

Explaining Crime and Disorder in Libraries

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LIBRARIES AND THEIR curators are charged with highly regarded societal duties: preservation of the historical record, protection and dissemination of culture in all its forms and flavors, and compilation and transmission of knowledge. However, libraries have fallen prey to the rising tide of criminal activity threatening individuals and institutions alike. Recurrent crime in libraries, and its attendant encroachment upon the services offered therein greatly interfere with their ability to serve constituents and patrons. To understand the nature of the crime and the criminal, those affected have often turned to social science and traditional theories of deviance.

The noted French sociologist Emile Durkheim once speculated that deviance is inevitable in all societies.¹ Deviance and conformity are relative functions of human affairs. This is not difficult to grasp. In the physical environment, for example, hot is inextricably tied to cold, as is fluidity to solidity. Similarly, in the social environment, licit behavior implies a possibility of illicit behavior. Even in a society of saints, Durkheim argued, deviance would arise; to a large extent saints and sinners owe their separate identities to each other.

Certain practical results flow from Durkheim's assumption. If deviance is unavoidable, society would do better to direct its resources and energies toward devising methods of identifying and controlling its manifestations than toward eradicating it altogether. The success of that investigation depends in large part on the Durkheimian assump-

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tion about the nature of deviance. Sainly and sinful behavior are but two ends of the range of human action. Between saints and sinners is a common bond of humanity. Social science relies upon a willingness to exploit that bond to understand one another and the forces behind our behavior.

Classification of Crime

As a prelude to any discussion of the solutions to deviance, it is necessary to understand the nature of the crime itself. One working definition of crime is any sequence of behavior willfully directed toward the injury of persons or property, proscribed by formal law and for which there are prescribed penalties.² Criminologists have devised a variety of systems to classify crime. One scheme looks to its offenders and victims; much is made of the distinction between white collar crime and street crime, for instance. Crime may also be classified by its degree of politicization, economic impact, seriousness, frequency of occurrence, or demographic characteristics, such as age, race and sex of offenders and victims.³ The utility of these typologies varies, and in the end, their usefulness often depends upon the kinds of questions about crime one needs to answer. The classification used in this article divides crime into two broad types; property and violent offenses.⁴ The two can be easily distinguished by the direct object of the illicit behavior. The object of violent crime is a person—criminal homicide, rape, and assault are all violent offenses. The objects of property crime are property and service; larceny/theft, embezzlement, and fraud are some examples. Robbery, a unique case, is both a violent and property crime since it involves the taking of goods through force or threat of force.

Most library crime appears to be against property. The most common may be theft and mutilation of materials, including books, periodicals, journals, texts, microfiche, and the equipment which makes these items accessible, such as microfiche readers and card catalogs.⁵ The equally destructive, but often more dramatic, crimes of arson and vandalism also affect libraries.⁶ There are some reports of violent offenses as well.⁷ And there are other activities which do not fit neatly into the violent/property typology—e.g., public sexual activity and drug traffic, as well as disorderly conduct. The perpetrators of these last crimes have been characterized by some as “problem patrons.”⁸

Although the occasional violent criminal and problem patron can be agitants within the library and its surrounding community, it is property crime that threatens the essential functions of the library.

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Theft and mutilation strike at the very core of the library: the material representation of culture and knowledge. Criminological theory and research may help identify the human factors which lie behind such destructive behavior and suggest suitable solutions.

Criminological Theories

Criminologists seek to identify the causes of crime and to understand the various mechanisms of social control. They do this largely through the formulation and testing of theoretical paradigms. Criminology is not only an interdisciplinary enterprise, but like many sciences, is multiparadigmatic as well. There are several rather divergent theoretical models that attempt to explain crime. No single model is a perfect "fit" with reality and it is the weight of the empirical evidence which ultimately determines a model's strength. The more a theory accommodates the range and depth of human behavior, the stronger it becomes.

