

# Delinquency in School and Society: The Quest for a Theory and Method

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## Introduction

**A**BOUT FOUR YEARS AGO, A YEAR OR SO AFTER THE SCHOOL OF CRIMINOLOGY WAS abolished and I was reassigned to the Department of Education on the Berkeley campus, I designed a two-quarter course to introduce students to the classic works in delinquency based on nonquantitative methods. I am still tinkering with the course format, deleting and adding readings each year I teach the course. It is not a theory or methods course as such, but touches on both. If anything, it has to do with epistemological issues in delinquency theory and research, or where we have been and where we are now.

A couple of things occurred that led me to put the course together. One, the experiences of two students from the Criminology School who enrolled in Education to study under me, and two, some books I had finished reading, especially Steve Butters' "The Logic of Enquiry of Participant Observation" in *Resistance Through Rituals* (Cultural Studies, 1975), a publication of what has come to be called the Birmingham School. With respect to the first point, the program in Education, unlike the program in the Criminology School, is quite traditional. The students are required to take a combination of statistics and methods courses totaling a minimum of 20 quarter units. One of the students opted to take a two-quarter survey research course taught by Charles Glock in the Department of Sociology, and the other student elected to take a three-quarter sequence in Grounded Theory on the San Francisco campus, taught by Anselm Strauss. Although both students did well in their course work, both were troubled by the lack of integration of theory and research, especially the student who took the survey research course. He came away from the course totally bewildered. He had learned computer programming, data reduction, cross tabs, multivariate analysis, etc., but what all this had to do with theory or science remained a mystery. The second student learned to do ethnography, note taking, memo writing, and coding (analytic induction?), and to make common-sense interpretations of the often mundane and trivial items of behavior. The ahistoricism and the neglect of macrosociological factors troubled her. There

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was also the problem of whether a theory can be generated from empirical data, as some of the earlier writings on Grounded Theory claimed, and which Anselm Strauss now admits was an overstatement. Thus, one of the purposes of my course was to address, as Blalock (1961: 5) observed some time ago, the appearance of “an inherent gap between the languages of theory and research.”

While the writings of the people at the University of Birmingham (England) provided the underlying logic for the course, some books I had finished reading impressed me with the importance of teaching the philosophical foundations of theory and method, and to trace historically the appearance and disappearance of systems of criminological inquiry (Habermas, 1971; Willer, David and Judith, 1973; Macksey and Donato, 1972; Kuhn, 1975). The latter task was especially important, as the demise of liberal criminology (Galliher, 1978; Platt and Takagi, 1977) provided the transition to introduce the Marxist-informed ethnographic studies.

Since the course was put together during the 1977–1978 academic year, it has been considerably enriched by several publications by English and American authors. These works include Paul Willis, *Learning to Labor* (1977), Stuart Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis* (1978), Paul Rock, *The Making of Symbolic Interactionism* (1979), and several books just released: Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1980), Mike Brake, *The Sociology of Youth Culture and Youth Subcultures* (1980), Jack Douglas, *Introduction to the Sociologies of Everyday Life* (1980), and James Bennett, *Oral History and Delinquency* (1981). Also relevant is a critique of the Birmingham School in the introduction of Stanley Cohen’s re-release of *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (1980). Although not generally available in the United States, the occasional mimeographed papers of the Birmingham School contain the preliminary ideas for many of the works listed above.

### Course Description

The syllabus for the first quarter describes the course as follows:

This is a two-quarter course designed to introduce students to the classic works in criminology based on fieldwork methods. While the techniques of data collection in fieldwork have included such procedures as interviewing, observing, and participating (or a combination of these procedures), data reduction and analyses vary depending upon the perspectives of the researcher. Thus it is helpful, though somewhat arbitrary, to categorize the literature into “schools of thought.”

This quarter we will look at some of the following schools: Appreciative Understanding, Analytic Induction, and the various strands of labeling. In the second quarter, attention will be turned to the Constant Comparison and the Regressive-Progressive methods.

The students are asked to purchase two books—Jack Douglas, *Sociologies*

of *Everyday Life* (1980), and Bernard Meltzer et al., *Symbolic Interactionism* (1975)—that contain brief but understandable descriptions of the philosophical assumptions underlying the Chicago school (pp. 20–37 and 1–52 respectively). In my lectures, I focus on the several defining characteristics of these writers (John Dewey, George Herbert Mead, William James): the concern with the role of group factors as important elements for understanding behavior (see Meltzer et al., 1975: 42–52); behavior as having its conditions in the social environment; the critical significance of the self or the idea of emergence; and the adoption of the method of sympathetic introspection or the case history and natural history methods. Paul Rock (1979: 24–101) traces the epistemology to a blending of Hegel, Darwin, and the philosophy of science into a distinctive compound that emphasizes ecology and formalism; but in my lecture, I describe the linkages to the Progressive reform movements of the 1890s. John Dewey, for example, was a member of the advisory board to Jane Addams’ Hull House. In the Practice Theory of the settlement house movement, the visiting teacher movement, and in Lightner Witmer’s psychological clinic, there is clearly an emphasis on group factors—the adjustment of the social environment, or advocacy in some instances, to bring about the adjustment of the individual, and a view of the self as both organized and organizing (Levine and Levine, 1970).

### **Appreciative Understanding**

Following this introduction to the Chicago School, we examine the first set of empirical studies called “Appreciative Understanding.”

In the Chicago School and their followers, fieldwork data are organized into ethnographic descriptions which attempt to map the meanings of custom, role, and social structure within a presumed closed cultural system, closed, as suggested by the titles of their works, in that the phenomenon under investigation is a unique cultural feature. Each student will select one of the following works representative of the Chicago School to report to class. The student should focus attention on the method employed, data analyses, problems highlighted by the research, and assess its contribution to theory (Butters, 1975).

