The poverty of criminology: a reaffirmation of the need for a structural criminology

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The poverty of criminology: A reaffirmation of the need for a structural criminology

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The poverty of criminology:
A reaffirmation of the need for a structural criminology

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Thomas Samuel Ward

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The Poverty of Criminology

Criminology is an academic discipline with the goal of explaining and understanding crime and criminal behavior. If we are to successfully address the problem of crime in the United States, the explanations and understandings derived from criminological investigations should inform criminal justice policy and systems operation. Criminology today is an interdisciplinary field drawing its explanations and understandings from such disciplines as sociology (e.g., Hagan, 1994; Messner and Rosenfeld, 1994; Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990; Currie, 1985a), psychology (e.g., Eysenck, 1989 and 1977; Yochelson and Samenow, 1977 and 1976; Bandura, 1973), economics (e.g., Becker, 1976 and 1968; Becker and Landes, 1974; Ehrlich, 1974), and biology (e.g., Jeffery, 1989 and 1979; Gordon, 1986; Mednick, Moffitt, and Stack, 1987; Mednick and Christiansen, 1977; Wilson and Herrnstein, 1985). Interdisciplinary approaches to criminology have largely been pursued because it is believed that they can increase our ability to explain and understand crime and criminal behavior by drawing upon insights provided by various disciplines. However, it will be argued in this dissertation that a common problem in interdisciplinary approaches advocated today is that they actually severely limit our understanding of crime,
and if followed in terms of policy, will clearly limit our ability to address the problem of crime in the United States. These interdisciplinary approaches have lost key insights provided by a sociological and social-structural understanding of crime and criminality. Several prominent interdisciplinary approaches will be examined to see where they are taking us in terms of explanation, understanding, and criminal justice policy.

It will be argued in this dissertation that the interdisciplinary theories to be examined fail to understand the complex phenomenon of crime because they lack adequate attention to the complexity of criminal behavior. Several researchers have noted in recent years a trend in criminology towards focusing upon individuals as the explanatory variables to understanding crime, while neglecting the role of the social context or social-structural factors in generating crime (e.g., National Research Council, 1993; Phillips, 1991; Lilly, Cullen, and Ball, 1989; Currie, 1985a; Jensen, 1981). The interdisciplinary theories to be examined in this dissertation reflect such a shift in focus. The problems emanating from such an approach and the reasons for this shift in criminology will be explored as a critical analysis of these perspectives is undertaken.

The critique contained in this dissertation will include a sociology of interdisciplinary criminology and a critique of
ideology. Like Gouldner, who sought a "...critical understanding of the social mission of Academic Sociology,..." one of the aims herein is to "...formulate some tentative ideas about the social mandate..." of several theories of crime claiming to be interdisciplinary, the ideologies they express, and their link to the larger society (1970:26). Through a critique of these examples of interdisciplinary criminology an attempt will be made to shed some light on the interests embedded in these theories and the reasons for their popularity. Not only have individualistic non-structural theories been attractive to some theorists, they have also been the preferred explanations of many politicians, criminal justice professionals, and the public in general (Scheingold, 1991). The popularity of crime myths, explanations, and understandings that blame individuals and excuse the existing social order has been noted by several researchers (e.g., Kappeler, Blumberg, and Potter, 1993; National Research Council, 1993; Phillips, 1991; Lilly et al., 1989; Currie, 1985a; Jensen, 1981). After developing a critique of this brand of interdisciplinary criminology and its policy implications, a "new criminology" will be advocated that embraces the complexity of crime and its origins in a social context. It will be argued that a non-reductionist, structural, and reflexive criminology can provide us with a more complete explanation and understanding of crime and
criminality, in addition to suggesting policy directions that get at the "roots" of crime. Before launching into a critique of several prominent examples of interdisciplinary theories of crime and recommendations for the future of criminology, the methods of analysis to be employed in this effort will be discussed.
CHAPTER 2
METHODS OF ANALYSIS

A Critique of Interdisciplinary Criminology

This dissertation will consist of a critique of theoretical statements in criminology that claim to be interdisciplinary and improvements over other theories of crime, theories which have in fact lost, or ignored, a sociological and social-structural criminology. It will be argued that these theories are therefore not adequately "interdisciplinary." The theories will be evaluated along several criteria. The critique begins with a sociology of criminology which includes a discussion of the theories' level of analysis, followed by an examination of their domain assumptions. Through an analysis of domain assumptions the social and political interests embedded in these perspectives will be explored. The analysis in this dissertation also incorporates a critique of ideology. It will be argued that the ideology contained in these examples of interdisciplinary criminology reflect an alienated view of men and women in society. In addition, since the criminological perspective and assumptions one embraces suggests plans for action to address crime, the policy implications from these perspectives on crime will be examined. A more detailed description of the methods of analysis follows below. For the sake of simplicity, the examples of criminological theories to be
critiqued will heretofore be referred to as "interdisciplinary" theories of crime.

A Sociology of Interdisciplinary Criminology

The Fallacy of Autonomy

The critique of interdisciplinary criminology begins with a discussion of a common error in focus and level of analysis. Interdisciplinary theories commit what Currie (1985a) terms "the fallacy of autonomy." This fallacy amounts to attributing the "causes" of crime to individuals or to institutions divorced from their larger social contexts and influences, such as the economy, the labor market, the community, or patterns of economic and racial inequality. When a theorist commits the fallacy of autonomy, they have failed to recognize that our lives take place within social contexts that are embedded with meaning, that life and its events, including crime, do not take place within a vacuum. By focusing on individuals or social institutions divorced from their larger social contexts and influences, interdisciplinary criminology overlooks key explanatory factors in crime causation. For example, when crime is attributed to a loss or lack of self-control, without examining the sources of this deficit, an incomplete explanation and understanding of crime is the result. Social-structural factors that could contribute to low self-control are left unexamined. The theories of crime
critiqued in this study will be examined for this form of reductionism.

**Domain Assumptions**

To gain an understanding of the interests embedded in the interdisciplinary theories of crime being examined here, their domain assumptions regarding human nature, the nature of society, and the desirability and possibility of social change will be examined. Several assumptions guide the analysis contained herein. First, whether we "like it or not, and know it or not, sociologists...organize their researches in terms of their prior assumptions..." (Gouldner, 1970:28). This certainly holds true for criminologists as well as for other social scientists. Our claims to knowledge and our theories regarding the nature of social reality, including crime, are themselves socially situated social products, reflecting social, political, and individual interests and value positions (Pfohl, 1994; Gouldner, 1976 and 1970; Strasser, 1976; Horton, 1974; Mannheim, 1936). As Brown notes, "...every representation is always a representation from some point of view, within some frame of vision" (1990:188).

Therefore, in order to understand the character, perspective, or point of view of a particular theory of crime and the interests embedded, it is necessary to examine the theorist's "background" and "domain assumptions" regarding humanity and
society. According to Gouldner:

Domain assumptions are the things attributed to all members of a domain; in part they are shaped by the thinker's world hypotheses and, in turn, they shape his deliberately wrought theories. They are an aspect of the larger culture that is most intimately related to the postulations of theory. They are also one of the important links between the theorist's work and the larger society (1970:31).

Domain assumptions are theory shaping. Domain assumptions, or what Strasser (1976) calls "guiding interests of cognition," significantly influence what a sociologist, or criminologist, "...looks for, what he sees, and what he does with his observations by way of fitting them, along with other facts, into a larger scheme of explanation" (Inkeles, cited in Strasser, 1976:18). The theory or perspective that one embraces reflects one's domain assumptions or guiding interests and likewise shapes what one sees and what one does with one's observations. As Michalowski notes, "...it is through the prism of perspective that we view reality, and like prisms they color our understanding of the world around us" (1977:19). An examination of a theory and its domain assumptions can help reveal the social interests of the theorist(s) and expose what is taken for granted and left unexamined. But we also need to explore what is being examined. As Williams (1981) warns, if one only focuses on the values and assumptions hidden in a theory, without examining its content, our ability to move ahead in
criminology and develop a more complete explanation and understanding of crime will be hampered.¹

Part of the discussion of socially situated value positions and interests embedded in theories also involves an examination of the social context in which theories emerge and prosper (e.g., Scheingold, 1991; Lilly et al., 1989; Bohm, 1981; Williams, 1981; Gouldner, 1970). As Lilly and colleagues note, "...social context plays a critical role in nourishing certain ways of theorizing about crime" (1989:11). And since "...different theories suggest different ways to reduce crime" (Lilly et al., 1989:13), the social context helps to shape what will and will not be done about crime. Through exploring the social context in which theories on crime emerge, we can gain a better understanding of why a particular theory arises and gains popularity and why others lose or never hold favor. A complete sociology of criminology, then, includes a critical examination of the assumptions behind the theory, its guiding interests, its social context, and its content in terms of its explanation and understanding of crime. In critically examining interdisciplinary criminology, it is important to recognize that the model of society proposed by any theory in question induces a selective focus (Strasser, 1976:15-17). In the following pages, the selective focus of several interdisciplinary theories of crime will be examined.
A Critique of Ideology

As part of the critique and sociology of interdisciplinary criminology, the analysis in this dissertation incorporates a critique of ideology. Through an examination of the ideologies present in interdisciplinary criminology, the selective focuses of these perspectives will be made clearer. As Bernstein notes, "...ideologies are based upon beliefs and interpretations which purport to be true or valid. These beliefs and interpretations are consequently subject to rational criticism" (1976:108). The attempt here will be to critically understand the ideologies expressed and unexpressed in the interdisciplinary theories of crime being examined.

According to Bernstein:

the critique of ideology has several inter-related functions: (1) It must describe and accurately characterize the ideology.... (2) It seeks a depth interpretation of the ideology which will at once reveal how the ideology reflects and distorts an underlying social and political reality. (3) It seeks to discover the material and psychological factors that reinforce and sustain it. (4) It seeks to isolate the fundamental beliefs and interpretations that are the basis of the ideology. (5) It seeks to dissolve the legitimizing power of ideologies by overcoming resistance in the ideologies' defenders (1976:108).

Through this process, the accuracy, interests, distortions, interpretations, and ideologies present in the interdisciplinary perspectives of crime under examination will be exposed for analysis.

It is important to note that both theoretical statements
and empirical theories contain ideologies. While empirical theories may claim to report the "facts" about social phenomena, they are nonetheless ideological in their claims. According to Bernstein:

one must stress that the explicit intention of those who advance such theories is to give an objective and value-neutral account of the 'facts,' not to pass off their value judgements as factual descriptions. ...By virtue of the belief that they are simply doing good empirical science, social scientists give a false legitimacy to claims that they are not merely empirical and scientific. The critique of empirical theory as ideology seeks to reveal these hidden and dubious value biases (1976: 107).

A number of theorists stress the importance of critically examining the ideologies embedded in theories in order to better understand their character and interests (e.g., Lilly et al., 1989; Bohm, 1981; Williams, 1981; Gouldner, 1970 and 1976). This is important because social theories, including theories of crime, carry with them implications for action in terms of prevention or remediation, and in terms of whether the focus for change will be the individual, their immediate surroundings, or the larger social-structure. As Lilly and colleagues note, "understanding why crime occurs...is a prelude to developing strategies to control the behavior" because different theoretical perspectives suggest different courses of action to reduce or eliminate crime (1989:12-13). Even when a theory suggests no change or action at all, interests are expressed in its implicit acceptance of the
status quo (Bohm, 1981; Geiger, 1947). Gouldner made this point clear when he stated that:

...every social theory facilitates the pursuit of some but not all courses of action, and thus encourages us to change or to accept the world as it is, to say yea or nay to it. In a way, every theory is a discreet obituary or celebration for some social system (1970:47).

In summary, through a critique of ideology we can better assess the interests embedded in a theory of crime, the reasons for the attractiveness of a particular theory, and its value in terms of an explanation and understanding of crime. We can also assess the implications of adhering to such approaches in terms of policy recommendations and "solutions" to crime. Before beginning the critique and analysis of interdisciplinary criminology, the selection criteria will be discussed for the inclusion interdisciplinary theories of crime in this dissertation.

Selection Criteria for Inclusion of Interdisciplinary Theories

The theories that have been included for critique in this dissertation were selected because they are representative of a disturbing trend in criminology today. The trend, already introduced, involves a focus upon individuals as the level of analysis and a diminishing of the importance of social-structural factors in explaining, understanding, and addressing crime. As already noted, this trend has been
recognized by a number of researchers (e.g., National Research Council, 1993; Phillips, 1991; Lilly et al., 1989; Currie, 1985a; Jensen, 1981). Despite these limitations, the theories selected claim to be interdisciplinary (or integrated) in some fashion. Their claim of "interdisciplinarity" carries with it an assumption that these perspectives are in some way improvements over other theories of crime because they break the disciplinary barriers by including insights from various fields of study. However, it will be argued that these theories are not adequately interdisciplinary due to their lack of social-structural insights from sociology and other disciplines.

In addition to the claim of interdisciplinarity, all the theories to be critiqued in this dissertation claim to be theories of all crime. But in reality, since these theories ignore the social structure's and social context's role in crime causation, it will be argued that the complexity of much of crime and criminal behavior is lost in their explanations and understandings. The understandings that are provided by the interdisciplinary theories being critiqued in this dissertation turn out to be variants of control theories of crime--theories that emphasize individual self-control and the importance of social controls and social bonds to significant others or institutions in preventing crime and criminality. As Messner and Rosenfeld note, "control theory...is arguably
the dominant theoretical perspective within criminology today" (1994:47). As evidence of this dominance, Messner and Rosenfeld discuss a survey of articles published between 1964 and 1992 in *Criminology*, the journal of the American Society of Criminology, which found that articles on control theory far and away dominated the journal. The dominance, popularity, and influence of control explanations of crime and delinquency has been noted by other theorists including Curran and Renzetti (1994), Williams and McShane (1994), Beirne and Messerschmidt (1991), and Farrington and colleagues (1986). In addition, Hirschi's (1969) version of control theory, the basis for Gottfredson and Hirschi's general theory of crime—a theory to be critiqued in this dissertation—has developed into one of the most dominant perspectives in criminology today (Gibbons, 1994). As will be discussed in greater detail later in this dissertation, control theories also lack social-structural insights and analysis, in addition to other deficiencies, and therefore offer an incomplete explanation and understanding of crime.

In summary, the theories included were chosen because they represent a disturbing trend in criminology today, including an individual focus, a lack of attention to the importance of social-structural or contextual factors in crime causation, claims to interdisciplinarity and therefore superiority, and they are examples of control theories of
crime--one of the dominant perspectives, if not the dominate perspective in criminology today. As a result of their particular brand of "interdisciplinarity" and their control theory focus (and the dominance of control theories in criminology), these theories offer inadequate explanations and understandings of crime and criminality. A brief introduction to the theories to be critiqued follows below.

