

Quarterly Journal of Ideology

A Critique of Conventional Wisdom

An electronic journal at:

www.lsus.edu/la/journals/ideology

Ideology: Criminology's Achilles' Heel?

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Few things prevent the accumulation of reliable knowledge more surely than ideological intransigence (Blankenship & Wachholz, 1989). Sociopolitical ideology forms, shapes, and colors our concepts of crime and its causes in ways that lead to a tendency to accept or reject new data according to how well or poorly they cohere with that ideology. While all scholarly disciplines have had their ideological battles (see Walsh, 1997, for a brief history of this in chemistry, biology, psychology, and sociology), perhaps no discipline has been more plagued by it than criminology. The ideological divide in criminology lies primarily between criminologists who focus on strictly environmentalist theories that give short shrift to individual differences, and those who focus on individual differences and wish to integrate insights from the biological sciences into criminology. The former tend to be radicals and liberals and the latter tend to be conservatives and moderates (Wright & Miller, 1998).

Orlando Patterson (1998:ix) asserts that conservatives believe that only "the proximate internal cultural and behavioral factors are important ('So stop whining and pull up your socks, man!')," and "liberals and mechanistic radicals" believe that "only the proximate and external

factors are worth considering ('Stop blaming the victim, racist!')." Patterson's observation is reminiscent of the ancient Indian parable of the blind men feeling the elephant, each man describing the elephant according to the part of its anatomy he had felt, but failing to appreciate and integrate the views of the others who felt different parts. Because of this failure, the men fell into dispute and departed in anger, each convinced of the utter stupidity, and perhaps even the malevolence, of the others. Ideology tends to lead many criminologists to "feel" only the individual or only the individual's environment, and thus to confuse the parts with the whole and to engage in rancorous debates with each other. The theoretical disarray in criminology occasioned by this tendency has been noted by a number of writers (Barak, 1998; Dantzaker, 1998; Walsh, 2002; Williams, 1999).

Environmental theories that largely ignore individual differences (especially differences linked to biology) dominate mainstream criminology today (Rock & Holdaway, 1998; Rowe, 2002). Not content to tend their own gardens, many criminologists expend a considerable amount of time and energy attacking other criminologists who employ different theoretical perspectives. Although criminologists of all ideological persuasions may engage in a little mudslinging from time to time, those of a more radical inclination seem particularly prone to ad hominem attacks. A review of criminology textbooks by Wright and Miller (1998:14) concluded that: "Sadly, twenty recent books link biological explanations of crime to sexism, racism, and fascism, a common tactic used by some criminologists (especially those embracing critical perspectives) to discredit these arguments." Such attacks discredit the discipline and stifle rather than stimulate healthy debate.

The Influence of Ideology in Criminological Theory

In response to a question asking which criminological theory had the "greatest amount of empirical support," a sample of members of the American Society of Criminology listed 15 different theories (Ellis & Hoffman, 1990). This is indicative of both theoretical fragmentation and of a selective reading of the empirical literature, since by definition there can only be one theory with the "greatest amount of empirical support." Unfortunately, the study did not attempt to determine to what extent, if any, the findings could be systematically linked to ideology or any other factor. We repeat and extend the Ellis and Hoffman study and attempt to go beyond simple description to evaluate what our findings might mean for the future of criminological theory. We do this by attempting to determine the extent to which a favored theory or cause of crime is influenced by sociopolitical ideology.

What should a "good" theory do for researchers in any discipline? Theories should help them to understand and explain the regularities they observe in their domains of interest and to predict the existence of other regularities not yet observed. It is fair to say that criminology has failed to discover even a single central principle enabling it to systematically organize its empirical facts in the way that, for instance, the principle of evolution by natural selection organizes biology. Much of the theoretical progress made in the more fundamental sciences has come with their vertical integration with even more fundamental sciences; that is, chemistry with physics, biology with chemistry, and, increasingly, psychology with biology (Cosmides, Tooby, & Barkow, 1992; Walsh, 2002). These sciences now enjoy hierarchies of mutually consistent explanations that social scientists can only dream about.

