her husband. In one august decree, her reproductive role and social role were established and fixed. To be a woman, then as now, meant not just to be a distinctive blend of physiological and psychological characteristics. It meant and means that one is perceived differently, treated differently, responded to differently, and the subject of different expectations. Given the varying social forces that weigh unequally on the sexes in creatures as culture-dependent as humans, it seems clear that the resulting differences in behavior owe more to wide disparities in social-role than to the narrow differences in physical and psychological makeup.

The answer to the nursery-rhyme question, "what are little girls made of?" is revealing at several different levels. The list of ingredients—"sugar and spice and everything nice"—contains both a biological theory and a social demand. We are told, first of all, that little girls are good because of their inherent structure, and secondly, that they had better be good if they hope to enjoy the status of femininity and avoid the social disapproval which accompanies deviancy. Little boys, too, are under social pressure, but of a different kind. They are made of "snakes and snails and puppy-dog tails"—a combination designed to contrast mischievously and dynamically with the inert and saccharine constitution of their female counterparts. They, too, are saddled with social and presumed biological imperatives which compress the wide-ranging human potential for variation into the narrow confines of social-role expectation. There is hardly any important individual or social area—play, personal hygiene, manners, discipline, dependency, dress, activity, career, sexual activity, aggressiveness, etc.—which has not been polarized and institutionalized as a sex-role difference. While it is true that men have tended to stigmatize women as a group, deviation from social standards is even worse—e.g., the "effeminate" man and the "masculine" woman.

Traditionally, the little girl and later the woman are confined to a low level of noise, dirt, disorder, and physical aggression. They must be obedient, dependent, modest about their bodies, and avoid sex play as well as rough and tumble competition. But life is not all no-no's: for her pains she is allowed to turn more readily to others for gratification, to cry when hurt, to be spontaneously affectionate, and to achieve less in school and work. Whatever the natural inclination of the sexes may be, society does not depend on spontaneous acquisition of the profile it considers desirable: besides identification with the parent of the same sex, which is probably the single most important determinant of behavior, it selects out from the random range of childhood activities those certain ones which will be accentuated or discarded. The shaping process includes toys—mechanical and problem-solving for boys, and soft and nonchallenging for girls—social structuring, individual rewards and punishments, and the satisfactions apparently inherent in conforming to role expectations. The development of aggressive and dependent traits, both of which are considered to be sex-related, is a case in point. One research study found that while aggressive boys become aggressive men and dependent girls become dependent women, the reverse was true for dependent boys and aggressive girls: as they approach maturity, they reverse themselves and also become aggressive men and dependent women, respectively. Similarly, there is a greater overlap of sex-role personality traits when the sibling in a two-child family is of the opposite sex, and this effect is greater with the younger siblings than with the older ones. Clearly, learning and social pressure are influential in effecting sex-role expectations. Extending the argument that social roles are related to biological processes only indirectly, presumably a technology which permitted father to nurture the child could result in a complete social-role reversal. In a pithy and accurate observation, Simone de Beauvoir summed up the consensus of current thinking when she said, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman."

In the interests of clarity, I have spoken separately of the major physical, psychological, and social characteristics which distinguish women from men, although obviously each molds the final form of the other, both clinically and theoretically. Investigations of animal behavior demonstrate, for example, that rat pups who are psychologically stimulated develop larger and presumably smarter brains than those exposed to sensory isolations; a litter born to a low-status African wild dog is less likely to survive than one born to a high-status female because the pups are less well fed and less protected by the pack; the male offspring of low-status baboon females, regardless of their innate characteristics, are less likely to become dominant than those born to high-status females bec
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than those born to high-status females because the latter spend more time in physical proximity to the inner circle of dominant males and learn dominance behavior; and the ovulatory cycle of a dove is retarded when a glass partition is placed between her and the rest of the flock, and it is stopped altogether if she is isolated in a room, unless there is a mirror. The interdependency between biological drive and learning is described in Konrad Lorenz's formulation of the concept of "instinct-training interlocking behavior": he describes this as a blend of instinctive and learned components, with instinct guaranteeing the readiness for certain kinds of learning and behavior to occur but experience shaping its final form.

In summary, females are smaller and meeker than men, they are less stable physiologically, they produce fewer androgenic hormones, and they have been socially shaped toward passivity, dependency, and conformity. Men are bigger, stronger, more aggressive, achievement-oriented, and more willing to break rules and take risks. This profile of the "normal" male and the "normal" female is consistent with the traditional differences which, until the last few decades, have prevailed for their criminal counterparts. However, the increasing "masculinization" of female social and criminal behavior forces us to reexamine the basis for her previous feminine limitations. A common-sense approach, and one followed by even such uncommon men as Freud and Adler, would suggest that what is natural to the female could be inferred from a factual description of the way the majority of females think and feel and act. Understandably, this is what has been done, and just as understandably it has been wrong. . . .

Female Passivity: Genetic Fact or Cultural Myth?

In the past, aggression was thought to be chiefly a biologically controlled trait. As a matter of their birth and ongoing internal chemistry, males were assumed to be "naturally aggressive"—hence the explanation of their historic roles as soldiers, hard-boiled businessmen, and merciless criminals. Women, on the other hand, were thought to be innately timid, passive, and conforming. Their general failure to be anything but mothers and housewives was offered as proof of their inability to be aggressive.

Of all the differences between the sexes, only four—size, strength, aggression, and dominance—have been implicated in any way with the overrepresentation of males in the criminal system.

The first two are biological givens; the other two are largely, if not entirely, socially learned. Let us examine them separately. In non-technological societies, and in earlier periods in industrial societies, physical strength was often the final arbiter of social interaction, but even so, it was not the only one. In man as well as in the apes, psychological factors including social manipulation, ruses, and group alliances were often decisive for leadership and effective action. In animals as well as men, the battle did not always go to the strong nor the race to the swift. But even if it did, this edge has been diminished by the technology of modern weapons. The deadliness of a gun is not necessarily less dangerous in the hands of a woman—although some have claimed that her lack of aggressiveness makes her a very unlikely and ineffective gunslinger. This is an interesting assumption because it is a common stereotype and is grounded in studies of male hormonal influences on lower animals, which gives it a ring of biological authenticity. There is much truth in this, but it is only a partial truth which, when stretched beyond its limits, conveys a falsehood. The truth is that in lower animals males are characteristically more aggressive, and this aggression is so directly linked to male hormones that if the male is castrated or injected with estrogen (the female hormone) he will stop fighting. Likewise, the prenatal administration of testosterone to pregnant monkeys results in pseudohermaphroditic female offspring who even three years after birth are more aggressive than normal females.

However, it would be misleading to formulate the equation androgen = aggression or estrogen = nonaggression for all but the simplest and least socially developed species. Furthermore, it cannot be claimed that aggression is the exclusive prerogative of males. Mature female chimpanzees regularly drive off lower-status males and any female mammal's defense of her cubs is as fierce as it is legendary.

