WERE CLOWARD AND OHLIN STRAIN THEORISTS? DELINQUENCY AND OPPORTUNITY REVISITED

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Although Cloward and Ohlin are frequently seen as offering a variation of Merton's strain theory, I argue that their work is more accurately conceived as offering a fundamental critique of this paradigm—a critique rooted most firmly in the writings of the Chicago School. Cloward and Ohlin's central premise is that strain (or stress) theories are incomplete because they do not account for the content of the resulting adaptation. As a result, a second perspective—which they called "opportunity theory"—is needed to explain why persons choose one wayward path rather than another. I attempt to detail Cloward and Ohlin's reasoning, suggest reasons why the main point of their theorizing has often been missed, and discuss the significance of their perspective for formulating more adequate explanations of crime and deviance.

Twenty-five years after publication, Cloward and Ohlin's "opportunity theory" remains an integral part of the criminological literature (Cole, 1975; Wilson, 1985, p. 42; Wolfgang, 1980). Indeed, it has satisfied perhaps the most important criterion for achieving the status of a classic: Every summary of criminological theory gives it an obligatory citation, if not an extended discussion (see Davis, 1975; Empey, 1981; Johnson, 1979; Kornhauser, 1978; Liska, 1981; Pfohl, 1985; Shoemaker, 1984; Vold and Bernard, 1986). At times this attention has been critical, but Cloward and Ohlin's ideas have not died of neglect.

Even so, their work has not been fully understood; accordingly, its theoretical power has been left untapped. Claims of theoretical misin-

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terpretation are common, of course, but this case seems different. Though scholars differ on certain points, they tend to give similar accounts of Cloward and Ohlin's perspective: "Along with Cohen," the typical summary reads, "Cloward and Ohlin provided a major variant of Merton's strain theory." In light of such consistency in interpretation, there seems to be little room for asserting that opportunity theory has been misread and its implications left unexplored. After all, how could almost everyone be wrong?

On the surface they are not. Cloward and Ohlin owe a large intellectual debt to Merton and their writings clearly acknowledge this connection. Most scholars, however, have not looked beyond this debt and thus feel safe in categorizing Cloward and Ohlin as "strain theorists." Yet this label, though partially correct, has often blinded criminologists to the truly innovative side of Cloward and Ohlin's theorizing—the side borrowed not from Merton but from "Chicago School" authors such as Sutherland and Shaw and McKay.

I do not wish to fall into the trap of trying to knock down a "straw figure." Some scholars, mostly of an older generation, understood what Cloward and Ohlin were suggesting. More relevant, current theorists at times will observe that as a "subcultural" perspective, opportunity theory is a "mixed model" that draws both from Merton and from the Chicago School. Such statements, however, rarely lead scholars to a different level of analysis; they make, but miss, the point.

Thus it is paradoxical that Cloward and Ohlin are called strain theorists: This label has secured their place in theoretical discussions, but has led to a general misunderstanding of the true direction of their work. Following this line of reasoning, I will attempt to show why Cloward and Ohlin owe as much to the Chicago School as to the Durkheimian/Mertonian strain tradition, specify how they revised Merton's paradigm in a fundamental way, and suggest why their theorizing has suffered an ironic fate. I will conclude by arguing that criminologists have good reason to revisit and reconsider Cloward and Ohlin's writings.

REVISING STRAIN THEORY

In 1959, Richard Cloward published his essay introducing the concept of illegitimate means. In the first paragraphs, he made his intentions clear: "to consolidate two major sociological traditions" so as to construct a "more adequate theory of deviant behavior" (Cloward,

1959, p. 164). The two traditions, of course, were anomie theory and the Chicago School or "cultural transmission/differential association" perspective.

It is instructive to note how Cloward approached this ambitious work. In the initial part of the essay, he reviewed the contributions of Durkheim and Merton, the first two "major phases" in the development of anomie or strain theory.[1] Though interesting and useful, this account was little more than a summary of past theorizing; indeed, Cloward claimed no new interpretations of their work.

Nonetheless, this review served the necessary function of setting the stage for Cloward's attempt to show how the concept of illegitimate means could make possible a third theoretical phase. This advance, however, depended on making a critical distinction that his predecessors had not integrated into the core of their thinking. "Once processes generating differentials in pressure are identified," he stated, "there is then the question of how these pressures are resolved, or how men respond to them" (Cloward, 1959, p. 167). In short, Durkheim and Merton had addressed the structural sources of the strains that create deviant and criminal motivations, but they had left unexplained the circumstances that shape the responses to these strains.

Where could insights into this second problem be gained? Why do people adapt to strain in one way rather than another? Cloward observed that "it is a familiar sociological idea that values serve to order the choices of deviant... adaptations which develop under conditions of stress." Compare, for instance, how the value system in Jewish culture precludes alcoholic deviance, while the "cultural emphasis" of the Irish "encourages the excessive use of alcohol under conditions of strain." Merton had also illustrated this point, if only unwittingly, when he argued that class differences in socialization disposed rule-oriented middle-class citizens to "handle stress by engaging in ritualistic rather than innovating behavior." Merton had shown Cloward that "values... exercise a canalizing influence, limiting the choice of deviant adaptations for persons variously distributed throughout the social system" (all quotes above from Cloward, 1959, p. 167).

