Themenschwerpunkt: Gewaltausübung und Gewalterfahrung

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Explaining Deviant/Violent Behavior—A Review of Current U. S. Literature on the Basis of Classical Theories

1. Introduction

The United States is faced with violence on a daily basis. In urban areas, homes and schools, in relationships between men and women, parents and children, the elderly and their caregivers, the problem of violence has reached a level of awareness that has been called epidemic. Crime is one of the top issues in political debates. As a nation, the U. S. ranks first among all developed countries in the world in homicides and according to FBI statistics, one violent crime occurs every eighteen seconds (Federal Bureau of Investigation 1996). Five out of six people will be victims of violent crimes at least once in their lifetimes (National Victim Center 1993).

Scientists agree that many factors, including guns, gangs, drugs, poverty and racism, affect independently or interactively violent behavior in society. During the 1960s, when one seriously began to study aggression, American society sought the causes of aggression within either social structures or the underlying characteristics of human personality. The alarming increase of violence during the 1970s shifted the attention to the development of control mechanisms. In the 1980s attention was refocused on social and cultural influences. Societies and cultures differ in their social (e. g., racial and ethnic heterogeneity, demographic composition, exposure to values, beliefs and attitudes, levels of education and literacy, methods of child raising), political and economic dimensions (Jahoda 1979; Murdock/Provost 1973).

In the U. S. as in other nations, members of certain groups engage in a disproportionate amount of criminal violence. Urban and southern residents commit more violent crimes in comparison to rural and northern residents, young adults and males in comparison to older adults and females, blacks and low-income persons in comparison to whites and higher income persons (Curtis 1974; Netler 1982, 14–41). These facts raise questions about the relationship between gender, race, social inequality, regional location and criminal violence.

This article will discuss the dominant and classical theories of anomie and social disorganization, differential association, deviant subculture, differential opportunity structure and control in the field of criminology which offer an explanation for crime and deviance in the American society and examine how these theories incorporate the above variables in the current U. S. literature.

2. The Four Major Variables that Influence Violence

When we analyze violent behavior we come across several variables which seem to have an impact on violence. Statistical data has shown that more men than women, more African-Americans than whites, more poor than affluent people, more southern than northern residents commit violent acts.

2.1 The Role of Gender in Violence

Empirical research has shown that men are more prone to violence than women. Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) attribute the sex differences in aggression to inherent physical differences between men and women, while others (e. g., White 1983) give credit to the differential socialization practices of men and women. Scientists also have learned that women are more likely than men to consider aggression inappropriate, tend to repress it, and feel guilt or anxiety after an aggressive act. Also, conditions which produce anger in women are often different from those that produce anger in men (see e. g., Harris 1993; Paul et al. 1993; Paul/Galloway 1994). Eagly and Steffen's (1986) research revealed that a woman's behavior is more guided than a man's by the potential consequences of aggression, especially violence. For example, women are less aggressive than men when they believe their aggressive act might harm the victim, pose a danger to themselves, or evoke intense feelings of guilt. Campbell (1993) found that men's and women's interpretation of their own aggressiveness also differs: while men view their aggression more often as an instrumental behavior that allows them to control other people, women tend to see theirs as an emotionally uncontrolled act.

Various researchers have studied the violent conditioning of males in our society. Miedzian (1991) argues that it is this "taken-for-granted attitude" of male violent conditioning that is primarily responsible for the prevalent violent behavior in males. Violence of male children is not only expected but permitted. Kimmel (1996) goes so far to say that boyhood in the United States equals a training ground for violence where one's

manhood is proven. Wood (1994) attributes violence directly to masculinity and lists four elements of masculinity that advertise violence: "Don't be female", "Be successful", "Be aggressive" and "Be sexual". Women and children, because of their social inferiority and powerless position are easy and frequent targets of sexual and physical aggression. The sexual element coupled with aggression leads to sexual exploitation, with a focus on satisfying men's urges and desires.

