

PART VII

Critical Criminology: Power, Peace, and Crime

In the quarter century following World War II, notes James Patterson (1996: vii), Americans had "great expectations" about "the capacity of the United States to create a better world abroad and a happier society at home." These expectations reached a feverish pitch in the 1960s. With an economic boom under way and unprecedented support for broadening equal rights, President Lyndon Johnson called for the creation of a "great society"—a call that at the time did not seem naive. Scarcely a decade later, however, much of this optimism had turned to despair. Equal economic opportunity for all now seemed beyond reach, and racial cleavages—despite gains in formal legal rights for minorities—seemed to have widened, as urban riots and white resistance to integration made clear. Viet Nam, Kent State, Attica, and Watergate—together these events and many others revealed the abuse of state power in the pursuit of questionable, if not illegal, goals. The assassinations of John and Robert Kennedy and of Martin Luther King, Jr., leaders who preached hope and peace, were perhaps the most vivid and enduring reminders that achieving true social justice remained an American dream.

What lessons were to be drawn from the failure to achieve the "great expectations" for American society? For a generation of criminologists who grew up in these tumultuous times and whose campus days were spent in protest marches, their social world had been transformed. Their

utopian belief in a just society and faith in the "system" had been replaced by the sobering realization that inequality was deeply entrenched and that those in power wished to reinforce, not change, the status quo. Once all the rhetoric about America being the "land of opportunity" had been dispelled, they learned that fundamental reform would require unmasking and challenging the structures of power and the forces that undergirded them.

Equipped with this vision, criminologists in the late 1960s and early 1970s found "traditional" theories of crime—such as those covered in the previous parts of this volume—intellectually sterile, if not unthinkingly dangerous. These theories seemed blind to the central reality of American society: its pervasive economic and racial inequality. Traditional perspectives largely ignored and thus left unchallenged the powerful interests that benefited from this inequality. As a result, crime was detached from the very structural forces that sustained the mean streets of inner-city neighborhoods and, it might be added, that gave rise to rapacious corporations.

In contrast, this generation of criminologists called for a "new criminology" that would take a "critical" stance toward society and, intellectually, toward the assumptions and content of traditional criminology (Krisberg, 1975; Taylor et al., 1973). The category of "critical criminology"—sometimes also called conflict, radical,

or Marxian criminology—encompasses diverse lines of inquiry (see Bohm, 1982; Milovanovic, 1982; Thomas and O'Maolchatha, 1989). At the risk of missing the richness of theorizing within this approach, however, it is possible to identify several themes that make a theoretical work distinctively “critical” in its focus.

Central Themes of Critical Criminology

First, the concepts of inequality and power are integral to any understanding of crime and its control. Building on the work of Karl Marx, critical criminologists note that capitalism enriches some and impoverishes many, thus inevitably producing a wide economic gap between the social classes. Pursuing their own interests, the affluent use their money to ensure that government policies do not threaten their position of advantage. As a result, the state—including the criminal law and the criminal justice system—operates to legitimate and protect social arrangements that benefit those profiting from capitalism.

Second, “crime” is a political, not a value-free, concept. Traditional criminology accepts that crime is behavior that violates the law. Critical criminology, however, recognizes that what is and is not outlawed reflects the power structure in society. In general, the injurious acts of the poor and powerless are defined as crime, but the injurious acts of the rich and powerful—such as corporations selling defective products or the affluent allowing disadvantaged children to go without health care—are not brought within the reach of the criminal law. Only by rejecting state definitions of crime and replacing them with a new standard—such as defining crime as the violation of human rights—can criminologists oppose, rather than reinforce, existing inequalities. “What is certain is that the legalistic definitions cannot be justified as long as they make the activity of criminologists subservient to the state,” comment Schwendinger and Schwendinger (1975: 138).

“In the process of redefining crime, criminologists will redefine themselves, no longer to be the defenders of order but rather the guardians of human rights.”

Third, as a defender of the existing social order, the criminal justice system ultimately serves the interests of the capitalist class. The system is largely set up to process poor and minority offenders—most of whom could find no meaningful place in the labor market—while ignoring the illegalities of rich and corporate offenders. As Reiman (1984) puts it, the system is designed so that “the rich get richer and the poor get prison.” In enforcing order, moreover, criminal justice officials are not beyond breaking the law themselves, such as through police brutality and receiving payoffs in vice operations (Henderson and Simon, 1994). On a broader level, to protect its interests, the capitalist state will use its power to commit, largely with impunity, crimes against its own dissident citizens (e.g., illegal wiretapping against protesters), not to mention sponsoring covert actions to undermine other governments (Barak, 1991).

Fourth, capitalism is the root cause of criminal behavior (see Greenberg, 1993). Under capitalism, the human needs of the poor are ignored. Instead, they face demoralizing living conditions that foster crime by stunting healthy development (Currie, 1985) and/or by making crime a rational response (Gordon, 1973). More noteworthy, capitalism creates a fertile environment for crimes by rich and powerful white-collar offenders, including corporations (Pearce, 1976; Van Slyke et al., 2016; see also Part IX). Pressures for profits, combined with lax state regulation and the infrequent application of criminal penalties, induce business enterprises to pursue profits through illegal methods. The consequences are not only huge economic losses but also violence that may well surpass that exacted by street crimes. Thus, by selling dangerously defective products, polluting the environment, and exposing workers to job hazards and toxic agents, corporations exact an enormous toll in

illnesses, injuries, and deaths (see Cullen et al., 1987; Hills, 1987; for an analysis of the costs of white-collar crime, see Cohen, 2016).

Fifth, the solution to crime is the creation of a more equitable society. Equipped with this knowledge, critical criminologists should unmask the ways in which capitalist-based exploitation creates crime and victimization. Equally important, they should not be armchair criminologists but rather should work to foster greater social justice. In particular, they should support humane policies aimed at preventing harm from occurring (see Maguire, 1988), and, more broadly, they should engage in political activity advocating a fairer distribution of wealth and power in society. For many critical criminologists, the goal of this reform effort is a socialist economy combined with a democratic political system sensitive to the needs of all citizens.

These broad principles inform much of the scholarship done under the broad name of critical criminology. Again, however, the intellectual richness of this perspective has resulted in many specific theoretical contributions—indeed, so many that it is beyond the scope of this volume to capture them all (see Greenberg, 1993; Lynch et al., 2000). Our main focus is on those works that have been particularly influential in addressing the question, Why does crime occur? We should note that critical criminologists are often criticized for studying how powerful interests shape the content of law and the operation of the criminal justice system (see, e.g., Chambliss and Seidman, 1982; Quinney, 1974; Turk, 1966) instead of providing specific insights into the etiology of criminal behavior. In contrast, the strength of traditional criminology is precisely its sustained concern with explaining involvement in crime and in subjecting theories to empirical tests. Critical criminology's viability as an alternative to traditional perspectives thus depends on advancing explanations of criminality that are both theoretically persuasive and backed up by the data.

Capitalism and Crime

Most critical criminologists' thinking is influenced, at least in a general way, by the work of Karl Marx. Marx believed that in a capitalist system, the bourgeoisie—those who owned the means of production—inevitably exploited the proletariat-workers who did not own the means of production. Capitalism thus resulted in the immiseration and demoralization of the working class, a condition that would only be alleviated when workers shed their false consciousness that existing economic arrangements were legitimate, realized their joint interests, and revolted to create a socialist system.

For our purposes, it is noteworthy that Marx, despite sporadic writings on criminality and law, did not spell out systematically the connection between capitalism and crime (Greenberg, 1993; Taylor et al., 1973). It remained for Willem Bonger, a Dutch criminologist, to author in 1916 what is now considered the first classic attempt to use Marx to explain crime, *Criminality and Economic Conditions* (see Chapter 19 in this part).

Following Marx's dim view of the social consequences of capitalism, Bonger offered the central thesis that the capitalist mode of production breeds crime. Bonger believed that the key proximate cause of criminality is the mental state of egoism, whereas the social sentiment of altruism fosters prosocial conduct. Egoism is rooted in economic relations; after all, the basis of capitalism is ruthless competition and the exploitation of others in the pursuit of individual profits. The larger social good is not considered and thus altruism is not encouraged. In the proletariat, especially among those most impoverished, brutish living conditions, efforts by the bourgeoisie to incite materialistic desires, and the lack of moral training intensify egoistic impulses. Not surprisingly, criminal behavior is widespread in this class.

Anticipating the work of Edwin Sutherland on white-collar crime, Bonger also recognized that capitalism creates crime among the bourgeoisie.

Crimes such as bank fraud, selling adulterated products, and large-scale swindles are at times committed by businesses that are economically imperiled. But many offenses are engaged in by those whose businesses are flourishing. These illegalities are a product of a "bourgeois environment" that inculcates, even in children, the moral principle that honesty is to be valued only so long as it does not interfere with one's advantage (Bonger, 1969 [1916]: 136). Furthermore, bourgeois crimes are made attractive because "the opportunity to commit these offenses undetected is enormous" (p. 138). This "unlimited opportunity to deceive the public" is made possible by capitalism; indeed, these "bourgeois crimes . . . can be committed only under an economic system of the kind that ours is" (p. 140). Bourgeois economic criminals, moreover, have little to fear from the criminal law. As Bonger (p. 142) noted, "the penalties prescribed for these crimes are relatively light as compared with those for ordinary crimes," and the "number of punishable acts is very limited as compared with those which really deserve punishment." In short, "it is these crimes which show clearly the class character of the penal law" (p. 142).

As might be anticipated, Bonger believed that under socialism—where the means of production were owned by the community—egoism would be discouraged and children would be morally educated to value altruism. Although sympathetic to his general theory, Taylor et al. (1973) take issue with Bonger's emphasis on the control of egoism as the key to reducing crime. In many ways, Bonger's theory moves away from Karl Marx and toward Emile Durkheim, the early anomie theorist who advocated the restraint of desires through moral education. This theoretical shift risks clouding Marx's fundamental focus on the misery caused by persisting inequality and on the need for working people to struggle against their exploitation. "Criminal man is consistently depicted [by Bonger] not so much as a man produced by a matrix of unequal

social relationships, nor indeed as a man attempting to resolve those inequalities of wealth, power and life-chances," note Taylor et al. (1973: 235); "rather, criminal man is viewed as being in need of social control. . . . Socialism is preferable to capitalism, most of all, because it will control the baser instincts of man."

In contrast, the centrality of the proletariat's struggle against oppression by the capitalist class is vivid in Richard Quinney's *Class, State, and Crime* (1980), an important book written a half century after Bonger's *Criminality and Economic Conditions*. "The contradictions of developing capitalism," maintained Quinney (1980: 59), "heighten the level of class struggle and thereby increase (1) the need to dominate by the capitalist class and (2) the need to accommodate and resist by the classes exploited by capitalism, particularly the working class." In an effort to secure its advantage, the capitalist class commits economic crimes, denies people basic human rights, and uses the state to protect its interests and to repress the poor. For the working class, crime is best understood as a response to its members' harsh, inequitable living conditions. Their illegalities "range from unconscious reactions to exploitation, to conscious acts of survival within the capitalist system, to politically conscious acts of rebellion" (p. 65).

Similar to Bonger, Quinney notes that the "only lasting solution to the crisis of capitalism is socialism" (1980: 67). In the second edition of *Class, State, and Crime*, Quinney (1980) turned away from a strict Marxian theory of crime to recognize the importance of religion in human life. In his view, capitalism was beset not only by materialistic contradictions but also by a spiritual crisis—a "sacred void." Socialism thus must become spiritual, merging the secular and sacred to create a "prophetic socialist faith . . . a religious socialist culture" (p. ix). "The socialist struggle," commented Quinney, "requires a religious consciousness as much as a class consciousness . . . the religious goal transcends concrete societies.

The prophetic expectation speaks finally to that which is infinite and eternal" (p. 68).

Quinney's embrace of the spiritual and its transformative powers, at the expense of the crass materialism of Marxism, is seen again in his subsequent efforts to lay the foundation for a "peacemaking criminology" (Pepinsky and Quinney, 1991). His writings in this area helped to trigger the development of a branch of critical criminology that remains vibrant today (Fuller and Wozniak, 2006; Wozniak, 2002; Wozniak and Braswell, 2002). We will return to the peacemaking perspective at the end of this part.

Pathways to Crime

Critical criminologists such as Quinney propose that capitalism is the root cause of criminal behavior. Their analyses, however, often are couched in general terms, with bourgeois crime attributed to the need for the capitalist class to maintain its dominance and working-class crime attributed to the dehumanizing and demoralizing conditions of life under capitalism. Although useful in sensitizing scholars to processes involved in producing crime, these earlier analyses did not detail the specific factors under capitalism that foster criminal conduct. More recently, however, important efforts have been made to demarcate the specific pathways that link capitalism to crime. Elliott Currie (Chapter 20 in this part) and Mark Colvin (Chapter 21) have made significant contributions in illuminating the mechanisms through which an unequal social structure produces criminal behavior.

