

# **“Were You Drunk at the Time?”: The Influence of Parole Boards on Accounts and Neutralization Techniques in State Parole Hearings**

**Danielle Lavin-Loucks\***  
Valparaiso University

**Kristine Levan**  
Plymouth State University

## **ABSTRACT**

This paper examines the collaborative nature of accounts and neutralization techniques that are employed in parole hearings. Prior research using neutralization theory has largely overlooked the role of other actors in the development of neutralizations, examining them through interviews or narratives where interaction is either scripted or limited and thus has little bearing on the production of such accounts. In contrast, this study evaluates real time interaction, examining how parole board members propose, respond to, and modify neutralizations issued by inmates seeking parole. Ethnographic observations of 438 regular parole and parole revocation hearings, videotapes of 40 such hearings from the larger corpus, and interviews with a state parole board demonstrate how accounts are shaped by interactions that may influence social control decision making and criminal justice outcomes.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Individuals seeking parole have a limited amount of time in front of the parole board to build a case for early release. In one form, their appeals represent accounts (Scott & Lyman, 1968) or statements of neutralization (Sykes & Matza, 1957) that they anticipate will protect themselves from self-blame, guilt, and the blame of others. A great deal of what we know about neutralization techniques has been learned through interviews or surveys and questionnaires of active criminals, incarcerated criminals, former criminals, and other deviant groups. Yet, many neutralizations are not simple statements, but rather constructions built through interpersonal exchanges.

---

### **\*Corresponding Author**

Danielle Lavin-Loucks, Valparaiso University, Department of Sociology & Criminology, College of Arts & Sciences, Rm. 331, 1700 Chapel Drive, Valparaiso, IN 46383 USA, e-mail: [danielle.lavin-loucks@valpo.edu](mailto:danielle.lavin-loucks@valpo.edu)

Prior research has largely ignored the collaborative nature of neutralizing behavior, viewing it as either a unilateral assertion by the deviant actor prior to the commission of deviance, or, in more recent research, as a retrospectively invoked rationalization to mitigate the offense. As a result, very little is known about how neutralization techniques function interactively, especially with regard to exchanges that involve power differentials that can influence criminal justice outcomes. Indeed, according to Sykes and Matza's (1957) original conception of neutralizations, they were "justifications for deviance that are seen as valid by the delinquent but not by the legal system or society at large" (p. 666).

This paper examines accountable motives and neutralizations by inmates that exist as collaborative efforts. Even when the statements are made summarily, they exist in a context that allows for ratification, denial, or modification by another interested party, namely the parole board. Inmates routinely ascribe accounts and neutralization strategies to their behaviors as a means of diminishing personal blame during parole hearings, and in doing so, deny a need for their own rehabilitation and offer a justification for release. Parole board members also provide candidate accounts for the potential parolees. This work illustrates how parole hearings, much like the drug court proceedings analyzed by [Burns and Peyrot \(2003\)](#), take the form of negotiations.

The larger implications of this research can be partially linked to social control decision making in the criminal justice process and the continuation of deviance. Potential parolees present evidence and engage in excuse making and remedial work (Goffman, 1971), which attempts to change the meaning of their behavior, thereby convincing the board members that they are deserving of parole release. Although parole hearings in the United States are not nearly as adversarial as criminal trials in which legal representation and the provision of a defense are encouraged, some of the questions that state parole boards ask are accusatory in nature. In addition, because the board itself determines release decisions, the types of questions that parole board members ask can transform the meaning of inmates' acts. Although board members themselves espouse beliefs that support the presentation of a rehabilitated identity on the part of parole applicants, they also offer, ratify, and comment on accounting strategies. Furthermore, as Maruna and Copes (2005) proposed, parole applicants who accept these neutralizations and have them endorsed by the board may be contributing to their own long term or persistent deviance. Thus, understanding how accounts are collaboratively constructed in a context in which decisions to release offenders are made, is of particular import to the field of criminology.

## **THEORETICAL BACKDROP**

C. Wright Mills (1940) used the term "vocabulary of motive" to describe the way in which individuals recast their deviant actions in a way that is so-

cially acceptable. As opposed to an internal process, these motives are powerful because they are linguistic and possess the unique potential to influence the perceptions of others. Weber (1947) noted that motives themselves are an amalgamation of meanings understood by the actors and observers who are given the referent action and can provide a sufficient explanation for a social action in question. Individuals with a spoiled identity, stigmatized and barred from social acceptance, face challenges in reframing their identity (Goffman, 1963). When confronted by normals, those who bear no stigma, those with spoiled identities are forced to renegotiate their accountable actions. In order for an actor to be successful at overcoming a spoiled identity, the audience must honor the proposed account. This is even more apparent in parole hearings, where attempts to establish identity are overtly contested as part of the hearing process. Moreover, there is a significant amount at stake for parole petitioners. The difference in participant status in the hearing may place individuals seeking parole at a distinct disadvantage, as they vie to have their version of accounts accepted by those who hold the key to their freedom.

Building on the concept of vocabularies of motive, Scott and Lyman (1968) proposed the concept of accounts to refer to “linguistic device[s] employed whenever an action is subjected to evaluative inquiry” (p. 46). These accounts have the capacity to bridge the gap between what is expected and what actually transpires. Furthermore, according to Scott and Lyman (1968), they are situated; accounts that are offered to explain behavior are presented in an environment where they are interactionally relevant, linked to social status, and culturally rooted. When confronted or accused of an action, individual actors can deploy two types of accounts: excuses and justifications. Justifications involve a denial of the wrongness of an act, and yet responsibility is acknowledged. However, excuses involve a denial of responsibility and an acceptance of the wrongness of an act (Scott & Lyman, 1968). When faced with moral judgments, excuses and justifications attempt to salvage a spoiled identity. In all of these cases, motives can be rejected, questioned, altered, or proposed by other parties to an interaction—parties who may possess more power over the issuer of the account. Characteristics like gender and social status influence the form and content of rhetorical strategies, such that the symbol banks differ and means and methods of constructing accounts differ sharply (Hazani, 1991; Klenowski, Copes, & Mullins, 2011).

Sykes and Matza’s (1957) neutralization theory further explains how these discursive techniques provide the means to rationalize deviant behavior in such a way that limits guilt and self-blame and minimizes both negative attributions (Agnew, 1994) and stigma (Hathaway, 2004). Frequently conceived of as a psychological process, rhetorical skill and linguistic devices are used by individuals to deploy techniques of neutralization. In Sykes and Matza’s original formulation, the techniques precede the behavior itself, allowing individuals to engage in crime and deviance through the process of neutral-

ization and continue after the act concludes. That is, because deviants held conventional values and belief systems along with societal attachments, in order to engage in deviance, they needed to neutralize (Copes, 2003; Cressey, 1953). Sykes and Matza (1957) explained how deviants cognitively alter their behavior so that neither their conscience nor their self-image is damaged by their actions. In cognitive psychology, Bandura (1990) highlighted the concept of “moral disengagement” to refer to the process whereby individuals reframe conduct, reduce personal agency, ignore negative consequences, or degrade the victim to avoid self-condemnation. However, neutralizations and moral engagement appear to extend beyond internal processes and even the commission of the deviant or criminal act, especially in light of criminal justice processes that potentially solicit at least candidate explanations, if not outright neutralizations from individuals after the act.