Nels Anderson, *The Hobo*

Harvey Zorbaugh, *The Gold Coast and the Slum*

Clifford Shaw, *The Jackroller*

Frederic Thrasher, *The Gang*

Paul Cressey, *The Taxi-Dance Hall*

Clifford Shaw, *The Natural History of a Delinquent Career*

Edwin Sutherland, *The Professional Thief*

From the students’ presentations and discussions, it becomes immediately

apparent that the methods employed in the research vary considerably. Shaw calls his method a life history or natural history, but his work relies heavily on agency records; Zorbaugh mapped the near north side of Chicago from newspaper items and official records; Anderson's work is informed by his own experiences as a hobo; and Cressey used field workers and agency records for his study.

*The Professional Thief* is the only work that can be described as using the natural history method, but it is also informed by Sutherland's preliminary ideas on differential association. In general, the analytic procedure in all of these works does not lead to the production of a theoretical analysis, given their inability to link cultural features to structural factors, and the omission of historical and macro-sociological factors to explain the poverty, urbanization, and human exploitation in which the cultural features appeared.

### Culture and Personality

We turn next to a set of readings called "Culture and Personality Studies." Some graduates from the Chicago School, probably students of Park and Burgess, mapped out the cities of Honolulu and Seattle, both of which have large populations of Chinese and Japanese. Areas of social disorganization were identified by examining indices of delinquency, crime, suicide, prostitution, etc. The researchers found very low delinquency rates among the Chinese and Japanese in the most "disorganized" area of the cities.

Andrew W. Lind, "Some Ecological Patterns of Community Disorganization in Honolulu"

Andrew W. Lind, "The Ghetto and the Slum"

Norman Hayner, "Delinquency Areas in the Puget Sound Region"

Norman Hayner, "Social Factors in Oriental Crime"

S. Frank Miyamoto, *Social Solidarity Among the Japanese in Seattle*

Unable to explain "an interesting exception to Shaw's findings in other cities," Hayner invoked a post hoc explanation. Hayner writes: "One of the major factors that accounts for the low rate of criminality [is] the integrated families that are characteristic not only of Japan but also of China and the Philippines" (1938: 911). The explanation of the low delinquency rate was therefore to be found in the cultures of China and Japan, which the immigrants brought with them and transmitted to the children. Thus, the strategy is to scan the culture overseas and to identify key factors that shaped and controlled the behavior of youngsters and, for whatever the children achieved or failed to achieve, the logic is to blame or credit the immigrant's home culture.

The culture and personality strategy and, more generally, the Appreciative Understanding school are actually a variant of functional analysis. There are two interrelated considerations that support this conclusion. The key idea is social disorganization. A disorganized society is assumed to be synonymous with a rapidly

changing society characterized by instability, discontinuity of experiences in groups, and disagreements among members on the common concerns of everyday life. The disappearance of intimacy in social relationships is assumed to lead to individualism, which in turn leaves its participants frustrated and thwarted in fulfilling their personal needs and desires (Lemert, 1951: 8).

The analytic model is clearer, for example, in W.I. Thomas, *The Unadjusted Girl* (1923). Thomas' work is based on an analogue model, that is, likening the properties, processes, or structures of society to those of an organism. Throughout the book, Thomas employs metaphors and analogues from the animal world to clarify complex human relationships. In this view, society is seen as evolving in a unilinear and irreversible process similar to organisms in evolution. Hence, over a period of time certain stages appear in urban communities that are characterized by structural changes, namely, social disorganization. Although this version of functionalism differs from modern functionalism, as in Merton (1957), Miller (1958), and Albert Cohen (1958), the analytic form is the same. They borrow a mechanism from another application, that is, some set of properties from the borrowed mechanism is represented in the phenomena to be studied (see Willer, 1967: 29–37).

The second consideration has to do with cultural relationships. It was believed then, and is still believed today, that Cooley's concepts of personal and social disorganization are essentially interactional phases of the same problem (Lemert, 1951: 9–10). The difficulty is that none of the approaches to the study of social disorganization have come to grips with the relationship between individual and social disorganization. W.I. Thomas believed that he solved the difficulty by making a distinction between "attitude" and "value." In Thomas' writings, "by attitude [he meant] a process of individual consciousness which determines...activity," and "by a social value [he meant] any datum having an empirical content accessible to members, and a meaning...as an object of activity" (Barnes, 1948: 798). The four wishes Thomas posits in *The Unadjusted Girl* (1923) are the four principal attitudes in individuals, and his well-known concept, the definition of the situation, is the mechanism that delimits, modifies, or controls the wishes (*Ibid.*, 798–804). The logical structure of the theory is similar to Merton's "Social Structure and Anomie" (1957).

In Thomas' writings, the meaning of culture and cultural relationships is not always clear. Sometimes by culture he means value(s); elsewhere, by culture he means the whole ensemble of "values, institutions, customs, attitudes, and behavior reactions" (Barnes, 1948: 801). In the latter meaning, a personality is essentially a microcosm of cultural relationships, a product of reciprocal influences that is both organized and organizing.

Following this line of analysis, we can now understand the analytic task of culture in Hayner's work. As Herman Schwendinger suggested to me in personal correspondence, the oversimplification of cultural relationships in functional analysis is designed to make their essentially psychological theories credible. The category

of culture performs the same analytic task that categories like instinct or deep-seated impulses did in earlier theories. Robert E. Park, for example, viewed race prejudice as stemming from “deep rooted, vital, and instinctive impulses” (1950: 223–29).

### Analytic Induction

We turn next to analytic induction, one of the more interesting developments in American criminology. As I indicate below, it was a short-lived enterprise, although its roots go back to the Chicago School. The course syllabus describes the readings as follows:

Analytic induction, a strand of the Chicago School, although short-lived, represents an important bridge to the constant comparison method to be examined next quarter. Analytic induction is an effort to form abstract hypotheses (or propositions) of certain cultural forms. It looks for main patterns of behavior, and by trial and error, it attempts to create partial models of the phenomenon under investigation. The partial models are then reconciled based upon constant testing (looking for negative cases) and, in the end, it welds together the remaining partial models to form an explanatory account (Butters, 1975).