Like others in the critical tradition, Elliott Currie (2009 [Chapter 20]) sees capitalism as the root cause of crime—especially of the United States' high rate of serious violent crime. But he is a wise social observer, and thus he recognizes that capitalism is not unique to America but is an integral feature of the current global economy. His special insight, however, is that capitalism comes in different forms. A number of advanced industrial nations embrace a more "compassionate

capitalism," in which the government takes steps to ensure that inequality does not become too widespread and that "cushions" are in place to support those who are the losers in the economic competition. In contrast, the United States embraces a harsh brand of capitalism in which there are big winners and big losers. Compared to many advanced nations, in America the rich are richer but the poor are poorer—including poor children. Inequality (i.e., the gap between rich and poor) is thus much wider and supports for those citizens struggling to survive are less generous. The cost of enduring inequality, as a number of scholars have pointed out, is socially isolated and economically impoverished minority communities that are fertile soil for the growth of violent crime (see, e.g., Blau and Blau, 1982; Currie, 1985; Hagan, 1994; Hagan and Peterson, 1995; Peterson et al., 2006; Sampson, 1997; Short, 1997; for a review, see Ousey and Lee, 2013).

The culprit in this situation is the virtual omnipotence in America of what Currie calls a "market society" (see also Currie, 2009, 2013). He describes it in this way:

By market society, I . . . mean . . . the spread of a civilization in which the pursuit of personal economic gain becomes increasingly the dominant organizing principle of social life; a social formation in which market principles, instead of being confined to some parts of the economy, and appropriately buffered and restrained by other social institutions and norms come to suffuse the whole social fabric—and to undercut and overwhelm other principles that have historically sustained individuals, families, and communities. (1997: 151–152)

Does this description of the "institutional imbalance" between the economy and other American social institutions sound familiar? It will for those who recall Messner and Rosenfeld's (2007; see Chapter 11) extension of Merton's anomie theory. These theorists contended that the power of the "American Dream" causes economic interests to "penetrate" and weaken other institutions

(e.g., the family). The resulting institutional imbalance fosters anomie and impotent informal social controls.

Currie agrees with certain points in Messner and Rosenfeld's analysis, but, as a critical criminologist, he believes that the pathways to serious crime in the United States are in a different direction. Thus, he focuses less on the breakdown of control and more on how the market economy is an amoral force that robs people of their jobs, fails to care for at-risk kids and families, and acquits the government from doing much about the human costs of inequality. He believes that this unrelenting generation of social misery and lack of support is a "toxic brew" (1997: 167). In particular, Currie identifies seven pathways through which the market economy creates high rates of serious violent crime in the United States:

... the progressive destruction of livelihood; the growth of extremes of economic inequality and material deprivation; the withdrawal of public services and supports, especially for families and children; the erosion of informal and communal networks of mutual support, supervision, and care; the spread of a materialistic, neglectful, and "hard" culture; the unregulated marketing of the technology of violence; and, not least, the weakening of social and political alternatives. (1997: 154)

Mark Colvin is another critical scholar who seriously explores the complexities of crime causation. His key insight is in illuminating another pathway through which an inequitable class structure produces crime and delinquency: coercion. This idea first took form in a collaborative work with John Pauly (1983). Colvin and Pauly argue that parents' class position in the labor market shapes the methods they use to exercise control over their children. Specifically, they link the way in which parents are disciplined in the workplace to how they come to discipline their own children.

Colvin and Pauly are most concerned with those who are employed in the secondary labor

market (in "dead-end jobs"), because these workers are controlled through coercive sanctions (e.g., yelling at or firing of workers). Importing this style of control into the family, these parents tend to discipline their children coercively, attempting to enforce conformity through erratic, harsh punishment rather than through, for example, parent-child discussions aimed at developing internalized self-control. Such coercive discipline, however, proves counterproductive, alienating children and weakening bonds to parents. As problem behavior surfaces in school, the children are placed in strict or coercive class settings (e.g., special classes), further weakening their bond to society. They also are likely to associate with other alienated peers and to participate in delinquent subcultures. In short, they are on a pathway of deepening involvement in delinquency.

In *Crime and Coercion* (2000), Colvin expands on these themes, attempting to develop a more comprehensive "integrated theory of chronic criminality" (see Chapter 21; see also Colvin et al., 2002; Vander Ven and Colvin, 2013). A key premise of his perspective—again building on his work with Pauly—is that "coercive relations can appear in any number of settings, including workplaces, families, schools, among peers, and in state bureaucracies, such as welfare and criminal justice agencies" (2000: 52). Coercion—"compelling someone to act in a certain way"—occurs not only through "direct force and intimidation" but also "through the pressure of impersonal economic or social forces" (e.g., living in a community in which quality jobs have moved elsewhere; p. 36).

In proposing a "differential coercion theory," Colvin suggests most generally that the greater the degree of coercion, the greater the criminal involvement. More specifically, he proposes that people are most at risk for crime when they endure coercion that is harsh and erratically applied. He also details the intervening linkages, which he calls "social-psychological deficits," between the experience of coercion and crime.

He argues, for example, that coercion causes criminal participation by increasing “coercive ideation,” anger, feelings of humiliation, and an external locus of control and decreasing self-control, self-efficacy, and conventional social bonds (2000: 49–50). He amasses considerable evidence in favor of these premises. Recent empirical research lends further support to the core propositions of his theory (Baron, 2009; Unnever et al., 2004).

Colvin, however, is not interested in merely developing abstract theoretical principles but, similar to Elliott Currie, in placing his theory within the current American social context. In this regard, he asserts that in the United States, both interpersonal and impersonal coercion is tied to inequality. Inner-city youths thus are more likely to experience coercion in families, schools, peer groups, jobs located in the secondary labor market, and their neighborhoods. They are more often exposed to the conditions that cut off conventional life chances and ensnare them in a trajectory of chronic criminality. Also like Currie, Colvin’s prescription for saving individual youths from bleak criminal futures and for reducing crime rates is clear: supportive social and criminal justice policies that reduce the multiple forms of coercion faced by our most vulnerable fellow Americans.

In this regard, Colvin and Currie might be seen as falling into a brand of critical criminology called “left realism” (DeKeseredy, 2010). Similar to other critical criminologists, they would favor creating a society that is truly equitable and democratic—that is, a society that sees inequality in living conditions and in political influence as unjustified. But in the absence of a dramatic transformation of the United States into a social democratic system, they advocate blunting the worst effects of inequality through a series of pragmatic programs that have been shown to be effective (Colvin, 2000; Currie, 1998). Thus, they would support policies such as early intervention programs for at-risk children, universal child care and health care to foster the healthy development

of youngsters, public job programs for the unemployed, laws mandating that all full-time employees make a “living wage,” and progressive tax policies that ensure the richest Americans pay their fair share.

It should be noted, however, that one benefit of critical criminology is its willingness to “think outside the box.” When putting theory into action, advocates of more mainstream theories tend to focus on specific programs that might work with offenders or in a local community (see Barlow and Decker, 2010). These policy recommendations make sense because they seem attainable. Still, they lead us to focus more on incremental change rather than to envision a broader, more utopian call to action. One critical criminologist who has long thought “outside the box” and who has pushed the field to think more boldly is Richard Quinney. In the next section, we consider his efforts to create what has come to be known as “peacemaking criminology.”

Peacemaking Criminology

Richard Quinney has been perhaps the most influential critical criminologist over the past three decades. In large part, Quinney’s influence is due to his willingness to explore new horizons in his thinking. Unlike most criminologists, he has not staked out a theory and then defended it “to the end.” Instead, his ideas have evolved, at times in ways that appear inconsistent with earlier theoretical positions. For example, in *Class, State, and Crime*, Quinney (1980) gives a classic Marxist, materialist interpretation of crime in capitalist America. By contrast, his later work on “peacemaking criminology” seems to offer a distinctly different way of understanding crime.

Paradoxically, this portrayal of his criminologies as being inconsistent with one another is both correct and incorrect. It is correct because each step in Quinney’s intellectual journey is *transformative*; that is, his ideas are not mere “add ons” to his previous thinking but emerge as qualitatively different. The portrayal of intellectual

inconsistency is inaccurate because Quinney's new ideas are not a rejection of the old. Rather, the old is folded into the new as Quinney seeks to illuminate social reality in fresh ways. His theorizing is not linear but holistic (Quinney, 2002). Thus, two decades after their publication, he would not deny his materialistic insights on capitalist America because he would still view these inequitable structures as creating suffering and crime (Anderson, 2002). But in his later work, Quinney changes angles and uses the vision of peacemaking to show how individuals and social policies might create conditions in which the sources of crime will not be nourished (Wozniak et al., 2008).

Thus, writing in 1991, Quinney offered a classic statement that—along with contemporaneous writings from feminists and those with a progressive religious inspiration (Fuller, 1998; Fuller and Wozniak, 2006; Pepinsky and Quinney, 1991)—helped to initiate peacemaking criminology. Here, Quinney suggests that as individuals we are on a spiritual journey, which involves transcending one's egocentric self to understand the suffering in ourselves and in the world. Inner peace and peacemaking actions are intertwined and reinforcing. Without such peace, crime is inevitable. "Crime is suffering," Quinney reminds us, and "the ending of crime is possible only with the ending of suffering" (1991: 11). But advancing peace and diminishing suffering require social justice; "this is the biblical command" (p. 11). The goal of a peacemaking criminology is thus to seek "to end suffering and thereby eliminate crime. . . . Without peace within us and in our actions, there can be no peace in our results. Peace is the way" (pp. 11–12).

The work of Quinney and other peacemaking criminologists is fresh, even inspiring, but is it scientific? These scholars have tended to offer a different way of thinking without providing any empirical evidence that their approach is in fact a more powerful explanation of criminal behavior than alternative theories. Recently, however, Fuller and Wozniak (2006) have derived a set of

17 propositions that take peacemaking criminology from a perspective that sensitizes readers to different realities to one that is potentially testable just like any other theory. For example, they argue that crime and victimization will be less "when underlying social harms are more consistently addressed," and that individuals "who are responsive, mindful, and connected" will be less involved in illegal conduct (2006: 270). To the extent that scholars investigate these propositions, peacemaking criminology will earn more legitimacy among criminologists in the discipline.

Regardless, peacemaking criminology is not—and never will be—simply a dry theory; it is also a call to action. And, today, many critical scholars are embracing Quinney's prescription to make peace (Fuller, 1998; Lozoff and Braswell, 1989; Wozniak, 2002; Wozniak et al., 2008). For them, criminologists should use their knowledge and lives to create social justice. They reject, in particular, traditional "get tough" criminal justice responses to crime, which they argue attempt fruitlessly to fight violence with violence, suffering with more suffering. How many more failures will be necessary before we conclude that "wars on crime" never prove successful? Instead, they favor programs such as "restorative justice" that seek to mediate conflict, to address the real needs of victims, and to reintegrate offenders into a community that can instruct them in the ways of peace.

More generally, they assert that freeing ourselves from the burden of crime will require the ability to reject the inevitability of our current market society and related structures of inequality. The challenge is thus to *envision a new society* in which the scourges of racism, sexism, and classism are abandoned and in which the human needs of all citizens are given the highest priority. What might our society be like, they ask, if the government was less concerned with the gross national product (GNP) and with producing wealth and truly committed to seeing that every single child was born into and raised in a healthy and caring environment? This thinking is not

utopian but rather a political option that must be articulated and fought for—one child at a time. Peacemaking criminology thus is not merely a theory but a way of imagining a future in which the struggle against suffering and crime is ongoing (Tifft, 2002).

In this context, the presidency of Donald Trump and the far-right nationalist movements in European nations comprise a troubling development for peacemaking scholars and, indeed, for all critical criminologists. The attack on social welfare supports, such as repealing health care protections to fund tax breaks for the rich, is a stark reminder of the capacity for economic interests in a crass capitalist environment to take priority over human suffering. The vilification of immigrants—whether from south of the U.S. border or from abroad—is viewed by leftist analysts as a means to stoke populist white fears and to divert attention from policies that reinforce existing structures of inequality. Rather than greeting vulnerable populations with peace and understanding, the Trump administration's

approach has been to pursue exclusion and demonization. The call has been to build walls, not bridges. Empirically, research shows that racial and ethnic animus is a predictor of punitiveness both within the United States and in other Western nations (Unnever and Cullen, 2010; Unnever et al., 2008). This aligns with Trump's claim to be the "law-and-order president" and to show a near-blind support for law enforcement personnel, whether deployed to the nation's borders or in inner-city neighborhoods (cf. Hayes, 2017 with Mac Donald, 2016). For critical criminologists, the challenge has been to deconstruct the prevailing rhetoric and to unmask myth from reality. For example, an important reality is that, as noted by Kubrin (2013: 440), "a substantial literature consistently finds that immigrants are less, not more, crime prone than their native-born counterparts." The larger project is to resist, through their writings and praxis, attempts to transform Western governments into anti-liberal, authoritarian-oriented regimes that inflict harm rather than spread peace.

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19. Criminality and Economic Conditions

Willem Bongers

For Bongers, crime is a form of egoism—a rejection of the social instinct of altruism and of placing one's own interests above those of other people. Understanding crime, therefore, depends on answering the question, "Why does a man act egoistically?" (Bongers, 1969 [1916]: 26).