Sykes and Matza maintained that neutralization occurred prior to deviance, allowing individuals to engage in deviance. In this context, techniques of neutralization are important because they allow individuals to drift between criminogenic and law abiding behaviors (Matza, 1964). Yet, other researchers contend that neutralization occurs more frequently after a deviant act as a retrospective rationalization (Byers, Crider, & Biggers, 1999; Fritzsche, 2002; Hirschi, 1969; Minor, 1984) with others contending that they co-occur with the deviant behavior. Notwithstanding the voluminous research in regard to neutralization theory, the testability of temporal ordering has proven problematic and remains much debated in contemporary criminology. Although this debate has important implications for understanding an individual’s entry into delinquency and crime, the timing has little impact on our analysis or interpretation because this research examines the collaborative nature of neutralization and accounts in parole hearings, which by definition occur after a crime or alleged parole violation has occurred.

Included in Sykes and Matza’s initial formulation are five neutralization techniques, including denial of the victim, denial of responsibility, denial of injury, condemnation of condemners, and appeal to higher loyalties. To neutralize their criminal misconduct, offenders make a variety of claims seeking to minimize blameworthiness; however, they may invoke multiple techniques as well. The first three techniques involve claims that sidestep the worthiness of the victim, intentionality of the act, or the harm perpetrated. In contrast, the last two techniques allow delinquents to question the character of those who judge them or identify more soundly with a distinct moral code; this eliminates the need for them to consider the wrongness of their own actions. Neutralization techniques and the perspective more generally have been applied to a wide-ranging set of deviant behaviors committed by youth and adults. Researchers have examined the use of neutralizations among violent inmates (Agnew, 1994; Presser, 2003; Presser, 2004); rapists (Scully & Marolla, 1984a; Scully & Marolla, 1984b); pedophiles (DeYoung, 1989; Long, 2011); spousal abusers (Cavanagh, Dobash, Dobash, & Lewis,

2001; Totten, 2003; Wolf-Smith & LaRossa, 1992); hit men (Levi, 1981); hate crime offenders (Byers et al., 1999); white collar criminals (Benson, 1984; Geis & Meier, 1977; Klenowski et al., 2011; Piquero, Tibbetts, & Blankenship, 2005); embezzlers (Nettler, 1974; Zeitz, 1981); legal professionals (Erez & Laster, 1999); drug users (Burns & Peyrot, 2003; Hathaway, 2004; Priest & McGrath, 1970); shoplifters (Cromwell & Thurman, 2003); poachers (Eliason & Dodder, 2001); car thieves (Hazani, 1991); cheaters (Diekhoff et al., 1996); undercover officers (Jacobs, 1993); hospital nurses (Dabney, 1995); and even pageant moms (Heltsley & Calhoun, 2003).

In the last fifty years, at least seven other neutralization techniques have been identified, including justification by comparison and postponement (Cromwell & Thurman, 2003); metaphor of the ledger (Minor, 1981); defense of necessity (Klockars, 1974); claim to entitlement, denial of necessity of the law, and the claim that everybody else is doing it (Coleman, 1994). All of these techniques of neutralization involve socially approved “vocabularies of motive” (Mills, 1940) or excuses, justifications, and accounts (Scott & Lyman, 1968) that provide rational explanations for seemingly irrational behaviors. The neutralization framework has become a staple in deviance research, garnering attention with the discovery of each new technique that actors use to mitigate blame and deny responsibility.

While the enumeration of new techniques of neutralization help specify Sykes and Matza’s original formulation, it does not explain how they function in real interaction, why they are of consequence, and how they are impacted by other factors such as setting and power. Certainly, the setting in which neutralizations are articulated also has an impact on how they are accepted, rejected, or altered and, in turn, how they influence decision making. Social control decision making, situated within the context of the criminal justice system, fundamentally alters how accounts and neutralization techniques evolve as explanations of deviant and criminal behavior, especially when that system promotes the acceptance of responsibility for individuals’ actions (Fox, 1999). It is precisely this interactive aspect of the phenomenon that this paper seeks to explore.

## DATA AND METHODS

### *Method*

The first author observed the Midwestern state’s<sup>1</sup> parole board for over six months. At the beginning and end of the study period, open-ended qualitative interviews were conducted with parole board members; 14 additional impromptu interviews were also conducted with each of the board members during the study period. These informed the analysis and provided background that may explain the behavior of the board members during the hearings. The first author observed 438 regular parole and parole revocation hearings conducted at various penal institutions throughout the state,

as well as public hearings at the local government center where individuals could speak in support or opposition of the potential parolee.

Forty videotaped hearing records were randomly selected from the initial set of 438 hearings attended for in-depth analysis because they could be transcribed and subjected to repeated analysis; they were transcribed verbatim, using a modified set of conversation analytic transcribing conventions (Jefferson, Sacks, & Schegloff, 1987). The decision to transcribe only 40 hearings was primarily a practical one because the transcription of the tapes was labor intensive. In the data, inmates and parole violators are identified by pseudonyms which were abbreviated in the speakership portion of the transcript.<sup>2</sup>

### *Sample*

Of the 40 parole hearings, 25 involved parole revocations and 15 were regular parole cases. The majority of parole revocation hearings involved technical or routine violations of parole.<sup>3</sup> Regular parole hearings centered on two types of inmates, those whose parole had been previously violated and were now eligible for discretionary release, and old code<sup>4</sup> inmates who had remain incarcerated for serious violent crimes including homicide, rape, robbery, kidnapping, or assault.

**Table 1. Offender Demographics**

	Male	Female	Total
African American	15 (37.5%)	2 (5%)	17 (42.5%)
White	22 (55%)	1 (2.5%)	23 (57.5%)
Total	37 (92.5%)	3 (7.5%)	40 (100%)

Note: No information was available on the ethnic composition of the sample of hearings.

In the data corpus, 3 of the offenders were female and 37 were male. Though the sample of female offenders was small, it is representative of the state prison population, given that female offenders accounted for only 5% of all state prison inmates nationally. Of the female offenders, 1 was White and 2 were African American; 15 of the males were African American and 22 were White. In all, 42.5% of the offenders in the sample were African American, which is slightly over-representative of the actual 39.3% African American prison population in the state where the parole board met; when compared to state prison populations on a national level, this figure is under-representative. Moreover, 30 % of the offenders in the data corpus had achieved some level of post high school/collegiate education, whether in standard educational institutions or inside the prison via correspondence courses.



