Towards an Integrative Theory of Crime and Delinquency: Re-conceptualizing the Farrington Theory

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Abstract

The Farrington Theory (2003) was developed to explain offending and anti-social behaviour by working class males. This theory alleges that stability in criminal behaviour resides *in* the individual rather than in the environment; the social problem of crime is largely medicalized, constituting a psychological model of anti-social behaviour rather than a theory of crime and delinquency. The argument proposed in this paper is threefold: First, I argue Farrington's theory is problematic given that it constructs deviance in a narrow and largely stable manner; therefore, this theory is better conceptualized as a psychological model of anti-social behaviour not a theory of crime. Secondly, I argue that integrated theoretical perspectives offer more nuanced and dynamic explanations and understandings of crime over the life course. As such, I attempt to address the shortcomings of Farrington's model by reframing it in terms of an integrative framework. Specifically, I use strain theory and control theory to elucidate the importance of structural and social processes leading to crime and delinquency, and to emphasize the potential for discontinuity as well as change in criminal propensities over the life course. I conclude the paper by illuminating the implications of Farrington's psychological model in terms of broader policy initiatives.

Introduction

As perhaps one of the most prominent prospective longitudinal studies in developmental criminology to date the Cambridge study sought to investigate the development of delinquent and anti-social behaviour in 411 South London boys born in 1953, from the age of 8 to 48 (Farrington, 2003). Researchers utilized a variety of methods including surveys, psychological tests, and interviews to examine continuity and discontinuity in behavioural development, the effects of life events on development, and to predict future behaviour of the sample of boys (Farrington, 2003). According to Farrington (2003) the Cambridge study "…was not designed to test any one particular theory about delinquency but to test many different hypotheses about the causes and correlates of offending…" (pg. 138). To be sure, the Cambridge study is a-theoretical in nature and thus largely method

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driven; however, this extensive methodological orientation comes at the expense of sacrificing theoretical understandings of crime over the life course which has implications for policy development (Sampson and Laub, 1993).

The findings from the first forty years of the Cambridge study led Farrington to develop "The Farrington Theory" to explain offending and anti-social behaviour by working class males. According to Farrington (2003) stability in criminal behaviour resides *in* the individual rather than in the environment, as such, Farrington's theory largely medicalizes the social problem of crime, thus depicting a psychological model of anti-social behaviour rather than a theory of crime and delinquency. The argument proposed in this paper is threefold: First, I argue that Farrington's theory is problematic given that it constructs crime and deviance in a very narrow and largely stable manner; therefore, this theory is better conceptualized as a psychological model of anti-social behaviour as opposed to a theory of crime. Secondly, I argue that integrated theoretical perspectives offer more nuanced and dynamic explanations and understandings of crime over the life course. As such, I attempt to address the shortcomings of Farrington's model by reframing it in terms of an integrative framework. Specifically, I use strain theory and control theory to elucidate the importance of structural and social processes leading to crime and delinquency, and to emphasize the potential for discontinuity as well as change in criminal propensities over the life course. Finally, I conclude the paper by illuminating the implications of Farrington's psychological model in terms of broader policy initiatives.

Theory versus Models

Before explicating my argument it is necessary to provide a brief outline as to how theories and models are to be conceptually distinguished. There is a tendency within the literature to use the terms theory and model interchangeably as though they represent the same conceptual tool. However, I contend it is important to distinguish theories of crime from models of crime. To assume that these terms are synonymous is to undermine the value that theory has for our understanding of the social world.

In the most basic sense a theory can be conceptualized as a statement of how and why specific facts are related (Brym, 2004; Macionis and Gerber, 2011). Theories are informed by epistemological positions pertaining to the nature of knowledge, and ontological positions concerning the nature of the social world. In essence, theories are used as guiding frameworks to understand, explain and predict social behaviour. Perhaps, most significantly theories are dynamic in nature offering nuanced understandings and explanations of phenomenon. Pfohl (1985: 9-10) describes theories in the following way

> Theoretical perspectives provide us with an image of what something is and how we might best act toward it…Theoretical perspectives transform a mass of raw sensory data into understandings, explanations, and recipes for appropriate action.

On the other hand, models offer more reductionist descriptions of phenomenon and social processes. Indeed, models are often presented in a very mechanistic and static fashion, in other words, models simplify phenomenon while providing "us with the sense of being in a world of relatively fixed forms and content" (Pfohl, 1985). As such, models produce the building blocks necessary to develop theories but are not sufficient to stand as

theories on their own. In sum, the argument proposed in this paper is infused by this very rudimentary distinction between models and theories. The focus of the paper will now turn to an overview of the model proposed by Farrington (2003).