Writing in 1916, Bongers took pains to dismiss the answer of his contemporary Lombroso (see Chapter 2) and the members of his Italian or positivist school of criminology, who saw criminals' egoism as a "manifestation of atavism, that is, that some individuals present anew traits of character belonging to their very remote ancestors" (Bongers 1969 [1916]: 26). This explanation could not account, said Bongers, for evidence of altruism in earlier, supposedly less civilized times or for bourgeois crimes in the present. Referring to the lawlessness of the rich, Bongers noted that "even the Italian school is forced to admit that the stigmata found elsewhere cannot be pointed out in these individuals. Furthermore," continued Bongers, "in this case we can hardly speak of atavism. It may be that our ancestors were great offenders, but it is not probable that they ever were guilty of swindles of this kind" (p. 142).

Instead, Bongers contended that egoism was a product of the social environment and, in particular, was linked intimately to the "mode of production." In his view, capitalism breeds egoism because it is, by its very nature, an economic system in which individual self-interest is pursued regardless

of its consequences for others. The bourgeoisie—those who own the means of production—thus use unscrupulous means, illegal if necessary, to protect and advance their economic advantage. In search of profits, they also exploit the proletariat, paying them as little as possible for their labor and feeling no reciprocity or sense of obligation toward them. Instead, the bourgeoisie see workers as mere instruments to serve their interests—people whose human needs and material well-being are of scant concern.

For the proletariat, capitalism causes egoism and thus crime to flourish. Their exploitive, rather than reciprocal, relationships with the bourgeoisie dull their altruistic sentiments. Brutish living conditions also serve to demoralize the proletariat, especially those in the "lower proletariat . . . who do not succeed, for any reason, in selling their labor" (Bongers, 1969 [1916]: 52). In these harsh circumstances, the moral training necessary for the development of altruism is undermined as youths are prematurely sent to work, are denied education, are raised in families and housing conditions detrimental to their healthy development, and are exposed to criminal influences on the street.

In the end, observed Bongers, "we have a right to say that the part played by economic conditions in criminality is preponderant, even decisive" (1969 [1916]: 197). Still, room for optimism remained. If crime "were principally the consequence of innate human qualities (atavism, for example)," as Lombroso might claim, "the pessimistic conclusion that

crime is a phenomenon inseparably bound up with the social life would be well founded" (p. 197). But because "crime is the consequence of economic and social conditions," contended Bonger, "we can combat it by changing those circumstances" (p. 197). The answer is to replace capitalism with socialism, with a society in which "the means of production are held in common" (p. 198). According to Bonger, "such a society will not only remove the causes which now make men egoistic, but will awaken, on the contrary, a strong feeling of altruism" (p. 200). With the economic basis of crime thus eliminated, only crimes committed by "pathological individuals" would continue to exist (p. 200).

Bonger's criminology can be criticized for its rather crude economic determinism, its simple psychology of crime that ties crime only to the sentiments of egoism versus altruism, and its utopian view of socialism. Even so, Bonger's theory has value in showing that a capitalist economy has consequences, simultaneously creating demoralizing conditions that impede the healthy development of the poor and creating strong incentives for the rich to break the law.

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To find the causes of crime we must . . . first solve the question: "Why does an individual do acts injurious to the interests of those with whom he forms a social unit?", or in other words: "Why does a man act egoistically?"

Capitalism, Egoism, and Crime

. . . As we have seen in the preceding pages, it is certain that man is born with social instincts, which, when influenced by a favorable environment can exert a force great enough to prevent

egoistic thoughts from leading to egoistic acts. And since crime constitutes a part of the egoistic acts, it is of importance, for the etiology of crime in general, to inquire whether the present method of production and its social consequences are an obstacle to the development of the social instincts, and in what measure. We shall try in the following pages to show the influence of the economic system and of these consequences upon the social instincts of man.

After what we have just said it is almost superfluous to remark that the egotistic tendency does not *by itself* make a man criminal. For this something else is necessary. It is possible for the environment to create a great egoist, but this does not imply that the egoist will necessarily become criminal. For example, a man who is enriched by the exploitation of children may nevertheless remain all his life an honest man from the legal point of view. He does not think of stealing, because he has a surer and more lucrative means of getting wealth, although he lacks the moral sense which would prevent him from committing a crime if the thought of it occurred to him. We shall show that, as a consequence of the present environment, man has become very egoistic and hence more *capable of crime*, than if the environment had developed the germs of altruism.

The present economic system is based upon exchange. As we saw at the end of the preceding section such a mode of production cannot fail to have an egoistic character. A society based upon exchange isolates the individuals by weakening the bond that unites them. When it is a question of exchange the two parties interested think only of their own advantage even to the detriment of the other party. In the second place the possibility of exchange arouses in a man the thought of the possibility of converting the surplus of his labor into things which increase his well-being in place of giving the benefit of it to those who are deprived of the necessities of life. Hence the possibility of exchange gives birth to cupidity.

The exchange called simple circulation of commodities is practiced by all men as consumers,

and by the workers besides as vendors of their labor power. However, the influence of this simple calculation of commodities is weak compared with that exercised by capitalistic exchange. It is only the exchange of the surplus of labor, by the producer, for other commodities, and hence is for him a secondary matter. As a result he does not exchange with a view to profit (though he tries to make as advantageous a trade as possible), but to get things which he cannot produce himself.

Capitalistic exchange, on the other hand, has another aim—that of making a profit. A merchant, for example, does not buy goods for his own use, but to sell them with advantage. He will, then, always try, on the one hand, to buy the best commodities as cheaply as possible, by depreciating them as much as he can; on the other hand, to make the purchaser pay as high a price as possible, by exaggerating the value of his wares. *By the nature of the mode of production itself* the merchant is therefore forced to make war upon two sides, must maintain his own interests against the interests of those with whom he does business. If he does not injure too greatly the interests of those from whom he buys, and those to whom he sells, it is for the simple reason that these would otherwise do business with those of his competitors who do not find their interest in fleecing their customers. Wherever competition is eliminated for whatever cause the tactics of the merchant are shown in their true light; he thinks only of his own advantage even to the detriment of those with whom he does business. “No commerce without trickery” is a proverbial expression (among consumers), and with the ancients Mercury, the god of commerce, was also the god of thieves. This is true, that the merchant and the thief are alike in taking account *exclusively* of their own interest to the detriment of those with whom they have to do. . . .

As we have seen above the merchant capitalist makes war in two directions; his interests are against those of the man who sells to him, and of the man who buys from him. This is also true of the industrial capitalist. He buys raw materials

and sells what he produces. But to arrive at his product he must buy labor, and this purchase is “*sui generis*.”

Deprived as he is of the means of production the working-man sells his labor only in order not to die of hunger. The capitalist takes advantage of this necessitous condition of the worker and exploits him. We have already indicated that capitalism has this trait in common with the earlier methods of production. Little by little one class of men has become accustomed to think that the others are destined to amass wealth for them and to be subservient to them in every way. Slavery, like the wage system, demoralizes the servant as well as the master. With the master it develops cupidity and the imperious character which sees in a fellow man only a being fit to satisfy his desires. It is true that the capitalist has not the power over the proletarian that the master has over his slave; he has neither the right of service nor the power of life and death, yet it is none the less true that he has another weapon against the proletarian, a weapon whose effect is no less terrible, namely enforced idleness. The fact that the supply of manual labor always greatly exceeds the demand puts this weapon into the hands of every capitalist. It is not only the capitalists who carry on any business that are subjected to this influence, but also all who are salaried in their service.

Capitalism exercises in still a third manner an egoistic influence upon the capitalistic “entrepreneur.” Each branch has more producers than are necessary. The interests of the capitalists are, then, opposed not only to those of the men from whom they buy or to whom they sell, but also to those of their fellow producers. It is indeed claimed that competition has the effect simply of making the product better and cheaper, but this is looking at the question from only one point of view. The fact which alone affects criminality is that competition forces the participants, under penalty of succumbing, to be as egoistic as possible. Even the producers who have the means of applying all the technical improvements to perfect their product and make it cheaper, are

obliged to have recourse to gross deceits in advertising, etc., in order to injure their competitors. Rejoicing at the evil which befalls another, envy at his good fortune, these forms of egoism are the inevitable consequence of competition.

Following the same classification that we employed in the preceding chapter we come now to that part of the bourgeoisie which, without having any occupation, consumes what has been made by others. Not to feel obliged to contribute to the material well-being of humanity in proportion to one's ability must necessarily have a demoralizing influence. A parasite, one who lives without working, does not feel bound by any moral tie to his fellows, but regards them simply as things, instruments meant to serve and amuse him. Their example is a source of demoralization for those [who] see this easy life without the power of enjoying it themselves, and awakes in them the desire to exchange their painful existence for this "dolce far niente." . . .

The Proletariat

To be thorough we begin by making mention of one of the consequences of the economic position of the proletariat, of which we have already treated briefly, namely the dependence in which persons of this class find themselves in consequence of their lacking the means of production, a state which has a prejudicial influence upon character. The oppressed resort to means by which they would otherwise scorn. As we have seen above, the basis of the social feelings is reciprocity. As soon as this is trodden under foot by the ruling class the social sentiments of the oppressed become weak towards them.

We come now . . . first to the consequences of the labor of the young. The paid labor of the young has a bad influence in several ways. First, it forces them, while they are still very young, to think only of their own interests; then, brought into contact with persons who are rough and indifferent to their well-being, they follow these only too quickly, because of their imitative tendencies, in their bad habits, grossness of speech,

etc. Finally, the paid labor of the young makes them more or less independent at an age where they have the greatest need of guidance. Even if the statistical proof of the influence of the labor of children and young people upon criminality were totally wanting, no one could deny that influence. Child labor is entirely a capitalistic phenomenon being found especially in the great manufacturing countries like England and Germany. And then one of the most salient facts of criminality is the amount of juvenile crime, which is so enormous that England, followed by other countries, has established a special system to combat this form of criminality. Certainly this increase of juvenile crime is chiefly due to the influence of bad domestic conditions (wage-labor of married women, etc.), but the labor of the young people themselves also plays its part.

It has rightly been said that work has a strong moral influence. But it is also true that immoderate labor has the contrary effect. It brutalizes a man, makes him incapable of elevated sentiments, kills as Key says (in "das Jahr-hundert des Kindes"), the man in the beast, while moderate labor ennoble the beast in the man.

The housing conditions of the proletariat have also a significance as regards criminality, and for the special group of sexual offenses their importance is very great. We shall speak of this more fully when we treat especially of these offenses, and will, for the moment, note simply their general consequences.

The disorder and squalor of the home communicate themselves to the inmates; the lack of room obliges the children to live, during a great part of the day, on the streets, with the result that they are brought into contact with all sorts of demoralizing companions. Finally, the living together of a great number of uneducated persons in one small dwelling is the cause of constant quarrels and fights. The situation of those who are merely night-lodgers is especially unfortunate, as we have already seen. . . .

As has already been said at the beginning of those observations as to the influence of the

economic life upon the development of social feelings on the part of the proletariat, the egoistic side of the human character is developed by the fact that the individual is dependent, that he lives in a subordinate position, and that he feels himself poor and deprived of everything. However, in so far as the proletarian sells his labor he is guaranteed against famine, however miserable his condition, and conscious of the utility of his role in society, he feels himself, notwithstanding his poverty, a man who, except for his employer, is independent of all men. But if work is not to be found, or if the proletarian, sick and infirm, is not able to work, it goes without saying that the resulting unemployment is very demoralizing. The lack of steady work, the horrors of the penury into which he and his fall, and the long train of evils which result from both, kill the social feelings in a man, for, as we have seen above, these feelings depend upon reciprocity. Let one familiarize himself with the thought of the condition of the man who lives in the greatest poverty, *i.e.* the man who is abandoned by all, and he will understand how egoistic must be the feelings of such.

From the position in which the proletarians find themselves it follows that, towards each other, it is rather the altruistic than the egoistic feelings that develop; living less isolated than the bourgeois, they see the misfortune that strikes their neighbor, and have felt the same themselves, and above all, their economic interests are not opposed. Forced idleness—at present chronic, and acute in times of panic—modifies these conditions at times; it makes competitors of the workers, who take the bread out of each other's mouths.

The proletarian is never sure of his existence: like the sword of Damocles unemployment is constantly hanging over his head. Upon this subject Engels says:

But far more demoralizing than poverty in its influence upon the English working man is the insecurity of his position, the necessity of living upon wages from hand to mouth, that in short which makes a proletarian of him.

The smaller peasants in Germany are usually poor, and often suffer want, but they are less at the mercy of accident, they have at least something secure. The proletarian, who has nothing but his two hands, who consumes today what he earned yesterday, who is subject to every chance, and has not the slightest guarantee for being able to earn the barest necessities of life, whom every crisis, every whim of his employer may deprive of bread, this proletarian is placed in the most revolting, inhuman position conceivable for a human being. (Engels, "Condition of the Working Class in England," p. 76)

This uncertainty of existence is one of the reasons which explain why, in relatively prosperous times the workingman often spends his wages as soon as he receives them, for he knows that the economies possible to him are so small that he could never be saved from misery in case of unemployment.

Finally we must speak of ignorance and lack of training on the part of the proletariat, as a factor of criminality. . . .

The first reason why ignorance and the lack of general culture must be ranked among the general factors of crime is this: the person who, in our present society, where the great majority of parents care very little for the education of their children, does not go to school, is deprived of the moral ideas (honesty, etc.) which are taught there, and ordinarily passes his time in idleness and vagabondage.