The first theory to be discussed is Gottfredson and Hirschi's "general theory of crime" (1990; Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1988). These theorists reject the interdisciplinary label for their perspective in favor of the "general theory" designation. However, Gottfredson and Hirschi do claim to pursue a theory "...that can broaden the interests of criminology to encompass all of the disciplines contributing to it" (1988:24). Furthermore, they state that they have "...tried to write a book that is free of the constraints of disciplinary perspectives..." (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990:xiv). In other words, they have chosen to pursue an interdisciplinary criminology. As with the other theories to be critiqued here, Gottfredson and Hirschi believe that their perspective is in many ways an improvement over other theories of crime and criminality. Their theory purports to be a theory of all crime, and it consists of a restatement and modification of Hirschi's (1969) earlier version of control theory (Gibbons, 1994; Williams and McShane, 1994; Hirschi and
Gottfredson, 1993; Polk, 1991). As mentioned above, control theories are perhaps the most dominant perspective in criminology today, Hirschi's (1969) formulation of control theory being preeminent (Gibbons, 1994; Williams and McShane, 1994).

The second effort to be examined is an interdisciplinary theory advanced by Farrington, Ohlin and Wilson (1986). This theory, which is left unnamed, emerged from an interdisciplinary study group on crime funded by the MacArthur Foundation. After summarizing their view of what is known about crime from an interdisciplinary perspective, these researchers suggest strategies to learn more about crime while exploring policy issues in order to develop "cost-effective" strategies to prevent crime. Like Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), these researchers claim that their approach is an improvement over what has passed before. These authors also recognize and embrace the dominance of control theory explanations of delinquent (criminal) conduct (Farrington et al., 1986:96). In attempting to explain all crime, their theory emphasizes the importance of self- and social control in preventing crime.

The third perspective to be critiqued is found in Wilson's Thinking About Crime (1983), and Wilson and Herrnstein's Crime and Human Nature (1985). With a "crime-control policy" focus, the perspective advocated claims to be
interdisciplinary. While this perspective has been critiqued extensively by Scheingold (1991), Lilly and colleagues (1989), Kamin (1986), and Currie (1985a), among others, it is discussed here because it represents perhaps most clearly the trend in recent years towards focusing on the individual to the exclusion of the social-structure, and the claim to legitimacy and superiority because the theory is "interdisciplinary." Wilson and Herrnstein's theory was intended to explain all crime and like the other two theories analyzed, a primary focus is again upon the importance of self- and social control in addressing crime. Wilson and Herrnstein, however, also stress the importance of constitutional factors and predispositions in causing crime.

The critique of interdisciplinary criminology will conclude with a sampling of various other perspectives claiming to be interdisciplinary that commit similar errors to those discussed above. In this fashion, the explanations, understandings, claims, limitations, and problems inherent in such approaches will be explored and evaluated.

This dissertation does not argue for disciplinary criminology. The issues at stake here are far more important than protection of professional "turf." What is at stake is our understanding of and our ability to deal humanely and effectively with crime. A criminology that is interdisciplinary should increase our understanding of crime by adding
insights from all relevant disciplines. But as will be demonstrated, the theories mentioned above are crippled in their understanding of crime because they ignore the insights of a sociological and structural criminology. Such a crippled criminology is bound to develop an incomplete explanation and understanding of crime in addition to recommending and developing inadequate policies for the prevention and/or remediation of crime. By claiming to be "interdisciplinary," there is an attempt to bestow a sense of legitimacy upon these reductionist approaches to explaining and understanding crime. The primary aim of this study is to expose this reductionism, challenge the legitimacy of these perspectives based on interdisciplinarity, and to offer a vision of a criminology that is sociological, structural, reflexive, and truly interdisciplinary.
CHAPTER 3

A SOCIOLOGY OF INTERDISCIPLINARY CRIMINOLOGY

Sociologist Gary Jensen notes that in discussions of delinquency by sociologists, "the search for causes of delinquency...has become less distinctively sociological.... The explanatory variables studied as well as the conception of the phenomena to be explained have been shifting toward properties of individuals" (1981:8-9). While Jensen was commenting specifically on sociological theories of delinquency, the same can be said of many theories of crime today including the interdisciplinary theories to be examined here. This shift in focus has also been noted in research by the National Research Council (1993), Phillips (1991), Lilly and colleagues (1989), and Currie (1985a). The problems inherent in such a focus will become evident as several examples of interdisciplinary theories are examined in the following pages. The critique begins with a discussion of their level of analysis.

Interdisciplinary Theories and the Fallacy of Autonomy

One of the major problems with many interdisciplinary theories in criminology today is that they locate the primary cause of crime in the individual while minimizing, and sometimes ignoring, the social-structural conditions that
could lead to crime. For example, according to Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), the cause of all crime comes down to a lack of self-control. These authors state that criminal offenders appear to have little self-control over their desires, instead opting for the pleasures of the moment (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990:xv). Furthermore, they state that "the major 'cause' of low self-control...appears to be ineffective child-rearing" (1990:97). Crime, according to Gottfredson and Hirschi, is caused by an individual's low self-control over their passions and desires, and their low self-control was probably the result of poor up-bringing. This is the crux of the their "general theory of crime" which is intended to explain all crime--"...crime is a unitary phenomenon capable of explanation by a single theory, a theory that seeks first the features common to all crimes and deduces from them tendencies to criminality in the individual" (1990:201). And in their "general theory" the focus is upon the individual with their immediate surroundings of the family and school playing a contributing role, but the larger social context is for all intents and purposes, ignored. Gottfredson and Hirschi:

...offer...a view in which the state is neither the cause nor the solution to crime. In our view, the origins of criminality of low self-control are to be found in the first six or eight years of life, during which time the child remains under the control and supervision of the family or a familial institution (1990:272).
This is where Gottfredson and Hirschi commit a critical error common in the examples of interdisciplinary criminology being examined here. They commit what Currie terms "the fallacy of autonomy--the belief that what goes on inside the family can usefully be separated from the forces that affect it from the outside: the larger social context in which families are imbedded for better or for worse" (1985a:185). Gottfredson and Hirschi continually minimize the effects of the social-structure or context first by focusing on low self-control in the individual as the explanatory factor for all criminal behavior. They further minimize the importance of the social context by focusing on one aspect, the family, in isolation from other social-structural or contextual influences. The fact that such factors as economic inequality, unemployment, and/or patterns of discrimination impact the family, thus influencing the likelihood of crime and delinquency, is minimized, ignored, and sometimes denied by Gottfredson and Hirschi. For example, when discussing the importance of parental monitoring of children's behavior as an important element in teaching children self-control, Gottfredson and Hirschi mention that parents may not have the time or energy to monitor their children's behavior (1990:98). But that is all they say--they do not discuss the factors that effect a parent's ability and/or energy to monitor. And structural factors, such as a decline in real income and the increasing
need for both parents to work and earn a wage to make up for this loss, are factors that limit parent's ability to supervise or monitor their children (National Research Council, 1993). But instead of addressing such factors, Gottfredson and Hirschi emphasize the individual and their family while neglecting the importance of social-structural factors in influencing both. A discussion of research suggesting that social-structural factors play a significant role in generating crime (to be discussed later) is missing from their analysis. It appears that Gottfredson and Hirschi choose to ignore the social-structural evidence on crime that runs counter to their theory, a disturbing practice also noted by Polk (1991). Furthermore, as Currie (1985a) points out, there is a curious interest among some criminologists, like Gottfredson and Hirschi, with the "under the roof culture" while ignoring the larger culture and social conditions that shape and influence the "under the roof culture" in the first place. This tendency to emphasize the individual and the family, while minimizing or ignoring the social setting or context, has been common in the literature on delinquent and criminal behavior over the last two decades and it leads to some disturbing consequences.

In a recent study by the National Research Council (NRC) entitled, *Losing Generations: Adolescents in High-Risk Settings* (1993), an interdisciplinary panel of researchers
concludes that there has been an overemphasis in recent years on individual approaches to delinquency and other adolescent problems. The conclusions of the panel, which are also applicable to the study of crime in general, are worth citing at length here.

The work of this panel began as an attempt to better understand why some adolescents are drawn to risky life-styles while others, similarly situated, engage in only normal adolescent experimentation. As our work progressed, however, we became convinced that a focus on individual characteristics of adolescents would contribute to the overemphasis of the last two decades on the personal attributes of adolescents and their families at the expense of attention to the effects of settings or context. We concluded that it was important to right the balance by focusing on the profound influence that settings have on the behavior and development of adolescents (NRC, 1993:1).

Importantly, the NRC report recognizes the impact of social setting or context on the development of adolescents and in the development of delinquency and other high-risk behaviors. The social surroundings of the family, the school, the community, and the economy are recognized as having profound influence on the emergence of these problems. The findings of the NRC panel run counter to the analysis and suggestions made by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), as well as the other interdisciplinary theories of crime to be discussed, and supports the need for the development of a criminology that includes social-structural factors as variables of key importance. Indeed, the panel recommends that primary
emphasis be placed on social setting and context, in other words, on social-structural factors in order to successfully understand and address the problem of delinquency (NRC, 1993:12). According to the panel:

Although individual programs have shown impressive results and have provided a life raft for some adolescents, they are not a substitute for fundamental improvements in the major settings that are the framework of adolescent life.

The focus on settings reflects the panel's appreciation of the profound influence that context has on adolescent behavior and our judgement that the power of settings on adolescent development has been underappreciated. The lack of attention to settings has resulted in an incomplete picture of adolescence and an excessive concentration on individual adolescent behaviors and programs.... The categorical focus on individual behaviors has been largely ineffective because behavior is the result of individual and group interactions with the environment. Primary, sustained attention must be paid to reducing the exposure of children and adolescents to high-risk settings...(NRC, 1993:11-12).

Whereas the examples of interdisciplinary criminology to be examined in this dissertation commit the fallacy of autonomy, the NRC report, complied by an interdisciplinary panel of researchers, recognizes that individuals and families do not develop or live in a vacuum. Indeed, social-structural factors, factors related to setting or context in the language of the report, play key roles in shaping behavior and in "causing" delinquent or criminal behavior. This recognition is rare in interdisciplinary criminology today. In support of a structural and interdisciplinary criminology, the NRC report
concludes that:

Family income is perhaps the single most important factor in determining the settings in which children and adolescents spend their lives. Housing, neighborhoods, schools, and the social opportunities that are linked to them are largely controlled by income.... (And) ...income is a powerful influence in shaping that most important of settings, the family (1993:16).

And it is these social-structural conditions that make delinquent or criminal behavior more or less likely to occur. Income influences the social contexts or settings in which adolescents develop. According to the NRC report, if adolescents develop in an environment marked by low income, an economically stressed family, poor housing, poor schools, disadvantaged neighborhoods, and poor opportunity, they are more likely to turn to crime and criminality. The report concludes that economic hardship places adolescents at high risk for criminal activity (NRC, 1993:42). The conclusions of this panel are that social-structural factors play a key role in the emergence of crime and delinquency and in shaping the social contexts of the family and the school. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) pay "lip service" to social-structural factors, but that is not where their emphasis lies. As Gibbons (1994) notes, while social-structural factors in crime causation are mentioned by Gottfredson and Hirschi, they are dismissed as being unimportant. Their emphasis remains on the individual and their lack of self-control, and on families or schools
divorced from their social contexts.

The clearest evidence that individual explanations are inadequate for a complete explanation and understanding of crime comes from the fact that crime rates vary over time, by nation, by culture, by state, by region, by race, and by other such social-structural factors. As Currie asks:

why are people in St. Louis so much more 'prone to crime' than those in Stockholm or, for that matter, Milwaukee? Why are people in Houston not only far more likely to kill each other than people in London or Zurich, but also much more likely to do so today than they were 25 years ago (1985b:427-428)?

Or, if we take the fact that United States homicide and robbery rates far exceed those of all other "developed" nations (Messner and Rosenfeld, 1994), how does Gottfredson and Hirschi's theory of crime resulting from low self-control and "defective" parenting hold up as an explanation? Why does "defective" parenting show up when and where it does? Why are there more "defective" parents in the United States than in Denmark or Japan, which have much lower crime rates? Why does the rate of "defective" parenting vary from nation to nation, culture to culture, or from one part of the United States to another? By focusing upon individuals as the level of analysis, and by examining parenting divorced from its social context, interdisciplinary theorists like Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) not only commit the "fallacy of autonomy," they also fail to examine the social-structural factors that could
help explain the wide variations in crime rates between the United States and other similar nations. The reduction of explanations of crime to individual explanations based on low self-control cannot adequately answer these questions and will not add to our understanding of crime or to strategies for prevention or remediation.

In summary thus far, while theorists like Gottfredson and Hirschi do discuss a few of the social contexts in which crime emerges, such as the family and the school, their focus and emphasis remains on the individual and the "within-person" causes of crime and criminality (1990:256). Indeed, Gottfredson and Hirschi emphasize an individual's propensity for criminal behavior (1990; and Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1988). In these theorist's eyes, crime results from a lack of self-control, so instead of examining social-structural influences on individuals, the family, the school, or other institutions, they focus upon differing levels of self-control in individuals. Different levels of self-control are attributed to the individual's parent's child-rearing skills. The fact that child-rearing skills are also influenced by social-structural factors such as income inequality or economic hardship and stress (e.g., Conger et al., 1994; NRC, 1993; Conger et al., 1992; Currie, 1985a), unemployment and poverty (e.g., NRC, 1993; Jones, 1988; Currie, 1985a; Wilson, 1980), is diminished and then dismissed by Gottfredson and
Hirschi (1990). The role of these and other social-structural influences on crime, such as other forms of social inequality, patterns of discrimination, neighborhood, and housing, are also dismissed. As Phillips 1991) notes, Gottfredson and Hirschi's approach does not address how individual and family shortcomings come about in the first place or what might be done in terms of policy to remedy such problems. Their theory of self-control, as Gibbons points out "...is, at heart, a psychological argument" (1994:112). And since they emphasize "...self-control to the exclusion of other variables...it is not an integrated argument" (Gibbons, 1994:182), or really interdisciplinary either.

The understanding of crime that one gets from Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) general theory of crime is therefore incomplete, and it is also misleading. The theory is misleading in that it leads one to think that crime can be understood by looking primarily at individuals and their parents. The theory is misleading because it takes our attention away from any meaningful analysis of the role of the social-structure in creating crime. It is misleading because it suggests that crime can be remedied if we only "fix" parents' parenting skills and an individual's self-control. Social-structural factors that could effect parenting, self-control, and crime remain unexamined and unchallenged. This approach diverts attention away from any social-structural
factors that contribute to crime and from any needed social-structural change. And as already discussed, this approach is misleading because the authors choose to ignore research that contradicts their own research and theory. The relationship between parenting and crime is well documented in the literature (e.g., Farrington and Hawkins, 1991; Wilson, 1987; Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986; Hirschi, 1969), and surely self-control has something to do with crime. But to prevent this as a complete explanation ignores research and evidence to the contrary. For example, there is extensive research on the negative impact of economic disadvantage on parenting (e.g., Conger et al., 1994; NRC, 1993; Conger et al., 1992; Simons, et al., 1992; Dix, 1991; McLoyd, 1990). The factors impacting parenting and self-control must also be examined. Disturbingly, these authors are not the only ones to engage in such reductionism.