The Farrington Theory

Farrington's model of crime is consistent with broader developmental theories of crime. Much like the model proposed by Farrington these theories suggest that development trajectories are linear in nature. As such, developmental theorists are concerned with the persistence of antisocial behaviour over time (Moffitt, 1993; Moffitt and Caspi, 2001). It is argued that underlying antisocial tendencies are biologically/psychologically determined and thus remain relatively stable over the life course. Although discontinuity in criminal behaviour is sometimes recognized, changes are attributed to biological and psychological change (Laub and Sampson, 2003).

Farrington's theory seeks to explain offending and antisocial behavior by working class males (Farrington, 2003). He differentiates long-term development of antisocial tendency from "the immediate occurrence of offenses and other antisocial acts" (pg.166) and contends that *persistent individual* differences play an important role in accounting for continuity in offending (Lilly et. al., 2011, italics added). A general overview of Farrington's (2003) model suggests that the risk factors contributing to delinquency stem from the following sources of influence, biological, individual, family, peer, school, community and society. However, despite Farrington's alleged concern with the social, his model downplays continually the social while emphasizing psychological explanations of delinquency. In fact, Farrington (2003) is particularly concerned with Individual psychological/behavioural risk factors that contribute to long term development of antisocial tendencies. For example, he argues that the following "psych-based" risk factors, low intelligence, aggression, restlessness, impulsiveness, lack of empathy, and the inability to delay gratification, contribute to long term development of antisocial tendencies and thus increase significantly the likelihood that the individual will engage in various forms of criminal and delinquent behavior (Farrington, 2003). Furthermore, he suggests that these antisocial tendencies are perpetuated by long and short-term energizing factors that motivate an individual to engage in antisocial behaviours. In sum, it can be argued that for Farrington the propensity to offend or engage in other forms of delinquency is contingent namely on the interaction between an individual possessing a *certain degree* of antisocial tendencies, the social environment and a decision-making process in criminal opportunities.

In an attempt to apply his theory to explain some of the results of the study Farrington (2003: 168) argues:

> …children from poorer families may be likely to offend because they are less able to achieve their goals legally and because they *value* some goals (e.g., excitement) especially highly. Children with *low intelligence* may be more likely to offend because they tend to fail in school and hence cannot achieve their goals legally. *Impulsive children, and those with a poor ability to manipulate abstract concepts*, may be more likely to offend because they do not give *sufficient consideration and weight* to the possible consequences of offending. Also, children with *low intelligence and high impulsivity* are less able to build up *internal inhibitions* against offending. [emphasis added]

The statement above elucidates rather clearly that Farrington stresses the psychological while downplaying structural and social explanations of crime. That said, I do wish to recognize that to some extent Farrington makes use of some social characteristics in his theory (such as learning and strain), but ultimately as Jacob (2010) notes, in Farrington's view there is no mistaking that "all reasons for committing crime are focused on individual personality issues" (pg. 26). In the section that follows I elucidate how Farrington's model is problematic and make the case for adopting integrative theories to understand crime and deviance over the life course.

Problematizing Farrington's Model

In his attempt to, "…propose a larger all-embracing theory" to explain most of the main findings on criminal careers and risk factors for offending (pg. 165) Farrington fails to explain how a number of theories are relevant to his model; in fact, when outlining his model he seemingly deemphasizes the macro-level and micro- level contributions of these theories of crime while using them to support his psychological model of crime and deviance. In a sense, Farrington seems to justify this theoretical oversight by arguing that, "there is far more *agreement about risk factors* than about their *theoretical interpretation* (emphasis added, pg. 165). As such, by focusing on risk factors his model seemingly simplifies the complex social processes that promote or inhibit delinquent behaviour over the life course (see for example Laub and Sampson, 2003).

In essence, within Farrington's model crime and delinquency are rendered to be a psychological manifestation of an underlying antisocial personality disorder. This focus is problematic insofar as it offers a relatively narrow conception of crime and delinquency over the life course while de-emphasizing how social factors operating at both the macro-structural level and at the micro level (i.e. intimate relationships) contribute to criminal and antisocial behaviour. Overall, Farrington's theory offers little explanation regarding the role of larger external influences such as race, SES, composition of communities, or schools (Jacobs, 2010). Persistent offending is conceptualized as an individual–psychological problem rooted in biological deficiencies and poor parenting, regardless of other social characteristics.

A second major shortcoming of Farrington's model is the taken for granted assumption of stability in antisocial behaviour. This view is problematic given that as Robin's (1978) explains, "adult antisocial behaviour virtually requires childhood antisocial behaviour…[but] *most antisocial children do not become antisocial adults*" (pg. 611, emphasis added). To address the shortcomings of Farrington's approach, I argue that we should continue to develop integrated theories of crime that allow for the merging of theoretical perspectives. Integrative theories account for the possibility of multiple pathways leading to delinquency while recognizing the potential for change over the life course (Lilly et. al., 2011). Moreover, integrative approaches recognize that "competing" theories focus on different aspects or explanations of delinquent behavior and, as such, compliment rather than undermine one another (Kaplan, 2003).