There are three broad theoretical groupings in criminology, attesting to its multiparadigmatic status. The first of these we might call biological theories of crime. Biological theories look to the peculiar physical constitutions of criminals and noncriminals to explain behavioral differences between the two groups. Some researchers, for example, have linked abnormal genetic compositions with criminality.⁹ Others have identified specific biochemical imbalances among criminal samples.¹⁰ Still others have examined the nutritional content in the diets of criminals in an effort to explain their transgressions.¹¹

As one might imagine, biological research is quite controversial in the discipline at present. The empirical evidence pertaining to biology and crime is arguably mixed. Proponents of such research are disheartened by the ardent skepticism of their scholarly peers and a largely unaccepting public.¹² Perhaps it is the behavioral determinism implicit in biological theories that is unsettling. Too, the research methodologies of the early pioneers of biological criminology were seriously flawed and so may have set the stage for persistent charges of sophistry against like-minded criminologists who were to follow.

We shall not here devote further attention to biological theories in our pursuit for understanding of library crime because that paradigm offers so little in the way of plausible solutions. While biology may indeed contribute to crime in some way, biological theories offer marginal promise to librarians faced with crime within their institutions and who hope to control and contain it. After all, librarians could hardly

screen their patrons for proper genetic possession or biochemical purity. Such a practice raises profound ethical issues and possibly abridges basic constitutional guarantees. Any public policy affecting fundamental rights is certainly not within the immediate purview of librarians or criminologists.

We will focus our attention instead on the remaining two theoretical groupings. One of these encompasses the criminological attention to individual psychological traits and their contribution to criminality. We will call these theories, appropriately, psychological theories. The other grouping incorporates the work examining the ways in which societies are structured and how these structures might generate crime. These theories we will call sociological theories.

Psychological Explanations of Crime

The common element among psychological theories is an emphasis upon individual factors to explain criminal behavior. They share this emphasis with biological theories. While biological theories look to individual physiological, anatomical, or genetic dysfunction, psychological theories emphasize psychic dysfunction or impaired mental development. The foci of biological and psychological theories are decidedly different but both groups rely upon individual-level phenomena to explain unlawful behavior.

The body of psychological theory addressing crime may be further divided into two subgroups. The first of these involves theories that identify mental trauma or psychic pain as sources of criminal behavior. The second subgroup we can discuss under the mantle of learning theories of behavior.

Several criminological studies have linked psychological variables with violent behavior. In a study of murderers, for example, psychological frustration experienced early in life was linked to lethally violent behavior in adulthood.¹³ This early-age frustration arose from physical abuse in childhood, misapplied toilet training techniques, and overly repressive parental attitudes toward sexuality, to name just a few sources. In a more recent complimentary study of murderesses, similar sources of childhood frustration were identified as psychological factors contributing to criminally violent behavior.¹⁴

Other criminological studies have explored the connection between psychological factors and property crime. Such studies tend to highlight flawed personality development. Embezzlement, larceny/theft, and burglary presumably result from improperly developed moral and social consciences.¹⁵ Researchers concerned with the

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denotation of the "criminal personality" have attempted to delineate a series of psychological traits associated with it. Anger, distrust, poor decision-making ability, and generalized fear are some traits said to be associated with the "criminal personality."¹⁶ Importantly, the personality type is linked to a continuum; the presence or absence of the type is a matter of degree. The prospect for criminal behavior is theoretically greater when the criminal personality traits are present.

Many of these psychological formulations demonstrate the influence of psychoanalytic thought and developmental psychology. Behavior is seen as an expression of deeply-seated trauma or mental conflict. Trauma and conflict are usually described as originating from events surrounding the psychological development of an individual. Seen from this view then, criminal behavior is not always rational behavior. Rather, it springs from an individual's irrational reconciliation with the past and its bearing on current situations.

The crime control strategies implicated by these psychological formulations are appropriately individualistic ones. Counseling and therapy are prescribed for offenders. The aim of therapy is to identify and recognize the psychological sources of the behavior and to promote a healthier adjustment to the present.