Florian Znaniecki, *The Method of Sociology*

Alfred Lindesmith, *Opiate Addiction*

Edwin Sutherland, “Differential Association,” in his *Principles of Criminology*

Robert C. Angell, *The Family Encounters the Depression*

Donald Cressey, *Other People’s Money*

This form of theory construction came to an abrupt end following the criticisms made initially by Robinson (1951: 812–818) and then by Turner (1953: 604–611). The analytic procedure, however, is interesting because we see for the first time the influence of Charles Peirce’s philosophy of science and, also, the effort to construct iconic models of the phenomena under investigation.

Sutherland writes that he had worked for several years with a professional thief and was impressed that a person cannot become a professional thief merely by wanting to be one; he must be trained in personal association with those who are already professional thieves (Cohen et al., 1956: 17). He believed this was the process in all crime, but was reluctant to make the hypothesis explicit because, “I knew that every criminological theory which had lifted its head had been cracked down by everyone except its author.” In spite of the danger, he decided to make the hypothesis explicit in his 1939 edition of *Principles of Criminology*. The decision to do so was partly political, as a response to the Michael and Adler Report (*Ibid.*: 16, 229–246), but it was primarily due to two influences. He had learned the methodology of analytic induction from Alfred Lindesmith (*Ibid.*: 17–18), and

following the publication of Louis Wirth's "Culture Conflict and Misconduct" (1964: 229–243), there was a renewed belief that the relationship between personal meanings and cultural patterns contained the genesis of criminal behavior (Cohen et al., 1956: 16, 29). Sutherland was undoubtedly influenced by the following passages in Wirth's paper (1964: 241):

The sociological study of delinquency, however, does not end with a general description nor even a careful analysis of the cultural milieu of the individual. On the contrary, the study of the culture on the objective side *must be complemented through a study of the personal meanings which the cultural values have for the individual*. The concept of culture and the concept of personality do not stand in opposition to one another. A culture has no psychological significance until it is referred to personality, and vice versa...(emphasis added).

The methodological problem was how to study the personal meanings of the cultural milieu. Sutherland failed in this task, and in 1944 he concluded that differential association as an explanation of criminal behavior is invalid (Cohen et al., 1956: 37). Although Sutherland does not credit Charles Peirce's philosophy of science, the analytic procedure employed by Sutherland suggests that it was the source. Peirce separates induction into two stages: *abduction*, or the stage of obtaining a hypothesis, and *induction*, or the stage of proving the hypothesis. Peirce writes:

Abduction makes its start from the facts, without, at the onset, having any particular theory in view, though it is motivated by the feeling that a theory is needed to explain the surprising facts.... Abduction seeks a theory.... In abduction the consideration of the facts suggests the hypothesis (cited in Willer, 1967: 28; Habermas, 1971: 91–112).

While Lindesmith, Cressey, and Angell describe their preliminary hypotheses and test them by looking for negative cases, Sutherland apparently engaged in "mental experiments" to manipulate concepts and to abduce additional hypotheses. Sutherland, of course, was able to do that because of his extensive knowledge of the criminological literature. But in an effort to understand personality, he had to rely on abstracted findings as reported in the literature, typically studies of personal traits, which resulted in a psychologicistic model.

An iconic model is one of direct similarity to the subject of representation. Lindesmith's model of opiate addiction clearly resembles the phenomena under investigation. Sutherland's model does not resemble much of anything; it does not satisfy the rule of isomorphism; nor are the terms nominally defined. The hypotheses appear to be first-order abductions or merely definitions, rather than statements of regularities or of conceptual relations.

Despite these and other criticisms of analytic induction, the case history as a method was linked with theory construction and, in my judgment, represents one of the brighter periods in American criminology.

### Labeling School

The syllabus describes the next set of readings as follows:

Recent followers of the Chicago School have shifted toward phenomenology to study the essence of meaning in ethnographic descriptions, that is, the researcher wants to know if people under study think of the meaning, and if they do, how the meaning is considered according to the standards in the cultural milieu. This intellectual approach toward phenomenology Krisberg (1972) calls “hip sociology.” The hip sociologist appreciates the subject under study, but the researcher, while sympathetic to their problems, is not compassionate with them, resulting in the neglect of important dimensions of the phenomena which he is describing. This appreciative understanding-phenomenology school, called labeling, emerged during the 1960s and attracted hundreds of followers.

The students initially read Douglas (1980: 62–154) and Meltzer et al. (1975: 67–82). They then read one or more of the following works:

Edwin Lemert, *Social Pathology*

Edwin Lemert, “Social Structure, Social Control, and Deviation”

Erving Goffman, *Stigma*

Howard Becker, *The Outsider*

Aaron Cicourel, *The Social Organization of Juvenile Justice*

In addition to reading the criticisms in Meltzer et al. (1975: 83–117), students are also asked to read Alvin Gouldner, “The Sociologist as Partisan: Sociology and the Welfare State” (1968: 103–116).

First, a comment on the readings. Of the several dozen works representative of the labeling school, I have focused on Lemert, Goffman, Becker, and Cicourel for several interrelated reasons. Since the purpose of the course is to understand the relationship of theory and method, it is important to read the writers and the works that are most frequently cited. Second, the readings should focus on those ideas that have informed the study of criminological issues; and third, as will become clearer in our discussion of the labeling school, we need to focus on Lemert’s writings to untangle what has become a controversial (Gove, 1980) and confusing body of literature.