A focus on values, Cloward understood, would bring only a limited theoretical yield, but there was a rich criminological tradition—the Chicago School—that might furnish fresh insights into "how pressures are resolved." Those who wrote about "cultural transmission" and "differential association" did not see their work as solving a puzzle inherent in strain theory, namely, the choice of adaptations, but Cloward thought it could be used for this purpose.

Sutherland's (1937) life history of the "professional thief," Cloward maintained, showed that access to this criminal role was not universally available. To become a professional thief, it was not enough to be gripped by strain or even by the specific motivation to be an elite member of the underworld. Aspiring offenders were barred from professional thievery unless selected for tutelage in the technical expertise of the role and allowed to perform this role by existing thieves.

Cloward used these observations to draw four related conclusions. First, he asserted that the point of Sutherland's work should be generalized: Access was limited not only to professional thievery, but also to other criminal and deviant roles. Second, this insight shed light on an important parallel between the works of Merton and of Sutherland: Just as Merton had succeeded in identifying the concept of *legitimate* means, Sutherland had, in effect, identified the concept of *illegitimate* means. While Merton recognized that legitimate occupational roles were not universally available, Sutherland's work showed that the same was true of criminal roles. "Both systems of opportunity," Cloward (1959, p. 168) remarked, "are limited, rather than infinitely available." Third, this meant that participation in criminal or deviant roles is socially structured, not chosen freely. People under strain cannot become any kind of criminal or deviant, but are limited by the choices available to them. Fourth, just as structural location regulates access to legitimate means, so does it regulate access to the means—"learning environments" and "opportunities to discharge a role"—that are needed to engage in a given deviant adaptation. A person's class, ethnicity, gender, race, and neighborhood shape not only whether one is more likely to become a doctor or a dock worker, but also a professional thief, a racketeer, a white-collar criminal, or a mugger (1959, pp. 168, 172-173).

"The burden of these remarks," Cloward (1959, p. 168) added, "is that motivations or pressures toward deviance do not fully account for deviant behavior." Durkheim and Merton had developed a plausible, if not compelling, theory of structurally induced pressure or strain, but this was not a completely adequate explanation of deviant/criminal behavior. Again, Cloward held this view because he felt that explaining the origin of strain did not explain the resulting behavioral adaptation. A second theory—the theory of illegitimate means (or opportunity theory)—was needed to address why people variously situated in the social structure pursue one wayward path rather than another. For our purposes, it is important to note that the seeds of this second theory—Cloward's theory—were found in the writings of the Chicago School.

Sutherland was not the only scholar in this tradition who influenced Cloward's thinking. Cloward fleshed out his argument by showing the relevance of the Chicago School authors who focused on the "ecology of deviant behavior." Shaw and McKay, he observed, had provided vivid accounts of how juveniles in inner-city neighborhoods learn criminal roles from older peers. They showed, in short, that such access "depends upon stable associations with others from whom the necessary values and skills may be learned," though "they might also have pointed out that, in areas where such learning structures are unavailable, it is probably difficult for many individuals to secure access to stable criminal careers, even though motivated to do so" (1959, p. 170). Similarly, Cloward (1959, p. 172) believed that Solomon Kobrin's work was valuable in suggesting that the degree of social integration in a slum neighborhood determined the extent to which "opportunities for stable criminal role performance are more or less limited." As will be seen below, these insights laid the groundwork for Cloward's subsequent work with Lloyd Ohlin on delinquent gangs.

MERTON'S REACTION

Scholars did not have long to wait before learning of Robert K. Merton's reaction to Cloward's proposed revision of his paradigm. The editor of the *American Sociological Review* asked Merton to write a commentary on Cloward's essay. Merton accepted this invitation—according to the editor, "at short notice, and at the request of a persistent but grateful editor"—and his remarks appeared in the pages immediately following Cloward's article.

Because Cloward had been his student at Columbia and belonged to the university's social work faculty, this was not Merton's first chance to read and evaluate this article (it had been published as a chapter in Cloward's dissertation on inmates' adaptations to prison stresses). Therefore Merton's positive commentary is neither unexpected nor important beyond the legitimacy it added to Cloward's publication. The salient point—at least for my present purposes—is that Merton focused directly on the innovativeness of Cloward's ideas.

Merton (1959, p. 188) admitted that he had assumed mistakenly and "by default that access to *deviant* or *illegitimate means* for reaching a valued goal is uniformly available, irrespective of position in the social structure." Cloward, he noted, "corrects this unwitting and, it appears, untrue assumption by dealing with socially patterned differences to

learning how to perform particular kinds of deviant roles and of access to *opportunity for* carrying them out" (emphasis in original). Moreover, though he had adumbrated the concept of illegitimate means in an earlier essay written with Ashley Montagu (Merton and Montagu, 1940), the significance of this insight became apparent to him only in light of Cloward's essay:

> I can add another example of this kind of blind-spot, in which the systematic implications of a general idea are not seen even though it is used in a particular instance. Some years ago, I collaborated on a critique of Hooton's work on "the biological inferiority of criminals." We raised the question of whether we were to "assume biological determinants of the fact that there are proportionately five times as many Texas criminals [in Hooten's example] convicted of forgery and fraud as there are in the Massachusetts sample? . . . Possibly the 'glib and oily art' of stock-swindling is less a matter of bodily type than of petroliferous regions and an established pattern of promoting chimerical gushers." But this offhand allusion did not lead us to see the general concepts of learning- and opportunity-structures implied in it, concepts that, as Cloward shows, can be methodically used to help interpret variations of rates of different kinds of deviant behavior [Merton, 1959, p. 188, fn. 25].