The application of this brand of psychological theory of crime might aid in our understanding of some forms of library crime, but does not offer much comfort to librarians who wish to combat that crime. True, we might be more sympathetic to the problem patron who is given to the peculiar habit of stealing the shoes of female patrons. We might also be somewhat forgiving, though certainly not tolerant, of the individual who feels compelled to expose himself amid the library stacks. Perhaps these offenders suffer from some psychological malady. Yet if this is true and their behaviors are not rationally derived, they will not be deterred in their misadventures by the threat of penalty.

What then can the librarian do about the crime that results from the psychological problems of patrons? The answer is not much—at least not directly. One can see to it that community mental health services and campus clinics invite access to those who are in need. Support might be given to those social programs that promote mental well-being, if only by publicly addressing the once hidden social problems of sexual abuse, child abuse and neglect, and the like. These are not necessarily popular approaches to crime, especially in an era characterized by a zeitgeist of law and order. Nonetheless, we help ourselves when we help others who are troubled.

The second subgrouping of psychological theory involves learning principles of behavior. Psychologists and sociologists both have exam-

ined the manners in which crime is learned. The promise that learning theories hold for crime control strategies rests with the possibilities that unlawful behavioral patterns can be interrupted and extinguished if certain conditions are met.

Many in American society worry that the level of violence depicted by the various media and in sport has deleterious effects upon individuals who witness it. Their concern is that people exposed to extensive violence will themselves grow increasingly violent. As the cycle of violence enlarges, enlisting new adherents through television, film and literature, the ranks of victims increase and the very fabric of society threatens to unravel. For a great number of people, it is a frightening scenario. At the root of the concern is the assumption that violence is learned behavior.

There is some criminological credibility to the assumption. Violence does pervade American culture and its omnipresence may be partly to blame for our relatively high levels of assault, rape and homicide.¹⁷ Through the shaping and molding by violent significant others and primary groups, individuals may be socialized to behave violently.¹⁸ In some families and subcultures, for example, violence is highly valued as an effective means to get one's way. The preponderance of violent customs in everyday American life should indeed give us pause.

Precisely how much exposure to violence and crime it takes before one learns criminal behavior patterns is subject to variation. It may be that the learning of criminal behavior, whether violent or property, varies along four dimensions: (1) how young one is at initial criminal contact, (2) the strength of the relationship between teacher and learner, (3) the frequency of contact with criminal elements, and (4) the duration of contact through time. The younger one is at initial contact, the stronger the teacher-learner relationship, the more frequent and long-lived the contact, the greater may be the chance that an individual will learn to behave criminally.¹⁹

Learning theories suggest that crime spreads through a modeling or imitative process. Crime perpetuates itself through a social process of contagion. Just as a virus is transmitted through the physical environment from one person to another, crime may be transmitted through the culture or a smaller subculture, such as a gang, from one to another.²⁰ Crime, much like fads or fashion dictates, can take hold, be culturally transmitted, and engage increasing numbers of participants. But just as styles of fashion can come and go, sometimes with equal rapidity, crime can increase or decrease through contagion. One can learn a behavior;

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one can also learn that there may be undesirable outcomes associated with it.

Learning principles and the process of contagion may be applied successfully to several types of library crime. The defacement of library texts in a college library is a good example. Students may learn to communicate with each other by writing in books and articles placed on a reserve reading list. Often these comments reference negative attributes of the professor who assigned the reading. Students can also learn that the library stock of periodicals is a good place to pilfer articles they require for term papers. They may then school their younger peers in the practice or others may see the damage firsthand. Information describing how one might squirrel a book past the library security system may be passed from one student to another, too. Public libraries are subject to similar violations. The idea that the library is a perennial resource for magazine coupons may circulate among certain elements of the public. While serendipitous discovery of all these library uses may lie behind the violations, it is likely that some are learned by individuals under the informal tutelage of others.