*The Setting: State Parole Hearings*

At the state level, the parole system in the United States varies widely. In the state under investigation, one centralized parole board travels across the state to individual penal institutions or conducts facility hearings with inmates via videoconferencing. This is the offender's opportunity to petition the board for early release. A separate public hearing is also held to allow community members to oppose/support the release of an offender. In this Midwestern state, the parole board consists of five members, with three members representing the political affiliation of the governor.<sup>5</sup> Members of the board serve four-year terms. A simple majority vote determines release decisions. Although there are no specific release criteria, the state provides four factors for consideration in the denial of parole including the nature and circumstances of the crime; conduct while incarcerated; prior criminal history; and the best interest of society. These rationales are included on the official parole decision paperwork, where board members simply check the appropriate boxes. Frequently, board members retroactively impose the criteria by mapping them on to their decisions as a means of justifying assessments that were based on factors not included in the official directive.

Despite the high volume of cases heard by the board, discretionary parole was abolished in the state in the late 1970s. Yet, even in a state that has technically abolished parole, parole hearings matter, and for many offenders, the board itself decides when release is appropriate as opposed to mandatory release after a proportion of the sentence has been served. For every offender who violates his/her mandatory parole release, that case becomes fully discretionary and thus subject to parole board decision making. For those who violate parole, their recommitment to the institution or rerelease is dependent on the parole board. When these cases are combined with old code offenders—those sentenced prior to the abolition of parole—in the resulting population that is significant in size. Understanding the interaction that occurs within the context of parole hearings and how inmates and board members collaborate to produce accounts and ultimately influence outcomes is critical to the understanding of our justice system more broadly.

Parole hearings themselves are largely unscripted. Parole board members read case files prior to the hearing and routinely make informal notes about specific aspects of the case that deserve inquiry. However, they do not agree on a script or a line of questioning backstage, as researchers found is the case in juvenile parole revocation hearings ([Cavender & Knepper, 1992](#)). Rather, the types of questions that emerge depend on the case building strategy of the parole applicants. The hearings themselves range from mere minutes to over an hour. Each hearing opens with a reading of the initial charges, the parole violation (if it is a hearing to revoke parole), and an open-ended prompt that usually gives the parole applicant an opportunity to discuss any topics they believe are important to the case at hand. The board maintains the discretion to ask questions about any element of a parole petitioner's life

it deems relevant to their work. Unlike the hearings, which are taped, the board deliberates privately, the petitioner returns, and the board gives its decision. For most individuals who violate parole or other discretionary cases, the board members will wait twelve months to see the petitioner again for another hearing, although they may opt to see the applicant earlier if they are so inclined. For some old code offenders, the board may elect to wait five years before the next hearing.

All of the regular parole and parole revocation hearings are conducted either in the institution or via a video conferencing system. Technical violations, including failure to maintain a residence, gainful employment, and a verifiable address are among the most frequent causes for parole violation, with no new criminal charges being issued. In these situations, board members typically issue an order to appear instead of immediately bringing the parolee in to custody and remanding to the institution to await their revocation hearing. For more serious violations, especially for those offenders who have new pending charges, the parolees are rearrested and await their parole violation hearing at the institution. Parole revocation hearings are conducted separately from any criminal hearing or plea-bargaining related to a new charge; evidence that an inmate had engaged in criminal conduct, even in situations where the charges are eventually dropped, is sufficient cause for issuing a parole violation warrant and for the revocation of parole. Drug use/sales and weapons related charges are the most common offenses for the subset of inmates with new criminal charges.

### *Ethnographer's Role in the Hearing*

The first author's role in the parole hearings was minimal. Because she did not conduct interviews with the inmates themselves, they were not informed of her status as a researcher, nor was she introduced at the hearings. Parole hearings are open to the public and as a result, the parole board decided it would be better to conceal her identity. Therefore, she sat with the parole board, appearing to serve some official purpose, as inmates told their stories and sometimes directed their comments to her as if she were a board member. After spending over six months traveling to various prisons throughout the state, the first author became somewhat of a fixture with the parole board, tagging along to locations where security screeners and correctional officers routinely knew her; however, she had no input at any time during the hearings. It was in this minimal sense that the first author was a participant in the setting, although her role was more in appearance to the inmates than actual effect ([Adler & Adler, 1987](#)). Field notes were taken temporally, using a comprehensive strategy rather than limiting the observations to conduct believed to be salient (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). This strategy allowed the first author to return to the notes each evening and make additional notes and observations. The videotaping of the hearings was also minimally intrusive, since all hearings were already videotaped by the parole board as public records. Most parole applicants were familiar



with the videotaping and understood that it was required by law. The parole board, however, recycles the public record tapes, recorded on a VCR and stored in a central location, and tapes over them every three years.

### *Analytical Approach*

A grounded theory approach was used to analyze the videotaped interactions, ethnographic field notes, and in depth interviews (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The field notes offered a wealth of information on the ways in which hearings were conducted and were also invaluable in terms of analyzing what was said during the deliberation portion of the hearing, which is not taped. Ethnographic field notes also revealed core organizational features of the setting, the parole board's orientation toward certain types of offenders, and how hearings are accomplished "for all practical purposes."

Guided by the process of analytic induction, the videotaped data, which is the bulk of the data analyzed here, were examined for emerging themes and common strategies that inmates adopted throughout the hearings; close attention was paid to parole board members' contributions and responses, as well as the case outcome. Initial analysis of the transcripts focused on open coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), identifying all of the types of statements that parole petitioners made to the board, the content of the claims, and the board's reception to the claims. The resulting categories were checked against field notes to see if additional phenomena were present but not represented in the videotaped data. Following the open coding, a method of constant comparison allowed for the collapsing of many of the analytical categories into more general groupings, although still unrefined (Scott, 2004). Reflective coding or axial coding and a conditional relationship matrix helped sort the instances of parole petitioner claims and the types of questions the board asked. Using this matrix, we identified the who, what, where, when, why and how, (insofar as it appeared in the talk itself), as suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Eventually, a set of core categories emerged that clearly identified the types of strategies parole petitioners adopt to craft their appeals to the board and how the board members respond to such claims, a point which Glaser (1978) referred to as theoretical saturation. This analysis revealed patterns of talk that characterized inmates' case building attempts. Mitigating blame and denying responsibility by using excuses, justifications, and neutralizations was one of the themes identified. After identifying these strategies, the context in which these techniques emerged and how they were shaped by interaction with the parole board were also identified. These distinctions were particularly important insofar as they illuminated how parole board members themselves shaped the basis for offenders' appeals. During the final stage of the analysis, the researchers also considered the parole board's statements in open ended interviews and during the larger corpus of hearings to assess the degree to which their behavior in the hearings matched their stated preferences and confirmed larger data patterns.