A number of scholars have utilized integrative approaches to explain crime over the life course (Hagan, 1997; Kaplan, 2003; Sampson and Laub, 1993; Wikstrom and

Loeber, 2000) For example, in contrast to Farrington (2003), Sampson and Laub (1993) embrace a sociological rather than psychological approach to explain crime and delinquency. Although these authors recognize that psychological factors may play a role in explaining individual propensities for crime, they also argue that individuals and social processes exist within a structural context that is shaped by historical and macro-level forces that influence delinquent behaviour. Further, they recognize that family processes of socialization are influenced by structural background factors including, poverty, residential mobility, family size, employment and immigrant status. As such, to explain crime across the life course both micro and macro levels of analysis must be considered. In their research of crime over the life course Sampson and Laub (1993; 2003) adopt an integrated version of social control theory that recognizes the importance of both structure and process (pg.247). These authors argue that structural contexts are mediated by processes of informal social control provided by the family and schools, and that changes in criminality over the life course can be explained by informal social bonds in adulthood.

Furthermore, Wikstrom and Loeber (2000) emphasize the importance of adopting an integrative theoretical framework to explain crime. More specifically, they suggest that individual-level dispositional characteristics interact with structural characteristics (i.e. community SES) to influence the decision making process to engage in delinquent behaviour or avoid it. Finally, Hagan (1997) is particularly critical of developmental theorist's overemphasis on the micro and he advocates instead for sociologists to develop theoretical positions that bridge the division between macro and micro level research on crime. Hagan's integrative framework incorporates both historical and contemporary trends that involve social as well as economic processes that contribute to street crime in American society.

Although Farrington explicates a largely psychological model of crime, upon closer examination it might be argued that he alludes to a number of different theoretical premises yet fails to acknowledge how important elements of strain theory, and control theory inform his position. I contend that it is crucial to consider how these theories of crime inform Farrington's model so that his position reflects an integrative and comprehensive social theory of crime and delinquency (Akers, 2000; Kaplan, 1984; 2003) as opposed to a linear or mechanistic psychological description of delinquent behaviour.

The theoretical orientation we adopt informs the policies utilized to govern crime. Napoleon famously argued that, "In order to govern, the question is not to follow out a more or less valid theory but to build with whatever materials are at hand" (Napoleon).[1] Indeed, I argue that rather than following one perceivably "valid" theory it is best to build with the materials we have at hand. This form of theoretical building is possible if we recognize the utility of integrative theories which offer nuanced understandings of the etiology of crime and deviance by building on existent theoretical orientations. The argument proposed in this paper is influenced largely by the position advocated by Sampson and Laub (1993; 2003) which suggests that the causes of crime and deviance are rooted in structural disadvantage and weakened informal social bonds to family, school and work (1993: 255). In the following section I will discuss Farrington's model in terms of structural disadvantages.

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[1] Retrieved June 22, 2011 from, http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/theory.html.

Strain Theory

According to Farrington the foremost energizing factors leading to long-term variations in antisocial tendency include *desires* for material goods, *status* among intimates and *excitement* (pg. 167, italics added). These desires and antisocial tendencies are ultimately influenced by risk factors (167).[2] Farrington maintains that some of these desires are more *highly valued* among children from poorer families, for example, he argues that excitement is more highly *valued* by lower-class individuals than by middle-class individuals because poorer children *perceive* their lives to be boring. Further, poorer children, "are *less able* to postpone immediate gratification in favor of long-term goals" (pg.167 emphasis added) and are more likely to adopt illegal methods to satisfy their desires. Consequently, habitual acceptance of socially disapproved methods to satisfy these desires leads to an increase in antisocial tendency and later delinquency.[3] Farrington contends further that maturation and behaviour skills as well as risk factors determine the methods chosen by individuals. Therefore, for Farrington, the problem is clearly psychological not structural; he contends for example, that poorer children's inability to achieve their desires through legitimate avenues is attributed to their failure in school, and erratic and low status employment histories (they fail in school and at work because of their antisocial personality). This proposition emphasizes clearly that long term antisocial tendencies are influenced by psychological factors while structural explanations are overlooked. However, I argue elements of strain theory (Merton, 1938) can be applied to this proposition.

