

## Historical Theories of Crime and Delinquency

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*After an exploration of two underlying themes (the tendency among historians to explore crime in terms of punishment and the tension between determinism and indeterminism) that permeate the historical literature, this paper identifies and expounds on four constellations of historical theories that explain crime and delinquency: history of social science explanations, positivism, constructionism, and post-structuralism. Case illustrations detail the significance of social control and critical theories, both of the constructionist constellation, in a historical context. The conclusion touches on the difficult, yet necessary, task of integrating social environments and human behaviors in historical explanations of crime and delinquency.*

**KEYWORDS** *Historical theories, crime, delinquency, structuralism, constructionism, post-structuralism*

The literature that addresses historical theories of crime and delinquency is not extensive. Indeed, several scholars have noted that the field of history has largely ignored the issues of crime and delinquency (Rousseaux, 1996). However, the depth of a few theories clearly compensates for the lack of breadth. Benefiting from centuries of source data, the theories that historians propound are colorful and textured, and they substantiate the underlying claim that crime, criminal activity, and criminal law are contingent on a multiplicity of factors (e.g., time, place, and culture). Drawing from the past, scholars are encouraged to learn from the past and, hopefully, acquire a richer understanding of crime and delinquency.

This literature review is organized according to the philosophical complexity of the theories. It begins with an identification of the underlying

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tenets of historical theory related to crime and delinquency. After presenting these commonalities, four overarching theoretical categories are presented. The first category addresses historical explanations of crime and delinquency identified in the field of criminology. The second category is labeled *structuralism* and takes social, economic, and political factors to identify the multiple causes of crime and delinquency. The third group of theories is labeled *constructionism* to reflect the impact of criminal activity on the ever-changing criminal law in the form of labeling, social control, and critical theories. The fourth and final category is called *post-structuralism* that emphasizes the importance of moving beyond structural explanations to an evaluation of the exchanges of power by multiple actors. The literature review concludes with implications for future inquiry.

## METHODS

Given the paucity of literature, several means were used to gather, review, and evaluate sources and began with historical databases (e.g., America: History and Life, Historical Abstracts, and History Cooperative) using such search terms as *theories*, *crime*, and *delinquency*. Google Scholar was used to identify seminal texts that led to more sources. In addition to electronic databases, the University of California-Berkeley catalog proved to be useful.

### Underlying Themes

Most historical theories of crime and delinquency reflect common themes. First, historians often link *crime* with *punishment* rather than *delinquency* by focusing their attention on the development of institutions (e.g., penitentiaries and criminal law) to deal with crime rather than on the behaviors of individuals. Given the limitations of source materials, historians have been restricted by the availability of documentation and artifacts of the past, including administrative data (McHale & Johnson, 1976). As a result, historical theories often fail to capture criminal and delinquent activities that are punished informally through what Rousseaux (1996) calls “the reluctant litigators theory” wherein the community deals with deviant behaviors informally without resorting to the criminal justice system. White-collar crime is another example of limited documentation except when it is exposed in the media (Knafla, 1996).

Second, the tension between determinism and indeterminism related to a person’s ability to exercise free will permeates historical theories of crime and delinquency. Given the predominance of the institutional perspective of crime and punishment, most historical theories relate to determinism where an individual’s behavior is shaped and defined by external factors (Schafer,

1977). Historians look for causality in structural factors; structuralists look for causality in social, economic, and political factors whereas constructionists focus on criminal law, and post-structuralists emphasize the internalization of external norms. Paradoxically, historians study institutions that operate on the premise of indeterminism or the tenet that people's behaviors are the results of choice or exercising free will (Schafer).

These two themes (crime and punishment, existence of free will) underlie historical theories of crime and delinquency and often distinguish historical theories of crime and delinquency from those emanating from other social sciences. Based on these two themes, this review explores in more detail the theories of crime and delinquency developed by other social science disciplines.

### History of Social Science Explanations

The first group of theories reflects a historical compilation of explanations of crime and delinquency developed by other social science disciplines. The trajectory of explanations ranges from the religious (Rothman, 2002) and biological (Rafter, 1997) to the personal, social, and cultural (Wolfgang, 1979).

