

49. Social Support and Crime

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Criminologists have been insightful in showing how bad things that individuals experience—such as living in a disorganized neighborhood, the stress imposed by blocked opportunities, and frayed social bonds—can increase wayward conduct. Cullen (1994) argues, however, that scholars' exclusive focus on the criminogenic impact of what is bad in people's lives blinds them to the protective impact of what is good in people's lives. In particular, he contends that social support—that is, the extent to which others provide a person with instrumental assistance (e.g., money, help getting a job) and emotional assistance (e.g., empathy in a crisis, parental love)—is an essential component of human relations. His overarching claim is that crime is inversely related to social support.

Cullen (1994) elaborates that thesis by presenting a set of propositions regarding social support. Among other things, he argues that social support has a direct effect on crime; that it influences other variables that affect crime, such as the level of social control; that it conditions the impact of certain variables on crime (e.g., strain is more likely to lead to crime when social support is low); and that it plays a critical role in the prevention of crime and the rehabilitation of offenders. Cullen applies the concept of social support to both micro-level and macro-level questions (e.g., why the United States has such a high crime rate) and also uses it to shed light on developmental issues (e.g., the desistance from crime in early adulthood; see also Chouhy et al., 2020).

The concept of social support represents an important addition to criminology. Even though numerous theories make implicit or explicit reference to social support, Cullen draws explicit attention to the central role this concept may play in crime (see also Drennon-Gala, 1995). In doing so, he introduces a new variable into mainstream criminology. Support is related to, but distinct from, concepts such as social control and social disorganization. Second, the concept of social support moves us toward a rather different approach to reducing crime. Current policies focus largely on the control of crime, often through very punitive policies. Cullen's theory of social support, however, suggests a more humanitarian approach (Cullen et al., 1999).

Cullen's theory is compatible with existing research on crime (as described in his article; see also Cullen and Wright, 1997). A growing number of empirical tests also provide evidence in favor of the theory (for overviews, see Chouhy, 2019; Makarios and Sams, 2013). For example, in one study based on a sample of 1,775 adolescents and their parents interviewed for the National Survey of Families and Households, Wright (1995) found that structural factors, such as poverty and broken homes, increase delinquency mainly by diminishing the amount of support that parents are able to supply their children. In another study based on the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, Wright and Cullen (2001) reported that social support reduces delinquent involvement both directly and

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in combination with parental control (i.e., when parents both support and control their children). A more recent example is found in the research of Dong and Krohn (2017). Using the Rochester Youth Development Study, they found that perceived family support reduced offending in both adolescence (ages 14–18) and young adulthood (ages 21–31). Their analysis also revealed that during the adult period, family support buffered the effect of labeling—the official intervention of police arrest—on criminal involvement.

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My intention is to argue that notions of social support appear in diverse criminological writings. . . .

What is lacking, however, is an attempt to integrate these diverse insights on social support into a coherent criminological paradigm. In the sociology of mental illness, for example, considerable progress has been made in this direction (Lin, Dean, and Ensel 1986; Vaux 1988). But in criminology the insights linking social support to crime remain disparate, and are not systematized so far as to direct theoretical and empirical investigation. Indeed, I can offer one (nonetheless significant) indicator of the latency of this concept: virtually no introductory or theoretical textbook lists "social support" in its index. . . .

My goal, then, is to argue that social support, if approached systematically, can be an important organizing concept for criminology. In the pages ahead, I will discuss propositions that might form the parameters, in a preliminary way, for a criminological paradigm, which draws on existing knowledge to illuminate new research vistas.

What Is Social Support?

. . . Lin (1986: 18) defines social support as "the perceived or actual instrumental and/or expressive provisions supplied by the community, social networks, and confiding partners." Dissection of this definition reveals three major dimensions of

support. The first is the distinctive objective delivery and the perceived taking perceptions into account because it leads to the insight that receive support in a mechanistic appraisal, and anticipate it in situations (see Matsueda 1999).

Second, although different social support is usually categorized by Lin (1986: 20), "the instrumental involves the use of the support to a goal, such as seeking someone to be instrumental through the provision of material aid or financial providing information clarifying issues (and expressive).

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support. The first is the distinction between the objective delivery and the perception of support. Taking perceptions into account is important because it leads to the insight that people do not receive support in a mechanical way but interpret, appraise, and anticipate it in the context of social situations (see Matsueda 1992).

Second, although different typologies exist, social support is usually divided into two broad rubrics: instrumental and expressive. According to Lin (1986: 20), "the instrumental dimension involves the use of the relationship as a means to a goal, such as seeking a job, getting a loan, or finding someone to babysit." Vaux (1988: 21) suggests that "instrumental functions may be served through the provision of goods or money (material aid or financial assistance) and through providing information, making suggestions, and clarifying issues (advice and guidance)."

The expressive dimension, again according to Lin (1986: 20), "involves the use of the relationship as an end as well as a means. It is the activity of sharing sentiments, ventilating frustrations, reaching an understanding on issues and problems, and affirming one's own as well as the other's worth and dignity." Vaux (1988: 21) notes that the "affective functions" of support "include meeting the needs for love and affection, esteem and identity, and belonging and companionship. These needs are met respectively through emotional support, feedback and social reinforcement, and socializing."

Third, Lin's definition indicates that support occurs on different social levels. Micro-level support can be delivered by a confiding individual, such as a spouse or a best friend. But social support also can be viewed as a property of social networks and of communities and larger ecological units in which individuals are enmeshed.

A fourth dimension, not discussed by Lin, must be added: whether the support is delivered by a formal agency or through informal relations (Vaux 1988). Informal social support would occur through social relationships with others who lack any official status relative to the

individual. Formal social support might be provided by schools, governmental assistance programs, and—perhaps most interesting to us—the criminal justice system.

The Ecology of Social Support

In the past decade, scholars have shown a renewed interest in studying the social ecology of crime, as did Shaw and McKay (1942) (Bursik and Grasmick 1993a; Byrne and Sampson 1986; Reiss and Tonry 1986). This research has shown that crime rates vary across nations and, within a single nation, across communities. It is noteworthy, if unsurprising, that the United States has higher rates of serious crime, especially violent offenses, than other Western industrialized nations (Adler 1983; Archer and Gartner 1984; Currie 1985; Messner and Rosenfeld 1994; also see Lynch 1995). This finding prompts my first proposition:

1. *America has higher rates of serious crime than other industrialized nations because it is a less supportive society.*

I am not claiming that Americans, as individuals, are ungenerous in giving their money to charity or their time to voluntary organizations; quite the opposite appears to be the case (Wuthnow 1991). Even so, I assert that American society is not *organized*, structurally or culturally, to be socially supportive. This conclusion receives confirmation from several sources, which makes interrelated or complementary points.