Controlling library crime would seem to be a matter of interfering with the learning of the criminal practices and extinguishing the behavior pattern—much easier said than done. Put simply, crime control requires librarians to use learning principles of behavior to their own advantage. The most popular way in which this is done at present seems to be by way of aversive techniques. Signs explicitly conveying the legal penalties for book theft and mutilation are frequently posted on library bulletin boards. Sophisticated detection equipment, turnstyles and limited exitways are purposely conspicuous in many libraries. In this case, the message that library crime is onerous and will not be tolerated is implicitly conveyed. Occasionally, a book thief may even be prosecuted as an example of the consequences of such behavior, although more than one library administrator will agree that enforcement of the law is difficult, if only because of the time and effort required. These control strategies are all designed to insure that library crime is not viewed as an advantageous enterprise.

An alternative control strategy might be more positive than negative in the reinforcement of behavior. Aversive techniques call for actual or threatened punishment when rules are violated. The more positive plan calls for the reward of rule-abiding behavior. This does not necessarily mean that librarians should hand out material awards to those who do not steal or deface materials. It might be achieved by expanded rights and responsibilities to those individuals who treat the library and

its resources with the respect they deserve. Increased operating hours, more liberal reserve policies, and access to special collections might affirmatively promote desirable behavior even as it rewards those who already abide by the rules.

Somewhere between these two alternatives is a third, even more subtle approach. It is based on a hypothesis that library crime is committed by some and countenanced by the community at large because too little value is placed on the materials and the institution and, in turn, too little weight is ascribed to the seriousness of the crime. Going ten miles an hour over the posted limit on the highway, for example, may be commonly done by even the most law-abiding individual; this is not because there is little fear of being caught, but also because there is no perception that the extra speed endangers anything of value to the society or the individual. If, however, the commuter could be persuaded that driving faster than the posted limit posed a very real threat to his own safety, the welfare of other travelers, and his car's new paint job, he might decrease his speed. Similarly, if individuals and society were educated to place more value on libraries and what they represent, there might be a decrease in library crime and, equally important, there might be a community participation in measures to combat that crime.

Admittedly, the strategy involves considerable commitment and an unrelenting persistence. The public, to which thieves and mutilators also belong, needs to hear from librarians about what libraries do for them both in esoteric and practical ways, and how library crime affects them. Above all, the benefits to be had by a flourishing, active library should be continually emphasized to the community. The strategy may take the form of a small public relations effort or a more informal outreach program. Getting people to use the multitude of library resources in the proper manner should be the goal. By directly speaking about the larger purposes of the library, rule-abiding behavior within the library is simultaneously reinforced. Crime will not be eliminated through such a plan, but it might become less frequent and severe. That mere possibility merits a trial.

Sociological Explanations of Crime

A sociological imagination requires one to transcend the individual experience and to entertain the structures and workings of human relationships. Sociology is the study of groups, communities, families, neighborhoods, societies, and all other social constellations of human interaction. The driving purpose of the discipline is knowledge of the

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intricate patterns to human affairs and the myriad ways those patterns evolve and work their way through time. Crime is a human pattern and sociologists are understandably intrigued with the social forces that create and sustain it.

Since there are several paradigms of sociological thought, there are an equal number of ways to approach library crime from a sociological perspective. In the interests of clarity and brevity, we will discuss three dominant approaches. The first of these identifies existing social structural pressures that encourage crime. The second views crime as a natural byproduct of conflict in and between social groups. The third approach examines the peculiar ways in which coercive control strategies may actually exacerbate crime. Taken together, the three approaches help us understand the social forces that quite possibly create and sustain library crime.