Religious explanations of crime and delinquency flourished in the eighteenth century. According to Rothman (2002), most people did not define crime or poverty as social problems but merely as part of the human existence and a fall from grace. Criminal activities resulted from an individual's inherent moral depravity, and crime was not seen as a form of social disorganization. Nevertheless, harsh and punitive measures were applied to those who committed crimes, with little attention to the various levels of gravity of criminal activities. In essence, all crime was sin, and all sin was abhorred in God's eyes. Criminal activities included those that were religious in nature, such as blasphemy, and those committed against other persons. Early white Americans regarded a crime committed against another person as a crime committed against God and looked to the three institutions of family, church, and community to address these sins. The family's responsibility included raising obedient children, and the church was called upon to ensure that families fulfilled their responsibility. Finally, relations among community members provided another mechanism to ensure that families fulfilled their duties to raise respectful children.

The next body of theories that dominated criminology was biological in nature. In her book *Creating Born Criminals*, Rafter (1997) describes the development of eugenic criminology that contributed to a biological and a hereditary understanding of criminality. At the end of the nineteenth century, the belief that people are born criminals permeated criminology. This school of thought rejected the notion that crime is a result of a person's fall from grace and proposed, instead, the idea that criminal tendencies are inherited

and could be recognized by a review of family history and a physical examination. The chief proponent of this school was the Italian criminologist Lombroso who noted that certain physical characteristics (e.g., large jaws and long arms) and weak intelligence could identify born criminals. This genetic school of thought emerged with the eugenics school that helped to create a movement to engineer society by engaging in selective reproduction that, in turn, lost its prominence by the turn of the century.

The biological school of thought lost favor with the rise of interest in the ability of people to improve themselves. Based on the work of Healy, the belief that one was born a criminal and thus doomed to be a criminal was replaced with the idea that criminality was not intrinsic to one's biological composition (Wolfgang, 1979) but more related to a personality that could be altered through the use of appropriate interventions (Platt, 1969).

According to Wolfgang (1979), personal explanations preceded biological explanations at the beginning of the twentieth century. Thomas was one of many social scientists providing explanations of crime and delinquency by focusing on the environment as both the location of criminal activity and the source of criminal behavior. Using a social systems approach, Sutherland developed the concept of differential association that suggests that contact with other criminals can make someone into a criminal. Wolfgang also noted the contributions of Shaw and McKay in the 1930s, who argued that delinquency was the result of social disorganization wherein the internalized values of the disorganized community place the individual at odds with mainstream society.

Finally, in the late 1930s, the cultural studies of Sellin emerged to support the notion that contradictory cultural norms could give rise to delinquency. In a similar way, Cohen in 1955 argued that there is a subculture of criminal activity that is diametrically opposed to mainstream society and, by 1967, Wolfgang and Ferracuti were arguing that there is a subculture that condones the use of violence.

This ebb and flow of various theoretical perspectives represents the historical trends identified by social scientists seeking to explain the causes of crime and delinquency. Based on this historical perspective, some of the explanations of crime and delinquency reflect paradigmatic shifts whereas others represent the efforts of scholars to build on one another's work. This review focuses on the personal, social, and cultural explanations of crime and delinquency by identifying the attempts of historians to explain the evolution of crime and delinquency.

## Structuralism

Historical explanations that are classified as structuralist reflect the factors in the social, economic, and political environments as a way to explain crime and delinquency by emphasizing objectivity over subjectivity. There

are at least eight environmental factors that historians use to explain crime and delinquency: (1) urbanization, (2) industrialization, (3) deindustrialization, (4) demographic changes, (5) changes in residential composition, (6) poverty, (7) war, and (8) behavior of law. The structuralist school does not play a prominent role in the contemporary explanation of crime and delinquency found in current historical research, but its contributions merit a brief overview.

