

Journal of Theoretical & Philosophical Criminology

ISSN: 2166-8094

JTPCRIM, January 2013, 5: 43-53

Integrating Assumptions about Crime, People, and Society
Response to the Reviews of *Toward a Unified Criminology*:
Robert Agnew. Department of Sociology, Emory University

This essay comments on the reviews of my book, *Toward a Unified Criminology: Integrating Assumptions about Crime, People, and Society* (2011, New York University Press). These reviews were published in the last issue of the *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Criminology* (July, 2012, Volume 4, #2). I also provided a synopsis of the book in that issue, and as did the review by James Unnever. I want to begin by thanking the four reviewers, Stuart Henry, Matthew Robinson, James D. Unnever, and Avi Brisman, for their thoughtful comments. I also thank the editor of the journal, David Polizzi, for organizing the review symposium.

The reviewers all recommend the book and point to certain of its strengths, such as the fact that it draws on a range of disciplines when evaluating and integrating the underlying assumptions of crime theories and perspectives. But the reviewers also point to certain important issues and sources that I overlook, as noted below. And they criticize certain of the arguments I make. I respond to their criticisms below, arguing that many are based on a misreading of the book. I begin with the major problem that the book addresses, then discuss the goals of the book, followed by the particular chapters in the book – each of which examines a major underlying assumption.

The Problem: A Divided Criminology. I open the book by arguing that criminology is a divided discipline, with the most prominent division between mainstream and critical criminologists. But I also contend that there are major divisions within mainstream and critical criminology as well. Criminologists representing different perspectives and theories often focus on different types of crime, employ different explanations, test their explanations using different methods, and make different recommendations for controlling crime. For example, mainstream criminologists

assume that crime involves acts in violation of the criminal law, while critical criminologists employ a much broader definition of crime, focusing on many harmful acts not in violation of the law – including acts committed by corporations and states. To give another example, many control theorists assume that there is little variation in the motivation for crime, and they explain crime in terms of differences in the controls or restraints against crime. Strain theorists, by contrast, assume there is much variation in the motivation to crime, and they explain crime in terms of the stressors or strains that pressure individuals into crime.

I then state that my book “is motivated by the belief that this division has hurt the field and the larger society.” This division undermines attempts to construct a comprehensive theory that can better explain a broad range of crimes. And it prevents criminologists from agreeing on recommendations for reducing crime. My book is designed to lay the foundation for an integrated or unified criminology that will overcome these problems. Avi Brisman, however, states that he is not sure that criminology is a divided discipline, or at least any more divided than other disciplines, and he wonders whether “criminology risk[s] reversing course and losing some of its interdisciplinary vitality by working toward unity and integration.” At the same time, he acknowledges that “a little more open-mindedness towards differing underlying assumptions would well serve criminologists.”

I stand by my assertion that criminology is a divided discipline, as briefly described above and more fully discussed in the book, although I am not in a good position to judge whether it is more or less divided than other disciplines. But whatever the case, I also stand by my assertion that the division in criminology is dysfunctional. As argued in the book, many scholars in the discipline work in their own taken-for-granted worlds, focusing on particular types of crimes but ignoring others, considering certain causes but unduly dismissing others, and advocating crime reduction strategies that flow only from the crimes and causes they consider.

As indicated in the book, the negative effects of this division are reflected in a number of ways, including the modest amount of explained variance in crime, the fact that the amount of explained variance has not increased in recent years, and the reluctance of the leading criminology organization in the world to make recommendations for controlling crime. The review by Matthew Robinson reinforces and builds on these arguments. Robinson, for example, discusses the unwillingness of many criminologists to consider approaches outside their particular disciplines. (Robinson’s own integrated theory, I might note, goes well beyond most others in its efforts to incorporate perspectives from multiple disciplines, particularly biological approaches that were largely neglected in criminology until recently (Robinson and Beaver, 2009).)

Further, I do not think that the approach I advocate will reduce interdisciplinary vitality. In fact, it is intended to do just the opposite. The book brings a broad range of perspectives to bear on criminology and calls on others to do likewise. It takes an inclusive approach that recognizes the value of different theories and perspectives, including those reflecting different disciplinary emphases. And it encourages criminologists with different persuasions to engage in dialogue and debate over a range of core issues involving the definition, causes, and control of crime. The book was written, in fact, because of my great concern over the fact that criminologists representing different perspectives and theories often do *not* engage in meaningful dialogue or debate with one another.