But relevant as this is in establishing that aggression can co-exist with estrogen and can be unrelated to male hormones in mammals, the evidence for hormonal-behavioral detachment is even more compelling in subhuman primates and men. It is not possible to understand the behavior of social animals outside the context of a social situation. For example, an electric shock applied to an animal in a dominant position vis-à-vis another will result in an attack; the same stimulus applied to the same animal who is in a subdominant position vis-à-vis another will result in cringing, submissive behavior. Likewise, the response of anger vs. fear or fight vs. flight depends less on the release of specific chemicals than on whether we perceive the threatening stimulus, in relation to ourselves, to be smaller or larger. The human capacity for abstraction and symbol formulation extends the range of "size" to include factors only remotely related to actual mass, so that characteristics such as wealth, lineage, social connections, skill, and intelligence may be perceived as "big" and accorded dominance. In the evolutionary progression toward higher mammals, there is a decreasing dependency between hormones and behavior, and in humans we find an almost complete cultural "override" of innate drives and tendencies. Thus, while status and dominance appear to be constants throughout the order of social primates, culture defines which characteristics will be labeled as dominant. Likewise, the distinctive sex-appropriate behaviors so rigidly controlled by hormones in lower animals have yielded to a rich variety of gender roles in human societies.

In *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*, Margaret Mead described three revealing cultural variations. In one tribe, both sexes acted in the mild, parental, responsive manner we expect of women; in a second, both sexes acted in the fierce initiating fashion we expect of men; in a third, the men were chatty, wore curls, and went shopping in the manner of our stereotype of women, while the women were their unadorned, managerial, energetic partners. She concluded that sex roles were "mere variations of human temperament, to which the members of either or both sexes may, with more or less success in the case of different individuals, be educated to approximate." She also concluded that regardless of what social role the male plays, it is always the lead.

Regardless of what his characteristic behavior may be and even when it is imitative of "feminine behavior," it is considered high status when he adopts it. While historically and universally it is indeed a man's world, it does not follow that modern industrial man is innately more dominant than modern woman. It could be argued that the equalizing effects of a technological civilization like ours is without historical parallel and that the universal dominance of men may have resulted more from the institutionalization of man's superior strength than from any innate feminine submissiveness.

Western history is replete with examples of women who have risen above their cultural stereotype to become leaders of vigor and acclaim. Nor has their reign or tenure in office been particularly noteworthy for its tranquility, peacefulness, or lack of aggressive adventures, all characteristics of their countrywomen in the social role of housewife. These women have, in fact, displayed a remarkable talent for ruthless and highly aggressive leadership. For instance, few world leaders have ever been so renowned for their tyrannical, belligerent rule as the English queens. One can still be stirred by the picture of Elizabeth I attired with her gold crown and shining breastplate, mounted on a white stallion, and moving like an avenging angel through her
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moving like an avenging angel through her army of twenty thousand men at Tilbury; . . . Cleopatra of ancient Egypt, a biological woman's woman by any standards, was known for her shrewd political manipulations and insatiable appetite for military conquests; Maria Theresa was the founder of the modern Austrian state; the Russian Empress Catherine, who mothered a dozen children during her reign, still found time to annex ever-widening territories and seek new armies to defeat. In the present day, it is noteworthy that the two major countries with female rulers have both been at war within the last few years: Indira Gandhi of India and Golda Meir of Israel have shown no timidity—each, in wars across her border, has wielded political and military might as effectively as any man. Of course, such women as these who have risen to national leadership possess extraordinary characteristics which distinguish them from the mass of women—and the mass of men, for that matter. The very capacity and drive for ascension through a male world involved a selection process which would have discouraged weaker women. Notwithstanding their small numbers, the resoluteness and fortitude of such women challenge the myth of innate female passivity. On a broader scope, and one which encompassed more ordinary women, was the female incursion into criminal areas, previously considered male, during World War II. In law-enforcing as well as law-breaking, it would appear that social position and social-role expectations are more important than sex in determining behavior.

During the early 1940s, the mobilization of males from the civil to the military sector resulted in the necessity for a large number of women to fill positions previously held by men. And fill them they did, in a way not altogether anticipated. It had been known and expected that lesser men often rise to the stature of a role thrust on them by circumstance. It should not have been surprising, therefore, that "lesser men" who happen to be women would do the same thing. What was most portentous, however, about this vocational shift was not that women could assume men's jobs, but that in doing so they could also presume to men's social roles. One need not look to psychological theories to explain the enthusiasm with which women embraced men's esteemed positions. Their own, as housewife and playmate, had been eroding for years and a desperately labor-short male establishment had further devalued it in the interests of national defense, as something akin to indolence, if not disloyalty. "Rosie the Riveter," symbol of the women working for the war, was proclaimed a heroine in song and style by a grateful country. As the residence of female status shifted from the home to the office or factory, a trip that men had made long before, the American woman accommodated so congenially to the change that few people at the time challenged her credentials to perform. However, many were concerned that she was not just commuting to her new-found roles but might settle down to stay. In unprecedented numbers women crossed the sex-role line in their jobs and in their crimes during the war years, 1940 to 1945. In that period, the crimes committed by women almost doubled in number and even began to assume the same patterns as male crime. The trend peaked in 1945 and declined rapidly after the war with the return of men to their jobs, but it could never be the same. Women were now urged to act more like women by a male establishment which wanted to return to the position it had temporarily (it hoped) vacated. But in social evolution as in biological evolution, there is no easy road back, especially since in a very profound sense the women could not go home again. Labor-saving household appliances and the denigration of the domestic work ethic they conveyed rendered her old position untenable. In addition, there was a shift in the male attitude. Men were seeing women as worthy rivals and feeling considerably less charitable and more competitive toward them. Furthermore, in a world grown too full of people, even the once sacrosanct status of motherhood was beginning to bear unhappy resemblances to overproductive pollution. With

zero population as a national goal and household drudgery an accepted epithet, where was the woman to go? The road back was blocked, and while the road forward was not completely open it was now more accessible than ever before.

The pressure was all for discarding the separate-but-equal provisions of the old social contract and opting for a chance to compete in the same field and under the same conditions as men. Unfortunately, the men were not as ready for this change as the women. Psychoanalysts, long accustomed to the futile penis envy of women, were now talking about breast envy and womb envy, an example of male jealousy toward women almost unheard of in Freud's day.

While women proceeded to widen their social and criminal roles, many men, especially middle- and lower-class men, who had the least ground to yield in the status hierarchy, resisted in every way they could. . . .

Gender Equality and Crime

The old ways do indeed die hard, not only because we need our stereotypes and our subdominants, but also because cognitive systems tend to become security blankets to which we cling most tenaciously just when we are most threatened. It is perhaps for these reasons that the coming of age of the Western woman was not forecast by the behavioral scientists who should have known, but instead it caught us unawares and overtook our comfortable prejudices with a fait accompli. While most were predicting that it was impossible and many were arguing that it wasn't happening, it had already occurred. It is tempting to think no deeper than an apparent fact, and it must be admitted that the "facts" of female inferiority were apparent to all who could read the figures that supported them. It did not seem productive to search out the reasons behind the figures. They were self-evident because they confirmed what we already knew about the natural superiority of men. If it were otherwise, we surely would have been told by this time. But, indeed, we were being told new "facts" in compelling ways by new figures which were challenging old theories.

In the countless indices which measure female output of degrees and income and factory production, and in the Uniform Crime Reports which tabulate her legal transgressions, these rising figures were intruding not only on our beliefs but on the mores which supported them. At first, the rising crime rates were greeted as an apparition, a mirage; at first, they were dismissed as an aberration which would correct itself by statistical adjustments; at last, they were recognized as ancient female strengths which had always been latent and were just now, at this sociotechnological juncture of history, realizing their potential. Everything we know about the history of woman and everything we see about her current behavior tells us that her past limitations as a worker and law-breaker have been largely, if not entirely, the result of her physical weakness and the cultural institutions which derived from that fact. Save only her inferiority in size and strength, her differences from men are just *that*, differences. Some confer an advantage, others a disadvantage, depending on the particular culture. In our own, given her education, aspirations (these, too, have been liberated), freedom from unwanted pregnancies, healthy assertiveness, and access to labor-saving devices, including guns, she shares the same fortunate or unfortunate criminogenic qualities as men.