The destabilizing effects of urbanization are well documented in the literature and include theories based on conservative politics, Marxism, classical sociology, American sociology, and European cultural history (Johnson, 1995). According to Knafla (1996), urbanization results in a loss of community and social order. Urban environments provide the social heterogeneity and anonymity that make it easier for criminals to conceal themselves whereby traditional regulatory institutions (e.g., the church and the communal networks) lose their potency (McHale & Johnson, 1976). With anonymity and the absence of traditional social controls, perceived opportunity may entice potential criminals into committing criminal acts if they believe the benefits outweigh the risks of capture and punishment. Using empirical evidence from Germany, Johnson (1995) has argued against the urbanization explanation by suggesting that material hardship, marginalized social status, and values are more powerful determinants of criminal activity than urbanization. Nevertheless, urbanization as a historical cause of crime and delinquency continues to play a prominent role in the literature.

Related to urbanization, theories of industrialization feature changes in the types of criminal activities committed, a “shift from violence to theft” (Rousseaux, 1996). Assuming that crime is a quest for social power, this theory hypothesizes that the types of criminal activities endemic to a given society are contingent upon that society’s stage of industrialization (Wolfgang, 1979). In a pre-industrialized society, honor and status are prized, and the quest for social power through crime emphasizes violence against other persons (Johnson, 1995). In an industrialized society, money and market status are prized (Johnson), resulting in white-collar crime related to fraud and violation of intellectual property rights (Wolfgang). In Chicago, Haller (1970) explains the rise of underworld crime of professional thievery and business and labor racketeering often connected to a person’s ethnic minority status and the quest for social power. Underworld figures held important civic positions, and they relied on clandestine patronage arrangements with politicians and police to evade the criminal justice system. Though “civilized” crime tended to replace random violence, Rousseaux (1996) argues that there is no evidence that the people who live in industrialized countries are less aggressive toward one another than those who live in non-industrialized countries. Moreover, Tonry (1999) argues that industrialization requires the development of regulatory institutions (e.g., schools, factories, and the military) that inculcate the importance of deference to authority and the need

for order. These regulatory institutions have the potential to counteract the inclination to engage in white-collar crime.

In recent decades, the United States has experienced the converse of industrialization, namely, de-industrialization. Historians and sociologists alike (Wilson, 1996) believe that de-industrialization can also explain criminal activities, especially related to the impact on family structure. Ousey (2000) argues that the increase in female-headed households helps to explain the increase in crime rates.

Other demographic factors that help to explain crime include changes in cohort size of those committing crimes and changes in residential composition. Wolfgang (1979) claims that the post-World War II baby boom created a large, "crimogenic cohort." According to this theory, the degree of criminal activity reflects the number of people who are potential criminals. Wolfgang also reviews changes in residential composition to explain changing perceptions of crime. With the overthrow of restrictive covenants in 1949, the composition of residential neighborhoods became more heterogeneous as racial- and ethnic-minority families were able to move into neighborhoods that had previously been restricted to white families. As neighborhoods increased in heterogeneity, perceptions of crime increased as well. Thus, not only migration from rural to urban environments but migration within an urban environment have impacted perceptions of crime throughout history.

Throughout history, the factors of poverty and war have also been linked with crime rates. Poverty, it was assumed, provided an incentive for criminal activity (Brauer, 1982). If poverty were to be reduced, crime rates would fall concurrently. McHale and Johnson (1976) also expound on the impoverishment of the working class that provided an incentive for criminal activities. Capitalism, according to the theory, contributed to an increase in poverty and, in turn, contributed to criminal activity. Historical theories differ with respect to the implications of war on criminal activities. Some would argue that in a time of extreme social, economic, and political upheaval lawlessness would abound, and rational people would take advantage of this opportunity to engage in criminal activity for personal gain (Knafla, 1996). Others, like Rousseaux (1996), argue that the relationship between war and crime is ambiguous.

The last structuralist factor to explain crime and delinquency relates to the behavior of the law (Reidel & Welsh, 2008). It focuses on criminal law rather than criminals and criminal activities. Simply stated, the behavior of the law suggests that the number of laws regulating criminal activities is positively correlated with the number of criminal activities recorded (e.g., the more laws, the more documentation of crime). Though this theory has its own logic, there has been little historical evidence to support it.

