

1

The Structure and Relevance of Theory in Criminology

Knowledge itself is power.

—Sir Francis Bacon,
Meditationes Sacrae

The criticism and transformation of society can be divorced only at our peril from the criticism and transformation of theories about society.

—Alvin W. Gouldner,
The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology

One of the most difficult classes to teach, and we readily admit one of the most difficult classes to take in a criminology, criminal justice, or sociology curriculum, is a class on criminological theory. This difficulty is certainly not because of a lack of subject matter. Criminologists have been exceptionally fertile, professionally speaking, and in a very short time they have generated more than their share of possible explanations about why crimes are committed and why offenders behave the way they do. We believe that, instead, criminological theory is problematic primarily because to many students it is simply irrelevant, and irrelevant things are difficult to focus on. Students often believe that this theory has nothing to do with the “real world”—the places where they anticipate working and living.

Many students correctly observe that criminological theory is the product of professors who sit in university offices rather than in places where “the action is”—police

stations, courtrooms, or correctional institutions. And that in a nutshell, they conclude, is the source of its fatal flaw. These theoretical writings may get published as journal articles and books, but they then simply sit on the stacked, dusty shelves of other professors (and their students). Perhaps this theory is of interest to those scholars who are forced to read it, but some students say it simply is not useful, interesting, or meaningful to them.

We happen to think that this perception is short-sighted and mistaken. Criminological theory is relevant for the world. It tells us what we need to examine in the world in order to understand crime and what we need to change, and leave unchanged, in order to reduce crime. By explicitly telling us what we need to look at (e.g., peer groups, the quality of neighborhoods, psychological states), theories of crime and criminality also implicitly tell us what we may ignore or what we do not really need to pay attention to. Thus public policy is informed and guided by theory, even if this connection is not always made explicit. In other words, criminological theory suggests some lines of action for policy makers to take and rules out others, and these lines of action certainly have ramifications for real human lives.

As an example, consider the implications of rational choice/deterrence theory, which asserts that criminal behavior is rational conduct that occurs when the benefits of committing crime are perceived by a would-be offender to be greater than both the costs of crime and the benefits of non-crime. That is, would-be offenders contemplate and are affected by the consequences of their actions. If the benefits of crime are high and the costs low, crime will occur. If, however, the benefits of crime are lower than the costs, crime will not occur. An implication of this theory, then, is that if the costs of crime are made to be high, would-be rational offenders will be restrained or deterred from committing it. Consider also that many state legislators have argued in favor of death penalty legislation by claiming that the threat of execution will keep someone contemplating murder from committing the crime. In other words, although the penalty of life imprison-

ment might not deter murder; increasing the penalty to death would. At least partly on the basis of their predicted deterrence benefits, such death penalty statutes are now legal in a majority of states.

A theory of crime does then have an influence on what is done in the real world. Furthermore, other theories of crime and punishment, for example retribution theory, would also support the execution of convicted murderers. In fact, much of what is done in criminal justice policy is at least implicitly guided by some theory of crime. Rational choice/deterrence theory is not unique in this. We believe that all theories of crime contain within them suggestions or implications for criminal justice policy. We also believe that those who make decisions about criminal justice policy use and are informed by theory. Hence, theory and policy are inextricably related.

To continue with our example: Any theory of crime which argues that offenders can be deterred from committing criminal acts by making the punishment more severe does two things. First, it emphasizes the importance of criminal sanctions in the causation of crime. As a result, rational conduct theory highlights the arsenal of penalties at the disposal of the state to discourage crime (e.g., more police for certain and swift apprehension, longer confinement for more severe punishment, and capital punishment rather than life imprisonment). This theory, therefore, focuses our attention on issues like the certainty, swiftness, and severity of criminal penalties.

The second, and perhaps less obvious, thing that this theory does, however, is that it implicitly suggests *what not to look at*. For instance, arguing that criminal conduct is rational and is responsive to the punishment policies of government implies that crime is not due to broken and dysfunctional families, or psychological traits such as a weak superego, or to any constellation of biological abnormalities that criminal offenders may have. These things are simply not relevant to rational choice/deterrence theory; and if it is not relevant, we do not need to pay attention to it or do anything about it. The point is that just as theory brings some

things to light, by its silence, it keeps other things in the dark.