I have not contended here that women are equal *to* men, simply that they are potentially the equal of men. There are many differences which we have described and no doubt more will be discovered, but all evidence points to two complementary conclusions: First, the small natural differences between the sexes have been polarized and institutionalized in special ways by different cultures to produce a gender disparity which reveals more about emotional needs of the society than about the innate possibilities of the individual. And second, when size and strength between the sexes are discounted by technology, as they have been within the ranks of

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There was a time early in the history of the physical sciences, before the concepts of mass and gravity were formulated, when the weight of an object was thought to reside within the physical boundaries of the object. Because weight is palpable and measurable, it was a conclusion which met the requirements of common sense and common experience. But the limitation of common sense is that it owes too much allegiance to the past to permit conceptual breakthroughs to the future. It is a better follower than leader. As physicists later discovered, the weight of an object is not inherent within it but rather the measure of an outside gravitational pull acting upon it. In an analogous manner, scientific thinking about human behavior has evolved in the same centrifugal di
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Even if it is established that humans have innate biological drives, and even if it were confirmed that females have a different biogrammar (i.e., a behavioral repertoire of signals) from males, the social forces which impinge on her from without would still be decisive for her conformist as well as her deviant behavior. In the profoundest evolutionary sense, the social factors which sustain and suspend us also create our destiny, and biology must follow where society leads.

Discussion Questions

1. How do you think that the Women's Movement and the corresponding changes that were occurring in American society affected Adler's ideas on female crime as she wrote *Sisters in Crime*?
2. What is the liberation thesis? How does this relate to Adler's views about the "rise of a new female criminal"?
3. Why did Adler argue that biology is not the main cause of female behavior, including female criminality?
4. Think back to your own childhood and teenage years. How might the socialization practices that you witnessed while you were growing up be related to why the criminal behaviors of males and females differ?

25. A Feminist Theory of Female Delinquency

Meda Chesney-Lind

"There is considerable question," notes Meda Chesney-Lind (1989: 10), "as to whether existing theories that were admittedly developed to explain male delinquency can adequately explain female delinquency." But why is this necessarily the case? After all, if strain, control, or social learning are general causes of crime, might we not expect that the sources of female criminality would be the same as those of male criminality? In Chesney-Lind's view, however, such thinking renders gender socially irrelevant and behaviorally inconsequential. Yet gender is a master status in virtually every social interaction—a salient factor that provides meaning to and structures for behavioral options. As a result, growing up in the United States (and elsewhere), girls and boys have different experiences, they react to their experiences differently, and they are reacted to differently by those seeking to control them. Gender thus provides the ongoing, day-to-day contact through which crime is caused and accomplished.

The most defining feature of gender roles is "patriarchy." But it is precisely here that traditional theories of crime are most wanting. Because they were largely constructed to explain male criminality, the values and power relations inherent in male domination simply are never given any causal consideration. In methodological terms, one might say that traditional theories are "misspecified": they leave out a key explanatory variable—not merely women or gender, but what it means to be a female.

When patriarchy is used to inform one's criminological analysis, however, the special pathways that girls take into crime are suddenly illuminated. An important feature of the "patriarchal context" from which female delinquency flows, observes Chesney-Lind, is that girls are vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse. Faced with constant abuse, females can do little to fight back against their dominant male abusers. One option is to run away. Here, however, they face a second manifestation of patriarchy: They are defined as "runaways" and as sexually "promiscuous." According to Chesney-Lind, criminal justice agencies have traditionally sought to criminalize the behavior of these girls. They have played a role in tracking down the runaways and returning them to the very homes in which the victimization had transpired.

Facing extensive physical and sexual victimization at home and with little hope of protection from the state, girls find escape in the "streets." Their quest for survival, however, leads to crimes of petty theft and panhandling. But patriarchy is reproduced on the streets as well. Their sexuality is another means of survival, and thus they risk being lured into prostitution. As Chesney-Lind (1989: 24) notes, these girls have "little else of value to trade" and thus "get involved in cri
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The potential weakness of femi
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to trade" and thus "get involved in criminal activities that exploit their sexual object status."

The potential weakness of feminist theories is not what they include but what they exclude. Feminist scholars risk committing the same mistake as the criminologists they rightly criticize by simply dismissing—often on a priori, ideological grounds—theories they do not like. By calling perspectives "male-centered" and ignoring the related research studies, they are free to neglect the causal significance of conditions that have been shown empirically to affect not only boys' but also girls' delinquency. Traditional theories thus are useful in identifying factors that may, in varying degrees and in unique ways, play a role in the crime and delinquency of females (Agnew, 2009; De Coster et al., 2013; Heimer and De Coster, 1999).

Even so, Chesney-Lind has shown the value of using a feminist perspective to study delinquency (see also Chesney-Lind, 2015). She has demarcated a pathway into crime—rooted in gender-related power inequities and the physical/sexual abuse girls endure—that would not be apparent without the lens of gender and patriarchy. Feminist theories are essential, therefore, because they force criminologists to take seriously the position that, however overlapping their experiences might be, boys and girls reside in different worlds that are circumscribed by the broader patriarchal system. Gender affects so much in our lives; the notion that crime would be the exception is, on its face, difficult to sustain.

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There is considerable question as to whether existing theories that were admittedly developed to explain male delinquency can adequately explain female delinquency. Clearly, these theories were much influenced by the notion that class and protest masculinity were at the core of delinquency. Will the "add women and stir approach" be sufficient? Are these really theories of delinquent behavior as some (Simons, Miller, and Aigner, 1980) have argued?

This article will suggest that they are not. The extensive focus on male delinquency and the inattention to the role played by patriarchal arrangements in the generation of adolescent delinquency and conformity has rendered the major delinquency theories fundamentally inadequate to the task of explaining female behavior. There is, in short, an urgent need to rethink current models in light of girls' situation in patriarchal society.

. . . This discussion will also establish that the proposed overhaul of delinquency theory is not, as some might think, solely an academic exercise. Specifically, it is incorrect to assume that because girls are charged with less serious offenses, they actually have few problems and are treated gently when they are drawn into the juvenile justice system. Indeed, the extensive focus on disadvantaged males in public settings has meant that girls' victimization and the relationship between that experience and girls' crime has been

systematically ignored. Also missed has been the central role played by the juvenile justice system in the sexualization of girls' delinquency and the criminalization of girls' survival strategies. Finally, it will be suggested that the official actions of the juvenile justice system should be understood as major forces in girls' oppression as they have historically served to reinforce the obedience of all young women to demands of patriarchal authority no matter how abusive and arbitrary. . . .

Toward a Feminist Theory of Delinquency

To sketch out completely a feminist theory of delinquency is a task beyond the scope of this article. It may be sufficient, at this point, simply to identify a few of the most obvious problems with attempts to adapt male-oriented theory to explain female conformity and deviance. Most significant of these is the fact that all existing theories were developed with no concern about gender stratification.

Note that this is not simply an observation about the power of gender roles (though this power is undeniable). It is increasingly clear that gender stratification in patriarchal society is as powerful a system as is class. A feminist approach to delinquency means construction of explanations of female behavior that are sensitive to its patriarchal context. Feminist analysis of delinquency would also examine ways in which agencies of social control—the police, the courts, and the persons—act in ways to reinforce woman's place in male society (Harris, 1977; Chesney-Lind, 1986). Efforts to construct a feminist model of delinquency must first and foremost be sensitive to the situations of girls. Failure to consider the existing empirical evidence on girls' lives and behavior can quickly lead to stereotypical thinking and theoretical dead ends.