## ANALYSIS

### *Candidate Neutralizations*

The most influential way that the parole boards elicit accounts that neutralize behavior is through the proposal of candidate neutralizations. In these instances, parole applicants can simply agree with these characterizations and elaborate to satisfy the parole board's typifications or theories of offense involving criminal types (Drass & Spencer, 1987; Fox, 1999). Similar to the probation officers Drass and Spencer (1987) examined, parole board officials use parole applicants' statements as evidence of whether they can succeed on parole. Drawing from their individual experiences with similar types of offenders or criminal types, the board makes assessments based on the perceived legitimacy of the applicants' neutralizations and whether that places them in a lower risk category for reoffending.

If neutralizing is predictive of an unsuccessful parole bid, then why do parole board members propose candidate neutralizations? When asked about excuses and explanations, one board member suggested a possible reason, saying, "I guess for me it does matter if drug addiction or other circumstances are really to blame for the criminal activity. It is a mitigating circumstance that deserves to be heard even if we end up not deciding in their favor." Drug and alcohol use is the most common excuse that the parole boards offered to inmates. The proposal of drug or alcohol related mitigating circumstances permits inmates to deny either partial or full responsibility for the actions that violated their parole or led to their original offense, while performing the denial of accountability in a preferred manner (Pomerantz 1984) that was sanctioned by the parole board. At the same time, problems with drugs and alcohol present parole board members with a solution to an inmate's problem, often providing a reason to add special stipulations to their continued parole if they are released or to advise completion of a drug/alcohol treatment program inside prison if they are retained. Inmates who adopt these neutralization techniques become victims whose behavior can be explained by their past experiences, their co-conspirators, and/or drugs and alcohol.

#### **Excerpt 1: IN9-1:PV Martin**

B4: Mister White, are you so addicted to marijuana that you just don't have any control of yourself?

MA: Well I know it's a sickness. Maybe I need some more help. I do need some more help with it. I'm more than willing to go back to classes. Extensive classes.

B4: We tried v o a and I don't know why it didn't work.

MA: I just need some more help.

B2: Mister White, once or twice ya know I was at a party and somebody passed me a joint. You tested positive seven times.



B2: Hm. Okay, from what I saw you've never taken any substance abuse counseling or anything while you've been here. Have you?

RI: Substance abuse?

B2: Yeah

RI: Yeah I did.

B2: You did-? You did complete substance abuse? Okay, would you be willing to do any follow up counseling and that type of thing once you go out?

RI: Oh yeah. Yeah.

B2: Okay because you obviously- it looks like you had a problem with both alcohol and marijuana. You used to be a daily user of pot too didn't you?

RI: Right.

Some inmates conversationally resist candidate neutralizations by side-stepping parole board proposals. When asked if he was drunk or on drugs, Richard indicates that he was in a bar. While this admission is aligned with the proposal of alcohol use, he avoids using the term "drunk" in his response and instead initiates an account of where the crime occurred and then how he came into contact with the police officer. His resistance prompts a parole board member to directly inquire once more about whether he was drunk. After he admits to being drunk, the same parole board member immediately moves to the topic of treatment. However, this time the inmate has already completed the program. He does indicate willingness to complete counseling, which is also aligned with the neutralized offense, yet despite this willingness, he is retained at the institution.

The adoption of a candidate neutralization requires an inmate to agree with the parole board's assessment. When the agreement is modest or unconvincing, parole board members prompt inmates to elaborate or fully accept their assessment.

### **Excerpt 3: Case IN163-1 Kirk**

B3: Were you drunk at the time or what was going on?

KI: I suppose I was. I had drunk some that day.

B3: Can you just not control yourself?

KI: I don't know. I suppose not.

B3: What can we do with you? You just don't seem to get it.

KI: I'm trying, but I just can't get a break.

In Kirk's case, the parole board again discusses the issue of control and suggests drunkenness at the time of the battery as a reason for the crime. He

reluctantly agrees, but modifies his problem to being unable to get a break—a potential allusion to the impossible circumstances faced by parolees. When asked what the parole board should do with him, Kirk has no answer. In the discussion of his parole violation, the board unanimously agrees that he just does not have what it takes to be a parole success, and they vote to give him the balance of time on his original sentence. One board member claims that he is “still blaming everyone but himself.”

In some situations, parole board members’ questions about circumstances elicit more compelling neutralizations than originally offered by the inmate or parole violator.

**Excerpt 4: IN13-1:PV Jon**

B4: What were the circumstances of that offense?

JON: Well uh I was over at my girlfriend’s house and she had some stuff over there that-

B4: She had some stuff over there?

JON: Yeah and then-

B4: And how’d they come—how’d they come into your house?

JON: Well they was looking for somebody that was staying- was supposed to been staying there.

B4: They had a- they had a

JON: They had a warrant that they-

B4: They had a warrant, okay.

JON: Yeah because somebody that was staying there.

B4: Okay.

JON: It must- they didn’t have no warrant she actually let them.

B4: Oh let them in.

JON: Yeah, let them search and saw that the person wasn’t there.

B4: And when they went there, they found the cocaine in the apartment.

JON: They found some things on me and—and they seen some substance in the ( )

B4: So you were just in the wrong place at the wrong time.

JON: Yes sir.

B4: Uh hah. That often happens.

Responding to a parole board member’s question about the circumstances of the drug offense that violated his parole, Jon explains that his girlfriend was the one who had some “stuff.” Collaboratively, they construct how it was

that the police entered his house to look for another person. A board member proposes that he was in the “wrong place at the wrong time,” which he immediately agrees with. The same parole board member then contends that this often happens, normalizing the candidate denial of responsibility that he initially provided for the inmate. In this way, the offender becomes a victim of circumstance, as opposed to the initiator of criminal activity, and worthy of release. The victim of circumstance represents a specific type of neutralization, not entirely elaborated in prior research. Moreover, it demonstrates that board members are attuned to the specific challenges faced by parolees.

Board members conversationally encourage neutralizations, although sometimes these techniques are offered in such a way that they allow the parole board to recommend a specific course of action to resolve the issue—primarily treatment. Even in instances when drugs and alcohol are not directly involved in the crime, parole board members can invoke these explanations to explain seemingly irrational behavior, effectively mitigating the inmate’s responsibility. Despite their willingness to contribute to offenders’ versions of events, all members of the parole board expressed some level of disdain for excuses or justifications. When asked about what factors influence their parole decisions, one board member remarked, “If an offender can’t even take responsibility for the crime, then he’s not ready, ya know, to be out dealin’ with reality and victimizin’ other people.” Another board member noted the inability of some offenders to admit to their crimes, saying, “In some cases the offenders can’t even acknowledge the offense,” later commenting that this was “problematic” and “evidence that the offender has not learned anything.” A third board member, a lawyer, commented that “some of these offenders come in here expecting us to hear their woes and just release them because they got caught up in the moment or were on drugs.” Later on during the study period, one of the four board members remarked in an impromptu interview, “I just cannot understand how some of these offenders think that what they do is okay. Somehow, they think it’s okay and they are trying to convince us to be on their side.” Although this explicit preference for admissions of responsibility and a disdain for excuses existed, parole board members were the ones who sometimes proposed candidate neutralizations, suggesting at least tacit approval of some accounts that minimized culpability. In other instances, parole board members acted in ways that were consistent with their statements, denying accounts that involved neutralizations and attempting to force potential parolees into accepting responsibility for their actions, which parallels Fox’s (1999) research on the acceptance of responsibility as one of the dominant paradigms in the correctional management of offenders.