Having said that, I do understand Brisman’s concern. Suppose we were to somehow reach the point where there was widespread agreement on a unified approach to defining, explaining, and controlling crime. There is of course the danger that this paradigm might stifle new perspectives. But I am not too concerned. If by some chance we do reach this point, I have little doubt that there will be a great deal of debate along the way and that whatever paradigm is developed will be subject to continual re-examination and challenge.

The Major Goals of the Book. I argue that the division in criminology is rooted in the different assumptions that theories and perspectives make about the nature of crime, people,

society, and reality. For example, it is rooted in the fact that some criminologists assume that people are naturally self-interested, others that they are socially concerned, and still others that they are “blank slates,” fully shaped by the social environment. And I state that the book has three major goals, the first being to describe these assumptions and their impact on the field. I state that these assumptions typically receive little attention by mainstream criminologists and in criminology texts, although most have been the subject of significant attention by critical criminologists. I cite many scholars who have discussed these assumptions, with the work of Stuart Henry and associates being prominent among these citations (see especially Einstadter and Henry, 2006). Henry, one of the reviewers of my book, has devoted great effort to describing the underlying assumptions of crime theories and perspectives and attempting to build on certain of them. Henry’s review mentions a chapter by Jock Young (1981) that also focuses on these assumptions, one that I neglected to cite. I also neglected to cite another work examining these assumptions, by Robert Bohm and Brenda Vogel (2011).

I describe the assumptions that criminologists make about the nature of crime, free will and determinism, human nature, society, and reality. I emphasize that different theories and perspectives often make different, even opposed assumptions. And I describe the fundamental impact that these assumptions have had on the discipline, including the types of crime that are examined, the causes that are considered, the methods that are employed, and the control strategies that are recommended. Again, I readily acknowledge, both here and in the book, that many others have also described these underlying assumptions. Certain of the descriptions are more detailed than my own; for example, they systematically describe the assumptions made in several areas by many particular theories (e.g., biological, psychological, control, strain, subcultural, labeling, anarchist, postmodern, etc.) (e.g., Bohm and Vogel, 2011; Einstadter and Henry, 2006). That said, I provide concise descriptions of the core assumptions drawing on a large number of sources. But the major goals of my book involve much more than the description of these assumptions.

One such goal is to evaluate these assumptions, drawing on a wealth of recent research in a range of disciplines. I contend that up until quite recently we did not have a good basis for assessing accuracy of these assumptions; for example, for determining whether people are self-interested, socially concerned, or blank slates. Reflecting this fact, criminologists often simply assert that the assumptions they make are correct, but present little supporting evidence. But recent research puts us in a much better position to assess these assumptions. And I think a major contribution of the book is to bring this research to attention of criminologists in an accessible way. And most of the several hundred references in book are to studies in biology, psychology, anthropology, economics, sociology and other areas that bear on the assumptions that criminologists make. I describe, for example, certain recent research in biology that questions the existence of free will. To give another example, I describe research from several areas that challenges the idea that people are “blank slates,” fully shaped by their environment. This is a distinctive feature of book, not done to any significant degree in the previous work which describes the underlying assumptions of criminology.

Another major goal is to draw on the recent research to construct a new, integrated set of assumptions – one that will form the foundation for a unified criminology. Based on my reading of the evidence, I argue that the particular assumptions made by different theories and perspectives are not so much wrong as incomplete. Each captures a part of the truth. For example, it is not the case that people are self-interested *or* socially concerned *or* blank slates, but rather that they are self-interested, socially concerned, *and* significantly shaped by the social environment. As a consequence, those theories based on assumptions of self-interest, social concern, or the “blank slate” *all* have an important role to play in the explanation of crime. This very brief example, however, does not do justice to the book. The book, in particular, presents a detailed description of self-interest, social concern, and the ability and inclination of people to learn from others. It discusses the relations between self-interest, social concern, and social

learning. Among other things, it argues that social learning shapes the emphasis on and the nature of self-interest and social concern. Consequently, the inclinations for self-interest and social concern vary across people and circumstances. Further, it discusses the implications of my integrated description of human nature for criminology in some detail. The same is done for the integrated assumptions regarding the nature of crime, free will and determinism, society, and reality. And this too is a distinctive feature of the book, moving well beyond what one finds in other discussions of the assumptions of crime theories.