An example of this sort of flawed theory building was the early fascination with the notion that the women's movement was causing an increase in women's crime; a notion that is now more or less discredited (Steffensmeier, 1980; Gora, 1982). A more recent example of the same sort of thinking can be found in recent work on the "power-control" model of delinquency (Hagan, Simpson, and Gillis, 1987). Here, the authors speculate that girls commit less delinquency in part because their behavior is more closely controlled by the patriarchal family. The authors' promising beginning quickly gets bogged down in a very limited definition of patriarchal control (focusing on parental supervision and variations in power within the family). Ultimately, the authors' narrow formulation of patriarchal control results in their arguing that mothers' work force participation (particularly in high-status occupations) leads to increases in daughters' delinquency since these girls find themselves in more "egalitarian families."

This is essentially a not-too-subtle variation on the earlier "liberation" hypothesis. Now, mother's liberation causes daughter's crime. Aside from the methodological problems with the study (e.g., the authors argue that female-headed households are equivalent to upper-class "egalitarian" families where both parents work, and they measure delinquency using a six-item scale that contains no status offense items), there is a more fundamental problem with the hypothesis. There is no evidence to suggest that as women's labor force participation has increased, girls' delinquency has increased. Indeed, during the last decade when both women's labor force participation accelerated and the number of female-headed households soared, aggregate female delinquency measured both by self-report and official statistics either declined or remained stable (Ageton, 1983; Chilton and Datesman, 1987; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1987).

By contrast, a feminist model of delinquency would focus more extensively on the few pieces of information about girls' actual lives and the role played by girls' problems, including those caused by racism and poverty, in their delinquency behavior. Fortunately, a considerable literature is now developing on girls' lives and much of it bears directly on girls' crime.

Criminalizing Girls' Surviv

It has long been understood that a majo
for girls' presence in juvenile courts was
that their parents insisted on their arre
early years, conflicts with parents wer
the most significant referral source; in
44% of the girls who appeared in cour
through 1930 were referred by parents.

Recent national data, while slightly
plicitly, also show that girls are more lik
referred to court by "sources other tha
forcement agencies" (which would inc
ents). In 1983, nearly a quarter (23%)
but only 16% of boys charged with deli
fenses were referred to court by non-la
ment agencies. The pattern among yout
for status offenses (for which girls are
sented) was even more pronounced. We
(56%) of the girls charged with these o
45% of the boys were referred by sou
than law enforcement (Snyder and
1987, p. 21; see also Pope and Feyerher

The fact that parents are often co
two standards of adolescent behavior i
nation for such a disparity—and one
not be discounted as a major source
even in modern families. Despite e
to the contrary, gender-specific s
patterns have not changed very mu
is especially true for parents' relatio
their daughters (Katz, 1979). It appe
parents who oppose sexism in gene
comfortable tampering with existin
and "do not want to risk their childr
misfits" (Katz, 1979, p. 24). Clearly,
tempts to adhere to and enforce the
notions will continue to be a sour
between girls and their elders. Anot
explanation for girls' problems with
which has received attention only i
years, is the problem of physical and
Looking specifically at the problem
sexual abuse, it is increasingly clear
of abuse is a particular problem for

29. Imprisoning Communities: Coerced Mobility Theory

Todd R. Clear

It seems reasonable to suppose that imprisoning offenders would reduce crime and that communities with the highest proportion of imprisoned offenders would experience the largest reductions in crime. Conservative criminologists and policymakers have made this claim. DiIulio (1994: 15), for example, stated that "no group of Americans would stand to benefit more from policies that keep convicted felons, adults and juveniles, behind bars for all or most of their terms than crime-plagued inner-city Americans and their children." In the selection below, however, Todd Clear makes the opposite argument.

Clear contends that the very high rates of incarceration that characterize many disadvantaged, largely African American communities increase the crime in those communities. Clear does not deny that incapacitating offenders stops some crime, although he claims that the incapacitation effect is small. He argues, however, that very high rates of incarceration increase community crime rates for several reasons—and this increase outweighs the reduction in crime that results from incapacitation.

Clear notes that in some highly impoverished communities, as many as one-fifth of all adult men are incarcerated on any given day. This is said to disrupt families. For example, it leads to more single-parent families, it reduces parental supervision, and it removes parental role models. The high rate of incarceration also creates economic problems; there are fewer employed residents in the community, both because many people are incarcerated and because those with prison records have trouble finding decent employment upon their release. Also, the money spent on prisons means there is less money to invest in local communities, including money for schools and jobs. Finally, the high rate of incarceration reduces both respect for the legal system and levels of political participation. Many residents, in fact, are unable even to vote because of their criminal records.

All of these effects reduce levels of control. Parents are less able to effectively supervise their children, teach them that crime is wrong, and instill self-control. Likewise, adults in the community are less able and/or willing to exercise control over one another. If the adults are not imprisoned, they are struggling with economic problems, have little "stake in conformity" or investment in conventional society, and are weakly attached to or even hostile toward the legal system. Further, they are unable to secure resources from the larger community, such as money for better schools. High rates of incarceration, in short, are a major source of social disorganization in the community (see Part II).

Clear (2007) presents much evidence in suppor of these arguments in his book Imprisoning Com munities, *although not all evidence is supportiv Most notably, studies on the overall effect of inca ceration on community crime rates have produc mixed results (see Clear, 2007; Lynch and Sab 2004). Some studies indicate that high rates of carceration increase community crime rates, wl other studies find the opposite. These mixed res reflect the fact that it is very difficult to accura estimate the effect of incarceration on commu crime rates. One must take account of the fact community crime rates may affect incarcer rates and that both incarceration rates and munity crime rates may be influenced by the third variables, such as poverty (see the d sion in Clear, 2007: 166–174). These thin not easily done. Nevertheless, Clear gives u reason to question what to many is a strai ward proposition: if you lock up a lot of of from a community, that community will ence a reduction in crime.*

Clear concludes his selection with som recommendations. He describes how w reduce the incarceration rate and thereb the negative effects of high incarceration communities. As an alternative to incar he recommends a form of "community jus is quite similar to the restorative justice advocated by Braithwaite and others (se and Chapter 19). Community justice, also involves efforts to strengthen the families and neighborhood groups to e fective control. For example, it involves improve local school systems.

An important development could effects of coerced mobility: for the pas so, prison populations have stopped g have declined from around 2.3 million million. Although these developments aging, Clear does not believe that they the negative effects of mass incarcerati city neighborhoods. Two reasons und sessment. First, the decline in prison slow, small, and inconsistent across

Clear (2007) presents much evidence in support of these arguments in his book Imprisoning Communities, although not all evidence is supportive. Most notably, studies on the overall effect of incarceration on community crime rates have produced mixed results (see Clear, 2007; Lynch and Sabol, 2004). Some studies indicate that high rates of incarceration increase community crime rates, while other studies find the opposite. These mixed results reflect the fact that it is very difficult to accurately estimate the effect of incarceration on community crime rates. One must take account of the fact that community crime rates may affect incarceration rates and that both incarceration rates and community crime rates may be influenced by the same third variables, such as poverty (see the discussion in Clear, 2007: 166–174). These things are not easily done. Nevertheless, Clear gives us good reason to question what to many is a straightforward proposition: if you lock up a lot of offenders from a community, that community will experience a reduction in crime.