Table 2 shows the outcomes of the hearings according to the case building strategy used. Clearly, the most effective means of building a case for release was claiming rehabilitation. However, neutralizing was also modestly successful, which challenges the acceptance of responsibility as the only path to release.



**Table 2. Hearing Outcome According to Case Building Strategy**

Case Building Strategy	Released/Granted	Retained/Denied	Total
Claiming Rehabilitation	9	4	13
Complaining	0	14	14
Mitigating Blame/Neutralizing	2	10	12
Total	11	28	39

N=39. One case of the original corpus of 40 hearings was excluded because the offender consistently shifted case building strategies throughout the hearing. Both parole violation and regular parole hearings are represented in the table.

Furthermore, just under half of the offenders who neutralized with the assistance of the parole board's own constructions of the crime or parole violation would reappear in front of the parole board prior to their legally scheduled time so that the board could hear their case early.

#### *Inmate & Parole Violator Initiated Neutralizations*

Frequently, individuals seeking parole invoke neutralizations without prompting. In other instances, the parole board prompts them for an explanation or mitigation of an offense. This line of questioning may engender the types of accounts that diminish individual responsibility for a crime or parole violation. However, neutralization techniques issued by inmates are generally not as well received as those proposed by other parole board members. When inmates provide neutralizations for their behavior, parole boards view the inmates as unable to accept the repercussions of their actions, which they expressly articulated a preference for during ethnographic interviews. In many instances, board members are quick to deny these accounts. In other cases, they divert talk to topics they believe are more germane to the case.

This is especially true of those who portray their identity as overwhelming positive, a technique Minor (1981) referred to as the "metaphor of the ledger." The logic behind the metaphor of the ledger is that good deeds outweigh bad deeds, so when they are added up, the deviant behavior is really more good than bad, and thus non-deviant at heart. In excerpt 5, Jeff refers to the positive side of his ledger, but then refers to "impossible circumstances," a similar account to one proposed by a board member in another hearing.

#### **Excerpt 5: IN1-1:PV Jeff**

B1: Okay, you wanna explain?

JF: I'd like tuh start back with something that I feel is pretty important. March fifteenth nineteen ninety seven, I quit smoking. I vowed to give up drugs and alcohol. I vowed to do something with my life

B1: Uh hah.

JF: I worked hard in college. I made the dean's list three times. I became shy of one semester from graduating. When I got out, I went straight to work. I also went to school. My child support is paid. I'm a law abiding citizen. I'm very clean, and I do good things for people.

B1: All that's well and good

JF: These people are—I cannot control-

B1: Mister Coleman, let's talk about this allegation okay. We don't wanna know about all you're doin' in the community.

In response to a parole board member's request for an explanation, Jeff, a parole violator, recounts all of the good deeds he has accomplished since release. Instead of explaining the violation, Jeff discusses quitting smoking, giving up drugs and alcohol and doing something with his life. He references his school performance, making the dean's list, being gainfully employed, paying his child support, and doing good things for people, rejecting the parole board's request for an explanation. In this manner, Jeff seeks to have the parole board consider the positive acts that he feels are an indication of improvement and discount his negative behaviors, but he simultaneously ignores their initial line of questioning that was related to the offense, which leads one parole board member to directly reject his assertion of good character.

When parole boards rebuff accounts, inmates are required to shift their appeal strategy and invoke other neutralization techniques. When prompted again for an explanation for his violation of a no contact order, Jeff (continued from excerpt 5) denies the act altogether.

**Excerpt 6: IN1-1:PV Jeff**

B1: Lets deal with this allegation. You had special stipulation nuh—to have no contact with Miss Kelly.

JF: Yes.

B1: And you-

JF: And at no time did I get a hold of her. No time did I ever bother her or her family.

B1: So, now where did you get this car title from then?

JF: She delivered—I have not—she has—I can't control what she does.

B1: Oh but you can.

JF: I can't.

B1: Oh but you can. If someone comes to my home, my place of business, invading my space that's like if you had a no con-

tact order from a court that says you're not supposed to have contact with somebody and if they came around you, you need to notify somebody that that's going on because YOU are under the penalty of revocation for violating. Not her.

JF: I understand that

B1: You—so I don't wanna hear about how you couldn't control that. Sounds like to me you may not have wanted to control that.

JF: That's not true.

B1: Okay.

JF: I've worked very hard to stay out of prison.

B1: Okay, so now at what other times did you have contact with Miss Kelly?

JF: I did not have contact with Miss Kelly.

B1: At what other times did she have contact with you?

JF: She has called me when—when her brother died and when her other brother had a heart attack and out of compassion I'm gunna talk to her and I realize that that's a direct violation but-

B1: It is. Enough said.

Later, Jeff denies responsibility, contending that the victim was the one who initiated contact. After one parole board member rejects this and reformulates the question about the contact, Jeff asserts that he talked with the victim out of compassion, to help her deal with a difficult time. This generates further criticism from one parole board member. In the face of evidence to the contrary, Jeff is forced to develop a new neutralization, referring to the impossibility of the circumstances. His inability to control the actions of others becomes the reason for his parole violation, and if accepted by the board, this would reduce his culpability. Jeff's ability to switch between a variety of neutralization strategies attests to the dynamic nature and context dependence of neutralization techniques. Depending on the response, Jeff attempts to tailor his appeal to the reaction of parole board members, searching for a neutralization that will minimize his blameworthiness in the eyes of the board. However, his strategy is not effective. During the deliberation, the board chastises him, and refers to him as a "con man." Upon his return, one board member tells him "I hope you brought your toothbrush," a clear signal that they would not be returning him to parole after his violation and he would be re-incarcerated.