In sum, structuralist historical theories suggest that certain factors (e.g., urbanization, industrialization, deindustrialization, population changes, resi-

dential pattern changes, poverty, war, and quantity of laws) help to explain criminal activities. In contrast, the constructionist theories question the very basis of structuralist theories by deconstructing the relationship between criminal activity and criminal law.

## Constructionism

According to constructionist theories, crime is in the eyes of the beholder, and the beholder is the law. Though crime is deviant, not all deviance is crime. Who defines criminal activity? Constructionists review the changes in criminal law throughout history to suggest that definitions of crime fluctuate throughout time, noting that acts throughout time have been criminalized, decriminalized, and recriminalized (Friedman, 1993). Abortion is an example of an activity that was normative, then criminalized, and subsequently decriminalized (Reagan, 1997). Constructionist theories focus on criminals and criminal activities in terms of criminal law and all parties involved in the criminal justice system (Rousseaux, 1996). Society determines deviancy. When deviancy is perceived to threaten the state, sanctions against deviant behavior become codified into law (Scarpitti & Nielsen, 1999). Thus, laws that regulate criminal activities represent society's strongest response to deviant behaviors. Hence, constructionists believe that all crime is inherently political (Friedman, 1993). Laws, in a sense, create crime.

This section presents three categories of constructionist theories (e.g., labeling theory, social control theory, and critical theory). Labeling theory suggests that criminal law serves to reify middle-class values and, as a byproduct, stratifies society on the basis of conformity to those values. In contrast, social control theory argues that criminal law purposively stratifies and marginalizes certain populations for social, economic, and political elites to maintain "law and order." Finally, critical theory provides a counterweight to social control theory to diffuse power and to acknowledge the centrality of oppressed populations. The three categories are not mutually exclusive because they blend into each other. The distinctions among the three are subtle. Historians have presented numerous case studies through the lens of constructionism but rarely explicate the theories through which they are pursuing their research.

### LABELING THEORY

Within the context of constructionist theories, labeling theory assumes a benevolent, or at least neutral, stance toward the criminal lawmaking process. Labeling theory proposes that criminal lawmaking results from a pluralistic process in which different groups battle in the legislative arena to codify their values (Scarpitti & Nielsen, 1999). Both Hagan's (1980) conception of moral functionalism and Scarpitti and Nielsen's (1999) conception of value

consensus suggest that laws reflect commonly held values that are believed to uphold public welfare. The values that are enshrined in law are those of the pluralistic majority. According to moral functionalism and value consensus, laws also are a social contract whereby people agree to concede a degree of freedom and to abide by the laws in exchange for the common good. As norms may not be self-enforcing in a pluralistic society (Friedman, 1993), laws ensure that those who do not abide by codified values are subject to punishment.

To expand the usefulness of labeling theory, Pfohl (1985) uses a historical lens to address deviance (in addition to crime) to identify the battle to establish normative behavior whereby the winner can claim normative status and the loser is perceived to exist outside the boundaries of so-called proper society. The winners have the privilege of defining the losers. As such, deviants are labeled because they threaten the prevailing notion of the common good.

The distinction between labeling theory and social control theory is subtle. Labeling theory is based on the benevolent and pluralistic complexities of the lawmaking process. However, lawmaking does not occur in an arena of balanced power positions. It is difficult (if not impossible) to find historical case studies that explicitly support labeling theory given the care with which historians consider social, economic, political, and cultural contexts. Historians, thus, are more likely to implicitly identify with social control theory that situates the lawmaking process squarely in an imbalance of power relations.