Other criminologists share the individual focus and lack of adequate attention to social structure or context found in Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) general theory of crime. In another interdisciplinary effort, Farrington, Ohlin, and Wilson (1986) state that their goal is to develop a case for a new research strategy that aims to better understand crime in order to prevent it. According to these authors, one of the central themes in this endeavor is "...the importance of knowing more about individual differences among offenders and
nonoffenders" (1986:13). They go on to suggest that "...if we wish to reduce the probability of low-rate offenders becoming high-rate offenders, we must develop greater insight into far more subtle differences among individuals and their circumstances" (1986:13). Again, as with Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), the focus is upon the individual. The "circumstances" Farrington and colleagues (1986) discuss are such things as family differences in producing delinquency (ultimately attributable to families' failure to produce and maintain strong bonds with their children), parenting abilities (including consistent discipline, supervision and monitoring), the limitations imposed by the "cognitive and temperamental characteristics" of children, the ability of schools to produce obedience in their students, the mix of talents and abilities of students and teachers, and the ability of families to cope with social and economic aspects of their environment. Their focus raises several interesting issues.

First, why only focus on reducing "the probability of low-rate offenders becoming high-rate offenders"? Why not focus on reducing the development of low-rate offenders in the first place? This criticism is acknowledged by the authors, but they still go on to focus on identifying "early signs of troublesome behavior" in families and schools as a primary means of preventing delinquency and crime (Farrington et al., 1986:95). They do this without developing an agenda for
research or prevention that truly aims at preventing crime before it begins, or a plan that addresses the structural conditions that make crime more likely. Rather than aiming at preventing crime, these authors seem determined to address crime and delinquency after low-rate offenders have already developed. In reality, this approach is not prevention oriented at all, the intervention focuses instead on the deterrence and control of crime.

As discussed earlier, since crime rates vary over time, by nation, by region of the country, by race, and by gender, an examination of the social-structural factors that could help us understand these patterns would seem to be the most fruitful way to go. But in the theory advanced by Farrington and colleagues (1986), the focus is again on the individual to explain, understand, and prevent crime. Again, "circumstances" are mentioned, but upon examination, these relate to individual characteristics or social circumstances that have been divorced from their larger social-structural influences or context. Their mention of "social and economic aspects" of the environment seems to be nothing more than "lip service," because the causes of crime, according to these authors, seem to lie in individuals, families, and/or schools without seriously considering the impact of such factors as economic inequality, racism, discrimination, or other such social-structural factors that contribute to crime. These authors
too commit the fallacy of autonomy. Social and economic influences are mentioned, but they are not emphasized or fully explored. For example, they emphasize how families cope with their economic and social environment (Farrington et al., 1986:13), not the social and economic conditions themselves and their impact on families and children. This is an extremely important oversight found in this approach, because the bonds of affection in a family, the ability to supervise or monitor one's children, the success of parents, the success of a school, or the mix of talents and abilities of students and teachers, are all likely impacted by economic inequality, patterns of discrimination, and/or various other social-structural conditions in one's community and nation (e.g., Conger et al., 1994; Hagan, 1994; NRC, 1993; Conger et al., 1992; Simons et al., 1992; Dix, 1991; McLoyd, 1990; Jones, 1988; Sampson, 1987; Wilson, 1980)—but this link is left unexamined. Research demonstrating the importance of social-structural factors in crime causation will be examined further in the next chapter.

Further evidence of the fallacy of autonomy can be seen in Farrington and colleague's (1986) failure to examine social-structural factors when they discuss the impact of schools on crime. These authors assume a different mix of talents and abilities in students and teachers while believing that this mix helps to explain differences in a school's
"...ability to induce reasonable levels of obedience in their pupils..." (Farrington et al., 1986:13), but they don't ask where the differences stem from in the first place. Their assumption seems to be that these differences are innate or arise entirely in families, rather than springing from a complex interaction between individuals and their social and economic environment. Furthermore, when exploring the implications of their analysis for theories of crime and for the development of a research strategy for the future, these authors pose several questions to be answered by future research, including: "Why are parental child-rearing techniques, family criminality, the child's troublesome behavior, and the child's poor educational attainment the best predictors of the onset of offending (Farrington et al., 1986:57)?" But they fail to include a question about the relationship between these "predictors" and socioeconomic factors such as income inequality, poverty, and neighborhood. And as suggested by the recent NRC report (1993), and by the social-structural research on crime to be discussed in the next chapter, these factors are critical.

Curiously, in at least two instances Farrington and colleagues cite research that stresses the impact of economic deprivation on families and on delinquency, but still conclude that the problem lies in the family, or more specifically with parenting methods (1986:97,99). For example, after noting the
strong relationship in the literature between lax parental supervision and delinquency, they include the following quote by Wilson:

The essential point of our findings is the very close association of lax parenting methods with severe social handicap. Lax parenting methods are often the result of chronic stress, situations arising from frequent or prolonged spells of unemployment, physical or mental disabilities among members of the family, and an often permanent condition of poverty. If these factors are ignored and parental laxness is seen instead as an attitude which can be shifted by education or by punitive measures, then our findings are being misrepresented (1980:233-234).

Farrington and colleagues conclude from all of this that "what is needed is...study to isolate the most strategic targets for enhancing the effectiveness of parental supervision" (1986:99). They choose not to address the social-structural factors identified by Wilson, unemployment and poverty, instead opting to focus entirely on enhancing parenting skills. In this fashion they sidestep the more obvious suggestions of the need for social-structural change—even if it's only to improve parenting skills. At another point, after noting the importance of socioeconomic disadvantage on families, on parenting, and on delinquency, Farrington and colleagues conclude that "...the persistent association of family variables and delinquency supports a major focus on the development of intervention programs to remedy critical deficiencies in family socialization processes" (1986:97).
Again they ignore the social-structural factor—socioeconomic disadvantage—that has been suggested by the very research they have just cited. These researchers continually refocus attention on defective individuals, defective socialization, families, and/or parents, while diverting attention away from an examination of the existing social-structure. Through their focus on socialization processes, the existing normative and social-structure is assumed (Mills, 1963). Similar to problems that Colvin and Pauly note in their discussion of "integrated theories" of crime, this approach fails "...to transcend the confines of the micro level, interpersonal processes to examine why the various socialization paths are arrayed as they are and why distinctive socialization sequences are differentially distributed along class lines" (1983:525). Throughout their theory, Farrington and colleagues (1986) focus on such factors as individual abilities and talents, coping skills, parenting skills, or temperament, while the existing social-structure and its role in creating and/or contributing to crime is left unexamined. These theorists, like Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), fail to ask how these individual and/or family deficits develop to begin with and why they are arrayed as they are.

Another theory of crime that clearly reflects the trend in recent years towards focusing on individuals to the exclusion of social-structural factors was developed by Wilson
in Thinking About Crime (1983), and by Wilson and Herrnstein in Crime and Human Nature (1985). These efforts focus on "...explaining criminality rather than crime (Lilly et al, 1989:195)" and on predispositions or propensities of criminal behavior in the individual. Wilson and Herrnstein identify constitutional factors "...usually present at or soon after birth..." (1985:69) that predispose certain individuals to commit crimes. Over the years Wilson (1983) and Wilson and Herrnstein (1985) have been criticized extensively in the literature for their myopic focus on the individual and their lack of serious attention to social-structural factors in crime causation (e.g., Scheingold, 1991; Lilly et al., 1989; Currie, 1986 and 1985a and b). While Wilson and Herrnstein mention that "it is likely that...the tendency to commit crime has both constitutional and social origins..." (1985:69), their emphasis remains strongly on the individual and predispositions to criminality. While claiming "...that criminal behavior...results from a complex interaction of genetic and environmental factors" (Wilson and Herrnstein, 1985:70), they "...return relentlessly to criminality as the consequence of flawed individuals making the wrong choices" (Scheingold, 1991:12). As Scheingold notes, despite their claims to being interested in "objective conditions" or social-structural causes of crime, "...there is an unmistakably volitional inflection to the conclusions drawn by
Wilson and Herrnstein" (1991:12).

Like Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), and Farrington and colleagues (1986), Wilson and Herrnstein (1985) focus on the individual instead of paying adequate attention to the social-structural influences on crime. But unlike the other two interdisciplinary theories being discussed here, Wilson and Herrnstein stress the importance of underlying predispositions to commit crime that they believe are, to a large part, genetically based. In his critique of Wilson and Herrnstein, Kamin states that:

The book does, of course, contain some appropriately worded comments to the effect that the relations between genes and the social environment are complex, so that the two should not be thought of as 'either-or.' Lip service aside, however, Wilson and Herrnstein repeatedly imply that genes and environment are radically separate sources of causation, and that when variations in the two are correlated, as is usually the case, causation resides in the genes (1986:27).

Kamin also claims that Wilson and Herrnstein support their arguments through the selective interpretation and misinterpretation of the research. This tendency has also been noted by Lilly and colleagues (1989). As discussed earlier in this dissertation, it has been suggested that Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) also selectively reviewed the literature and ignored data in order to support their theory (Polk, 1991). It appears that Wilson and Herrnstein (1985) were determined to support their individual and socio-
Regarding the family, as with the other two theories previously discussed, Wilson and Herrnstein (1985) also stress the importance of parenting abilities in preventing delinquency and crime. And also like the other theories, the family is examined divorced from its larger social context. Unlike Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) and Farrington and colleagues (1986), Wilson and Herrnstein (1985) go further by stressing the role of genetically transmitted family traits predisposing some to crime. The problems and fallacies related to their genetic argument will be discussed in the following section on the assumptions regarding human nature in these interdisciplinary theories of crime. Suffice it to say that if crime is genetically based, it would have to be concluded that the gene pool in the United States is badly "polluted" given our relatively very high crime rates—especially in the case of violent crime. We would also have to be able to explain why people become less criminal as they grow older, a pattern common today that has been well established in the literature on crime. If genes "caused" their initial criminality, do their genes then mutate in such a consistent pattern that they become non-criminal "by nature" as they mature? Wilson and Herrnstein's focus on "natural" causes of crime functions to take attention away from the larger social context in which families live and in which
crime emerges.

The problems found in the examples of interdisciplinary theories of crime discussed in this dissertation are common in the interdisciplinary literature on crime today. For example, Hawkins, Catalano, and Miller (1992), Farrington and Hawkins (1991), and Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber (1986), all emphasize the importance of good parenting skills (such as monitoring and supervision of children) in preventing crime and delinquency, but they fail to connect parenting to the larger social context. These theorists also embrace variations of a control theory perspective which accepts the existing normative structure, focuses on the individual "out-of-control," and ignores the importance of social-structural factors in influencing parenting skills, socialization, and the development of social bonds to begin with. For example, Farrington and Hawkins (1991) note structural influences on families and delinquency, but then ignore the implications of these insights in their conclusions and recommendations. As with the other theories discussed in this study, these perspectives, while claiming to be interdisciplinary, lack serious consideration and analysis of the impact of sociological and structural factors on crime, and are therefore incomplete and not adequately interdisciplinary. These perspectives direct our attention away from any needed social-structural changes.
An example of the aforementioned redirection of our attention away from the social-structure to individuals, or to institutions divorced from the social-structure, can be found in Hawkins' and colleague's (1992) discussion of risk and protective factors for adolescent drug abuse and delinquency. These authors identify economic deprivation, poor family management practices, family conflict, and low bonding to the family, among other risk factors, as increasing the risk of drug abuse or delinquency. However, when their solutions surface, they suggest such programs as parent training and social competence promotion as means of prevention. They discuss the importance of monitoring and supervision of children but do not address the social-structural factors, such as economic stress and disadvantage, that influence these and other parenting skills (e.g., Conger et al., 1994; NRC, 1993; Conger et al., 1992). Additionally, while economic deprivation is brought up as a risk factor, they develop no plan to address this problem. The literature Hawkins and colleagues (1992) cited which addresses economic deprivation stresses interventions and support programs to help people cope with their deprivation rather than addressing directly the deprivation itself and ways of eliminating or minimizing such economic inequality. As with the other theories discussed in this dissertation, Hawkins and colleagues mention social-structural factors in crime causation, but that is not
where their emphasis lies. The role of social-structural factors in crime causation and the need for structural changes and programs to address crime are not explored.

In summary, the interdisciplinary criminological theories examined in this study focus on the individual in attempting to explain and understand crime. And when these theorists do examine an aspect of the social-structure, setting, or context as a factor influencing the likelihood of crime, such as the family, they commit the "fallacy of autonomy"—they all focus on the individual or institutions influencing the individual to the exclusion of social-structural factors influencing both. To say, for example, that the family, the school, the community, or the peer group are unaffected by such factors as patterns of economic and racial inequality ignores important sociological research on the family and on crime (e.g., Conger et al., 1994; Hagan, 1994; NRC, 1993; Currie, 1985a). As Currie (1985a) remarked, there is indeed a curious interest among some theorists with the "under the roof culture" of the family, but an equally curious lack of interest in the larger culture that shapes and continues to influence the family and the occurrence of crime and delinquency. In addition, each of the interdisciplinary theories critiqued in this dissertation represent variants of control theories— theories emphasizing the importance of social control, self-restraint, and bonds to others in preventing crime. Control theories also fail to
recognize the importance of social-structural factors in generating crime and in developing, maintaining, and severing social bonds. Control theories also accept the existing normative structure, "...the structure of authority and actions of social control agents as an unexamined given" (Colvin and Pauly, 1983). Therefore, non-structural interdisciplinary criminology, like conservative criminology, "...stacks the deck in favor of 'individual' explanations by simply choosing to ignore the implications of variations in 'antisocial' behavior across different social strata, racial and ethnic groups, or countries" (Currie, 1985a:217). These approaches are misleading because they lead us to think that we can explain, understand, and address crime without an analysis of the role of the social-structure in creating crime. They suggest that if we only "fix" parenting skills and control unruly natures we can prevent or stop crime. Social-structural factors that effect parenting, self-control, bonding, and crime remain unexamined and unchallenged. This approach diverts attention away from any social-structural factors that contribute to crime and from any needed social-structural change. The interests expressed in such approaches and their limitations will be addressed further as the domain assumptions present in these theories are examined.
Domain Assumptions

Other areas of difficulty for interdisciplinary criminology become evident through an examination of domain or "background" assumptions. An understanding of the assumptions at the base of these theories will provide a more complete understanding of their nature and character while also gaining insight into the interests and ideologies they reflect.

Different assumptions and ideas regarding the nature of human kind and society shape any social investigation (Gouldner, 1970; Strasser, 1976), including the orientation to the study of crime and delinquency (Michalowski, 1977). To begin, the assumptions regarding human nature present in the theories of crime being examined in this study will be explored.

Human Nature

The view on holds regarding human nature significantly shapes the subsequent investigation of crime and the theories one develops or accepts (Michalowski, 1977; Gouldner, 1970). If a theorist believes that people are prone to crime by their nature, then the focus of their explanation of crime is likely to be on the individual rather than on the role of the social-structure in creating crime. If instead, human nature is viewed as malleable and shaped by social circumstances, the theorist is likely to focus on the role of such factors as economic inequality, opportunity, and racism in generating
crime, rather than appealing to individual differences in criminals. Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) view of human nature, and the views of control theories in general, fall into the first camp.