The second reason which makes ignorance a factor of crime, is that generally an ignorant man is, more than others, a man moved by the impulse of the moment, who allows himself to be governed by his passions, and is induced to commit acts which he would not have committed if his intellectual equipment had been different.

In the third place, it is for the following reasons that ignorance and the lack of training fall within the etiology of crime. The mind of the man whose psychic qualities, whether in the domain of the arts, or the sciences, have been developed, has become less susceptible to evil

ideas. His intellectual condition constitutes thus a bridle which can restrain evil thoughts from realizing themselves; for real art and true science strengthen the social instincts. . . .

The Lower Proletariat

In the preceding pages I have already spoken of the influence exercised by bad material surroundings upon a man's character; I have pointed out the moral consequences of bad housing conditions, and also that he becomes embittered and malicious through lack of the necessities of life. All this applies to the proletariat in general, but much more strongly still to those who do not succeed, for any reason, in selling their labor, that is the lower proletariat.

If the dwellings of the working-class are bad, those of the lower proletariat are more pitiable still. There are, through sickness or lack of work, periods of dire poverty in the life of almost every worker—for the lower proletariat these periods are without intermission. Its poverty is chronic. And when the poverty makes itself felt for a long time together, the intellectual faculties become blunted to such a point that there remains of the man only the brute, struggling for existence.

Although the material and intellectual poverty of the lower proletariat is much greater than that of the proletariat, the difference between them is only quantitative. In one connection, however, there is also a qualitative difference, a very important one, namely that the working-man is a useful being without whom society could not exist. However oppressed he may be, he is a man who has a feeling of self-respect. It is different with the member of the lower proletariat. He is not useful, but a detriment. He produces nothing, and tries to live upon what others make; he is merely tolerated. He who has lived long in poverty loses all feeling of self-respect, and lends himself to anything whatever that will suffice to prolong his existence.

In short, poverty (taken in the sense of absolute want), kills the social sentiments in man, destroys in fact all relations between men. He who

is abandoned by all can no longer have any feeling for those who have left him to his fate. . . .

Conclusions

What are the conclusions to be drawn from what has gone before? When we sum up the results that we have obtained it becomes plain that economic conditions occupy a much more important place in the etiology of crime than most authors have given them.

First we have seen that the present economic system and its consequences weaken the social feelings. The basis of the economic system of our day being exchange, the economic interests of men are necessarily found to be in opposition. This is a trait that capitalism has in common with other modes of production. But its principal characteristic is that the means of production are in the hands of a few, and most men are altogether deprived of them. Consequently, persons who do not possess the means of production are forced to sell their labor to those who do, and these, in consequence of their economic preponderance, force them to make the exchange for the mere necessities of life, and to work as much as their strength permits.

This state of things especially stifles men's social instincts; it develops, on the part of those with power, the spirit of domination, and of insensibility to the ills of others, while it awakens jealousy and servility on the part of those who depend upon them. Further the contrary interests of those who have property, and the idle and luxurious life of some of them, also contribute to the weakening of the social instincts.

The material condition, and consequently the intellectual condition, of the proletariat are also a reason why the moral plane of that class is not so high. The work of children brings them into contact with persons to associate with whom is fatal to their morals. Long working hours and monotonous labor brutalize those who are forced into them; bad housing conditions contribute also to debase the moral sense, as do the uncertainty of

existence, and finally absolute poverty, the frequent consequence of sickness and unemployment. Ignorance and lack of training of any kind also contribute their quota. Most demoralizing of all is the status of the lower proletariat.

The economic position of woman contributes also to the weakening of the social instincts.

The present organization of the family has great importance as regards criminality. It charges the legitimate parents with the care of the education of the child; the community concerns itself with the matter very little. It follows that a great number of children are brought up by persons who are totally incapable of doing it properly. As regards the children of the proletariat, there can be no question of the education properly so-called, on account of the lack of means and the forced absence of one or both of the parents. The school tends to remedy this state of things, but the results do not go far enough. The harmful consequences of the present organization of the family make themselves felt especially in the case of the children of the lower proletariat, orphans, and illegitimate children. For these the community does but little, though their need of adequate help is the greatest.

Prostitution, alcoholism, and militarism, which result, in the last analysis, from the present social order, are phenomena that have demoralizing consequences.

As to the different kinds of crime, we have shown that the very important group of economic criminality finds its origin on the one side in the absolute poverty and the cupidity brought about by the present economic environment, and on the other in the moral abandonment and bad education of the children of the poorer classes. Then, professional criminals are principally recruited from the class of occasional criminals, who, finding themselves rejected everywhere after their liberation, fall lower and lower. The last group of economic crimes (fraudulent bankruptcy, etc.) is so intimately connected with our present mode of production, that it would not be possible to commit it under another.

The relation between sexual crimes and economic conditions is less direct; nevertheless these also give evidence of the decisive influence of these conditions. We have called attention to the four following points.

First, there is a direct connection between the crime of adultery and the present organization of society, which requires that the legal dissolution of a marriage should be impossible or very difficult.

Second, sexual crimes upon adults are committed especially by unmarried men; and since the number of marriages depends in its turn upon the economic situation, the connection is clear; and those who commit these crimes are further almost exclusively illiterate, coarse, raised in an environment almost without sexual morality, and regard the sexual life from the wholly animal side.

Third, the causes of sexual crime upon children are partly the same as those of which we have been speaking, with the addition of prostitution.

Fourth, alcoholism greatly encourages sexual assaults.

As to the relation between crimes of vengeance and the present constitution of society, we have noted that it produces conflicts without number; statistics have shown that those who commit them are almost without exception poor and uncivilized, and that alcoholism is among the most important causes of these crimes.

Infanticide is caused in part by poverty, and in part by the opprobrium incurred by the unmarried mother (an opprobrium resulting from the social utility of marriage).

Political criminality comes solely from the economic system and its consequences.

Finally, economic and social conditions are also important factors in the etiology of degeneracy, which is in its turn a cause of crime.

Upon the basis of what has gone before, we have a right to say that the part played by economic conditions in criminality is preponderant, even decisive.

This conclusion is of the highest importance for the prevention of crime. If it were principally

the consequence of innate human qualities (atavism, for example), the pessimistic conclusion that crime is a phenomenon inseparably bound up with the social life would be well founded. But the

facts show that it is rather the optimistic conclusion that we must draw, that where crime is the consequence of economic and social conditions, we can combat it by changing those conditions. . . .

Discussion Questions

1. Willem Bonger and Cesare Lombroso were both writing in the same general time period. How do their theories of crime differ?

2. How does capitalism cause egoism and thus crime?
3. If Bonger were observing the United States today, what would he have to say about the nation's crime problem?
4. For Bonger, what is the solution to reducing crime?

20. Crime in a Market Society

Elliott Currie

In 1975, James Q. Wilson leveled a stinging attack on traditional sociological "thinking about crime" (Wilson, 1975; see also Wilson and Herrnstein, 1985). Wilson argued that the search for "root causes" of crime was a fool's errand: these causes either did not exist or, if they did, were beyond the control of the government. Social welfare policies would not, said Wilson, reduce crime. Instead, the solution was to use the one governmental resource that could blunt the crime rate if administered wisely: prisons. Because a relatively small group of offenders commit a disproportionately high amount of the serious crime, the key to decreasing lawlessness was to lock up the "wicked" among us. In essence, Wilson was proposing the policy of selective incapacitation.

Elliott Currie (1985, 1998) has been perhaps the most articulate progressive criminologist in responding to Wilson's reasoning—an important task given that Wilson's way of thinking would prove persuasive to conservative policymakers (see also Bennett et al., 1996). In Currie's view, the crime and policy analysis advanced by Wilson and similar conservative commentators is flawed in three important respects.

First, they have a misplaced faith in the idea that prisons are the solution to crime. Currie does not deny that some dangerous offenders must be incarcerated or that locking up over 2 million Americans has some effect on the crime rate. But he points out that the six-fold increase in prison populations in the last quarter of the twentieth century did not

yield a six-fold decrease in crime; in fact, crime rates rose and then fluctuated in a way that was not closely connected with rates of incarceration. In particular, Currie (1985, 1998) claims that there is little evidence that nations that imprison the highest proportions of their citizens are the safest.

Second, Currie believes that Wilson's crime analysis is flawed because his social analysis is flawed. In particular, Currie contends that conservative commentators such as Wilson fail to confront the distorting effect that America's largely unfettered capitalist system—what he calls the "market economy"—has on those people who are losing in the Social Darwinist fight to survive economically. The nation's powerful economic engine produces enormous wealth but also considerable poverty. This wide inequality creates powerful criminogenic forces, such as childhoods spent amidst the ravages of poverty, whole segments of the labor force left without the ability to secure steady employment and a meaningful livelihood, the concentration of disadvantage and associated problems in deteriorating inner cities, and so on.

The effects of these harsh and unforgiving conditions might be blunted if the government were proactive in cushioning the suffering of its people. But the market economy has another dark side: its production of cultural values and political interests that oppose government intervention to help those in need. Thus, the market economy's emphasis on individual responsibility

for failure, and its pressure on the state to reduce taxes and welfare budgets, means that social programs aimed at supporting at-risk citizens are constantly attacked as being “undeserving” and counterproductive. The result is disquieting. The combination of persisting high levels of inequality and of cutbacks in government support for the casualties of the market economy is a “toxic brew” that generates America’s high rate of violent crime (see also Currie, 2009, 2013).

Third, Currie rejects Wilson’s conclusion that, in essence, the government can do nothing about crime other than incarcerate more offenders. In his writings, Currie (1985, 1998) documents a variety of employment, early intervention, and criminal justice programs that have been shown to be effective and that, when taken together, could create a more “compassionate capitalism” within the United States. The nation’s failure to embark vigorously on these programs reflects not the dearth of knowledge or of resources but the dominance of market society ideology and a lack of political will. The consequence of this policy approach to crime is that prisons continue to be filled to the brim, but serious violence in America remains an enduring problem.

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In this paper I want to argue that it is precisely the extreme subordination of social life to the imperatives of what we rather inaccurately call the “market” that helps to explain not only the recent upsurge in violence in places like Russia and China, but also why the U.S. has long led the advanced industrial world in levels of serious violent crime—and why that unfortunate dominance continues in the face of unprecedented rates of incarceration which now surpass those of any other country in the world, advanced or otherwise, with the possible exception of Russia (Mauer, 1995).

The Idea of Market Society

I will argue that the varying levels of serious U.S. criminal violence across the “post-industrial” societies are closely tied to the greater or lesser growth of what I call “market society.” By market society I don’t just mean the existence of a market economy—but the spread of a civilization in which the pursuit of personal economic gain becomes increasingly the dominant organizing principle of social life; a social formation in which market principles, instead of being confined to some parts of the economy, and appropriately buffered and restrained by other social institutions and norms, come to suffuse the whole social fabric—and to undercut and overwhelm other principles that have historically sustained individuals, families and communities.

By market society, in other words, I don’t mean “market” in quite the same way that is meant when economists talk about the “free” market—the idea of an economy in which everyone gets to compete on level terrain without

government interference. That is part of the *ideology* of market society, but is decreasingly its reality. We don't have that kind of market economy in the U.S., which, again, is the traditional exemplar of market society among the advanced nations: we have an economy in which increasingly those better situated are able to *insulate* themselves remarkably well from the pressure of market forces. . . . What we *do* have in the U.S., however, and to a growing degree in Britain and many other advanced industrial countries, is a society in which most areas of social life—most of the major institutions through which we grow up, earn a living, care for our bodies and minds, and put a roof over our heads—are increasingly shaped by private decisions made in the service of the accumulation of private gain. And that is what I mean by market society.

Market societies, in short, are Darwinian societies, whether or not they can be said to be “free” in any meaningful sense. They are societies which, by definition, offer few cushions against the impact of disabilities or misfortunes in the labor market and minimal public provision of social services. At best they provide basic “safety nets” for the worst victims of economic insecurity, but even those are likely to be fragile and increasingly besieged as market society advances. They are “sink or swim” societies, at least for those unable to corral enough private resources to stay afloat.

I suggest that market society, as thus defined, is a particularly fertile breeding ground for serious violent crime. . . . Our uniquely devastating experience of serious violent crime, in short, reflects the equally unique extent to which the principles of market society have driven America's social and economic development and shaped its national culture. And that not only helps us understand the state of crime—and punishment—in the U.S. itself, but offers a cautionary tale for other countries tempted to follow a similar developmental path.

. . . No one much disputes the reality of a relative absence of institutions countering the

unfettered expression of the market principle in American history. In modern industrial societies those countervailing institutions have been essentially of one of two kinds; borrowing from the American economist Richard Belous (1992: 1–3), we can call them “compassionate” and “keiretsu” forms of capitalism. “Compassionate” capitalism stresses social solidarity, equity and community values; it is historically a bottom-up development rooted in traditionally strong unions, as in Scandinavia (this is similar to Will Hutton's description of the operative principles of “social market” Europe). “Keiretsu” capitalism, on the other hand, is paternalistic rather than communitarian—top-down rather than bottom-up; and has its roots in that kind of corporate paternalism rather than in a strong labor movement: Japan being the classic example. But both systems may end up in somewhat similar places when it comes to protecting ordinary people against the forces of unfettered markets. Thus taxation is relatively low in the Japanese version of “keiretsu” capitalism (or “peopleism,” in Hutton's phrase); but so is inequality, and “human relations and the necessity of nurturing them are centre stage” (Hutton, 1995: 269).