Perhaps the most important lesson to draw from this discussion is that even if it is not made explicit (and it rarely is), public policy about crime is in fact generally driven by some criminological theory. That is, criminological theory does not simply lead an idle existence in books and obscure journal articles, but actually serves as a guide to criminal justice policy. As testimony to this, thousands of offenders are currently incarcerated across the United States under the implicit theoretical rationale behind “three-strike” laws, scores are executed each year, and still more are in job, education, and therapeutic programs. To understand policy, therefore, it is necessary to understand theory, and to critique policy is to critique theory.

This talk about the public policy implications of theory may sound quite odd to you. After all, you may have started this chapter thinking that criminological theory and criminal justice policy live in separate worlds. You may now very well be asking yourself, “So where can I find policy within theory?” It is to this important question that we now turn our attention.

Articulated Propositions

In his discussion of the content of social theory, Alvin Gouldner pointed to a complement of both articulated or explicit propositions, what he calls an infrastructure of sentiments and the personal dimension of theory—the implicit part of any theory. We will divide these components of theory into articulated and unarticulated propositions.

Formal or Written Context

A theory’s set of *articulated* propositions consists of its formal or written content. That is, in a theory, theoretical concepts are linked by relationship statements. For instance, conventional beliefs and crime are theoretical concepts found side by side in some control theories, and the statement “As conventional beliefs get stronger the likelihood of crime decreases” is a relationship statement. Theoretical concepts identify key

terms of the theory and relationship statements link these concepts with one another into propositions or hypotheses. These articulated propositions are the formal structure and content of a theory because this is the part of theory that is made explicit by the theorist when words are put on paper. In other words, when we read a theory in a book or article and learn about what the theory says, we are learning its set of articulated propositions.

For example, when we read Robert Agnew's (1992) journal article that describes his general strain theory, he states (among other things) that:

- Persons feel strain when they have unpleasant experiences.
- One response to unpleasant experiences is to feel anger, and blame someone or something for those feelings.
- These outwardly-focused feelings of anger may be difficult or deal with, and it may be difficult to "calm down."
- Those who feel uncontrolled anger may have a set of rationalizations for criminal conduct and a collection of like-minded others willing to provide support and companionship.
- Persons who are both strained and angry, and who have both justifications for and assistance with crime, are more likely to commit criminal offenses than others.

Although a simplified rendition of Agnew's theory, these five statements form a set of articulated propositions about general strain theory. We arrived at these propositions because Agnew articulated or discussed them in writing. In fact, each of the criminological theories in this book has a set of articulated propositions about the process it thinks best accounts for variation in criminal behavior. Moreover, as a formal exposition of a theorist's point of view about the causes of crime, the articulated propositions of a theory are a professional product. They reflect the theorist's own scholarly training, reading, and understanding of the phenomenon of crime.

The Cognitive or Empirical Validity of Theory

One of the questions that any discipline asks about the formal or articulated propositions of a theory is whether or not they are true, or "fit the facts." After all, a theory at its most basic level is an explanation or description about how the world operates (in the case of the theories in this book, it is a description about what produces crime), and one of the features that we demand of a "good" theory is that it portrays the world accurately. What we would expect, therefore, is that the propositions alleged by the theory be true—that they accurately map with reality.

In language that is very helpful, Gouldner (1970, 13) refers to this truth element of a theory as its *cognitive validity*. A good theory with high cognitive validity is the product of an intellectual, cerebral, or cognitive i.e., with the mind) exercise. Determining the cognitive validity of a social theory is generally done by conducting research—specifically, by collecting data (via questionnaires, interviews, or secondary sources) and by determining how well these data fit with what the theory has predicted. If, for instance, the theory says that persons who have unpleasant experiences, and who react to such experiences with anger, and who have peers to act delinquent with, will be more likely to commit crimes than others, then this is exactly what we should see when we collect information about persons' strain, anger, stock of peers, and criminal activity. If we do our empirical study, collect and analyze our data, and find that the expected relationships are not true, then the theory is empirically or cognitively suspect. The cognitive validity of a theory with weak empirical support is, therefore, low. If we see the things in our data that our theory predicts, then the theory enjoys some empirical support and we have strengthened its cognitive validity. Because the cognitive validity of a theory depends upon how closely it fits with empirical facts, it is also referred to as *empirical validity*.