#### SOCIAL CONTROL THEORY

Social control theory appears to be the most developed body of theory that historians have used to explain crime and delinquency. With its roots in a Marxist tradition, it posits that criminal law is a tool used by social, economic, and political elites to maintain and perpetuate social, economic, and political order to support their interests (Hagan, 1980). Rothman (2002) contends that concomitant with urbanization and industrialization, the population exploded, cities grew, and enlightenment ideas spread where penal codes replaced traditional methods of social control (i.e., family, church, and community). The key to social control theory is the use of law to coerce human behavior. Though elites could maintain social, economic, and political order through physical restraint, a more effective approach, according to social control theory, is control through the legislative process (Turk as cited in Reidel & Welsh, 2008). The use of democratic processes gives laws their moral credibility and justification (Turk as cited in Reidel & Welsh).

In essence, social control theory views crime as political and linked to the lawmaking process. Social control theory acknowledges that pluralism



is an intrinsic part of democratic lawmaking and that conflict, not harmony, is a building block of criminal law (Muraskin, 1976). Social control theory acknowledges that lawmaking does not emerge in a vacuum but rather is embedded in power relations. Hence, those with access to power are likely to shape the law to suit their interests and to maintain their privileged positions (Muraskin) and to squelch the imposition of laws that are not conducive to their interests, such as those that prosecute white-collar crime or perceived immoral acts that cut across classes like extramarital affairs (Friedman, 1993). Nevertheless, as long as the populace maintains the perception that the law is morally justified, social order is maintained and authorities retain power (Turk as cited in Reidel & Welsh, 2008). Crime is a status given to those who resist norms (Turk as cited in Reidel & Welsh). Criminal laws serve as a tool to deal with norm violators without resorting to what the populace perceives as unjustifiable physical force.

The elites, defined broadly to include persons belonging to the middle-class, have had vested interests in shaping criminal law. The middle class was interested in the formation of criminal law, particularly at the turn of the twentieth century, out of a sense of class uneasiness (Muraskin, 1976). The perceived decline of order and morality had a special signification for this group (Muraskin). The construction of social problems required new kinds of experts (Mayer, 1983), roles that middle-class members (Platt, 1969), were eager to fill. Muraskin cautions against the historical interpretation of social control purely to support socioeconomic interests. He argues that ideology also plays an important role. Muraskin believes that ideology genuinely motivated some middle-class reformers to codify middle-class values into new laws. Ideas, states Muraskin, may have material contexts, but they may also have idealistic aims.

There are several historical accounts that build upon social control theory. Regan's (1997) *When Abortion Was a Crime: Women, Medicine, and Law in the United States, 1867–1973* emphasizes the criminalization of abortion as a means to enforce traditional norms of womanhood and motherhood. In *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic*, Rothman (2002) argues that the underlying purpose of asylums was not the rehabilitation of individuals but rather an effort to maintain social order. Musto (1973) argues that the thrust to create drug control policies emanated from social anxiety among white people about the perceived threat posed by racial and ethnic minorities (e.g., African-Americans and Chinese immigrants) in *The American Disease: Origins of Narcotic Control*. Finally, Platt's (1969) chronicle of the child-saving movement in *The Child Savers: The Invention of Delinquency* reflects middle-class efforts to control the lives of poor, immigrant youths vis-à-vis juvenile delinquent status. Platt's study provides an excellent example of a historian's use of social control theory and provides the focus for the next section.

## JUVENILE DELINQUENCY AND SOCIAL CONTROL

Platt's (1969) groundbreaking history moved beyond the structuralist tradition to argue that delinquency and deviance are "ascriptive" labels by tracing the constructions of laws that demarcate the bounds of juvenile delinquency. Child saving was a movement at the turn of the twentieth century led by middle-class, well-educated reformers who viewed urban life as a breeding ground of moral decay that made children susceptible to delinquency. Philanthropic zeal and religious optimism permeated the vision of these reformers. The optimism was based on the therapeutic interventions offered by doctors to reform children in an era of declining support for social Darwinism. These reformers wanted to strike at the root of crime by inculcating children, especially immigrant and poor children, with white, middle-class values (e.g., the primacy of the nuclear family and the role of women in the home). These reformers sought to prove that delinquents could be transformed into law-abiding citizens.