First, Braithwaite (1989: 100) observes that societies differ in their "communitarian" quality—that is, in the extent to which "individuals are densely enmeshed in interdependencies which have the special qualities of *mutual help and trust*" (emphasis added). With a mobile, heterogeneous, urban population, the United States is low in communitarianism. Accordingly the structural basis for creating and sustaining supportive social relations is weak.

Second, numerous commentators—often referred to as communitarians—have documented

the corrosive effects of America's culture of excessive individualism (Bellah et al. 1985, 1991; Coles 1993; Etzioni 1993; Reich 1988; Wuthnow 1991). In the influential *Habits of the Heart*, Bellah et al. (1985) decry in particular "utilitarian individualism"—the dominance of individual self-interest in the pursuit of desired, usually material ends (also see Messner and Rosenfeld 1994). "We have committed," says Bellah et al. (1985: 285), "what to the republican founders of our nation was the cardinal sin: we have put our own good, as individuals, as groups, as a nation, above the common good." Building a "good society," in which concern for community and mutuality of support dominate, awaits a fundamental "transformation of American culture" (Bellah et al. 1985: 275–96, 1991).

Wuthnow (1991) notes that even compassion is "bounded" by the culture of individualism. Compassionate behavior is managed by being segmented into limited roles (e.g., a few hours of volunteer work). If pursued so extensively that it interferes with a person's self-interest, such behavior is regarded as an unhealthy obsession (1991: 191–220). As a result, while "some of the work—the work that can be divided up into limited commitments—is accomplished, much of it remains to be done" (1991: 220). . . .

In short, Wuthnow suggests that the demand for support in America exceeds the supply. This observation leads to a corollary to the first proposition: *The more a society is deficient in the support needed, the higher its crime rate will be.*

Third, Currie (1985, 1989, 1993) makes perhaps the most compelling case that support is low in America and is linked inextricably to the country's high violent crime rate. As Currie points out, America's past and recent economic development has disrupted the traditional "private cushions" provided by networks of social support. Unlike other Western nations, however, America's welfare state has been stingy, if not mean-spirited, in the support it offers to the casualties of the social dislocation and wide inequalities bred by this development (also see Block et al. 1987). The cost of undermining the delivery of support, argues

Currie, is an inordinately high rate of violent crime. . . .

Currie also challenges attempts to relate America's high crime rate to a weakness in control. Because other Western nations are more socially integrated, the argument goes, they are better able to exercise informal controls over their citizens (Adler 1983; Bayley 1976). Although this view may have merit, it overlooks the role of support in reducing crime. Japan offers an instructive example. Currie (1985: 46) notes that previous analyses have neglected "the ways in which Japanese society is more *supportive* than ours, not simply more 'controlling'" (author's emphasis). In particular, he points both to Japan's "private mechanisms of social obligation" and to Japan's efforts to limit inequality and to provide lifetime job security to most workers (also see Beirne and Messerschmidt 1991: 608–609).

As I will discuss again later, the broader point here is that criminologists often confound the effects of informal control with those of social support. These concepts are not necessarily rivals in explaining criminal behavior; in reality, support and control may be mutually reinforcing in reducing crime. Still the distinction between the two is important both for achieving theoretical precision and because their policy implications can differ dramatically. . . .

The social ecology of support and crime varies not only across but also within nations (Currie 1985). Thus I offer a second proposition:

2. *The less social support there is in a community, the higher the crime rate will be.*

This thesis is buttressed by several pieces of evidence. Admittedly, quantitative research on communities and crime has not systematically explored the relationship of social support to crime (Bursik and Grasmick 1993a; Byrne and Sampson 1986; Reiss and Tonry 1986; but see Zuravin 1989). Nonetheless, variables employed in various studies may be viewed as operationalizing the concept of support.

First, there is evidence that governmental assistance to the poor tends to lessen violent crime

across ecological units (DeFronzo 1983; Messner 1986; see Rosenfeld 1986). Thus, contrary to conservatives' claims that welfare corrodes individual initiative and fosters irresponsibility, including lawlessness (Ellwood 1988; Murray 1984; but see Block et al. 1987), it appears that state support buffers against criminogenic forces (also see Currie 1985, 1989, 1993).

Second, research reveals that crime rates are higher in communities characterized by family disruption, weak friendship networks, and low participation in local voluntary organizations (Sampson 1986a, 1986b; Sampson and Groves 1989). Sampson interprets these findings as an indication that such communities are unable to exert informal social control over their residents (also see Bursik and Grasmick 1993b). Although this perspective may have merit, it is unclear why these variables are measures of control and not of support. It is telling that the mental illness literature uses neighborhood interaction and participation in voluntary organizations to assess "community and network support" (Lin, Dumin, and Woelfel 1986). Further, high rates of family disruption may operationalize not only adults' ability to exert surveillance over youths but also the availability to youths of both adult support networks and the opportunity to develop intimate relations. In short, existing ecological studies can be interpreted as containing measures of social support and, in turn, as showing that support reduces rates of criminal involvement. . . .

Quantitative and ethnographic research on the "underclass" or the "truly disadvantaged" also is relevant to the social ecology of crime and support. This research documents the powerful social forces—deindustrialization, joblessness, persisting racial segregation, migration to the suburbs—that have created socially and economically isolated inner-city enclaves (Devine and Wright 1993; Jencks and Peterson 1991; Lemann 1991; Massey and Denton 1993; Sullivan 1989; Wilson 1987). This trend, which has been described as a continuing process of social and cultural "disinvestment" in these neighborhoods, has

enormous social consequences (Hagan 1993a; Short 1990, 1991).

The literature essentially documents the erosion of community social institutions and of their ability to provide social support. Wilson (1987: 144) notes, for example, that the departure of many middle-class families from inner-city neighborhoods reduced the "social buffer" or human capital needed to "absorb the shock or cushion the effect of uneven economic growth and periodic recessions." Similarly, in his review of Anderson's (1990) *Street Wise*, an ethnography of the Philadelphia neighborhood of "Northton," Hagan (1993a: 329) shows how "structural and cultural disinvestment" has frayed the supportive relations between adults and youths that previously protected youths against crime. . . .