In their general theory of crime, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) embrace what they term the "classical" image of human nature. The authors speak of "universal desires" (1990:273) and state that "...human behavior is motivated by the self-interested pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain" (1990:175). Crime for these theorists results from an attempt to enhance pleasure and avoid pain in those lacking self-control (1990:175). Furthermore, they say that "...people naturally pursue their own interests and unless socialized to the contrary will use whatever means are available to them for such purposes" (1990:117). In an earlier article, Hirschi and Gottfredson conclude from their reading of the biological literature on crime that "...there is considerable evidence that heritable individual characteristics play a significant role in crime causation" (1988:9). But in their general theory of crime they reject the idea that there are born criminals or genes that transmit criminality (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990:96). However, in speaking of "universal desires," a self-seeking human nature, and people driven to satisfy their own interests, even at the expense of others if not controlled by socialization or held in check by
self- and/or social controls, it is clear that Gottfredson and Hirschi have very definite ideas regarding human nature and their view is one of an innately selfish human being. Their view of human nature is in fact similar to that of Freud's (1961). Freud viewed human beings as self-seeking and driven by instincts until we are forced to renounce our instincts by external social controls, which then leads to the development of internal controls. This sounds suspiciously like Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) claim that crime is caused by a lack of self-control, driven by "universal desires," and resulting from inadequate socialization. Both views downplay the sociological view on the role of the social-structure and culture in shaping what is considered "human nature" and in leading to crime. These assumptions regarding human nature are at the foundation of Gottfredson and Hirschi's general theory of crime based on low self-control.

The assumptions regarding human nature are not stated as clearly in the theory of crime developed by Farrington and colleagues (1986), although these authors do seem to share many of the views of Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) on human nature, including embracing control theory assumptions of a self-interested human nature in need of self- and social control. Farrington and colleagues discuss "temperament," while stating that "psychologists believe that temperament is to some degree inherited" (1986:6). And later, in discussing
an earlier theory developed by Farrington, people are viewed as being hedonistic and rational (Farrington et al., 1986:59). In several instances these authors state that criminality could be caused in part by genetic factors, and they minimize the importance of social-structural and economic factors in crime causation (as previously discussed). For example, there is an assumption throughout their discussion of temperament that it is somehow inherited, a part of the "baggage" that comes with a particular parent or child. The possibility that temperament develops in a process of social interaction influenced by social-structural realities is not seriously considered. When discussing temperament, these authors again commit the fallacy of autonomy. And while lacking a clear statement of their assumptions regarding human nature, their discussion of temperament, genetics, their mention of hedonism, rationality, their focus on the individual, families, and schools, the importance of socialization, supervision, and social control, all suggest a view similar to that of Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990).

While Farrington and colleagues (1986), lack a clear statement of their assumptions regarding human nature, Wilson and Herrnstein (1985) are very clear on their assumptions. Of the three theories focused on in detail in this dissertation, Wilson and Herrnstein's explanation and understanding of crime is based most heavily on their assumptions regarding human
nature. The authors state that their book "...is an effort to set forth an understanding of human nature by examining one common, if regrettable, manifestation of that nature—criminality" (Wilson and Herrnstein, 1985:19). In fact, they go on to say that "...crime is universal..." but fail to adequately explain just why this universal "human nature" manifests itself in crime more often in some places and times than others. They address the issue of differences in crime rates but conclude that to find an explanation, "...one cannot begin with the society as a whole or its historical context, for what needs explanation is not the behavior of 'society' but the behavior of individuals making up society" (Wilson and Herrnstein, 1985:20). Crime is attributed to "constitutional factors" with social influences playing a minor contributing role. But as previously noted, even though Wilson and Herrnstein pay "lip service" to social origins of crime, their focus is upon constitutional factors and individual choices predisposing some to commit criminal acts (e.g., Scheingold, 1991; Kamin, 1986; Currie, 1985a&b).

Whatever one thinks about the views of human nature expressed by Wilson and Herrnstein (1985), Farrington and colleagues (1986), or Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), they are simply not helpful in understanding or explaining crime. As Currie points out, this view of human nature "...cannot tell us why some times, some places, and some groups are more
criminal than others" (1985a:187). How can the conceptions of human nature offered by these theorists explain the facts regarding crime? For example, in 1993, Detroit, Michigan had 581 homicides while Toronto, the largest and most racially diverse city in Canada, had only 53 (Lazaro, 1994). Is human nature in Canada that different from human nature in the United States? The robbery rate in the U.S. in 1988 of 221 robberies per 100,000 people was twice as high as the industrial nation with next-highest rate, four to five times higher than most other industrial nations, and 158 times higher than the rate in Japan (Messner and Rosenfeld, 1994:22). The homicide rate in the U.S. in 1988 of 8.9 homicides per 100,000 people was three times higher than the closest industrial nation, and more than seven times greater than other industrial nations (Messner and Rosenfeld, 1994:22). If the explanation of these facts lies in our "nature," the rates of these and other crimes should be at least somewhat constant across nations. The fact that these crime rates vary so much by nation suggest that there are differing social conditions that could better explain these phenomena. Human nature alone can't explain these facts regarding crime. A more sociological view of "human nature" and a structural and reflexive criminology can.

There is an alternative view of human nature that fits better with the facts regarding crime. Simply stated, this
view holds that social conditions and culture shape what some call "human nature." Indeed, it is not primarily "nature" that shapes human behavior, it is the social conditions and settings in which we live out our daily lives. In this perspective, there is no inherent, invariant human nature. According to this viewpoint, expressed clearly by Marx, "...the essence of man is not an abstraction inherent in each particular individual. The real nature of man is the totality of social relations" (1956:68). In this scheme, we are neither "good" nor "evil," but can be either depending upon the social conditions in which we live out our lives. Whether a society fosters self-interest or concern for others and the common good, depends upon the nature of social relations in that society. This is not a call for a "blank slate" view of human nature. Even though Marx believed that what is called "human nature" is actually the culmination of social and productive relations, he still felt that people are endowed with certain powers and needs that "make" us human (Oilman, 1976:74). This is a call for a criminology that recognizes that even with our endowments, whatever they may be, human behavior is largely shaped by and through social processes. What Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), Farrington and colleagues (1986), Wilson (1983), and Wilson and Herrnstein (1986) call "human nature," such as a self-interested pursuit of pleasure, is in fact a reflection of a historically specific conception...
of human nature that reflects the social system and ruling ideas of the age. In this view, "human nature" is largely a reflection of the social relations engendered by particular social and economic arrangements.

Given the importance of the social-structure and social relations in helping to shape our "nature," the fact that the theories of crime discussed in this dissertation de-emphasize those relations surfaces as a major limitation of these approaches. In addition, the lack of attention to, or denial of social-structural "causes" of crime severely restricts their ability to explain, understand, or deal with crime in terms of prevention or remediation. By positing a self-interested, self-seeking, or a criminal human nature, these perspectives focus our attention on the individuals involved in crime while directing it away from the social-structural conditions that can lead to crime. As Lilly and colleagues note, "...attempts to root crime in human nature exempt the social fabric from blame and lend credence to the idea that offenders are largely beyond reform and in need of punitive control" (1989:199). All three theories assume the existence of an invariant human nature, ignore or minimize the role of the social-structure in shaping human behavior, ignore or minimize the role of the social-structure in generating crime, and emphasize control measures to address crime. Any theory that shares a control theory focus with its assumptions on
human nature, or an emphasis on a self-interested human nature with predispositions to criminality, would suffer from these same limitations. To further understand the character of these interdisciplinary theories of crime while also learning more about the interests and ideologies they express, their assumptions regarding the nature of society will be examined next. Like assumptions regarding human nature, the assumptions one holds regarding the nature of society shapes any subsequent social investigation (Gouldner, 1970), including the investigation of crime.

**The Nature of Society**

Every social theory, including those on crime, contain domain assumptions regarding the nature of society that influence their explanation, understanding, and possible courses of action to address crime. As Gouldner (1970) noted, these assumptions reflect our personal experiences and sentiments and they facilitate particular courses of action or inaction regarding social phenomena. Among these assumptions are beliefs and attitudes regarding the possibility and desirability of social change. For example, if a criminologist believes that crime is the unavoidable result of human nature, then it would do no good to restructure society to address crime. In this sense, the nature of society is such that it cannot be changed. The focus would instead be on
control of individuals engaged in crime, since changing their nature would not be possible. These domain assumptions regarding the nature of society influence what a theorist thinks can be done in and about the world. According to Gouldner:

...domain assumptions entail beliefs about what is real in the world and thus have implications about what it is possible to do, to change in the world; the values they entail indicate what courses of action are desirable and thus shape conduct. In this sense, every theory and every theorist ideologizes social reality (1970: 47-48).

The domain assumptions or guiding interests found in the interdisciplinary theories of crime discussed in this study assume a human nature that is in need of control. Furthermore, these perspectives see crime arising out of individuals, who for one reason or another, lack self-control or self-restraint. The focus for blame and change is upon the individual. The existing social and normative structure are accepted as they are.

The theories of crime proposed by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), Farrington and colleagues (1986), Wilson (1983), and Wilson and Herrnstein (1985), de-emphasize the role of social-structure in their explanations and understanding of crime, and do not seriously entertain the possibility of social-structural changes in order to address crime. The status quo is assumed as legitimate and individuals, families, and schools are expected to adjust to the demands of our economic
and social reality. For example, Farrington and colleagues state that families able to prevent delinquency in their children do so because of their ability to develop strong bonds of affection with their children, their effective parenting skills, and because of their ability to cope with "...the economic and social aspects of their environment" (1986:13). According to Gottfredson and Hirschi, "...the state is neither the cause nor the solution to crime" (1990:272). In their view, it is individuals who lack self-control over their "universal desires" that "cause" crime. Furthermore, poor parenting is viewed as the primary cause of individuals with low self-control. Wilson and Herrnstein (1985) focus on underlying predispositions and constitutional factors that lead to criminality instead of examining criminogenic factors in the social-structure. In fact, Wilson has gone so far as to say that "we have made our society and we must live with it" (1983:249). In all three of these cases, the focus is on the individual in addressing crime and in adapting to the status quo while social-structural change is seen as undesirable and unnecessary. The possibility of altering or restructuring the existing social and economic order or opportunities is not considered.

One of the consequences of the views discussed above, coupled with the view of a self-interested pleasure-maximizing human nature, is that the "blame" for crime is directed away
from the existing social order and on to "defective" others that are somehow "different" from law-abiding citizens. This practice involves pointing "...to the different ones as the source of a problem, so we don't have to change our lifestyle or take responsibility for the problem" (Kappeler, 1993:14).

As long as the blame for crime is placed on individuals, their nature, or their families, social change is not seen as necessary or desirable. In building upon C. Wright Mills' (1963) analysis of social problems, Ryan adds that:

Within such a framework...deviation from norms and standards comes to be defined as failed or incomplete socialization--failure to learn the rules or the inability to learn how to keep them. Those with social problems are then viewed as unable or unwilling to adjust to society's standards....

In defining social problems in this way, the social pathologists are, of course, ignoring a whole set of factors that ordinarily might be considered relevant--for instance, unequal distribution of income, social stratification, political struggle, ethnic and racial group conflict, and inequality of power. Their ideology concentrates almost exclusively on the failure of the deviant. To the extent that society plays any part in social problems, it is said to have somehow failed to socialize the individual...(Ryan, 1976:14-15).

The focus of Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), and Farrington and colleagues (1986), is upon the individual and their socialization within the social contexts of the family and the school, while ignoring the significant social structural factors discussed by Ryan. Wilson and Herrnstein (1985) also ignore these social-structural factors with their emphasis on
the individual, socialization, and constitutional predispositions to criminality. By blaming human nature, faulty socialization, and individuals out of control, and by blaming parents and schools, the status quo remains unquestioned and unchallenged. Given this understanding, individuals, families, and schools are "blamed" for crime and need to be changed in order to prevent or reduce crime. This understanding serves as an effective ideology to justify and maintain the status quo by directing "blame" away from the social-structure as a source of crime. The need or possibility for social change is rendered unnecessary and undesirable.

As discussed above, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), Farrington and colleagues (1986), and Wilson and Herrnstein (1985) focus on faulty socialization as a major cause of crime. Given this framework, the norms, roles, and values that people are supposed to be socialized to are assumed and not questioned. As Mills has observed, the normative structures behind the content of what is to be socialized is left unexamined by theorists calling for more effective socialization as a solution to norm violation (1963:533). Also left unexamined are the origins of the norms and the reasons for differences in socialization processes and outcomes in families (Colvin and Pauly, 1983). But most importantly, these perspectives fail to examine why
socialization "fails" to begin with. Perhaps a social-structural factor (or factors) "causes" both failed socialization and crime. The focus on failed socialization leads to viewing problems as individual, rather than as problems in the structure of society. This orientation will find social change unnecessary and undesirable. This bias and domain assumption represents another important limitation of these theories of crime.

The perspectives discussed in this dissertation claim to be interdisciplinary theories of all crime, but they in fact ignore social-structural insights found in a sociological perspective on crime while catering to conservative values and interests. With their individual focus, their lack of attention to social-structural factors in addressing crime, their preference for maintaining the status quo, these perspectives are not comprehensive enough or adequately interdisciplinary. As Lilly and colleagues have noted in their critique of conservative criminology, these views "...pay little attention to crime's social roots" and they assume that the "...offenders' social circumstances are either unfixable or unimportant in crime causation" (1989:204). Before discussing just what policy implications emanate from these reductionist approaches to explaining and understanding crime, a philosophical error that effects both the theory and practice of interdisciplinary criminology will be discussed.
Alienated Criminology

The interdisciplinary theories of crime being analyzed in this dissertation suffer from an alienated view of humankind, society, and crime. They fail to recognize that our society, culture, form of government, market economy, social institutions, patterns of social interaction, values, beliefs, and "nature" are all human social creations. This significant and basic sociological insight suggests that since these things are social creations, they can all be modified or changed. What the theories of crime discussed call "human nature" is also a social creation, and this "nature" too can be changed or modified. If on the other hand we assume, as do Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), that human beings are driven by "universal desires," or that "constitutional" factors predispose some to be criminal (Wilson and Herrnstein, 1985), then we have precluded the possibility or changing what is called "human nature" through changing our institutions or values, and we are left with the option of only controlling an otherwise unruly human nature or predisposition. In addition to ignoring social-structural factors in crime causation, this view of human nature and of society reflects an alienation from our own creations. In the alternative view, we create through social processes what we call "human nature" and we create the institutions and values that shape that "nature" and our behavior. Whatever capacities an individual is born
with, the complete human being that we become with our values, beliefs, attitudes, and personality, emerges in a social process within which individual characteristics and capacities interact with social forces. By failing to consider this, the interdisciplinary criminologies of Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), Farrington and colleagues (1986), Wilson (1983), and Wilson and Herrnstein (1985), explain, understand, and address "human nature" only after assuming that "what is," has to be. There is an alternative sociological viewpoint that does not suffer from this alienated view of human kind, one that does not regard the particular manifestation of human nature as eternal.