Employment policy is a prime example of this rough convergence. Both Sweden, historically one of the most prominent exemplars of the compassionate model, and Japan, with a very different political history, have traditionally sought to keep workers employed even under the most adverse macroeconomic conditions. And both stand in stark contrast to the U.S. and some other exemplars of what Belous calls “contingent” capitalism, in which employers hire and fire at will and reject even the most modest government intervention in the labor market.

What makes the U.S. so distinct is that alone among post-industrial societies it has *neither* history—not the top-down but in many ways quite supportive corporatist tradition of a country like Japan, or the bottom-up, social-democratic buffers against the ravages of the

market that strong labor movements and their allies successfully fought for in many European industrial countries—measures which are today, of course, under siege in many of them.

What does this have to do with violence? A great deal. This history means that the criminogenic effects of the market have traditionally been unleashed in the U.S. far more than in other advanced industrial societies. That is not to say that the U.S. is the only place they are found. Indeed part of my concern is precisely that they are becoming a familiar, even normalized part of the social landscape in many places around the world. But outside the Third World no country yet has experienced these effects in as concentrated and sustained a way as the U.S. And therein lies the core of our violence problem.

Market Society and Violent Crime

... There are at least seven of those profoundly criminogenic and closely intertwined mechanisms operating in “market society.” They are not temporary aberrations, but—I would argue—intrinsic to the logic of market society itself. ...

1. First, *market society breeds violent crime by destroying livelihood*. It has sometimes been fashionable to argue that there are few if any connections between the labor market and crime. But the accumulating evidence strongly suggests otherwise. How individuals, families and communities fare in the labor market affects the potential for criminal violence in multiple and profound ways. On the level of individual aspirations and motivation, for example, the long-term absence of opportunities for stable and rewarding work, especially for the young, breeds alienation, undercuts the sense of having a “stake” in legitimate society, and exerts powerful pressures toward participation in illicit enterprises (Sullivan, 1985). Steady work provides one of the most important bonds that enable individuals to desist from early criminal careers (Sampson and Laub, 1993), and its absence helps explain why doing so is considerably harder for black youth in the U.S.

than for their white counterparts (Elliott, 1994). Moreover, the absence of strong work opportunities undermines the effectiveness of programs to reintegrate offenders into the community, thus ensuring high rates of recidivism (Currie, 1985: Ch. 4). Long-term exclusion from stable work disrupts families and inhibits family formation in the first place (Wilson, 1987: Ch. 3), and diminishes the capacity of adults to perform credibly as role models and agents of socialization and the transmission of values to the young (Fagan et al., 1993). Less often discussed, but not less important, is the effect of *overwork* in poorly-paid jobs on the capacity of parents to provide a nurturing and competent environment for childrearing and on the capacity of communities for self-regulation and the maintenance of networks of mutual support and care. At the community level, the lack of opportunities for rewarding work breeds illicit enterprise, especially drug sales, which once established both increase the level of routine violence and weaken the community's capacity for supervision and support (Wilson, 1995). And mass exclusion from steady, well-paying work interacts with traditional gender norms to produce a broad stratum of men for whom violent means of asserting “manhood” flourish in the absence of conventional ones.

On all these counts, market society tends inherently to push the labor market in precisely the wrong directions. The fundamental problem is that in market society labor appears simply as a cost to be reduced rather than a social institution valuable in its own right—among other things, because of its capacity to promote social cohesion and personal integration. Accordingly, it is a central thrust of market society to seek to cheapen labor and/or eliminate it altogether. The result is a constant, systemic pressure toward the degradation of the labor market—through the proliferation of low-wage, high turnover jobs, endemic structural unemployment, or some combination of both. That is especially true in the context of the recurrent global overcapacity which market economies tend routinely to produce.

That combination, in fact, is what has most clearly characterized the U.S. labor market since the 1970s. The U.S. economy is often viewed as a highly successful "job machine," and its labor market policies have accordingly been widely held up as a model for the "rigid" economies of Europe to follow. But to the extent that the U.S. has indeed achieved higher job growth and lower measured unemployment than many (though not all) other advanced economies, it has been at the expense of wages and benefits—boosting the numbers of the "working poor" and creating a stratum of low-wage workers who are uniquely disadvantaged vis-à-vis their European counterparts. Thus, as of the late 1980s, as the economist Richard B. Freeman shows, men in the bottom decile of the U.S. earnings distribution earned only 38 percent of the median wage, while their counterparts in the bottom decile in Europe averaged 68 percent and in Japan 61 percent of the respective medians. The lowest-paid American workers "have lower real earnings than workers in all advanced countries for which there are comparable data"—earning less than half, for example, of what the lowest-paid German workers earn (Freeman, 1994: 12–13). That helps explain higher U.S. levels of family poverty (about which more below), and also in its own right exacerbates the criminogenic effects of overwork on families and communities. Market society can indeed, apparently, create "jobs"—lots of them. But it cannot reliably create *livelihoods*.

Moreover, the relatively low rates of official unemployment in the U.S. obscure relatively *high* levels, on average, of *non*-employment in recent years (Balls, 1994)—as measured by the proportion of working-age men who have dropped out of the labor force. . . .

Market society, moreover, tends to exacerbate the criminogenic impact of weakening labor markets through its reluctance to cushion the economic impact of joblessness or to use public resources to generate new jobs and serious training for them. The comparative figures are stunning: At the beginning of the 1990s the U.S. was

spending less than half of what even the British spent, just a quarter of what the Dutch spent, and less than a quarter of what the Swedes spent on labor market programs of all kinds. And a good part of what it *did* spend went for unemployment insurance. When it comes to programs to provide training and jobs outside the private labor market, these differences are much starker. Sweden spent eight times what the U.S. did, proportionately, on these "active" labor market programs (Reutersward, 1990).

2. The second—closely related—mechanism through which market society breeds violence is its *inherent tendency toward extremes of inequality and material deprivation*. The progressive elimination of good work (and the systematic resistance to an active employment policy) is part of the reason for that tendency. Another is the resistance of market societies against government intervention to offset the inadequacy of labor market incomes.

In the U.S., where "market" principles reign supreme in the absence of strong countervailing forces, income inequality has traditionally been more extreme than in other advanced societies; in the early 1980s, the share of the poorest fifth of the population in GDP was half again as high in West Germany and nearly *twice* as high in Sweden (Barr, 1992: 776). And those gaps widened substantially in the 1980s and 1990s, as the U.S. income distribution took a sharp turn toward increased inequality. . . .

The key reason for the wider spread of inequality in the U.S. is that the bottom is so far down, as recent data from the Luxembourg Income Study illustrate in sharp relief. At close to 22 percent, the child poverty rate in the U.S. towers above that of European countries—even relatively poor ones like Ireland (at about 12 percent). Child poverty rates are below 4 percent in Sweden, Belgium, Finland and Denmark; the closest competitors to the U.S. among advanced industrial nations are Canada and Australia, at roughly 14 percent (Rainwater and Smeeding, 1995, Table 2). . . .

Even more striking, from the LIS data, is the stark *inequality* in the economic condition of American children. Thus, in no European country do children in the *upper* fifth of the scale of real income match the income of comparable children in the U.S.: but only in Ireland (and Israel) are children's real incomes in the *lowest* fifth below those of the poorest American children. Poor children in the U.S., in short, are not only more numerous but also poorer than their European (or Canadian or Australian) counterparts, while the most affluent children in America are considerably *richer* than their counterparts in other advanced countries. . . .

What makes it troubling, among other things, is that both poverty and inequality are increasingly implicated in violent crime. Again, as with employment, the relationships are complex and some are indirect. Yet the evidence points strongly to a profound role for both absolute and relative deprivation. How much poverty, and how wide a spread of inequality, a society tolerates *matter* in terms of violence, and this for several related reasons.

The evidence for a strong link between income inequality and homicide in particular is longstanding, and it comes from a variety of different kinds of research carried out across a variety of different settings (cf. Blau and Blau, 1982; Currie, 1985: Ch. 5; Messner, 1989; Gartner, 1990). Notably, one recent study finds a strong and specific association between the growth of wage inequality in the U.S. since the 1970s and levels of homicide and aggravated assault (Fowles and Merva, 1996). These connections are typically drawn in terms of some conception of relative deprivation. But there is also growing evidence that poverty itself—or more precisely a syndrome of multiple deprivation (what Land et al. have usefully called “resource deprivation”)—is implicated in homicide generally (Land et al., 1990; Smith and Brewer, 1992) and in family homicides in particular (Goetting, 1995).

The long-term deprivation characteristic of market society generates high levels of violent crime in part because of its impact on child

development. To begin with, the link between severe economic deprivation and child abuse is one of the strongest and most recurrent in the literature on child development (Sampson, 1993). In the U.S. the risk of reported physical child abuse is seven times higher in families making below \$15,000 a year than in those making more (Cappelleri et al., 1993). Poverty's strong contribution to child abuse increases the level of criminal violence both directly, by increasing violence against children, and indirectly, through the intergenerational impact of abuse on later violence (Widom, 1992). At the same time, “persistent” poverty of the kind routinely generated by market society inhibits intellectual and social development among children and predisposes them toward school failure and later economic marginality (Miller and Korenman, 1993). The more years children spend in poverty, the more their measured intellectual development falls behind, even after other factors, like family structure, are controlled (Duncan et al., 1993).

3. But the lack of public supports to ameliorate the market's impact on the well-being of families and communities involves more than just income benefits alone. The third main mechanism by which market society breeds violent crime is by *weakening other kinds of public supports* that we have good reason to believe act as strong buffers against crime.

As with the problems of inadequate livelihood and economic deprivation, the problem is that market society is *intrinsically* antagonistic to the provision of the kinds of social supports that, as Frank Cullen (1994) has detailed, may act as critical inhibitors of serious crime. Because it is a basic operating principle of market society to keep the public sector small, it forces individuals and families to rely on individual efforts to secure some of the basics of healthy human development that less Darwinian societies, even poorer ones, provide much more reliably and accessibly. Poor but relatively generous societies, accordingly, are likely to do a better job at keeping violent crime low than wealthy but mean-spirited ones.

The withdrawal of public provision has especially devastating consequences when it is combined (as it invariably is in advanced market societies) with the broad structural shifts in the labor market I have noted above. The strains between family and work offer a key example. The adoption of low-wage, high-turnover labor market strategy that is an essential feature of "contingent" capitalism tends to undercut parents' ability to nurture and supervise their children, leading, in turn, to the kinds of problems that many versions of control theory warn us about. As wage levels fall and steady full-time work is replaced by the packaging of several part time and/or temporary jobs, parents in market societies increasingly need to work excessively long hours to make ends meet—which means that their children are likely to be deprived of attention and support. Reliable and affordable child-care facilities and after-school programs could ease that strain considerably; but market societies provide them spottily and grudgingly at best.

Here too, the figures differentiating the U.S. from the "compassionate capitalist" countries are stark and consistent. Just as we are the post-industrial nation with the most meager income support for low-income families, so too we have the least developed mechanisms to mitigate the stresses between work and childrearing. Virtually every other post-industrial nation provides nearly universal care for 3- to 5-year-olds, in one way or another, and all provide some form of paid parental leave (indeed a number of *developing* countries do better in this respect) (Kamerman and Kahn, 1995). Once again, the effects on violence are multiple and complex. The tendency of market society to force parents on to their own (often slim) resources puts children at great risk of abuse and neglect; it simultaneously increases the risks of domestic violence, as the paucity of outside supports for child care combine with weak job opportunities to trap women in abusive relationships.

This pattern, moreover, applies across the board to other public institutions that could play an important role in preventing violent crime.

Widely accessible, high-quality preventive and prenatal health care, for example, might prevent some of the most basic physical and emotional traumas of childhood that we know are implicated in violent crime (Lewis et al., 1988). But the U.S. is also the only post-industrial nation without a national health system to deliver that care. (Those systems, of course, are increasingly under siege—in countries as diverse as Britain and Costa Rica as global market society advances.)

4. The withdrawal of *public* supports is compounded by the simultaneous tendency of market society to erode *informal* social supports and networks of care. This is especially a consequence of the rapid movement of capital and, accordingly, of opportunities for steady work in market society—which is characterized by the demand for "flexibility" in the workforce and by the absence of strong ties of capital to any geographic community. But what the system hails as "flexibility" from the point of view of the employer translates into rootlessness for individuals and families and atomization for communities. The result is to deplete the sources of informal support that might otherwise buffer the consequences of mass joblessness, poverty and the retreat of public social services.

If, for example, a family stressed by long working hours and unable to procure decent child care could lean on the grandparents down the street to care for the children; if they could look to uncles, cousins, and friends to help keep an eye on their teenagers when long working hours mean they can't do it themselves; then the criminogenic consequences of overemployment and poverty could arguably be mitigated. But market society systematically splits extended families and creates communities characterized by rapid geographical mobility and the consequent "thinning" of networks of close friendship and mutual care. The overall result is not unlike what social disorganization theorists have warned about since the 1920s, and recent research has repeatedly confirmed (see Sampson and Groves, 1989; Sampson, 1993; Cullen, 1994).