In short, my thesis is that both across nations and across communities, crime rates vary inversely with the level of social support. The social ecologists of crime have largely overlooked this possibility, but (as I hope I have revealed) their work contains evidence favoring the social support thesis and offers important clues for future investigation. In the next section I explore ways in which the presence or absence of support is implicated in individuals' involvement in crime.

Support and Crime

Since the inception of American criminology, interest in the criminogenic effects of family life has ebbed and flowed (Wilkinson 1974). Over the past decade, attention has increased once again, in part because of the American family's beleaguered status (Sykes and Cullen 1992) and in part because of the emergence of salient criminological findings showing that the pathway to serious adult criminality begins in childhood (Loeber and Le Blanc 1990; Nagin and Farrington 1992; Nagin and Paternoster 1991; Sampson and Laub 1993).

This renewed interest has prompted not only numerous empirical studies on family correlates of crime (Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber

1986; Wells and Rankin 1991) but also widely read theoretical frameworks. Although these theories differ fundamentally, they emphasize the criminogenic role that the family plays by the way it exercises or instills *control* (Colvin and Pauly 1983; Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990; Hagan 1989; Regoli and Hewitt 1994; Wilson and Herrnstein 1985). These perspectives are earning a measure of empirical confirmation (see, for example, Akers 1994; Burton et al. 1994; Grasmick et al. 1993; Hagan 1989; Hagan, Gillis, and Simpson 1990; Messner and Krohn 1990); thus I will not argue against their value. At the same time, as a result of criminologists' emphasis on control, virtually no theoretical attention has been paid to how family-related social support, or its absence, is involved in crime causation. Accordingly I offer my third proposition:

3. *The more support a family provides, the less likely it is that a person will engage in crime.*

We have considerable evidence that parental expressive support diminishes children's risk of criminal involvement. . . .

The firmest empirical evidence, however, can be drawn from Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber's (1986) comprehensive meta-analysis of family correlates of delinquency: factors indicating a lack of parental support clearly increase delinquent involvement. (Also see Feldman's [1993: 196] discussion of "positive parenting.") Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber conclude that delinquency is related inversely to "child-parent involvement, such as the amount of intimate communication, confiding, sharing of activities, and seeking help" (1986: 42). Similarly, their analysis indicates that measures of parental rejection of children, such as "rejection, not warm, lack of love, lack of affection, less affectionate," were "consistently related to delinquency and aggression" (1986: 54; also see Sampson and Laub 1993: 119). These "support" elements, moreover, were among the most powerful family factors related to delinquency; their effects exceeded those of parental criminality, marital discord, parental absence, parental health, and family size (1993: 120-23). . . .

In contrast to expressive support, criminological research contains few empirical studies on the impact of instrumental family support on crime (see, for example, Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber 1986). It is premature to conclude that instrumental support is as salient as expressive support, and possibly these forms of support vary in their effects across the life cycle. In any case, the literature contains some clues as to the importance of instrumental family support. Thus, if we revisit Glueck and Glueck (1950: 129-30), we discover that delinquents were more likely than nondelinquents to have parents who "had not given any thought to the boys' futures." Further, as noted above, family-based networks are an important source of entry into the job market; this, in turn, can undermine continued involvement in crime (Sullivan 1989; also see Curtis 1989: 155).

Finally, any discussion of families and crime must be careful to avoid what Currie (1985: 185) calls the "fallacy of autonomy—the belief that what goes on inside the family can usefully be separated from the forces that affect it from the outside: the larger social context in which families are embedded for better or for worse." Indeed, large social forces have transformed many American families in ways that often have reduced their capacity to support children (see, for example, Hewlett 1991; Wilson 1987). For example, adolescents today are much less likely than in the past to eat evening meals with parents or to spend time at home (Felson 1994: 104; Messner and Rosenfeld 1994: 103); the potential time that parents have to spend with children is declining (Hewlett 1991: 90-92); and "less than 5 percent of all families have another adult (e.g., grandparent) living in the home, compared to 50 percent two generations ago. This reduces the backup support that might otherwise be available to working parents" (Panel on High-Risk Youth 1993: 56).

Most disconcerting, however, is the concentration of forces that have ripped apart families of the underclass, or the "truly disadvantaged" (Devine and Wright 1993; Wilson 1987), and have made inner-city youths vulnerable to crime, drugs, and

an array of unhealthy behaviors (Currie 1985, 1993; Panel on High-Risk Youth 1993). The Panel on High-Risk Youth states,

Perhaps the most serious risk facing adolescents in high-risk settings is isolation from the nurturance, safety, and guidance that comes from sustained relationships with adults. Parents are the best source of support, but for many adolescents, parents are not positively involved in their lives. In some cases, parents are absent or abusive. In many more cases, parents strive to be good parents, but lack the capacity or opportunity to be so. (1993: 213)

Accordingly I offer this as a corollary to my third proposition: *The more support is given to families, the less crime will occur.* As Rivara and Farrington (forthcoming) observe, "increased social support to families can take the form of information (e.g., parenting programs), emotional support (e.g., home visitors), provision of material needs (e.g., food stamps, housing) or instrumental help (e.g., day care)." They also note that the "most successful interventions appear to be those which offer more than one type of social support service, thereby affecting a number of risk factors for the development of delinquency and violence" (forthcoming; also see Farrington 1994). Echoing this theme, Currie (1989: 18–19, 1993: 310–17) argues persuasively that the government should institute a "genuinely supportive national family policy," including, for example, child care, family leaves, and special programs for families at risk for mistreating children.

Currie's (1985, 1989, 1993) analyses and the above discussion on changing levels of support within the American family lead to a second corollary: *Changes in levels of support for and by families have contributed since the 1960s to increases in crime and to the concentration of serious violence in high-risk inner-city neighborhoods.* This statement contradicts the thinking of Murray (1984), who blames the "generous revolution" of the Great Society programs for eroding individual responsibility and for

fostering criminal and other deviant behaviors (see Lemann 1991; Lupo 1994).

Beyond the family, Krohn (1986) contends that social networks may provide a "web of conformity" (also see Sampson and Laub 1993). Krohn emphasizes how dimensions of networks operate to control behavior; scholars in the sociology of mental illness study how these characteristics of networks are an important source of social support (Lin et al. 1986; Vaux 1988). In short, the web of conformity involves not only constraints but also supports (Sullivan 1989; also see Zuravin 1989). This point leads to my fourth proposition:

4. *The more social support in a person's social network, the less crime will occur.*

Social support theorists have examined most extensively how supports mitigate the effects of strain or "stress." The relationships are complex, but social supports can prevent stresses from arising or can lessen negative consequences if stresses should emerge (House 1981; Vaux 1988). These findings are important in light of the recent revitalization of strain theory, particularly empirical research linking strain to criminal behavior (Agnew 1985a, 1989; Agnew and White 1992; Burton and Cullen 1992; Farnworth and Leiber 1989; McCarthy and Hagan 1992; Vaux and Ruggiero 1983). . . .

