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## 4

## Crime, Shame, and Reintegration

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## Summary of the Theory

In the first part of this chapter clear definitions are attempted for the key concepts in Figure 4.1, which provides a schematic summary of the theory of reintegrative shaming. The cluster of six variables around interdependency at the top left of Figure 4.1 are characteristics of individuals; the three at the top right are characteristics of societies; while high levels of crime and shaming are variables that apply to both individuals and societies. The theory as summarized in Figure 4.1 thus gives an account of why both some kinds of individuals and some kinds of societies exhibit more crime.

A more parsimonious theory could be obtained by collapsing the similar constructs of interdependency (an individual-level variable) and communitarianism (a societal variable) into a single construct, but then there would no longer be a framework to predict both which individuals and which societies will have more crime. On the desirability of being able to do this Cressey expressed it best:

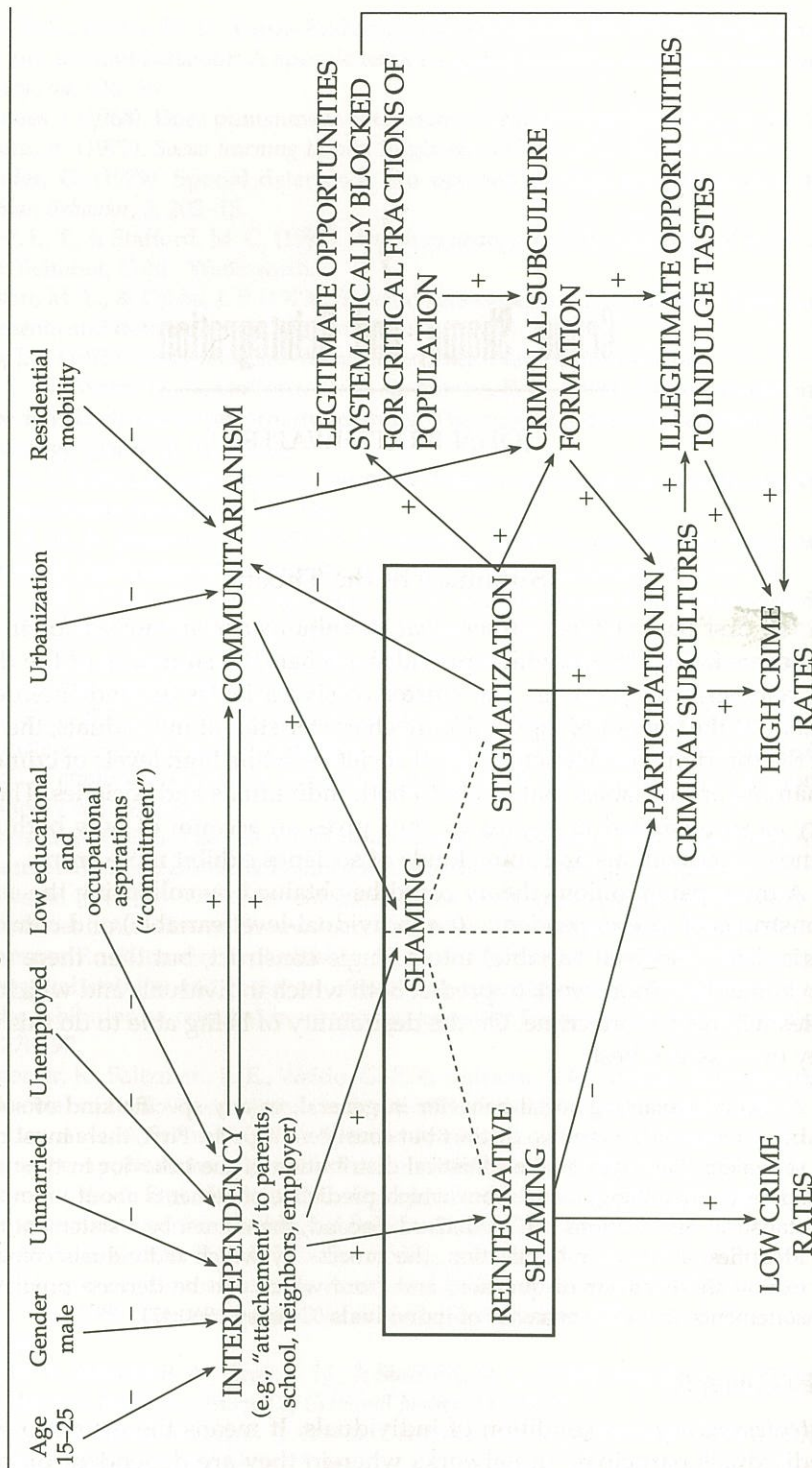
A theory explaining social behavior in general, or any specific kind of social behavior, should have two distinct but consistent aspects. First, there must be a statement that explains the statistical distribution of the behavior in time and space (epidemiology), and from which predictive statements about unknown statistical distributions can be derived. Second, there must be a statement that identifies, at least by implication, the process by which individuals come to exhibit the behavior in question, and from which can be derived predictive statements about the behavior of individuals (Cressey 1960:47).