Strain theory holds that deviant conduct emerges when individuals have limited or no access to institutionalized means by which culturally valued goals may be achieved (Merton, 1938; Agnew, 2006). In other words, the disjuncture between cultural goals, whatever they may be, and accessibility via institutional means creates a strain towards anomie. This strain-engendered position leaves large segments of the population desiring goals that cannot be attained through conventional means (Lilly et. al., 2011). Deviant behaviour is a probabilistic outcome of this anomic social structure (Merton, 1938; Cullen and Messner 2007). Thus, the propensity to commit crime is *structured* not *driven* by the distribution of legitimate means (Bernard, 1997). Further, according to Messner and Rosenfeld (1994), when a system becomes anomic the capacity of regulative institutions (e.g. family, school, and law) to control individuals is undermined exacerbating cultural economic sources of strain (see also Rosenfeld and Messner, 2011).

In terms of Farrington's proposition, he acknowledges that desires for material goods, status, and excitement are energizing factors that lead to delinquency but he fails to acknowledge that these goals are culturally defined, and commonly accepted among most individuals who live in developed countries. Moreover, Farrington acknowledges that children from poor families are afforded less opportunities to achieve these goals but attributes this largely to psychological factors (i.e. low self-control). Farrington's proposition therefore does not account for the fact that a structural inability to satisfy

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[2] As mentioned above low intelligence, aggression, restlessness, impulsiveness, lack of empathy, inability to delay gratification etc.

[3] In a sense, Farrington's explanation appears to be tautological in nature insofar as risk factors appear to influence and be influenced by one's desires.

these cultural desires may cause individuals from disadvantaged neighborhoods to adapt by pursuing illegitimate avenues, ultimately leading to long term antisocial tendencies and various forms of delinquency.[4]

  Farrington's psychological conception of strain theory is not entirely surprising given that numerous scholars have interpreted strain and anomie in psychological or social psychological terms (Bernard, 1997). As a result, Merton's theory is often mis-conceptualized as a, "sociological variant of the frustration-aggression hypothesis" (Bernard, 1997: 265). However, this interpretation of strain theory is largely inaccurate; For Merton, strain and anomie do not refer to properties of individuals but rather refer to properties of social structures (Bernard, 1997). According to Bernard (1997) Merton's theory is often misinterpreted because he adopts social psychological language to argue that social structures "exert a definite pressure on certain individuals to engage in non-conforming rather than conforming conduct" (p.132). Consequently, this "pressure" is often interpreted, "in terms of frustrating experiences associated with the structurally induced inability to achieve culturally prescribed goals. The, frustrating experiences then, are interpreted as causing criminal activity at the individual level-that is, as driving the individual to commit crime" (265). Nevertheless, Merton does not make this individual-level argument anywhere in his theory, in fact, he does not offer any claims about the psychological states of individuals in situations of structural strain (Bernard, 1987).

  In sum, there is a tendency for some scholars to interpret strain theory out of context. To reframe Farrington's proposition in terms of strain theory is to recognize that inequality in the economy and in the lives of poor individuals can be attributed to structural disadvantages beyond the control of those affected (Hagan, 1997; Murray, 1984). Thus, long term patterns of delinquency are understood as a symptom of a pathological social structure as opposed to a pathological individual.

  Farrington's second proposition suggests that the energizing factors responsible for short term variations in antisocial tendency include boredom, frustration, anger, and alcohol consumption and these are influenced by life events. Similar to the first proposition, this argument focuses on individualized explanations of short term antisocial tendencies while ignoring structural factors that might contribute to these propensities. Cohen's (1955) conception of the subculture of delinquency offers one way to understand how these energizing factors are influenced at both the macro and micro level. Indeed, Cohen's (1955) theory bridges macro and micro level processes that contribute to delinquency by merging structurally induced strain with notions of cultural transmission (Lilly et., al., 2011; Williams and McShane, 2004). Cohen (1955) found that delinquent gangs were heavily concentrated in slum areas. Moreover, according to Cohen (1955), lower class youth are disadvantaged when it comes to achieving success and status in conventional institutions given that they lack the legitimate means to achieve such goals (see also Cloward and Ohlin, 1960). For example, the school system creates a source of strain by inducing a sense of status deprivation among lower class youth (Bernard, 1997) insofar as these youth feel forced to compete with middle class children and are also evaluated on the basis of a middle class measuring rod. These structural conditions lead to feelings of deprivation and injury resulting in status-frustration (Cohen, 1955). Cohen argues to cope with these feelings many youth invest themselves in delinquent

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[4] Merton (1938) identifies this form of adaptation to an anomic social structure as innovation. The innovator accepts culturally defined goals but pursues illegitimate avenues to pursue those goals.

subcultures (Cohen, 1955). Therefore, the strains of class based status discontent present lower class youth with a common problem that is solved by embracing delinquent values that offer opportunities for status enhancement and "the psychic satisfaction of rejecting respectable values that lie beyond their reach" (Lilly et., al., 2011: 70). Thus, Farrington's short term energizing factors, particularly frustration and anger might be symptomatic expressions of larger social processes at work, processes beyond the control of the individual.