Merton did not stop at this point, but proceeded to emphasize the broader theoretical relevance of the "illegitimate means" concept. "Pressures for deviant behavior are one thing," he stated; "actual rates of deviant behavior, quite another." Again, he showed that his writings had anticipated this principle, when he proposed that class differences in socialization influenced "vulnerability to pressure for one or another *type* of deviant behavior" (emphasis in original). Merton acknowledged quickly, however, that this material was "at best no more than a bare beginning." The next critical theoretical task was "to identify other sociological variables that intervene between structurally induced pressure for deviant behavior and actual rates of such behavior." In particular, Cloward's "concept of differential access to the illegitimate opportunity-structure should help explain differences in vulnerability to pressures for particular kinds of criminal behavior" (all quotes above from Merton, 1959, p. 188).

In short, Merton was generous not only in his general praise for Cloward's essay but also in his admission that his former student had systematized a point that Merton had made in his writings but had missed in the sense of failing to understand the idea's theoretical ramifications. Despite this admission, however, only a few subsequent

theorists came to appreciate fully the implications of Merton's commentary. In the end, most scholars noted Cloward's intellectual debt to Merton but did not perceive, as Merton did, Cloward's fundamental revision of strain theory.

OPPORTUNITY THEORY AND DELINQUENCY

Cloward's thoughts on illegitimate means were not formed in an intellectual vacuum. Merton's influence on his 1959 essay was apparent, but equally important was his growing interaction with Lloyd Ohlin, who had joined Columbia University's School of Social Work in 1957. Ohlin brought with him a broad knowledge of the Chicago tradition; moreover, he was deeply familiar with the writings of Albert Cohen, whom he had known since their days as graduate students at Indiana University.

Ohlin and Cloward's collaboration began when they designed a study of two juvenile institutions in New York. Their working hypothesis was that the kind of administrative structure (authoritarian, individual casework) in an institution would determine the type of inmate subculture. They decided to postpone this study, however, when a social service agency asked them to provide a theoretical framework and research program for a grant proposal for a youth project that NIMH had rejected with the provision that it might be revised and resubmitted. Despite this shift in attention, their conceptual discussions on inmate subcultures proved important, for these exchanges laid the foundation for their work on delinquency. Ohlin relates the development of their thinking:

> It was when we were working on the institutional data that the differential opportunity notion emerged. Cloward was especially excited by the potential explanatory power of controlled access to *illegitimate* as well as *legitimate* opportunities. . . . With encouragement from both Robert Merton and myself, [Cloward] prepared an article for a special issue of the ASR on anomie. . . . What we hit upon was simply taking the opportunity ideas that we were working on in the juvenile correctional facilities and applying them to the delinquent subculture in the community. We theorized that different kinds of delinquent subcultures would arise as a reflection of differential access to socially structured legitimate and illegitimate community opportunities for youth. Thus it was a transfer of these basic theoretical notions we were developing in the institutions, that we developed further and applied by analogy to the community [interview with Laub, 1983, p. 211; see also pp. 210-215; emphasis in original].

Most criminologists are familiar with the product of this collaboration, *Delinquency and Opportunity* (1960), but a brief review may be useful. As with Cloward's essay, their theory combined Merton's strain theory with the contributions of the Chicago School. "Cloward brought in a familiarity with anomie concepts and their applicability," Ohlin recalls. "I stressed the importance of the symbolic interactionist perspective—and Sutherland's application of it—to socialization and learning under different patterns of community organization. So the collaboration resulted in pulling together two quite different theoretical traditions in the field at the time" (interview with Laub, 1983, p. 212).

Thus they borrowed from Merton the idea that blocked opportunity generates deviant strains, and they showed that certain types of lower-class youth were especially vulnerable to this criminogenic condition (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960, pp. 77-107). From Chicago theorists such as Sutherland, Shaw and McKay, and Kobrin, they borrowed the ideas that the opportunity to enter criminal roles was limited and that certain kinds of neighborhoods permitted the evolution of certain kinds of collective subcultural responses. Slum neighborhoods varied along an "organized-disorganized" continuum, and the degree of social organization (or integration) shaped the *form* of delinquent groupings that would arise by limiting the nature of the learning environment and the chance to perform specific roles. They proposed that organized slums produced criminalistic subcultures (and by implication gang behavior), while disorganized slums produced groups that valued conflict or fighting (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960, pp. 144-186).[2]

In works reviewing criminological theory, scholars often repeat this account or one similar to it, but they seldom detail or explore the broader implications of the framework that informed Cloward and Ohlin's substantive analysis. This framework is presented in the second chapter of *Delinquency and Opportunity*, which Cloward and Ohlin titled "Questions a Theory Must Answer."