From reading the descriptive analyses and criticisms of the labeling school, one gets the impression that the relationship of theory and method is never clear (Meltzer et al., 1975: 104). Paul Rock writes: “Much of their work is...characterized by a certain amorphousness, ambiguity and apparent aimlessness” (1979: 8), and

“readers’ abound, but there are almost no comprehensive and programmatic expositions” (*Ibid.*: 9). One writer tells the reader how theory is linked to methods: “The theoretical basis for analyzing man must be assessed for adequacy both subjectively and objectively. To be objective about man, paradoxical as it would seem, we must understand the subjective world of meaning” (Bruyn, 1966: 163). To understand the subjective world of meaning, all of the writings in one way or another make reference to the method expressed so long ago by Florian Znaniecki:

When I wish to ascertain at first hand what a certain activity is, just as when I wish to obtain first-hand information about a certain object, I try to experience it. There is only one way of experiencing an object: it is to observe it personally. There is only one way of experiencing an activity: it is to perform it personally (cited in Bruyn, 1966: 90).

But the practical problems of performing an activity in the name of science are not easily overcome, and the writings out of Europe on phenomenology seemed to provide the operational link to “sympathetic understanding.” As Severyn Bruyn writes: “The interests of the phenomenologist and the participant observer are remarkably similar” (1966: 91); in Paul Rock: “A few have emphasized the phenomenological strands...by synthesizing their work with the thought of Alfred Schutz and his successors” (1979: 85); and in Douglas: “We distinguished the two strains of phenomenological sociology. One strain describes shared but contingent patterns of subjective experience in the language worked out by Husserl and Schutz. The second strain of research is more closely related to the founding concerns of phenomenological philosophy (1980: 148).

This mystical discussion of method becomes even more confusing with respect to theory construction. A theory somehow flows out of the ethnographic data. As Paul Rock writes: “It does not rest on an explicitly intellectual vocabulary of explanation and justification. Understanding and knowledge are held to flow from praxis, not from contemplation and abstract exposition” (1979: 3). Rock explains in another context that: “The pragmatists had injected into interactionism a reasoned incapacity to work with systematic thought, a priori schemes, or propositional logic. It was argued that understanding would be corrupted if it were framed by a precisely structured explanation” (*Ibid.*: 85–86). Thus, instead of laying out hypotheses and definitions at the beginning of a description, the strategy is to coax “theory” out of the unwinding discussion. If a stance exists at all, Rock writes, it relies “on the loosest of ideal types, which are progressively modified and refined as they become applied in substantive work” (*Ibid.*: 87).

After reading Douglas (1980) and Meltzer et al. (1975), the students then read Becker (1963), Cicourel (1968), and Goffman (1963). Of the three works, Becker’s *The Outsiders* has been the most influential in the development of the labeling school. Cicourel’s work is a study of labeling in two probation offices, but it is much more than that. It is an effort to establish grouped relationships between

measures, or the formation of an operational system (see Willer, 1967: 83–96). Cicourel (1968: 1–21) is interested in building a theoretical apparatus for making sense of ethnographic data, specifically the “tacit knowledge” of how subjects under study understand and communicate their knowledge and experiences. And of all of Goffman’s work, *Stigma* (1963) perhaps has been the least well received. The work develops the concept of a biography that is superior to the concept of self. A biography begins long before an individual’s birth and continues after his death. I will have more to say about this later on.

Two conclusions emerge from reading these three works. First, with the exception of Cicourel, labeling theories do not necessarily engage in fieldwork. Goffman and Becker rely on a variety of data sources — anthropological studies, documents, case histories, and, in Becker’s case, his personal experiences as a jazz pianist. Second, contrary to the impression that hypotheses are coaxed out of ethnographic data or that the loosest of ideal types are modified and refined in substantive work, all three works begin with a hypothesis. The well-known proposition in Becker’s work (1963: 9) that “social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance” appears early on in the book and is clearly credited to Frank Tannenbaum and Edwin Lemert. All three works credit the organizing hypothesis for their studies to Edwin Lemert, and for that reason alone, we need to read Lemert’s writings.

Lemert’s *Social Pathology* (1951) also does not comport with the impression that the perspective is characterized by amorphousness, ambiguity, and aimlessness. Instead, the work is highly informed of prior efforts to study deviancy, and in this work Lemert generates seven postulates for a theory of deviance. Lemert does not tell the readers how he derived the postulates, other than to state: “These postulates are simple statements of fact for which the writer feels no obligation to supply proof.... They are the building blocks for the theory of this treatise and ipso facto they must be accepted as points of departure for the analysis which follows” (1951: 22). In the remainder of the work, Lemert defines the terms in the theory, specifies and loosens conditions to set the scope of the theory, marshals empirical evidence to support the postulates, and generates propositions, such as his well-known primary and secondary deviation. He warns his readers that “the question as to whether these postulates are the relevant ones or whether they are too few must await answer until the theory has been tested” (*Ibid.*: 22).

The book ends with seven postulates and a large number of hypotheses. The postulates and hypotheses remain disconnected and required an organizing principle for an internally consistent model. Lemert apparently believed then, based upon the organization of the chapters, that the key to a theory of deviance was to understand the concepts of individual deviation and societal reaction. With respect to the former, he viewed deviation in a statistical sense and suggested that norms, in a sociological sense, needed to be studied in space and time and with reference to status indicators such as age, sex, and economic class. The concept of societal

reaction was similarly troublesome. He viewed societal reaction as a function of “The Tolerance Quotient,” which varied depending upon community characteristics. Lemert employed the tolerance quotient as a schematic device to suggest social processes that needed to be explored.

The concepts of individual deviation and societal reaction were to remain unsolvable, but meanwhile Becker (1963), Gusfield (1966), and others representing the labeling perspective were to gain considerable fame. Lemert, in a sharply stated criticism, repudiated their works for having vulgarized the concept of societal reaction (1974: 457–468) and disassociated himself from the labeling school.