Our society and our "nature" are social creations. But when these creations are endowed with a power external to their human creators, this is the essence of alienation as conceived by Marx (Vogel, 1988). When we see these creations as ruling over us rather than as our creations, we remain alienated from our real (social) world. Through social action, and the recognition that these institutions and the "human nature" they help to shape are social creations, human beings have the power to remake their world and their "nature" into forms that are consistent with human needs. Vogel states that "alienation...is...a single phenomenon, in which the products of our action--social institutions as well as physical objects--appear as external and independent forces
whose connectedness to us has been lost" (1988:376).
Similarly, Berger and Luckmann warn of reification whereby human phenomena are apprehended as if they are things (1967:89). According to Berger and Luckmann:

reification implies that man is capable of forgetting his own authorship of the human world, and further, that the dialectic between man, the producer, and his products is lost to consciousness. The reified world is, by definition, a dehumanized world. It is experienced by man as a strange facticity, an opus alienum over which he has no control rather than as the opus proprium of his own productive activity (1967:89).

To overcome alienation we must learn to recognize "...that these forces are the result of our own action, and thus that they can be controlled, that their Naturwuchsigkeit can be eliminated" (Vogel, 1988:380). In this view, the particular form "human nature" takes in a historical epoch is a reflection of the dominant social order, its ruling ideas, and the social relations it engenders. As Marx argued, in capitalism, with its alienated labor, "...man not only produces his relation to the object, and to the process of production as alien and hostile men; he also produces the relation of other men to his production and his product, and the relation between himself and other men" (Marx, 1956:169). If the nature of these relations is changed, we will have changed what has been regarded as "human nature" in addition to changing the structure of society. Approaching crime and delinquency from this enlightened viewpoint enables us to
address "root causes" through altering what alienated criminology calls "human nature" by altering the structure of society and its institutions, a structure that is assumed by alienated criminology. As Groves and Sampson note, "the bottom line...is that since society is a human product it is amenable to conscious planning and rational control" (1986:564).

A central characteristic of alienation according to Marx involves "...the separation of what does not allow separation without distortion" (Ollman, 1976:47). The dissociation of crime from the structure of society is a related and fundamental problem in the theories of crime being examined in this study. The French writer, Jacques Ellul sees "dissociation" as a fundamental problem in our way of thinking about the world.

In the realities of the world and society we dissociate and separate those things which can certainly be distinguished but which are in fact complementary and inseparable. Thus we separate the individual and society.... Our mode of thinking is also reductionist and one-dimensional. We are prepared to see only one object, to reduce what we can see to a single dimension, to eliminate all difficulties and details and singularities. Formed by science, technique, and the media, our thinking is not global and complex, like reality--it is disabled (1990:221).

The individual focus and assumptions regarding human nature found in interdisciplinary criminology are examples of dissociation. The individual is examined based on a view of
human nature that is separated from its social context, and the complex problem of crime is reduced to an issue of inadequate controls and a self-interested unrestrained human nature. The existing social structure and its influences are left unexamined. It social contextual influences are considered at all, such as the family and the school, these contexts are dissociated from the larger society (the fallacy of autonomy). The understanding of crime that emerges from such a view is bound to be incomplete, and in Ellul's terminology, "disabled." We instead need a view of crime that addresses the complexity of crime as a social phenomenon, one that does not dissociate crime from its larger context or suffer from an alienated view of human kind, human nature and the social world that we create.

Alienation also surfaces as a problem in the process of studying crime. A perspective that overcomes an alienated, reified, and dissociated view of crime must be prepared to address the limitations and assumptions found in a traditional scientific approach to the study of crime. As Gouldner notes (1970), the study of social phenomena as a "natural science" contains domain assumptions that reflect an alienated view of our social world. To view a social phenomenon, such as crime, as if it is a natural phenomenon reflects a failure to possess the social world that we have created (Gouldner, 1970:53). A sociological, structural, and reflexive criminology would
provide us with an understanding of crime that is not guilty of alienation, reification, or dissociation—an understanding that embraces the social world we have created. A reflexive criminology recognizes the importance of social-structural factors in shaping "human nature," one's society, and crime, while also recognizing that society is a human social creation. Berger and Luckmann stressed the importance of such a viewpoint in this well-known passage:

society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product. It may also already be evident than an analysis of the social world that leaves out any one of these three moments will be distortive (1966:61).

As Pfohl notes, "we are, at once, creative and created ritual agents--self-structuring subjects and structurally subjected selves" (1994:505). We can restructure society and restructure ourselves and our "nature" in the process. The interdisciplinary theories of crime critiqued in this dissertation do not recognize the reflexive and reciprocal relationship between the individual and the social-structure. This problem is most evident in Wilson's comment in discussing what can be done to address crime in the United States--"we have made our society and we must live with it" (1983:249). Wilson acknowledges the human and social origins of society, but then reifies the existing social arrangements. This clearly reflects an alienated and dissociated view of men and women in society. As will be seen from examining the policy
implications of interdisciplinary criminology, the solutions that emanate from such an alienated, dissociated, and distortive view are inadequate for dealing with the reality of crime.

Policy Implications

As has already been noted, the theory of crime that one embraces has consequences in terms of policies designed to address crime (e.g., Lilly et al., 1989). The policy implications and directions emerging out of the interdisciplinary perspectives being examined in this dissertation focus on changing individuals, their families, and schools. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) argue that the cause of crime is low self-control resulting primarily from ineffective child-rearing. The solutions they suggest take the form of parent-skills training and education, and programs designed to bolster social controls. Gottfredson and Hirschi argue that:

because low self-control arises in the absence of the powerful inhibiting forces of early childhood, it is highly resistant to the less powerful inhibiting forces of later life, especially the relatively weak forces of the criminal justice system (1990:255).

Focusing on the "within-person" causes of crime and the importance of early development and socialization, Gottfredson and Hirschi emphasize teaching individuals self-control—"...trouble is likely unless something is done to train the child to forego immediate gratification in the interest of
...need only learn the requirements of early childhood socialization, namely, to watch for and recognize signs of low self-control and to punish them. Effective and efficient crime prevention that produces enduring consequences would thus focus on parents or adults with responsibilities for child-rearing (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990:269).

After claiming that crime results from lack of individual self-control, Gottfredson and Hirschi state flatly that "...the state is neither the cause of nor the solution to crime" (1990:272). Since in their view self-control is learned under familial supervision and control, they state that:

apart from the limited benefits that can be achieved by making specific criminal acts more difficult, policies directed toward enhancement of the ability of familial institutions to socialize children are the only realistic long-term state policies with potential for substantial crime reduction (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990:272-273).

So Gottfredson and Hirschi's solutions to crime come down to such strategies as "target hardening" and vague policies designed to enhance parenting skills. Again, the status quo is accepted and the role of social-structural factors in crime causation are ignored. The individual, the family, and the school are divorced from the influences of any and all social-structural factors such as income inequality, unemployment, poverty, and racial inequality. In addition, while focusing on a human nature driven by "universal desires" and low self-
control as the causes of crime, Gottfredson and Hirschi sidestep the issue of the existing wide variations in crime rates between the United states and other industrial nations. In the last two paragraphs of their book, Gottfredson and Hirschi attempt to recover from some of the major "oversights" of their general theory of crime by stating that:

...left unexplored...are its implications for the nature and origins of values, for the distinction between criminal and civil law, for intergroup conflict, and for the structure and functioning of complex organizations, be they educational, legal or economic. After all, a general theory of crime must be a general theory of the social order (1990:274).

The problem is, these authors have just spent an entire text dismissing, discounting, and discrediting just such explanations by ignoring these and other social-structural factors. The fact that they end by lamenting the exclusion of these factors does not diminish their claim that the cause of all crime is low self-control. And it does not change the fact that they claim that the state is not the solution or the cause of crime (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990:272). It seems instead that these authors are more concerned with "covering" their academic reputations than with presenting a comprehensive and nonreductionist theory of crime. In spite of the inclusion of these lamentations, the theory and policy recommendations presented by Gottfredson and Hirschi are based on a theory of crime that ignores the social-structure in favor of an individualistic perspective that considers the
family and the school, only when stripped of their social context and influences. These factors could have been at least briefly discussed. Dropping social-structural factors in at the end of their treatise does not excuse their exclusion from the discussion throughout, or their advocacy of a theory and policy that ignores such factors.

Inadequate attention to social-structural factors in theory and in policy recommendations is also a major limitation of the approach advocated by Farrington and colleagues (1986). These authors suggest that we focus our attention on identifying and treating offenders at an early stage in their development in order to prevent them from becoming involved in criminal careers. Furthermore, they suggest that families and schools are the "natural" place to start "...the search for early signs of troublesome behavior" (Farrington et al., 1986:95). An obvious flaw in this approach is that these types of policies or programs wait for early signs of criminality to develop rather than focusing on the prevention of the emergence of criminality in the first place. This approach treats the symptom while failing to address the causes of early offending. In addition, programs designed to identify early offenders carry the potential for mass violations of civil liberties, harassment of "potential offenders," and class bias in definition of "troublesome behavior." Additionally, as Hagan notes, "...the capacity to
predict future careers in crime is limited" (1994:164).

Other policy suggestions from Farrington and colleagues (1986) theory of crime emphasize the role of familial and educational institutions is the socialization of children and the role of socialization in preventing criminality. Like Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), these authors stress the importance of maintaining close bonds between family members to facilitate the effective socialization of children and to prevent crime. Given this understanding, Farrington and colleagues emphasize "...prevention measures directed at family and school experiences..." (1986:95). In particular, programs are suggested that would aim at strengthening parenting skills such as supervision and monitoring. Their focus on parental supervision and control, and the socialization process within the family, subject their theory to the same criticisms as that of Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) general theory of crime discussed above. As has been discussed, good parenting, a strong parent-child bond, and effective socialization certainly have something to do with crime, but this is not the whole picture. Social-structural factors are mentioned, but are largely ignored in Farrington and colleagues (1986) theory of crime. Their emphasis on the individual, the family, and the school, again detached from their social contexts and influences, demonstrate their underlying assumptions and biases. These authors arrive at
their conclusions in spite of evidence that they themselves cite that strongly suggest the importance of social-structural variables in causing crime (e.g., 1986:99). As previously discussed, research is cited to support their emphasis on the importance of parenting skills in crime causation, while literature that emphasizes social-structural factors that influence parenting abilities, parent-child bonds, and successful socialization is ignored.

Similar policy implications can be found in the theories of crime offered by Wilson (1983), and Wilson and Herrnstein (1985). In his book, Thinking About Crime (1983), Wilson expresses a view that there is little one can do about crime. According to Wilson, "the factors that most directly influence crime--family structure, moral development, the level of personal freedom--are the very things that we cannot easily change" (1983:247). After stating that we must live with the society we have created, Wilson adds that "...we must labor as patiently as we can to make a liberal society work and to make the best and sanest use of our laws to control behavior without feeling embarrassed that by invoking 'The Law,' we are denying our liberal creed" (1983:249). Wilson's view clearly reflects an alienated criminology where we are incapable of changing the world we have created to address crime. The collaborative effort by Wilson and Herrnstein (1985), has very little new to offer the student of crime or the policy maker.
In fact, they go as far as to say that their argument is not "...an argument from which many (possibly any) clear policy recommendations can be deduced" (Wilson and Herrnstein, 1985:514). While accepting the status quo, the major policy recommendations that can be deduced are for strengthening families, improving parenting skills, increasing punishment, and intensification of social control measures in the family and schools. The "solutions," as difficult as they are to find, turn out to be similar to those proposed by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), Farrington and colleagues (1986), and by control theories in general. As with these theorists, Wilson and Herrnstein diminish the importance of social-structural factors in crime causation.

So the solutions to crime embraced by the theories discussed in this dissertation revolve around such things as strengthening families, parent-training programs, changing individuals, teaching self-control, and controlling "universal desires" and unruly natures through effective socialization. Individuals, their families, and their schools are all divorced from their larger social context and social-structural influences. These are the policy implications arising out of a criminology that assumes a human nature driven by "universal desires" or constitutional factors; a criminology that sees social-structural changes as unnecessary, undesirable, and in some cases impossible; a
perspective on crime that reifies the existing social order and suffers from an alienated and dissociated view of crime and society. This understanding of crime and the policies it engenders are inadequate for addressing crime in our society. The social-structural and reflexive criminology offered in the next chapter can overcome these limitations and suggest policies that can better address crime.

Conclusions

The Poverty of Criminology

The interdisciplinary theories of crime critiqued in this dissertation claim to be theories of all crime and they claim to be significant improvements over other theories of crime. These theories also claim to be interdisciplinary, or in Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) case, they claim to not be disciplinary, hence they all claim to be superior to disciplinary theories of crime. They make these claims because they include, for example, psychological variables such as personality and temperament, and sociological factors such as families and schools in their analyses. However, as has been argued, these theories focus on the individual, possess an image of a self-interested "universal desire"-seeking human nature, and examine families and schools divorced from their larger social contexts, while largely ignoring the influences of social-structural factors on what
is considered "human nature," in crime causation, and on cross-national differences in rates of crime. It has also been argued that these theories, all variants of control theories, are among the dominant perspectives in criminology today.

This is the poverty of criminology today. These perspectives lack an adequately sociological and social-structural perspective on crime. The field is dominated by theoretical perspectives that do not adequately address the complexity of crime and therefore are incapable of addressing the magnitude of the problem of crime in the United States. An analysis of the role of the social-structure is missing in these theories. The claim to "interdisciplinarity" carries with it the legitimizing assumption that the theory offers the reader a more complete theory of crime because it draws on the significant insights from various disciplines, but that is not the case with the interdisciplinary theories of crime critiqued here. While technically being interdisciplinary because of the inclusion of psychological and sociological variables, these theories still offer a very limited view of crime and criminality based on a set of assumptions giving primacy to the individual, their "nature," and the acceptance of and preference for the status quo. In addition, these theories are not adequately interdisciplinary because they ignore much of the evidence produced by sociological and
social-structural theories of crime. Their focus is on the individual or upon institutions divorced from the influences of other institutions or aspects of the larger social context, setting, or structure. For example, when these theories examine the importance of the family or school in producing crime, they analyze these institutions without considering the impact of social-structural factors such as the economy, the labor market, or patterns of class or racial discrimination on these institutions and on crime. These perspectives are not improvements over strictly disciplinary perspectives.

Despite the serious limitations of the interdisciplinary approaches to crime discussed in this dissertation, their explanation and understanding of crime dominates, and their policies are those favored in our society. Generally, these perspectives are favored over social-structural approaches to explaining, understanding, and addressing crime because they embrace the status quo. According to Scheingold, social-structural approaches to understanding and dealing with crime are generally opposed in our society and culture by the public, our political leaders, and our criminal justice system because: (1) it is easier to design programs that focus on the individuals engaged in crime than it is to remedy the social-structural problems that contribute to the crime problem; (2) the status quo is left unchallenged and unchanged insuring that vested interests remain unthreatened while diverting
attention away from social-structural problems; (3) structural changes would be more costly monetarily, psychologically, and politically, especially for those in positions of power; and (4) the criminal justice system is designed to process, punish, and treat individuals, not to address or remedy social-structural problems (1991:1-28). Additionally, "structural interpretations of crime sorely tax the economic, political, and ideological resources of the state" (Scheingold, 1991:23), and "...structural measures entail redistributive and unpredictable policies, which divide the polity, because they require substantial commitments of resources and threaten vested interests" (Scheingold, 1991:27). In contrast, the individualistic non-structural approaches to crime that are the focus of the critique in this dissertation discount social-structural causes and "solutions" to crime thereby leaving the status quo unchallenged. This explains, in part, the dominance and prominence of interdisciplinary perspectives on crime with an individual orientation and control theory assumptions. This orientation serves the interests of those in power and those who have anything to lose through a change in the social order. The social context influences the dominance of theoretical perspectives in additional ways also.
Social Context and Theory Dominance

As has already been noted, control theories are among the most influential and dominant theories in criminology today. And it has been argued that all of the interdisciplinary theories examined in this dissertation are variants of a control theory perspective and embrace control theory assumptions. According to Williams, the reasons for the prominence of control theory, as well as the reasons for the prominence of any criminological perspective, has less to do with "new evidence" in support of any particular perspective than with the political climate of the times and "...the application of new value sets" (1981:24-25). Williams states further that:

As society has become more conservative during the past decade, conflict approaches have declined or become coopted into conservative thought and the prime contender of the consensus theories has gotten 'old.' In a period where society is concerned about the state of the family, religion is staging a rebirth, and national identity is in a state of crisis, any theory which reifies the value of conventional institutions and beliefs should gain popularity (1981:24).