Cloward and Ohlin (1960, p. 31) noted that they were "interested in knowing why delinquent subcultures arise in certain locations in the social structure." To address this issue, however, two central questions had to be answered.[3] First, "to what problems of adjustment might this pattern be a response? Under what conditions will persons experience strains and tensions that lead to delinquent subcultures?" (p. 32). Cloward and Ohlin believed that Merton's paradigm was the key to understanding this question. "We contend . . . that widespread tendencies toward delinquent practices in the lower class are modes of adaptation to structured strains. . . . Discrepancies between aspirations

and legitimate avenues thus produce intense pressures for the use of illegitimate alternatives" (pp. 105, 106).

Second, "why is a particular mode of delinquency selected rather than others? Several delinquent adaptations are conceivably available in any given situation; what, then, are the determinants of the process of selection?" (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960, p. 32). Because Merton had advanced a strain theory, Cloward and Ohlin understood that his paradigm could not provide insight into this question. "To account for the development of pressures toward deviance," they cautioned, "does not sufficiently explain why these pressures result in one deviant solution rather than another" (1960, p. 34). After all, why do people under strain "*necessarily* become delinquent rather than, say, suicidal?" (1960, p. 35; emphasis in original).

In short, Cloward and Ohlin suggested that an adequate theory of delinquent subcultures—or of deviant behaviors in general, for that matter—had to explain not only the origins of deviant or criminal pressures but also the particular adaptations made by people variously located in the social structure. The failure to make this distinction was pervasive and, according to Cloward and Ohlin (1960, p. 34), resulted in "perhaps the largest area of conceptual confusion in the literature on delinquency." However, though Cloward and Ohlin showed how their theory of illegitimate opportunity (means) provided a framework for resolving this confusion, the criminological community was not moved to elaborate systematically on these insights.

MISSING THE POINT

Few ideas are missed; most are either used partially, resurrected at a later time, or developed independently. Therefore it would be misleading to claim that scholars have missed entirely the point of Cloward and Ohlin's work. The salient issue is the level of understanding that has been achieved.

As noted above, several scholars have shown a clear awareness of Cloward and Ohlin's general theoretical principle. Cohen (1966, pp. 108-109), for example, observes that although Merton had a "good deal to say on the sources of strain," he furnished little insight on "the determinants of this or that response." Cloward and Ohlin's "concept of illegitimate opportunity," however, was "an attempt to remedy this deficiency."

Despite the clarity of this statement and others like it (DeLamater, 1968, p. 44; Phillips, 1979, p. 1170; Rose, 1982, pp. 244-247; Steffens-

meier, 1983, p. 1170; Stein and Martin, 1962, p. 57), most criminologists focus on how Cloward and Ohlin applied Merton's paradigm to delinquency, and not on their fundamental criticism of his theory. Cloward and Ohlin thus are reduced to "strain theorists" (Briar and Piliavin, 1965, p. 32; Gould, 1969, pp. 10-11; Gibbons, 1971, p. 269), and tests of their work involve little more than assessing whether a disjunction between aspirations and perceived opportunity ("expectations") propels juveniles to violate the law (Eve, 1978; Hirschi, 1969; Johnson, 1979; Quicker, 1974; Segrave and Hastad, 1985).[4] Even among those who discuss the subcultural variations identified by Cloward and Ohlin, the concern is more substantive than theoretical; that is, they ask whether different subcultures exist rather than asking whether the broader theory of illegitimate means might expand our theoretical horizons (Bernard, 1984, p. 368; Gibbons, 1979, p. 107; Kornhauser, 1978, pp. 154-162).

Another development, however, has taken place since the publication of *Delinquency and Opportunity*: A number of scholars have provided substantive analyses of how the illegitimate opportunity structure shapes deviant adaptations to strain. The examples are plentiful: Ianni's (1974) study of the increasing access of blacks to the "Mafia," Humphreys's (1975) analysis of the "styles of adaptation" that tearoom participants make to "deviant pressures," Phillips's (1979) work on factors influencing the choice of suicide, Glassner and Berg's (1980) research on how Jewish culture constrains involvement in alcoholic deviance, Colvin's (1982) investigation of the forces that structure the form of inmate insurgency, and the growing literature on how gender conditions responses to strain (Adler, 1975; Dohrenwend and Dohrenwend, 1976).

These writings have contributed to an understanding of how the social structure regulates involvement in various types of deviance or crime, but they are marked by two limitations. On the one hand, some of these authors do not see the relationship of their work to the framework articulated by Cloward and Ohlin. On the other hand, even among those who cite Cloward and Ohlin, few see how their particular topic relates to the conclusions reached by scholars (such as those mentioned above) who have focused on other forms of deviance. As a result, these studies remain independent illustrations of opportunity theory and do not sensitize readers to the perspective's more general principles.

Cloward and Ohlin, I believe, share this evaluation of the status of opportunity theory. Writing with Frances Piven in 1979, Cloward reiterated that the idea that social context, not stress, "determines the

form of deviation" has "virtually escaped recognition" and has "not generally been understood" (Cloward and Piven, 1979, pp. 654-655; see also Cloward and Piven et al., 1977). Ohlin echoes these sentiments. In an interview with John Laub in 1979, he stated that there "are aspects of the theory that have not been fully exploited." One of these aspects, Ohlin noted, is the "need to theorize and research further on the way in which operating criteria get established and applied to admit or deny access to legitimate and illegitimate opportunities to differentially situated groups" (Laub, 1983, p. 213).