While I draw on literatures from many areas in examining the assumptions of criminology, it is inevitable that I missed certain relevant material. Brisman, trained as an anthropologist, provides several excellent suggestions here. I expect, indeed hope, that others will point to additional sources. While criminology is an interdisciplinary endeavor, criminologists often overlook valuable research from outside the field. As the review by Robinson points out, criminologists tend to draw only on the disciplines in which they were trained, most often sociology. Beyond that, criminology is now growing at a rapid rate, making it difficult to keep up with the literature in one's particular subarea, let alone the literature in other disciplines. But as I hopefully demonstrate in the book, it is critical to look beyond the field.

Evaluating the Integrated Assumptions. The assumptions I propose are designed to lay the *foundation* for an integrated or unified criminology, which focuses on the definition, causes, and control of crime. And the book devotes much attention to the implications of the assumptions for such a unified criminology. For example, the book discusses the implications of my "integrated theory of bounded agency" for efforts to explain and control crime in some detail. But as indicated at several points in the book, I do *not* attempt to build an integrated or unified theory of crime. I state that this would be both premature and beyond the scope of book. It would be premature because the integrated assumptions I propose are in need of critical evaluation and – most probably – revision. And it would be beyond the scope of the book because the construction of such a theory will, as I state in the book, be a "major undertaking" involving "the contributions of a broad range of individuals," with expertise in many areas.

I stress the fact that I do not attempt to develop a unified theory because it is relevant to many of the criticisms that Henry makes in his review. Henry, in particular states that he is surprised that my book "attempts integration of criminological thought without first systematically reviewing previous attempts at integrating criminological theory." But as indicated, I am not attempting to integrate criminological theories. Rather, my focus is on the underlying assumptions that criminologists make about the nature of crime, free will and determinism, human nature, society, and reality. I integrate the assumptions criminologists make in each area. And while these integrated assumptions have major implications for an integrated theory of crime, they are quite distinct from such a theory. Given this focus, I describe the assumptions made by different theories and perspectives. But I did not see any compelling reason to describe the many integrated theories in criminology, including my own (Agnew, 2005). This would take a book in itself.

But again, I do describe the implications of my assumptions for the definition, causes, and control of crime; and thereby provide much guidance to those who will move on to the next step of constructing an integrated or unified theory. And it would be possible to systematically evaluate the existing integrated theories in criminology from the perspective of the assumptions I propose. As I *suggest* in the book, most would likely be found wanting in various ways. Most notably, they neglect major types of crime; they take a deterministic approach to explaining crime or at least fail to fully model the implications of agency for crime; they are based on incomplete conceptions of human nature; they fail to consider the ways in which the level and nature of group conflict directly and indirectly affect crime; and they employ incomplete measures of objective and subjective "reality." But before making a detailed critique of integrated theories, I think it is important to first evaluate the assumptions I propose – thereby ensuring that we have

a strong foundation from which to critique existing integrated theories and on which to build a new one.

Henry also states that his evaluation of my book will assess “how far [my] integration overcomes the various challenges that have been leveled at integrative theory.” He then lists these challenges, all of which focus on integrated theories of crime. That is, they focus on theories that describe the major causes of crime, discuss the relationships between them, describe the relative strength of their effects, and so on. But as indicated, I do not develop an integrated theory of crime. I integrate the underlying assumptions that criminologists make in several areas, which is quite different. For example, I integrate the assumptions that criminologists make about human nature, developing a more complete description of human nature. While this description has strong implications for the development of an integrated theory, implications which I describe, it is not appropriate to evaluate this description using criteria developed for integrated theories.

To illustrate, my integrated description of human nature states that people are selfinterested, socially concerned, *and* both able and strongly inclined to learn from others. I describe the nature of these concepts in some detail; discuss the factors that influence the extent to which they are operative; and explore their relation to one another. These arguments are based on research from several disciplines. I discuss the implications of my arguments for criminology but again do not present anything close to an integrated theory. If one wants to critique my integrated description of human nature, one should engage the evidence and the arguments I present. For example, did I misinterpret certain research, overlook certain relevant research, or move beyond the research in questionable ways when developing my integrated view of human nature. Much of Henry’s evaluation of my description of human nature, however, treats it as if it were an integrated theory of crime. He states, for example, that “there is no explanation of the ways concepts are linked and no analysis of causal type or direction.”