In sum, we would argue that every formal criminological theory has a set of articulated or written propositions that link via relationship statements the theoretical concepts of

the theory (e.g., strain, anger, supportive beliefs, offending). As an explanation about the expected process that generates crime, criminological propositions can be, and generally are, “put to the test” by empirical research. The purpose of this is to determine if what the theory says is true maps accurately with the world (i.e., do offenders behave the way the theory says they should behave?). To the extent that a theory’s propositions about the causes of crime match or are consistent with research findings, the theory is said to contain some empirical “truth” or cognitive validity.

The cognitive validity of a theory is directly linked to its professional popularity, “career,” or success. Generally, theories that have low cognitive validity, that enjoy little empirical support and therefore seem not to be accurate descriptions of reality, are not likely to be supported by the community of scholars. In the field of criminology, theories with little empirical support are not likely to appear long in journals, are not likely to be taught in undergraduate classes, are not likely to be part of the training of graduate students, and are, therefore, not likely to have long “careers.” At least one reason for the decline of a theory’s professional popularity, then, is that it lacks sufficient cognitive or empirical validity.

Unarticulated Propositions

The articulated propositions of a theory are a professional product, the result of the theorist’s own scholarly training and thinking about crime. We now examine theory as a *personal product* (Gouldner 1970) containing propositions that also reflect the theorist as a person, a human being with a history, with tastes, feelings, and preferences. These are referred to as *unarticulated* propositions expressly because a theorist usually does not make them apparent when describing the theory. Instead, they are implicit. That is, when you read a scholar’s theory, you are unlikely to find a formal written treatment of these unarticulated propositions. Unlike articulated propositions that are written, knowledge about a theory’s unarticulated propositions often must be inferred or dis-

covered by implication and careful reading and re-reading. Another difference between articulated and unarticulated propositions is that although the former are subject to empirical examination and falsification, the cognitive validity of unarticulated propositions is rarely empirically tested. As you will see, however, readers of theory do evaluate these unarticulated propositions and they do influence the career and popularity of a theory.

Types of Unarticulated Propositions

There are different types of unarticulated propositions in criminological theory. One type concerns the assumption that all criminological theorists must inevitably make about human beings. This assumption is implicit and unexamined, but forms an important context or background for their work. In fact, this assumption is influential in the kind of theory that is actually constructed. An example may help.

As you will soon discover, a rather broad class of theory in criminology is referred to as *control theory* (Toby 1957; Nye 1958; Reckless 1967; Hirschi 1969). Specific control theorists emphasize different things in their explanations, but they all share a common assumption about human beings—that humans are generally self-interested, asocial beings who would naturally (i.e., without much additional motivation) commit criminal or deviant acts if they thought it would be to their benefit. To control theorists, rule-breaking is not problematic, and because it frequently satisfies human desires and wants as well as or better than conformity, no special explanation need be made for it. If persons are assumed to be asocial, self-interested beings, the real question for control theorists is not “Why do some people commit crime?” but “Why do some people not commit crime, and why do those who do commit crime not do it more often?” Because of their assumption of human nature, therefore, control theorists do not have to account for antisocial conduct. Instead, they must account for conformity or obedience. As a result, control theorists talk about restraints or controls on rule-breaking and criminal impulses.