Condemnation of the condemners is a technique that deflects attention away from the inmate and focuses instead on members of the system that are admonishing him/her. Kirk proposed a modest version of this theme in

excerpt 3, making an indirect allusion to not being able to “get a break.” However, his source of problems was vague and invokes a similar theme to the other accounts discussed earlier—the impossible circumstances of parole. Some inmates are more forthcoming about who is to blame for their problems, contending that judges, lawyers, and witnesses are at fault. For parole violators, parole officers and other administrators, even parole board members, are likely scapegoats for unsuccessful parole periods. Inequity in parole administration, unduly restrictive parole terms, inaccessible parole officers and the like are routinely cited in parole hearings as reasons for failure, all of which suggest that parole stipulations and the system itself generate failure. According to some inmates, parole officers make it difficult to comply with parole stipulations or even get treatment for drug and alcohol problems, as the following extract illustrates:

**Excerpt 7: IN3-1:PV Mark**

B3: The New Day program that’s—that’s the—that’s the inpatient treatment that’s where ya know well there are inpatient and outpatient there are a whole series of things.

MK: They told me—I—when they gave me the outpatient program I told them that’s not enough she told everybody (no), and I asked her for it and she (wouldn’t).

B1: Who?

MK: My parole officer. She said no you give—give—you’ll get what I give you.

B1: Well then why didn’t you go get into a program of your own?

MK: It was—‘cause the outpatient was not enough, it was doin’ nothin’ for—I-

B1: No, I’m just sayin’ why didn’t you go find one on your own?

B3: That’s why you went in.

MK: She told me I couldn’t, she told me I could not, she said you cannot, that’s (it). She told me you cannot go in the inpatient program. What programs we give you is what you take.

B4: Okay.

When questioned about his non-compliance with a parole board order to complete substance abuse treatment, Mark claims that his parole officer was unwilling to provide him with the resources necessary to enroll in and complete an inpatient drug program. One parole board member challenges this assertion, asking Mark why he failed to complete a program of his own. He responds by condemning the parole agent who issued his violation, claiming that she would not allow it. Initially, the parole board member interactively sought the acceptance of responsibility on the part of the parole violator, by proposing that he is the one who could have initiated another course of treat-

ment. This places him in the actor-agent role and indicates that he is responsible for his own situation. However, he shifts the blame to his parole officer, although unsuccessfully since he is retained on the parole violation.

Individuals who claim that everybody does it (Coleman, 1994; [Coleman & Ramos, 1998](#)) appeal to the normative nature of their actions. Not only are the acts in question widespread, they are very common occurrences in the eyes of the deviant. An interesting twist occurs in parole hearings, where non-criminal acts can lead to a parole violation. Tim's hearing involves a discussion of his harassment of a little girl waiting at a bus stop. Even though his parole violation technically involved public intoxication, his parole stipulations also require that he not be present at locations where children congregate. However, a local police officer had just testified in favor of retaining him at the institution because he is bothering a little girl who lives close to his home and is at risk of victimizing another child.

**Excerpt 8: IN6-1: Tim**

B1: Well what are you-

Tim: I ain't bother nobody.

B1: What are you saying to her in the morning?

Tim: I aint said nothing outta the way. All I said is hi. What's wrong with saying hi? If someone comes in, you'd say hi. What's wrong with saying hi? I didn't-

B1: But what were you calling her for?

Tim: I just waved at her, spoke.

B1: M hm.

Tim: Just like I'd say hi to you if you spoke to me. I'd say hi right back. I don't mean no harm, lady.

B4: How come you were drinkin' beer when you were not supposed to and how come you were intoxicated?

Not only does Tim justify his behavior by claiming that "everybody does it," he further rationalizes it as common courtesy, the embodiment of social norms. In his argument, not initiating a greeting would be at odds with social behavior and even provides an example of a typical hypothetical exchange by using a parole board member as the subject. His account invokes the impossible to follow stipulations of parole which appear to be at odds with normal social conduct. As Tim unwaveringly supports his action as normal, another board member interjects and focuses the discussion on the public intoxication. The parole violator later responds that he was not aware that he could not drink alcohol. Regardless of the secondary issue of intoxication, his initial proposal of the normalcy of a greeting exchange fails, and in the parole board's deliberation, it is used as evidence of his status as a parole risk.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Neutralizations are common among parole violators and regular parole applicants undergoing review in parole hearings; over 30% of the parole applicants in the videotaped hearings selected for analysis adopted neutralization strategies, which is roughly equivalent to the proportion in the larger set of 438 hearings. While this paper does not address the cognitive dimensions of why inmates neutralize, a topic for future research, it does offer insight into the manner in which parole board members contribute to the neutralizations of inmates. In some instances, these statements are offered to potential parolees as candidate neutralizations, to which they can simply offer agreement or incorporate into their account. In other instances, parole board members wield their power and directly challenge and deny offenders' accounts, forcing them to alter their strategy or reframe their strategy for building a case for release. In these instances, individuals seeking parole shift their approach and rely on other neutralization techniques, as well as non-neutralizing techniques such as making claims to rehabilitation or lodging complaints to the board.

The least successful neutralizations were those offered by inmates. In particular, when parole violators blame the circumstances of parole or life more generally, deny their responsibility, or reconstruct their role in relationship to the victim as moral or just of their own accord, parole board members react negatively. In contrast, those neutralizations initiated by board members engender a more positive response, one that emphasizes treatment or the unique circumstances of the inmate and may predict early release or at minimum early review of the case following a rejection. The parole board's candidate neutralizations focus primarily on a specific form of denial of responsibility, the impossibility of circumstances, which suggests that other neutralizations may be less acceptable in their type of social control decision making. Candidate neutralizations may embody social approved vocabularies of motive (Mills, 1940) within the context of parole hearings. Despite a more general preference for prisoners who repent and acknowledge their immorality (Fox, 1999; Ugelvik, 2012), individuals seeking parole frequently point to external forces as responsible for their actions. Moreover, parole board members themselves appear to be accepting of the impact of external forces that diminish culpability insofar as board members initiate the use of these circumstances as topics for discussion in the course of the hearing. Despite a clearly articulated preference for accepting responsibility, parole board members engage in discursive techniques that oppose their own views.

Although this type of research cannot specify whether inmates actually experienced guilt or whether their neutralizations were carefully crafted to minimize blameworthiness, it does reveal how conventionally-oriented others, such as the parole board members, influence the development of strategies to account for criminal behavior. Ironically, the use of neutralization



techniques initiated by parole violators usually solidifies their deviant label, insofar as parole boards look for acceptance of responsibility, for this responsibility is tacitly denied when neutralization techniques are employed. Despite the fact that parole board members routinely ask for any explanation or mitigation of the parole violation, the preferred answer, according to interviews with board members, is to admit fault and accept culpability for the transgression or crime. This illustrates a key tension between the rehabilitative ideal that board members espouse a preference for, and the candidate excuses they offer up to individuals petitioning for release.

If neutralizations exist as after-the-fact justifications that buffer the effects of negative attributions, their insulating effects are only experienced to the degree that parole boards buy into them and make decisions in their favor. In contrast to police, who frequently use candidate neutralizations to trick suspects into statements of culpability (Leo, 1994), parole board members proposing neutralization techniques do so in an interactive environment where they also propose resolutions such as drug or alcohol treatment. Adopting a more medical model of dealing with potential parolees, parole officials actively shape the vocabularies of motive adopted by the petitioners. This may suggest a larger awareness of the prominence of a treatment oriented, psychiatric approach in not only popular discourse, but in corrections more generally (Scully & Marolla, 1984a; Scully & Marolla, 1984b).