Not only are many propositions and theories in criminology not consistent with those of the more fundamental sciences (not vertically integrated), they are not even consistent within their own domains (not horizontally integrated). For instance, anomie/strain theory views high aspirations as criminogenic because they promote strain for certain groups of people said to be denied opportunities to realize them, while social control theorists view the same aspirations as indications of social integration because they promote commitment to and involvement with prosocial activities. Differences such as these within the same environmentalist camp are also ideological in nature. Anomie/strain theory is located more within the conflict tradition of sociology whereas social control theory is firmly entrenched in the consensus tradition. Even though most criminologists would probably agree that consensus and conflict are dynamic and complementary aspects of social life, theorists in both camps go about their theorizing as if one process or the other has characterized social relations throughout human history.

The Constrained and Unconstrained Visions

In Thomas Sowell's wonderful book *A Conflict of Visions* (1987) he informs us that two contrasting visions of how the world is (or should be) have shaped our thoughts about human nature since human affairs were first pondered. The constrained vision, exemplified by Hobbes's "bloody war of all against all," views human activities as constrained by an innate human nature that is self-centered and unalterable. The unconstrained vision, exemplified by Rousseau's "man is born free, but is everywhere in chains," views human nature as formed exclusively by culture, and posits that it is perfectible. The first vision says: "this is how the world is," the second, "this is how the world *should be*." Sowell often uses the terms "gut level" and "instinct" to describe how these visions intrude into human thinking: "It is what we sense or feel *before* we have

constructed any systematic reasoning before we have constructed any systematic reasoning that could be called a theory, much less deduced any specific consequences as hypotheses to be tested against evidence" (1987:14, emphasis original).

Sowell's argument is persuasive, and suggests that vertical theoretical integration faces formidable ideological barriers, although horizontal integration may be achievable. It also supports the notion that the liberal/conservative political alignment is fundamental to understanding the fault lines in criminology. A number of studies corroborate Sowell's contention that something at the "gut level" underlies our visions of the world by demonstrating that the liberal/conservative attitudinal continuum has a heritable component ranging from 0.40 to 0.60 (Bouchard et al., 2003; Plomin et al, 1997) (heritability is a coefficient ranging from 0.0 to 1.0 indicating the degree which *variation* in a trait in a population is influenced by genes). The liberal/conservative dimension is one of the most heritable traits found in personality research. We will not, of course, find genes "for" liberalism or conservatism by rummaging around among our chromosomes. Rather, attitudes ("visions") are synthesized genetically via our temperaments which serves as substrates guiding and shaping our environmental experiences in ways that increase the likelihood of developing traits and attitudes that color our sociopolitical beliefs (Olson, Vernon, & Harris, 2001).

A number of studies have shown that the more heritable the trait the more strongly attitudes indicative of it are held, and the more difficult it is to change them (Crelia & Tesser, 1996; Olson, Vernon, & Harris, 2001; Tesser & Crelia, 1994). In one study, students were instructed to write essays favoring positions that were discrepant with their stated attitudes while their heart rates and galvanic skin responses were being measured. Significantly greater

electrodermal responses were found for attitudes with high heritability than for attitudes with low heritability (Tesser, et al., 1998). This does not mean that highly heritable attitudes are impossible to change, only that they are difficult to change. Liberalism/conservatism is a continuum, not a dichotomy, and many people shift back and forth on that continuum according to the issue at hand. Only a very few are glued tightly to opposite "critical regions" of the ideological distribution (Sowell is aware that he is dichotomizing a continuum, doing so for heuristic purposes).