A different class of criminological theories are called *strain theories* (Merton 1938, 1968; Cohen 1955; Cloward and Ohlin 1960; Agnew 1992). There are some subtle differences among these, but they all share a common assumption about the nature of human beings. Strain theories essentially assume that human beings are social creatures who have internalized the existing belief or normative system (system of rules) within which they exist. That is, strain theorists assume that people are naturally inclined to conform because they believe in the “rules of the game.” Thus, strain theories take conformity for granted. Unlike control theorists, they do not have to explain why people conform to rules. If, however, you assume that people are basically social beings, what you do have to account for is rule-breaking. In other words, if you take conformity for granted, then deviance and crime are problematic and you must in your theoretical work be able to explain and account for it. For this reason strain theorists must build an incentive or motivation to do crime and deviance into their theories. This is why it is useful to think of strain theories as motivational theories. The general explanation for these theories is that persons are under strain or pressure to break rules.

As you can perhaps surmise, assumptions about human nature are an important component in any criminological theory. If you adopt the assumption that humans are basically asocial, you assume rule-breaking and develop a theory of restraint and control. If, however, you assume that humans are essentially social creatures, you assume conformity and must develop a theory that includes deviant or criminal motivation. In spite of their centrality, however, assumptions about the nature of human beings are rarely made explicit by theorists. You do not, for example, read about the essential nature of human beings when you read Albert Cohen’s (1955) strain theory found in his book, *Delinquent Boys*, nor is there such a discussion in Jackson Toby’s (1957) control theory essay about the failure of delinquents to have a stake in conformity. Instead, these assumptions are an unarticulated or implicit com-

ponent that forms the background and context of the theorist’s work.

Another type of unarticulated assumption embedded in criminological theories concerns the public policy implications of the theory. We have alluded to the fact that criminological theory does indeed have consequences for the real world. Every criminological theory accepts some part of the world and challenges others. In his discussion of general social theory, Gouldner (1970) noted that, by its implicit suggestions for public policy, advocates some lines of political activity at the expense of others, and that “every social theory is thus a *tacit theory of politics*”(40). Thus, the written work of social theorists encourages people to do things in the world (and by implication, discourages other things):

Rooted in a limited personal reality, resonating some sentiments but not others, and embedded in certain domain assumptions, *every social theory facilitates the pursuit of some but not of all courses of action, and thus encourages us to change or accept the world as it is, to say yea or nay to it. In a way, every theory is a discreet obituary or celebration for some social system.* (Gouldner 1970, 47, emphasis added)

This emphasizes our point that inevitably every criminological theory both sheds light on some things and hides or masks others.

Tacit Implications for Public Policy

You may be used to thinking of criminological theory as a purely intellectual product that is scientifically “neutral” without any political or policy component, so a few examples to the contrary might be helpful. Our first example comes from August Aichhorn’s (1935) psychoanalytic theory of delinquency. This theory proposed that diverse forms of rule-breaking are due to a time-stable individual trait that Aichhorn referred to as “a predisposition to delinquency,” possibly rooted in the child’s early emotional experiences:

When I ask parents how they account for the dissocial behavior of their children, I usually receive the answer that it is a result of bad company and running around

on the streets. To a certain extent this is true, but thousands of other children grow up under the same unfavourable circumstances and still are not delinquent. There must be *something in the child himself* which the environment brings out in the form of delinquency. If for the moment we call this unknown something a predisposition to delinquency, we have the factor without which an unfavourable environment can have no power over the child. . . . We like to think that this predisposition is inherited. Psychoanalysis has shown us that heredity cannot explain everything, that *the first experiences of childhood are important in determining later development.* (39–40, emphasis added)

The explanation of crime, this theory tells us, is anchored in one's "first experiences of childhood." Accordingly, we need look no further than events that occur very early in life, most importantly, those interactions that take place between parents and very young children. What crime is *not* due to, therefore, are events and experiences that occur in adolescence and adulthood—like unemployment, the stigma received from processing by a criminal court, divorce, drug addiction, or the strains and pains of adolescence. Aichhorn's theory clearly places the light of scientific scrutiny solely on early life experiences and internal emotional states.