Reformers took children who had committed delinquent activities (and those who exhibited the potential to commit delinquent activities) from their homes and placed them in reformatories with the alleged goal of providing "normal homes" for underprivileged children. The child savers defined juvenile delinquent activities as drinking, roaming the streets, staying out late at night, and begging. In short, delinquent activities were those in which poor, immigrant children were likely to engage. Defining these activities as delinquent gave members of mainstream/dominant society a window of surveillance into the lives of poor, immigrant families.

The child savers placed juvenile delinquents in reformatories to provide moral training, education, and job training activities. Built in the countryside, it was believed that reformatories could counteract the deleterious effects of growing up in an improper home or in an unsuitable environment. Children were often confined in these reformatories for indeterminate sentences and without due process. Although ostensibly defined to reform, they functioned as institutions of restraint and control designed to intimidate and to control poor, immigrant families.

Platt's account of the child-saving movement effectively demonstrates how commonly perceived criminal activities can be socially deconstructed by illustrating the ways that privileged groups can manipulate the law to impose their worldview on others and promote their interests. In the case of the child-saving movement, reformers were able to codify white, middle-class values as normative and develop new professions to deal with juvenile delinquents. Women in particular benefited from the creation of new occupations as child saving was perceived as a natural extension of the domestic sphere. Despite the cogency of Platt's account, his argument does not take into account the humanitarian interests that may have motivated some of the reformers in the child-saving movement. Nevertheless, this

history opened the door into a new line of inquiry in the study of crime and delinquency.

#### CRITICAL THEORY

The final category of constructionist theory is critical theory that serves as a bridge between social control theory and post-structuralist theory. In contrast to the top-down approach of social control theory, critical theory embraces reciprocity by focusing on the capacities of marginalized groups to use deviance as a form of resistance. Like the other constructionist theories, critical theory claims that those in power are able to define deviance as a way to de-politicize acts of resistance and to support the power of elites. Departing from other constructionist groups, critical theory suggests that social control is not necessarily a top-down affair but can result from the internalization of elite-sanctioned norms by engaging the will of oppressed persons. The dual emphasis on power and engagement of the will of the oppressed can be seen in the works of historian Thompson, who sought to reveal the simplistic dichotomies of social control theory.

#### E.P. THOMPSON AND CRITICAL THEORY

E.P. Thompson's works (e.g., *The Making of the English Working Class* [1964]; *Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture* [1991]; and *Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of the Black Act* [1975]) attempt to build on the "historically impoverished" Marxist underpinnings of social control theory (Eastwood, 2000, p. 648). In *Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of the Black Act*, Thompson chronicles the legislation of the Black Act that sought to protect property by using the threat of capital punishment. The act was used by the "propertied" against the "landless" as a legislative weapon in the arsenal of social control. Though the act could be used as a means of social control, it actually limited the power of the elites based on its universal applicability; in essence, it controlled relations between social classes while also applying to members of all social classes.

Thompson also moves beyond social control theory by recognizing the power of the landless, who were not mystified by the law and did not assume that it was necessarily justified and legitimate. As a result, Thompson celebrates the working class's small acts of deviance that resisted the implementation of the Black Act. As Eastwood (2000) observes, "Resistance to enclosure, hostility to the game laws, passionate commitment to popular amusement in the face of polite reformers, rough music, arson, and crimes of anonymity were seen by Thompson as offering a rich resource enabling plebeian society to constrain patrician power" (p. 652).

Though Thompson's works transcend the staunch Marxist underpinnings of social control theory, social class still remains his most salient factor in determining how laws are formed and applied to the landless. For him,

criminals and criminal activities are tightly intertwined with class-related factors as they relate to the law. In contrast, the next theoretical school argues that power extends beyond class constructs.