That "thinning" of community under the impact of market development is speeded by systematic private sector disinvestment—as the economic and social condition of the hardest-hit communities no longer suffices to justify investment in market terms—at least in the short term, which is, more and more, the operative time frame in market society. As market society progresses, in other words, we increasingly see communities with not only few *public* agencies—recreation programs, health clinics, libraries—but also few stores, restaurants or movie theatres.

The overall result is a deepening, self-fueling cycle of social impoverishment—what Jeffrey Fagan and his colleagues, in their recent multi-city study of crime, drugs and neighborhood change in the U.S., describe as a progressive "unraveling" of low-income communities. As these researchers point out, the resulting depletion of stable adult supervision and support means that youth gangs or drug dealers may become "the dominant informal control and socialization force" (Fagan et al., 1993: 4). More generally, it leaves youth more and more dependent for help, advice and role modeling on their peer groups and on an increasingly pervasive consumer culture (on which more below).

A second consequence is equally potent. As two decades of research make abundantly plain, it is precisely this sort of "social" impoverishment that is heavily implicated in severe child abuse and neglect—and which helps to explain why some low-income communities have much higher levels of child maltreatment than others (Zuravin, 1989; Garbarino and Kostelny, 1992; Sampson, 1993). It is important not to overstate this case. Even in the most "unraveled" parts of American (or Third World) cities, there remain strong families, at least some solid, longstanding communal institutions (in the U.S., notably churches); and often a handful of dedicated, if overextended, nonprofit social service agencies. But the overall drift of market society is increasingly to marginalize and, at the extreme, to overwhelm them.

5. Market society simultaneously breeds crime by promoting a culture that exalts atomized and often brutal individual competition and consumption over the values of community, contribution and productive work. The tendencies I have noted in the labor market, in levels of inequality, deprivation, social provision and support, are exacerbated by fundamental changes on the level of culture. Here the empirical reality is murkier and the changes harder to quantify. Yet I do not think we can adequately understand trends in crime in either the advanced or the developing world without paying these changes close attention. Market society is underpinned by a distinctive set of cultural values and norms—and as it develops, these come to push aside others which have traditionally helped communities to maintain social cohesion (and low levels of violence) in the face of economic deprivation and uncertainty.

We talk a great deal, especially in the U.S., about the links between crime and the culture of poor people. We talk hardly at all about the role of the *common* culture. There is much discussion—I think *too* much—of the culture of the underclass, but little about the culture of the *overclass* (for a fine critique of the "underclass" discussion, see Gans, 1995). That is a serious default, because we will simply not understand the character of violent crime in the contemporary world—perhaps especially youth violence—unless we view it within the context of the growth and spread of a dominant culture of exploitation, predation and indifference to human life in our time.

We can break down these developments into at least three distinct parts; first, the increasing potency and primacy of consumer values; second, and relatedly, the erosion of what I would call "craft" values; and finally the increasing institutionalization, or normalization, of a "mainstream" culture of exploitation and irresponsibility.

There is nothing new about the idea of the U.S. being an extreme example of a consumer society. What is new, I think, is the extent to which the other trends I have described have made young people, especially, more and more vulnerable to

the appeals of a frantically consumerist culture. As we have decimated both formal and informal adult institutions of supervision, livelihood and support—and not just in poor communities—the culture's insistent proddings toward acquisition and consumption, through the advertising industry, television and the movies, are increasingly unmediated. We have some evidence for this shift that goes well beyond the anecdotal. In their recent multi-city study of drugs and crime in impoverished inner-city neighborhoods, for example, Jeffrey Fagan and his colleagues found a growing "materialism" in American inner cities—indeed, in some cities, what they describe as "hypermateralism" (1993: 8). Nor is that phenomenon confined to drug-dealing youth gangs. Surveys have described a significant shift toward "consumption aspirations" among American adolescents generally during the 1980s; the proportion agreeing that "having lots of money" was one of their main goals in life rose from less than half in 1976 to nearly two-thirds a decade later (Crimmons et al., 1991).

A second underappreciated casualty of the spread of market culture is what I would call "craft" values—by which I mean the value of a job well done, the pleasure in productive work and creativity, the self-esteem that comes from acquiring competence and contributing your growing skills to an appreciative community. I can't measure this loss in neat numbers. But I am struck by it frequently in encounters with young people in general and delinquent youth in particular.

As market society advances, the value of work and its ability to bind individuals into a productive community life is progressively demeaned in favor of the valorization of consumption for its own sake—and of getting what you want, or getting ahead of others, by whatever means will suffice. When that cultural shift is combined with the decimation of opportunities for good work, it produces a dual assault on one of the most crucial mechanisms of social support, social control and communal engagement.

I'm suggesting, in other words, that the eclipse of stable and rewarding work in market society has, in addition to the economic and social consequences I have proposed above, a more subtle cultural one. Work stabilizes society in part through its cultural meaning—its ability to provide channels of status and esteem, and definitions of virtue and worth, that involve hierarchies of competence, diligence, and contribution. It allows for the valuing of productive means over consumerist ends, of contribution over position. One of the quieter, but I think extremely corrosive, effects of market society is to chip away at those cultural standards linking esteem to the capacity for production and contribution.

These considerations may also help explain why some poor communities manage to resist, at least for a while, the atomization and institutional disintegration that engulf others—and the accompanying levels of violence. In the U.S., that pattern is often found to be true of recent immigrant communities, as against those with a longer history of economic marginalization and longer exposure to a "hypermateralist" dominant culture. Immigrant communities may retain strong elements of premarket values stressing family obligation and the dignity of work—values which, as a broad body of empirical research makes clear, tend to be worn down the longer immigrants reside in the U.S. and are buffeted by the onslaught of market values.

Another cultural development, equally difficult to quantify, but I think equally important in understanding the links between market society and violence, is what might be described as the spread of a culture of "normal brutality." This too, is by no means a new idea; it is prefigured in the work of a number of early criminological theorists. Around the turn of the century, for example, Enrico Ferri wrote that what he called the "law of free competition" was a "disguised form of cannibalism"—because it established, he said, the rule that "your death is my life" (1962: 84). That insight has transparent relevance for the problem of white-collar crime, but its implications are

much broader. Market society promotes violent crime in part by creating something akin to a perpetual state of internal warfare in which the advancement of some is contingent on the fall of others, and in which a corresponding ethos of unconcern—of non-responsibility for others' well-being—often legitimized under the rubric of beneficent competition, pervades the common culture and the interactions of daily life.

A culture in which routinely throwing employees out of work in the name of "restructuring" is increasingly defined as thoroughly laudable business practice; where losing one's footing in the intensifying scramble for livelihood and income means more and more the possibility of falling into real social limbo; where even the most basic help for those who do "lose" is granted, if at all, grudgingly and with overt disrespect; where even the risks of disability or death from illness or accident are contingent on market income and basic health care may be withheld from those without it; where, in short, those on top continually make it clear that they have only minimal concern for the well-being of those on the bottom—is a society in which the risks of violent crime are magnified, because those on the bottom are likely to internalize and reciprocate the prevailing ethos of disregard.

The extraordinarily prescient Willem Bonger put it this way, early in the century: "He who is abandoned by all can no longer have any feeling for those who have left him to his fate" (1969: 53). We do not have much of a language for this phenomenon in contemporary criminological theory. But I don't think anyone who has spent much time with delinquent youth, repeat offenders or drug dealers in the inner cities of the advanced societies can have failed to be aware of their sense of society as a "dog-eat-dog" world. Market society's fundamental cultural attitude of nonresponsibility, in short, breeds a pervasive tendency toward "unbonding" from society of those most impacted by economic and social insecurity and impoverishment—a sense that they are not merely deprived but maltreated. What

we might call a "culture of callousness," in which concern for the well-being of other people becomes steadily attenuated, is not a "subculture" confined to "lower-class" youth, but a fundamental tendency of the *dominant* culture itself which poor youth assimilate and, no doubt, magnify, but cannot be said to initiate.

6. A sixth mechanism by which market society aggravates violent crime is by deregulating the *technology of violence*. I don't think this point needs much elaboration. The level of gun involvement in violent crime—especially homicide—in the U.S. is immense, and we won't understand the American pattern of violence apart from it. That is particularly true of the sharp rise in youth homicide that scarred the country in the late 1980s and early 1990s; from 1990 through 1994, 71 percent of black and 54 percent of white juvenile homicide victims were killed by firearms (Snyder et al., 1996: 3). There is much room for debate over how *much* of the difference in rates of homicide in the U.S. versus other advanced industrial countries can be laid to the prevalence of firearms—how many gun homicides, for example, might be carried out by other means if handguns were less easily available. If we simply subtract handgun homicides from the total, for example, the U.S. rate still towers above those of most European countries and Japan. But there is no serious dispute that the virtual absence of national-level regulations on the sale and possession of firearms both distinguishes the U.S. from virtually every advanced nation and contributes substantially to the lethality of American violence (Cook et al., 1995). Nor is there dispute that the modest recent national-level legislation establishing waiting periods for gun purchases and restricting military-style assault weapons have left vast areas of the firearms market for all practical purposes untouched, notably the so-called "secondary" firearms market of informal gun shows and private sales (Cook et al., 1995: 87–90).

What is less often acknowledged is how closely this absence of public regulation of firearms meshes seamlessly with the general "market"

orientation of American civilization. The unique proliferation of firearms, especially handguns, in the U.S. is often attributed to its "frontier" culture, but though there is surely some truth in that explanation, by itself it is unconvincing. Canada is also a "frontier" society, but it regulates guns far more stringently than does the U.S. and suffers only a fraction of the level of handgun violence. I think the more salient distinction involves the varying historic dominance of market culture and institutions across these two countries, which is evident across many realms of culture and social policy. It cannot be entirely coincidental that Canada has both more stringent controls over the sale of guns and (so far) a much more generous "welfare state" than the U.S., or that Canada pioneered the kind of universal medical care system which the U.S. has fiercely and effectively resisted in the name of the "free market."

7. Finally, market society breeds violent crime by *weakening or eroding alternative political values and institutions* through which those it hurts most could make sense of their situation in progressive terms and take effective collective action against it.

We don't talk about this issue much in our recent thinking about violent crime. But it has a significant, if abbreviated, history in criminology. Recall that Robert Merton's fifth "adaptation" to the condition of social "strain" was "rebellion," which

leads men [sic] outside the environing social structure to envisage and seek to bring into being a new, that is to say, a greatly modified social structure.

Crime was only one of several possible responses to a disjunction between socially structured means and culturally prescribed ends; political action to change either or both was another. But in order to "pass into organized political action," frustration with the existing social structure had to be translated into allegiance to "new groups possessed of a new myth"—thus transforming mere alienation into positive rebellion. That in

turn required breaking the "monopoly of the imagination" imposed by what Merton called the "conservative myth"—the assertion that the deprivation and inequality were inevitable in the nature of things or the result of individual failure rather than social structural constraints (1963: 155–7).

Merton himself did not elaborate much on this point, and it has been mostly forgotten since. But the central insight is crucially important. The way in which adverse social and economic conditions affect people's propensity to crime will obviously be mediated by the cultural ideologies and communal institutions available to them to respond to that adversity. Where strong labor movements or political parties address the concerns of low-income people, or strong ethnic or communal organizations are at hand to promote the collective well-being, the frustrations of social and economic deprivation are more likely to be channeled into constructive social action. But in "market" society those institutions are weak to nonexistent; in fact, it is precisely their weakness that allows market society to flourish to begin with. And as it progresses market society tends to erode them even further—witness the rapid decline of union membership in the U.S. (and many other advanced countries) in recent years, the casualty of market-driven deindustrialization and of concerted attacks by employers in legislatures and on the shop floor.

Why is this important for understanding violent crime? Because it leaves the people most "at risk" because of deprivation and social impoverishment with little means of constructively challenging the forces that are undermining their communities, families and futures—and thereby makes it far more likely that their response will take the form of an individual lashing-out, or a gratification of individual impulse at the expense of other people in the same boat. Over time, the withering of those countervailing institutions begins to deprive them of even the language, the conceptual framework, to define their problems in collective terms and to envision a collective response.

The Future

... I have argued that market society is peculiarly conducive to violent crime, for reasons that are analytically separable but, in the real world, closely intertwined and mutually reinforcing—operating simultaneously on the levels of material well-being, social support, and cultural meaning. Thus it is not just that market society increasingly forces a harsh choice of joblessness or low-wage labor, but that in doing so it exacerbates economic inequality and plunges large segments of its population into extreme deprivation—while simultaneously both withdrawing public provision of support and chipping away relentlessly at the informal support networks that might cushion these disadvantages. All the while it is also replacing earlier communal values and norms with an increasingly strident ethos of competitive consumerism which rubs raw the frustrations that accompany the declining economic fortunes of large strata of the population, and weakening the counter-ideologies and institutions that could mobilize constructive challenges to a harsh and depriving social order. To top it off, at the extreme such a civilization laxly regulates and opportunistically promotes the marketing of the mass instruments of lethal violence. It is a potent and toxic brew. And it is, again, a mixture intrinsic to the logic of market society—a function not of its failure but of “the quality of its success,” as R. H. Tawney put it in the 1920s; “its light itself a kind of darkness” (1920: 33). . . .

