

not out of frictions of human proximity or distrust, which varies by distance, but simply out of the will of living man to think more highly of himself than he ought to think'. That is why the larger problem can only be met by the individual acceptance of what in fact Christian charity must mean: 'we must learn to love others as ourselves; unless we do this, we not only doom others but are doomed ourselves. But if we can do this there is no problem of racial or any other kind of prejudice which need overwhelm our judgment'.

Delinquency—A Sub-cultural Hypothesis

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There are many approaches to the problem of juvenile delinquency and its causation, but in a rough and ready fashion it is possible to divide these approaches into two main groups. On the one hand are those who see delinquency as stemming from personality disturbances or emotional conflicts, and on the other are those who view delinquency as coming from relatively normal personalities which have been exposed to an 'abnormal' environment such as a deviant sub-culture in which the individual learns to be a non-conformist as others learn to be conformists.

If one is to judge from recent writings in criminology, the conflict between these two approaches is still quite intense. This is unfortunate, for apart from vested interests and professional pride there is no real reason why the two approaches should not be regarded as complementary. That I have taken sub-cultures as my theme in this article does not mean that I consider this approach to be more fundamental or more fruitful than others, still less does it mean that I consider it to be the only one. It does mean, however, that I think that it is necessary to stress the wider social factors, the part played by society as a whole, in the delinquency equation and to draw attention to the fallacies of attributing all delinquent responses to inadequate socialization and of viewing

deviant behaviour as typically coming from biological impulses breaking through the restraints imposed by culture.

The theory of 'differential opportunity systems', put forward by Cloward and Ohlin,¹ represents an interesting contribution in the analysis of delinquency sub-cultures. The authors attempt to explore two questions (1) Why do delinquent 'norms' or rules of conduct develop? and (2) What are the conditions which account for the distinctive content of various systems of delinquent norms (violence, theft, drugs?). This article is chiefly concerned with the first of these questions. In exploring these questions two theoretical approaches are used. The well-known Shaw-McKay-Sutherland theories dealing with the way in which features of the social structure regulate the selection and evolution of deviant solutions, and the lesser known but more fundamental (and in this case more influential) work of Robert K. Merton,² which deals largely with the sources of pressure that lead to deviance. The theory of 'differential opportunity systems' represents an attempt to integrate these two streams of thought as they apply to the problem of delinquency. It was Emile Durkheim,³ of course, who initiated the approach which has since been extended and developed by Merton. He saw modern industrial societies emphasizing common or universal success goals as a way of ensuring their own survival and he pointed out that one of the paradoxes of social life is that the processes by which societies seek to perpetuate themselves and secure order result in disorder. Cultural emphasis on success goals creates as well as solves problems. Durkheim saw pressure for deviant behaviour stemming from unlimited aspirations which were by definition unachievable.

Durkheim's pioneering work was developed by Merton who saw a state of 'anomie', a state of social disorganization, developing not because of a breakdown in the regulation of goals alone, but rather because of a breakdown in the relationship between goals and the legitimate avenues of access to them. For Merton there is a conflict between values which stress success and the values which make an achievement of success an impossibility for some people. Materialistic goals of success and achievement are characteristic of our society, yet values

¹*Delinquency and Opportunity. A Theory of Delinquent Gangs* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1961).

²*Social Theory and Social Structure* (Revised and Enlarged Edition). (Glencoe, Ill. Free Press 1957). *Social Structure and Anomie*, pp. 490-499 in *Sociological Theory. A Book of Readings*. Ed. Coser and Rosenberg. (Macmillan 1957).

³*Suicide. A Study in Sociology*. Translated by Spaulding and Simpson (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951).

concerning the legal means of realizing these goals effectively deny success to many members of the lower classes. This leads to efforts among the lower classes to achieve success by illegal means. In other words, conflict of values pertaining to ends and means could unintentionally stimulate high crime rates. The sequence could be as follows. Certain groups are unable to attain many of the material goals which their culture constantly stresses as important, therefore they tend to lose respect for, and loyalty to, the values which, if they are maintained, deny success to them. Success is often measured in terms of property, so lack of respect for property rights may follow; this in turn results in a high incidence of crime against property. Aberrant behaviour, then, may be regarded sociologically as a symptom of dissociation between culturally prescribed aspirations and socially structured avenues for realizing these aspirations.

Goals or objectives and norms of conduct operate together to shape prevailing practices but they do not always bear a constant relation to each other. In different societies or in the same society at different times greater stress may be placed on one or the other of them. Could it be that the forces and pressures are such in our society that individuals are being pressed into centering their emotional convictions on ends whilst at the same time there is far less support in the social structure for the prescribed or legitimate means of reaching these ends? If this is so (and who would doubt it?) then the normal institutional procedures may become so vitiated by this constant stress on material goals and achievement that in the end the only factors taken into consideration by many individuals will be factors of technical expediency. The questions they will tend to ask themselves will be concerned with which of the available procedures is most efficient in achieving the culturally approved and oft plugged values. In short: a stable society requires a rough balance between goals and norms, and if these two components of the social structure are not well integrated, then we can expect a sort of literal demoralization which will have profound consequences for the behaviour of people variously situated within this social structure. The conceptual refinements of Merton have enabled Cloward and Ohlin⁴ to advance and expand their enquiry in such a way that certain areas of the general problem which have previously proved difficult can now be dealt with. These include limited aspirations (i.e., striving after limited goals) when the possibilities for achieving them are also limited; pressures leading to deviance within the normal functioning of the

⁴*op cit.* pp. 84-86.

social order, and the everyday processes giving rise to deviant behaviour. Anomie can be accounted for under conditions other than those of economic crisis—crises need not be regarded as being synonymous with the instability of society as a whole (in the sense of an economic depression) but as being intimately linked with certain types of relationships between the two components of the social structure with which we are concerned, namely aspirations and opportunities.