In Lemert’s own writings, it was not until the publication of “Social Structure, Social Control, and Deviation” in 1964, reproduced in his book, *Human Deviance, Social Problems, and Social Control* (1967), that he took up the problem again. In this work, the rationale appears to be some version of modern functionalism as he attempts to rescue Merton’s “means-ends” schema (1957: 5–6). It resembles Homans’ exchange model, with some important differences (1961: 51–82). Lemert presents the individual as a rational economic man who weighs values against costs, leading to conformity or deviation. Lemert views the individual as pursuing a hierarchy of values, sacrificing something of lesser value for something of greater value. The group becomes for the individual a means to his ends (*Ibid.*: 6). Deviation, Lemert concludes, is risk taking. “This concept of risk taking refers to situations in which the persons who are caught in a network of conflicting values choose not deviant alternatives but rather behavioral solutions which carry risks of deviation” (*Ibid.*: 11).

The idea of values and costs was to increasingly occupy Lemert’s thoughts. In his 1974 article, he invokes the schema as an explanation of societal reaction. He writes: “An important principle is that changes in the definition and control of deviance may be due not to any alteration in value systems but to changes in their costs of satisfaction. An increase in costs...may change the disposition of cases by police or probation officers even though their preferences are to follow an old pattern” (1974: 465).

The formulation by Lemert is not a theoretical model. As noted earlier, he had borrowed the “means-ends” schema from Merton. Both Merton and Homans had also borrowed the model from another application. But in Merton’s and Homans’ works, the mechanism and the rationale are wedded to the concept of equilibrium, that is, a change in any part of the system will result in a tendency to change it back to its original form. The mechanism of total balance is extinguished in Lemert’s formulation. This, of course, is one of the problems in analogue modeling. Any modification of the borrowed model will violate the postulates of the model and weaken or eliminate the mechanism (Nagel, 1961; Willer, 1967).

According to Galliher (1978), by 1975 the major journals in the field contained virtually no articles based upon a labeling perspective. It is probably true that the

social and political criticisms of the labeling school, initiated by Gouldner (1968), had contributed to its demise; but it is also the case that the inability to elevate the disconnected hypotheses into a coherent model raised questions that needed to be addressed, one of which is whether the original postulates were indeed statements of fact, as Lemert asserted. Perhaps Lemert arrived at the same conclusion, albeit on different grounds. He writes: "All of this tells me that deviance sociologists can do better with working tool concepts than with ambitious theory" (1974: 467).

### **The Constant Comparative Method**

The constant comparative method is another strand of the Chicago School and is associated with Anselm Strauss, Barney Glaser, Leonard Schatzman, and some others at the University of California Medical School in San Francisco. Similar to the method of analytic induction, the strategy seeks to generate widely applicable models by coding and scanning data in order to build a cluster of partial models or clusters of hypotheses. The strategy differs from analytic induction in that the systematic comparisons are integrated with the strategy for collecting and coding observations during the course of the fieldwork. The method, called Grounded Theory, explicitly links theory and method. The syllabus describes the method as follows:

The strategy of constant comparison looks toward the establishment of law-like generalizations about the phenomenon within narrowly limited social and historical locations. These generalizations are not obtained immediately, but only after the revision and hierarchical organization of a series of provisional hypotheses, that is, the analysis emerges concurrently with fieldwork observations (note taking and reflection). There is a spiral process of "theoretical sampling" of locales and events, recording and coding observations, writing trial hypotheses into analytic notes, and providing for more detailed and focused comparisons of data with data, data with hypotheses, and finally, a more sociologically informed sampling.

The constant comparison is similar to the logic in multivariate analysis of survey data, that is, one focuses on the differences made by the introduction of a new (a third) variable to the relations between subgroups of incidents, persons, or social forms. The mode of analytic inference is to start with a surprising result or an anomalous incident. The researcher searches for a rule, a hypothesis, or model, which will explain the case (the incident plus the already known or understood context) (Butters, 1975).

Although there is a growing body of literature based on the method, I was not able to identify a work on criminology per se. Two books were selected for readings, since they represent the first statement and a more recent one on the method.

Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*  
 Barney Glaser, *Theoretical Sensitivity*

As noted earlier, Anselm Strauss admitted (in a 1980 guest lecture to the class) to some overstatements in the earlier writings. It is therefore instructive to compare the two works. In *Theoretical Sensitivity* (Glaser, 1978), critical terms, such as the definition of a theory, are more precise. Thus, grounded theory means a *substantive theory* of an empirical area of investigation that fits the real world, works in predictions and explanations, is relevant to the people concerned, and is readily modifiable (*Ibid.*: 142–144). Glaser’s claim of a theory is: “Countless studies make us quite sure of this effort” (*Ibid.*: 142). I remain unpersuaded, because a reading of their empirical studies suggests the substantive theory to be no more than empirical generalizations, although statements of relations are couched conceptually. But then survey research findings are also couched in concepts like “political sensitivity,” “interaction potential,” “race tolerance,” and so on, and remain at the level of empirical generalization. Empirical generalizations also predict and “explain” at one level, but they are not scientific explanations (Nagel, 1961). This is not to say that substantive theory cannot be elevated to a formal theory. Glaser recognizes the difficulties, since he writes: “We are more humble when it comes to generating formal theory. We remain convinced that it should be grounded, but are not sure yet...of the resolutions to many specific problems... (*Ibid.*: 142).

### **The Progressive-Regressive Method**

The next set of readings could be called Marxist-informed ethnographies, but that would not be totally correct, as the studies employ additional data collection techniques. However, all of the authors have engaged in fieldwork at one time or another to produce the writings, so I would not be too far off to call it that.