But Is A Unified Criminology Possible? While I do not attempt to develop a unified criminology, I argue that such a criminology will focus on the definition of crime, explanation of crime, and control of crime. This argument derives from Sutherland’s conception of criminology, said to involve “the processes of making laws, breaking laws, and reacting to the breaking of laws” (Sutherland et al., 1992:3). Brisman notes that there is more to criminology than this. For example, some criminologists study what crime means to people, examine crime and crime control as a way to understand other aspects of society, and examine the impact of crime on individuals and groups. This is an excellent point. As Brisman notes, the assumptions I examine have some relevance to these other areas – although this is not something I discuss. In any event, Brisman’s observation suggests that there would be some value in examining the underlying assumptions about the nature of criminology itself – as well as the assumptions about the nature of crime, people, and society.

Unnever raises an even more serious challenge to the idea of a unified criminology. He states that the variables associated with the major theories all affect crime, suggesting that an integrated theory is both possible and of potential value. But he goes on to state that “the diversity in offending can only be captured with a diversity of theoretical reasoning,” and that there is “a need for a pluralism of criminological theories rather than a grand or integrated theory of crime.” He is quite explicit in stating that we need a different theory of crime “for different groups and institutions.” Following his argument, literally scores if not hundreds of distinct theories are necessary. That is because the “worldview” of different groups is “peerless.” Unnever focuses on race/ethnic and gender groups in his discussion, but the same argument can and has been applied to age groups, class groups, groups differing in sexual orientation, etc. And drawing on the work on intersectionality, the argument can be applied to combinations of group memberships. So, for example, one might argue that we need a separate theory of offending for Afro-Caribbean black, lower-class, adolescent, heterosexual males.

On the one hand, I very much agree with Unnever's point that it is critical to consider the social position, experiences, and characteristics – including “worldviews” – of different groups. And my book emphasizes this point by discussing the need to take an intersectional approach when explaining crime. But I do not think that this means that we need hundreds of distinct theories. Rather, I think that the direct causes of crime are similar for all individuals and groups. At the micro level, these causes include the types of strain I identify in general strain theory (e.g. criminal victimization, harsh and erratic parental discipline, discrimination), types of social control, the nature of peer associations, various individual traits, etc. At the macro-level, they include the types of communities and societies in which individuals live, including their level and nature of group conflict. As Unnever and Gabbidon (2011) and others demonstrate, these direct causes are affected by or associated with one's social position, as indexed by such things as race and gender. Variables such as race and gender, then, are exogenous variables which impact the many causes of crime.

So I think it is possible to develop an integrated theory that applies to all groups. That said, I think that this unified theory needs to be *race sensitive*, *gender sensitive*, etc. (I take the concept of “gender sensitive” from the work of the Girls' Study Group (Zahn, 2009). This means that while the causes of crime are similar for all groups, they are not identical. For example, *certain* causes may only apply to females (e.g., early puberty). Also the nature of particular causes may vary somewhat across groups. For example, while both African Americans and Latinos experience discrimination, the nature of this discrimination differs somewhat. So I think it is possible to develop an integrated theory of crime that is generally applicable across groups, although it is critical to recognize that group membership may sometimes affect the nature of these causes, with there being certain unique causes for certain groups.

Definition of Crime. I review the advantages and disadvantages of the mainstream definition of crime, which focuses on violations of the criminal law. I then review alternatives to the legal definition of crime, also discussing their advantages and disadvantages. Many alternatives argue that one defining characteristic of crimes is that they cause harm, but the definitions of harm provided are often quite general—providing much room for criminologists to draw on their own values when deciding what is and is not a crime. I give some examples, and the review by Henry provides another. In the review, Henry describes a definition of crime that he developed with Dragan Milovanic: “crime... is the power to deny others the ability to make a difference.” It is difficult to apply this rather broad and abstract definition, and efforts to better specify what is meant by it are of little help (e.g., individuals are “denied their worth,” “simultaneously reduced and repressed,” “denied their own contribution to the encounter”). A parent scolding their child for mistreating an animal would seem to qualify as a crime, as would many other acts that few would view as harmful or criminal.