This is not the place to go into the details of what would be required to deflect this trajectory. But a few points seem clear. I have argued that market society generates several analytically separable mechanisms through which it exacerbates the problem of serious violent crime. But these are not really separable in the real world, and some of them are more central than others. In particular, it is the systematic assault on steady livelihood that is arguably the most destructive feature of the advance of market society, and the one with the most diverse and potent

ramifications for families and communities; it is, therefore, also the most promising lever for change. Full employment at socially meaningful work at good wages, and with reasonable hours, at a stroke attacks many of the criminogenic features of market society—integrating individuals into a larger social purpose, stabilizing local communities, and guaranteeing sufficient income. It makes illicit markets less appealing and reduces the kinds of family stresses that put smaller children at risk of abuse and weaken the supervision of older ones.

Building that kind of strategy, in the face of the technological changes now transforming work across the globe, means moving in two directions at once (see Currie, 1995): substantially expanding employment in the public and non-profit sectors of the economy, and developing policies for worksharing and reduction of work time. Both are worthy in themselves, but both also have enormous potential for reducing violence. If we spread work and reduce work time, we not only widen access to livelihood among people who are now cut off from the integrative and supportive effects of stable work, but we also lessen the destructive impact of *overwork*. If we invest in public-sector job creation, we provide new livelihoods for many people the private market will not employ—and we can also staff the public agencies of social support and capacity-building which market society erodes if left to its own devices: health and mental health care, public schooling, child care and skill training. An active employment policy geared to creating new jobs in the public and nonprofit sectors, in short, meshes powerfully with a commitment to the universal provision of high-quality public services; and that combination can be the core of an effective attack on the conditions that breed violent crime.

Such is the state of public discourse on these matters in most of the developed world today that calls for revitalizing an active employment strategy along these lines are sometimes dismissed as Utopian. But there is considerable evidence that

it is both eminently feasible (Glyn and Rowthorn, 1994) and capable of attracting strong public support. Even in the U.S., a substantial majority, according to opinion polls, agrees that government should guarantee work for those the private economy will not or cannot hire. Criminologists need to add their voices to what should become a

broad and public debate over the nature of work and of social support in the advanced societies of the 21st century. They can do so best by affirming that violence is one of the clearest costs of our increasingly heedless global assault, in the name of the market, on the preconditions of a sustaining social life.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the "market economy"? How does it produce inequality and the conditions that are conducive to high rates of violent crime in the United States?
2. Compared to other advanced industrial nations (e.g., Japan, western European countries), is the U.S. government more or less supportive of its citizens who are in need? Why

- does Currie think this is the case? What does he believe are the consequences of these government policies?
3. How is Currie's "market society" theory similar to Messner and Rosenfeld's "institutional-anomie" theory? How do the theories differ?
4. What policies would Currie's perspective on crime suggest are likely to reduce crime? What policies would Currie believe would not reduce crime?

21. Crime and Coercion

Mark Colvin

In Crime and Coercion (2000), Mark Colvin argues that the notion that coercion causes criminal behavior is not novel but rather found in a variety of criminological theories, including Agnew's general strain theory (Chapter 12) and Cullen's social support theory (Chapter 41). Braithwaite's (Chapter 16) reintegrative shaming theory, Sherman's defiance theory (Chapter 17), and many critical theories might have been added to this roster of perspectives that, to a greater or lesser extent, would caution that coercion does not breed conformity but crime. Still, with few exceptions (Patterson et al., 1989), previous scholars have not gone beyond offering the broad insight that coercion is criminogenic to develop a systematic theory of crime and coercion. By contrast, Colvin carefully builds on previous theorizing and research to provide such a comprehensive model in his "differential coercion theory" (see also Colvin et al., 2002; Vander Ven and Colvin, 2013).

Colvin argues that control has two fundamental dimensions, each of which can be envisioned as a continuum with two qualitatively different endpoints. First, control can range from coercive to non-coercive. Second, control can range from consistent to erratic. By cross-tabulating these two dimensions into a 2 × 2 table, one can arrive at "four control types." For Colvin, the most consequential is "Type 4," which is when control is exercised coercively and erratically. Social contexts that impose coercive-erratic control generate a variety of "social-psychological deficits," including "high other-directed anger; low

self-efficacy; weak, alienated social bond; coercive modeling; perceived control deficit with feelings of debasement; low self-control; [and] external locus of control" (2000: 43). These deficits in turn coalesce to create a strong predisposition for serious predatory criminal behavior. Further, when people are exposed to coercive-erratic control across time and across social contexts (i.e., family, school, workplace, community), the result is likely to be chronic or life-course-persistent offending.

It remains to be seen whether Colvin's four-fold typology of control will match the reality of wayward human behavior, which often is too complex and "messy" to fall neatly into ideal-type categories. Still, there is growing evidence that coercion is criminogenic (Colvin, 2000), and that the core propositions of his causal model have merit (Baron, 2009; Unnever et al., 2004). Furthermore, his thinking has salient policy implications. In his book, Colvin (2000: 138–175) outlines an illuminating "theory-driven response to crime." Similar to Elliott Currie (Chapter 20, 1985, 1998) and other critical theorists, he argues that the solution to crime is to create a "noncoercive society." Making strides in this direction would entail realizing the limits of punitive crime-control strategies and the wisdom of government policies that, among other things, advocate more democratic workplaces, provide broad-based economic security to all Americans, and ensure the healthy development and care of at-risk children and families.

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A Differential Coercion Theory of Criminality

Drawing on the insights of previous theories, we are able to discern two important dimensions of control. First is the degree of coercion, ranging from extremely high coercion to complete non-coercion. Second is the degree of consistency, ranging from highly consistent to highly erratic. With these two dimensions I construct four types of control that have profoundly different effects on criminal and non-criminal outcomes: (1) non-coercive consistent control; (2) non-coercive erratic control; (3) coercive consistent control; and (4) coercive erratic control. I label

these, respectively, Type 1, Type 2, Type 3, and Type 4 control. . . .

Coercion occurs when one is compelled to act in a certain way through direct force or intimidation from others or through the pressure of impersonal economic or social forces. Interpersonal forms of coercion may or may not involve the use of violence. Coercion can involve the threat of or actual taking away of something of value, such as a person's job or other social supports. It is punitive in nature. It motivates behavior because it is physically and/or emotionally painful and because it threatens to or actually does remove both expressive and instrumental social supports. Coercion, as I am using the term, encompasses Athens's (1992) definition of coercion and includes his concept of retaliation. Retaliation, in my use of this concept, is an excessively brutal and more unrelenting form of coercion. . . .

Thus coercion can be seen as setting into motion the social-psychological dynamics that the major theories of criminality discussed earlier posit as precursors to chronic involvement in criminal behavior. Coercion creates strain in the form of anger; it contributes to weak, alienated social bonds, low self-efficacy, an external locus of control, and, if delivered on an erratic schedule, low self-control. In addition, it models behavior for the individual when that person exercises control over others. And it becomes a provocation that produces a deviant motivation. These social-psychological variables are altered depending on the degree of coercion and consistency in control relations. In the discussion below, we explore the social-psychological and behavioral outcomes produced by the four types of control.

The Varieties of Control Experiences

As discussed in the previous section, relations of control come in varying forms defined by their degree of coercion and their consistency in application. Non-coercive controls can be either

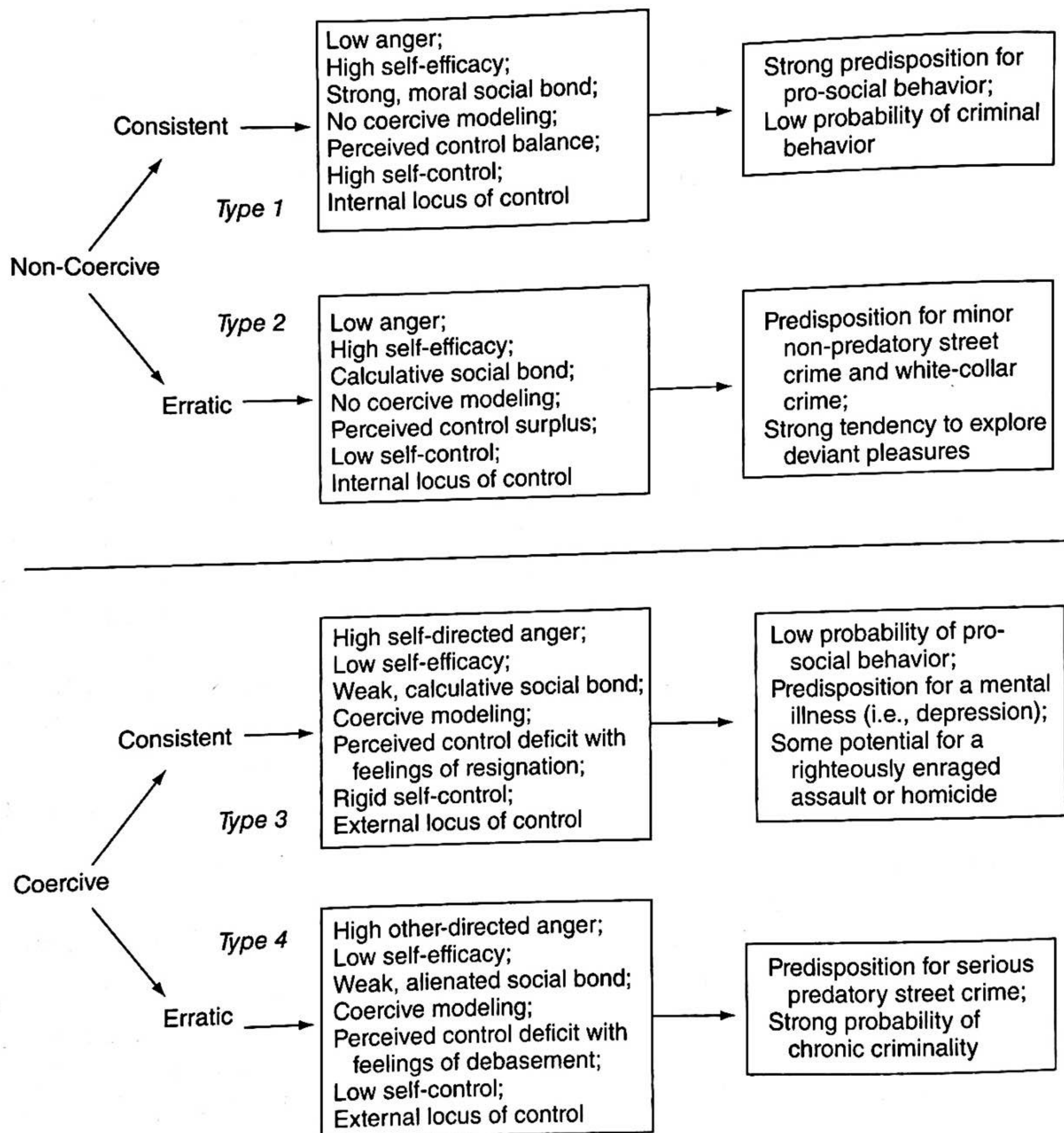
consistent, firm and fair, or they can be overly lenient, permissive, and erratic. I refer to these respectively as Type 1 and Type 2 forms of control. Coercive relations of control can be consistently punitive or erratically punitive. These are labeled Type 3 and Type 4 respectively in the following discussion. The form of control most conducive to chronic predatory criminality is Type 4, a coercive relation that is erratic and punitive. However, as discussed in this section, Type 2 control is also conducive to certain forms of criminality, as to some extent is Type 3....

Each type of control has different social-psychological outcomes and thus different effects on behavior. Figure 21.1 presents the social-psychological and behavioral outcomes that emerge from each type of control. The following discussion expands upon the relationships presented in Figure 21.1....

Type 1: Consistent, Non-Coercive

This is a non-coercive type of control in which strong social support of both expressive and instrumental needs are provided. It utilizes a

Figure 21.1
Social-Psychological and Behavioral Outcomes Predicted by Four Control Types



combination of normative and remunerative control. It involves no provocation that could become the basis for recognizing a control deficit. It produces the following social-psychological outcomes:

- Low anger.
- High self-control, based on internalization of norms.
- Internal locus of control.
- High self-efficacy.
- Strong, positive, moral social bond.
- No modeling for coercive behavior.
- No perceived control deficit or control surplus (control balance).

And it produces the following behavioral outcomes:

- Generally non-criminal, non-delinquent
- Strong tendency to engage in pro-social behavior. . . .

Type 1 control is the least likely to produce a propensity for criminal or delinquent behavior and is the most likely to insulate the person from exploring the pleasures of deviance. This is not to say that a person emerging from such control relations will be completely non-deviant and law-abiding. But deviant explorations will require rationalizations that "neutralize" the guilt that would otherwise hold these individuals back from deviant activities (Sykes and Matza 1957). Some white-collar criminals (usually of a less chronic variety) and short-term exploratory offenders would fit this pattern. These offenders soon desist from deviant involvement when the rationalizations that support their behavior break down and internal moral constraints reassert themselves. Such deviant explorations may, under the right circumstances, change the type of control under which the person has operated. This change in control may move them toward one or another of the three types discussed below. He or she may move to the lenient type if controllers ignore the deviance, or these explorations in crime may lead to one of the coercive types with

subsequent impact on social-psychological and behavioral outcomes.