Clear concludes his selection with some policy recommendations. He describes how we might reduce the incarceration rate and thereby reduce the negative effects of high incarceration rates on communities. As an alternative to incarceration, he recommends a form of "community justice" that is quite similar to the restorative justice approach advocated by Braithwaite and others (see Part VI and Chapter 19). Community justice, however, also involves efforts to strengthen the ability of families and neighborhood groups to exercise effective control. For example, it involves efforts to improve local school systems.

An important development could impact the effects of coerced mobility: for the past decade or so, prison populations have stopped growing and have declined from around 2.3 million to around 2 million. Although these developments are encouraging, Clear does not believe that they will reverse the negative effects of mass incarceration on inner-city neighborhoods. Two reasons underlie this assessment. First, the decline in prisoners has been slow, small, and inconsistent across states. Mass incarceration has not worsened, but it remains the elephant in the correctional room. Second, given the racial disparities baked into the criminal justice system, the effect of incarceration will still be experienced most deeply by impoverished communities (see Clear and Frost, 2020). Still, should long-term decreases in imprisonment be sustained and be buttressed by other community reforms, the possibility of reversing the criminogenic effects of coerced mobility could be possible.

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Prison populations have grown mostly through society's locking up ever-increasing numbers of young men, especially black men, largely from impoverished places. The concentration of imprisonment of young men from disadvantaged places has grown to such a point that it is now a bedrock experience, a force that affects families and children, institutions and businesses, social groups and interpersonal relations. With its isolation of people from poor places, incarceration does more damage than good, including increases in crime. In this way, incarceration has

become part of its own dynamic. Imprisonment has grown to the point that it now produces the very social problems on which it feeds. It is the perfect storm.

Uninformed public sentiments and practiced political interests have created a malignant foundation for our crime-prevention policy. Legislative changes lean only in the direction of ever-growing punitiveness, drawing more and more young people—especially black men—into the system's clutches. The system clutches them; indeed, people who get caught up in the penal system stay there longer, are subjected to more controls, and suffer a greater chance of failure than ever before in history. Faced with this situation, policy makers think only of becoming more strict and more punitive, more damaging, for an ever wider range of misbehaviors, drawing into the storm an ever larger group. As that group grows, the ripple effects of the damage also grow, crossing the social networks of those poorer communities and extending into future generations. Crime goes up, crime goes down; yet in a weirdly disconnected fashion, prison populations increase regardless. . . .

This chapter makes four central points:

- The extraordinary growth in the U.S. prison system, sustained for over 30 years, has had, at best, a small impact on crime.
- The growth in imprisonment has been concentrated among poor, minority males who live in impoverished neighborhoods.
- Concentrated incarceration in those impoverished communities has broken families, weakened the social-control capacity of parents, eroded economic strength, soured attitudes toward society, and distorted politics; even, after reaching a certain level, it has increased rather than decreased crime.
- Any attempt to overcome the problems of crime will have to encompass a combination of sentencing reforms and philosophical realignment.

Incarceration and Crime

As a general rule, Americans believe that sending people to prison, especially men, prevents crime. This belief in the crime-prevention power of prison has a good dose of apparent face validity. After all, men behind prison walls cannot commit crimes against society. As a kind of proof, there is the all-too-common news story of a violent crime committed by a person recently released from prison. It seems an unassailable fact that at least *this* crime could have been prevented had the person never been allowed to get out. And if we can just make the prison experience *tough* enough, then surely people will think twice about committing the crimes that put them at risk of going there. . . .

In fact, however, the scientific evidence about the relationship between incarceration and crime is by no means uniformly supportive of the prison's capacity to reduce crime. The face validity of incapacitation—if you lock up a person who is actively committing crimes, you prevent the further crimes he would have committed—begins to evaporate upon close inspection. Many crimes still occur, because the person who is now behind bars is replaced by someone else. Almost everyone who goes to prison is eventually released, but the prospects for most of them to live crime-free have been *damaged* by the effects of their prison stay. Moreover, concrete practical and legal limits on punishment establish a surprisingly low ceiling for the potential deterrent power of a prison sentence. A child who is exposed to a parent or sibling who went to prison has an *increased*, rather than a decreased, risk of incarceration, and this testifies to the weakness of the deterrent effect of the sanction.

The limited capability of prisons to prevent crime is surely one of the reasons that, in the 33 years that prison populations have been rising continuously, trends in crime rates have been anything but systematic: they went up in the 1970s; down, then up in the 1980s; and up, then down in the 1990s. Today's headlines raise the fear that after a decade-long drop in crime, the trend may turn upward again (Frieden 2006), even as prison populations continue to rise. There is a puzzling discontinuity between imprisonment rates, which have increased every year since 1973, and crime rates, which have been up and down during this time and are, today, about what they were in 19[illegible] when the prison population was at its lowest level in a generation.

This discontinuity is not discussed very much in the substantial social science literature assessing the impact of prisons on crime rates. Some studies, especially older ones, suggest that the impact is substantial. An equivalent body of studies, many of them more recent, find little or no impact on crime. As weaknesses in the earlier methodology are corrected by newer studies with more careful designs, the results show stronger connections between incarceration and crime prevention. Today, an overwhelming majority opinion is emerging that prison use has probably reduced crime, but only by a marginal amount. Scholars also tend to agree that additional growth in prison populations will produce ever smaller, decreasing marginal returns in public safety (for reviews, see Spelman 1994, 2000). . . .

Black Males

That black men have been put behind bars at higher rates than any other group is a matter of observation. But their rate of incarceration, always high, has been growing more rapidly than that for any other subgroup of males, and is especially true for black high school dropouts. Sociologist Bruce Western has shown that in the last 25 years, black high school dropouts have been almost five times more likely to be incarcerated than white high school dropouts, and the difference in incarceration rates has been growing (Western 2006). . . .

The main vehicle for the different incarceration for black males is the drug law. The explanation is not because black males are

31. A Theory of African American Offending

James D. Unnever and Shaun L. Gabbidon

In his classic statement and study of social bond theory in Causes of Delinquency, Travis Hirschi (1969) explored whether the wayward conduct of African Americans and whites had different sources (see also Unnever et al., 2009). Hirschi concluded that "there is no reason to believe that the causes of crime among Negroes are different from those among whites" (p. 80). "It follows," he added, "that we need not study Negro boys to determine the causes of their delinquency" (p. 80).

In a way, the view that the causes of crime are "general"—the same for everyone—rather than "race-specific" has important ideological implications. As espoused by Hirschi in his day, the generality perspective represented a rejection of racist theories that attributed minorities' illegalities to their inherent intellectual and moral inferiority. Essentially, people are people, and they offend for the same reasons.

James Unnever and Shaun Gabbidon, however, argue that the generality view is partially—and importantly—mistaken. They agree that the causes of African Americans' and whites' crime are often the same. For example, abusive or ineffective parenting will increase the risk of offending regardless of a youngster's race or ethnicity. But Unnever and Gabbidon point out that African Americans and whites have a fundamentally different lived reality. As members of a historically oppressed minority group, blacks are perpetually at risk of confronting majority group members who harbor prejudice and act toward them in a discriminatory way. They must overcome implicit and explicit negative racial stereotypes that can devalue their personal identity. And they must negotiate a criminal justice system that they perceive as unjust—a system whose officials stop and frisk them even when they are doing nothing wrong and that disproportionately imprisons and disenfranchises them (Alexander, 2010; Tonry, 2011).

