

Introduction to the Study of Social Control

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This book focuses on the impact of social threat on the pattern and shape of deviance and crime control institutions, organizations, programs, and policies. This is an important subject of study for two reasons. One, the financial cost of supporting these institutions, organizations, programs, and policies around the world is staggering and has sharply increased in the West, particularly in the United States, since World War II. Two, these institutions, organizations, programs, and policies substantially affect the structure and organization of society and people's daily lives. While sociologists and other social scientists have only recently become interested in deviance and crime control, it is a special case of social control, a subject of which sociologists have had a long-standing interest. The discussion of deviance and crime control thus begins with a historical review of the sociological study of social control.

History of the Concept of Social Control

The concept of social control has a long history in the social sciences. Among sociologists the concept gained prominence at the turn of the last century when sociologists were confronted with the problem of social order in the emerging urban centers. To a large part, sociologists, like Ross and Cooley, attributed this to the absence of primary social relationships in urban society. These social relationships were thought to be the mechanism through which the social order is passed from one generation to another. From the turn of the twentieth century to about 1930, sociologists studied how ecological forces (industrialization and urbanization) created social conditions (social

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mobility, weak primary relationships, migration, and cultural diversity), which in turn weakened social control, which increased deviance. Sociologists studied a litany of institutions and organizations, such as the family, education, law, religion, and occupations that could function as a source of social control in an urban environment and thereby maintain the social order. Because social control was viewed as necessary for social order, during this era the study of social control was equated with the study of sociology.

This era came to an end in the early 1930s when many sociologists came to believe that urban centers were not necessarily disorganized and lacking social order but were just organized differently than traditional rural agricultural societies. They argued, not that there was less social control in urban than rural environments, but that similar social control processes in urban and rural environments led to different types and forms of social order. They were interested less in the degree or level of social control—implicitly assumed to be constant across different forms of social order—than in the social conditions that give rise to these different forms of social order. Perhaps one of the best examples is Sutherland's theory of differential association. He argued that deviance from the norms of the conventional society is frequently in conformance to the norms of another social order in conflict with the norms of the conventional order. Indeed, his theory of deviance is a theory of how people are socialized into the norms of unconventional social orders and how these orders are passed on.

By the 1940s the structural-functional perspective had taken hold in American sociology, and by the 1950s it assumed a dominant position. Assuming a very high degree of normative consensus, order, consistency, and integration, the perspective reduced the study of social control to the study of acts of deviance that disrupt an otherwise integrated social system. Social control was generally defined as those acts, relationships, processes, and structures that maintain social conformity. There were numerous conceptual efforts to define, refine, and categorize these acts, relationships, processes, and structures. Reiss (1951), for example, distinguished between personal and social control. Nye (1958) emphasized the role of family relationships for both types of control. These emphases and distinctions are reflected in the latter work of Hirschi (1969), who attempted to delineate the social relationships (such as social attachment to conventional others, commitment to conventional activities and roles, and involvement in conventional activities and roles), that control people from acting on their motives to deviate.

During the 1960s, the critique of the structural-functional per-

spective had a profound impact on the conceptualization of social control. Of interest here is the structural-functionalist assumption that social norms are reasonably clear and thus that norm violations are equally clear: they can be defined, and efforts to control them can be defined independently of the norms themselves. Hence, we can study the effectiveness of social control in actually controlling norm violations. Theories of the 1960s (Lemert 1951; Becker 1963; Scheff 1966) questioned these claims and turned the above question on its head. They argued that social norms are generally not very clearly defined; rather, they are frequently quite vague and dependent on situational circumstances. Indeed, what is deviant depends on what is negatively reacted to, what is not tolerated in social interaction, or what is sanctioned in social interaction. We learn about proper behavior, not by learning about abstract norms and then applying them to specific situations, but by observing what is tolerated and punished in specific situations. Hence, because deviance is defined in terms of social control, the latter not the former should be the focus of study. This perspective drew attention to the study of acts, particularly acts of punishment, that attempt to control social interaction. Numerous studies examined who gets arrested, prosecuted, and sentenced. To the extent to which social control acts, relationships, processes, and structures can be defined independently of deviance, the societal-reaction theorists argued that social control generally does not decrease deviance; it increases it. They proceeded to delineate the mechanisms by which this occurs.