In sum, an examination of Farmington's first two propositions in the context of strain theory moves the focus away from psychological explanations towards structural factors that contribute to crime and delinquency. Nonetheless, to understand Farrington's model as an integrative theory of crime it is necessary to also acknowledge how micro-level process variables (e.g. attachment to ones parents) explain delinquency (Sampson and Laub, 1993). Indeed, Sampson and Laub (1993) maintain that understanding how process variables contribute to delinquency is important given that, "informal social controls derived from the family and schools mediate the effects of both individual and structural background variables" (pg. 19). As such, as I explain in the following section social control theory can be used to explain the next aspect of Farrington's model concerning "inhibiting factors."

Control Theory

Farrington (2003) argues that when beliefs and attitudes are built up in a social learning process that consists of rewards and punishments antisocial tendencies can be reduced. More specifically, individuals are more likely to view offending negatively when they have parents who favour legal norms, exercise close supervision, and punish inappropriate behaviour with love-oriented methods. Farrington contends further that parental warmth and loving relationships can elicit empathy which can also help to inhibit antisocial tendencies. Thus, children who fail to "build up internal inhibitions against socially disapproved behaviour" are more likely to offend (pg. 167). Moreover, children that have delinquent friends and that come from criminal families will "build up anti-establishment attitudes and the belief that offending is justifiable" (pg. 168).

Farrington's proposition is problematic on two grounds. Firstly, Farrington again stresses the psychological while downplaying social processes that may inhibit crime. Secondly, this proposition depicts a static conception of the anti-social individual doomed to a life of failure and unruly conduct from childhood onward (Lilly et. al., 2011). However, as Sampson and Laub (2003) explain desistance from crime is universal and childhood risk factors do not appear to predict the point at which desistance takes place (Lilly, et. al., 2011). In what follows, I will explain how Farrington's proposition can be attributed to, and expanded by social control theory (Hirschi, 1969; Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1990; Reckless, 1967; Reiss, 1951; Sampson and Laub, 1993).

Very generally, control theory deems deviant and criminal behaviour to be innate but, in most cases, "restrained by internalized and external informal social control, due to bonding to social control agents such as parents, family, peers, school, and community – that is, to the social integration of the individual" (Carrington, 2011: 237). Arguably, Farrington's position is largely consistent with more recent conceptions of control theory

(Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990), which emphasize stability and continuity of psychological factors believed to inhibit crime, as opposed to alternative conceptualizations of the theory that place more emphasis on social processes that reduce delinquent propensities.

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) advocate for a general theory of crime that considers criminal behavior and delinquency to be a stable trait extending over the life course. Their theory of self-control contends that individuals who lack self-control will lack the necessary restraints to avoid delinquency and thus are propelled into a life of crime. As such, self-control is conceptualized as a permanent internal state acquired early in life. Gottfredson and Hirschi, (1990) thus emphasize the importance of quality parenting in early childhood. Similar to Farrington's model Gottfredson and Hirschi's theory explains crime and delinquency in terms of the psychological while downplaying the social and ignoring the propensity for change over the life course.

Alternative conceptions of control theory are more integrative in nature insofar as they are rooted in social-psychological explanations which recognize that both psychological and social factors must be used to explain crime and delinquency (Reckless, 1967; Reiss, 1951). Proponents argue that to prevent delinquent and criminal behaviour individuals must be socialized to accept and respect legal norms (Hirschi, 1969; Reiss, 1951). Indeed, delinquency is conceptualized to be the consequence of unsuccessful socialization provided by primary groups (eg. family, neighborhood, school) (Reiss, 1949). Reiss (1951) contends that delinquency results from the failure of personal and social control. Reiss (1951) defines personal control as "the ability of the individual to refrain from meeting needs in ways which conflict with the norms and rules of the community" (pg.196), while social control is defined as "the ability of social groups or institutions to make norms or rules effective" (pg. 196). According to most control theorist's effective child rearing practices are crucial in order to encourage self control and thus elicit law abiding behaviour.

In his earlier work Hirschi's (1969) conception of control was more sociological in nature. Hirschi vehemently criticized numerous theories of crime for their focus on explicating something that does not need to be explained- motivation (Lilly et. al., 2011). For Hirschi criminologists should be asking why individuals do not break the law; this conception of control theory rejects the explanation of crime through psychological explanations of internalized control, and instead adopts a sociological approach that explains control in terms of an individuals' relationship with conventional order (Lilly et. al., 2011). Hirschi (1969) maintains that when an individual's bonds to society are weakened, or absent, the propensity to engage in antisocial behaviour and crime increases (Hirschi, 1969). From this perspective control is not manifested in a psychological trait or established set of beliefs, but rather, resides in an individual's relationship to conventional society including bonds to people, institutions, and societal beliefs (Hirschi, 1969). Moreover, unlike Hirschi's theory of self-control, social bonds are not limited to childhood, there is potential for their formation at any age (Lilly et. al., 2011).