The purpose of this paper was to understand how parole violators and inmates use neutralization techniques as a case building strategy, and how these techniques are influenced by interaction with board members. The theoretical implications of candidate neutralizations expand some of the earlier conceptions of neutralization theory as initially presented by Sykes and Matza (1957). The collaborative nature of producing neutralizing accounts, especially in the context of a hearing where the behavior and the spoiled identity of an offender are topics of discussion, adds to this classic literature. If conventional others offer viable accounts, then the excuse-making of stigmatized individuals is more likely to be accepted as legitimate. It may also alleviate self-guilt more powerfully because it is endorsed by social control decision makers. However, it is not just candidate accounts that the parole board influences. Those which are initiated by offenders become modified in the course of the hearing as well.

In addition to illuminating the collaborative nature of neutralizing accounts, what appears to be a new subtype of neutralization and part of a potentially larger category presenting the impossibility of circumstances emerged in parole hearing discourse. Analytically, this category incorporates some elements of prior techniques such as denying the victim, condemning the condemners, and denying responsibility. However, it represents distinct conversational features insofar as it references elements of social life and the structure of parole. At a more general level, this could serve as a neutralization technique in myriad forms across different crime types and

individuals of varying social status. Notwithstanding the appeal to impossible circumstances, more generally, this paper attests to the collaborative nature of neutralization techniques. It is not sufficient to examine decontextualized neutralizations, assuming that individuals who receive the accounts accept them at face value. Rather, to understand how neutralizations protect deviant actors, it is necessary to understand how they are constructed in and through interaction. In this formulation, the context in which neutralizations are used has a profound impact on how they are shaped.

The hearing itself is a site where social control decision makers possess significant power in determining the future of parole petitioners. The tactics that offenders adopt, who are at the will of the parole board, indicate that they are responsive to the statements of board members. However, other characteristics of offenders, such as social position, matter as well. Specific rhetorical strategies are dependent on socially acceptable roles (Klenowski et al., 2011), and the resulting accounts differ in form and content by these roles. Similarly, social class and related socializing experiences have an impact on neutralizations, as Hazani (1991) demonstrated when analyzing car thieves “symbol banks” as a means of understanding differing constructions of accounts. In this case, the symbol banks of parole petitioners are shaped by the board, such that the tools they use to appeal for release are morphed in the hearing, according to board members’ statements.

Future research should address the protective quality of neutralizations proposed by others. Do these neutralizations deflect self-blame and guilt, or do they simply appease conventional others and allow them to understand the logic behind deviant behavior? How do they impact inmates? It also remains to be seen whether those who violate parole and successfully neutralize their actions will continue to rely on similar negotiations in the event of future parole violations. Similarly, if parole violators unsuccessful in their reliance on neutralizing their behavior, will they repeat similar techniques or alter their behavior and attitudes in an attempt to achieve a successful parole release?

## ENDNOTES

1. For the purposes of confidentiality, and in accordance with internal and external institutional review board policies, the name of the state has been concealed.
2. In the transcripts, B1 through B4 indicates board members one through four. Parole petitioners’ names are abbreviated first name pseudonyms, represented by the first two letters of the pseudonym name.
3. Routine violations of parole include: failure to report, change of residence, failure to maintain employment, failure to complete a treatment program, and failure to pass mandatory drug testing.

4. Old code inmates were incarcerated prior to the abolition of parole. As such, their cases are wholly discretionary. However, other inmates are also eligible for discretionary parole despite the switch to a mandatory system. An individual who violates his/her parole and returns to prison also becomes a discretionary case and falls under the discretion of the parole board.
5. Shortly after the study period began, one of the board members died suddenly. He was not replaced, so the parole board had an even number of members. If there was a split vote, one of the members was required to change their vote to avoid a tie.

## REFERENCES

- Agnew, R. (1994). The techniques of neutralization and violence. *Criminology*, 32(4), 555-580.
- Adler, P. A., & Adler, P. (1987). The past and the future of ethnography. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 16(1), 4-24.
- Bandura, Albert. (1990). Mechanisms of moral disengagement. In W. Reich (Ed.), *Origins of terrorism: Psychologies, ideologies, theologies, states of mind* (pp. 161-191). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Benson, M. L. (1984). The fall from grace: Loss of occupational status as a consequence of conviction for a white collar crime. *Criminology*, 22(4), 573-593.
- Burns, S. L., & Peyrot, M. (2003). Tough love: Nurturing and coercing responsibility and recovery in California drug courts. *Social Problems*, 50(3), 416-438.
- Byers, B., Crider, B. W., & Biggers, G. K. (1999). Bias Crime Motivation A Study of Hate Crime and Offender Neutralization Techniques Used Against the Amish. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 15(1), 78-96.
- Cavanagh, K., Dobash, R. E., Dobash, R. P., & Lewis, R. (2001). Remedial work': men's strategic responses to their violence against intimate female partners. *Sociology*, 35(3), 695-714.
- Cavender, G., & Knepper, P. (1992). Strange interlude: An analysis of juvenile parole revocation decision making. *Social Problems*, 387-399.
- Coleman, J. W. (1994). Neutralization theory: An empirical application and assessment. *Unpublished doctoral thesis, Oklahoma State University*.
- Coleman, J. W., & Ramos, L. L. (1998). Subcultures and deviant behavior in the organizational context. *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, 15, 3-34.
- Copes, H. (2003). Societal attachments, offending frequency, and techniques of neutralization. *Deviant Behavior*, 24(2), 101-127.
- Cressey, D. R. (1953). *Other people's money; A study of the social psychology of embezzlement*. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press.