Theoretically, Unnever and Gabbidon present a model that is consistent with Agnew's (2006) general strain theory (see Chapter 14). Growing up, African American youngsters—some more than others—encounter the strain of "being treated in a negative manner by others" (Agnew, 2006: 19). Because this strain is unjust, it is especially likely to generate negative emotions, such as anger, that can lead to crime (p. 62). General strain theory recognizes, however, that not everyone responds to strain by breaking the law. Instead, there are factors that condition this response and determine whether an individual engages in criminal or noncriminal coping.

Importantly, Unnever and Gabbidon address this issue of why only some African Americans

respond to racial oppression through a criminal adaptation. The key to unlocking this mystery, they argue, is understanding the nature of racial socialization. In brief, parents of black children face the extra burden of teaching their children how to cope with diverse life experiences when, due to their race, they are devalued and mistreated. Those who racially socialize their offspring effectively equip them with the skills to negotiate a world that, at times, is hostile. But some parents do not address this issue or teach their kids to cope by mistrusting whites and by responding to perceived injustices with defiance. This approach tends to foster negative emotions and to weaken social bonds to conventional (white) institutions—both factors that place youngsters at risk for sustained criminal offending.

In summary, Unnever and Gabbidon reject general theories of crime and call upon scholars to take seriously that African Americans and whites live in an America that has both a shared reality and a racially specific reality (see also Unnever et al., 2019). They argue that race matters, and that it is nonsensical to assume that being a person of color is unrelated to the quality of one's life experiences, emotions endured, and behaviors chosen. Notably, Unnever and his colleagues have provided evidence that is emerging in support of the theory's propositions (Unnever, 2014; Unnever et al., 2016).

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The Basic Premise of Our Theory of African American Offending

A basic assumption of our theory of African American offending is that blacks have a unique worldview (or cosmology, axiology, aesthetics, cognitive landscape, collective memory) of the American social order that is not shared by whites and other minorities (see Coll, Lamberty, Jenkins, McAdoo, Crnic, Wasik, and Garcia, 1996; Feagin, 2010; Gay, 2004; Harrell, 2000; Jean and Feagin, 1998; Mazama, 2001; Oliver, 2006). We argue that this worldview has been shaped by racial dynamics largely outside of their control. Thus, our theory assumes that African Americans, unlike any other racial group (e.g., whites) or other ethnic minorities (e.g., Hispanics), have a unique racial lens that informs their beliefs and behaviors especially as they relate to the salience of race and how racism impacts their lives in the U.S.

We argue that nearly every African American shares this worldview. A core belief of this worldview is that race and racism matters. This means that nearly every African American believes that they will encounter racial prejudice and racial discrimination during their lives because they are black. Thus, African Americans believe that th
will not be treated as fairly as other races (e.
whites) or other ethnicities (e.g., Hispanics). F
simply, they are aware that the playing field is
level; that is, they are aware that they will be
criminated against because of their race. In s
we contend that the pivotal belief that solidi
and defines the worldview shared by Afri
Americans is that the United States has been
continues to be a systematically racist society

We argue that the social construction o
African American worldview is a dynamic, e
ing process. It includes a general recogniti
the historical racial struggles that African A
cans have gone through along with specif
counts of successful resistance. This mean
the worldview has a historical-legacy comp
that acts as a racial lens that sensitizes A
Americans to how race and racism sha
contours of their daily lived experience
worldview also evolves as its history is
with the present collective racialized li
periences of African Americans. But, all
views are just broad guides. They are not
detailed blueprints that precisely define
African Americans should behave across
surable situations. Because of this impre
is possible for the African American w
to be both an inspiration for the major
rican Americans to successfully resist tl
subordination as well as a source of b
cause a minority of blacks to offend.
majority of blacks draw upon the stren
stories that describe how others have s
resisted their racial subjugation. . . .
the worldview for others causes them
whelmed with the deleterious feeling
with their awareness of how their race
will negatively impact their lives.

In sum, our theory contends tha
view shared by African Americans
vast majority of blacks with the ab
off the deleterious consequences o
ordination. However, it also provid
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nise of Our Theory of nerican Offending

n of our theory of African is that blacks have a unique mology, axiology, aesthet-cape, collective memory) of order that is not shared by norities (see Coll, Lamberty, nic, Wasik, and Garcia, 1996; 004; Harrell, 2000; Jean and na, 2001; Oliver, 2006). We dview has been shaped by ely outside of their control. sumes that African Ameri-r racial group (e.g., whites) rities (e.g., Hispanics), have nat informs their beliefs and is they relate to the salience ism impacts their lives in

rly every African American A core belief of this world-racism matters. This means can American believes that racial prejudice and racial their lives because they are

black. Thus, African Americans believe that they will not be treated as fairly as other races (e.g., whites) or other ethnicities (e.g., Hispanics). Put simply, they are aware that the playing field is not level; that is, they are aware that they will be discriminated against because of their race. In sum, we contend that the pivotal belief that solidifies and defines the worldview shared by African Americans is that the United States has been and continues to be a systematically racist society. . . .

We argue that the social construction of the African American worldview is a dynamic, evolving process. It includes a general recognition of the historical racial struggles that African Americans have gone through along with specific accounts of successful resistance. This means that the worldview has a historical-legacy component that acts as a racial lens that sensitizes African Americans to how race and racism shape the contours of their daily lived experiences. This worldview also evolves as its history is infused with the present collective racialized lived experiences of African Americans. But, all worldviews are just broad guides. They are not explicit detailed blueprints that precisely define how all African Americans should behave across immeasurable situations. Because of this imprecision, it is possible for the African American worldview to be both an inspiration for the majority of African Americans to successfully resist their racial subordination as well as a source of beliefs that cause a minority of blacks to offend. Thus, the majority of blacks draw upon the strengths of the stories that describe how others have successfully resisted their racial subjugation. . . . [However,] the worldview for others causes them to be overwhelmed with the deleterious feelings associated with their awareness of how their race and racism will negatively impact their lives.

In sum, our theory contends that the worldview shared by African Americans provides the vast majority of blacks with the ability to fend off the deleterious consequences of racial subordination. However, it also provides a minority of blacks with the impetus to respond to racial subjugation with attitudes and behaviors that increase their likelihood of offending. . . .

Racial Socialization and African American Offending

Nearly all African Americans, at some point in their lives, perceive criminal justice injustices, racial discrimination, and experience the negative consequences of being pejoratively stereotyped. We argue that these perceptions and experiences are related to African American offending because they weaken social bonds with conventional institutions and cause blacks to have heightened states of anger-defiance and depression. Yet, we also know that only a small percentage of African Americans offend. This, of course, means that the vast majority of African Americans somehow successfully negotiate the deleterious consequences of encountering racial injustices. In short, blacks are incredibly resilient (Brown, 2008; Keyes, 2009; Miller, 1999; Stevenson, Reed, Bodison, and Bishop, 1997). In fact, scholars argue that, in the absence of acknowledging this resiliency, there is a strong tendency to define African Americans in terms of the pathology associated with disproportionately living in resource-depleted neighborhoods (Nicolas, Helms, Jernigan, Sass, Skrzypek, and DeSilva, 2008). In this chapter, we argue that racial socialization experiences are a critical reason why so few African Americans respond to the damaging consequences of racial injustices by offending.