In the last two decades the scientists curiosity has been fed by changes in violent behavior in women. Reiser (1999) looked into the aspect of anger displayed by men and women in a changing society. It appeared to her that the progress towards equality has created its own potential for anger and aggression toward the other sex. Astrachan (1986) analyzed interviews with men from various backgrounds and found high levels of anger, fear and envy as a result of changing gender roles—especially the entry of women into the workplace. He observed three negative behavior patterns displayed by the interviewed men: *hostility*, either "gross and physical or subtle and Machiavellian" (Astrachan 1986, 15); *denial* of women's power and competence; *the attempt by men to transform women into something they can deal with*, such as whores. Astrachan believes that men "lose [their] identities, [their] selves, [their] very humanity when women show they can do the same work or exercise the same power" (Astrachan 1986, 200). Levine (1993) points out that still too many men (and even some women) view women's advances in economy, politics and in the intellectual field as "annexing men's turf" (Levine 1993, 394). Therefore it has become increasingly difficult for men to provide adequately as breadwinners. Levine emphasizes that gender is not only about being different but also about hierarchy; because men are valued and women are devalued, gender enforces inequality and thus oppression. "Women, in rising up against the injustice of male privilege, did not create the state of hostility between the sexes, but they declared the war" (Levine 1993, 395).

2.2 Race and Social Inequality

The following two variables, race and social inequality are closely intervowen in the United States. Poverty and racism are chronic, institutional stresses that have been associated to violence in the inner cities. Anderson (1990) has observed about inner-city communities that alienation and violence spring naturally from the living conditions of poor and racial minorities. Public health surveys continue to report the

finding that the residential segregation of poverty and the extent of income inequality are primary factors explaining rates of crime and violence (Kawachi/Kennedy 1997). Overall, poverty affects one in ten adults and one in five children (Betson/Michael 1997). It is not, however, an equal-opportunity condition: African-American and Latino children and children from single parent families are disproportionately poor (Corcoran/Chaudry 1997). Poverty has been found to have a primary influence on how well parents manage family life (Garrett, Ng'andu, and Ferron 1994). It is therefore not surprising that unchecked aggression is more frequently exhibited in children from impoverished families (Tolan/Henry, 1996). Such difficult life conditions set a constellation of cultural circumstances that make the transmission of interpersonal violence normative (Staub 1996).

Other risk factors for violence can also be connected to economic and race stressors. Early academic failure most strongly predicts high-risk adolescent behavior (Tuakli-Williams/Carrillo 1995). Yet it was found that a child's chances for success in school are extremely affected by early childhood experiences of poverty (Brooks-Gunn/Duncan 1997). Family income, in fact, is a primary predictor of the cognitive development and behavior of children (Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, and Klebanov 1994).

Statistically, minorities, and in the American society especially African-Americans are strongest affected by poverty, torn families and poor academic performance. The racial factor in the U. S. criminal justice system has been under close scrutiny for many years. African-Americans are not only the majority of inmate population in jails but also top the statistics when it comes to violent offenders, victims of violent crimes and recipients of police brutality. Race and social inequality is therefore not only a variable in determining violent behavior in individuals but also a variable in defining victims of violence: Ruback and Weiner (1995) point out that there is evidence that aggression against a target motivated by prejudice depends on both individual factors (e. g. the subject's race) and situational factors (e. g., the target's ability to retaliate). For example, Dovidio and Gaertner (1986) found that if their aggression cannot be justified, subjects will be less aggressive toward blacks than toward whites. However, if their aggression can be justified, subjects will be more aggressive toward blacks. In summaries of these and other studies, reviewers have concluded that discrimination is likely to occur only when there is some other apparent motive for the discriminatory behavior. "At this point in the culture, with black males

threatened from a convergence of powerful trends, the manner in which a child internalizes the content of negative messages through distorting self-image provides additional explanation for the culture of violence swirling through urban communities" (Bloom/Reichert 1998, 39).

2.3 Regional Location and Violence

Social and cultural factors, as well as a person's socialization process, provide the basis for individual differences in aggression within given situations. Cross-cultural studies analyze social and cultural influences on aggression and violence in two ways: they compare national cultures, and they compare subcultures within nations. One comparison revealed that the United States has the highest rate of homicide among the world's industrial nations. One of the possible explanations for the relatively high incidence of violence in the American society is the American's tendency to generate aggressive solutions for interpersonal conflicts to a greater degree than other nationalities (see Archer/McDaniel 1995). The acceptance of violence as a means to respond to situations and problems may become embedded in social norms that define the conditions under which aggression is an acceptable, and even socially desirable behavior. Such a prescriptive process manifests itself not only in national cultures but also in what Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1982) have called subcultures of violence within larger societies. Studies have identified the existence of regional subcultural differences in aggression within the U. S. associated with differential norms for aggressive behavior (Cohen/Nisbett 1994; Nisbett 1993).