Sampson and Laub (1993) offer a more comprehensive conception of social control theory which rejects the deterministic nature of social bond theory, and related assumptions of criminal stability, while recognizing that social bonds and the informal social controls they provide can and do change throughout the life course and these changes can be used to explain persistence and desistence from crime. Their age-graded

theory of social control acknowledges the potential for Individuals to transform antisocial trajectories during adolescence or young adulthood by acquiring positive social bonds (Sampson and Laub, 1993; see also Jacob, 2010). In sum, as Jacob (2010) explains it is important to recognize that the sources and relative strength of social controls vary throughout the life course; as such the significance of social bonding extends beyond childhood into adolescence, "as age-graded sources of informal social control contribute to changes in antisocial and delinquent behaviour" (2010: ii). Thus, to return to Farrington's proposition, it is important to recognize the inhibiting stage as more than a psychological internalization of control; rather we must recognize that this social learning involves complex social processes that extend well beyond the psychological. Further, this process is subject to change throughout the life course. The focus of the paper will now shift to a discussion about the implications of Farrington's psychological model in terms of broader policy initiatives.

Policy Implications

Theories are relevant not only for knowledge building but also for policy development. Indeed, when it comes to criminal justice policy "ideas have consequences" (Szasz, 1987).[5] Theories provide conceptual understandings as to why crime occurs and, in consequence, elucidate strategies to control crime (Lilly et. al., 2011). As such theory has direct implications for policy development.

Unsurprisingly, the main policy implications derived from Farrington's theorizing are relevant to risk assessment and risk focused prevention (Farrington, 2003:170). In order to reduce delinquent and criminal behavior risk based policies seek to identify and address risk factors (e.g. antisocial behavioral tendencies) that have been found to be linked to delinquent conduct. As Farrington (2003) explains, "Risk-focused prevention suggests that in order to reduce offending, the key risk factors should be identified and programs should be implemented to tackle these risk factors" (pg. 171). Farrington offers three brief examples of the types of programs implemented under risk models: The first program addresses issues of low intelligence and attainment targeting high risk children in the preschool years. The second program is aimed at improving poor parental child rearing behaviour through educational programs offered in pregnancy and the first few years of parenthood. The final program is intended to target impulsivity by offering cognitive-behavioral skills training (Farrington, 2003).

Farrington's psychological model, focused on antisocial behavior and its proposed link to life course criminal propensities, is largely consistent with broader policy concerns. Indeed, Farrington's model is aligned with current social discourses and political ideologies that shape criminal justice today. It is crucial to acknowledge how social context influences the way in which we theorize about crime (Lilly, 2011). To borrow from Dorothy Smith (1990), we must not govern in abstract concepts and symbols rather we must situate our knowledge in the "direct embodied experience of the everyday world" (pg. 22). Indeed, historical research on crime and deviance has undoubtedly elucidated that approaches to crime control in any given era are directly

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[5] As cited in Lilly et., al., (2011: 5).

attributable to contemporary notions of crime causation (Lilly, 2011). As such, social context, criminological theory and policy are inexorably related (Lilliy, 2011: 7).

Antisocial Youth and Policy

Accoding to Warr (2002), the age distribution of crime is irrefutable. Indeed, several researchers have argued that during middle to late adolescence offending rates across nearly all crime categories increase (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990; Wolfgang et. al., 1987; Moffitt, 1993). Given that youth are disproportionately engaged in various forms of delinquent behaviour a discussion of the current social context must first address the way in which youth are constructed. It appears societal constructions of youth move between two competing ideologies: one that renders youth in need of protection, and a second that essentially problematizes and demonizes youth rendering adults in need of protection (Crawford, 2009; Pearson, 1983). It can be argued that this latter conception most closely characterizes how youth are constructed today. This perception is perhaps amplified given that youth today are postponing commitments of work and family well into early-adulthood, which is perceived by many to lead to a commitment-free pre-adulthood life characterized by antisocial and criminal behavior (Crawford, 2009). Yet, this fear of "criminal youth" is not new, in fact, older generations tend to contrast a mythical golden age of "obedient youth" with current generations of youth characterized as "out of control" and thus, spiraling into a state of irrevocable social disorder (Pearson, 1983). According to Pearson (1983) this cycle of "respectable fear" reminds us that the origins of youth crime cannot be explained in terms of conditions of the present but rather are rooted in socio-economic relations characteristic of modern capitalist societies (Pearson, 1983: 236-242).