In sum, the study of social control has been an integral part of sociology since its inception. Originally, the concept was defined as any structure, process, relationship, or act that contributes to the social order. Indeed, the study of social order and social control were indistinguishable. This conceptual problem was evident in the early Chicago perspective in which the concepts "social disorganization," "social control," and "deviance" were not conceptually distinguished. Deviance was thought to be the consequence of a lack of social control and was often used to measure its presence; areas of a city with high rates of deviance were assumed to have low levels of social control. In the late Chicago perspective, by the 1930s and 1940s, the level of social control was no longer a significant variable. It was implicitly construed as a constant and only the content was thought to vary. Areas of a city were thought to be differentially organized. Within the structural-functionalism of the late 1940s and 1950s, the study of social control was further allocated to the sidelines, dealing with residual problems of deviance in a social system assumed to be gen-

erally integrated and well functioning. However, by the early 1960s society was, again, assumed to be considerably less orderly and integrated and, again, the concept rose to the forefront, as both a dependent and an independent variable. Studies examined both its causes and consequences. Thus, by the mid-1960s, the intellectual ground had been laid for a renewed scholarly interest in the study of social control. We now turn to the social conditions that focused this interest into the study of crime control during the 1970s and 1980s.

Crime Control

By crime control we mean those activities authorized by a governmental unit that are intended directly or indirectly to reduce crime. By "authorized" we mean that the activities are legal—that is, they do not violate any laws. Legal activities to reduce crime can be engaged in by governmental organizations (the police), nongovernmental organizations (private police and security units of corporations), collective citizen groups, (the Guardian Angels), and citizens acting individually (purchasing secure locks).

Growth in Crime Control During the 1960s and 1970s

Since the middle 1960s large-scale social surveys (GSS, Harris, Gallup, NORC, NCS) have reported that a very high percentage of the U.S. population is concerned about crime and fears being victimized (Garofalo 1979; Skogan and Maxfield 1981; Yin 1985), and that this percentage has been steadily increasing since the mid-1960s. Using Gallup polls and the General Social Science survey, Stinchcombe et al. (1980) report that this percentage reached about forty-five percent in the middle-to-late 1970s with the major increase occurring between 1968 and 1974. More recent reports suggest that the figure has remained at this high level. Indeed, concern about crime and the fear of crime have reached such proportions that they themselves have become the subject of considerable study.

Perhaps in direct response to these public concerns, crime control activities and resources have also increased significantly since the 1960s, particularly from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s. Consider the police. From 1950 to 1965 cities employed approximately 1.9 police officers per thousand population; but by 1975 that number had increased to 2.5. This trend was accentuated for cities over 250,000 in

population. From 1950 to 1965 they employed approximately 2.4 officers per thousand population; but by 1970 that number increased to 2.8, and by 1975 it increased to 3.6, stabilizing thereafter at about 3.3. As might be expected, a similar trend is evident in police expenditures. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that police expenditures per capita adjusted for inflation, while increasing slowly from World War II to 1960, accelerated from the early 1960s to the late 1970s. From 1946 to 1962 it increased seventy-six percent, approximately 4.4 percent annually, but from 1962 to 1977 it increased 128 percent, approximately eight percent annually. Since then it has remained relatively constant. From the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, the arrest rate also increased substantially. From 1965 to 1975 it increased from 3,695 to 4,455 per one hundred thousand population (twenty-one percent) for all crimes and from 622 to 1,061 (seventy-one percent) for index crimes, whereas for the previous five years and for the following five years the rate remained relatively stable.

Consider imprisonment. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that since World War II the prison population of the U.S. slowly increased from a low of 98 per one hundred thousand population in 1945 to 109 in 1950, 112 in 1955, 117 in 1960, and then briefly decreased to 108 in 1965 and 96 in 1970, perhaps reflecting the demand for young males made by the Vietnam War. After the war it sharply and steadily increased to 111 in 1975, 138 in 1980, and 201 in 1985. To give these figures even more meaning, consider the prevalence rate of imprisonment. For 1979, Langan and Greenfeld (1985) calculate that 0.18 percent of the U.S. population and as much as 1.66 percent of black males are imprisoned in any one day. By aggregating the probabilities of serving a first sentence at age thirteen through age eighty-four, they estimate the lifetime prevalence of imprisonment. Assuming the 1979 rates over a person's lifetime (they are already higher today), approximately 2.7 percent of the population, 5.1 percent of all males and 18.6 percent of all black males will experience imprisonment during their lifetime.

Starting with the War on Crime program, initiated by the Johnson administration and continued by the Nixon administration, billions of dollars have been funneled into the criminal justice system. Chapman et al. (1975) report that all levels of government spent about \$3.3 billion for crime control in 1960, but by 1973 that figure had risen to \$13 billion. This is just not a matter of inflation. Statistics show that an increasing proportion of the GNP was being allocated to crime control during those years. The Center for Research on Criminal Justice (1975) estimates that the proportion of the GNP spent on the criminal

justice system increased from one-half percent in 1955 to a full one percent in 1971.

In sum, statistics show that crime control as measured by crime control activity (such as arrest and imprisonment rates), by the supporting infrastructure (such as police size), and by the expenditures to support them have steadily increased since World War II, and that the increase has accelerated since the early 1960s, particularly from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s.