Drawing on the work of others, I argue that there are two avenues for defining harm in a universally applicable and reasonably precise way. First, there are a core set of acts that threaten physical security and are viewed as harmful across the vast majority of societies (e.g., rape, theft, homicide). Second, the international human rights law identifies a range of human rights violations that can also be viewed as universally harmful. Although not perfect, I discuss the many advantages of drawing on the human rights law. Among other things, it provides concrete definitions of a broad range of harms. These harms go well beyond those described in the criminal law of most nations and include many acts committed by corporations and states. Contrary to the suggestion of Henry, my definition does encompass a broad array of corporate and state harms, as is immediately apparent when one examines the major types of crime that fall under the definition (e.g., “repressive state crimes,” see pages 38-40 of the book). It is true that the human rights law is a political creation, as I acknowledge in the book, but the human rights law reflects a consensus among actors from a broad range of states, representing a range of political systems and value orientations, and it is informed by a large body of scholarship. It is the best vehicle in my view for identifying harmful acts beyond direct acts of violence, theft, and

destruction. In addition, I argue that harms must be “blameworthy” to qualify as crimes. I provide much discussion of what constitutes “blameworthy,” again drawing on a large body of scholarship. One part of my definition, then, defines crimes as “blameworthy harms.”

I also argue that there is good reason to define crimes as acts condemned by the public, and also as acts subject to sanction by the state. Acts that meet *any one* of these three criteria qualify as “crimes,” worthy of criminological study. These three criteria allow us to develop a typology of crime, with acts classified according to the standing on each criterion. For example, we have blameworthy harms that are not condemned by the public nor sanctioned by the state (what I call “unrecognized blameworthy harms”), and we have acts that cause little blameworthy harm but are condemned by the public and sanctioned by the state (what I call “constructed crimes”).

I describe the advantages of this approach to defining crime over previous definitions. Among other things, my definition directs attention to a large number of blameworthy harms that are now neglected by the criminal law in most nations. And it encourages criminologists to examine the factors that lead the public to condemn acts and the state to sanction them, including acts that cause little blameworthy harm.

Henry and associates have also done much valuable work on the definition of crime, as have others. In particular, the prism of crime developed by Henry was a major contribution, building on Hagan’s pyramid of crime (see Lanier and Henry, 2004). My definition of crime, however, focuses on a much broader range of harms, reflecting its focus on human rights violations; specifies that these harms must be “blameworthy,” and provides a concrete definition of blameworthiness; and is more parsimonious (the prism of crime has six dimensions, versus my three). These are major advances in my view, not minor ones as Henry suggests, although I again acknowledge the pioneering work of Henry, Hagan, and others in moving beyond a strictly legal definition of crime – including the many scholars who argue for a focus on human rights violations (e.g., Schwendinger and Schwendinger, 1970).

Determinism and Agency. After reviewing recent research on determinism and agency, some of it quite innovative, I state that it is not possible to definitively prove that agency exists. Agency has two components: individuals are able to intentionally make choices that are not fully determined by forces beyond their control and they are able to act on their choices. But drawing on the work of David Matza (1964), I argue that there is some value in *assuming* that agency exists and exploring the consequences of this assumption. I then describe the presumed nature of agency in some detail, drawing on several literatures. I argue that there is reason to believe that certain individuals exercise more agency than others, with agency being more likely when individuals a) are motivated to alter their behavior, b) believe they can produce desired change, c) have the resources to exercise agency (e.g., creativity, broad knowledge, autonomy, power), and d) are in environments that have weak or countervailing constraints, provide numerous opportunities for agency, and encourage agency. I next discuss the implications of these arguments for criminology, arguing that the behavior of agentic individuals is somewhat more unpredictable and that agency contributes to *somewhat* higher levels of crime – partly because agentic individuals are able to act in ways not fully determined by outside forces, with these forces typically favoring conventional behavior. I stress, however, that agency may lead to both crime and conventional behavior, and a major section of the chapter discusses the factors that influence whether agency results in crime or convention.