## Key Concepts

*Interdependency* is a condition of individuals. It means the extent to which individuals participate in networks wherein they are dependent on others



Figure 4.1 Summary of the Theory of Reintegrative Shaming



to achieve valued ends and others are dependent on them. We could describe an individual as in a state of interdependency even if the individuals who are dependent on him or her are different from the individuals on whom he or she is dependent. Interdependency is approximately equivalent to the social bonding, attachment, and commitment of control theory.

*Communitarianism* is a condition of societies. In communitarian societies individuals are densely enmeshed in interdependencies that have the special qualities of mutual help and trust. The interdependencies have symbolic significance in the culture as group loyalties, which take precedence over individual interests. The interdependencies also have symbolic significance as attachments that invoke personal obligation to others in a community of concern, rather than simply interdependencies of convenience as between a bank and a small depositor. A communitarian culture rejects any pejorative connotation of dependency as threatening individual autonomy. Communitarian cultures resist interpretations of dependency as weakness and emphasize the need for mutuality of obligation in interdependency (to be both dependent and dependable). The Japanese are said to be socialized not only to *amaeru* (to be succored by others) but also to *amayakasu* (to be nurturing to others) (Wagatsuma and Rosett, 1986).

*Shaming* means all social processes of expressing disapproval that have the intention or effect of invoking remorse in the person being shamed and/or condemnation by others who become aware of the shaming. When associated with appropriate symbols, formal punishment often shames. But societies vary enormously in the extent to which formal punishment is associated with shaming and in the extent to which the social meaning of punishment is no more than to inflict pain to tip reward-cost calculations in favor of certain outcomes. Shaming, unlike purely deterrent punishment, sets out to moralize with the offender to communicate reasons for the evil of his or her actions. Most shaming is neither associated with formal punishment nor perpetrated by the state, though both shaming by the state and shaming with punishment are important types of shaming. Most shaming is by individuals within interdependent communities of concern.

*Reintegrative shaming* is shaming followed by efforts to reintegrate the offender back into the community of law-abiding or respectable citizens through words or gestures of forgiveness or ceremonies to decertify the offender as deviant. Shaming and reintegration do not occur simultaneously but sequentially, with reintegration occurring before deviance becomes a master status. It is shaming that labels the act as evil while striving to preserve the identity of the offender as essentially good. It is directed at signifying evil deeds rather than evil persons in the Christian tradition of "hate the sin and love the sinner." Specific disapproval is expressed within relationships characterized by general social approval; shaming criminal behavior is complemented by ongoing social rewarding of alternative behavior patterns. Reintegrative shaming is not necessarily weak; it can be cruel, even vicious.



It is distinguished from stigmatization not by its potency but by (1) a finite rather than open-ended duration, which is terminated by forgiveness, and (2) efforts to maintain bonds of love or respect throughout the finite period of suffering shame.

*Stigmatization* is disintegrative shaming in which no effort is made to reconcile the offender with the community. The offender is outcast, his or her deviance is allowed to become a master status, degradation ceremonies are not followed by ceremonies to decertify deviance.

*Criminal subcultures* are sets of rationalizations and conduct norms that cluster together to support criminal behavior. The clustering is usually facilitated by subcultural groups that provide systematic social support for crime in any one of a number of ways—supplying members with criminal opportunities, criminal values, attitudes that weaken conventional values of law-abidingness, or techniques of neutralizing conventional values.