It may well be that this approach could throw some light on the possible relationship between increased delinquency and increased prosperity. It has been suggested⁵ that prosperity heightens the aspirations of lower class people without appreciably affecting the likelihood of their achieving their goals. It would not be surprising if in certain circumstances this did result in increased delinquency rates.

Merton's formulation also enables distinctions to be made regarding the severity of pressures towards deviant behaviour which originate at different points in the social structure, and this helps Cloward and Ohlin to explain why social class membership is an important factor which must be taken into account in attempting to understand particular forms of delinquency. Their evidence on this point is, of course, taken from the United States, and unfortunately we have no Lipset and Bendix⁶ type of analysis for this country. As far as I am aware, we lack the necessary empirical data (on such matters as class distribution of aspirations, types of aspiration, educational, social, cultural and structural barriers to opportunity, alternative avenues to success, etc.) to enable a thorough validation of the hypothesis to be made.

It has been argued that there is nothing new or surprising in linking social class with certain types of delinquency, but in answering this, it is vital to emphasize that in this context the relevance depends not on some direct link with poverty, but on poverty linked with aspirations and opportunity, on the idea that different groups have different chances of reaching common success goals despite the prevailing ideology of equal opportunity. It may also be argued that there have always been social groups the members of which were unable to reach the top, but to argue in this way misses the point, for we (*all of us*) have not always been promised the top. It is this common aspirational-success value system (constantly reinforced by the mass media), that is the important

⁵Daniel Glaser and Kent Rice, 'Crime, Age and Employment', *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 24, No. 5, pp. 679-86 (Oct. 1959).

⁶S. M. Lipset and R. Bendix. *Social Mobility in Industrial Society* (University of California Press, 1959).

point. Add to this the fact that the social structure contains few, if in fact any, means of 'legitimizing' low status and it becomes clear why Cloward and Ohlin feel able to predict that the pressure to engage in deviant behaviour will be greatest in the lowest levels of society.

Their hypothesis may be summarized as follows: The disparity between what lower class youth are led to want and what is actually available to them is the source of a major problem of adjustment. Adolescents who form delinquent sub-cultures have internalized an emphasis on conventional goals. Faced with limitations on legitimate avenues of access to these goals, and unable to revise their aspirations downwards, they experience intense frustrations, and the exploration of non-conformist alternatives may be the result.

It is essential to point out at this stage that to account for the development of pressures does not sufficiently explain why these pressures should result in one solution rather than another. The explanation of the motivational basis of the deviant pattern does not always explain the resulting response. (Delinquency is but one form of deviant response.) Moreover, as Merton⁷ has pointed out, there is not necessarily a perfect, positive correlation between pressures towards deviance and the rate of deviance, for surely other variables—e.g., the variation in the availability of both legitimate and illegitimate opportunities—intervene to influence the outcome of those pressures.⁸ In short, to accept this theory of motivation is not to accept the inevitability of delinquency, there is no deterministic relationship. Delinquency may well be a plausible response under such pressures, and in certain circumstances a more plausible response for some groups than others.

All sorts of questions are raised by this approach—How do sub-cultural solutions arise and delinquent sub-cultures evolve? Why should it be a collective rather than an individual solution? Why one adaptation and not another? What are the forces making for persistence and/or change?

As far as this article is concerned these and many other vital questions must remain unanswered. My purpose is not to test the validity of the hypothesis for this country but to examine some of the implications that it might have for us and to suggest new ways of looking at an important social problem.

It seems reasonable to suggest that in our society the pressures I have

⁷*op cit*, pp. 145-146.

⁸see Cloward 'Illegitimate Means, Anomie and Deviant Behaviour', *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (April 1959).

mentioned will tend to affect males more than females, and adolescents more than younger and older people. If this is so then it would appear that some of the popular ways of regarding adolescent disturbances will be found wanting, for according to this view adolescence is not just a period of waiting to achieve adult status; after all, adult status will come eventually and the adolescent knows this. The problem becomes a more enduring one and takes the form of improving one's lot, with the feeling of certainty that the low position is relatively fixed and unchangeable. The permanent nature of this dilemma makes it more acute and the delinquent sub-culture represents a specialized mode of adaptation to this problem of adjustment.