Consequences of Crime Control

This expansion of crime control is important because of its consequences for society. The most widely studied consequence is the deterrence of crime. Indeed, most research on crime control studies the effectiveness of control organizations and programs—particularly institutional forms of punishment—for deterring crime. Whether these organizations and programs do or do not control crime, they are an integral part of society and have numerous foreseen and unforeseen consequences for society.

Perhaps the structural-functionalists, starting with Durkheim, were among the first to recognize this. They have pointed out that crime, primarily through the societal reaction to it (such as punishment), functions to maintain the social order; that is, to maintain social boundaries and to build social solidarity and cohesiveness. Others have noted the negative consequences of crime control institutions and programs. First and foremost, they are enormously expensive. As just noted, the present criminal justice system in the U.S. consumes billions of dollars on policing, prosecuting, and sentencing people. Additionally, crime control, whether just or unjust, is always an intrusion into the daily lives of citizens. Many of its consequences have not been fully recognized. For example, only recently have scholars begun to discuss the economic consequences of penal work units, such as farms and road gangs, for local (Adamson 1984) and national (Connor 1972) economies, and the consequences of imprisoning a high proportion of young black males on the family structure of blacks.

In sum, because of the rapid expansion of crime control in the 1960s and 1970s and perhaps of a growing realization of its consequences for individuals and society, crime control has become the form of social control that has been most studied during the 1970s. To a large extent, these studies are isolated from the studies of other forms of deviance and crime control, such as the mental health sys-

tem; and to a large extent, they use the individual as the unit of analysis, examining how various crime control activities, like arresting, prosecuting, and sentencing, are affected by the legal, psychological, and social characteristics of people. Because these microlevel studies are well organized and synthesized, constituting a clearly defined literature, they are not the subject of this book. Some studies use collectives—organizations and communities—as the unit of analysis, examining how deviance and crime control patterns are affected by social structures. Most of this research takes the form of historical case studies that illustrate rather than test sociological perspectives on deviance and crime control (Erikson 1966; Harring 1983); most of it focuses on only one organization, program, or policy of control within the criminal justice, mental health, or welfare systems; and most of these studies, isolated from each other, do not constitute a recognized body of research, “a literature,” and their implications for a general macrotheory of deviance and crime control are not exploited. The general purpose of this book is to organize this research into a theoretical literature.

Theoretical Perspectives

Most of these studies can be organized within one of three theoretical perspectives: economic, structural-functionalist, and conflict.

Economic Perspective

Within this perspective, crime control research is generally macro-comparative and theory testing, and it constitutes a recognized body of research that bears on general economic theory. Hence, it cannot and should not be ignored by other social scientists.

The perspective (Becker 1968; Ehrlich 1973; Schmidt and Witte 1984) assumes that people have relatively stable preferences or interests, that they weigh the benefits and costs of behavior alternatives, and that they behave so as to maximize the ratio of benefits to costs. The study of crime control is always considered with regard to its impact on crime, particularly with developing policies and programs to control it. Crime control and crime are thus part of one general model composed of three equations that predict: (1) criminal behavior (crime generation equation); (2) crime control activities, such as arrests and convictions, that affect the cost of criminal behavior (production function equation); and (3) crime control resources, such as

(e.g., police size and salaries), and the organization of labor (e.g., two-officer patrols and high-density patrolling) on crime control activities (e.g., the certainty of arrest).

Crime control resources (capital and labor) are viewed as a positive function of community fiscal capacity and workload, such as crime rates (equation 3). These resources are thought to be constrained by a community's fiscal capacity, in the sense that a rich community can afford more control per capita (as it can afford more social services in general) than can a poor community (Phillips and Votey 1981). Work in the 1950s and 1960s focused on the effect of a community's mean income, its tax rate, and intergovernmental transfers on crime control resources (Weicher 1970). By the 1970s, interest shifted to the effect of crime rates (workload) on resources. As crime increases, citizens are thought to demand more control services. They are willing to increase revenues and to support political candidates who advocate strong crime control (McPheters and Stronge 1974; Phillips and Votey 1981; Carr-Hill and Stern 1979). Indeed, much of the work during and after the 1970s has focused on estimating the reciprocal effects of crime rates and crime control resources.

In sum, economists approach this issue as part of a clearly specified model, linking crime rates and crime control, which can be derived from a general economic theory of behavior. Sociologists could learn much from the logical and empirical rigor of this work. Yet, the theory—particularly the three-equation model of crime and crime control—is built on some very questionable assumptions (Loftin and McDowall 1982), which direct research away from some fundamental questions.

Two assumptions, regarding interests and power, are particularly relevant to the study of crime control. First, crime is assumed to be more or less costly to all citizens, and thus all are assumed to be motivated and interested in controlling it. The power to influence crime control policy is equated with the vote, and elections are equated with a free market where information on candidates' policies is fully available (Becker 1968; Ehrlich 1973; Phillips and Votey 1981). In effect, people are thought to have similar and enlightened self-interests regarding crime control and equal power to influence policy. These assumptions depoliticize and direct attention to the aggregate demand for crime control and to the objective social conditions that influence that demand, such as crime rates and community resources.