The white southern culture has long been considered to be more violent than the northern culture in the United States. The South has a well deserved reputation for violence, including a greater proclivity towards homicide as a means of resolving conflicts. Climate, poverty and the tradition of slavery are all possible explanations. First, the South is hotter than the North, and there is evidence that homicide and other violent crimes are more common on hot days than on cool ones (Anderson 1989); secondly, the South is poorer than the rest of the country, and poverty everywhere is associated with violence; finally, whites might have extended their violent treatment of slaves to other whites. Alternatively, the fact that work was unnecessary for whites may have encouraged violent behavior (Nisbett et al. 1995).

3. Anomie and Social Disorganisation

The idea that delinquency is caused by environmental factors has a long history. Urban studies in the nineteenth century in Europe produced correlations between delinquency and such factors as population density, age and gender, poverty, and level of education. Theoretical constructs based on social disorganization and anomie as explanations of delinquency represent the earliest modern sociological and social psychological explanations of crime and delinquency. The hypotheses, concepts and research generated from these theories have influenced the analysis of delinquency and crime for most of the twentieth century.

3.1 Anomie Theory

The concept of *anomie*, as first introduced by Emile Durkheim in his work *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893), refers to a breakdown of social norms and is a conditon where norms no longer control the activities of members in society. Individuals cannot find their place in society without clear rules designed to guide them. Changing conditions as well as adjustments of life lead to dissatisfaction, conflict, and deviance. Durkheim observed that social periods of disruption (e. g., economic depression) resulted in greater anomie and higher rates of crime, suicide, and deviance.

Robert K. Merton borrowed Durkheim's concept of anomie to form his own theory in *Social Structure and Anomie* (1938). His theory became known as Strain Theory. The real problem, he argued, is not created by a sudden social change, but rather by a social structure that proclaims the same goals to all its members without giving them equal means to achieve them. Deviant desires are therefore entirely a social product.

Recent Trends and Developments

Durkheim's work does not explain or take any of the above variables into account. His concern was exclusively the individual's response to societal deregulation. Neither did Merton look into the relevance of gender, race, social inequality, and regional location on deviance. His attention was focused on the level and kind of socialization that representatives of each class received. He observed that individuals who were firmly socialized were more likely to uphold the moral mandate of society and were constrained from utilizing illegitimate means when they lacked legitimate means to attain a desired goal. This level of socialization was not available in the lower class (Merton 1968, 205).

Talcott Parsons *The Social System* is a study of the sources of the main stresses that ostensibly underlie all forms of deviance (Parsons 1951, 249–325) and differs from Merton in that it addresses the question of why people deviate in certain ways. His "masculine-feminine identification theory" locates the source of aggression among boys in the strain generated by intrafamiliar conflict. Parsons observed that in modern societies the role of the father diminished significantly in the upbringing of children. This arrangement is especially stressful for boys, whose preoccupation with the mother leads to early feminine identification. This they have to give up as adults in order to alleviate the strain of having an inappropriate sex identification. They now overassert their masculinity and trade their "good" ("feminine") behavior, with aggressive "bad boy" behavior.

3.2 Social Disorganization

The Social Disorganization theory, largely associated with the "Chicago School" of sociology, offered an explanation of deviance as well as of a state of society that produces it. This empirically based new perspective departed from the previous pathological viewpoints, and instead saw deviance as a by-product of fast social change. Shaw and McKay, in their 1929 study "Delinquent Areas", found that the highest rates of delinquency occured in the expanding central business center, and that the crime rates reflected the degree of social disorganization. They concluded that the social disorganization among immigrant groups, who were forced to be adjusted to a new culture, produced crimes in the transition zone (Pfohl 1994, 190, 191).

Thomas and Znaniecki in *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (1927), compared the conditions immigrants had left in Poland with those they found in Chicago. Additionally they studied the assimilation of Polish immigrants into the American culture. They found that older immigrants, who held on to their former lifestyle and values, were less affected by the change than younger immigrants and first generation Americans, who neither had the strong emotional ties to the Old World nor were assimilated into their new home-country yet. The authors attributed rising crime and delinquency rates to social disorganization, defined by them as the breakdown of effective social bonds as well as social controls in the community.