- Cromwell, P., & Thurman, Q. (2003). The devil made me do it: Use of neutralizations by shoplifters. *Deviant Behavior*, 24(6), 535-550.
- Dabney, D. (1995). Neutralization and deviance in the workplace: Theft of supplies and medicines by hospital nurses. *Deviant Behavior*, 16(4), 313-331.
- DeYoung, M. (1989). World According to NAMBLA: Accounting for Deviance, *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, 16, 111-126.
- Diekhoff, G. M., LaBeff, E. E., Clark, R. E., Williams, L. E., Francis, B., & Haines, V. J. (1996). College cheating: Ten years later. *Research in Higher Education*, 37(4), 487-502.
- Drass, K. A., & Spencer, J. W. (1987). Accounting for pre-sentencing recommendations: Typologies and probation officers' theory of office. *Social Problems*, 34, 277-293.
- Eliason, S. L., & Dodder, R. A. (1999). Techniques of neutralization used by deer poachers in the western United States: a research note. *Deviant Behavior*, 20(3), 233-252.
- Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R.I. and Shaw, L.L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Erez, E., & Laster, K. (1999). Neutralizing victim reform: Legal professionals' perspectives on victims and impact statements. *Crime & Delinquency*, 45(4), 530-553.
- Fox, K. J. (1999). Reproducing criminal types. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 40(3), 435-453.
- Fritzsche, I. (2002). Account strategies for the violation of social norms: Integration and extension of sociological and social psychological typologies. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 32(4), 371-394.
- Geis, G., & Meier, R. F. (1977). *White-collar crime: Offenses in business, politics, and the professions*. New York: Macmillan
- Glaser, B. G. (1978). *Theoretical sensitivity: Advances in the methodology of grounded theory*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociological Press.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A.L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. London: Wiedenfeld and Nicholson.
- Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the Management of a Spoiled Identity*. Prentice-Hall.
- offman, E. (1971). *Relations in public: Microstudies of the social order*. New York: Basic Books.
- Hathaway, A. D. (2004). Cannabis users' informal rules for managing stigma and risk. *Deviant Behavior*, 25(6), 559-577.
- Hazani, M. (1991). Aligning vocabulary, symbols banks, and sociocultural structure. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 20(2), 179-202.
- Heltsley, M., & Calhoun, T. C. (2003). The good mother: Neutralization techniques used by pageant mothers. *Deviant Behavior*, 24(2), 81-100.

- Hirschi, T. 1969. *Causes of Delinquency*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Jacobs, B. A. (1993). Getting narced: Neutralization of undercover identity discreditation. *Deviant behavior*, 14(3), 187-208.
- Jefferson, G., Sacks, H., & Schegloff, E. A. (1987). Notes on laughter in the pursuit of intimacy. In *Talk and social organization*. (Pp. 152-205). G.J. Button and R.E. Lee (Ed.). Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters, Ltd.
- Klenowski, P., Copes, H., & Mullins, C. (2011). Gender, identity and accounts: How white collar offenders do gender when they make sense of their crimes. *Justice Quarterly*, 28, 46-69.
- Klockars, C. B. (1974). *The professional fence*. New York: Free Press.
- Leo, R. (2008). Police interrogation and social control. *Social & Legal Studies*, 3(1), 93-120.
- Levi, K. (1981). Becoming a Hit Man Neutralization in a Very Deviant Career. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 10(1), 47-63.
- Long, B. (2011). It's Not Easy Being a Child Lover: Applying Techniques of Neutralization Theory to Case Studies of Intergenerational Intimacy in the Philippines. *International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation*, 15(2), 79-84.
- Maruna, S., & Copes, H. (2005). What have we learned from five decades of neutralization research? *Crime and Justice*, 32, 221-320.
- Matza, D. (1964). *Delinquency and drift*. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons.
- Mills, C. W. (1940). Situated actions and vocabularies of motive. *American Sociological Review*, 5, 904-913.
- Minor, W. W. (1980). The neutralization of criminal offense. *Criminology*, 18(1), 103-120.
- Minor, W. W. (1981). Techniques of neutralization: A reconceptualization and empirical examination. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 18(2), 295-318.
- Minor, W. W. (1984). Neutralization as a hardening process: Considerations in the modeling of change. *Social Forces*, 62(4), 995-1019.
- Nettler, G. (1974). Embezzlement without problems. *British Journal of Criminology*, 14 (1), 70-77.
- Piquero, N. L., Tibbetts, S. G., & Blankenship, M. B. (2005). Examining the role of differential association and techniques of neutralization in explaining corporate crime. *Deviant Behavior*, 26(2), 159-188.
- Pomerantz, A. (1984). Agreeing and disagreeing with assessments: Some features of preferred/dispreferred turn shapes. In J.M. Atkinson and J.C. Heritage (Eds.), *Structures of social action: Studies in conversation analysis* (Pp. 57-101). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Presser, L. (2003). Remorse and neutralization among violent male offenders. *Justice Quarterly*, 20(4), 801-825.
- Presser, L. (2004). Violent offenders, moral selves: Constructing identities and accounts in the research interview. *Social Problems*, 51, 82-101.

- Priest, T. B., & McGrath, J. H. (1970). Techniques of neutralization: young adult marijuana smokers. *Criminology*, 8(2), 185-194.
- Scott, K. W. (2004). Relating categories in grounded theory analysis: Using a conditional relationship guide and reflective coding matrix. *The Qualitative Report*, 9(1), 113-126. Retrieved September 14, 2014 from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR9-1/wilsonscott.pdf>
- Scott, M. B., & Lyman, S. M. (1968). Accounts. *American Sociological Review*, 33(1), 46-62.
- Scully, D., & Marolla, J. (1984a). Convicted rapists' vocabulary of motive: Excuses and justifications. *Social Problems*, 31(5), 530-544.
- Scully, D., & Marolla, J. (1984b) Rape and psychiatric vocabularies of motive: Alternative perspectives. In A.W. Burgess (Ed.), *Handbook on Rape and Sexual Assault*. New York: Garland Publishing.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Sykes, G. M., & Matza, D. (1957). Techniques of neutralization: A theory of delinquency. *American Sociological Review*, 22(6), 664-670.
- Totten, M. (2003). Girlfriend abuse as a form of masculinity construction among violent, marginal male youth. *Men and Masculinities*, 6(1), 70-92.
- Ugelvik, T. (2012). Prisoners and their victims: Techniques of neutralization, techniques of the self. *Ethnography*, 13(3), 259-277.
- Weber, M. (1947). *The theory of social and economic organisations*. Free Press.
- Wolf-Smith, J. H., & LaRossa, R. (1992). After He Hits Her. *Family Relations*, 41(3), 324-29.
- Zietz, D. (1981). *Women who embezzle or defraud: A study of convicted felons*. New York: Praeger Publishers.

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

**Danielle Lavin-Loucks** is an Assistant Professor of Sociology and Criminology at Valparaiso University. She received her PhD in Sociology from Indiana University- Bloomington. Her research and teaching interests include urban education, criminological theory, the intersection of media and crime, qualitative methods, and corrections. Her research has appeared in journals such as the *American Sociological Review* and *TRAILS*, as well as edited volumes such as *Race and Racism in the United States: An Encyclopedia of the American Mosaic* and the *Encyclopedia of Social Measurement*.

**Kristine Levan** is an Associate Professor of Criminal Justice at Plymouth State University in Plymouth, NH. She received her PhD in Criminology and a Master of Science in Applied Sociology from the University of Texas at Dallas.



Her research and teaching interests include institutional corrections, violent crime, criminological theory and media, and public perceptions of crime. Her research has appeared in journals, such as *Justice Quarterly* and *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. She co-edited the book *Crime Prevention*, and authored *Prison Violence: Causes, Consequences and Solutions*.