The two assumptions should be considered very carefully. Interests and motivations to control crime are not self-evident. Indeed, they seem to be quite variable—varying over time, among societies, and among social statuses within societies. Such interests may vary

with the rate of victimization experienced by each status and by the needs of each status to protect itself and its property. Perhaps those who can afford to live in low-crime neighborhoods and to insure their property against theft (the very rich), as well as those who have little to lose (the very poor), have a minimal interest in crime control, compared to those who have something to lose but cannot afford to protect it (the middle class). While the right to vote may be equally distributed in many Western societies, information on candidates' policies and the resources to influence them are generally not equally distributed. Economists appear to be generally unconcerned either in explaining the distribution of interests in crime control and the distribution of power to influence policy, or in taking these distributions into account in explaining variation in crime control among social units.

Structural-Functionalist Perspective

The structural-functional perspective traditionally conceives of society as integrated and orderly. It assumes that there is a general consensus on goals and values, that general needs for survival can be identified, that social structures (persistent patterns of behavior) function to maintain society's values, goals, and needs, and that social structures can be explained by these functions. Rapid change in the social structure is conceived as an extraordinary event which is brought about by an equally extraordinary event in the external environment of the society.

While "modern or neo" structural-functionalism may not make many of these assumptions, much contemporary social control theory and research is guided by them. The structure of crime control, as of any other behavior, is thought to maintain society's values, goals, and needs, particularly needs for social control, and it is thought to be explained by these functions. To the extent that the structure of crime control is effective—functional—it is assumed to persist and remain stable, only changing in response to extraordinary events in the external environment.

This perspective has some general similarities to the economic perspective. Both assume that there is a consensus and stability of values and goals (in economic terms, preferences and interests) and that persistent patterns of crime control come into existence and are maintained because they contribute to society's values and goals. While economists explicate the underlying processes in terms of enlightened self-interests and market mechanisms, structural-functionalists talk more vaguely about social values and hidden feed-

whether or not patterns of crime and crime control can be explained by their consequences.

Change in punishment. Within the structural-functional perspective on crime control, social change tends to be treated as an extraordinary event. Yet, from time to time, social systems, even those that are predominantly stable, experience events (e.g., political movements, immigration, economic inflation and depression, and war) that threaten the social order. According to this perspective, people respond to these threats with acts that reaffirm and strengthen their collective values and identity. In times of social stress, simple norm infractions are magnified and take on great symbolic significance, whereas in normal times they may just be ignored. Hence, during times of stress we might expect little tolerance and considerable punishment for norm violations.

Some support for this proposition can be found in historical studies, especially in studies on witchcraft. Erikson (1966), Currie (1968), and Ben-Yehuda (1980) interpret changes in the punishment of witchcraft as a response to boundary crises precipitated by socially disruptive events, such as an influx of culturally different people or a technological revolution. Yet, as previously indicated, most of these studies illustrate rather than test the theory. They are steeped in the contextual detail of a particular time and place, making comparisons across time and across studies difficult. Pivotal concepts, such as "boundary crisis," are not clearly defined so that they can be operationalized across historical contexts.

Inverarity (1976) attempts to test this general theory by examining the link between mechanical solidarity and repressive punishment. He examines a sample of parishes in post-Civil War Louisiana that are assumed to have undergone a boundary crisis precipitated by the Populist movement. Following Durkheim, he assumes that a social crisis precipitates an increase in punishment only in parishes whose mechanical solidarity is strong. Measuring mechanical solidarity as the percentage of blacks, the level of urbanization, and the level of religious homogeneity, and measuring repressive punishment as the number of lynchings, he reports support for the hypothesis: mechanical solidarity coupled with a social crisis increases repressive punishment. This work has been extensively criticized, perhaps because it claims to be one of the few rigorous tests of the functional thesis (Pope and Ragin 1977; Wasserman 1977; Bohrnstedt 1977; Bagozzi 1977; Berk 1977). For example, critics have questioned whether the post-

Civil War Populist movement in Louisiana really constituted a boundary crisis and whether the above indicators constitute a valid operationalization of mechanical solidarity.

Stability of punishment. Within the structural-functional perspective, functional patterns of behavior are assumed to persist (remain stable), and since punishment is assumed to be functional, it too is assumed to be stable. This reasoning leads to an interesting corollary. Assuming that the overall level of punishment is stable, then as the crime rate increases, only the most serious crimes can be punished and the less serious ones must be ignored. Indeed, Durkheim (1938) argued that even the social definition of crime expands and contracts in relationship to the general volume of undesirable behavior. He described this in what has come to be known as the society of saints parable (1938:68-69):

Imagine a society of saints, perfect cloister of exemplary individuals, crimes, properly so called, will there be unknown; but faults which appear venial to the layman will create there the same scandal that the ordinary offense does in ordinary consciousness. If, then, this society has the power to judge and punish, it will define these acts as criminal and treat them as such.