Education as a Countervailing Process

Given what we have said about the constrained and unconstrained visions, it is understandable that many criminologist feel that the disciplines that examine criminality from biosocial perspectives—evolutionary psychology, behavior genetics, and the neurohormonal sciences—resonate more with the right than with the left (Pinker, 2002). However, this is not necessarily so; many researchers in these areas have impeccable liberal credentials, and all these sciences are very "environment-friendly." Perhaps the major reason many criminologists believe that biosocial theories are entrenched on the right wing of the ideological spectrum is that many of them lack exposure to the theories and concepts of other disciplines that also study crime. An acquaintance with those disciplines may well assuage ideological-based fears about them. Criminologists in the biosocial camp, on the other hand, have had wide exposure to mainstream criminological theories as part of their professional training in criminology. It is therefore less likely that their acceptance of biosocial theories is a function of ignorance of strictly environmental theories.

Frank Williams tells us that "Criminological theories are disciplinary reductionistic—they tend to focus on concepts derived from a single discipline" (1999:65). He opines that this "smacks of disciplinary hegemony" with each discipline attempting to explain behavior with the only variables that are "really important"—its own (1999:67). Blankenship and Wachholz (1989) want to rectify this and appeal for theoretical integration: "discipline boundaries should be crossed in an effort to glean from the work of scholars holding different ideologies...true paradigmatic shifts may only occur in the social sciences through the process of theoretical integration" (1989:2). We agree that criminologists should acquaint themselves more thoroughly with disciplines other than their own, if for no other reason than to be able to comment intelligently about the theories and methods of those disciplines, even if they continue to oppose their application to criminology.

One strategy for achieving horizontal integration has been suggested by Williams: "The content of existing theories should be examined for conceptual similarities, and bridges should be built between these concepts" (1984:103). As a first step, a series of factors having similar meanings in different theories that are associated with crime and criminality should be identified. Agreement among criminologists of different ideological persuasions about the relative importance of these factors as causes should then be identified. This is a tall order given the great variety of criminological theories that seem to be constructed with data selected and interpreted more for the ideological support they offer than by any effort to advance the criminological enterprise.

Although there has been sympathy for the idea of theoretical integration in criminology, as well as attempts to do so, no previous work has attempted to assess the difficulty of the task

presented by the fragmented and ideological situation within the field. We do not presume to show how the different theories, concepts, and proposition might be integrated. We only propose to present empirical data revealing the enormity of the task by identifying the diversity of theories and alleged causes of crime cataloged by a sample of contemporary American criminologists. We attempt to do this in two steps. First, we want to identify the most popular theories among contemporary criminologists and compare them with the most popular theories identified by Ellis and Hoffman (1990). Second, we want to determine the relative weight assigned by criminologists to a series of alleged causes of criminal conduct. The purpose of this is to identify causes of crime that criminologists of different ideologies agree and disagree on.

METHODS

The Sample. Five hundred attendees at the 1997 American Society of Criminology (ASC) conference in San Diego, California, were mailed a two-page questionnaire, an explanatory letter, and with a stamped and addressed envelope enclosed for reply. We limited our sample to those attendees who are affiliated with universities in the United States because we only wished to evaluate the opinions of American criminologists. Only 147 (29.4%) questionnaires were returned. Ninety-five of the respondents (64.6%) were male and 50 (34.5%) were female.

As with the Ellis and Hoffman study (1990), we asked respondents to indicate the criminological theory that they considered to be "most viable with respect to explaining variations in serious and persistent criminal behavior." All but nine respondents complied with this request. The primary difference between this survey and the Ellis and Hoffman (1990) survey is that ours presented an open-ended question allowing respondents to name any theory

they wished, whereas Ellis and Hoffman presented their sample with a list of theories from which respondents were asked to choose.

To ascertain the scope of our respondents' education and training in the basic human sciences, we asked them to indicate the discipline in which they received their primary training, and the number of graduate and undergraduate classes they took in anthropology, biology, psychology, and sociology. Our reasoning here was that the wider the number of perspectives a person is exposed to the more open he or she would be to the possibility that factors outside of his or her field of specialization may influence criminal behavior.

Finally, to assess the effect of ideology on theoretical allegiance we asked our respondents to self-report their sociopolitical ideology. The categories were "conservative," "moderate," "liberal," and "radical."