The remaining issue, largely ignored by strain theorists (Cullen 1984), is how people respond to this range of stressful conditions. Building on the social support literature (e.g., Vaux 1988), Agnew (1992) suggests that the ability to cope with criminogenic strains is contingent on access to supports. "Adolescents with conventional social support," he observes, "should be better able to respond to objective strains in a nondelinquent manner" (1992: 72). This contention suggests my fifth proposition:

5. *Social support lessens the effects of exposure to criminogenic strains.*

In their important reassessment of Glueck and Glueck's longitudinal data, Sampson and Laub (1993) study not only sources of the stability of crime across the life course but also the

50. Social Concern and Crime

Robert Agnew

Crime theories are based on certain underlying assumptions, including assumptions about human nature (Agnew, 2011, 2014). As Agnew argues in this chapter, crime theories most commonly assume that people are self-interested, focused on the satisfaction of their needs and desires. Crime is therefore most likely when the costs of crime are low and the benefits are high. And many crime theories, including control and social learning theories, focus on the costs and/or benefits of crime.

But in this chapter, Agnew argues that much recent research challenges the idea that people are simply self-interested. Rather, human nature is more complex. While people possess some self-interest, they also show much concern for others. Agnew describes the nature of this social concern: people care about the welfare of others, desire close ties to certain others, follow certain moral intuitions (e.g., not causing harm to innocent others), and are inclined to conform to the behavior and views of others. This social concern is said to be part of human nature because it is widespread and has some genetic basis. Agnew further argues that people are malleable, such that they are shaped by their social environment. Certain environmental factors increase social concern, while others reduce it. Social concern, for example, is more likely when people have strong bonds to prosocial others and learn concern from them.

According to Agnew, the fact that people possess some social concern has major implications for crime theories. It means that crime is not simply a

function of costs and benefits. Social concern generally inhibits crime, and people often refrain from crime even when they would benefit from it. Crime theories therefore need to consider those factors that lead individuals to act contrary to their concern for others, factors such as strain or stress.

Further, Agnew argues that individuals and groups vary in their level of social concern, for both biological and social reasons. This variation contributes to variation in crime, a proposition that is at the core of Agnew's theory of social concern and crime. In particular, crime is generally less likely when social concern is high. Agnew lists additional propositions describing the relationship between social concern and crime. For example, social concern has an indirect effect on crime, through its effect on strain, control, and social learning. And social concern influences or conditions the effect of other causes on crime (e.g., strain is more likely to lead to crime when social concern is low).

Agnew's theory is relatively new and has not yet been subject to a full test. But, as described in this chapter, the theory is compatible with certain research, such as the research on the relationship between empathy and crime (also see Agnew, 2011; Chouhy et al., 2016, 2017; TenEyck and Barnes, 2019). In the tradition of positive criminology, Agnew's theory suggests that criminology may benefit a great deal if it expands its focus beyond negative traits, such as low self-control, and considers positive traits, such as those that comprise social concern.

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Perhaps the core assumption of criminology is that people are naturally self-interested, focused on the satisfaction of their needs and desires. Most theories are built on this assumption. Crime is said to result when people have not learned to control the pursuit of their interests or are in environments where their interests are better served through crime. Likewise, most crime-control initiatives focus on reducing the criminogenic pursuit of interests, usually by increasing the costs of crime.

This article presents an expanded view of human nature and discusses the implications of this view for the causes and control of crime. It is argued that:

- People are naturally socially concerned as well as self-interested; that is, people have a set of biologically based inclinations that sometimes lead them to give more consideration to others than to their own interests. These inclinations include caring about others, forming close ties to and cooperating with them,

- following certain moral intuitions, and conforming. People follow these inclinations even when there is no extrinsic benefit and perhaps some cost to doing so. There are, however, individual, demographic, and circumstantial variations in the strength of these inclinations.
- Social concern has direct, indirect, mediating, and conditioning effects on crime. Although social concern generally reduces crime, it has little effect on or increases crime in certain circumstances.
 - The social environment also has a large impact on social concern, influencing the level and nature of social concern, as well as its expression. These environmental effects suggest several strategies for controlling crime. . . .

The Dominance of Self-Interest in Criminology

Nature of Self-Interest

The criminological assumption of self-interest has three components. First, individuals are strongly motivated to satisfy their needs and desires, particularly their short-term needs/desires. This provides substantial motivation for crime because crime is often the most expedient way to get what you want. . . .

Second, individuals give priority to their interests over those of others. That is, "people think of and act first for themselves . . . they are not naturally inclined to subordinate their interests to the interests of others" (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990: 5). . . .

Third, it is assumed that individuals are *some-what* rational in the pursuit of their interests. That is, they consciously consider the costs and benefits of possible behaviors and tend to *choose* those behaviors that increase their benefits and reduce their costs. . . .

Self-interest is said to be "natural" or part of human nature because it has a substantial genetic basis and characterizes the large majority of people (see Wilson, 2012: 193, for a discussion

of human nature). Evolutionary theorists explain the pervasiveness of self-interest by arguing that individuals who put their interests above others are more likely to survive and reproduce (see Boehm, 2012; Nowak and Highfield, 2011). . . .

Self-Interest and the Causes and Control of Crime

If people are self-interested, they should be most likely to offend when the costs of crime are low and the benefits are high. And most of the leading crime theories focus on the costs and/or benefits of crime (Agnew, 2011; Akers, 1990; Bohm and Vogel, 2011; Lanier and Henry, 2004; Piquero and Tibbetts, 2002). Classical and deterrence theorists focus on the formal costs of crime or sanctions by the state, whereas social control theorists also examine the informal costs. These informal costs involve direct control or sanctioning by parents, teachers, neighbors, and others; the individual's emotional bond to conventional others and investments in conventional society, both of which are jeopardized by crime; and the internalization of moral beliefs, particularly the belief that crime is wrong. These theories focus on variation in the costs of crime because they assume that the benefits of crime are high and roughly comparable across individuals. That is because all individuals are said to have unfulfilled needs and desires that could easily be satisfied through crime (Kornhauser, 1978).