Considerable theory-testing research, stimulated by the work of Blumstein and his colleagues, has addressed this issue. Their work has two interrelated thrusts: documenting the stability of punishment and identifying the causal processes that underlie it.

Blumstein and associates (Blumstein and Cohen 1973; Blumstein et al. 1976; Blumstein and Moitra 1979) use time series techniques to examine the stability of imprisonment rates in the United States from 1926 to 1974, in Canada from 1880 to 1959, and in Norway from 1880 to 1964. They argue that imprisonment rates in these countries are generated by a stationary process; that is, the observed statistical variation in punishment over time can be modeled as statistical variation around a constant mean. In a reanalysis of these data, Rauma (1981a) argues that while a stationary process may indeed generate these observations, there is just as much evidence that a nonstationary process generates them. Furthermore, he (1981b) argues that a univariate time series analysis can tell us very little about the causal processes, as specified by Durkheim and others, that underlie whatever level of stability is observed.

In a second related research thrust, Blumstein tries to show how stability in punishment is maintained by continual adjustments in the

type of behavior punished. In one study, Blumstein and Cohen (1973) examine the relationship between crime and arrest rates for serious and nonserious crimes in the United States. Their findings suggest that as the general crime rate increases, the arrest rate of nonserious crimes decreases, and as the crime rate decreases, the arrest rate of nonserious crimes increases, thereby maintaining a stable general arrest rate. In a second study, Blumstein et al. (1976) analyze the flow rates between conformists, criminals, and prisoners in Canada. Making certain assumptions about the stability and state of the prison population, they deduce flow rates among these groups that generally approximate the observed rates.

In short, Blumstein and his associates have attempted to model the social process that underlies the stability of punishment. The model, however, is underidentified. They circumvent this problem by studying either the outcomes of the process (univariate time series) or by providing "guesstimates" of some of the parameters. Their work takes us further than we have been before and has stimulated considerable debate (Rauma 1981a). What is needed now is research that measures more of the model variables and empirically estimates more of the model parameters.

Continuing in the Blumstein tradition, Berk et al. (1981) have also attempted to identify the equilibrium mechanism that underlies the stability of punishment. Assuming that the punishment rate varies somewhat around a specific level that is functional for a given society—the system target—then the growth rate of punishment is a simple function of the growth rate of the population. If for some reason punishment rates exceed the target, responding to changes in the external environment, future growth rates in punishment should decrease; and if rates fall below the target, future growth rates should increase. Growth rates of punishment are then the "mechanism" by which societies adjust the punishment rate to system targets. Berk et al. (1981), using a time series of imprisonment rates in California from 1851 to 1970, find no empirical support for this equilibrium hypothesis.

Generally, research leaves considerable doubt that the punishment rate in social systems is stable over time and that this stability is sustained because it is somewhat functional. Moreover, research suffers from theoretical ambiguity in conceptualizing the social process underlying stability—an ambiguity that can be traced to Durkheim. Theorists and researchers alike assume that societies have certain requisites for survival, such as solidarity and boundary maintenance, and that a level of punishment persists because it functions to main-

tain these needs; but neither Durkheim nor recent researchers such as Erikson, Blumstein, Rauma, or Berk clearly specify the social process by which a level of punishment persists that maintains a system's requisites for survival. Instead, research examines the logical consequences of the punishment stability assumption. Assuming that punishment is stable, Blumstein and Cohen (1973) suggest that if the crime rate is high, then only the most serious crimes can be punished; and Berk et al. (1981) imply that if the punishment rate is high, then the punishment growth rate will be low. These relationships are construed as the dynamic mechanisms by which stability is sustained. This is correct, but only in a logical or definitional sense. If the relationship between the rate of punishment and the growth of that rate is negative, then of course the punishment rate will tend toward stability. Yet the study of such relationships does not shed light on the substantive causal processes by which this stability is sustained—that is, those causal processes by which the consequences of punishment, such as solidarity or boundary maintenance, influence punishment so as to sustain a stable level of punishment.