Robert Park (1921) and Ernest Burgess (1967) addressed the characteristics of the crime area instead of the criminals. They designed a model of natural urban areas, which consisted of concentric zones

extending outward from the downtown central business district to the commuter zone in the suburbs. Each zone had its own structure and organization, characteristics and particular type of inhabitants. This model became known as Burgess' Concentric Zone Theory.

Recent Trends and Developments

The focus on race and delinquency has had a long tradition in social disorganization theories and goes back to Thomas and Znaniecki's study of Polish immigrants. Their study provided interesting information on the relevance of racial and ethnic awareness and identification with cultural values and norms in regard to crime. Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay used Park and Burgess's model of the "natural urban area" of Chicago to investigate the relationship between crime rates—mainly delinquency—and the various zones of Chicago. They found that delinquency occurred especially in the areas nearest to the business district and that high delinquency areas were characterised by a high percentage of immigrants, non-whites and lower income.

3.3 General Strain Theory

The popularity of strain/anomie theory declined in the late 1960s due to the lack of empirical evidence and the political climate of the decade. Recent developments in criminology, like Robert Agnews 1999 "A General Strain Theory of Community Differences in Crime Rates" introduced a new perspective on anomie.

Agnew's theory states that strain or stress is one of the major sources of criminal motivation. High-crime communities are more likely to contain strained individuals, produce strain and in return foster criminal responses to it. Agnew introduces following major strains associated with higher crime rates (Agnew 1999, 126–128): The failure to achieve positively valued stimuli such as money, status and respect, autonomy, and the desire to be treated in a fair and just manner. Likewise the desire for respect and status: Violence becomes the most powerful means to achieve and maintain this goal. Residents of deprived communities tend to follow "the Code of the Streets" (Anderson 1994) which not only accepts but encourages verbal and physical abuse in order to receive respect. *Relative deprivation*: "In fact, virtually all of the community-level research on strain theory has focused on the relationship between inequality and crime rates. It is assumed that when inequality is high, people compare themselves to advantaged others, decide that they want and deserve what these

others have, and decide that they cannot get what these others have through legitimate channels" (Agnew 1999, 134).

The loss of positive stimuli, such as the loss of a friend or spouse, a pet or a valued object, can cause a strain that is met by the individual with delinquent or violent behavior as an attempt to either prevent the loss, retrieve what was lost or seek revenge (Agnew 1992, 57). Before its addition to the general strain theory, *the presentation of negative stimuli,* such as abuse, neglect, homelessness, unemployment, problems with relatives, neighbors, had for long been neglected in criminology (Agnew 1992, 58). Research has shown that this kind of strain may have a strong impact by increasing delinquency in adolescents (Hoffman/Miller 1998, 106; Agnew 1985, 154).

Recent Trends and Developments

Agnew's theory pays much attention to gender differences in regard to perceived strain and response to strain. Agnew and Broidy (1997) used the strain theory to explain why males are more prone to deviance and violence than females. They found that females experience as much or even more strain than males. Males and females not only experienced different types of strain but also displayed a different emotional response to it. Women, for example, are more concerned with creating and maintaining close bonds and relationships with others while men are more concerned with material success. Women more often respond to failure to achieve goals with self-destructive behavior, while men have a higher likelihood to turn to property and violent crimes as a response to that strain (Agnew/Broidy 1997, 278–283).

Their findings lead to the conclusion that females lack the confidence and self-esteem that may be conducive to criminal or violent behavior and rather try to relieve strain by escape or avoidance (Agnew/Broidy 1997, 283–287).

Agnew's elaborations regarding the strain of deprivation refer especially to racial minorities and residents of poor neighborhoods, regions or countries. There is much indication that residents of deprived communities, and here typically the young, minority males, are more likely to live by values conducive to crime. They are also more likely to experience and perceive class and race/ethnic discrimination, for example by the police (Miller 1996). Negative experiences with the police create feelings of injustice and increase the likelihood of crime (Paternoster et al. 1997). Food, clothing, fuel and shelter are obvious candidates, the acute lack of which constitutes deprivation beyond