There is an implicit or tacit theory of public policy here, too. According to Aichhorn's thesis, "doing something about" crime means focusing attention on early life experiences. Even though we may be a little powerless in manipulating the kinds of experiences people have, this theory implies that we can do something about how those events and experiences have subsequently been interpreted. This is particularly true for those unpleasant events and experiences Aichhorn (1935, 46) refers to as "psychic traumas." The insights provided to individuals by psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, for example, are needed to help people discover and overcome their psychic traumas. Aichhorn's theory, therefore, would be compatible with any number of psychological and psychiatric treatments (i.e., individual and perhaps group therapy). Structural changes, such as

a redistribution of wealth, higher wages for the working class, athletic programs for the idle, work programs for the young urban poor, and a decriminalization of status offenses, would not be appropriate according to his theory. By linking deviance and crime to a pathology of the individual rather than the criminogenic nature of the social system, Aichhorn's body of criminological theory constitutes a celebration of the existing social order.

A second, and entirely different, example comes from Richard Quinney's (1974) conflict/Marxist theory of crime. In his book, *Critique of Legal Order: Crime Control in a Capitalist Society*, he writes the following:

. . . the legal system is an apparatus created to secure the interests of the dominant class. Contrary to conventional belief, law is a tool of the ruling class. The legal system provides the mechanism for the forceful and violent control of the rest of the population. In the course of battle, the agents of the law (police, prosecutors, judges, and so on) serve as the military force for the protection of domestic order. Legal order benefits the ruling class in the course of dominating the classes that are ruled. (52)

Clearly, Quinney's theory of crime is much different from Aichhorn's. Instead of one's early life experiences as the cause, for Quinney the social system itself breeds crime. Thus, capitalist society uses the legal system to maintain existing economic inequalities. The criminals are not biologically or psychically inferior; they simply do not have control over the means of economic production. The theoretical light of the conflict perspective is, therefore, away from the individual and turned on social, economic, political, and cultural institutions.

In his discussion of the state and the legal system, Quinney has some clear policy implications as well. In order to reduce crime, we would not need to provide psychoanalytic understanding for individuals who have experienced "psychic trauma." Rather, we should work on creating a more equitable economic order. Quinney's charge would be that, in their current form, criminal laws favor the economically powerful, who trans-

late economic power into political power by having the behaviors of the lower/working classes (e.g., robbery, theft) deemed “crimes,” while comparable acts committed by the powerful are treated as either “shrewd” business practices or minor, sometimes non-criminal offenses. Thus, the explanation and prevention of crimes require us to focus on the relationship between economic and political power. By implication, what we need not examine are things like the biology and psychology of offenders or their set of peer relationships. Whereas Aichhorn’s theory can be seen as a celebration of the existing social system (criminal propensity resides in the personal psychological backgrounds of offenders), Quinney’s is clearly an obituary for American society (more friendly to social-economic change than individual change).

We readily admit that these are dramatic examples to forcefully illustrate our point: every criminological theory discussed in this book implicitly contains some prescriptions for public policy. That is, in line with Gouldner’s “tacit theory of politics,” each theorist suggests what we should do in the world in order to reduce crime. Naturally, in telling us what to do, a criminological theory also implicitly tells us what we can ignore. Because most theorists do not usually make the policy implications of their theory explicit, we take special care in this book to have all the writers do so.

The Sentiment Relevance of Theory

In our discussion of a theory’s articulated propositions, we alluded to the fact that the popularity and career of a criminological theory are in part determined by cognitive or empirical validity. A great many scholars interested in the study of crime spend their professional careers collecting data and objectively testing whether theories are true to the known facts about crime. In his discussion of social theory in general, Gouldner (1970) argued that although evaluating the scientific merit of theory is crucial, scientific considerations alone *do not* and *should not* completely determine the validity or acceptability of a theory:

That the ideological implications and social consequences of an intellectual system do not determine its validity. . . is not in the least denied here. Certainly the *cognitive* validity of an intellectual system cannot and should not be judged by its ideological implications or its social consequences. But it does not follow from this that an intellectual system should be (or, for that matter, ever is) judged only in terms of its cognitive validity, its truth or falsity. In short, it is never simply a question of whether an intellectual system, or a statement that it implies, is true or false. (13)