When we hear of isolated reports of book theft and mutilation, most of us are quick to think it the work of mean-spirited, selfish individuals. We believe that the culprits are fully responsible for the wrongful acts since they are intentionally violating established rules for their own gain. As a consequence, we demand that the rule-breakers be duly penalized. While it is probably true that most book thieves and mutilators understand that their behavior is wrong, the actual impetus for their misdeeds may lay beyond mere malice and intent; social structural pressures can be figuratively forcing their hands. This is why aversive penalties and stricter enforcement of the law might not be sufficient to suppress crime. Such practices ignore the larger causes. The symptom is treated and not the malady.

Structural pressures take many forms. Each arises from the manner in which the economic, political and social institutions are organized. To a large extent, structural pressures are not the province of a single individual but are the residue of many individuals acting in concert.

For example, crime in America may spring from the structure of our economic system. Our system is predicated on the assumption that we compete with one another for financial rewards. However, the structure of opportunities available to the competitors is not an open one which invites access and equal reward to all. For various reasons, not all among us can win; some must necessarily lose. Amidst an excess of claimants, certain jobs and professions might be more highly valued than others and so are assigned the greater rewards.²¹ The prospective sources of economic and social inequality abound, vividly illustrated in real life by the great number of impoverished and middle-income people and the relatively few truly wealthy. Frustration and dissatisfaction

with life conditions and social stations may encourage some to get ahead through criminal actions, such as theft and robbery.

The close intersection of our economic and cultural systems offers yet another source of structural pressures that engender crime. We emphasize that wealth and success, widely prescribed goals in our culture, are achieved through diligence and education, the acceptable and legitimate means to the ends. In American culture it may be that the emphasis placed on the goals is far greater than that placed upon legitimate means. When such a disproportionate value is given to wealth and its manifestations, the acceptable ways in which one may attain them can give way to the more expedient means of crime.²²

The structural pressures toward crime help explain behavior such as book theft and mutilation. The special pressures structured into collegiate life are one illustration. One highly valued academic goal is, of course, a good grade point average. The prescribed avenues for such scholarly achievement are attentive study and sustained effort over a long period. Compounding the pressure is the fact that students are in competition with one another for the best grades since the academic merit system is based upon a comparative ranking structure. This approach places burdens on students and may encourage "shortcuts" around the accepted avenues for scholastic achievement. Students may clandestinely pilfer reserve readings from the library not only to read them but also to make them unavailable to others. Or they may hide crucial sources from their peers, especially if several students are addressing a similar topic for a term paper assignment in the same class. If the number of hours that a library is open are inadequate or inconvenient students may tear articles from journals for after-hours reading in dormitories. All of these examples of illicit library behavior result from an underlying emphasis on goals complemented with a system of structurally limited opportunities to attain them.

Many control responses to library crime reflect a tendency to install costly security hardware designed to prevent the infractions. This method may indeed hinder library crime to an extent but, like many existing crime control strategies, it treats only the symptoms. As we shall see later in this paper, elaborate security systems may also serve to exacerbate rather than diminish the problem behavior. One must remember that a likely cause of some library crime is structural in nature and, should we want to discourage it, the appropriate structural change should be the focal point of our plan.

It is unrealistic to expect librarians to unilaterally tinker with the venerated system of academic merit on our campuses. However, they can

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institute some changes in their own discrete province. They can alter certain library practices to better accommodate the students exposed to the pressures of that system. Library hours might be extended. Additional photocopy machines could be installed to eliminate the need for journal and book mutilation, taking care, however, to insure compliance with copyright laws. Money could be allocated for the purchase of duplicate copies of the most popular and utilized texts. Professors might be encouraged to assign outside readings according to a schedule which reduces last minute pressures and deemphasizes competition. All of these strategies inevitably require significant financial commitments. However, they may represent a better long-term investment than the additional security systems.

The second sociological approach to crime holds crime to be a result of conflict within, between, and among social groups. The conflict approach describes crime as a product of competing interests: cultural, socioeconomic or political. We might expect violent and property crime, for instance, to occur in urban areas where separate ethnic or racial neighborhoods border one another. Conflicting codes of cultural conduct are thought to be the impetus for crime in this case.²³ The reports of sporadic violence from American communities that rapidly absorbed Southeast Asian refugees could be explained by intergroup cultural conflict.

