

BOOK REVIEW

Crime and Crime Reduction: The Importance of Group Processes

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*Crime and Crime Reduction: The Importance
of Group Processes*

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Over years, many studies have devoted effort in understanding the criminal mind alternating a set of interdisciplinary approaches. However, less attention was given to the influence of peers in criminal acts. The status, abiding rules and other social skills are of paramount importance to understand the attachment of people to crime. As this backdrop, Jane L Wood and Theresa A. Gannon compiled an intriguing book aimed at exploring the connection of social environs, family, social bonds and crime. To the biological basis of criminality proposed by Lombroso and colleagues followed the cultural-related theories, most of them coined in US, a country which was experiencing substantial demographic changes because of the mass-migration from Europe. Today, specialists are discussing that crime would be shaped in the free will of the subject, but would be determined by peer-

pressure. Key factors such as self-esteem, status, retaliation and rule-reinforcement should be placed to the lens of scrutiny if social scientists want to expand the current understanding of criminality. Otherwise, Wood and Gannon add, the rich-empirical research as well as the efforts of Government to mitigate the local crime is backfired. This book exhibits a more pungent thesis; many criminals wish to be recognized by their peers. In so doing, crime seems to be in the only instrument to achieve their goals. The societies can be understood through the analysis of their criminals.

The preliminary section contains four seminal chapters alluding to the needs of improving the conceptual framework whereby specialists give their diagnosis. G. Tendayi Viki & D. Abrams open the discussion presenting a set of empirical-rich studies to find how group-affiliation needs and social identity may converge in criminal acts. Under some conditions, lay-people compare their own behavior with out-group members so that they adjust their own expectancies to group-demands. What seems to be important to discuss is to what an extent these expectancies may lead to commit a crime. Criminals look the approval of peers in their

behavior beyond the ethic fields. To understand this it is necessary to examine how the rules of a group evolved. Further, it is clear how some devaluated-identities are prone to accept discourses that encourage the infra-humanization of others. These tactics not only alleviates the anxiety experienced after the crime, but also re-frames the prize/punishment system inside the group. What for ones is a moral disaster for others would be a prerequisite to gain further status or other underlying privileges. In this chapter, authors alert that two types of different des-humanization techniques surface, animalistic and mechanistic. While the former signals to the denial of human-based attributes in view of the potential punishments, the latter refers to views that presents human as machine-like. In some respects, these techniques are intended to reinforce the group-values.

Similarly to the previous discussed work, Wood J and Alleyne, in the second chapter, give an upshot on the gang-world and their ways of recruiting new members. Gangs are often moved by social skills, circumscribed to a specific soil. Steeped in the belief that gang-recruitment recognizes the need of teenagers to cause a good impression in other peers. Social determined by many factors, crimes are resulted from social learning and psychological needs for love. The sentiment of admiration some criminals exert over these youth not only bespeaks of the role played by emotions in crime, but also re-considers to what an extent gang-membership, encouraged by cultural entertainment industries as cinema, may become in a fertile source of research in the next few years. Violence and crime cannot be reduced, unless experts understand the complexity of the problem.

This argument begs an interesting question, what is the origin of violence?

Whenever any person, no matter the cultural environment, is exposed to unended episodes of violence in its childhood, once grown will develop hostile attitudes to others. This type of sympathy for violence is disposed by the subject when their ego is psychologically

undermined. In respect to this, it is important not to lose the sight that psychological frustration not only engenders violence but also gang criminal-inclined activity.

Any gang-membership offers certain degree of protection and social support combined by power enhancement and social recognition. In combination, both factors (power and recognition) facilitate the things for the advance of displaced-violence. This is exactly the point of research that E. Vasquez, B. Lickel and K. Hennigan studied in their career. Displaced aggression is defined in terms of the acts of violence resulted from the fear of retaliation and ruminating, occurred when who initially provoked cannot re-direct their response to the source of the provocation. Now in US and England one of the most troubling aspects for inter-gang violence is posed by the displaced-aggression. Police should receive more psychological training in ruminating thinking to reduce the violence among gang-bangs.

The archetype of masculinity plays a pivotal role not only in the proliferation of violence but also in sexual offending. L. Harkins & L. Dixon convincingly argues that sexual abuse unfortunately takes a common place in industrial societies. In UK for instance, 42% of rapes were acted by more than one person, or Gangs, preferably males in urban sprawl. This condition contrasts with those abuse committed by one person, which are contextualized in secrecy or in situations where police is absence.

The second section is based on the formation and functioning of terrorist network. The specialists who collaborate with this section are educated in terrorist-related research. In opposite to the thesis that points out terrorists suffer severe psychological disorders that leads to commit suicidal attacks against innocents, a theory originally portrayed by the media, Wilson, Bradford & Lemanski proposed a fresh interesting model why terrorists do what they often do. In Middle East, many teenagers accept to partake of radicalized groups following their friends or looking for social recognition. In other cases, their mothers and brothers earn a mon-

etary income improving the existent conditions of life. Similarly to Gang-bang recruitments, terrorists join to fundamentalist networks in quest of approval and economic benefits.

Last but not least, the ultimate section places under the lens of scrutiny to what an extent a criminal may be or not socialized or rehabilitated. The recovery of criminals depends on the imaginary boundaries between the nature of law and criminal justice theory. Some inmates are subject to efficient psychological therapies to change the lines of their former behavior but without any result. The rate of reidency has risen in the last few years in almost all developed countries. The prison system not only is facing serious problems to recover criminals, but it encourages inmates to plan crimes. The efficiency in these psychological therapies seems to be determined by the degree of closing with the hermeneutical past. Jo, Thakker

and W. Marshall give insight into the challenge and problems of the current criminal justice institutions in Europe and US. Because of time and space a full review of all chapters is almost impossible.

Of course, any book formed by chapters which have been written by diverse authors, face to the problems of readability. Alternating with a variety of styles and methods, it is very hard to orchestrate a main thesis to be discussed on the role played by social skills in crime-inclination behaviors. Quite aside from that, this book exhibits a new original response, recommended to studentships, scholars and practitioners, respecting to the crime-related issues. At a first glance, one idea anyway persists: group-membership should be seriously taken in mind in order for state-specialists may implement the necessary policies and plans in making streets safer.