One of our purposes was to identify conceptual differences and commonalities among criminologists relative to their views of crime causation, and to determine if these differences and commonalities are associated with sociopolitical ideology. The alleged causes listed in the questionnaire were derived from an exhaustive literature review that covered many hundreds of studies compiled for a chapter in Ellis and Walsh's *Criminology: A Global Perspective*, (2000). Our respondents were asked to consider these causes of "serious and persistent criminal behavior" in terms of how important they thought they were. We listed 24 possible causes divided into a series of broad categories labeled "economic," family," "peer influences," "media," "psychological," "genetic," "evolutionary," "neurological," "social reaction," and "substance abuse." Respondents were instructed to assign a score to each "cause" ranging from 0, indicating that they considered the cause "of no importance," to 9, indicating that they

considered the cause "extremely important." The possible causes of crime and the mean scores assigned to them by conservatives, moderates, liberals, and radicals are presented in Table 3 in the findings section.

In terms of academic training, 64 (43.5%) of our respondents indicated that they were primarily trained in sociology, 34 (23.1%) in criminal justice, 30 (20.4%) in criminology, 4 (2.7%) in psychology, and 15 (10.2%) listed "other." The mean numbers of undergraduate and graduate sociology classes taken were 6.23 and 9.10, respectively. The corresponding mean numbers of undergraduate and graduate classes taken in psychology were 3.71 and .94; 1.24 and .231 in anthropology; and 1.69 and .028 in biology. These criminologists, as a whole, are well educated in the social/behavioral sciences, particularly in sociology, but only minimally in biology. Ideologically, 50.3% of the sample identified themselves as liberals, 25.9% as moderates, 15.6%, as conservatives, and 8.2% as radicals.

RESULTS

Table 1 lists the 23 theories listed by our respondents as the "most viable with respect to explaining variations in serious and persistent criminal behavior" broken down by ideology ($X^2 = 177.23, p < .0001$). All respondents who listed feminist theory as the theory with the most empirical support were female and liberal, indicating that gender ideology is also a factor in determining theoretical allegiance. The majority of female respondents (86%), however, listed theories other than feminism as their favored theory.

Social control theory was by far the most popular theory in the present sample. It is the most favored theory of moderates, and is the joint favorite with differential association theory among liberals. Overall, 16.7 percent of the respondents listed social control theory as the most

empirically supported theory as opposed to 26.9 percent in the Ellis and Hoffman (1990) survey. The second most favored theory--self-control theory--was not developed in 1987, and may have drawn away some support from social control theory since both theories seem to be most strongly supported by the same ideological groups, namely conservatives and moderates. Moffitt's (1993) developmental theory is another theory that had not been developed in 1986. Although clearly most popular among moderates, it is the only theory of the 23 listed that is represented in each ideological category. The relatively high ranking of this theory and its apparent appeal across ideological categories is remarkable given its fairly recent origin.

The number of theories listed in Table 1, as well as the four sociopolitical categories, renders the interpretation of the accompanying statistics somewhat suspect because of the number of empty cells in the table. A more instructive analysis may be to compare mainstream environmental theories that are exemplars of either of Sowell's constrained or unconstrained visions. We omitted theories that are not mainstream (biosocial theories) or that cannot be easily placed into either vision (Sowell considers Marxist/conflict perspective "hybrids" of his two visions). Sowell writes that: "While believers in the unconstrained vision seek the special causes of war, poverty, and crime, believers in the constrained vision seek the special causes of peace, wealth, and a law-abiding society" (1989:31).