poverty. Criminal behavior becomes a means of survival. "The fact that Social Norms of their family and neighborhood condone these actions ... merely supports further offending to 'survive' and perhaps lowers the threshold of acceptability" (Stewart et al. 1994, 94). "The breakdown of social controls is in effect a precondition for the economic determinants of crime to have full-play. However the breakdown of those social controls may also in its turn be determined partly by economic circumstances" (Field 1990, 35). Community-level variables are credited with the engaging of individuals in crime. Economic deprivation has been repeatedly listed as the most distinguished characteristic of high-crime communities (see Land et al. 1990; Sampson et al. 1997). While we find property crimes evenly spread throughout all communities we observe "clusters" of violent crime in those communities which tend to be large in size and high in population density, show overcrowding and a high residential mobility as well as a large percentage of non-Whites. Law enforcement functions as a means to keep the status quo in these communities ("ghetto policing").

The relative deprivation theory focuses primarily on the economic plight of high-crime communities. It is usually tested by examining the impact of income or the lack thereof on community crime rates (see Fowles/Merva 1996; Kovandzic et al. 1998; Messner/Golden 1992). However, not all studies support a significant direct effect of economic inequality on crime.

Many of Agnews characteristics of strain apply especially to racial minorities. Literature and statistics have pointed out repeatedly that residents of high-crime communities—especially young, African American males—are more likely to define certain types of treatment as aversive. Luckenbill and Doyle (1989) claim in this context that the subculture of violence describes these "individuals to be highly sensitive and boldly responsive to affronts" especially when "fundamental properties of the self are attacked." Anderson (1994) observes that many forms that dissing [disrespectful treatment] can take might seem petty to middle-class people, but to those invested in the street code, these actions become serious indications of the other person's intentions (Anderson 1994, 82). Residents of deprived communities not only show a higher sensitivity towards certain types of treatment, they are also more exposed to negative/aversive treatments, such as economic hardships, family disruption, and related problems, all of which contribute to one of the strongest community correlates of crime: signs of incivility, such as vandalism, street harassment, and the presence of unsupervised

teenage peer groups (Agnew 1999, 138). The General Strain Theory concludes that these variables not only reduce social control but also increase strain. Community crime rates themselves have a direct (criminal victimization) and an indirect (further deterioration in community characteristics) effect on strain.

4. Interpersonal and Situational Explanations: Differential Association

Sutherland replaced the concept of "social disorganization" with "differential social organization" in order to better explain why crime rates concentrate in a certain area (e. g., inner-city). He explains that some environmental settings, such as norms, values, and behavior patterns are not disorganized, but organized differently. Some groups tend to be more supportive or sympathetic of deviant behavior; others were organized to deter it (Lilly et al. 1995, 46). Thus, by associating with certain individuals, a person becomes delinquent when he/she acquires definitions favorable to crimes over definitions unfavorable to crimes. The degree of differential association is dependent on the frequency, duration, priority and intensity of an individual's association (Pfohl 1994, 302–303).

Recent Trends and Developments

The differential association theory has explained deviance as a way of conforming with the norm in a particular neighborhood, community or subculture and does not further discuss the above variables. In the wake of this theory, Stewart et al. (1994) identified two major determinants of social norm: the reproduction of communities within which offending, or crime, is acceptable and condoned; and socialization into a criminal way of life within the family. "Socialization and learned behaviour can allow, even promote, deviance, and appear to do so in a way which could be said to correspond to the boundaries of a neighborhood, locality or estate" (Stewart et al. 1994, 78). Family support of offending behavior helps to promote violence in young impressable human beings. "In others, the expectation is so high that not offending would be non-conformity: The cumulative effect of communicated expectations is that Eddy will follow in the footsteps of his family i.e. will not achieve status-wise or financial security and will follow family norms regarding attitude to law and offending." (Stewart et al. 1994, 79) Offending is accepted as a way of life and is seen as a chance to gain status with friends.

5. Lower-Class-Based Theories of Delinquency

5.1 Subcultural Theory

Albert K. Cohen's work integrated several sociological theories such as the Chicago School sociologists' work, Merton's strain theory, culture conflict theory, and Sutherland's differential association theory. In "Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gangs" (1955), Cohen argued that the delinquent subculture was mostly to be found in the working class Cohen 1955, 73), where the mechanisms to constrain delinquency were not strong enough. Cohen held that the social disorganization theory failed to explain "the origin of the impulse to be delinquent" (Cohen 1955, 33) and agreed with Sutherland that the criminal subculture existed in certain social groups. Individuals learn the value of the delinquent subculture through participation in gangs.