Some researchers (Erikson 1966; Berk et al. 1983), and to a lesser extent even Blumstein and Cohen (1973), argue that the observed stability of punishment may simply reflect stability in the processing capacity of control systems. For example, stability in the prison population may simply reflect stability in prison size. In a recent paper, Berk et al. (1983) argue that the constraints of prison capacity operate through the many daily admission and release decisions of criminal justice administrators. This explanation should be regarded with some caution. Considerable research shows that the capacity of control systems is not necessarily stable; rather, it may expand and contract in response to social conditions (Currie 1986; Connor 1972). More importantly, this explanation of punishment stability is unrelated to the logic of structural-functionalism. That is, if the capacity of a control system is stable, thereby limiting and stabilizing the level of punishment, then the postulation of unobservable goals, targets, and needs to explain stability is quite unnecessary. Blumstein et al. (1976: 319-20), apparently unsatisfied with an explanation in terms of system capacity, argue "that social forces accounting for stability include more than simple prison-cell capacity. . . . More fundamental considerations of social structure are probably at work. If too large a portion of society is declared deviant, then the fundamental stability of society will be disrupted. Likewise, if too few are punished, the identifying values of society will not be adequately articulated and reinforced, again leading to social instability."

It is interesting that Erikson, Blumstein, and Berk made references both to unobservable targets, goals, and needs, and to the capacity of the social control system in order to explain the stability of punishment. Emphasis on the latter links their research to an explicit causal mechanism missing in the former, and emphasis on the former links their work to a general theoretical framework missing in the latter.

Feedback loops and system estimation. In contemporary economics and much sociology the problem of identifying causal processes consistent with a traditional functional explanation has been dealt with by postulating causal feedback loops (Stinchcombe 1968). Consider just one possible consequence of punishment, "social solidarity." Based on the structural-functional tradition, it is reasonable to assume that crime positively affects punishment, which positively affects solidarity, which in turn negatively affects crime (see figure 1.1B). Changes in any one of the variables, brought about by changes in various exogeneous variables, vibrate through the system and dampen over time; and because the causal loop consists of both positive and negative causal effects, the system tends toward long-term stability. For example, an increase in crime, brought about by an increase in unemployment, increases punishment, which increases solidarity, which in turn decreases crime. Alternatively, the emergence of an external threat, like a war, may increase solidarity, which decreases crime, which decreases punishment, which in turn decreases solidarity. In both cases the initial random shock to the system is counteracted by the feedback loop and dampened over time.

The system can be further complicated by postulating additional feedback loops. The system in figure 1.1C has two feedback loops, an internal loop and an external loop. In addition to indirectly decreasing punishment through decreasing crime, solidarity may directly increase punishment. To put it simply, as solidarity increases, the resolve to control crime may increase. The inner loop amplifies the effect of an initial random shock on the system, and the outer loop controls it. The net effect depends on the relative strengths and time lags of the two loops.

While complex feedback loops make it difficult to see intuitively the outcome of random shocks to a causal system and make the parameters of the system difficult to estimate, explicit feedback loops with a control structure transform the traditional teleology of functionalism into a testable causal theory (Stinchcombe 1968). Assumptions about unobservable needs, goals, and targets are rendered

unnecessary, and functional theories simply become special cases of causal theories.

Also, making explicit the causal logic underlying the assumed stability of punishment clarifies the interrelationships between the three propositions regarding consequences, change, and stability. Much theory and research on each proposition is not integrated with work on the other propositions. Yet, these interrelationships are significant in estimating each proposition. Indeed, for models B and C in figure 1.1, estimates of the specific causal paths will be biased unless the model as a whole is considered. For example, estimates of the effect of crime rates on crime control will be biased unless the indirect effect of crime control on crime rates is controlled.

This sensitizes us to the structure of random shocks. In the language of simultaneous equation modeling, random shocks constitute exogenous variables and can thus serve as instruments to identify the structural coefficients linking the endogenous variables. Identification of models (1.1B) and (1.1C) requires that some of the exogenous variables (random shocks) affect one but not the other endogenous variables. Thus, in studying feedback systems it is not only important that we study external variables that shock the system, but that we study those exogenous variables that shock only some endogenous variables in the system.

Conflict Perspective

While both the economic and structural perspectives have been important for studying and understanding deviance and crime control, since the mid-1960s the conflict perspective has been *the* dominant perspective for organizing and stimulating macroresearch on deviance and crime control. The remainder of this chapter and book focus on this perspective.

Similar to the economic perspective, the conflict perspective (Turk 1969; Quinney 1977; Spitzer 1975; Beirne 1979) assumes enlightened self-interests, especially on the part of economic elites; contrary to the economic perspective, the conflict perspective assumes an uneven distribution of self-interests in crime control and an uneven distribution of power to implement self-interests into social policy. Theory and research focus on how these distributions of interests and power come into being, persist, and influence deviance and crime control, particularly lawmaking and enforcement. Lawmaking is assumed to reflect the interests of the powerful; those

activities are criminalized that threaten their interests. Assuming that the violation of some laws is more threatening than the violation of others, the conflict perspective asserts that those laws that most protect the interests of the powerful are most enforced. Assuming that law violations are more threatening when committed by some people than by others, the perspective asserts that laws are most enforced against those people who most threaten the interests of the powerful. Hence, the conflict perspective asserts that the greater the number of acts and people threatening to the interests of the powerful, the greater the level of deviance and crime control—the threat hypothesis (see figure 1.1D)

Perhaps the major advantage of the threat hypothesis is that it broadens the study of deviance and crime control from just the criminal justice system to other institutions and organizations, such as the mental health and welfare systems. Indeed, considerable research from this perspective has examined both the mental health and welfare systems as alternative forms of controlling threatening acts and people.