The point that Gouldner makes is an important one. He argues that a theory should be judged in part by how well it fits the facts—its cognitive validity. Every theory must, therefore, be evaluated in terms of the collection of empirical findings about it. But this is not the only basis upon which to evaluate theory. There is another, much more subjective, basis upon which we can evaluate theory. This is not an objective intellectual approach driven by concern for the empirical facts; rather, as Gouldner (1970) eloquently notes, “some theories are simply experienced as *intuitively* convincing” (30). Notice the language here. A theory is *experienced* as intuitively convincing when the sentiments it contains reflect the sentiments of the reader. Now, how do sentiments enter a theory?

You will recall that in addition to the articulated propositions of a theory that are subject to empirical falsification and verification, a theory contains a cache of unarticulated propositions, such as assumptions about human nature and prescriptions for what to do in the world. Gouldner argues that these unarticulated propositions become the foci for sentiments, and that people subjectively sense or feel, based on their own personal history and experience, that the theory is valuable. In other words, some theories are *felt* to be true because the sentiments captured in the theory resonate with the sentiments of the reader. Other theories, independent of the scientific evidence, are thought to “ring hollow” for the same reasons. The “reasons” are, however, affective rather than cognitive and intellectual. In this

sense, theory as a personal product of the writer either reflects or is antagonistic to the personal history of the reader and consumer of theory.

For example, for reasons that have nothing to do with its scientific validity, many students and scholars reject a Marxist explanation of crime such as that previously described by Richard Quinney. To its critics, such a theory, with its implication of economic class conflict in American society, simply does not feel intuitive or comfortable. Marxist criminology suffers because the sentiments it contains are not reflected in the personal histories of some readers. Others may reject control theory because they do not find intuitively satisfying its assumption that human beings are basically self-interested and asocial, and that their appetites must be restrained for social order to be possible. Others feel hostile to a biological theory of crime because, to them, it seems to have connotations of racial inferiority or suggests that criminal behavior is somehow predetermined. Empirical research findings have virtually no impact on these intuitive and emotional perceptions. Readers may reject a theory simply because it does not reflect their own assumptions about human nature or the foundation of social order.

This means that the popularity or career of a theory, in addition to its truth value or cognitive validity, is also determined by extra-scientific or non-intellectual criteria. There is an affective evaluation of theory that sticks to its collection of unarticulated propositions. Some theories simply feel right to us and we accept them. Just as the construction of a theory is both an intellectual and personal product for the theorist, it is also an intellectual and personal product for the reader. Moreover, the truly important point is not whether we should evaluate criminological theory by its sentiment relevance, we just need to acknowledge that we often do. A theory may be accepted and rejected, enjoy professional popularity and suffer professional anonymity, in part because we may not like what it implies about things like the essence of human nature or what it suggests we do in the world to reduce crime.

The rise and demise of social reaction or labeling theory is a perfect illustration of this point (see also Chapter 8). One of the features of the labeling school of criminology and deviance is that it implies a deep distrust of government and formal means of social control. Formal institutions like courts, prisons, and law enforcement are portrayed as *contributing* to the crime problem by the processes of stigmatization, role engulfment, and deviance amplification (Schur 1971). The basic suspicion of the state can be seen in the labeling theory proposition that intervention by formal agencies of control usually will make things worse for someone caught up in them. As a theory of crime, labeling theory probably reached the height of its popularity during the late 1960s and early 1970s. This surge in its popularity could not be attributed to the fact that empirical evidence suddenly emerged to support its articulated propositions. In fact, for the most part, the jury was still out regarding the cognitive validity of this theory. Instead, the appeal of labeling theory probably had to do more with the fact that its theme of heavy-handed and malignant authorities resonated with the anti-government sentiments of the time. That is, an unpopular war in Vietnam and internal turmoil brought about by the civil rights movement had bred a distrust of formal institutions. When the intellectual climate changed over time and became more conservative, the popularity of labeling theory waned to the point that many scholars considered it “dead” (Tittle 1980). This is one of numerous instances where the career of a criminological theory was influenced by non-scientific criteria.