#### POST-STRUCTURALISM

The seminal text in historical post-structuralist theories of crime and delinquency is Foucault's (1975/1977) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. His work focuses on the concept of power that he defines as diffuse and productive. According to O'Brien's (1989) reading of Foucault, power can create its own legitimation. To unearth the diffusion of power and its constructive potency, Foucault proposes genealogy that can detect shifts in power-knowledge regimes wherein one power-knowledge regime can displace another as it relates to crime (Foucault). By extending critical theory, Foucault argues that power is not a matter of domination but rather a matter of circulation. Power is not housed solely in political and economic institutions; it is also exercised in everyday acts. Moreover, power is not confined to mere acts; it also shapes behavior. It reaches into the innermost psyche to control the body. In addition, power cannot be reduced only to class and economic interests. Though it may serve class and economic interests, power is interwoven and interconnected (O'Brien), and it exists in multiple locations of power (O'Brien). Thus, Foucault shuns theoretical explanations that rely solely on class struggle or legislative processes but looks instead to the importance of feelings, love, conscience, and instinct (Hunt, 1989). He aims to show that what constructionist theories take as monolithic and homogeneous is actually heterogeneous (Hunt).

To apply his genealogy of power-knowledge to crime and punishment, Foucault analyzes prisons in France at the end of the eighteenth century and notes the shift from punishing the crime to punishing the criminal. To punish the criminal, a bevy of officials, ranging from judges to predecessors of social work, carefully examined the biography of the individual. This examination was an exercise of power; it permitted the acquisition of knowledge, it permitted surveillance, it deprived persons of the fullness of their humanity and reduced them to classifiable entities, and it generated a set of comparative data. The prison introduced the dichotomy between the mind and the body, and its goal was to discipline the body (O'Brien). The rise of the prison grew concurrently with the rise of schools and factories. To substantiate his thesis, Foucault examines state documents as well as family letters, the latter to deny the centrality of the state (O'Brien).

#### FUTURE INQUIRY

In 1978, O'Brien drew attention to the neglect of theories of crime and

delinquency by historians. She challenged her colleagues to explore the “territory yet to be discovered” (p. 518). Though crime and delinquency remain largely unexplored areas in the field of history, Foucault’s seminal work on prisons seems to represent the zenith of historians’ interest in crime and delinquency. Even though sociology dominates the academic discussion of crime and delinquency, it has acknowledged the value that historical inquiry brings to a discussion of crime and delinquency and the potential contribution of history to enriching an understanding of crime and delinquency theories (Ousey, 2000). Historical inquiry promotes reflection on what has been taken for granted and can propel studies of crime and delinquency toward new directions in the future (Courtwright, 2004).

Foucault provides a promising line of inquiry that can dissolve the dichotomies between determinism and indeterminism to acknowledge other factors that can explain the causes of crime and delinquency. Fass (2003) argues that social historians have succeeded in recent years to explain the behavioral tendencies of social groups, and cultural historians have succeeded in framing the daily lives of ordinary people and the exercise of individual choice. She notes that both are important as social history frames the big picture, and cultural history sheds light on the experiences of individuals. Thus, historians, such as social workers, strive to understand the deeply intertwined relationships among and between social environments and human behaviors.

## CONCLUSION

The distinguishing factor of each identified school (i.e., history of social science explanations, structuralism, constructionism, and post-structuralism) is the locus of power. In the synthesis of explanations throughout history, social science academics and researchers have the power to explain crime and delinquency drawing from religion, biology, psychology, sociology, and anthropology. In the case of structuralism, explanatory power is ascribed to external factors (e.g., urbanization, industrialization, deindustrialization, population changes, residential pattern changes, poverty, war, and quantity of laws). Constructionism locates power in the ability to label and to codify. According to this school of thought, those with power are privileged to define and, thus, to explain crime and delinquency. Finally, post-structuralism splinters power into quotidian exchanges that take place over time to define and to redefine crime vis-à-vis normality. Progressing through the schools of thought, explanatory power becomes increasingly difficult to pinpoint. It becomes increasingly difficult to define terms such as “crime” and “criminal” as it is recognized that these terms are not self-evident; rather, these terms are nested in a vast web of power relations that implicate all human behaviors and all people. The suggested direction for future inquiry (e.g.,

the juxtaposition of social and cultural history) further builds on the tradition of continuing to splinter power by locating power in social environments, human behaviors, and the mutually reinforcing relationship between them.

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