The discerning reader has perhaps picked up on the Marxist hyphenated ethnographies and is wondering whether I am referring to some strand of contemporary Marxism. On the contrary, it is nothing more than a device to introduce a problem that needs to be addressed—the tendency of commentators to find it necessary to categorize a rapidly developing Marxist criminology into some kind of Marxism or another. I have in mind Stanley Cohen’s recent criticism of the Birmingham School: “The conceptual tools of Marxism, structuralism, and semiotics, a Left-Bank pantheon of Genet, Levi-Strauss, Barthes, and Althusser have all been wheeled in to aid this hunt for the hidden code” (1980: *ix*). Although I believe the people at the University of Birmingham do not require my assistance for a response, if indeed one is needed, this criticism does raise a more general problem. By parading names and schools of thought, it produces feelings of uneasiness and perhaps uncertainty about a Marxist criminology. To pursue the point, the Progressive-Regressive Method comes from the writings of Jean-Paul Sartre (1968) and informs the work of the Birmingham School. Is Sartre a structuralist? It is not clear. Based on a critique

by Levi-Strauss of one of Sartre's works, he is not; to read another account, he is (Dyson-Hudson, 1972: 237). But if the matter is simply a critique of theories that assign a privileged status to history (Piaget, 1970: 121; Thompson, 1978: 1–120), then the works of the Birmingham School, shaped in part by Sartrean ideas that give prominence to history, cannot, it seems to me, be construed as a motley mixture of Marxism, Structuralism, and Existentialism.

The sciences ultimately turn to philosophy for answers to difficult questions. But which philosophy? To answer the question, I reproduce below long passages from Sartre's writings that help us to understand the significance and the historical necessity for the development of a Marxist criminology.

Between the seventeenth century and the twentieth, I see three...periods, which I would designate by the names of the men who dominated them: there is the "moment" of Descartes and Locke, that of Kant and Hegel, finally that of Marx. These three philosophies become, each in its turn, the humus of every particular thought and the horizon of all culture; there is no going beyond them so long as man has not gone beyond the historical moment which they express.... An "anti-Marxist" argument is only the apparent rejuvenation of a pre-Marxist idea. A so-called "going beyond" Marxism will be at worst only a return to pre-Marxism; at best, only the rediscovery of a thought already contained in the philosophy which one believes he has gone beyond. As for "revisionism," this is either a truism or an absurdity. There is no need to readapt a living philosophy to the course of the new world; it adapts itself by means of thousands of new efforts, thousands of particular pursuits, for the philosophy is one with the movement of society.... If [a] movement on the part of philosophy no longer exists, one of two things is true: either the philosophy is dead or it is going through a "crisis." In the first case there is no question of revising, but of razing a rotten building; in the second case the "philosophical crisis" is the particular expression of a social crisis, and its immobility is conditioned by the contradictions which split the society. A so-called "revision," performed by "experts," would be, therefore, only an idealist mystification without real significance. It is the very movement of History, the struggle of men on all planes and on all levels of human activity, which will set free captive thought and permit it to attain its full development" (1968: 8–9).... Marxism is still very young, almost in its infancy; it has scarcely begun to develop. It remains, therefore, the philosophy of our time. We cannot go beyond it because we have not gone beyond the circumstances which engendered it. Our thoughts, whatever they may be, can be formed only upon this humus; they must be contained within the framework which it furnishes for them or be lost in the void of retrogress" (*Ibid.*: 30).

The readings include three works from the Birmingham School plus an article by the Schwendingers.

Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method* (85–166)

Chas Critcher, “Structures, Cultures and Biographies”

Paul Willis, *Learning to Labor* (1–116)

Stuart Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis* (327–397)

Herman and Julia Schwendinger, “Collective Varieties of Youth”

(In teaching the course to undergraduate students, I have limited the readings to the pages indicated.)

The reading material requires a revolution in thinking to understand that the languages of theory and method are the same. The theory and method focus attention on class, class relations, history, etc., and students initially experience some difficulty in apprehending a unity of theory and method. This is understandable because, contrary to bourgeois social science, there is typically no appendix on the method, nor is there a statement of a hypothesis or theory, sampling procedure, technique of data collection, and proposed analysis.

I have students focus initially on a few defining characteristics. These are: (1) an individual is always viewed as a member of a class (or race and class as in the work by Stuart Hall et al.); (2) attention is always focused on the relations of that class to another (as in Willis’ study, the “lads” and the “ear ’oles”); and (3) history. History, however, has a very special meaning in Marxist analysis.

We know only a single science, the science of history. One can look at history from two sides and divide it into the history of nature and the history of men. The two sides are, however, inseparable; the history of nature and the history of men are dependent on each other so long as men exist... (Marx and Engels, 1968: 28).

There is a problem in the passage and I will come back to it in a moment. But by proceeding in this fashion, the students learn that the concepts of class and class relations refer to the relations of production. It also presents the opportunity to teach the method of dialectics; that is, antagonistic classes bound together in capitalist society or the “lads” and the “ear ’oles” in a state of guerrilla warfare and yet inseparable units, and so on.

With respect to history, a problem is: What is meant by the history of nature? Several treatises have been written on the topic, and I have adopted the interpretation of man transforming nature to satisfy his basic wants and needs—food, shelter, clothing, at the most basic level—and the idea that the satisfaction of these needs leads to other needs. Through transforming nature, which involves work, man realizes self-actualization; but in the labor process under capitalism, man’s labor becomes alienated. I need to detour at this point to comment briefly on the concept of alienation, a subject that has also received a great deal of attention. It

has become one of the more difficult ideas in Marxism because, in my judgment, of the several interpretative works. Depending on the writer, alienation is sometimes viewed as a theory (Meszaros, 1970; Ollman, 1976; Mandel and Novack, 1970). Also depending on the writer, there are types of alienation, for example, political alienation, religious alienation, economic alienation, and intellectual alienation. The interpretative works also speak of four broad relations under economic alienation, that is, man being separated from his productive activity, the product of his labor, other men, and species being. In some works, alienation conveys the impression that it has something to do with man's subjective state (Ollman, 1976), while bourgeois sociology has vulgarized the concept to mean a psychological condition. My intent here is not to explicate the concept of alienation, but rather to describe the context in which Marx introduced the concept.