TABLE 1
Theories Favored by Criminologists Broken Down by Political Ideology

Theory Favored*	<u>Political Persuasion</u>				Total
	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal	Radical	
social control ⁽¹⁾	3	10	10		23
self-control	4	8	2		14
differential association ⁽⁴⁾	2		10		12
conflict			7	3	10
Moffitt's developmental	2	5	1	1	9
traditional anomie ⁽⁹⁾			8	1	9
social learning ⁽²⁾	2		7		9
strain		2	5		7
routine activities	4		3		7
feminist			7		7
developmental	2	4			6
biosocial ⁽⁴⁾	1	4			5
Marxist ⁽⁸⁾				4	4
social disorganization ⁽⁷⁾			4		4
differential opportunity ⁽⁵⁾	1		2		3
radical			2		2
labeling ⁽⁶⁾			1		1
critical ⁽¹⁰⁾				1	1
integrated		1			1
classical	1				1
criminal personality		1			1
neoDarwinian			1		1
ecological	1				1
Total	23	35	70	10	138

$\chi^2 = 177.23, df = 66, p < .0001$

* Superscripts represent ranking of theories in the Ellis and Hoffman (1990) survey. Theories without a ranking were not represented in that survey.

Mainstream theories clearly in the unconstrained camp are differential association, anomie, and social learning theories. Each of them assumes the social construction of human nature, consider it a puzzle that inherently social beings commit antisocial acts, and thus believe it sensible to ask why people commit crimes and to search for the answer in places external to the offenders. Theories in the constrained camp are social control and self-control. These theories assume a universal human nature, are not at all puzzled that inherently self-centered humans commit antisocial acts, do not ask why people commit crimes but rather why most of us do not. They seek to answer that question by looking at individuals and how social and self-control mechanisms prevent antisocial behavior, and how the absence of such mechanisms allow it.

We created a 2 x 2 table by (1) placing conservatives and moderates into a single "conservative" category and liberals and radicals into a "liberal" category, and (2) collapsed the theories identified above into "constrained" and "unconstrained" categories. Table 2 shows that we can reject the null hypothesis that ideology has no effect on favored theory ($\chi^2 = 19.92$, $df = 1$, $p < .0001$). We note that conservatives are 2.08 (25/12) times more likely to favor constrained theories over unconstrained theories and 6.25 (26/4) times less likely to favor unconstrained theories over constrained theories. The ratio of these conditional odds (the odds ratio) is $2.08/.155 = 13.54$, and Yule's $Q = 0.86$. The relationship between ideology and type of theory favored is particularly strong when only theories that clearly exemplify Sowell's two visions are included.

TABLE 2
Ideology and Type of Theory Favored*

<u>Theory Type</u>	<u>Ideology</u>		<u>Total</u>
	<u>Conservative</u>	<u>Liberal</u>	
Constrained	25 (86.2%)	12 (31.6%)	37 (55.2%)
Unconstrained	4 (13.8%)	26 (68.4%)	30 (44.8%)
	29 (100%)	38 (100%)	67 (100%)

$$X^2 = 19.92, df = 1, p < .0001, \text{ Yule's } Q = 0.86, \text{ odds ratio} = 13.54$$

* Constrained theories = social Control, self-control theories. Unconstrained theories = differential association, anomie, and social learning theories.

The second concern of this paper is to identify areas of agreement and disagreement as to the specific causes of crime among our respondents, and to determine if these areas are systematically associated with ideology. Table 2 presents the means of each of the 24 alleged causes of crime for each ideological category, the total mean, and the F ratios and significance levels. Causes of crime were deemed "important" if the mean total value assessed by respondents was five or greater, and "less important" if the mean total value was less than five. The first panel lists those causes considered important, but about which there were significant differences across ideological categories as to the mean weight given to the cause. The first two factors--*unfair economic system* and *lack of educational opportunities*--were scored above a mean of five by all ideological categories. By far the biggest difference in this panel ($F = 12.29, p < .001$) is found for *poor discipline practices*, with moderates assigning twice the mean weight to it than radicals.

The second panel contains alleged causes deemed to be important and about which there

is no significant disagreement (as indicated by nonsignificant F ratios) across ideological categories. Means scores in each ideology category were greater than five only for *lack of empathy* and *peer influences*. It is worth noting that *lack of empathy* is the only individual-level variable among the 24 alleged causes that radical respondents considered an important cause of criminal behavior.