Why, then, have most students of crime and deviance missed the central message of Cloward and Ohlin's theorizing? Why have they often failed to grasp that the illegitimate opportunity structure, not strain, regulates the content or form of deviant adaptations? Several factors, taken together, furnish a plausible answer to this question.

Problems of Stating the Theory

Cloward and Ohlin must accept some of the blame for the misreading their work has received. Although their critique of strain theory is explicit—as the material quoted above suggests—their statement of opportunity theory suffers from three limitations.

First, after writing *Delinquency and Opportunity*, Cloward and Ohlin became involved in applying their theory to delinquency prevention in the Mobilization for Youth (MFY) project on New York City's Lower East Side. Ohlin, however, soon left for Washington, first to take a position at HEW and then to serve on the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice (interview in Laub, 1983, pp. 213-214). Eventually, he joined the law faculty at Harvard and focused much of his work on criminal justice reform (Miller and Ohlin, 1985; Miller, Ohlin, and Coates, 1977). Meanwhile, Cloward's experiences on the MFY project moved him to consider the politics of community change and social welfare. With Frances Piven, he subsequently devoted much of his career to these issues (Piven and Cloward, 1971, 1977, 1982).

Both Ohlin and Cloward have made significant scholarly contributions, but by taking divergent career paths they forfeited the chance to clarify their criminological theory and to apply it to a broader range of wayward behaviors. Cloward returned to the ideas in the 1970s, but with the exception of an article analyzing female deviance (Cloward and Piven, 1979) and an unpublished government report (Cloward and Piven et al., 1977), he applied them to collective forms of protest and

insurgency (Piven and Cloward, 1977), an area not often addressed by criminologists. As a result, the narrow readings and misinterpretations of *Delinquency and Opportunity* have gone largely unchallenged.

Second, Cloward and Ohlin could have broadened their original statement of opportunity theory. Their theoretical task was demanding in itself, and it would be unfair to quarrel with their substantive focus. But the subsequent understanding of their work might have been greater if they had provided a more detailed analysis of how their underlying framework applied to *all* strain theories and to the choice of *all* deviant or criminal adaptations. Although the point is made, particularly in Cloward's 1959 essay, it is overwhelmed by the focus on Merton's version of strain theory and on delinquent adaptations. Thus their phrasing of the issue created the risk that the more general principles of their theory would be missed and that their work would be seen as offering no more than a strain theory of delinquent subcultures.

Cloward and Ohlin could have noted that previous theorists had anticipated, even if only partially and unwittingly, their thesis that stress states do not account for the content of the resulting adaptation and that nonstress variables channel actors along one or another deviant path (see Cullen, 1984, pp. 15-38). They could have pointed to Henry and Short's (1954) analysis of the circumstances in which frustration leads either to suicide or to homicide. Because Durkheim (1951, p. 357) also addressed the selection of suicide or homicide, Cloward and Ohlin (1960, pp. 78-82) might have discussed more than his views on the origins of "anomic" stresses in modern industrial societies. Readers might have been intrigued to learn that Durkheim (1951, p. 342) had discussed how gender shaped involvement in different types of murder (women, he noted, committed "feminine forms of murder"); or to read Durkheim's (1951, pp. 291-292) comment that "the social causes on which suicides in general depend . . . *differ from those which determine the way* they are committed" (emphasis mine).

Other possibilities abound. In the area of crime, for example, Cloward and Ohlin could have shown the relevance of the insights of Willem Bonger (1969, p. 16), who commented in 1916 that the "kind of economic crime" a person commits "depends principally upon chance (occupation, etc.)." Lottier's (1942) "tension theory" of embezzlement might also have been relevant. Although tension can lead to "many forms of theft, most homicides, rapes and other assaults," observed Lottier (1942, pp. 842, 843), embezzlement will occur only if the person is situated in "a particular position in the division of labor which allows [this] possibility" and lacks "subjectively available alternatives."

Further, Cloward and Ohlin (1960, pp. 48-53) could have presented a different critique of Cohen's and Parsons's work on "masculine identification" and delinquency. Cloward and Ohlin were largely correct in asserting that "nothing in the masculinity-crisis theory helps us to specify the intervening variables that determine the outcome of generalized pressures resulting from this problem of adjustment"; but a more generous reading of Cohen's and of Parsons's writings might have added force to their statement of opportunity theory. They could have cited Cohen's direct statement of the principle that social context shapes adaptations to strain. As Cohen (1955, p. 55) wrote:

> Neither sociologists nor psychiatrists, however, have been sufficiently diligent in exploring the role of the social structure and immediate social milieu in determining the creation and selection of solutions. A way of acting is never completely explained by describing, however convincingly, the problems of adjustment to which it is a response, as long as there are conceivable alternative responses. Different individuals do deal differently with the same or similar problems and these differences must likewise be accounted for.