Social learning, rational choice, and routine activities theories, however, consider variation in both the costs and benefits of crime. Social learning theory states that the benefits of crime are higher for some individuals because they are in environments where crime is more likely to be differentially reinforced (e.g., delinquent peer groups). Rational choice and routine activities theories devote much attention to the situational factors affecting crime, and they state that some individuals are more often exposed to situations where the benefits of crime are high, such as situations where attractive targets for crime are present (also see Felson and Boba, 2010; Greenberg, in press).

Self-control theory focuses on a general trait that influences the individual's awareness of and responsiveness to the costs and benefits of crime. Those low in self-control are focused on the immediate and easy gratification of their desires, have a preference for risky activities, have little tolerance for frustration, give little thought to the future, and are insensitive to others. As such, they are less likely to notice and be concerned about the costs of crime, and they are more likely to be tempted by the benefits of crime (Arneklev, Grasmick, and Bursik, 1999; Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990; Tittle, Ward, and Grasmick, 2004). By contrast, those high in self-control have been taught by parents and others to delay gratification, exercise caution, control their emotions, work toward long-term goals, and have some concern for others. As such, they are less likely to satisfy their immediate needs and desires through crime. Rather, they are instead focused on the disciplined pursuit of their long-term interests. . . .

In sum, most leading crime theories and crime-control policies are based on the assumption that individuals are naturally self-interested. . . . And, consequently, it is assumed that the task of society is to tame this self-interest, creating "a cultural overlay, a thin veneer hiding an otherwise selfish and brutish nature" (de Waal, 2006: 6). . . .

The Nature and Determinants of Social Concern

Recent research in several areas challenges the assumption that people are *simply* self-interested. Human nature is more complex, and people *also* are socially concerned. That is, self-interest exists alongside biologically based inclinations that serve to "suppress or regulate self-interest and make cooperative societies possible" (Haidt, 2012: 270). Social concern, in particular, refers to a set of inclinations that sometimes lead people to give more consideration to others than to their own interests. Social concern has four elements: people 1) care about the welfare of others, 2)

desire close ties to others, 3) are follow certain moral intuitions, and conform to the views and behavior. Each of these elements substantiate the likelihood that people will in ways that increase their ability to survive and reproduce (see subsequent discussion).

The research demonstrating social concern is summarized in *Toward a Unified Criminology*. Numerous other sources. This research suggests that you are inclined to:

- Care about the welfare of others, particularly when they are in need.
- Feel sympathy for others, particularly when they are in need.
- Understand the reasons for others' behavior.
- Desire close ties to others, particularly when they are in need.

desire close ties to others, 3) are inclined to follow certain moral intuitions, and 4) tend to conform to the views and behavior of others. Each of these elements substantially increases the likelihood that people will work together in ways that increase their ability, that of their kin, and/or that of the groups to which they belong to survive and reproduce (more in the subsequent discussion).

The research demonstrating the existence of social concern is summarized in Chapter 4 of *Toward a Unified Criminology* (Agnew, 2011) and numerous other sources. . . . Taken as a whole, this research suggests that most people are naturally inclined to:

- *Care about the welfare of others.* Survey, observational, and experimental data suggest that most people feel distress at the suffering of innocent others. Furthermore, people are inclined to help innocent others in distress, particularly when they personally encounter these others. This is the case even when there is no benefit and some cost to providing the help (see Agnew, 2011, for an overview). Empathy and sympathy seem to be at the heart of this inclination, including “emotional contagion” or feeling what others feel; “cognitive empathy” or understanding the other’s situation, including the reasons for their distress; and sympathy or feelings of sorrow or concern for the distressed other. . . .
- *Desire close ties to certain others, including ties of an emotional and cooperative nature.* Data from a variety of sources indicate that people seek close emotional ties to certain others, even when such ties provide no extrinsic rewards. Furthermore, people want to feel accepted and valued by these others. And people suffer negative emotional and other effects when rejected (see especially Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Leary, 2010). People also are inclined to cooperate with others in instrumental endeavors, even when selfish behavior would be to their greater advantage. For example, when people

are asked to play games that provide the opportunity for selfish and cooperative behavior, they tend to cooperate even though their interests would be better served by selfish behavior. People also are inclined to punish those who do not cooperate, even at some cost to themselves (Agnew, 2011).

- *Follow certain moral intuitions, as well as punish those who violate such intuitions.* Data from a variety of sources, including experiments, surveys that ask people how they would respond to moral dilemmas, and cross-cultural observations, suggest that people share certain moral intuitions (see Agnew, 2011). Although there is still some debate over the nature of these intuitions and the extent to which they are “natural” versus learned, these intuitions likely include 1) not killing or physically harming innocent others; 2) not taking the property of innocent others by force or theft; and 3) treating others in an equitable manner (e.g., not cheating or engaging in deceptive practices in exchange relationships, not “free-riding” off the contributions of others, distributing earned resources on the basis of inputs, sharing with equal partners, and giving needed resources to those dependent on you). . . .
- *Conform to the behavior and views of others and, more generally, to social norms, as well as sanction those who violate social norms.* Much research indicates that people have a strong inclination to conform to the behavior and views of others and to social norms more generally, even at some cost to themselves (Agnew, 2011). Furthermore, people are inclined to sanction those who violate social norms. At the same time, it should be noted that people can distinguish acts that cause significant harm from those that simply violate social conventions, and they favor stronger sanctions for harmful acts.

Research suggests that people generally act on these inclinations with little forethought and that

such action involves that part of the brain concerned with emotions rather than with rational thought, including emotions such as compassion, guilt, and anger. A major contribution of the recent research on social concern, in fact, is the suggestion that behavior is frequently more habitual and less rational/deliberative than is commonly thought. . . .

Relationship Between Social Concern and Self-Control

Both social concern and self-control act as constraints on that type of self-interest involving the pursuit of short-term needs and desires. But social concern is nevertheless distinct from self-control. Self-control involves an *enlightened* self-interest, wherein individuals have learned to control the pursuit of their short-term needs and desires (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990; also see Paternoster and Pogarsky, 2009). They are instead focused on the quasi-rational pursuit of their long-term interests, have an aversion to risky activities, and possess some *learned* concern for others. By contrast, social concern is a set of biologically based inclinations that sometimes lead individuals to act in ways independent of and even in conflict with their interests—both short and long term. Furthermore, social concern is more often intuitive than rational/deliberative in nature. Research suggests that social concern coexists with self-interest, both immediate and enlightened. That is, both social concern and self-interest motivate behavior, although their relative influence varies across individuals, sociodemographic groups, and circumstances (more in the subsequent discussion). . . .