These first two panels reveal an interesting, albeit expected, dichotomy, with conservatives and moderates favoring individual-level explanations most strongly, and liberals and radicals favoring macrosocial explanations most strongly. The top three factors for conservatives were (in order) *lack of empathy*, *impulsiveness*, and *lack of supervision*; the top three favored by moderates were *poor discipline practices*, *lack of supervision*, and *lack of empathy*. Liberals favored two macrosocial variables—*unfair economic system*, and *lack of educational opportunities*—and one individual-level variable—*lack of empathy*—most strongly. Radicals favored macrosocial factors exclusively—*unfair economic system*, *lack of educational opportunities*, and *bias in the criminal justice (CJ) system*.

The final two panels contain alleged causes of crime that were considered less important (total means less than 5.00) by respondents. The first panel contains causes about which there was significant disagreement as to the weight given to them across ideological categories, and the second panel contains less important causes about which there was no significant disagreement. Of all the fourteen alleged causes in these two panels, the only causes to have a mean greater than five assigned by any ideological category, all by radicals, were *bias in the CJ system*, *labeling factors*, and *unrealistic goals* (in the Mertonian sense of striving for middle-class success goals).

The final panel reveals that, taken as a whole, criminologists of all ideological persuasions view alleged biosocial causes of crime (*hormonal, genetic, and evolutionary factors* and possibly *low intelligence*) as relatively unimportant. This does not mean that they reject the role of biology in criminal behavior entirely, only that they consider biosocial factors to be less important than environmental factors in explaining criminal behavior. For instance, only 25.2% of the respondents indicated (by assigning a score of zero) that genetic factors are of no importance at all, which means that almost 75% did feel that genetic factors are of *some* importance. The percentages of respondents assigning a score of zero for *hormonal, evolutionary, low intelligence, and neurological factors* (from the third panel) were 17.0, 48.3, 15.5, 11.6, respectively. The percentages of respondents who considered biological variables to be of great importance (by assigning a score of five or more) were: *evolutionary factors* (9.1), *genetic factors* (13.1), *hormonal factors* (17.0), *neurological factors* (29.9), and *low intelligence* (34.3). The majority of these criminologists/criminal justices, even while apparently lacking a firm grounding in biosocial theory, were open to the possibility that biosocial factors play at least some part in the etiology of criminal behavior, and a small minority consider them to be very important.

TABLE 3

**Means of Possible Causes of Criminal Activity About Which
Criminologists of Different Ideological Persuasions Agree and Disagree**

Causal Factor	Con.	Mod.	Lib.	Rad.	Total	F	Sig.
<u>Important causes with significant disagreement among ideological groups</u>							
Unfair Economic System		5.13	5.76	6.69	8.20	6.29	4.86 .003
Lack of Educational Opportunities		5.04	6.05	6.21	7.60	6.08	2.87 .039
Lack of Supervision		6.39	6.78	5.28	4.60	5.81	5.13 .002
Poor Discipline Practices		6.22	7.19	4.94	3.50	5.65	12.29 .000
Unstable Family Life		5.69	6.22	5.44	3.60	5.56	3.43 .019
<u>Important causes with no significant disagreement</u>							
Lack of Empathy		6.65	6.46	5.85	5.70	6.14	1.13 .340
Peer Influences	5.39	6.08	5.70	5.20	5.71	0.65	.582
Impulsiveness		6.39	6.00	5.15	4.80	5.56	2.49 .063
Alcohol abuse		4.73	6.00	5.44	5.40	5.48	1.22 .304
Drug Abuse		5.09	5.57	4.94	3.80	5.05	1.21 .308
<u>Less important causes with significant disagreement</u>							
Bias in CJ System		3.60	4.05	5.33	6.70	4.80	4.23 .007
Labeling Factors		2.65	3.55	5.03	5.60	4.28	8.05 .000
Lack Religious/Moral Training	4.65	4.76	3.72	2.70	4.08	2.84	.041
Creating Unrealistic Goals		2.74	3.57	3.84	5.60	3.71	3.41 .020
Media Violence	2.43	3.05	3.91	3.40	3.43	2.88	.038
Neurological Factors		2.39	4.40	2.75	2.80	3.14	5.34 .002
<u>Less important causes with no significant disagreement</u>							
Punishment too Harsh		2.69	3.92	3.67	4.90	3.66	1.83 .144
Mental Illness		3.00	3.84	3.42	3.30	3.45	0.75 .523
Low Intelligence		3.39	4.30	2.82	2.70	3.31	2.67 .052
Punishment too Lenient	2.39	3.05	2.22	3.41	2.71	1.19	.361
Pornography		2.09	2.19	2.69	2.30	2.43	0.57 .633
Hormonal Factors		1.86	2.89	2.27	1.70	2.33	2.05 .110
Genetic Factors	2.00	2.81	1.81	1.80	2.11	2.46	.066
Evolutionary Factors		1.48	1.86	1.09	1.20	1.37	1.43 .340