Drawing from Merton's strain theory, Cohen believed that delinquent gangs were the result of the class structure of American society. Working class children deal with status-frustration in American society where middle-class values are dominant. Sharing the goal of intellectual or occupational success, they realize that they are incapable of achieving it. They "solve" this status problem by creating a delinquent subculture that rejects the values of the middle class. Delinquent Boys was the first scientific work that applied the concept of subculture to juvenile delinquency.

Discussion and Evaluation

The subcultural theory focuses exclusively on lower-class delinquency. Thus, social inequality is one of the key elements in explaining deviance. The gap between lower and middle class, the dominant value and goal system of the middle class in our society and an awareness of the inability to breach that gap have created a deviant subculture in our country.

5.2 Theory of Differential Opportunity Structure

Delinquent subcultures, according to Cloward and Ohlin's Differential Opportunity Theory, flourish in the lower-classes and take particular forms so that the means for illegitimate success are no more equally distributed than the means for legitimate success. Accordingly, the form of delinquent subculture depends on the degree of integration available in a particular community. Like Cohen's, Cloward and Ohlin's theory combined aspects of the strain, differential association and social

disorganization theories in their perspective on crime. It studied the individual not just in relation to one or the other system, but in relation to both legitimate and illegitimate systems.

Discussion and Evaluation

Cloward and Ohlin explain the gender gap in deviance by the masculine-identification crisis theory as outlined first by Talcott Parsons. Sex differences are not just biological; they also reflect differences in social definitions of masculinity and femininity (Cloward/Ohlin 1960, 48–54). In this context, gang participation especially among male adolescents and violent behavior as expression of "compulsive masculinity" may be understood as reactions to obstacles to masculine identification.

6. Control Theories

Unlike many other theorists during the 1960s, who focused on an individual's personality as a source of deviance (Lilly et al. 1995, 97), Hirschi studied the role of social relationships, which he called social bonds (Hirschi 1969, 16). His bonding theory states that no motivational factors are necessary for someone to become delinquent, all it takes is the absence of control. Without control the individual is free to weigh the benefit of the delinquent act over its costs. Four variables explain why individuals either conform to or deviate from social norms: *attachment, commitment, involvement*, and *belief* in social norms. The degree of attachment (as the central value in Hirschi's theory) of adolescents to their parents determines the likelihood of future delinquent behavior. "Because parents are generally the first to socialize their children, attachment to parents is the most important dimension of attachment. Insofar as an adolescent is alienated from his or her parents, he or she will not adequately develop a conscience and thus will lack conventional moral values to guide behavior. When children are strongly attached to their parents, it is easier for them to internalize the norms of society and to develop respect for their teachers and peers" (Anderson et al. 1999, 437). Anderson et al.'s 1999 study also reveals a link between peer relationships and delinquency among girls. Approval from female delinquent friends appears to be associated with delinquency.

To some, attachment to crime becomes a way of life: The offender would rather hold on to those social circumstances that promote violence than change his deviant lifestyle. The process of freeing oneself from a subculture of violence is a fight against the social norms of that particular subculture.

Michael R. Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi's 1990 "A General Theory of Crime" proposes that self-control is the general concept that integrates all of the known facts about delinquency (Gottfredson/Hirschi 1990, 85). It further claims that other theories pay insufficient attention to the fact that crimes are committed in the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain. The authors provide their own definition of crime as "acts of force or fraud undertaken in pursuit of self interest" (Gottfredson/Hirschi 1990, 15). It should be noted that "classical theory and the concept of self-control are remarkably compatible" (Brownfield/Sorenson 1993, 244).

Individual or situational properties other than a lack of self-control can have a strong influence on the likelihood of deviant behavior (Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1993, 53). Their perspective, "unlike many others, is not meant to predict any single type of activity since most deviant behavior, by its very nature, is impulsive and opportunistic. Therefore, everything else being equal, low self-control and a weak bond to society should positively and significantly predict a variety of deviant and criminal conduct" (Polakowski 1994, 62). A lack of self-control and the failure of the family are no clear predictors of criminal behavior, rather they provide favorable conditions for delinquency. Gottfredson and Hirschi emphasize the role of the parents as the most essential source of socialization for children (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990, 97). Hirschi's later work claims that family structure, beyond its impact on a child's self-control and socialization, can at least in some aspects actively prevent delinquency (Hirschi 1995, 123).