As has been argued in this dissertation, control theories reify the existing social order and embrace its standards and values. According to Williams, this helps to explain the dominance and popularity of this perspective. According to Jensen, Williams' "...view is consistent with the shifts toward deterrence, victimology, and incapacitation research as
well as the shift away from structural and cultural theories of delinquency toward social learning and social control theories" found in criminology today (1981:16-17). This shift in the causal research requires neither "...social class nor any other background characteristic to affect crime and delinquency.... Rather, the focus is on the strength of bonds between people and conventional others, institutions and values, or on generic learning processes" (Jensen, 1981:10). A similar argument is advanced by Scheingold in his statement that a society's understanding and approach to crime "...is at least as much a reflection of its political culture and its institutional capabilities as of the current state of criminological knowledge" (1991:5). Therefore, the dominance and popularity of particular perspectives is really more of a political matter rather than one of the quality of knowledge, evidence, or the nature of the insights on crime (Scheingold, 1991; Lilly et al., 1989; Williams, 1981). And Scheingold notes that "volitional" or individual explanations and understandings of crime have been and continue to be dominant in our society, and continue to be preferred over "structural" explanations by our political culture and the criminal justice system.

Since our explanations and understandings of crime suggest plans to address crime, one would expect a system that prefers individual explanations of crime to also propose
individual "solutions" to crime. This preference can be seen in the United States in recent calls for the renewal and expanded use of the death penalty, proposals for "boot camps" to deal with juvenile offenders, and the continued and increased reliance on punishment and incapacitation as the "solutions" to our crime problem. Very rarely do we hear plans to modify criminogenic factors in our social environment or proposals that suggest anything other than that crime is an individual problem. When is the last time a bill has been proposed in Washington that recommended full employment, the elimination of racial inequality, or a reduction in economic deprivation to combat crime? As will be seen in the next chapter, these are some of the factors identified as being criminogenic by a social-structural criminology. The policies advocated and followed by our political and criminal justice leaders instead reflect the dominance of individual and non-structural understandings of crime. The theories examined in this dissertation, including those by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), Farrington and colleagues (1986), Wilson (1983), and Wilson and Herrnstein (1985), illustrate these same individual preferences and the dominance and shift in focus to non-structural theories of crime in our society and in criminology. This shift in focus successfully directs attention away from the social-structure to a focus on individual, family, and school failings.
Summary

The interdisciplinary theories of crime critiqued in this dissertation focus on the individual and an image of human nature that ignores the social nature of both. These perspectives fail to recognize that "we are, at once, creative and created ritual agents--self-structuring subjects and structurally subjected selves" (Pfohl, 1994:505). When an aspect of the social-structure is examined, that aspect is examined divorced from the larger social context. In terms of plans to address crime, the focus is upon the individual and their immediate surroundings of the family or school, again divorced from the larger social-structure. The ideology expressed and unexpressed in these theories functions to maintain the status quo. Increased control of individuals is recommended while social change is seen as undesirable. Despite the attempts to legitimize those theories through an "interdisciplinary" designation, these theories do not include in their analysis insights on crime from a sociological and structural criminology. And yet we will only be able to understand, explain, reduce, and prevent crime by embracing a criminology that not only includes, but also emphasizes social-structural factors in its analysis of crime and criminality--a perspective that does not view the current
manifestation of human nature or society as eternal. In the next chapter, the nature and benefits of just such a nonreductionist, structural, and reflexive criminology will be discussed.
CHAPTER 4
TOWARD A STRUCTURAL AND REFLEXIVE CRIMINOLOGY

Introduction

It has been argued thus far that if criminology is going to accomplish its goals of explaining and understanding crime and criminality, in addition to addressing the problem of crime in the United States, the focus of theories claiming to be examples of interdisciplinary criminology will have to be broadened to include social-structural factors. This means that criminology is going to have to become more sociological. The call for bringing sociology "back in" to criminology isn't about protecting professional "turf." An interdisciplinary approach to the study of crime should be followed if it serves to increase our ability to explain and understand this phenomena. However, criminology in recent years has been dominated by theories with an individual focus and level of analysis, with a view of a self-interested "universal desire"-seeking human nature, by theories that reify and prefer the status quo, by theories that believe that crime is the result of inadequate "controls," and by theories that examine the individual, families, and schools divorced and dissociated from their social contexts and influences. The explanations and understandings developed, and the solutions and policies to address crime that emerge from such a criminology are inadequate for addressing the realities of crime.
The theories examined in this dissertation claim to be theories of all crime, and Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), Farrington and colleagues (1986), Wilson (1983), and Wilson and Herrnstein (1985), all claim their theories are improvements over other theories of crime. All the theories discussed claim to be improvements over existing theories because they draw upon insights provided by various disciplines. But in reality, these theories have minimized and/or ignored significant insights from the sociological literature on social-structural influences on crime. In this chapter, examples of research from a sociological and structural criminology will be discussed that can improve our explanations and deepen our understanding of crime while helping to devise strategies and policies that can better address the problem of crime.

While arguing that social-structural factors need to be brought back into our analysis of crime, this dissertation also argues for the recognition that we both create our social world and are created by and subject to the created social-structure (Pfohl, 1994; Berger and Luckman, 1966; Marx, 1956). It will be demonstrated that social-structural factors play a significant role in creating crime, and we need to recognize that since we have created our social world, we can recreate it in order to prevent or reduce crime. The importance of human agency in crime and in its remedy must be acknowledged.
For these reasons, a structural and reflexive criminology is advocated to adequately explain, understand, and address crime. The interdisciplinary theories critiqued in this dissertation focus on the individual but not their role in recreating the social-structure. The theories examined and theories of like kind, suffer from an alienated view of men and women in society, reify the existing social order, and minimize or ignore social-structural influences on crime. A social-structural and reflexive criminology would benefit our explanation, understanding, and response to crime through a recognition of the reciprocal relationship between the individual and their society.

A Social-Structural Criminology

Like Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), Farrington and colleagues (1986), Wilson and Herrnstein (1985), and control theories in general, Wilson (1983) argues that the origins of crime are to be found in early socialization experiences, lack of self-control or restraints, and in ineffective child-rearing practices in the family. Wilson argues further that these early experiences, in interaction with individual predispositions, are the causes of crime—"...experiences occurring long before the child can have much contact with the labor market..." (1986:223-224). This is an example of how Wilson dismisses the role of social-structural factors in
creating crime. As Currie remarks:

What I cannot fathom, is why Wilson seems unable to comprehend that what goes on in the intimate settings of early childhood is profoundly influenced by forces outside those settings. ... I call this the "fallacy of autonomy"—the belief that what goes on inside the family can be separated from what goes on outside it. ... Can Wilson really believe that what happens to parents in the labor market has nothing to do with how they bring up their children, or the quality of the resources they're able to bring to that task (1986:229).

But Wilson does dismiss the social-structure in this fashion as do the other theorists discussed. This is why Gottfredson and Hirschi can conclude that "...the state is neither the cause of nor the solution to crime" (1990:272). Gottfredson and Hirschi state further that "there is no larger purpose behind rape, or robbery, or murder, or theft, or embezzlement, or insider trading" (1990:256). They instead suggest "...that the motive to crime is inherent in or limited to immediate gains provided by the act itself" (1990:256). Besides confusing the motive to commit a crime with its causation, Gottfredson and Hirschi also ignore social-structural factors that could help explain why "motives" to commit crimes appear more often in some places and times than in others, and why crime rates vary from region to region within a country and/or between countries. In the following paragraphs, research in structural criminology will be examined to demonstrate the importance of the role of the social-structure in crime causation, and to explore some of the "larger purposes" behind
crime that Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), Wilson (1983), Wilson and Herrnstein (1985), Farrington and colleagues (1986), and other theories sharing their perspective, assumptions, and focus, minimize and ignore.

As discussed in the previous chapter, several of the dominant theories of crime today ignore or minimize social-structural factors' influence on crime. They do this in spite of research indicating the importance of structural factors. For example, in a review of Gottfredson and Hirschi's A General Theory of Crime (1990), Polk states that:

if these authors are to be believed, the problems of American Blacks can be reduced to issues concerned with child-rearing practices, and readers can pass over such questions as poverty, the recent and dramatic shifts in the shape of unemployment..., the quality and emergent social isolation of city life, centuries of discrimination and prejudice, and institutional racism. Of course, they have already argued that unemployment is not important, citing, as one might expect, Hirschi's own work on one group of high school adolescents, but conveniently ignoring a great wealth of data which argues that the individual experience of unemployment is strongly related to crime. This tendency to ignore inconvenient empirical evidence is a characteristic that is unfortunately not uncommon in the arguments advanced by these writers (1991:576).

It is evident to Polk that structural factors are relevant to crime and he relates that the literature indicates as much. Furthermore, his review points to attempts by Gottfredson and Hirschi to shape the data on crime to fit their theory, including ignoring "...large batches of data inconvenient to
their hypotheses" (Polk, 1991:579). Whether or not these theorists purposefully distort the research, while an important point, is not the main issue here. Polk's observations stress the importance of social-structural factors in crime causation--factors which Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) ignore in their theory of crime emanating from low self-control. It is worth noting that Farrington and colleagues (1986) also minimize or ignore these same social-structural factors in crime causation in their theory of crime. As discussed earlier, these authors cite research indicating the importance of social-structural factors, such as poverty, in causing crime, but then choose to ignore those structural insights in their theory of crime. These authors opt instead to focus their attention on individuals and their coping mechanisms, families and their socialization skills, and schools and their abilities to induce obedience, as the sources of and solutions to crime while divorcing these mechanisms, skills, and abilities from their social context. As long as social-structural factors are left out of the analysis of crime, we are bound to emerge with an incomplete and disabled explanation and understanding of crime, and we will be unable to deal effectively with crime in the United States. Through an examination of examples of research showing the importance of social-structural factors in crime causation, an approach to resolving these inadequacies will be proposed.
Several studies demonstrating the importance of social-structural factors in crime causation have already been discussed at various points in the previous chapter. The National Research Council (1993) report discussed states that too much attention has been paid to individuals and their families in the study of delinquency, while not enough attention has been paid to the importance of social-structural factors such as income and social opportunities in creating delinquency. The report concludes that criminal activity is much more likely for adolescents facing economic hardships. It has also been noted that the interdisciplinary theories of crime examined in this dissertation focus on the importance of good parenting skills in preventing delinquency and crime. These theories believe that inadequate socialization, coupled with a self-interested human nature and lack of self-control or restraint, leads to crime. But these theories have ignored the literature that stresses how social-structural factors such as income inequality, economic hardship or disadvantage, economic stress (e.g., Conger et al., 1994; NRC, 1993; Conger et al., 1992; Currie, 1985a; Simons et al., 1992), unemployment, and poverty (e.g., NRC, 1993; Jones, 1988; Currie, 1985a; Wilson, 1980) negatively influence parenting skills. These and other social-structural factors must be included in the study of crime if we are to explain and understand why, when, and where crime occurs. The wide variations of crime
rates and criminal behavior within and between nations that exists cannot be understood by studying individuals, families, and schools divorced from these factors and influences.

In his review of the literature on structural causes of crime, Hagan notes that "there is considerable recent evidence of direct effects to the degree, and absolute concentration, of neighborhood poverty on violent crime" (1994:88). Hagan also discusses evidence for the relationship between unemployment, "general and/or racial socioeconomic inequality," and relative deprivation and crime. In a review of over sixty studies on the relationship between unemployment and crime, Chiricos argues "...that evidence favors the existence of a positive, frequently significant U-C [unemployment-crime] relationship" (1987:203). Furthermore, Chiricos argues that:

...efforts to increase the availability and value of work can be expected to have some depressing effect on the value of property crime as an alternative. And, while the relationship between unemployment and crime rates is far from perfect, it is sufficient to put jobs back on the agenda for dealing with crime (Chiricos, 1987:203).

In other research demonstrating social-structural effects on crime, Sampson, in a study of the effect of male joblessness and family disruption on urban black violence, concluded that "...male joblessness...has the strongest overall effect on family disruption, which in turn is the strongest predictor of black violence" (1987:377). Sampson's research has important ramifications for the interdisciplinary theories
discussed in this dissertation. These theories blame crime on individuals lacking self-control or restraint and families for failing to parent, socialize, or control their children adequately. Sampson's study stresses the importance of social-structural factors in impacting both families and individuals via employment opportunities. Support for this notion can be found in Colvin and Pauly's literature review on the influence of parent-child bonding on juvenile delinquency. Colvin and Pauly conclude from their review that a number of "...studies suggest that the coerciveness of family control structures, conditioned by parents' work experiences, contributes at least indirectly to the production of delinquency" (1983:537). While the interdisciplinary theories examined minimize or ignore the importance of social-structural factors such as employment opportunities or economic deprivation in crime causation, even in impacting families, a number of recent studies have stressed the importance of these factors in influencing families and parenting (e.g., Conger et al., 1994; NRC, 1993; Conger et al., 1992; Jones, 1988; Sampson, 1987) and criminal outcomes (e.g., NRC, 1993; Sampson, 1985 & 1987; Wilson, 1980). Sampson concludes "...that the extremely high level of black violence in American cities cannot be separated from the equally pressing problems of black male joblessness and family disruption" (1987:378). To address these problems, Sampson
recommends "...that social policies be directed toward the structural forces of economic deprivation and labor-market marginality faced by black males and the resulting consequences for family disruption and community crime" (1987:387). These findings corroborate the claim that we cannot adequately explain, understand, or address crime without taking the social-structure into account.

Other research with important implications for theories of crime focusing on the family can be found in a review of the literature on the effect of unemployment on children, adolescents, and families, by Jones (1988). According to Jones, "family socioeconomic status is not only the best single predictor of children's health status and development, but also predicts school failure and behavioral disturbances" (1988:204-205). Jones also notes that reduced resources resulting from unemployment weakens parental effectiveness and "...may damage the satisfaction derived from family relationships..." (1988:203). Since the interdisciplinary theories of crime examined in this dissertation place much of the responsibility for crime on families, it would seem that Jones' study of unemployment and its effects on the family would be an important part of their analysis—but this is not the case. Instead of just "fixing" parents and their socialization skills, or controlling children more effectively as the theories critiqued in this dissertation recommend, Jones
states that "probably one of the most effective programs to assure children would grow to maturity in a positive environment is a full employment economy" (1988:211). Furthermore, Jones adds that family problems, child behavioral problems, and substance abuse "...may be the outcome of unemployment, and not the result of family dynamics" (1988:212). Jones' review clearly suggests that social-structural factors need to be examined to understand family dynamics, parenting, and child behavioral problems that could possibly lead to delinquency and crime.