Henry makes several criticisms of my discussion of agency. He says “the evidence for agency is the very definition of agency.” I do discuss some independent evidence for the existence of agency but, as noted above, I clearly state that in the end one must assume that agency exists. Henry makes an excellent point about those factors that influence the exercise of agency, noting that these factors – such as the motivation to alter one’s behavior – may themselves be determined by the forces beyond the individual’s control. Henry asks about the implications of this. For example, is it appropriate to hold individuals accountable for their

agentic behavior when the ability and inclination to exercise agency may be determined by forces beyond their control? I would respond by stating that while individuals may have no control over those factors that contribute to the exercise of agency, agency still involves the ability to make and act on choices that are not fully determined by forces beyond the individual's control. Agentic individuals therefore have the ability – to varying degrees – to choose crime or conventional behavior. As such, they still bear some responsibility for their behavior. I welcome further discussion of this intriguing issue, however.

Henry further states that my discussion “assumes agency acting freely is dangerous and harmful, and that constraint and control and influence produce conformity, stability, and reduced deviance.” As suggested above, this statement is incorrect. I clearly indicate that agency may result in a variety of outcomes, including crime, conventional behavior, and great achievement. And, contrary to another of Henry's assertion, I discuss those factors that influence whether agency results in crime or conventional behavior in some detail (see especially pages 66-68 of the book). And while “constraint, control, and influence” reduce the exercise of agency, I nowhere state that they always reduce *deviance*. Constraint, control, and influence increase conformity, but whether that conformity involves deviance or conventional behavior depends on who is exercising the constraint/control/influence – as differential association and social learning theorists make abundantly clear. I do, however, state that larger social forces more often constrain individuals to engage in conventional rather than deviant behavior, which may be the source of Henry's mistaken interpretation.

Human Nature. After an extensive review of recent research from several areas, I conclude that individuals have some social concern for others, especially but not exclusively in-group members; that they also exhibit much self-interest; and that they show a strong ability and inclination to learn from others – with such learning influencing the degree and nature of social concern and self-interest, among other things. (This hopefully clarifies my position regarding the “blank slate” argument: individuals are born with strong inclinations toward both self-interest and social concern, but social learning *shapes* the strength and nature of these inclinations to *some extent* (see the review by Robinson).) The chapter describes the nature of social concern, self-interest, and social learning in some detail and, contrary to the suggestion of Henry, it discusses the factors that influence the exercise of self-interest and social concern in some detail. I note, for example, that social concern is less likely when the personal costs of showing such concern are high, during competitions for rank and over scarce resources, and during interactions with out-group members. And, when discussing the implications of my conception of human nature for criminology I discuss the mechanisms by which social concern may be enhanced and the criminal exercise of self-interest limited. Henry makes many other criticisms of my discussion here, far too many for me to respond to in detail, except to say that virtually all reflect a misreading of the chapter. He treats my description of human nature as if it was an integrated theory of crime, and so criticizes me for such things as failing to discuss causal direction and the nature of causal effects. Again, I present a description of human nature, not an integrated theory of crime. I do discuss the implications of human nature for criminology and, in doing so, suggest what an integrated theory might look like. Among other things, it would take account of biological and psychological factors related to human nature. It would also take account of how social factors influence both the extent and nature of self-interest and social concern. Contrary to an assertion by Henry, I strongly emphasize the role of social factors in shaping human nature. This partly explains why societies have different levels of crime and why crime varies over time – something Henry says I do not address. For example, drawing on the work of the philosopher Peter Singer (1981), I argue that social forces have led most individuals to expand their conception of who is worthy of social concern (what Singer calls “the expanding moral circle”), and this has contributed to a decline in violence over time. I urge readers to examine this chapter for themselves.

The Nature of Society: Consensus and Conflict. This chapter describes the core arguments of the consensus and conflict perspectives, examines the evidence for these arguments, and then proposes an integrated consensus/conflict theory of crime. I argue that while all functioning societies are characterized by a core consensus, the extent and nature of consensus and conflict varies across societies and over time. I describe major types of consensus and group conflict, with a focus on conflict. I am sure that my discussion here can benefit greatly from the input of others, since large bodies of research in several disciplines examine issues related to consensus and conflict (Henry mentions certain of his own work here). Conflict is said to involve “groups with incompatible interests and/or values, with the members of one group trying to advance their values or interests by inflicting blameworthy harm on those in the other group because of their group status.” Blameworthy harms are said to be synonymous with oppression here, and I describe the major types of oppression—with discrimination at the core of all types. That is, oppression involves the infliction of blameworthy harms on people because of their group status. Contrary to Henry’s assertion, I do not neglect “the harm produced by some types of discrimination.” Such harm, in fact, is the focus of the chapter.