We previously noted that theories, and thus theorists, tend to focus on concepts derived from a single discipline, which in the present context is overwhelmingly sociology (Williams, 1999). We thus decided to determine if exposure to psychology and biology (as indicated by number of combined graduate and undergraduate classes in those disciplines) leads to greater acceptance of individual-level causes of crime for conservative and liberals. Table 4 presents correlations pertinent to this issue. Greater exposure to biology classes (at least in terms of the low overall mean level of exposure of this sample) does not appear to be significantly related to acceptance of individual level causes among conservatives. Greater exposure to biology is significantly related to acceptance of low IQ and neurological factors as possible causes among liberals but not among conservatives. This does not mean that liberals on the whole ascribe more causal power to these factors (see Table 3), only that greater exposure to biology has more influence on liberals in this matter than it does on conservatives.

Another surprise is that the more exposure to psychology the less the acceptance of the importance of low IQ is to conservatives, but the more the exposure the greater the acceptance of low IQ as a causal factor is for liberals. This is the most highly significant of the correlation differences (r to Z transformation; $Z = 8.94$) between the two ideological groups. Greater exposure to biosocial disciplines (biology and psychology) appears to have greater impact on acceptance of individual level causal factors than does ideology, especially among liberals.

When examining the degree of acceptance of individual level factors by degree of exposure to sociology and anthropology, however, ideology appears to have more of an impact than mere exposure. Conservatives and liberals both reject individual level factors as possible causes, but liberal do so much more forcefully.

Table 4

Correlations Between Support/non-Support of Individual-Level Factors as Causes of Crime and Number of Combined Graduate/Undergraduate Classes in the Basic Human Sciences and Ideology

Number of Classes in	<u>Alleged Cause</u>					
	Genetic	Low IQ	Hormonal	Neurological	Evolutionary	
Biology	Con.	.074	.132	.152	.239	.173
	Lib.	.091	<u>.393*</u>	<u>-.146</u>	.227*	.132
Psychology	Con.	-.038	-.254	.023	.221	-.126
	Lib.	.036	<u>.438*</u>	-.099	<u>.430</u>	<u>.153</u>
Sociology	Con.	-.009	-.016	.238	.050	.207
	Lib.	<u>-.354**</u>	-.190	<u>-.157</u>	<u>-.464**</u>	<u>-.212</u>
Anthropology	Con.	-.096	.043	.195	.243	-.066
	Lib.	-.202	<u>-.260*</u>	<u>-.278*</u>	<u>-.354**</u>	-.204

* Significant at $. < .05$. ** significant at $. < .01$. Underlined correlations are significantly different from one another (conservatives/liberals) at least at the .05 level (Fisher's r to Z transformation).