Similarly, Cloward and Ohlin (1960, pp. 49-50) noted Parsons's proposal that masculine identification problems in the nuclear family resulted in juvenile aggression. Yet this was not Parsons's only point; he also maintained that this stressful condition was so endemic to Western societies that it could precipitate many forms of aggression. Therefore the critical theoretical task was to delineate the "forces which channel or oppose" aggressive tendencies; that is, to study the "social structuring of aggression in Western society, rather taking for granted that there is an adequate reservoir to motivate the familiar types of aggressive behavior" (Parsons, 1947, p. 167).[5]

The third source of confusion in Cloward and Ohlin's theoretical statement, I believe, is their use of the term *opportunity*. As will be suggested, I suspect that juxtaposing the concepts of "delinquency" and "opportunity" contributed greatly to the vitality of their book, but it also seems to have obscured the book's central message.

Many scholars give the term *opportunity* a narrow reading, seeing it as a single variable (thus the tendency to include "perceived opportunity" as one variable in a regression equation). For Cloward and Ohlin, however, the concept of "opportunity" or "means" referred to the various values, skills, and structural opportunities that allowed social roles to be learned and performed (Cloward, 1959, p. 168; Cloward and Ohlin, 1960, pp. 144-160). Not one but many variables shaped the

possible responses to strain. Thus Cloward and Ohlin (1960, p. 43) contended that "some variables help us to explain why predispositions to deviate from accepted norms arise; other *variables* tell us why delinquent rather than other types of deviance are selected" (emphasis mine). Merton (1959, p. 188), too, understood this point: "Cloward shows . . . [it] is necessary to identify other sociological *variables* that intervene between structurally induced pressure for deviant behavior and actual rates of such behavior" (emphasis mine).

It is instructive that Cloward and Piven's (1979) investigation of female deviance abandons the formal language of opportunity theory. Although they still embrace the underlying framework used in *Delinquency and Opportunity* (1979, pp. 654-655), they note how specific variables such as social ideology, sex-appropriate norms, and the structural distribution of resources "work to limit and define the repertoire of deviant possibilities" available to women (1979, pp. 665-660). This approach may prove more fruitful in illuminating the kinds of analyses that Cloward and Ohlin's earlier version of "opportunity theory" was meant to encourage (see also Cullen, 1984, pp. 162-166).

In sum, Cloward and Ohlin's theoretical framework might have been understood more fully if they had continued to work together, had placed their book within a broader theoretical tradition, and had used different terminology. This assessment, however, is not meant to imply that the statement of opportunity theory is the main reason why scholars have often missed the point of their framework. As the material cited in this article indicates, Cloward and Ohlin distinguished carefully the "questions a theory must answer" and explained how illegitimate opportunity structures shape deviant adaptations. Furthermore, as noted, some scholars have interpreted Cloward and Ohlin's writings accurately. Taken together, these observations suggest that other factors—circumstances beyond the authors' control—have also operated to obscure the full implications of their theory.

Throwing the Baby Out with the Bathwater

I have argued that Cloward and Ohlin's work is less a strain theory than a theory explaining how responses to strain are socially structured. In this light, they believed that the major contribution of *Delinquency and Opportunity* was its analysis of how neighborhood social organization regulates the emergence of and participation in various kinds of delinquent subcultures. Ironically, however, this innovative illustration

of the underlying principle that deviant/criminal adaptations are structured may have had the unanticipated consequence of causing the principle to be missed.

Cloward and Ohlin claimed that delinquent subcultures were differentiated into three types: criminal, conflict, and retreatist. Subsequent empirical analyses have challenged whether subcultures are so specialized; it appears, instead, as Empey (1981, p. 215) observes, that "they fit the pattern suggested by Cohen in which offenders engage in a garden variety of activities—everything from status offenses to serious crimes" (see also Bernard, 1984, p. 368; Short and Strodtbeck, 1965; Gibbons, 1979, p. 107).

What should be concluded from this empirical assessment? One option is to admit that Cloward and Ohlin's *substantive* analysis was incorrect, but not their underlying theoretical framework. More often, however, scholars are led elsewhere. They believe that the failure to validate subcultural differentiation means that Cloward and Ohlin's "typology" should be "discarded," and can be done so "without damage to the overall theory" (Vold and Bernard, 1986, p. 200).

In short, we have a case in which the baby is thrown out with the bathwater: Problems with the substantive analysis are generalized unwittingly to the underlying framework. Two consequences follow. First, no attempt is made to explore how the concept of illegitimate opportunity structures might be employed usefully to understand the selection of forms of deviance or crime that, unlike the proposed subcultures, do exist. Second, when Cloward and Ohlin's work on subcultures is discarded, nothing remains but their interpretation of how Merton's work can be applied to serious delinquents. In other words, Cloward and Ohlin are reduced to strain theorists and the larger implications of their framework are missed.