African Americans are faced with the reality of being black in a racist society. This means that they are confronted by racial discrimination, criminal justice injustices, and pejorative stereotypes that devalue them as being less than whites (Constantine and Blackmon, 2002). Scholars have revealed that many African American parents actively prepare their children to negotiate these perceptions of racial injustice (McHale, Crouter, Kim, Burton, Davis, Dotterer, and Swanson, 2006). They refer to this process as racial socialization. Lesane-Brown (2006: 400) defines racial

socialization "as specific verbal and non-verbal messages transmitted to younger generations for the development of values, attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs regarding the meaning and significance of race and racial stratification, intergroup and intragroup interactions, and personal and group identity."

Ward (1996) adds that racial socialization involves passing on the knowledge needed to resist internalizing the prevailing pejorative images and evaluations of African Americans and to create a self-identity that includes blackness as positive and valued. Ward (1996: 86) states:

> As agents of socialization, black families play an essential role in orienting their children to the existing social environment, teaching them what they need to know about the world and their place in it. African American parents socialize their children based on cultural and political interpretations and assumptions derived from their lived experience of being black in white America. The parenting of a black child is a political act. The psychological survival of a black child largely depends on the black family's ability to endure racial and economic discrimination and to negotiate conflicting and multiple role demands.

Thus, scholars of racial socialization detail how African American families experience and discuss racial inequalities and injustices and how they teach their children to manage them. More specifically, research recognizes that racial socialization is a multilayered phenomenon that "includes exposure to cultural practices and objects, efforts to instill pride in and knowledge about African Americans, discussions about discrimination and how to cope with it, and strategies for succeeding in mainstream society" (Hughes, Rodriguez, Smith, Johnson, Stevenson, and Spicer, 2006: 748). Scholars argue that African American parents must racially socialize their children so that they understand: (1) African American culture and how to interact with other blacks; (2) how to get along with other racial groups; and (3) how to cope with their minority status (Lesane-Brown, 2006: 401). Other scholars add that: "Race-specific barriers might include racial concerns, such as discrimination in the classroom, racial stereotyping, and issues of subordination. Effective racial socialization enables the youths to recognize the difference between these types of barriers and to cope with them effectively" (Nicolas et al., 2008: 276). In short, racial socialization is the attempt by African American parents to provide their children with the skills to buffer the effects of having a "collective spoiled identity" (Goffman, 1963; Inzlicht, McKay, and Aronson, 2006; Loury, 2004). . . .

Our basic thesis is that variations in racial socialization can exacerbate the influences that racial injustices have on the likelihood that blacks will engage in crime. We assert that there are four pathways through which racial socialization can increase the probability of individual African American offending.

First, we argue that parents who do not racially socialize their children put them at greater risk for experiencing the deleterious consequences of racial injustices that are related to offending (e.g., anger-hostility-defiance-depression and weak social bonds). Our theory posits that in the absence of parental-guardian racial socialization experiences, African American youth are more likely to construct their racial identity and their feelings about racial injustices by interacting with their peers and other individuals in their neighborhood; that is, on the "streets" (Oliver, 2006; Sharkey, 2006; Stewart and Simons, 2006; Stewart, Schreck, and Simons, 2006; Stewart and Simons, 2010). We additionally assert that it is likely, especially in disadvantaged isolated racially segregated neighborhoods, that the individuals that they will most likely interact with will be disidentified African Americans. We further hypothesize that it is likely that these disidentified individuals will have developed deep resentments toward individual whites and white-dominated institutions such as the criminal justice system. Consequently, we contend that African American youths who are not proactively and positively racially socialized by their parents will inculcate the attitudes that they are exposed to on the "streets" (Sharkey, 2006). We also hypothesize that youths who are racially socialized on the "street" are more likely to develop weak social bonds with institutions, such as their schools. Therefore, we stipulate that African Americans are more likely to offend if their "street" racial identity includes deep resentments toward racial injustices and race-based rationalizations that function to weaken their attachments to white-dominated institutions.

Second, we hypothesize that African Americans who are chronically exposed to criminal justice injustices, being pejoratively stereotyped, and racial discrimination are more likely to offend i their parents taught them, either purposefully o implicitly—verbally or nonverbally—to distru individual whites, white-dominated institution and that whites hold them in contempt (Brow Linver, and Evans, 2010). We posit that Afric Americans raised by parents that overly empl size the mistrust of whites and encourage th children to become overly defiant in the prese of racism are likely to develop a stigma sensi ity and stigma consciousness. The research sh that African Americans with these sensitivitie more likely to perceive discrimination direct them personally, interpret ambiguous situa as identity threatening, are less likely to wa prove the stereotype wrong, are more vulne to the toxic effects of stereotype threats, an provide more concrete examples of instan racial discrimination (Brown and Pinel, Inzlicht, McKay, and Aronson, 2006; Pinel, In addition, researchers have found tha heightened states of sensitivity may caus can Americans to have less self-control, that is unequivocally related to offendin our theory stipulates that an overemphasi mistrust of whites causes African Amer fending because it heightens their sens recognizing racial injustices, increases t lihood of negatively reacting to racial

that African American youths who are not proactively and positively racially socialized by their parents will inculcate the attitudes that they are exposed to on the "streets" (Sharkey, 2006). We also hypothesize that youths who are racially socialized on the "street" are more likely to develop weak social bonds with institutions, such as their schools. Therefore, we stipulate that African Americans are more likely to offend if their "street" racial identity includes deep resentments toward racial injustices and race-based rationalizations that function to weaken their attachments to white-dominated institutions.

Second, we hypothesize that African Americans who are chronically exposed to criminal justice injustices, being pejoratively stereotyped, and racial discrimination are more likely to offend if their parents taught them, either purposefully or implicitly—verbally or nonverbally—to distrust individual whites, white-dominated institutions, and that whites hold them in contempt (Brown, Linver, and Evans, 2010). We posit that African Americans raised by parents that overly emphasize the mistrust of whites and encourage their children to become overly defiant in the presence of racism are likely to develop a stigma sensitivity and stigma consciousness. The research shows that African Americans with these sensitivities are more likely to perceive discrimination directed at them personally, interpret ambiguous situations as identity threatening, are less likely to want to prove the stereotype wrong, are more vulnerable to the toxic effects of stereotype threats, and can provide more concrete examples of instances of racial discrimination (Brown and Pinel, 2003; Inzlicht, McKay, and Aronson, 2006; Pinel, 1999). In addition, researchers have found that these heightened states of sensitivity may cause African Americans to have less self-control, a factor that is unequivocally related to offending. Thus, our theory stipulates that an overemphasis on the mistrust of whites causes African American offending because it heightens their sensitivity to recognizing racial injustices, increases their likelihood of negatively reacting to racial injustices with anger-defiance-depression-hopelessness, enhances their likelihood of engaging in impulsive behaviors, and it weakens their ability to develop strong bonds with white-dominated institutions.

Third, our theory hypothesizes that African American parents may increase their children's probability of offending if they inadequately prepare them for their encounters with racial injustices. This aspect of racial socialization is referred to as "preparation for bias." We suggest that there are two aspects of preparation for bias that may lead to higher individual rates of offending. First, African American parents may stress inappropriate responses to racial injustices, such as defiance and aggression. Second, African American parents may not provide their children with effective coping skills, such as encouraging them to seek social supports (e.g., to talk with them or other positive role models), reporting racist acts to appropriate authorities, and affirmatively, but not angrily-aggressively, standing up to the perpetrators. In the absence of these effective resistant skills, we argue that African American youth will become more vulnerable to developing stigma sensitivity and stigma consciousness, which in turn predict higher rates of offending.