Type 2: Erratic, Non-Coercive

This non-coercive type of control can be described as lenient, lax, and permissive with a detached interest on the part of the controller who intervenes erratically and weakly. It provides feeble, erratic social support, which is mostly instrumental since a controller who becomes disengaged provides little expressive support. At best, inconsistent use of remunerative control is used in attempts to manipulate a subject's behavior. This control type involves no provocation that becomes the basis for recognizing a control deficit; in fact, it often involves situations in which a control surplus becomes evident as the purported controller ignores the subordinate's behavior or is manipulated to accede to the subordinate's wishes and demands. It produces the following social-psychological outcomes:

- Low anger.
- Low self-control.
- Internal locus of control.
- High self-efficacy.
- Intermediate, calculative social bond.
- No modeling for coercive behavior.
- Perception of a control surplus.

And it produces the following behavioral outcomes:

- Strong tendency to explore pleasurable deviant activities.
- Manipulation of authority figures and of rules and procedures.
- Lying.
- Strong predisposition for less predatory, minor street crime.
- Predisposition for white-collar criminality (if opportunity arises).

In this form of control, the person is usually ignored when non-compliant or is only mildly reprimanded when interventions do happen. On an erratic basis the controller may also attempt

to bribe the subordinate into compliance. The person can readily predict that serious interventions will not arise from behavior, so the pursuit of pleasure or financial gain is not constrained and thus self-control is not induced. Erratic monitoring of behavior by external authorities means that the person is free to experiment and take risks. Such individuals are not driven by the compulsion of others or of events, and in fact they try to shape these to allow for greater pursuit of personal pleasure or profit. Thus they have an internal locus of control in which they direct their own pursuit toward maximization of pleasure or gain. Rules are ill defined, vague, and subject to change through persistent manipulation. Thus the person develops little in the way of appreciating limits on behavior and in this sense may exhibit distorted (even grandiose) self-efficacy (confidence) in his or her abilities to take on and overcome risks. The lenient nature of interventions (when they do occur) means that anger is not produced, although respect for authority (which presents itself as weak, detached, and apathetic) is not induced either. It is more likely that such individuals become indifferent to the demands of authority. The social bond is intermediate, based on calculation of reward through pleasure seeking. Type 2 control predisposes the person to crime and delinquency that is generally less predatory, since it is not anger-driven. With low self-control, they are highly likely to explore deviant, pleasurable experiences, such as drug use, petty theft, sexual promiscuity, drinking, and other minor delinquent acts. Their combination of low self-control, intermediate calculative social bond, and high self-efficacy allows them to calculate pleasurable outcomes without having to neutralize guilt, while feeling confident in their abilities to manipulate circumstances to reduce risks. Some may become chronically involved in these types of activities as long as pleasurable rewards outweigh negative costs of continuing in these behaviors. When negative costs (to health, social relations, or freedom) begin to accumulate, the person is likely to desist from criminal involvement out of

rational calculation that these deviant pursuits are no longer worth it. This type is congruent with the "adolescent-limited" pattern of delinquency in which juveniles engage in deviance for a period of time and then desist from deviant involvement (Moffitt 1997). Since the Type 2 pattern promotes chronic lying and manipulation, it also applies to the background of many white-collar criminals, especially to the more chronically involved ones. The patterns of control and crime emerging from Type 2 (which accounts for the majority of *offenders*) are most congruent with arguments from control theory since individuals in this pattern are acting free from external and internal constraints.

Type 3: Consistent, Coercive

Coercive control in this pattern is delivered on a consistent schedule and creates a highly punitive relationship between the controller and the subordinate. The relationship provides weak instrumental and expressive social support. In fact, to the extent that they exist at all, these social supports are constantly under threat of removal. It continually provokes recognition of a control deficit, which is obvious to the subordinate who develops a posture of resignation. The Type 3 pattern produces these social-psychological outcomes:

- High level of self-directed anger.
- Rigid self-control, based on constant fear of a painful response.
- External locus of control.
- Low self-efficacy.
- Weak, calculative social bond.
- Strong modeling for coercive behavior.
- Perception of a control deficit accompanied by resignation.

And it produces these behavioral outcomes:

- Low probability of criminal behavior.
- Low probability of pro-social behavior.
- High probability of mental health problems, such as chronic depression.
- Some potential for a righteously enraged assault or murder.

In this form of control, the person is consistently met with a punitive response when not complying with rules, which are usually highly restrictive. Behavior is rarely ignored and rewards are rarely given for compliance. This control relation produces a highly external locus of control, as the person becomes fearful, submissive, depressed, and powerless. Anger tends to be directed inward since outward expressions of anger are met immediately with punitive responses. A sense of resignation to the demands of authority leads to few displays of defiance. The consistency of coercion tends to produce someone who *rigidly* monitors his or her behavior out of fear in order to avoid negative consequences, which they learn can be avoided only by very careful monitoring of behavior and following rules to the letter. The social bond lies between intermediate and negative, based on a calculation of avoiding pain. Self-directed anger focuses the negative feelings of alienation inward rather than outward.

Type 3 control is not likely to create a predisposition for criminality because of the close monitoring of behavior by external authority. Instead of crime, this style of control is more likely to produce problems related to mental illness, such as chronic depression. Pro-social behavior, such as the pursuit of an education or any activity that involves initiative or creativity, becomes highly problematic for such a person. But this control type can *under the right circumstances* lead to an explosion of violence if inner-directed anger is suddenly transformed into outer-directed rage (Katz 1988). The coercive behavioral modeling this control type provides may help form the impetus for such a violent outburst. If the nearly constant monitoring of behavior is lifted, inner-directed anger can be redirected outward since external constraints are not replaced by internal constraints. In fact, such a change would move the individual from a Type 3 toward a Type 4 pattern of control.

Type 4: Erratic, Coercive

This control type involves a punitive reaction to misconduct that is highly inconsistent. Social

support in this control relationship is weak to non-existent. The highly erratic nature of the coercion powerfully provokes a pointed recognition of a control deficit. This control type produces the following social-psychological outcomes:

- High levels of other-directed anger and defiance.
- Low self-control.
- External locus of control.
- Low self-efficacy.
- Very weak, negative, alienated social bond.
- Strong coercive behavior modeling.
- Strong perception of control deficit accompanied by feelings of humiliation.

And it produces the following behavioral outcomes:

- Defiant and hostile acts toward authority figures.
- Coercion and intimidation of others.
- Strong predisposition for chronic involvement in predatory street crime.

In this form of control, noncompliance is, on an erratic basis, either ignored or responded to with harsh punitive measures. At times serious noncompliance is ignored and minor noncompliance is severely punished. At other times, punitive responses may occur when no misconduct has taken place at all. On occasion, coercion takes the extreme form of retaliation, in which pain is inflicted well beyond the point of submission (Athens 1992). The schedule for such punitive interventions is thus erratic and arbitrary. Coercion that is inconsistent and seems arbitrary creates a strong sense of injustice and thus generates greater anger and defiance that are directed outward (Agnew 1992).

The erratic nature of the coercion also allows the individual to periodically escape control and, on random occasions, feel a sense of autonomy. Thus the experience of coercion (when it does happen) is highly provocative since greater feelings of debasement and humiliation accompany this rude reminder of a control deficit.

An external locus of control is produced in which the individual feels at the mercy of events that are beyond his or her control; the inconsistency of coercion makes negative events appear to be random occurrences not the consequence of behavior. This pattern of inconsistency also produces low self-control. Lack of self-control means that few brakes are placed on the expression of anger that is directed outward. The social bond is highly negative, based on alienation and open hostility toward authority figures. Someone experiencing this type of control develops low self-efficacy since he or she has little confidence that *in the long run* his or her behavior will make any difference in removing negative consequences that seem to arise in circumstances beyond his or her control. But in the short run, coercion against others provides a sense of power that, at least temporarily, changes the individual's position in relation to coercive control.

For individuals emerging from a Type 4 pattern of control, crime tends to be impulsive with little rational calculation of costs or benefits of behavior; such consequences cannot be predicted but are seen as matters of luck and fate. (This is a major distinction between the criminal patterns of Type 4 and Type 2 since the latter involves a higher degree of rational calculation.) Only short-term advantages often in the face of immediate coercive provocation are the anticipated outcomes of criminal behavior. This type of control produces a high predisposition for chronic criminality (the "life-course persistent" offenders [Moffitt 1997]). These offenders tend to start criminal behavior at an earlier age than do other offenders. While they engage in a wide variety of criminal behaviors, this group tends to engage more than other groups in predatory street crimes, including serious violent crimes (Elliott 1994). The coercive nature of these criminal acts is modeled by the coercive controls experienced by the individual. The patterns of control and crime under Type 4 (which accounts for the majority of street crimes) are most congruent with the strain theory explanation offered by

Agnew (1992) because the individual is acting under the pressures of extreme negative stimuli.

Coercion and Chronic Criminality

...I contend that coercive relations of control are conducive to chronic predatory criminality because they create a particular complex of emotions and personality traits: other-directed anger, low self-control, external locus of control, low self-efficacy, weak social bonding, coercive behavioral modeling, and perception of a control deficit that evokes debasement and humiliation. I label this complex set of emotions and traits *social-psychological deficits*. These social-psychological deficits include variables that have been related to criminal behavior and delinquency in the theories discussed earlier and in several research studies (Caspi et al., 1994; Grasmick et al., 1993; Peiser and Heaven, 1996; Shaw and Scott, 1991). But rather than viewing individuals as having hardwired personality traits (as Gottfredson and Hirschi [1990] do in their self-control theory), such traits are seen as arising out of coercive relations (initially in families [Patterson 1982]) and sustained by continuing coercive relations in a wide range of settings. The individuals who develop these social-psychological deficits have a high probability of eliciting coercive controls from authority figures and from peers. Thus there emerges a reciprocal relationship between these coercive controls and these social-psychological deficits that makes it more likely that the individual will be sustained in a path toward chronic criminality (Sampson and Laub 1993).

Together, these experiences of coercion and these social-psychological deficits contribute to the creation of *coercive ideation* in which an individual comes to view the world as an all-encompassing experience of coercion that can only be overcome through coercion. (Coercive ideation is similar to Athens's [1992] concept of *belligerency*...) Following insights from Tittle's control balance theory, the individual under Type 4 control, due to its erratic application of

coercion, imagines that coercive attempts to overcome such an environment can be successful (at least in the short run). In contrast, an individual under Type 3 control, with its consistent application of coercion, will find it difficult to conceive such transcendent moments of deliverance. Only in a rare circumstance can such an individual muster the rage to organize their behavior into an attack, which is often futile, on the coercive source of their continual subjugation and humiliation (Katz 1988). . . .

Coercion can be direct, arising from an actual interpersonal relationship of control, or may be indirect, arising from impersonal forces beyond the individual's control. One such impersonal force is economic. Economic conditions may compel a person to stay in a coercive relationship (at work or in a family), to leave a job he or she likes, to move to a location to which he or she does not want to go, or to take a job when he or she does not want to. Changing conditions of unemployment may, on an erratic basis, repeatedly move a person back and forth from highly coercive workplaces to the streets where little direct control exists; thus an erratic schedule of coercive control may be produced by these larger impersonal economic forces. All of these can be experienced as erratic coercion and may have the same social-psychological impact on the individual as do direct interpersonal relations that involve inconsistent coercive control.

There is a tie between interpersonal coercive relations and these impersonal forms of coercion. A coercive interpersonal relationship may be more difficult to escape if impersonal forces do not allow access to legal escape routes. For instance, a person in a coercive relationship at work

will find it difficult to escape if unemployment is high and alternative jobs are scarce. Such a situation also makes it easier to enforce a coercive control strategy at the workplace, since the threat of firing someone from the job has much greater impact if the person faces destitution as a result. Also in families, if control relations are highly coercive but the controller also holds economic power, it is much more difficult for spouses and children to escape if alternative forms of economic subsistence are truncated by larger economic conditions. These impersonal economic forces become coercive in and of themselves and they reinforce the interpersonal relations of coercion in various settings.

Coercive relations can appear in any number of settings, including workplaces, families, schools, among peers, and in state bureaucracies, such as welfare and criminal justice agencies. A person may pass through each of these settings in which various control relations are experienced. *To the extent that these settings create an accumulated experience of coercion, the greater is the likelihood that the person will experience anger, weak social bonding, an external locus of control, low self-efficacy, coercive behavior modeling, and a perception of a control deficit.* Together, these controls and social-psychological deficits contribute to the development of coercive ideation. *To the extent coercion is erratic, then the perceived control deficit will provoke feelings of debasement and humiliation, the anger will be directed outward, self-control will diminish, and coercive ideation will include the thought that a coercive environment can be overcome through coercion.* These in turn produce a stronger predisposition for chronic predatory criminality. . . .

Discussion Questions

1. What are Colvin's four types of control? Which type is most likely to produce serious offenders? Why?

2. Colvin identifies a number of "social-psychological deficits" that intervene between coercion and crime. What are these deficits? How do they relate to other theories you may have read about?