Discussion and Evaluation

Control theories apply to age, gender, and racial variations in crime, they discuss peer groups, schools, and especially the family, can be used in cross-cultural comparisons and in explaining white-collar and organized crime. Gottfredson and Hirschi attribute the differences among racial and ethnic groups, and between the genders to the level of direct supervision by the family. The authors acknowledge a crime component to racial differences in deviance rates, nonetheless they assume that, as with gender, differences in self-control still outweigh differences in supervision (Gottfredson/Hirschi 1990, 149). Although control theorists see an indirect relation between gender, race, or age of an individual and his criminality through socialization by parents they attribute

deviance mainly to a lack of self-control (Greenberg 1994, 372). Further, it is significant to note that while the controls inherent in the female gender-role protect women largely from a life in crime (Hagan et al. 1979; Wolfe et al. 1982), they do not keep them away from all deviant behavior.

7. Conclusion

For the last century social scientists have been on the quest to solve the puzzle why people become deviant. As a result we can choose today from a wide diversity of theoretical perspectives on such conditions as anomie, status, deprivation, social disorganization, differential association and societal reaction, which are believed to predispose, motivate, drive, or encourage individuals to engage in socially disapproved behavior.

From among the earliest explanations of crime, the social disorganization theory in its beginning confused cause and effect. It described community factors related to crime and deviance but failed to distinguish the consequences of crime from the disorganization itself. By analyzing crime as an almost exclusively lower-class phenomenon, social disorganization failed to explain middle and upper-class deviance and crime. The theory also never defined what social disorganization is and failed to explain why some social changes were disorganized and others organized. Recent research started applying the social disorganization theory to studies on communities and crime. Social scientists attempted to explain the fact that high-crime communities tend to be poor, urban, dense and overcrowded, transient, and populated by non-Whites and disrupted families (see Bursik 1988; Elliott et al. 1996; Sampson 1995; Sampson/Wilson 1995). The above factors are said to weaken the ability of local residents to control crime in their communities—a fact which in return directly and indirectly causes crime by allowing for the development of delinquent peer groups.

While the social disorganization theory has lost support over the years, the anomie theory has been recently revived by Agnew. The most notable weakness of the general strain theory is its broadness, because of which it cannot be tested all at once. In order to explain group differences in crime, it is necessary to determine how much and what types of strain individuals or groups experience and how and why they respond to the strain in a distinctive way (Agnew/Broidy 1997). It is left to future studies to determine which types of strain cause crime and why.

Sutherland offered a formal explanation of deviance, consisting of nine propositions. This form has made the theory relatively easy and inviting to test. Follow-up studies have confirmed that delinquency is often committed in groups or social settings. More problematic is Sutherland's hypothesis of the existence of norm-conforming versus norm-violating attitudes in a particular person, a concept extremely difficult to quantify and thus to test empirically.

One of Cohen's most important concepts, that of "status frustration" as experienced by lower-class children who are unable to meet middle-class goals, has received positive attention in recent research. Status frustration studies done by Gold/Mann (1972), Kaplan (1980), Bynner et al. (1981), Rosenberg et al. (1989) to name a few, confirmed this theory.

Overall, the subcultural theory is a very popular perspective. Much of current research in the United States is devoted to the analysis of the gang subculture. Violent street gangs are an excellent example of the impact of specific gang norms on the behavior of gang-members. Violence serves gang unity, demarcation from other gangs and social groups and self-image. It accompanies a gang-member his or her entire life. Most gang-members are born into a violent neighborhood with parents and or siblings who are affiliated with gangs and who view violence, substance abuse and crime as norm-conform (Moore 1978, 1991). Gang initiation rituals are also extremely violent: the new members are beaten and hit repeatedly to near unconsciousness. They soon carry out the "dirty work", violent acts toward rival gang-members and uninvolved bystanders. Studies have shown that gang members are more likely than non-members to commit violent offenses and property crime and to use and to deal illicit drugs (see Spergel 1995; Thornberry 1998).