Fourth, our theory hypothesizes that certain racial socialization experiences should weaken the ability of African American youth to develop strong bonds with white-dominated institutions. More specifically, we hypothesize that African American youths will develop weak bonds with their schools or place of employment if their parents: (1) did not culturally socialize them, that is, instill within them a positive racial identity; (2) ill-prepared them for racially-biased encounters; (3) encouraged them to mistrust whites; and (4) underemphasized the teaching of egalitarian values. Note that our theory recognizes that other forms of parenting, such as authoritarianism, can exacerbate or attenuate the relationships among racial socialization practices, weak social bonds, and offending. Consequently, we hypothesize that the highest incidences of offending should occur among those African Americans who are poorly

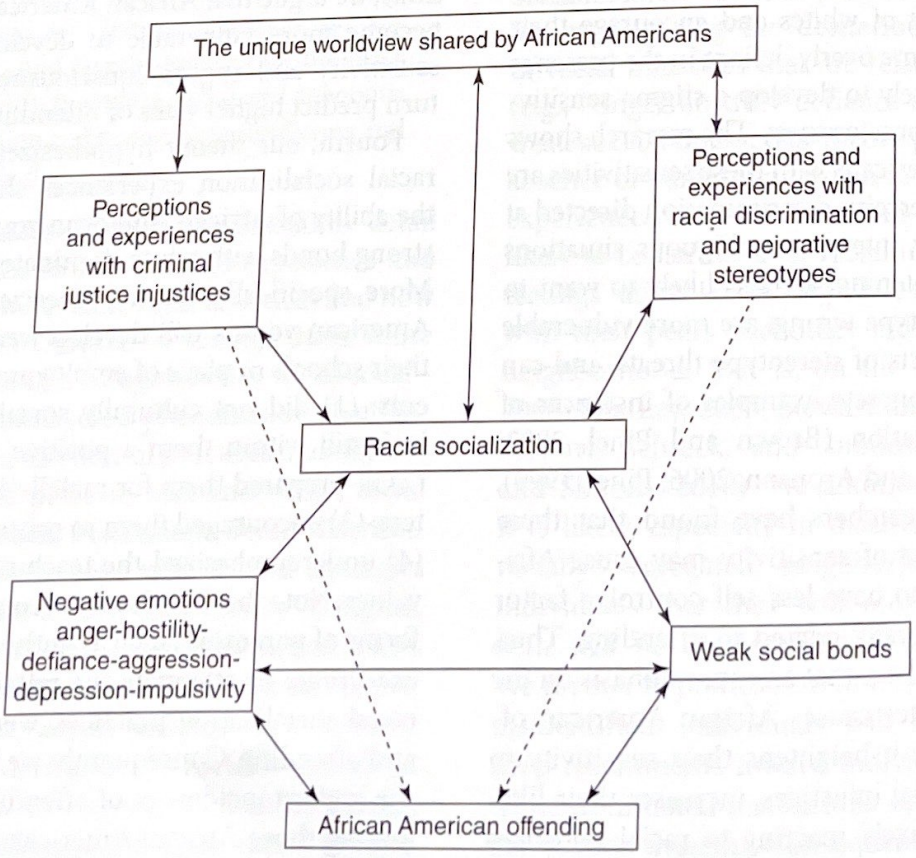
parented, have been ill-prepared by their parents to develop strong bonds with white-dominated institutions, and ill-prepared to fend off the noxious effects of racial injustices.

Our Theoretical Model of African American Offending

Below, we present a heuristic model that explicates our theory of African American offending. What separates our theory from the more general explanations of crime is that we contend that African American offending emerges from their unique worldview—that is, their peerless racialized daily experience. This unique worldview is only shared by African Americans and arose because of their inimitable racial oppression. In short, our theory of African American offending is race-centered; that is, it locates the cause of offending in the lived experiences of blacks residing in a conflicted racially stratified society—the United States.

Figure 31.1 indicates that the unique worldview shared by African Americans is reciprocally related to three core concepts of our theory: perceptions of criminal justice injustices, perceptions of racial discrimination and the effects of being negatively stereotyped, and racial socialization practices. Note that these are reciprocal relationships (i.e., two-headed arrows). This means that these three concepts are salient components of the unique worldview shared by African Americans but, at the same time, their worldview is reinforced each time an African American experiences these racial injustices and is racially socialized. For example, our theory argues that the inimitable worldview shared by African

Figure 31.1
Our Theory of African American Offending



Americans causes them to engage in the racial socialization of their children while, simultaneously, the racial socialization of African American youth further reinforces and sustains their unique worldview. This same process equally unfolds for the experiences that African Americans have with criminal justice injustices and different forms of racial discrimination. In the end, African Americans have a unique worldview that is reinforced when they encounter racial injustices and are embedded in social networks that reinforce the beliefs that emerge from their lived experiences with racial subordination.

Figure 31.1 highlights the importance that we assign to racial socialization experiences as we assert that it is the key factor that mediates the effects of criminal justice injustices, racial discrimination, and being noxiously stereotyped on whether African Americans express injurious negative emotions and develop weak bonds, which in turn directly impact offending. Thus, the model indicates that, as a result of experiencing racial injustices, inadequate racial socialization experiences will increase the likelihood that African Americans will express negative emotions and develop weak social bonds. Note that there are reciprocal arrows between racial socialization and perceptions and experiences with both criminal justice injustices and racial discrimination-pejorative stereotypes. Our model stipulates that some African Americans are racially socialized to be more vigilant in perceiving both of these racial injustices and, therefore, are more likely to react to these injustices with negative emotions and will have less ability to develop strong bonds with institutions. Our model also allows for there to be "child-effects" (Keijsers, Branje, VanderValk, and Meeus, 2010; Zadeh, Jenkins, and Pepler, 2010). These transactional child-effects are represented by the reciprocal causal arrows between racial socialization and both negative emotions and weak social bonds. These reciprocal relationships model the likelihood that African American parents will alter their racial socialization practices based on whether their children are overly expressing negative emotions or are having trouble developing strong bonds with conventional institutions.

Figure 31.1 reveals that the African Americans who are the least likely to offend are those that peripherally perceive criminal justice injustices, racial discrimination, and being negatively stereotyped and experience positive racial socialization practices that provide them with the ability to cope with their encounters with racial injustices by engaging in prosocial behaviors (e.g., reporting the perpetrator of racist acts to the appropriate authorities). It further indicates that African Americans who are unlikely to offend are those whose parents inculcated them with the ability to develop strong bonds with white-dominated institutions, even if they personally perceive them to be racist.

Our model indicates that the African Americans who are most likely to offend are those that intensely perceive or experience criminal justice injustices, racial discrimination, and being derogatorily stereotyped, and experience racial socialization practices over time that increase their likelihood of developing weak bonds with institutions, such as with their schools and places of employment, and are socialized to react to racial injustices with negative emotions (i.e., anger-hostility-defiance-aggression-depression-impulsivity). Figure 31.1 additionally indicates that there is a reciprocal relationship between the negative emotions that flow from racial injustices and developing weak bonds with conventional institutions. Our model predicts that African Americans who manifest negative emotions—anger-defiance-depression—will be more likely to develop weak bonds and that blacks who are unable to bond to white-dominated institutions will be more likely to express anger-defiance-depression. Note that Figure 31.1 also has two broken-line causal arrows. These indicate that it is possible for criminal justice injustices, racial discrimination, and being pejoratively stereotyped to directly impact offending. We argue that these direct relationships occur when these