Conclusion

We encourage you to put your sentiment-based, affective evaluations of the theories in this book out into the open. When reading, be clearly mindful both about what each theory says and what it is silent about, its fit with the facts, and its views on human nature and social action. With this goal in mind, you may use the major points of our introduction that follows as a useful guide to organizing as you read.

- Criminological theory contains a set of articulated propositions.
- These articulated propositions are an intellectual product and consist of relationship statements that link theoretical constructs.
- The articulated propositions of a theory are what we usually find when we select a book or journal article and read about a theory.
- The articulated propositions of any criminological theory are evaluated in accordance with their cognitive or empirical validity. The cognitive validity of a theory is the extent to which a theory “fits the facts.” Generally, scholars do this by gathering data and testing empirical hypotheses derived from the theory.
- The cognitive validity of a theory, the amount of empirical support it has, influences its professional popularity and career.
- Criminological theory also contains a set of unarticulated propositions.
- These unarticulated propositions do not generally comprise the formal, written part of the theory. They are generally implicit.
- The unarticulated propositions of a theory are an intensely personal product and pertain to issues such as the nature of human beings assumed by the theorist.
- Part of these unarticulated propositions also include a “tacit theory of politics”—prescriptions for what one should do in the world in order to deal with the “crime problem.” Implicitly, implications about what one should do to in order to deal with crime also carry ramifications for what one need not look at or need not do.
- A criminological theory’s set of unarticulated propositions become the foci for sentiments or feelings.
- Sometimes the sentiments embedded in a theory are reflected in the sentiments of a reader. When this occurs, a

theory is felt to be intuitively correct. When the reader’s sentiments are not resonated by the theory, it may be viewed with suspicion.

- In addition to their cognitive validity, therefore, theories are also evaluated with respect to their sentiment relevance.
- Because they contain suggestions for what to do (and what not to do) in the world, theories have real consequences for real people. Although the connection is not always made clear, criminal justice policies are virtually always based on some theory about the causes of crime. To understand policy, therefore, one must understand theory.

The essays in this book were written by the major criminological theorists of our time. In the course of each essay, you will find a discussion of the essential propositions of the theory (i.e., each theorist’s account of what explains crime). You will also find a review of the empirical work to date on the theory, and some understanding of the extent of empirical support the theory enjoys, and where additional research needs to be conducted. Finally, each theorist has explicitly spelled out some of the policy implications of his or her work.

References

- Aichhorn, August. (1935). *Wayward Youth*. New York: Viking.
- Agnew, Robert. (1992). Foundation for a general strain theory of crime and delinquency. *Criminology*, 30:47–88.
- Cloward, Richard and Lloyd Ohlin. (1960). *Delinquency and Opportunity*. Glencoe, IL: Free.
- Cohen, Albert K. (1955). *Delinquent Boys*. Glencoe, IL: Free.
- Gouldner, Alvin W. (1970). *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology*. New York: Basic.
- Hirschi, Travis. (1969). *Causes of Delinquency*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Merton, Robert K. (1938). “Social structure and anomie.” *American Sociological Review*, 3:672–682.
- . (1968). *Social Theory and Social Structure*. Glencoe, IL: Free.
- Nye, F. Ivan. (1958). *Family Relationships and Delinquent Behavior*. New York: Wiley.

Quinney, Richard. (1974). *Critique of Legal Order: Crime Control in Capitalist Society*. Boston: Little, Brown.

Reckless, Walter . (1967). *The Crime Problem*, 5th Edition. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.

Schur, Edwin. (1971). *Labeling Deviant Behavior*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Tittle, Charles R. (1980). "Labeling and crime: An empirical evaluation." Pp. 241–269. In

W.R. Gove (ed.), *The Labelling of Deviance*, 2nd Edition. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Toby, Jackson. (1957). "Social disorganization and stake in conformity: Complementary factors in the predatory behavior of hoodlums." *Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology, and Police Science*, 48:12–17.

6-8-00