Individual, Sociodemographic, and Circumstantial Variation in Social Concern

Although social concern and the behavior it inspires are common, some people possess more concern than others (e.g., Agnew, 2011; Balliet, Parks, and Joireman, 2009; Boehm, 2012; Haidt and Kesebir, 2010; Knafo and Israel, 2010; Penner and Orom, 2010; Singer, 1981; Willer, Flynn, and

Simpson, 2013). For example, although most people share with others in games that provide the opportunity for both sharing and self-interested behavior, some share more than others and a small percentage act in a strictly self-interested manner. Also, females show stronger inclinations for social concern than males (see Dovidio et al., 2006; Jolliffe and Farrington, 2007; Lahey and Waldman, 2005: 34–5; McGinley and Carlo, 2007; Walsh and Beaver, 2009; Walsh and Bolen, 2012). Likewise, there is evidence for age differences in many of the inclinations that comprise social concern, such as the inclination to conform (e.g., Dovidio et al., 2006; McGinley and Carlo, 2007; Walsh and Beaver, 2009, 2012).

Furthermore, the inclinations for social concern are weaker in some circumstances than in others (e.g., Bowles and Gintis, 2011; de Waal, 2008; Dovidio and Gaertner, 2010; Dovidio et al., 2006; Haidt, 2012; Haidt and Kesebir, 2010; Piliavin and Charng, 1990; Pinker, 2011; Wilson, Tumminelli, and Sesma, 2009; Wilson, 2012). Most notably, social concern is weaker when individuals interact with outgroup members, including those they view as different on salient dimensions and those that they dislike or distrust. Social concern also is weaker when individuals believe that others have violated the moral intuitions or otherwise have engaged in deviant acts. It is weaker when individuals are competing for scarce resources, including status and dominance. And it is weaker when individuals are in bad moods or are preoccupied with their own distress. In sum, social concern is both a state and a trait variable; individuals and sociodemographic groups differ in their general tendency for social concern, and social concern varies across circumstances (see especially Goetz, Keltner, and Simon-Thompson, 2010; see Horney, 2006, and Piquero and Bouffard, 2007, who make a similar argument regarding self-control).

In addition, the prosocial behavior motivated by social concern, such as cooperation and helping others in need, also is affected by its costs and benefits (Boehm, 2012; Dovidio et al., 2006;

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Goetz, Keltner, and Simon-Thomson, 2010). For example, although people cooperate with others even when they would benefit more from selfish behavior, they are *more* likely to cooperate when the costs are low and the benefits are high. (Those high in social concern, however, are more likely to estimate the costs of prosocial behavior as low [Penner et al., 1995].) And although people provide *anonymous* help to others, they are more likely to help in the presence of others because groups tend to reward prosocial behavior (Batson, 2010; Dovidio et al., 2006; Haidt and Kesebir, 2010; Komter, 2010; Nowak and Highfield, 2011; Willer, 2009; Willer, Flynn, and Simpson, 2013). The research on prosocial behavior does not deny the importance of self-interest; rather, it suggests that people are influenced by both self-interest *and* social concern.

Evidence for Natural Social Concern

Much evidence suggests that the inclinations that comprise social concern have a substantial biological basis. Certain of the inclinations for social concern emerge in inventories of human universals, such as the inclinations to follow social norms and to feel distress at the suffering of innocent others, especially members of one's ingroup (Agnew, 2011). Many inclinations appear very early in life, before there has been much opportunity for social learning. Very young children, for example, are inclined to form strong attachments to caregivers and to help others in distress. Many inclinations are exhibited by nonhuman primates, where social learning plays a much smaller role. For example, nonhuman primates often show concern for the pain of others; try to avoid causing harm to others, especially close others; and display some commitment to reciprocity (Agnew, 2011; de Waal, 2006). The inclinations are *some-what* independent of social learning. For example, the tendency for young children to help others is maintained regardless of whether it is rewarded or ignored (see Warneken and Tomasello, 2009). And the inclinations have some genetic basis and are linked to aspects of brain structure and

functioning (Agnew, 2011; Ebstein et al., 2010; Eisenberg, Eggum, and Di Giunta, 2010; Walsh and Beaver, 2012). . . .

The Effect of Environmental Factors on Social Concern

Much evidence suggests that the inclinations for social concern are shaped by a range of social experiences, as well as by the sociodemographic, community, and societal characteristics that impact these experiences. Among other things, social factors influence the level of social concern, who is viewed as worthy of concern, what is viewed as harmful and immoral, and the conditions where social concern is considered more and less applicable. The effect of social factors, however, is not unlimited. For example, all societies condemn theft from and the killing of innocent others. And while there is some variation in definitions of theft and homicide, there is much overlap (Kornhauser, 1978). Nevertheless, environmental factors have a large impact on social concern. This impact can be described in terms of the major crime theories, including social learning, strain, control, social support, and critical theories.

The inclinations for social concern are shaped through social learning, including differential reinforcement, modeling, the presentation of beliefs, and the cultivation of identities (e.g., Dovidio et al., 2006; Ellis, 1971; Laible, Eye, and Carlo, 2008; Lerner and Clayton, 2011; Penner et al., 2005; Stets and Carter, 2012). Expressions of social concern are generally rewarded by social groups, and this reward typically strengthens the inclinations and their likelihood of expression. . . . Social concern is strengthened and its expression more likely when individuals are exposed to models who show concern (Piliavin and Charng, 1990). Several literatures describe those beliefs that encourage social concern, as well as the justifications and excuses that some learn for not showing concern. . . . Drawing on social learning theories of crime, one key prediction is that those who associate with criminal peers will

be less likely to learn and act on the inclinations for social concern, particularly for those outside their peer group. Among other things, such individuals are less likely to be reinforced for concern, exposed to socially concerned models, taught beliefs favorable to concern, and associated with this, develop identities that emphasize concern.

There is also evidence that strain reduces social concern, particularly major strains that are perceived as unjust (Agnew, 2007). Individuals who are unjustly treated in a negative manner come to distrust other people and focus on their own distress. Consequently, concern for others is reduced (e.g., Colvin, 2000; Hochstetler, Copes, and Williams, 2010; Maier-Katkin, Mears, and Bernard, 2009; Simons and Burt, 2011). It is unclear, however, whether strain reduces social concern in a linear fashion. Certain data suggest that the relationship may be nonlinear, with high strain reducing concern and moderate strain fostering concern, particularly empathy/sympathy for others (Piff et al., 2010; Stellar et al., 2012). The argument is that *some* experience with strain makes one more understanding of and concerned about the suffering of others. More research is needed in this area, however.