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study suggest that those who have noted the fragmented and ideological nature of criminological theory are substantially correct. Twenty-three different theories were identified as "the most viable with respect to explaining variations in serious and persistent criminal behavior." Any field generating this much theoretical excess (and there are many others theories not favored by any of our respondents) to explain the same phenomenon can reasonably be accused of lacking in scientific rigor, and any field in which a person's

sociopolitical ideology predicts, albeit imperfectly, which theory he or she considers most viable in terms of empirical support can reasonably be accused of lacking in objectivity. All disciplines, of course, have their disagreements, but all mature sciences have a large core of knowledge about which there is little or no disagreement (how many competing theories of gravity, chemical bonding, and evolution are there?). Students in the natural and physical sciences usually do not encounter divisiveness until they meet the more esoteric topics in graduate school, but criminology students are introduced to it in their first class. By definition, ideology implies a selective interpretation and understanding of the data that come to our senses in terms of a general emotional picture of “how things should be” rather than an objective and rational evaluation of the evidence (Barak, 1998:260).

On the other hand, the wide theoretical range could be considered understandable for a relatively young discipline; and each theory could be looked upon as a middle-range theory doing its part to illuminate one small aspect of criminal behavior. The immediate task before criminologists is to come to some sort of agreement as to how those small parts fit together coherently (horizontal integration). Of course, everything identified by the current cohort of criminologists as causally related to crime does not have to be integrated. Many correlates will doubtless be exposed as spurious as our theorizing and research designs become more sophisticated. It is clear, however, that interdisciplinary (vertical) integration will be difficult to achieve as long as criminologists are educated primarily in strict environmentalism.

So is ideology the Achilles' heel of criminology? Can the contrasting visions be adequately reconciled to the point that data rather than ideology guide the criminological enterprise? We are guardedly optimistic; for we have demonstrated that exposure to disciplines

other than one's own produces somewhat of a tendency to weaken ideology's hold. Perhaps if all criminology students were required to dip both their heels in the River Styx of interdisciplinary study they would emerge less vulnerable to the arrows of ideological intransigence.

If the desired goal of criminological theorizing is to have a truly vertically integrated theory, then our results suggest that Moffitt's (1993) developmental theory could serve as a beginning. The fact that it was the only theory represented in each of our four ideological categories suggests that it holds considerable promise as an integrating theory, and as one that will least offend the ideological sensibilities of criminologists across the ideological spectrum.

Moffitt's theory posits two distinct pathways to offending. Individuals predisposed to antisocial behavior by temperamental and neuropsychological deficits, a disposition that is exacerbated by inept parenting, follow the first pathway. These are the life-course persistent offenders who commence offending prior to puberty and continue offending well into their adult years. Psychologically healthy and adequately socialized individuals take the other pathway. These are the adolescent-limited offenders whose offending commences around puberty and is exacerbated by peer influences. Adolescent-limited offenders will desist from offending with maturity and with the acquisition of socially responsible roles. This theory thus covers biological (temperament, neuropsychological deficits, the hormonal surges of puberty), psychological (the uncertainties of adolescence, self-esteem, need for approval), and sociological (socioeconomic status, peer influences, mimicry, status seeking, differential opportunities) variables in a sophisticated and dynamic model that explains both the onset of and desistence from delinquent/criminal behavior. Although the theory is only a decade old, a large number of

studies testing hypotheses derived from the theory have supported it (reviewed in Moffitt & Walsh, 2003), while none that we are aware of have failed to do so.

We found some weak evidence that the lack of exposure to other disciplines that also study crime and criminality may be more important than ideology in determining criminologists' opinions regarding individual level causes, such as genetic and neurohormonal factors. To the extent that this is true, we find it gratifying; lack of knowledge of other domains is rectifiable, ideological entrenchment is usually not.

Future research along these lines would benefit by assessing the attitudes of criminologists about the prospects of horizontal and vertical integration, and whether or not they favor either or both. It would also be useful to be able to break these attitudes down by ideology and area of professional training to determine these factors predict attitudes toward horizontal and/or vertical theoretical integration. Those most committed to the current standard social science model may be the most likely to shy away from incorporating variables outside of it into criminological theorizing, as evidenced in the present sample. Those most likely to favor integration may be the young (those not yet stifled by orthodoxy and most willing to learn new concepts), those in research universities (integration provides fresh new ideas and generates new hypotheses in need of testing), and those with the widest training in the various basic natural and behavioral sciences because these people will more likely to have been exposed to the concepts to be integrated.

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