#### *Short Summary of the Theory*

The following might serve as the briefest possible summary of the theory. A variety of life circumstances increase the chances that individuals will be in situations of greater interdependency, the most important of which are being of a certain age (under fifteen and over twenty-five), married, female, employed, and with high employment and educational aspirations. Interdependent persons are more susceptible to shaming. More important, societies in which individuals are subject to extensive interdependencies are more likely to be communitarian, and shaming is much more widespread and potent in communitarian societies. Urbanization and high residential mobility are societal characteristics that undermine communitarianism.

The shaming produced by interdependency and communitarianism can be either of two types: shaming that becomes stigmatization or shaming that is followed by reintegration. The shaming engendered is more likely to become reintegrative in societies that are communitarian. In societies where shaming does become reintegrative, low crime rates are the result because disapproval is dispensed without eliciting a rejection of the disapprovers, so that the potentialities for future disapproval are not dismantled. Moreover, reintegrative shaming is superior even to stigmatization for conscience building.

Shaming that is stigmatizing, in contrast, makes criminal subcultures more attractive because these are in some sense subcultures that reject one's rejectors. Thus, when shaming is allowed to become stigmatization for want of reintegrative gestures or ceremonies that decertify deviance, the deviant is both attracted to criminal subcultures and cut off from other interdependencies (with family, neighbors, church, etc.). Participation in subcultural groups supplies criminal role models and training in techniques of crime and techniques of neutralizing crime (or other forms of social support) that

make choices to engage in crime more attractive. Thus, to the extent that shaming is of the stigmatizing rather than the reintegrative sort, and to the extent that criminal subcultures are widespread and accessible in the society, higher crime rates will be the result. While societies characterized by high levels of stigmatization will have higher crime rates than societies characterized by reintegrative shaming, the former will have higher or lower crime rates than societies with little shaming at all, depending largely on the availability of criminal subcultures.

Yet a high level of stigmatization in the society is one of the very factors that encourages criminal subculture formation by creating populations of outcasts with no stake in conformity, no chance of self-esteem within the terms of conventional society—individuals in search of an alternative culture that allows them self-esteem. A communitarian culture, on the other hand, nurtures deviants within a network of attachments to conventional society, thus inhibiting the widespread outcasting that is the stuff of subculture formation.

For clarity of exposition, the two types of shaming have been presented as a stark dichotomy. In reality, for any society some deviants are dealt with in ways that are more stigmatic, whereas others receive more reintegrative shaming. Indeed, a single deviant will be responded to more stigmatically by some, more reintegratively by others. To the extent that the greater weight of shaming tends to stigmatization, the crime-producing processes on the right of Figure 4.1 are more likely to be triggered; to the extent that the balance of shaming tips toward reintegration, informal processes of crime control are more likely to prevail over these crime-producing processes.

The other major societal variable that fosters criminal subculture formation is systematic blockage of legitimate opportunities for critical fractions of the population. If black slum dwellers are systematically denied economic opportunities because of the stigma of their race and neighborhood, then criminal subcultures will form in those outcast neighborhoods. It can be seen that stigmatization (as opposed to social integration) as a cultural disposition may contribute to the systematic blockage of these economic opportunities; but cultural variables like stigmatization will be of rather minor importance compared with structural economic variables in determining opportunities. It has been argued here that the blockages in this part of the theory are not restricted to closed opportunities to climb out of poverty; systematically blocked opportunities for ever greater wealth accumulation by the most affluent of corporations often lead to corporate criminal subculture formation.

Criminal subcultures are the main mechanism for constituting illegitimate opportunity structures—knowledge on how to offend, social support for offending or communication of rationalizations for offending, criminal role models, subcultural groups that assist with the avoidance of detection and



organize collective criminal enterprises. However, illegitimate opportunities are greater in some societies than others, for a variety of further reasons that are not incorporated within the theory. Although the effects of legitimate and illegitimate opportunities on crime are mostly mediated by participation in criminal subcultures, the blockage of legitimate opportunities, combined with the availability of illegitimate opportunities, can independently increase crime. Whether illegitimate opportunities to engage in crime are supplied by participation in criminal subcultures or otherwise, they must be opportunities that appeal to the tastes of tempted individuals for them to result in crime.