Just as negative relations with others reduce social concern, strong bonds to conventional others and the receipt of social support increase concern. Strong bonds and support reduce strain and increase the likelihood that one will learn concern from others. Beyond that, strong bonds and support foster ingroup ties and a positive view of others, such that others are more likely to be considered worthy of concern (Colvin, Cullen, and Vander Ven, 2002; Dovidio et al., 2006). Relatedly, research suggests that dependence on others fosters social concern. Dependence makes one more attentive to others, more desirous of close ties with them, and more inclined to conform (Piff et al., 2010; Stellar et al., 2012; van Kleef et al., 2008).

Furthermore, one's social position, as indexed by factors such as class and gender, affects social concern. Social position affects one's social

learning, thereby affecting social concern. Females, for example, are more often socialized to be caring and channeled into roles that reward social concern (for overviews, see Broidy et al., 2003; Dovidio et al., 2006). And this partly explains why females are higher in most aspects of social concern, such as empathy/sympathy. . . .

Finally, larger social forces influence social concern. There are substantial differences in social concern across communities and societies (e.g., Bernard, 1990; Dovidio et al., 2006; Haidt, 2012; Henrich et al., 2001; Piff et al., 2010). For example, although most people tend to share in games that offer the possibility for sharing and self-interested behavior, people in some societies share significantly more on average than those in others. This is partly because of cultural differences, particularly norms and values regarding social concern (Bowles and Gintis, 2011; Dovidio et al., 2006; Penner et al., 2005). "Collectivist" societies place more emphasis on social harmony and the subordination of individual interests to those of the group, whereas "individualistic" societies place more emphasis on the unrestrained pursuit of individual interests. And evidence indicates that people in collectivist societies, such as those of East Asia, are higher in certain aspects of social concern, such as compassion and the need for social approval (Goetz, Keltner, and Simon-Thomas, 2010; Haidt, 2012; Oyserman, Coon, and Kimmelmeier, 2002; Twenge and Im, 2007). . . .

These cultural differences are at least partly rooted in the social and economic organization of societies. As critical and other theorists have stated, "market societies" are organized such that individuals are encouraged to compete with others for personal economic gain (e.g., Bongers, 1969; Currie, 1997; Hagan et al., 1998; Henrich et al., 2001; Karstedt and Farrall, 2006; Messner, 2012; Messner and Rosenfeld, 2007). In the words of Currie (1997: 164), such societies breed a "culture of callousness," in which concern for the well-being of other people becomes steadily attenuated." . . .

Finally, societies with high levels of strain tend to be lower in aspects of social concern. Such strain includes high levels of economic inequality which promotes a focus on self-interest, which increases the likelihood that others are seen as dissimilar and so unworthy of concern (Nowak and Highfield, 2011; Maier-Katkin, Mears, and Bernard, 2009). In their discussion of crimes in the United States, they argue that intense and widespread social concern is fostered by such things as deprivation, military occupation—fostered by small ingroups and a social orientation, such that social concern is extended to many others. In contrast, societies that are dehumanized and demonized have low social concern.

In sum, social concern is a social product, and those with a strong biological basis for social concern are in error.

A Theory of Social Concern

Effects of Social Concern

1. Social Concern and Crime. The effects of social concern on crime are about others. In more cooperative societies, moral intuition is higher (and concern for others), and these characteristics increase the likelihood that individuals will intervene. Intervention is especially important in threatening situations. . . .

Finally, societies with high levels of strain tend to be lower in aspects of social concern. Such strain includes high levels of inequality, which promotes a focus on self-interest and increases the likelihood that others will be viewed as dissimilar and so unworthy of social concern (Nowak and Highfield, 2011: 232–3). And, as Maier-Katkin, Mears, and Bernard (2009) argued in their discussion of crimes against humanity, intense and widespread societal strain—caused by such things as deprivation, oppression, and military occupation—fosters strong identification with small ingroups and an “us versus them” orientation, such that social concern is not extended to many others. In fact, others often are dehumanized and demonized.

In sum, social concern is both a biological and a social product, and it is most likely when those with a strong biological predisposition for social concern are in environments conducive to concern.

A Theory of Social Concern and Crime

Effects of Social Concern on Crime

1. *Social Concern Has a Direct, Negative Effect on Crime.* Those high in social concern care about others, desire strong emotional and cooperative ties to them, possess certain moral intuitions (e.g., do not harm innocent others), and have a strong need to conform. These characteristics should *directly* reduce the likelihood of most crimes, particularly those viewed as harmful, immoral, or deviant. Interpersonal acts of violence and theft are especially likely to have these characteristics. . . . Crimes with these characteristics threaten ties to others and run directly counter to the other inclinations for social concern. As such, those high in social concern should not consider engaging in such crimes, or if considered, they should be more likely

to refrain from them—motivated by emotions such as compassion and guilt.

2. *Social Concern Has an Indirect, Negative Effect on Crime Through Its Impact on Social and Self-control, Strain, and Association with Criminal Others.* The inclinations that comprise social concern foster the formation of strong social bonds with conventional others such as parents. They also make people more amenable to the socialization and control efforts of these others. These effects, in turn, contribute to the internalization of moral beliefs and the development of self-control. Furthermore, those high in social concern are less likely to provoke negative treatment from others, reducing their strain. Finally, they should be less likely to associate with criminal others, who engage in behaviors they condemn.
3. *Social Concern Conditions the Effect of Other Causes on Crime.* Strain, low control, and opportunities for crime should be less likely to lead to crime among those high in social concern. The same is true for association with criminal peers, with respect to those aspects of social concern involving care for others and the moral intuitions. (Association with criminal peers, however, should be more likely to lead to crime among those who desire close ties to others and have a strong inclination to conform [see Miller, 2010, for supportive evidence].) Because social concern provides a restraint against crime, it reduces the likelihood that individuals will respond to provocations and temptations with crime. . . .
4. *Social Concern Partly Mediates the Effect of Biological and Social-Psychological Causes on Crime.* As discussed, the experience and expression of social concern is affected by biological and social factors, with the social factors including variables associated with strain, social learning, control, and support theories. As such, social concern also should act as a mediating variable, partly explaining the effect of these variables on crime. In particular, these variables should affect crime partly through

their impact on aspects of social concern, such as empathy and the moral intuitions. . . .