Marx initiated his economic investigations in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*. In the first manuscript, which suddenly breaks off, we see the basic outline of *Capital*, as he analyzes the nature of wages, the profit of capital, and the system of rent. It is in the discussion of these economic matters that he poses the problem that needs to be explained. He writes:

Political economy starts with the fact of private property; it does not explain it to us. It expresses in general, abstract formulas the *material* process through which private property actually passes, and these formulas it then takes for *laws*. It does not *comprehend* these laws, i.e., it does not demonstrate how they arise from the very nature of private property. Political economy throws no light on the cause of the division of labor and capital, and capital and land.... We have to grasp the intrinsic connection between private property, greed, the separation of labor, capital and landed property; the connection of exchange and competition, of value and the devaluation of men, of monopoly and competition, etc.—the connection between this whole arrangement and the *money* system (Marx, 1974: 62–63).

In the modern language of theory construction, Marx introduces the concept of alienation in the famous and often-cited passage on alienated labor as the mechanism that accounts for the movement of private property. As equilibrium is the mechanism in functional analysis and legitimacy is the mechanism in Max Weber's types of authority structure, alienation performs the analytical task of linking the various processes in capital accumulation. Therefore, just as a theory of equilibrium or a theory of legitimacy makes no sense, a theory of alienation is similarly meaningless. While it is true that Marx speaks of causes as in the following passage, it refers instead to the fundamental postulate that wealth stems from the labor power of man.

Private property thus results by analysis from the concept of alienated labor, i.e. alienated man, of estranged labor, of estranged life, of estranged

man. True, it is as a result of the movement of private property that we have obtained the concept of alienated labor (of alienated life) in political economy. But on analysis of this concept it becomes clear that though private property appears to be the reason, the cause of alienated labor, it is rather the consequence... (*Ibid.*: 72).

In the remainder of the first manuscript and in the subsequent ones, Marx analyzes in great detail the broad relationships of “economic” alienation, creating the impression that he is constructing a theory of alienation. But that is not the case at all. Rather, he examines the nature of alienation, a sort of mental experiment, to develop theories of society, i.e., human nature under bourgeois society as compared to life under socialism.

Though, as Marx writes, “private property has made us so stupid and one-sided that an object is only ours when we have it—when it exists for us as capital, or when it is directly possessed, eaten, drunk, worn, inhabited, etc.—in short, when it is used by us,” he recognizes the subjective senses of man as transcending private property to become, subjectively and objectively, human (*Ibid.*: 94). It is in this sense, despite the alienated work whereby “the worker loses realization to the point of starving to death” (*Ibid.*: 63), that man struggles to become human.

Of relevance to criminology is that we could think of man’s desire to realize his potentialities that is dialectically related to being free, in a political sense, in a bourgeois democracy. Since many of the issues in criminology are objectifications of man’s nature, we need to look at the two sides of history. The Marxist theory of history, when stated somewhat differently but conveying the same idea, will aid us in the task. “Men themselves make their history but in a given environment which conditions them” (cited in Sartre, 1968: 85). Sartre seeks to clarify the thesis when applied to individuals. Although he gives several illustrations, his favorite example is the biography of Flaubert, a project that engaged his interest for most of his career. The Progressive-Regressive Method is not a theory, but a heuristic device, a guideline for research.

To illustrate, we take the case of Mrs. Eulia Love, who died from gunshot wounds inflicted by two policemen (Los Angeles Board of Police Commissioners, 1980: 1–9). We begin our analysis of the progressive moment, the sequence of events that led to her killing. We note she had earlier prevented the utility man from turning off services for nonpayment of bills. We note further that when the two policemen arrived, she shouted obscenities. Moments later, 12 shots were discharged by the police officers.

To understand these bare facts, we need to understand the larger society in which the event occurred. This is the regressive moment. The analysis begins with the material production of the immediate life and ends with the civil society, the state, and the ideology (the structures in Critcher’s formulation, 1975: 167–173). Inside these structures, by an analysis of class and class relations, we begin to obtain a

partial acquaintance of Mrs. Love as a black woman, the mother of three children, recently widowed by the death of her husband from sickle cell anemia, the sudden dependency occasioned by his death, the history of her people, and especially the history of brutalization. This is the *biography* in Critcher's article (*Ibid.*). At this level of analysis, we are elaborating and reworking the empirical connections at the levels of the individual and the structures.

The concept of a biography is similar to Goffman's. The difference is that while Goffman is interested in the individual's management of a "tarnished" identity, Sartre (1968: 135) seeks to illuminate those processes and institutions (structures) that mediate the emergence of an individual within the general matrix of a class society conditioned by the forces and relations of production and class conflict. For any given historical period, there is what Sartre calls a "field of possibles" or "the field of instruments."

The material conditions of [man's] existence circumscribe the field of his possibilities. The field of possibles is the goal toward which [man] surpasses his objective situation. And this field in turn depends strictly on the social, historical reality.... [T]he field of possibles, however reduced it may be, always exists, and we must not think of it as a zone of indetermination, but rather as a strongly structured region which depends upon all of History and which includes its own contradictions. It is by transcending the given toward the field of possibles and by realizing one's possibility from among all the others that the individual objectifies himself and contributes to making History (*Ibid.*: 93).

Critcher (1975) calls the field of possibles "cultural options." Put differently, the Marxist theory of history focuses on people's productive activities and how they are related to the social and political processes of production. It recognizes a wholeness of the process that leads to a specific form of distribution of power and influence on the one hand, and how the specific inequalities affect people's capacity to define and shape their lives on the other. It is not culture or ideology that relates the wholeness of the social process, but hegemony. "What hegemony points to is how relations of domination saturate life to the point that it is 'in the strongest sense a culture,' but a culture which has also to be seen as the lived dominance and subordination of particular classes" (Williams, cited in Wessman, 1981: 70–71). Hegemony is a process in that it is continually renewed, re-created, defended, and modified and it is continually challenged, resisted, limited, or altered (*Ibid.*: 72). The field of possibles, then, is the "forms and kinds" of resistance to hegemonic domination, but circumscribed by history. Thus conceived, the Civil Rights Movement as one of the possibles, rather than crime (Solomon et al., 1980), and the alteration of hegemonic domination that lead to specific styles of youth (Hebdige, 1980; Brake, 1980) are illustrative.