Further, this construction of "dangerous youth" is perpetuated quite frequently in the media (Crawford, 2009; Pearson, 1983; Yanich, 2005). According to Crawford (2009) for example, sensationalist media representations of 'youth gangs' and 'feral children' terrorizing Britain's streets has fostered myriad cover stories like the one in *Time Magazine* in April 2008, titled: "Unhappy, Unloved, and Out of Control − An Epidemic of Violence, Crime and Drunkenness has made Britain Scared of its Young." A similar sentiment is upheld across North America where youth crime is often contextualized within tragedies like the shootings at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, in April 1999. Indeed, Gilliam & Iyengar (1998) contend, "the Columbine story offered the perfect vehicle for the view of the juvenile as *superpredator—violent, remorseless and impulsive* pre-adults responsible for widespread mayhem" (pg.45).[6] Much evidence suggests that the construction of youth *as risk* prevails and consequently, youth are to be held accountable for their 'bad' behaviour (Crawford, 2009).

In the realm of criminal justice this conception of dangerous youth has led to a process of "adulteration" (Crawford, 2009: 22). In other words, when it comes to defining behaviour and criminal responsibility youth are increasingly being treated like adults (Goldson, 2004). Perhaps unsurprisingly, this philosophy is consistent with broader ideological changes within the justice system. Indeed, over the course of the past four decades the Western justice system has abandoned rehabilitative programs and developed

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[6] As cited in Yanic (2005: 104).

a more putative approach, one that emphasizes 'tough' on crime methodologies (Levrant et al, 1999; Presser and Hamilton, 2006). Influenced largely by the emergence of the neo-liberal state (see for example Gordon, 2006; O'Malley, 1996) this line of reasoning favours medicalization, individualization, punishment, and incarceration for those who break the law. For example, the increasing desire to punish and prohibit was remarkably clear in the war against drugs, as Luttwak suggests, "From the quasi criminal to the politically incorrect, all manner of behaviour, attitude and gesture is subject to taboo and control. The always criminal becomes more criminalized [and] the quasi-criminal becomes criminal" (pg.16). As I discuss below, this social context has serious implications for policy development.

Within Neo-liberal discourse responsibility for crime is not considered a function of systemic disadvantage, but rather, a function of individual decision making (O'Malley, 1996); this notion very much parallels the model purported by Farrington (2003). Indeed, the neo-liberal emphasis on rational, responsible and self-regulating individuals means that crime is understood and explained in terms of a calculating, free thinking offender (O'Malley, 1996). Individuals are presumed to be morally responsible and rational, and crime is understood as an inevitable set of risks that can be predicted and managed at least to some extent (O'Malley 1996). In essence, within a neoliberal framework, "...disadvantaged communities are defined as *sites of trouble not tribulation*" (Herbert, 2001:447 italics added).

Additionally, the shift toward individual responsibilitization has fostered support for programs and policies based on the regulation of behaviours and their consequences. For example, actuarial/insurance based techniques are increasingly favoured as a method of governance, especially within the criminal justice system (O'Malley, 1996). Actuarial techniques sort and classify individuals into particular categories (be they medical, criminal, financial etc.) based on differing levels of risk (O'Malley, 2010; Simon, 1988). These techniques embody and are aligned with putative and disciplinary technologies that eschew collective risk management in favour of an individual, responsibilization of risk management (O'Malley, 2010). Implicit in these techniques is the view that individuals have control over their own lives and therefore, they possess the ability to make reasoned choices and can take steps to change their behaviour (McCarthy, 2010).

To return again to Farrington's research it is important to reiterate the fact that his theory garners support for policies based on risk management which are largely aligned with the techniques discussed above.[7] More specifically, risk based policies are largely consistent with actuarial techniques as well as ideologies espousing individual reponsibilitization; this has led to an obsession with targeting and managing anti-social behaviors particularly among youth (Crawford, 2009).[8] Broader support for antisocial governance has stemmed from a growing concern among policy administrators with adult perceptions of insecurity (Crawford, 2009). Indeed, efforts to afford reassurance to members of the public by addressing social anxieties (e.g. fear of troublesome youth as described above) directly inform policy initiatives (Crawford, 2009).

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[7] Please note this is largely consistent with the notion of the risk society purported by Beck (1992); despite its relevance however, a discussion of this theory is well beyond the scope of this paper.
[8] To some extent it can be argued that Farrington's research is driven by policy concerns, rather than theoretical concerns (see for example Sampson and Laub, 2003).

According to Crawford (2009), numerous programs and interventions formulated under the rubric of 'tackling anti-social behaviour' have permeated various areas of social life including policy domains extending from, education, parenting, youth services, to, city centre management, environmental planning, social housing and traditional policing (pg.5). Anti-social policies seek to govern troublesome youth by disrupting, re-ordering and steering their futures (Crawford, 2009; McCarthy, 2010). Early and preventative interventions are adopted to directly target the "escalation of bad behavior at both an individual and community level" (Crawford, 2009: 6).