5. *Social Concern Partly Mediates the Effect of Macro-Level Causes on Crime, Including Sociodemographic, Community, and Societal Factors.* As noted, certain sociodemographic groups, communities, and societies are lower in average levels of social concern. This may be the case, for example, with very poor, inner-city communities, which are high in strain, low in control, and more likely to contain criminal peer groups. The lower levels of concern in such communities should partly explain their higher crime rates. This is not only because socially concerned people are less likely to engage in crime, but also because they are more likely to work toward the reduction of crime in others. . . .

Research on These Propositions

Social concern has not received much attention in criminology, with the notable exception of moral beliefs regarding crime and, to a lesser extent, empathy/sympathy. . . .

Criminologists usually conceptualize and measure moral beliefs in a narrow manner, with researchers focusing on the extent to which individuals disapprove of particular crimes. The moral intuitions, as described earlier, are much broader in scope. Most research finds that moral beliefs or the disapproval of crime has a strong negative relationship with crime. . . .

Criminologists have devoted much less attention to the effect of empathy/sympathy on crime, with most of the research here having been conducted by psychologists (although see Broidy et al., 2003; Jolliffe and Farrington, 2004, 2007, 2010). Although the research results are somewhat mixed, empathy/sympathy seems to have a moderate negative association with crime and related behaviors. . . . Empathy/sympathy and related concepts also help explain certain group differences in crime, including gender differences (Broidy et al., 2003; Hagan et al., 1998; McGinley and Carlo, 2007; Morash, 1983). . . .

Other aspects of social concern have been neglected by criminologists, although certain studies suggest that the needs for close ties to others and for social approval, as well as the related need to conform, may be negatively related to crime (Crowne and Marlowe, 1964; Goff and Goddard, 1999). . . .

Circumstantial Variation in the Effects of Social Concern

- 6.1 *Social Concern Has a Weaker Effect on Crime When Individuals/Groups Are Interacting with Those Perceived as Outgroup Members. Relatedly, Crime Will Be More Likely in Circumstances Involving Interactions with Outgroup Members.* Behavior is more strongly motivated by self-interest when individuals interact with outgroup members, although social concern may have a small effect here. And crime should be more likely in such circumstances given the reduced relevance of social concern. . . .
- 6.2 *Social Concern Has Little Effect on or Increases Crime When Individuals/Groups Believe that Others Have Violated the Inclinations Comprising Social Concern.* Showing concern for those who violate the inclinations is not adaptive; in fact, it invites exploitation and injury. Consequently, individuals show little concern for those who demonstrate a lack of empathy/sympathy, reject or refuse to cooperate with others, violate the moral intuitions, and deviate. Furthermore, individuals are inclined to sanction such others, even at some cost to themselves. Such sanction may take the form of crime if legal options for sanction are unavailable. . . .
- 6.3 *Social Concern Has a Weaker Effect on Crime When Individuals/Groups Are Competing over Scarce Resources, and Crime Will Be More Likely in Such Circumstances.* Behavior is more strongly motivated by self-interest when there is competition over scarce resources. . . . Anderson (1999) provided some support for this claim in his ethnography
- 6.4 *Social Concern Has a Weaker Effect on Crime When Strain and Individual Differences in the Ability to Focus on Others are Present.* Given that individuals are less likely to focus on others when strain is high, the costs and benefits of crime are lower. . . .
- 6.5 *Social Concern Has a Weaker Effect on Crime When Strain and Individual Differences in the Ability to Focus on Others are Present.* A strong bond to others reduces the expression of other things, serving to focus on them. Low control over others, reduced view of others as worthy of association with criminality, and differential reinforcement and associations vary in strength and across circumstances.

of a deprived, inner-city community, where there is fierce competition for status and economic resources. . . . Expressions of social concern, such as mercy and forgiveness, are discouraged and rare, particularly among the young males most heavily involved in status competitions. When social concern is expressed, it is taken as a sign of weakness and invites exploitation by others. And crime is quite high in such circumstances. Other accounts also suggest that social concern suffers during competitions over scarce resources and crime increases (e.g., Short and Strodbeck, 1965). Papachristos (2009), for example, demonstrated that gang violence in Chicago is more frequent when gangs are competing for status and dominance, particularly gangs with overlapping turfs.

- 6.4 *Social Concern Has a Weaker Effect on Crime When the Costs of Acting on Social Concern Are High, the Benefits Are Low, and/or the Ability to Act on Concern Is Low. And Crime Should Be More Likely in Such Circumstances.* Given that behavior is influenced by both self-interest and social concern, individuals are less likely to act on their concern when the costs of doing so are high and the benefits are low. . . .
- 6.5 *Social Concern Has a Weaker Effect on Crime When Strain Is High, Social Bonds Are Weak, and Individuals Are in the Company of Criminal Others.* As indicated, severe strain, weak bonds to others, and association with criminals reduce both the inclinations for and the expression of social concern. Among other things, severe strain leads individuals to focus on their own distress and distrust others. Low control, particularly weak bonds to others, reduces the likelihood that one will view others as worthy of concern. And association with criminal peers reduces the likelihood that social concern will be modeled and differentially reinforced. Strains, bonds, and associations vary both over the long term and across circumstances (see Agnew,

2006). So individuals should be less likely to experience and express social concern in circumstances characterized by severe strain, weak bonds, and criminal association.

7. *Circumstantial Factors Are Less Relevant to Those High in "Universal Social Concern," with Universal Social Concern Having a Strong Negative Effect on Crime.* While there are circumstances where social concern has little effect on or increases crime, the relevance of these circumstances varies across individuals and groups. Social concern may be severely circumscribed for some. Concern may be limited to a small number of ingroup members and quickly put aside when others are viewed in a negative light; when others are perceived as competitors; where there is some cost to acting on concern; and/or when strain is high, bonds are weak, or criminal others are present. Other individuals, however, may come close to possessing what might be called universal social concern. Their concern extends to numerous others, including those commonly seen as outgroup members, and circumstantial factors have little effect on their level and expression of concern. . . .

Conclusion

The assumption that people are naturally self-interested is at the core of most crime theories and crime-control initiatives. But a wealth of recent research has indicated that human nature is more complex: People are both self-interested and socially concerned. Furthermore, there is individual, demographic, and circumstantial variation in social concern. As argued in this article, this new view of human nature has fundamental implications for criminology. It means that we cannot take the motivation for crime for granted; rather, we must consider those factors that weaken or cause individuals to act against their social concern. Such factors are the focus of strain and certain other theories. Also, variation in the inclinations for social concern should be a