Several criminologists, often tagged "radical" or "new" criminologists because of their Marxian analyses, discuss crime as a function of the clash between socioeconomic classes. In societies marked by inequitable distributions of economic resources, the upperclasses are said to use the criminal justice system as a tool to retain and maintain control over the lower classes. Behavior that is defined as criminal is often the conduct that most threatens the class interests of the elite.²⁴ According to the radical criminologists, this is why so much white collar crime escapes official detection and prosecution while street crime does not.

Political conflict theorists identify similar sources of conflict that contribute to crime although they include more than socioeconomic conflict. They are prone to allude to power differentials in society by sex, race, or age, for instance, as breeding grounds for the conflict that, in turn, spawns crime. In this case the powerful use any available means, including the criminal justice system, to control the powerless.²⁵ There is some evidence, for example, that when convicted of the same offense, women rather than men receive stiffer sentences. The system is presumably both protective of and punitive toward women because it is rooted in traditional perceptions of the female social role. More women

than men appear to escape arrest or are excused from criminal processing, but those women who remain often receive harsher sentences than men.²⁶

Political, socioeconomic and cultural conflict may be responsible for some of the crime occurring in libraries. The criminal expression which flows from this conflict may take two forms. The first of these we might call "institutional" offenses. Institutional offenses are those which are directed toward the library as a symbol of learning, community, governmental authority, or any one of a number of similar ideals. As such it becomes a choate form toward which individuals dissatisfied with those concepts or their treatment under their auspices may direct their anger and frustration. A juvenile delinquent may express his disgust for school authority by defacing texts, or a disgruntled taxpayer may steal periodicals as an assertion that public property means his property. The second type of offense we might term "blackboard" offenses. In these cases, the library is seen as a convenient, available public billboard for expression of a variety of ideas, from humor to political criticism to advice to the local lovelorn. In this regard the library is no different than other broad-sided buildings—all are apparently irresistible blank slates.

A recent example of a "blackboard" offense that quickly involved the library as a social institution occurred in New York state. A book commemorating John F. Kennedy was defaced, scrawled with an explicit death threat against Ronald Reagan.²⁷ The book was apparently used as an opportunity for violent political expression. Alarmed by reports of the threat, the Secret Service demanded the library records of those who had recently borrowed the book. The librarian cited a state law defining such records as confidential and, not faced with a subpoena, she refused to turn over the relevant records. Heated conflict among the municipal, state and federal governments ensued and the stalemate was broken only when the federal government produced a subpoena. The aspiring assassin was apprehended, but the incident left the librarian soured on the coercive power exercised by the federal government. She now speaks to various groups about state laws that protect the confidentiality of library records.

The above example illustrates the potential ideological volatility of certain library resources and the manner in which social conflict can directly engage the interests of libraries. The forms of crime so inspired are probably the most difficult to defend against, if only because of the impassioned determination of its participants. Librarians might do well to be sensitive to the political, socioeconomic and cultural conflicts

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in their communities and to commit themselves to involvement in their management and resolution.

The final sociological approach we shall address identifies the way that control strategies devised and implemented to diminish crime may have the opposite and undesirable effect of amplifying crime. This is an alien notion to many who call for law and order policies as official responses to burgeoning criminal activity. Nonetheless, in some cases, it appears that the amount of deviance increases not because of structural forces or social conflict in the community, but precisely because of the social control measures taken to inhibit it.

In a sociological study of the Quaker invasion of Puritan America nearly three centuries ago, control measures were demonstrated to fulfill this prophecy.²⁸ Specific coercive actions were taken by the Puritan Colony in response to a small incursion of Quakers. The colony passed laws banning Quaker activities. This action seemingly served to exacerbate Quaker activity. Quakers, eager to display their commitment to their religion, increased their practice and more Quakers began entering the colony. The colony, in response, enacted more severe sanctions which further escalated and galvanized Quaker response. Only when punishment diminished did Quaker activity decrease as well. In this case, control strategies promoted deviance. Any attempt to neutralize Quaker activity was perceived as a deeply resented threat to it and, in fact, increased its level.