Perhaps the major problems with the threat hypothesis are the definitional and theoretical linkages. Concerning the former, the major concepts like “the powerful,” “interest,” and “threat,” are not clearly defined nor measured. For example, while the concept “the powerful” is generally interpreted as “elites” and “authorities,” these concepts, too, are not well defined in contemporary conflict theory. This is a significant issue because that which is threatening to some elites and authorities is not necessarily threatening to others. Concerning just political authorities, that which threatens one level (city, state, and nation) may not necessarily threaten another. Within levels of government, that which threatens one branch (judicial) may not threaten another (legislative). Even within branches of government (executive), that which threatens one unit (police) may not necessarily threaten another (prosecutor). Hence, in defining acts and people as threatening in a heterogeneous complex society, it is necessary to specify the authorities or elites in question.

Because the critical causal variables are not well defined theoretically and operationally, and are not clearly linked to each other in the form of propositions or a causal model, the relevant research literature is also not well defined and integrated. Consequently, studies are categorized by substantive forms of control (lynching, imprisonment, arrests, hospitalization, welfare), rather than by theoretical propositions. Researchers studying imprisonment are criminologists interested in prisons; researchers studying lynching are specialists in race

relations or collective behavior; researchers studying mental hospital admissions are interested in mental health; and researchers studying welfare are experts in social services. Conflict theory and the threat hypothesis in particular are employed to loosely guide research and to interpret findings, and explanatory variables are selected because they are readily accessible and/or generally amenable to a conflict interpretation. They are tied together by their focus on similar structural variables assumed to represent a threat to the interests of authorities. Some studies refer to the level and distribution of threatening people (percentage of unemployed, percentage nonwhites, and degree of income inequality) and some refer to the level and distribution of threatening acts (crime and civil disorders). Yet, it is not clear, theoretically, how the level and distribution of these acts and people generate a threat to the interests of different authorities and how that threat leads to specific forms of control.

I now briefly review some of these seemingly diverse research literatures (see figure 1.1D). They are arranged by the level of force, ranging from the stick (fatal controls) to the carrot (beneficent controls). They include studies of police use of deadly force and public lynching; studies of the criminal justice system, including crime reporting, police size, arrest rates, and prison admission rates; and studies of the welfare and mental health systems.

Fatal control

Fatal control refers to those forms of social control where the threatening population is killed—the most extreme form of control. This book examines two forms of fatal controls: police homicide of citizens and lynchings.

While lynching is certainly not an official form of control, the distinction between official and unofficial forms of controlling the black population was not always clear in the South from the Civil War to World War I. Vigilante groups were common, and some were supported and linked with local crime control agents.

A few lynching studies have been stimulated by Blalock's hypothesis (1967) that links racial discrimination to the percentage of nonwhites. He argues that as the percentage of nonwhites increases, they constitute a growing economic and political threat to whites. Economically, nonwhites compete for jobs, and politically, they compete for power. Racial discrimination—economic and political—is conceptualized as an attempt by whites, the ruling racial group, to control a threatening nonwhite population. Lynching is simply part of this pattern.

A few studies (Reed 1972; Inverarity 1976; Corzine et al. 1983) link the rate of lynching to the percentage of blacks in southern counties. Corzine et al. (1983) further report that the relationship is nonlinear with an increasing slope (power-threat hypothesis) and that the relationship is strongest in the deep South, particularly after the voter registration drives in the 1890s. They argue that these relationships support a threat hypothesis. Blacks, historically, have been perceived as more of a threat in the deep South than in other regions, and racial conflict was accentuated in the voter registration drives of the late nineteenth century. Inverarity's (1976) findings were immediately questioned in a controversial exchange by Pope and Ragin (1977), Wasserman (1977), Bohrnstedt (1977), and Berk (1977); and Reed (1972), and Corzine et al.'s (1983) findings have recently been challenged by Tolnay, Beck, and Massey (1989). They argue that support for the power-threat hypothesis (increasing slope) is contingent on a few outlier cases, a truncated sample, and an inappropriate measure of lynching. When the few outliers are deleted or when the sample is not truncated, the data provide no support for a nonlinear relationship (power-threat hypothesis) and only some support for a linear relationship (threat hypothesis).