Additional evidence for the unemployment-crime relationship can be found in research by Allan and Steffensmeier (1989) on the underemployment of youth and property crime. According to those researchers, unemployment is associated with high arrest rates for juveniles while "low quality of employment (e.g., inadequate pay and hours) is associated with high arrest rates for young adults" (1989:107). The authors suggest that to rectify this situation "...the most viable policy is one that produces more jobs for teenagers while simultaneously providing better-paying jobs for young adults" (1989:120). Allan and Steffensmeier also note that social controls--factors considered so important in crime prevention in the interdisciplinary theories of crime critiqued in this dissertation--lose their effectiveness due to cynicism and alienation resulting from a lack of suitable employment
These results are supported in research by Farrington, Gallagher, Morley, St. Ledger, and West, finding that youths committed more crimes "...during periods of unemployment than during periods of employment" (1986:351). Furthermore, "...unemployment was related to crime independently of the many individual differences between convicted and unconvicted persons" (1986:351). Farrington, Gallagher, and colleagues suggest further that the link between unemployment and crime may be based on financial need due to their finding that unemployment was related to higher rates of crime for material gain but not for other types of crimes (1986:351).

Additional evidence demonstrating the importance of including social-structural factors in the analysis of crime can be found in research by Sampson (1985) examining the role of structural economic factors on rates of offending across the United States. Sampson found structural economic factors to be "...important in predicting offending patterns" (1985:666). Specifically, "...income inequality has a significant positive effect on black criminal offending..." while "...the level of white poverty had significant positive effects on white violence and burglary" (Sampson, 1985:666-667). Overall, relative inequality was found to be more criminogenic than poverty for blacks.

Inequality was also identified as a factor influencing
homicide rates in a recent review of the literature by Land, McCall, and Cohen (1990). These researchers found that cities, metropolitan areas, or states that were relatively more deprived had higher homicide rates than those that were relatively more affluent. Additionally, areas with high population density or a greater percentage of divorced males tended to have higher homicide rates than areas low in population density or low in percentage of divorced males. Higher homicide rates have also been found to be associated with such social-structural factors as poverty (Curry and Spergel, 1988), resource deprivation (Williams and Flewelling, 1988), socioeconomic stratum (Centerwall, 1984; Lowry, Hassig, Gunn, and Mathison, 1988), violent cultural orientation (Williams and Flewelling, 1988), social disorganization (Curry and Spergel, 1988), and social disintegration (Williams and Flewelling, 1988). Additionally, Centerwall (1984) found a positive correlation between household crowding and rates of domestic homicide. Household crowding was viewed as an indicator of socioeconomic status as measured by the power to purchase uncrowded housing. And in research designed to test Blau and Blau's racial/ethnic inequality hypothesis, Balkwell (1990) found strong support for the claim that racial and/or ethnic inequality increases the rate of homicide. These examples of research on homicide clearly suggest that an examination of social-structural factors is necessary if we
are to explain, understand, and address criminal homicide in the United States.

In research examining the effects of labor stratification on crime, Crutchfield found that labor instability and stratification had "...very strong effects on homicide and assault" rates (1989:506). Crutchfield examined two fundamental segments of the labor market in his analysis—primary and secondary occupations. Primary occupations were defined as those central to the functioning of the economy, whereas secondary occupations were defined as those "...on the periphery of the economy" (1989:492), such as service sector occupations or other jobs that are unstable and/or poorly paid. Crutchfield argues that secondary occupations provide "...little opportunity to establish important social bonds to careers or the work place," in addition to creating an unstable work environment and a "...setting in which violent crime will occur" (1989:494). This negative environment is exacerbated further by unemployment, underemployment, and frequent turnovers common among secondary occupations. Results indicated that high percentages of workers in secondary occupations, high unemployment rates, and high rates of poverty were all related to higher levels of criminal violence (1989:498-499). Crutchfield stressed that "the overall thrust of his paper is "...that labor structure must be taken into account when considering the effects of economic
indicators on violent crime..." (1989:503). Furthermore, the "...paper argues that observed relationships between poverty, income inequality and violent crime are in large measure produced by the stratification of labor" (1989:507). While the theories critiqued in this dissertation ignore or minimize the significance of the social structure, Crutchfield's research, along with the other structural research reviewed, demonstrates clearly that social-structural factors in crime causation must be included if we are to explain, understand, and address crime adequately in the United States. As Crutchfield notes, "although structural determinants of crime are not currently popular with some social scientists and policy makers, these results indicate that investigation along these lines continues to be desirable" (1989:506).

An important presentation and development of a social-structural criminology which integrates such insights as those discussed above, can be found in John Hagan's *Crime and Disrepute* (1994). After reviewing the literature, Hagan argues that to adequately understand crime, such things as the recent and dramatic changes in the U.S. economy, racial and economic inequality, residential segregation, capital disinvestment, employment opportunities, and the concentration of poverty need to be explored. According to Hagan:

A new sociology of crime and disrepute focuses attention on the criminal costs of social inequality. .... Increased social inequality and reduced economic growth are both associated with
increases in crime, especially in America's low-income minority communities.

Structural changes have brought increasing inequality into the American economy and into the lives of individuals who live in its most distressed communities. Three interconnected processes of capital disinvestment—residential segregation, racial inequality, and the concentration of poverty—have intensified the crime problems of these communities (1994:98).

By "capital disinvestment," Hagan is referring to processes whereby capital resources are diverted "...away from socially and economically distressed communities" (1994:xii). For example, during the 1980's disinvestment occurred through the upward redistribution of resources such as income and wealth and the social opportunities connected to such resources. As a consequence of the economic policies and tax breaks implemented by the Reagan administration, the Congressional Budget Office reports that the average net income for the poorest ten percent of Americans dropped by 10.5 percent between 1977 and 1987, while the average net income of the top ten percent increased by 24.4 percent, and the wealthiest one percent of Americans experienced a 74.2 percent increase in income (Phillips, 1990:14). According to Hagan's argument, this disinvestment in income, along with other forms of disinvestment, results in diminished opportunities and resources for lower income Americans and their communities and increases the chances of "recapitalization," or criminal adaptations, to achieve a semblance of upward mobility or success. These criminal activities represent an attempt to recapitalize on
available resources to achieve desired goals. Hagan's "...sociological view suggests that expanded social as well as economic opportunities can provide a foundation for broadened participation of citizens in the production of economic wealth and a reduction in the social costs of crime" (1994:99).

Other researchers demonstrating the role that social-structural factors play in generating crime include Currie (1985a), who has documented the strong relationship between inequality, poverty, unemployment, and crime; Bursik and Grasmick (1993) who found that economic deprivation had a strong direct effect on juvenile delinquency; Sampson (1986) who discovered that urbanization had a direct effect on intergroup conflict, while inequality exacerbated ingroup victimization; and Taylor and Covington (1988) who found that relative deprivation increased levels of violence in neighborhoods experiencing underclass solidification, while violence in gentrifying neighborhoods was connected to increased social disorganization. These studies, like the others discussed above, suggest that we cannot explain, understand, or solve our crime problem if we fail to take these and other social-structural factors into account in our theories of crime. In addition to being social-structural, a complete criminology needs to also be reflexive.
A Reflexive Criminology

The call for a reflexive criminology has several meanings in this dissertation. First, this is a call for a criminology that is self-critical and self-aware (e.g., Bohm, 1981; Gouldner 1976 and 1970). A reflexive criminology is one that recognizes that the subject engaged in the investigation is always implicated in the object of study (Gouldner 1976), and that the theorist "...always plays an active role in the selective framing of meaningful knowledge: (Pfohl, 1994:8). This means that the interests and experiences of the subject always find their way into the explanation and understanding that emerges from a theory of crime. A complete separation of subject and object, therefore, is not possible. In agreement with Bohm, this dissertation argues that "...any criminology or any social science that professes to be 'critical' must be 'reflexive' about its own interests and value commitments as well as cognizant of its grounding in ideology" (1981:35).

A second characteristic of a reflexive criminology is that it considers the ethical implications of its work (Bohm, 1981). As Lilly and colleagues note (1989), different theories of crime suggest different strategies for addressing crime. The implications for prevention or remediation emerging from a theory of crime need to be recognized and considered critically.

A third sense of the term reflexivity in this disser-
tation refers to the recognition that while individuals are subject to an existing social-structure, they at the same time create and recreate the existing social structure through their thoughts and actions. Reflexivity in this sense recognizes that while people are social products and society is an objective reality, society is also a human creation capable of being modified or changed (e.g., Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Borrowing from phenomenology and ethnomethodology, a reflexive criminology would recognize that everyone is "...engaged in the process of creating social reality through..." their "...thoughts and actions" (Ritzer, 1983:353). A reflexive criminology would not suffer from an alienated or dissociated view of men and women in society—a view that separates subject and object and fails to recognize that the current manifestation of human nature or of society is not eternal. A reflexive criminology would recognize that the individual and society cannot be separated without the distortion of both (e.g., Ellul, 1990; Ollman, 1976).

Additionally, a reflexive criminology would understand that the particularistic conception of human nature and of society is capable of being modified or changed, and would recognize the reciprocal relationship between the individual and society (e.g., Ollman, 1976; Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Marx, 1956).
Policy Implications from Social-Structural Criminology

Whereas the interdisciplinary theories of crime examined in this dissertation see the solution to the crime problem in the United States in individuals, their families, and to a lesser extent, their schools, a social-structural criminology recognizes that crime cannot be adequately addressed without also taking into account social-structural factors in crime causation. The interdisciplinary theories discussed in the previous chapter suggested policies and programs that focus on strengthening families, parent-training, teaching self-control, and on controlling "universal desires" or unruly natures through effective socialization and social control. As Scheingold (1991) points out, this focus certainly serves the interests of those who wish to maintain the status quo. By focusing on the individual and their lack of self-control or restraint, and on families or schools for failing to adequately control individuals, the focus is diverted away from any role the existing social-structural arrangements might have in crime causation. As has been argued previously, this focus helps to explain the popularity and dominance of interdisciplinary theories of crime with an individual orientation and control theory assumptions. Structural explanations and understandings of crime instead challenge the existing social arrangements thereby threatening vested
interests and the status quo (e.g., Scheingold, 1991). This orientation helps to explain the lack of popularity or dominance of social-structural explanations, understandings, and policies to address crime (e.g., Scheingold, 1991; Lilly et al, 1989). But given all of the "facts" regarding crime, both structural and individual, existing social arrangements must be considered in any successful explanation or understanding of crime and in any effective policy designed to address crime.

As Scheingold notes, any fair reading of the research on crime indicates that crime "...is attributable to an interdependent web of social forces and individual characteristics" (1991:4). The interdisciplinary theories of crime examined in this dissertation present a very lopsided view of crime devoid of any social-structural understanding of crime. Given a social-structural understanding informed by the factors identified in the research discussed in this chapter, policies to address crime emanating from a social-structural criminology would revolve around various proposals to restructure existing social arrangements. In general, policies suggested would involve reducing or eliminating unemployment, poverty, inequality, prejudice, and discrimination.

Specifically, after noting the positive relationship between unemployment and crime, Chiricos recommends putting "...jobs back on the agenda..." to reduce crime (1987:203).
Similarly, Sampson recommends policies aimed at "...the structural forces of economic deprivation and labor-market marginality..." in order to combat family disruption and crime (1987:378). Jones states that the most effective program to assure that children live in "...a positive environment is a full employment economy" (1988:211). Jones notes further that unemployment negatively effects parenting skills and abilities and may lead to child substance abuse and behavioral problems (1988:212). Additionally, Allan and Steffensmeier note that "...the most viable policy..." to combat crime for juveniles and young adults would be one "...that produces more jobs for teenagers..." and "...better-paying jobs for young adults" (1989:120). While the other social-structural studies of crime discussed earlier in this chapter (along with several other studies discussed in the previous chapter) do not specify policy recommendations, their results also suggest reducing or eliminating unemployment (Crutchfield, 1989; Farrington, Gallagher, et al., 1986; Wilson, 1980), reducing or eliminating income inequality, resource deprivation, and poverty (NRC, 1993; Land et al., 1990; Crutchfield, 1989; Curry and Spergel, 1988; Lowry et al., 1988; Williams and Flewelling, 1988; Sampson, 1985; Wilson, 1980), and/or reducing or eliminating racial or ethnic inequality (Balkwell, 1990).
Clear policy recommendations for crime reduction or prevention are present in Hagan's recent book, *Crime and Disrepute* (1994). His recommendations include the expansion of social and economic opportunities, and reinvestment of social and cultural capital in our society, communities, and individuals. Additionally, there are recommendations for the reduction of all forms of social inequality and a redistribution of resources in the United States.

While policy implications from social-structural criminology are clear, the implementation of such plans are difficult and are likely to be met with resistance (e.g., Scheingold, 1991; Lilly et al., 1989; Currie, 1985a). Questions regarding how the reduction in inequality is to be accomplished and who will sacrifice what and how much are bound to be points of contention. It is much easier to blame individuals and families for crime, put parents into training programs to improve their skills, teach people to cope with their disadvantage, and punish transgressors, than it is to eliminate or significantly reduce inequality, poverty, or discrimination. But even with its greater difficulty in implementation, if the social-structural factors that help to explain why crime appears where it does, or even why low self-control or poor parenting appear where they do, are ignored, our efforts to reduce or prevent crime will continue to fall short.
Conclusions

The overview of literature presented in this chapter indicating important social-structural causes of crime is not intended to be an exhaustive review. Nor is the development of a social-structural criminology complete. But with explanations and understandings like those discussed above which incorporate social-structural insights, criminology can more adequately perform its task of explaining, understanding and addressing crime. These findings, along with those discussed throughout this dissertation, demonstrate that ignoring social-structural factors will lead to incomplete and inadequate explanations, understandings, and policies to address crime. Whatever particular perspective is employed, whether emerging from an anomie (e.g., Messner and Rosenfeld, 1994) or a conflict tradition (e.g., Hagan, 1994), for example, social-structural analysis is necessary to explain and understand why, where, and when crime appears. Additionally, research on the connection between social-structural factors and crime make it evident that policies to address crime are bound to fail if they only focus on individuals, their families, and their schools divorced from the larger social context and factors such as poverty, inequality, unemployment, and racial discrimination.