Thinking Differently About Crime and Deviance

The strain emanating from blocked aspirations has been linked to nearly every major form of deviant behavior, from crime, delinquency, and drug use to alcoholism, mental illness, suicide, and political insurgency (see Clinard, 1964; Cloward and Piven et al., 1977). For most scholars, this claim would not evoke much dispute but neither would it inspire further thought. For Cloward and Ohlin, however, this observation held considerable theoretical weight. If structurally induced strain could precipitate multiple forms of deviance, they reasoned, it could not

determine when any one response would occur. Therefore the remaining theoretical task was to specify the circumstances—which they called "illegitimate opportunities"—that channeled people under strain in one direction rather than another. More recently, Cloward and Piven (1979, p. 654) have phrased the issue in this way:

> Stress ought to be understood as *indeterminate*, as a generalizing condition in which any of various rule-violating behaviors may potentially result. In turn, it is features of social context which determine the forms of deviation [emphasis mine].

Why have so many scholars missed this point, much less applied it in their own research? The comments made above provide another clue: In effect, Cloward and Ohlin were asking theorists to *reverse* the way in which they typically thought about crime and deviance. The logic in Cloward and Ohlin's framework suggests that theorists first identify the conditions creating strain, then specify the possible adaptations, and finally explore the conditions that regulate when any given form of deviance or crime will occur. By contrast, most analysts first select *one* form of deviance to study and then proceed to identify the stressful condition producing this behavior (Durkheim is the classic example).[6] This approach assumes that the relationship between the socially induced strain and the adaptation is *determinate* or "etiologically specific" (Cassell, 1975) *rather than indeterminate.* Accordingly, the possibility that the strain could lead to more than one form of deviation is not even considered; thus the need to explore how "illegitimate opportunity variables" structure choices between deviant or criminal alternatives remains latent.

In short, if theorists are to grasp fully Cloward and Ohlin's framework, they must begin to think very differently about how to study their subject matter. Some scholars have been able to make this theoretical leap, but many others, I suspect, found the leap too difficult. As remarks by Cassell (1975, p. 358) make clear, such scholars would have had to surrender a mode of analysis so powerful and pervasive that it guides the thinking of scholars in a variety of disciplines:

> Stated in its most general terms, the formulation subscribed to (often implicitly) by most epidemiologists and social scientists working in this field is that the relationship between a stressor and disease outcome will be similar to the relationship between a microorganism and the disease outcome. In other words, the psychosocial process under investigation is envisaged as a stressor capable of having a *direct* pathogenic effect

> analogous to that of a physico-chemical or microbiological environmental disease agent. The corollaries of such a formulation are that there will be *etiological specificity*, each stressor leading to a specific stress disease, and there will be a *dose response relationship*, the greater the stressor the more likelihood of the disease. There is serious doubt as to the utility or appropriateness of either of these notions [emphasis mine].

Opportunity Theory in Context

As Cole's (1975) citational study indicates, Merton's strain theory—and the perspectives associated with it, such as those of Cohen (1955) and Cloward and Ohlin (1960)—emerged as the dominant paradigm of crime and deviance in the late 1950s. The general paradigm occupied this position until the early 1970s, when its influence diminished—though it remained, in Cole's (1975, p. 201) words, a "very important theory." The rise and relative decline of anomic strain theory, however, seem largely unrelated to its empirical status. Thus Clinard (1964, p. 55) observed that the paradigm reflected "the common tendency in sociology to accept intriguing and well formulated theories in advance of adequate empirical evidence"; alternatively, Cole (1975, p. 212) contended that "we could not say there is enough negative empirical evidence to discard the theory . . . the acceptance and rejection of a theory is not primarily dependent on empirical evidence."

What, then, accounted for the dominance of anomic strain theory in the 1960s? One plausible line of reasoning is that the theory interacted favorably with the prevailing social context. As the decade progressed, there was increasing concern about "denial of equal opportunity," and notions about the "great society" were put forth. In this climate, the attractiveness of Merton's paradigm becomes apparent.

Consistent with the times, Merton's theory showed the perils of blocking people from a fair chance at achieving the "American dream," namely, widespread crime and deviance among the less advantaged. As a "cautious rebel" (Taylor, Walton, and Young, 1973, p. 101), however, Merton did not push his point too far, but remained instead within the bounds defined by a liberal ideology. Although he elucidated a core contradiction of capitalism (Gouldner, 1973, pp. x-xi), he neither urged fellow sociologists to embrace Marx nor issued a call for radical social action. As Pfohl (1985, p. 228) observes, this choice contributed much to the popularity of his strain theory:

> Merton's theory of social structure and anomie . . . excited both the sociological imagination and that of the bureaucratic welfare reformer. . . .

> It could be viewed as critical of certain elements in the existing social structure without being read as critical of the system as a whole. . . . As Randall Collins suggests, "the great American creed of social mobility occupies the center of the stage, and lack of mobility opportunities (not the more fundamental structure of inequalities of distribution) is the villain of this structural drama." It was this quality more than any other that may have enhanced the marketability of the anomie perspective during the 1950s.

Cole (1975, p. 213) notes that Merton's paradigm also succeeded in fulfilling a "major latent function" essential to a theory's growth: providing "puzzles for scientists to work on . . . most scientists use theory to formulate their research problems and interpret their results. One functional requirement of a theory is that it must be useful to these tasks." Indeed, Merton's framework gave many scholars ample opportunity to make their careers. The puzzles are not difficult to identify: What deviations does the theory explain best (Clinard, 1964)? Are crime rates really higher in the lower class (Cole, 1975, p. 213)? Do blocked aspirations really result in delinquency (Hirschi, 1969)?