Luckenbill and Doyle (1989) observed that research assessing the capacity of a cultural explanation to account for the relationship between certain structural positions and high rates of criminal violence has ignored disputatiousness a variable representing the likelihood of being offended by a negative outcome and seeking reparation through protest. Their cultural model of disputatiousness and aggressiveness hypothesizes that individuals who engage in violence are more likely than their counterparts to be offended by a negative outcome, therefore take it more personally, are more likely to protest the injury, and to use force when the protest fails. Thus, differential disputatiousness and aggressiveness are most pronounced when the negative outcome

involves an attack on this particular individual by an equal in a public setting. The authors suggest to test this hypothesis with individual-level data bearing on behavioral dispositions under a variety of circumstances.

Cloward's differential opportunity theory has been rejected by most of the following research. Interviews with lower-class juveniles failed to confirm Cloward and Ohlin's basic assumption on lower-class youth (e. g., Hirschi 1969; Short et al. 1965). Their argument that the profile of lower-class gangs depends on the type of their neighborhood has received more support in the literature (e. g., Spergel 1964).

Hirschi's four components of conformity and deviation have received considerable criticism. Although control theory was introduced as a theory explaining criminal and deviant behavior, it failed to discuss all types of crime, such as white collar crime. Following discussions of Hirschi's control theory also revealed that there was confusion about the definition of his four variables (see Lilly et al. 1995, 99). Although his and Gottfredson's new General Theory of Crime seems quite valid, the authors never offered any empirical tests to back up their claims, nor did they define self-control independently from deviant behavior. The term criminality and self-control are used synonymously, which has caused confusion (Akers 1991, 204–209). Also, self-control theory does not cover crime committed for other reasons than self-interest (Grasmick et al. 1993, 10). Their view in favour of traditional roles of women and men in society has also been criticized for being too simplistic.

Interestingly, the Rochester Youth Development Study (Bjerregaard/Smith 1993; Lizotte et al. 1994; Thornberry et al. 1993) revealed that neither social disorganization nor poverty was significantly related to gang membership. Low expectations for completing school significantly predicted gang membership among females but not among males. Having delinquent peers was significant for both males and females. Neither attachment to parents nor family supervision nor low self-esteem were significant predictors of later gang membership.

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Themenschwerpunkt: Gewaltausübung und Gewalterfahrung

Editorial

Das neue „Journal- für Konflikt- und Gewaltforschung" liegt vor Ihnen. Mit dem Themenschwerpunkt „Gewaltausübung und Gewalterfahrung" wird ein Themenbereich fortgesetzt, der bereits in Heft 1/2000 (Themenschwerpunkt „Gewalt") im Mittelpunkt stand. Für das nächste Heft ist das Schwerpunktthema „Frauen und Gewalt" vorgesehen. Die Planungen dazu sind bereits abgeschlossen.

Nachdem in den ersten Heften des Journals die Gewaltthematik, nicht zuletzt im Zusammenhang mit aktuellen Entwicklungen, aber auch bedingt durch entsprechende Publikationsangebote, stark im Vordergrund gestanden hat, sollen in Zukunft neue Themenbereiche in interdisziplinärer Zusammenarbeit erschlossen werden, wobei die Gewaltthematik aber kontinuierlich weiterverfolgt werden wird. Folgende Themenschwerpunkte sind für die nächsten Hefte vorgesehen: Schule in der Zuwanderungsgesellschaft, gruppenbezogene Menschenfeindlichkeit, historische Gewaltforschung, Opferforschung. Bei diesen Themenschwerpunkten besteht noch die Möglichkeit zur Mitarbeit. Für weitere Themenvorschläge sind wir jederzeit offen.

An einer Reihe weiterer Themen soll kontinuierlich weiter gearbeitet werden: Konflikte um Sprache, Ethnische Kriege, Gewalt und Drogen, Minderheiten(-politik), Gewalt in Institutionen, Konfliktmediation, Zusammenleben in Nachbarschaften, Jugendkriminalität, Toleranz oder Anerkennung?, Konflikte um religiöse Symbole, gesellschaftspolitische Auswirkungen von Interventions- und Evaluationsansätzen, Gewalt gegen alte Menschen. Eine Einreichung von Aufsätzen zu diesen Themen ist jederzeit willkommen. Bitte wenden Sie sich bei Interesse an die Redaktionsanschrift und berücksichtigen Sie bei der Einreichung von Texten die „Hinweise für Autorinnen und Autoren" am Ende dieses Heftes.

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