Policy implications and recommendations emerging out of social-structural criminology aim directly at changing the
existing social arrangements in one fashion or another. Whether the recommendation or implication is for more and better employment opportunities (e.g., Allan and Steffensmeier, 1989; Jones, 1988; Chiricos, 1987; Sampson, 1987), a reduction of inequality (e.g., Land et al., 1990; Williams and Flewelling, 1988; Sampson, 1985), or an elimination of racial segregation (e.g., Hagan, 1994), a realignment of resources and a threat to established social arrangements and interests is involved. Unlike the interdisciplinary theories discussed in this dissertation, most structural theories of crime recognize and embrace the desirability and possibility of social change to address crime. But as Scheingold (1991) notes, there is a marked preference in our society and culture for individual explanations and understandings of crime that reject the need for social-structural change. As long as the focus is on individuals, attention is diverted away from structural problems, and individual solutions to crime are proposed aiming at increasing self-control, tightening social controls, and the increased use of punishment. Evidence of this focus can be seen in the United States today in the continued and increased reliance over the last two decades on incapacitation and punishment as the solution to our crime problem (Hagan 1994; Kemper, 1993; Currie, 1985a&b). The preference for individual explanations and understandings of crime further
ensures that individuals will be blamed and punished while vested interests are protected and structural changes rendered unnecessary (e.g., Scheingold, 1991).

As has been stated at several junctures in this dissertation, the interdisciplinary theories of crime examined claim to be improvements over other theories of crime because they are theories of all crime and because they are interdisciplinary—meaning that they draw on insights and research from various disciplines in forming their explanations and understandings of crime. In reality, these theories leave out of their explanations and understandings the social-structural insights found in a sociological view of crime, insights that are necessary in order to explain, understand, and address the complex phenomena of crime adequately. While these theories are technically interdisciplinary because they draw on selected insights from several different disciplines, they are not adequately interdisciplinary because they leave social-structural factors out of their analysis—the only factors that can explain the wide variations in crime within and between nations, and over time. A theory that blames all crime on low self-control, for example, and then blames parents for failing to socialize and teach their children self-control, cannot adequately explain why there are more people with low self-control in the United States (given our relatively very high crime rate) than in Canada, Europe, or
Japan. A social-structural criminology is better able to explain, understand, and address the complexity of crime and its social origins and context. For these reasons, a social-structural and reflexive criminology is advocated in this dissertation. As Marx queried nearly 150 years ago:

...if crimes observed on a great scale thus show, in their amount and their classification, the regularity of physical phenomena...is there not a necessity for deeply reflecting upon an alteration of the system that breeds these crimes... (Marx, 1956:229-230)?

A criminology which includes social-structural factors in its analysis can avoid the reductionism found in the interdisciplinary theories of crime examined in this dissertation—theories which reduce the complex phenomena of crime to individual explanations based on low self-control, genetic predispositions, and/or inadequate socialization. The fact is, without social-structural factors included in the analysis of crime, explanations of crime based on such factors as low self-control are really not explanations at all. Currie, in speaking of explanations of crime based on "antisocial personalities," remarked that this notion "...may give us a name for what is wrong with particular individuals who hurt others. But it cannot legitimately substitute for an explanation of why these individuals appear where they do" (1985a:217-218). Currie's remark also applies to explanations of crime based on low self-control, genetic predispositions, and/or inadequate socialization. None of these "explanations"
can tell us why, for example, the homicide rate in the United States is five times greater than Finland's, the next closest rate in the world among "developed" nations (Messner and Rosenfeld, 1994:22). These explanations cannot tell us why individuals with low self-control, genetic predispositions, and/or inadequate socialization, appear in the United States more often than in Finland or in the other "developed" or "industrial" nations. To understand the rates, patterns, and differences in occurrence of crime within the United States and throughout the world, a non-reductionist social-structural criminology is needed to examine the factors that shape these differences.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS

The Poverty of Criminology Today

As was noted in the opening of this dissertation, criminology today is an interdisciplinary field of study. It has been argued that several dominant theoretical perspectives in criminology today, theories that claim to be interdisciplinary in some fashion, theories that claim to be theories of all crime, actually limit our ability to explain, understand, and address crime in the United States. The primary reason for the poverty of these theories of crime, as well as for the poverty of criminology today, is that these approaches have lost or ignored social-structural factors in their analysis of crime. Indeed, these theories have become less sociological in their analysis. While these theories can be called interdisciplinary in one sense because they draw upon some insights from such fields as psychology, economics, sociology, and biology, they are not adequately interdisciplinary. These perspectives, represented in this dissertation by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), Farrington and colleagues (1986), Wilson (1983), and Wilson and Herrnstein (1985), have largely minimized and/or ignored social-structural factors in their analysis of crime—factors that are critical to the explanation, understanding, and to the ability to reduce or prevent crime. Because of this deficit, these theories fail to com-
prehend the complexity of crime and criminal behavior. In agreement with Hagan and Palloni, this dissertation argues that criminology needs to become more sociological because "...the structural foundations of sociology make its explanatory role necessary to the understanding of crime and delinquency" (1986:442). In addition, along with Messner and Rosenfeld, this dissertation argues that "...the formulation of a satisfactory explanation of cross-national variation in crime will require the systematic application of sociological knowledge and principles..." (1994:iii).

Additionally, it has been argued in this dissertation that the claim of "interdisciplinarity" carries with it the legitimizing assumption that the theory offers a more complete explanation and understanding of crime because it draws from the various disciplines engaged in criminological investigation. However, the interdisciplinary theories critiqued in this study are missing an analysis of the role of the social-structure in crime causation and are therefore not adequately interdisciplinary. These theories which focus on individuals, families, and schools divorced from the larger social-structure, are not improvements over strictly disciplinary perspectives.

The preceding argument does not amount to a call for a disciplinary or exclusively sociological criminology. The impact of crime on individuals, families, communities, and on
society is too great to get bogged down arguing over professional "turf." Whichever insights from whatever fields that can help us explain, understand, and deal with crime are worthy of our attention. However, a criminology devoid of sociological and structural insights is bound to develop an incomplete and inadequate explanation and understanding of crime. A sociological and structural perspective on crime is necessary to explain and understand this phenomena. It is the only perspective that can explain the wide variations in crime over time, and within and between nations.

Given the limitations of a non-structural interdisciplinary criminology discussed in this dissertation, why then do these theories dominate today? The answer given in this study has been that there is an individual, cultural, and political preference for perspectives that focus on individuals, their families, and their schools as the "causes" of crime (e.g., Scheingold, 1991; Currie, 1985a). As long as individuals lacking self-control or restraint are blamed, or parents are blamed for poor parenting skills and inadequate socialization, or individuals are blamed for their inability to cope with their disadvantage, or schools are blamed for the failure to teach obedience to children, the focus is taken off of any social-structural factors that could better account for crime. The interdisciplinary theories critiqued in this dissertation express a strong preference and bias for the
status quo—identifying deviants out of adjustment as the cause of crime while the role of existing social arrangements in the generation of crime is left unexamined and unquestioned. This focus serves the interests of those who benefit from existing social arrangements—those who would presumably have the most to lose through changing those arrangements. These facts help to explain the popularity of non-structural interdisciplinary criminology (e.g., Scheingold, 1991; Lilly et al., 1989; Currie, 1985a; Williams, 1981).

The bias in favor of the status quo in terms of social arrangements and relationships also strongly influences the policy recommendations and programs emanating from the interdisciplinary theories of crime critiqued in this dissertation. The policy implications derived from these theories focus on changing individuals, their families, and schools. Solutions proposed include programs and policies designed to enhance the abilities of families to socialize children, parenting-skills training and education programs, increasing punishment for undesirable behavior, intensification of social control measures in families and in schools, and teaching individuals self-control both in the family and in the schools. Given their view of a "universal desire"-seeking human nature, control of an otherwise unruly nature is all that is seen as possible in these interdisciplinary theories of crime with control theory assumptions.
Social-structural factors that impact our "nature," socialization, families, parenting, and the schools are not addressed in their explanations or their policy recommendations. A social-structural approach would help to "...refocus attention from individual criminals to the criminogenic features of the prevailing social order---ordinarily identified with extreme inequality" (Scheingold, 1991:6). By bringing sociology with its social-structural insights back into criminology, an individual bias can be avoided and policies could be developed to address the complex factors that lead to crime. An adequately interdisciplinary criminology would include social-structural factors in its analysis and would entertain policies designed to address those factors identified as increasing the risks of crime.

An interesting illustration of the flaws in the thinking of theorists who ignore social-structural factors in crime causation can be found in a review of Elliot Currie's *Confronting Crime: An American Challenge* (1985), by Travis Hirschi. Hirschi (1987) attacks Currie for his suggestion that inequality plays a role in causing such crimes as homicide. In response to Currie's discussion of the high rates of homicide in the United States relative to other "industrial nations," Hirschi states that:

...the crime itself is not considered. Conspicuously missing is a discussion of the motives for murder, which many accounts describe as trivial, the crime often apparently
stemming from petty disputes over nothing at all. If these accounts are accurate—and there is no good reason to dispute them—it is easy to see why Currie might avoid them. Unless serious crimes have serious causes, it is not clear that they justify serious modification of existing social arrangements (1987:68).

Hirschi's analysis confuses the motive to commit a crime with the cause of a crime. The fact that the motive for most homicides is "trivial," resulting from an argument over a parking space or some other "petty dispute," if this is indeed true, does not mean that there are not larger social-structural factors that can better explain the higher rate of homicide in the United States. Left unexamined are questions like why do "petty disputes" in this country end up in homicides more often than in other countries? Or, if it is a matter of having more "petty disputes" in the United States than in other countries, why are there more "petty disputes" here than elsewhere? Also left unexamined is the role of the wide availability of handguns in the United States and the role that might play in the likelihood of our "petty disputes" becoming homicides. Perhaps economic and racial inequality play a role in increasing the likelihood of "petty disputes," and in the likelihood of these disputes ending in homicide. Additionally, Hirschi fails to address the fact that our homicide rate is much higher than all other comparable nations. None of these issues are addressed or explored through a focus on motive. While motive and cause may
sometimes be equivalent, such as the case where an individual steals food from a grocery store because they are hungry, the manifest reason for the commission of this criminal act still does not give us a complete explanation or understanding of why more people steal food in one country than in another. To understand this fact we would have to examine such things as why there are more hungry people in one country than another and why they cannot or will not meet their needs in a legitimate fashion. Hirschi's continual focus on the individual or individuals to the exclusion of the social-structure results in an incomplete and inadequate explanation and understanding of the complexity of criminal behavior.

In conclusion, when social-structural factors are ignored in the analysis of crime, misunderstandings result. For example, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990; Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1983) treat as invariant the relationship whereby involvement in crime peaks in mid to late adolescence and then sharply declines throughout adulthood. However, as Hagan (1994) notes, while this pattern is common in industrial societies in this century, a different pattern existed in the nineteenth century. The significance of this insight is that rather than being an invariant pattern explained by individual differences, social conditions shape this crime pattern. Social-structural factors need to be included in the study of crime if we are to adequately explain, understand, and respond
to crime effectively. A social-structural and reflexive criminology can meet these challenges.

The Solution

The solution to the poverty of criminology today is to replace the inadequate interdisciplinary theories of crime that are dominant in the field with theories that are truly interdisciplinary, social-structural, and reflexive. The theories examined, while claiming to be interdisciplinary, are not adequately interdisciplinary because they exclude a social-structural analysis of crime. An adequately interdisciplinary criminology would draw upon insights and knowledge from all relevant disciplines including the sociological and social-structural analysis of crime. In addition, a reflexive criminology would be self-critical and self-aware of its interests and position in the analysis of and action taken to address crime. A reflexive criminology would also recognize the reciprocal relationship between the individual and society. It is critical to recognize that while people's lives, opportunities, experiences, and choices are shaped by their social environment, their society is ultimately a human social creation capable of manipulation, modification, and change. In this way, a reflexive and critical criminology overcomes the alienation and dissociation of theories of crime that reify current social relationships
and arrangements and view those arrangements as eternal. The interdisciplinary and structural criminology advocated here would also recognize that what is regarded as "human nature" is the result of a complex interaction between individuals and their social reality. A social-structural criminology is therefore empowering. With the knowledge of which factors influence crime and our "nature," policies designed to modify or change social-structural factors can be devised and implemented. The fact that social-structural changes are more difficult to accomplish than programs aimed at individuals or families should not prevent us from attempting to address those factors identified as being criminogenic. For example, the structural research examined in this dissertation has identified unemployment, inequality, and poverty as important factors in crime causation. Programs designed to accomplish full employment, reduce inequality, and reduce poverty are by no means simple to devise. In addition, attempts to restructure opportunity and reduce inequality are bound to meet resistance from various interest groups. These difficulties, however, should not dissuade us from attempting to address these and other criminogenic factors in our society.

If we seriously hope to reduce the crime problem in the United States, we need to address the social-structural factors that generate crime in the first place, rather than
teaching people and families to cope with their disadvantage. We are not going to solve our comparatively huge crime problem in the United States through parenting programs alone, or by increased punishment and social control. But these have been the directions advocated by many criminologists, our policy makers, and our leaders in recent years. There has been a shift towards incapacitation, deterrence, and retribution to deal with crime in the United States (Hagan, 1994). At the same time, there has been very little emphasis on the prevention of crime. Instead, the policies to address crime advocated by our political officials in the United States include advocacy for the death penalty, "boot camps" for juvenile offenders, increased punishment, mandatory sentencing, and the increased use of incarceration. When programs are designed that supposedly aim at prevention of crime, they turn out to be programs advocating "target hardening," neighborhood watches, or other strategies aiming at the prevention of victimization—but not the prevention of crime. Regardless of how many people we lock up in our prisons and jails, and regardless of how successful we are in making ourselves unattractive targets, if we do not address the factors that lead to crime to begin with, these efforts are destined to fail. The United States currently has one of the highest incarceration rates in the world (e.g., Hagan, 1994; Messner and Rosenfeld, 1994; Kemper, 1993; Currie,
Huge increases in our prison populations have occurred over the last two decades as a result of the increased use of incarceration to address crime. However, the increased use of incarceration has not been met with a corresponding decrease in our crime rates (e.g., Hagan, 1994; Kemper, 1993; Currie, 1985a&b). As ex-police officer James Fyfe has remarked, "the current strategy [of building more prisons to address crime] is like trying to deal with AIDS by building more hospices" (quoted in Kemper, 1993:73). It is time to seriously consider the prevention of crime.
NOTES

1 Groves and Lynch (1990) discuss two traditions in the study of crime, one involving "explanation" and the other "understanding." Explanation focuses on "establishing causal regularities," while "the goal of understanding is to interpret human actions so that they might be meaningfully understood" (1990:349). In this dissertation, both explanation and understanding are viewed as necessary to completely understand and address crime, a viewpoint shared by Groves and Lynch.

2 To a certain extent, what is considered "pleasurable" or "painful" is subject to social/cultural definitions. For example, if a culture teaches people to be self-sacrificing in favor of the common good, would self-interest still be pleasurable, or would it now be "painful" in the sense of causing guilt at one's self-centeredness? And if we can be "other-interested," then what happens to Gottfredson and Hirschi's conception of "human nature?" If humans can be other than what they presently are, then does it make any sense to speak of "human nature"? Why assume that there is any "human nature" that has to be controlled by socialization. An alternative view would be that what Gottfredson and Hirschi call "human nature" is in reality a particularistic historical conception of human nature, shaped by the social, political, and economic conditions in which we live. For example, their emphasis on self-interest and profit-seeking as part of our "nature" reflects the assumptions of a capitalist social and economic system. One of the most basic insights of the sociological perspective is the recognition that we are social beings.
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