This summary is crudely simple because it ignores what goes on within the shaming box in Figure 4.1. That is, it ignores the social processes that combine individual acts of shaming into cultural processes of shaming that are more or less integrative: gossip, media coverage of shaming incidents, children's stories, etc. In turn, the summary has neglected how these macro-level processes of shaming feed back to ensure that micro-level practices of shaming cover the curriculum of crimes.

#### *Ecological Fallacies?*

In a theory that simultaneously provides an account of individual behavior and societal behavior, one can slip variables across from one level of analysis to the other. Thus, when testing the theory at the individual level of analysis, one can code individuals according to whether they live in large cities or whether they have been residually mobile. That is, the two societal variables at the top right of Figure 4.1 can be translated into individual-level variables.

Equally, an individual-level variable like "age 15-25" can become a societal variable—percentage of the population of the society aged fifteen to twenty-five. However, in making these shifts it is possible to perpetrate the ecological fallacy—to assume glibly that what is true at the individual level of analysis will be true at the societal level. A society is more than the sum of its individual parts. Thus, when a society accumulates unusually high numbers of young people, the behavior of *older* people may change in response—they might vote for increased investment in education or police juvenile aid bureaus, for example. There is some evidence, for example, that while unemployment is a strong predictor of individual criminality, societies with high unemployment rates do not necessarily have high crime rates (Braithwaite, 1979; but see Chiricos, 1987). Gender is another variable that does not usefully shift from the individual to the societal level of analysis, because societies do not vary in what proportion of their population is female.

Apart from these two, there is no sound theoretical or empirical reason that the variables in Figure 4.1 cannot move between both the individual and societal levels of analysis.

#### *Capacity of the Theory to Explain What We Know About Crime*

What is the capacity of the theory to explain the correlates of crime? Some indeterminacy arises over the different effects of reintegrative shaming versus stigmatization. For example, what does the theory predict should be the association between gender and crime? Figure 4.1 shows that being female increases interdependency, which in turn fosters shaming. If the extra shaming produced is reintegrative, being female is associated with low crime rates. However, if the extra shaming amounts to stigmatization, higher crime rates become possible where subcultural support is found for the outcast status.

This problem can be solved by making a rather modest assumption. This assumption, as argued earlier, is that in most societies criminal subcultures are minority phenomena—narrowly diffused—so that stigmatization will in only a minority of cases be followed by an opportunity to participate in a subculture that is attractive to the individual. It follows that the level of shaming should be unambiguously negatively related to the crime rate, because most shaming will be either reintegrative shaming or stigmatic shaming, which does not lead to subcultural attachments, and both of these options will reduce crime. In any case, as is clear from Figure 4.1, variables (like gender) that increase interdependency have their effect on shaming partly through increasing communitarianism, and shaming that is a product of communitarianism is most likely to be reintegrative. Interdependency both increases the prospects of shaming and decreases the chances that such shaming as occurs will be stigmatic.

Thus, the characteristics associated with low interdependency—being male, between fifteen and twenty-five years of age, unmarried, unemployed, and with low educational and vocational aspirations—should all be associated with high involvement in crime. Urbanization and high residential mobility are also predicted by the theory as correlates of crime. All of these characteristics are strong and consistent correlates of crime.

In establishing the relationship between communitarianism and crime, there is far too much reliance on qualitative evidence from Japan and more doubtful qualitative evidence from a handful of other societies. The association between interdependency as a characteristic of individuals and crime, on the other hand, is well established. Control theory has spawned impressive evidence that young people who are "attached" to their parents and to the school are less likely to engage in delinquency.

There is no such impressive and unambiguous literature on "attachment" to neighbors and crime. The recent review of sixty-five studies of religiosity and deviance by Tittle and Welch (1983) suggested the possibility—contrary to some conventional wisdom in criminology—that interdependency via church affiliation may reduce crime. Tittle and Welch concluded that "the evidence seems remarkably consistent in suggesting that religion is related

to deviant behavior. Indeed, only a few variables in social science (possibly gender and age) have proven to be better predictors of rule breaking."

The theory offers a convincing explanation of why crime rates have been increasing in most Western societies since World War II. The recent development of Western societies has been associated with a decline in interdependency and communitarianism and a progressive uncoupling of punishment and shaming. This has been a period when urbanization, residential mobility, delayed marriage and marriage breakdown, and an explosion of the population between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five have occurred in most countries.

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