Man's praxis, the struggle to attain his humanity, turns our attention back to the

progressive moment. Of the hundreds of ways in which an individual has resisted dominance and subordination, he becomes aware of his class by means of the future that is possible for him. This is not a simple matter. The findings reported by Solomon et al. (1980) suggest that man's praxis is part and parcel of collective struggles, and the stage of the collective struggle may demand individual acts of revolt. In the study by Stuart Hall et al. (1978, Ch. 10), the interviews with black youngsters reveal their subjective impoverishment and "nonhumanity" as a result of the racism in British society. The youngsters repudiate their political status in England and speak of an uncertain future with Africa. The praxis of the youngsters contains within it the fate of their race and the racism, and their refusal to accept the present, a negation of the refused reality; their individual acts need to be understood within the context of their rejection as well of their immigrant parents' accommodation to the racism, in a period when struggles of black people are taking place all over the world. The analysis by the authors focuses on the youngsters' hostility toward whites, their resistance to authority, and their rejection of the work ethic, which become the very elements for further social control. These individual acts reflect a profound contradiction—the cultural options available to whites as contrasted to those available to blacks.

Culture, therefore, is not simply an inert working-class culture or a delinquent subculture as a functional equivalent (Cohen, 1958; Miller, 1958). Willis' ethnography illustrates how the subversion of the educational process by the "lads" is worked out anew by each generation of youth. This is in contrast to the view that there is a delinquent tradition, or the view that one joins an existing delinquent group. Culture is viewed as a *whole* that requires an analysis of the crucial interrelations of hegemonic elements, including tradition, transmitted by the schools and other institutions, and an emergent culture that is oppositional to the dominant elements.

The racism, for example, among the working-class youth described by Willis cannot be attributed to the low-grade behavior of the working class. The schools in various ways promote the racism by emphasizing a future possible that is good and desirable, and by rewarding compliant behavior, the symbol of a future possible means something other than the social reality of the work and activities of the "Pakis" and blacks structured in British society. For the "ear 'oles," it means a hoped-for mobility; for the "lads," an acceptance of a proletarian future, rationalized in different ways, and at the same time, beating up on Pakis and blacks, unwittingly promoted by schooling.

### **Some Concluding Notes**

I have not returned to a discussion of Mrs. Love since I do not have data to examine the progressive moment. But the works reviewed here indicate where we are today. The Birmingham School has not produced a theory of delinquency, and it remains to be seen whether the Progressive-Regressive Method can be a useful

strategy toward that end. I have also not made reference to the Schwendingers' article included in the readings. The reason is that their work has proceeded on quite different grounds. Although we must await the publication of their book, the published chapters provide clues on how they have proceeded.

In the introduction to their article, they describe the data collection on youth formations through participant observation. They write that these youth formations are "relatively autonomous, highly variable, stratified formations...." Their initial analysis (from personal communication) was to construct an abstract model (a model that resembles a property or set of properties of the empirical phenomena), in their case, a sociogram, to apprehend from among the interrelations of the youth formations a basic structure. We learn from the article that three types of adolescents—the Socialite, Vato, and Intellectual—anchor the basic structural relations. From here the analyses become exceedingly complex as the Schwendingers write both horizontally and vertically at different levels of analyses. For example, the wild rogues are similar to, and yet profoundly different from, the greasers discussed in a later chapter. They are similar at the most superficial level in that they are both "lower class" youthful lawbreakers; they are different in that the causes and definitions of youthful behavior differ. The wild rogues are the products of the major changes that were taking place from feudalism to capitalism, and represent the consequences not only of the new means of production, but also of the new bourgeois state and laws to harness labor for profit and to protect and justify the new mode of production. Toward the end of the first chapter, the Schwendingers introduce the concept of marginalization. The concept appears to have different meanings, but it refers to a fundamental process inherent in the forces and relations of production that entail different processes at different stages in the development of capitalism.

The causal conditions that produced the wild rogues focus on the dissolution of petty property relations and the remnants of the precapitalist relations. The production of redundant youth, in the second chapter, focuses on the production and overproduction of the means of production in the 19th century, marginalizing industrial proletarians, through the use of machines and the long-term decline in the rate of accumulation. The Schwendingers then describe the processes of marginalization in this period—the exclusion of youth from the labor market, the prolongation of youth, labor segmentation, and so on, and set the stage for how the causal conditions of marginalization in the 20th century are located in the family and school.

In their analysis of the family and school, the Schwendingers illustrate how the long-term uneven development of labor power that corresponds to the relations of production reproduces what they call the prototypic marginals, the greasers and intellectuals. These are products of advanced capitalism. The Schwendingers indicate that the intellectuals are the least delinquent in a society of youth, and the greasers the most delinquent. But youthful lawbreaking behavior cuts across social class, and in the last chapter, the Schwendingers discuss the prototypic bourgeoisie, or

socialite, who, although less likely to be involved in serious violent and economic forms of delinquency, nevertheless engages in other forms of delinquency.

The mechanism in the Birmingham School model is *resistance*, and in the Schwendingers' work, *marginalization*. The processes of marginalization, as we have seen, are located in the relations of production, while resistance is located in the lived dominance and subordination of a class, or its culture. Thus, the Birmingham School focuses attention on the activities and struggles within the constraints of available forms.

The Birmingham School has essentially constructed a single "ideal type" that distorts reality, but the purpose was not to construct a theory of delinquency. In Willis' work, the model was constructed to understand why working-class kids ended up in working-class jobs; in Stuart Hall et al., it was an effort to relate the sudden harshness in penal sentencing of West Indian youth to policing the crisis in the political economy.

One final note. The Schwendingers make references to the *state* and in one passage, to a worldwide "uneven development." In personal communications, they have advised that these topics are developed in the unpublished chapters.

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