Other criminological studies have suggested that formal crime control measures may inadvertently perpetuate crime. The criminal justice system, the official apparatus of justice, may encourage criminal careers by reinforcing an individual's self-image as an offender.²⁹ The further one proceeds through criminal processing, from arrest through sentencing, the stronger grows the attitude that one is indeed a criminal. If all around you perceive you as a criminal, it is most difficult to avoid a similar self-perception. Becoming a criminal then is frequently a self-fulfilling prophecy. Once an individual has personally accommodated the illicit expectations others have for him, it is likely he will meet those expectations and behave criminally.³⁰ Many crime control measures are based upon an assumption that if given the chance, people will behave criminally. By doing so, they inadvertently encourage continuing criminality.

In an effort to meet the challenge of crime, librarians have increasingly relied upon sophisticated security systems. While their use can often help in the management of crime, it could be that they also promote it to an extent. Their presence indicates a general acceptance of

crime. In addition, it may also elicit a perception of presumed guilt on the part of many library patrons, including those who are not especially predisposed to desecrating library resources. It is certainly not a pleasant perception to harbor. All around us there seems to be a growing reliance upon security hardware; more locks, alarms, fences, lights, guns, and guards are used, in malls, shopping centers, parks, libraries, office buildings, and homes. To catch the few, all are treated as suspect. A general resentment may attend this proliferation of security systems and, paradoxically, might find expression in escalating criminal activity. Those librarians who are seriously considering additional security systems should also consider that they risk a curious calculus of criminal enlargement.

The Promise of Behavioral Solutions

In these few pages we have seen that crime can have biological, psychological and sociological sources. Our primary focus has been on the psychological and sociological characteristics that, given the weight of empirical evidence, appear to be criminogenic. To summarize, psychological dysfunction may compel an individual to behave criminally. Some criminal activity might be learned behavior, too—the result of continued exposure to illicit elements and definitions. There is also strong evidence that crime results from the cultural, socioeconomic and political pressures that are built into our society. And some crime may arise from the social conflict that is ever present, a heritage of our great diversity and apparently bountiful opportunities. Finally, we can discuss how the very mechanisms we devise to control crime can sometimes serve to encourage it.

Our national and local efforts to combat crime often pay scant attention to the existing evidence on the causes of crime. Most efforts are aversive, designed to penalize and discourage unlawful actions—intending to severely scold the miscreants and deter all others. No doubt these measures are successful to a degree. Active enforcement of the law serves to illuminate the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable behavior. In a sense, this is the message of Durkheim's proposition with which we began. We know what is acceptable through our witness to the social consequences of behaving otherwise.

The point is that aversive and active control measures should not be the whole of our response to crime, in libraries or elsewhere. Such means of control are reactive; loss is suffered before they are instituted and with each new criminal incident the call goes out for increasingly expensive and often equally ineffective versions of the same approach. It might be

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more beneficial to direct greater attention to proactive control measures, to devise ways to prevent the bulk of crime from occurring. We are not by nature, however, a preventative society.³¹ Too often we wait until a problem has frayed the edges of our tolerance before we confront it. As a result, many times our response is untimely, ill-conceived and short-sighted.

There are many strategies of prevention available—only a few were suggested here. Prevention calls for a direct assessment of the reasons for crime's occasion and for control measures to respond to those reasons. Prevention requires full employment of psychological and sociological imaginations to craft solutions from criminological knowledge. Libraries are crucial to societal advancement. How fitting that our enterprise to protect them from criminal undertakings should rely less on ungainly hardware and aversive penalties than on the genius found within the very resources libraries so strenuously preserve.

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