In chapter 2 of this book, Tolnay and Beck review and elaborate the threat hypothesis as it applies to lynching in the Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction periods of the South. They conceptually distinguish sources of threat (political, economic, and status) and threatened social classes (old aristocrats, capitalists, poor whites). They theoretically specify when black concentration leads to each source of threat, differentially experienced by each class, and they theoretically specify that the relationship between each source of threat and lynching depends on the effectiveness of other forms of social control.

Considerable research on homicide by police has been conducted (Fyfe 1982); however, only a few macrostudies bear on the conflict perspective model in figure 1.1D. The findings are mixed. Using states as the unit of analysis, Kania and Mackey (1977) report a substantial and statistically significant correlation between the rate of homicides by the police and various measures of poverty, conceptualized as indicators of the presence of a threatening population. Yet, they also report a statistically insignificant correlation between such homicides and riots, a clear indicator of threatening acts. Sherman and Langworthy (1979), using cities, report a negative relationship between homicides by police and unemployment, also conceptualized as an indicator of threat. Perhaps the strongest support for the threat hypothesis comes from Jacob and Britt (1979). Using states as the

unit of analysis and controlling for various other variables, such as violent crime, they report that economic inequality, conceptualized as an indicator of threat, shows a statistically significant effect on homicides by police.

In chapter three of this book Yu and myself expand this line of work. We examine the relationship between racial and economic structures of cities and the police use of deadly force against both whites and nonwhites, and we explore the implications of these findings for the threat hypothesis.

Coercive control: criminal justice system

Coercive control refers to the activities of social control agents that physically constrain peoples' behavior (arrests and imprisonment). Studies examine both these activities and the infrastructures that support them. For two coercive control bureaucracies (police and prisons), this book examines the primary control activity (arrest, imprisonment) and their capacity to perform that activity (crime reporting, police size, prison size).

Crime Reporting. Crime reporting by citizens is a critical component in activating the criminal justice system. Black and Reiss (1970) report that the vast majority of reported crimes are reported by citizens and that only a very small number are discovered by police. Considerable microresearch shows that demographic, social, and psychological variables affect the reporting of crime to the police. Reporting seems to be affected by class, race, and gender; the relationship between the offender and the victim; the seriousness of the crime; and the victim's fear of crime. Our concern is the variation in crime reporting across macrounits and the extent to which it is affected by social threat as specified by the threat hypothesis. In chapter 4 of this book, Warner examines the extent to which the variation in crime reporting by social class and race across macrounits is affected by the relative presence and distribution of threatening people and acts.

Police. To a large extent, the volume of crime control is limited by the processing or carrying capacity of the police department, which is a direct function of its size, that is, numbers and expenditures per capita. The rapid expansion of police size during the 1960s and 1970s stimulated considerable attention to this issue.

Three studies (Jacobs 1979; Jackson and Carroll 1981; Liska et al. 1981) examine police size in the United States from 1950 to 1970. They

use civil disorders as an indicator of the presence of threatening acts and use the percentage of poor, percentage of nonwhites, income inequality, and degree of racial segregation as indicators of the presence and distribution of threatening people.

They report that civil disorders have no effect on police size. This is not surprising. If civil disorders affect police size, the process probably operates at the regional or national level. Disorders in any one city may affect police size, not only locally but also in comparable and neighboring cities.

They report no effect of the percentage of poor but a substantial effect of the percentage of nonwhites. This effect is stronger in 1970, following the civil disorders, than in 1960, and it is stronger in the South than in the non-South. Interestingly, Jackson and Carroll (1981) report that as the percentage of nonwhites increases from ten to 40 percent, its effect increases at an increasing rate, but as the percentage increases above forty percent its effect decreases. They argue that as the percentage approaches fifty percent, nonwhites are no longer a minority; they are approaching a majority large enough to achieve political power and authority, and nonwhite authorities are supported, not threatened, by a nonwhite majority.

Empirical support for the effect of income inequality on police size is inconsistent. Jacobs (1979) reports a positive effect, but Jackson and Carroll (1981) are unable to replicate his results. Liska et al. (1981) report that segregation has a negative effect on police size, which like the effect of the percentage of nonwhites, is stronger in the South than in the non-South and increases from 1950 to 1970. They argue that the segregation of problematic populations such as nonwhites into urban ghettos functions as a vehicle of social control, thereby lessening the need for more overt forms of social control.

Using data from the 1980s, Greenberg et al. (1985) question many of these findings. They find no income inequality effect, and they find that the strength and form (linear and nonlinear) of the percent nonwhite effect is contingent on geographical region and year (1960, 1970, and 1980).

Attempting to resolve these inconsistencies, Chamlin (1989) and Jackson (1989) have recently developed interesting directions of research. Chamlin (1989) argues that changes in social composition (e.g., percent nonwhite and income inequality) may be more threatening to authorities than high static levels of these compositions. He reports that changes in police size from 1972 to 1982, while not affected by static levels, are significantly affected by changes in many of these variables, such as property crime rates, percent nonwhite, and