Henry does raise an important point, however, arguing that I neglect the fact that “a consensus about the value of a power hierarchy that is legitimated by the fear of chaos of competing interests in its absence, is likely to produce numerous harms of repression of the very subjects it claims to be protecting.” This is of course very relevant to recent events in the Middle East. I would respond that this is not consensus. It does not fit the definition of consensus that I present or correspond to the several types of consensus I describe. I define consensus as an “agreement over core interests/values and the associated ability of groups to get along – such that they do not inflict blameworthy harms on one another because of their group membership.” Henry describes a type of conflict, where those in power maintain their privileged position using certain of the types of oppression I describe. In this case, the oppressors inflict a range of blameworthy harms, justifying or excusing them by claiming that the harms are “in the service of some greater good.”

My discussion of the consensus and conflict perspectives occurs toward the end of the book, and it is where I come closest to describing the outlines of an integrated theory of crime. That is, I *begin* to describe the keys variables that criminologists should consider; discuss in very general terms the relationship between these variables, including variables at the micro and macro levels; argue that variation in the extent and nature of consensus/conflict in a society is a critical consideration when explaining crime; related to this, argue that group memberships have a key impact on the causes of crime; and note that explanations will vary somewhat by type of crime. Henry seems more approving of these remarks, perhaps because they better address the criteria he uses to evaluate the book, namely those criteria designed for the evaluation of integrated theories of crime.

Nature of Reality. I argue that there is an objective reality “out there” that impacts behavior, and that it is possible to develop “reduced bias” measures of this reality. But it is also critical to measure subjective views of this reality, because they too have a major impact on behavior, including crime. It is also important to measure the relationship between different measures or information sources (e.g., between reduced bias measures and the subjective views of respondents, between juvenile and parent reports of the same factor). Particular types of relationships may affect crime, over and above the individual effects of their component parts (e.g., crime may be related to the extent to which juveniles and parents hold differing views of some variable, such as the severity of parental supervision or the juvenile’s performance in school). There was little critique of these arguments by the reviewers.

In sum, the reviewers raise many important issues and provide many useful suggestions, although at the same time I believe that certain of them also misread many of the core arguments in the book. I urge readers to examine the book itself if they have not already done so. The brief synopses and critical reviews presented in this journal, while valuable, cannot do

justice to the research overviews and arguments made in the book. I look forward to continued discussion and debate.

References

- Agnew, Robert. 2005. *Why Do Criminals Offend? A General Theory of Crime and Delinquency*. New York: Oxford.
- Einstadter, Werner J., and Stuart Henry. 2006. *Criminological Theory: An Analysis of Its Underlying Assumptions*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Lanier, Mark M., and Stuart Henry. 2004. *Essential Criminology*. Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Bohm, Robert M., and Brenda L. Vogel. 2011. *A Primer in Crime and Delinquency Theory*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Matza, David. 1964. *Delinquency and Drift*. New York: John Wiley.
- Robinson, Matthew B., and Kevin M. Beaver. 2009. *Why Crime? An Interdisciplinary Approach to Explaining Criminal Behavior*. Durham, NV: Carolina Academic Press.
- Schwendinger, Herman, and Julia Schwendinger. 1970. "Defenders of Order or Guardians of Human Rights?" *Issues in Criminology* 4:123-57.
- Singer, Peter. 1981. *The Expanding Circle: Ethics and Sociobiology*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
- Sutherland, Edwin H., Donald R. Cressey, and David F. Luckenbill. 1992. *Principles of Criminology*. Dix Hills, NY: General Hall.
- Unnever, James D., and Shaun L. Gabbidon. 2011. *A Theory of African American Offending*. New York: Routledge,
- Young, Jock. 1981. "Thinking Seriously About Crime: Some Models of Criminology." In Mike Fitzgerald, Gregor McLennan, and Jennie Pawson (eds.), *Crime and Society: Readings in History and Society*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Zahn, Margaret. 2009. *The Girl Delinquent*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