I have already stated that I am unable to deal with all the factors which would help us to explain why and when a collective delinquent solution is likely to develop, but it does appear that the soil is far from being infertile in this country at the present time. In a secular, competitive, impersonal, highly specialized, heterogeneous society the task of maintaining a stable social order has become extremely complicated, and it is becoming more and more difficult to identify universally shared moral sentiments which can guarantee allegiance to the 'accepted' norms of society. There is a tendency in such conditions towards the development of special norms, values and beliefs at different levels in the social structure. The common denominator (assuming that there has been one) is no longer in evidence, the expedient or the efficient becomes separable from the moral as a basis for 'legitimate' action, and it is not surprising that in conditions such as these, people at different social levels fail to agree about the forms of conduct that are both expedient and morally right. Once people begin to use expediency rather than moral validity as the basis for their commitment to norms, the stage is set for alienation from the dominant norms, and this process of alienation is an important one in the growth and development of sub-cultures.

Members of delinquent sub-cultures withdraw their support from established norms, and invest officially forbidden forms of conduct with claims for legitimacy in the light of their own special situation. The norms that develop tend to be in direct opposition to official norms and they are supported, ordered and closely integrated with appropriate values and beliefs, which serve to buttress, validate and rationalize the different types of behaviour in the various sub-cultures. These beliefs and values provide a sort of advance justification; the deviance is rationalized before it occurs. Blame for failure is attributed to an unjust

social order, support is obtained from others similarly situated and a psychological protection develops which enables the individual to engage in delinquency without serious damage to his self-image. A delinquent sub-culture, then, is one in which certain forms of delinquent activity are essential requirements for the performance of the dominant rôles supported by the sub-culture. It is the central position accorded to the specifically delinquent activity that distinguishes the delinquent sub-culture from other deviant sub-cultures, and according to Cloward and Ohlin its essential activities are provided with a stability because beliefs and values are well integrated with norms.

This close integration between values and norms could offer a possible explanation for the apparently intractable and conscienceless behaviour of the fully indoctrinated member of the sub-culture, but it is this very point on which there seems to be considerable disagreement even within the sub-cultural school. Cohen⁹ and Matza and Sykes¹⁰ hold that the sub-cultural delinquent retains a belief in the legitimacy of the official norms. Cohen sees a sort of basic ambivalence, with the repudiation being more apparent than real, and Matza and Sykes prefer to think in terms of neutralization rather than repudiation, holding that the delinquent redefines the limitation of the applicability of conventional norms so that misconduct can be justified, at least within the sub-culture.

In a more recent article Matza and Sykes¹¹ have some most interesting points to make, many of which, I feel, are extremely relevant for our society. They maintain that it is an erroneous view of the dominant (i.e., middle class) value system which has led many to assume a deviance in values as well as a deviance in conduct. It certainly seems possible that a number of supposedly delinquent values (search for kicks, disdain of work, desire for the big score, toughness as proof of masculinity, on the make) are closely akin to those embodied in the leisure activities of the dominant society, no matter how brutalized or perverted their expression in the sub-culture may be regarded. It is this question of expression and outlet that is important—the 'I am daring, you are reckless, he is delinquent', the in-group virtue, out-group vice

⁹A. K. Cohen, *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang* (Glencoe, Ill. Free Press, 1955).

¹⁰G. M. Sykes and D. Matza 'Techniques of Neutralisation': A Theory of Delinquency' : *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 22, (Dec. 1957).

¹¹G. M. Sykes and D. Matza 'Delinquency and Subterranean Values' : *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 26, No. 5, Oct. 1961, pp. 720, et seq.

approach¹²—which seems to be relevant here. Saturnalias, rugby club riots and student rags are not unknown in this country. Moreover, to characterize the dominant society as being fully and unquestioningly attached to the virtue of hard work also seems to fall short of reality. The ‘pull’, ‘soft job’, ‘easy number’, ‘fix’, ‘smart deal’ are all accepted practices in our society. Maybe, the delinquent conforms to society rather than deviates from it when he incorporates ‘big’ and ‘easy’ money into his value system. Has the delinquent moved into a new realm of values if he carries the idea further than many of society’s members may do?

It is also possible to develop a similar line of argument about societies’ attitudes towards violence and aggression. Surely a case could easily be made out for a widespread taste for and exhibition of violence on the part of the dominant society. Could it be that as far as values are concerned the delinquent does not stand as an alien in the midst of society but rather as a disturbed reflection or caricature? This is not the first time that criminologists have claimed that ‘basic values in our culture are accepted by both the delinquent and the larger society of which he is part’.¹³

I am fully aware that once again this tends to raise questions rather than give answers. Let me emphasize that there is no attempt to offer a comprehensive theory of delinquency. If I am concerned with establishing anything, it is that the traditional, anti-social, inadequate socialization approaches to the problem of delinquency are far more limited in applicability than it has been customary to assume. I hope it is also clear that I consider that we have little chance of stemming the present trend towards certain types of delinquent behaviour, if pressures within society remain the same. Changes in the social structure are necessary. To a certain degree, perhaps to a very large degree, society gets the delinquency it deserves.

¹²Merton, *op cit*, pp. 426-430.

¹³D. R. Taft, *Criminology* (Macmillan 1950).