I argue that anti-social policies are problematic on a number of grounds. Firstly, as Burney (2005), explains across various organizations there is extreme variability in the meaning and measurement of antisocial behaviour as well as in the adoption of diverse interventions to address behaviour defined as such. The very definition of what exactly constitutes anti-social behaviour is rather ambiguous. In fact, the term is used to explain myriad activities, misdemeanors, incivilities and crimes (see for example Crawford, 2009). Moreover, the term is not defined any more concretely in legislation. For example, in Britain anti-social behaviour is defined in legislation as "behaviour that causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to others" (Crawford, 2009: 5).[9] This definitional ambiguity serves a practical purpose insofar as it distorts distinctions between crime and incivilities, conflates civil and criminal processes, and connects inter-disciplinary approaches ultimately, permitting a range of oppressive legislative policies (Crawford, 2009: 5; McCarthy, 2010).

Secondly, policies adopted under the guise of "antisocial behavioral regulation" are problematic given that they primarily target and criminalize marginalized groups within society. As Crawford (2009: 23) explains

> We're already paying the price for effectively demonizing and criminalizing a generation… Let's not beat about the bush, the anti-social behaviour agenda and respect agenda are not targeted at the wider community. They are targeted at particular minorities within it; young people.

In particular, research suggests that disadvantaged youth are directly targeted by these types of policies. According to Gordon (2006), provincial legislation, and municipal bylaws (for example the Safe Streets Act) have been utilized effectively to criminalize vagrancy. For example, here in Canada the Safe Streets legislation rendered squeegee kids deviant (O'Grady and Bright, 2002; Parnaby, 2003). According to Parnaby (2003), through the use of disaster rhetoric anti-squeegee claimants suggested that squeegee kids were, "indicative of rising crime rates and the overall deterioration of urban living conditions" (pg.288). As such, squeegee kids were successfully constructed as a social problem that necessitated a law and order resolution and direct police targeting. In fact, the problem garnered so much public outcry that it was ultimately, "..addressed through putative measures of social control backed by consonant legislation" (Parnaby, 2003: 283). This legislation provided Toronto officers with the authority to target and criminalize those "antisocial youth deemed to belong to the squeegee culture.

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[9] Note that this definition is highly subjective and contextual (see Crawford, 2009). For instance some people may define smoking as anti-social in nature, while others would not constitute this behaviour as such.

In another example, McCarthy (2010) examined how police utilize and enforce contractual injunctions (e.g. Antisocial Behaviour Orders [ABO's]) in the United Kingdom. McCarthy found that ABO's give police the authority to target and criminalize the behaviour of certain marginalized groups deemed problematic. In essence, ABO's were utilized as a means of criminalizing as well as enforcing compliance among the marginalized, including substance abusers, homeless, and mentally ill individuals. ABO's are enforced as a means of moderating behaviour and removing the marginalized from public spaces to areas where they are less viewable. According to McCarthy (2010), "this enables methods of banishment to conveniently bypass the complexities of socially marginal groups by removing them from the area" (Pp.905-906). In sum, this brief review of policies that seek to address antisocial behavior elucidates the potential dangers of adopting such measures. As I have highlighted throughout this paper, these policies de-contextualize the complexities surrounding the etiology of criminal and delinquent behaviour.

Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that Farrington's developmental theory is problematic. In particular, this model, which constructs crime and delinquency as a psychological manifestation of an underlying antisocial personality disorder, is reductionist insofar as it constructs crime in a narrow and largely stable manner. As such, I argue that his theory of crime is better conceptualized as a model of crime. I argue further that one way to address the shortcomings of Farrington's model is to utilize integrative theoretical perspectives that offer more nuanced and dynamic explanations and understandings of crime throughout the life course (Hagan, 1997; Kaplan, 2003; Sampson and Laub, 1993; Wikstrom and Loeber, 2000). Thus, as a means of reconceptualising Farrington's model strain theory and control theory were utilized to illuminate the importance of structural and social processes leading to crime and delinquency, and to emphasize the potential for discontinuity as well as change in criminal propensities over the life course.

In conclusion, it is imparative to recognize that theory and policy tend to legitimate and reinforce one another (Lilly et al., 2011). Indeed, as I have explicated the implications derived from Farrington's model are largely consistent with the current social context and broader political discourses surrounding prevention, intervention and control of antisocial behaviour. Among those with little desire to transform social order it is necessary to attribute sources of crime and deviance to "defective individuals" or the "failure of institutions of socialization" (Lilly et al., 2011:300). However, it is time to seriously evaluate the merit and efficacy of policies legitimated by psychological theories of crime that seek to pathologize the individual while ignoring both the propensity for change over the life course, as well as how social factors operating at both the macro-structural level and at the micro level (i.e. intimate relationships) contribute to criminal and antisocial behaviour.

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