My purpose here is not to furnish a complete sociology of Merton's deviance paradigm but to provide a backdrop for understanding the selective treatment Cloward and Ohlin's work has received. My thesis is that scholars focused most completely on those aspects of *Delinquency and Opportunity* that paralleled Merton's concerns and meshed in turn with the social context, providing puzzles that could be addressed easily and fruitfully: that is, the part of the book linking strain to delinquency.

Thus the prevailing ideological concern in the 1960s was with denial of legitimate, not illegitimate, opportunity. In this context, the concept of "illegitimate means" might have struck some scholars as an interesting twist, but wasn't it peripheral to solving the problems of delinquency? After all, the key theoretical issue was elucidating the root cause of juvenile waywardness, namely, the strain induced when aspiring youths are closed off from legitimate means. In turn, the key policy issue was to attack this root cause by providing disadvantaged youth with equal opportunities: better schooling, better job training, access to jobs. By contrast, accounting for subcultural differentiation seemed of secondary significance.

As a result, the main puzzle suggested to most scholars by Cloward and Ohlin's work was not to determine how the illegitimate opportunity structure influences choices of adaptation: juvenile delinquency, for example, rather than suicide. Instead the dominant empirical question was whether frustrated aspirations were powerful enough to push juveniles to the other side of the law (see Pfohl, 1985, pp. 229-230). A few

researchers, as noted, did explore urban neighborhoods in search of criminal, conflict, and retreatist subcultures, but their forays produced mixed results at best (Short and Strodtbeck, 1965; Spergel, 1964). Most other scholars preferred to distribute surveys that measured aspirations and perceived opportunity among high school students, and then to report whether their data supported "Cloward and Ohlin's strain theory of delinquency."

The Social Construction of Opportunity Theory

Thus far I have identified several circumstances that contributed to scholars' proclivity to miss the principal point of *Delinquency and Opportunity*. The newer generation of criminologists has an added burden: They do not read the book with a clean slate but with preconceived notions of where Cloward and Ohlin "fit."

Sociological theories of crime and deviance are packaged neatly—strain, cultural deviance/Chicago School, control, labeling/societal reaction, radical. Some variations exist, but most texts use this terminology and set aside a chapter for each theory. Such consensus is valuable to the extent that it allows for similar conceptualizations and thus for empirical tests of competing theories, but it also exacts a cost: This social construction of theoretical categories imposes a reality that defines how theorists such as Cloward and Ohlin should be categorized. If the original research is read at all, it is read with blinders.

If these comments have validity, it is likely that the standard (and, I would argue, misleading) account of Cloward and Ohlin's framework has gained increasing legitimacy; transmitted knowledge has thus reified their work in ways that do not allow its full potential to be realized. In this light, it seems important to discuss why a different interpretation of "opportunity theory" is necessary, and to consider why it is important for theorists to reread and reconsider *Delinquency and Opportunity*.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

I have argued that although it is one of the most cited and discussed theories of crime and deviance, Cloward and Ohlin's "opportunity theory" has been interpreted widely in a way that misses, partially or fully, its fundamental critique of Merton's strain theory. For those interested in the social history of criminological theory, this situation

and my attempt to account for its origins might prove interesting; but does the treatment of Cloward and Ohlin's writings have any relevance for theorizing today? Is my discussion only a curious story, which in the end is really much ado about nothing?

Obviously, I believe that Cloward and Ohlin's insights are better conceived as much ado about something—indeed, about something important. My conviction is based on the observation that strain theory remains an important explanation of crime and deviance. Although it no longer dominates the field as it did in the 1960s, Merton's paradigm (as noted) is invariably discussed in theory texts, and still receives empirical and theoretical attention in academic journals (Bernard, 1984; Segrave and Hastad, 1985). Further, there has been a rapid growth in research linking "stress"—a synonym for "strain" in this literature—to deviant outcomes (see House, 1981). Most of this research has analyzed how social conditions such as stressful life events and role-related work problems (e.g., ambiguity, conflict) precipitate negative mental health outcomes, but it seems only a matter of time before the cross-fertilization of ideas will cause these models to be applied to criminal behaviors.[7]

The critical question is whether Cloward and Ohlin's framework can help to improve the quality of strain theorizing both within and outside Merton's paradigm.[8] The value of their opportunity theory is that it questions two related assumptions that continue to characterize most strain or stress explanations. The first assumption—that of "etiological specificity" or "determinacy," which is usually made implicitly or perhaps for heuristic reasons—is that strain leads ineluctably to the form of crime or deviance being studied. According to the second assumption, which is more explicit, a "dose relationship" exists between strain and the deviant/criminal form: The greater the "dose" of strain, the higher the rate of the adaptation (see Cassell, 1975).

Cloward and Ohlin challenged this mode of analysis. They observed that because scholars have shown that any given strain state (e.g., frustrated aspirations) can lead to a range of responses, the relationship between strain and any one form of deviance or crime is indeterminate, not etiologically specific or determinate; hence the need for a theory of intervening variables—opportunity theory—that explains why people pursue one wayward path and not another. This line of reasoning, in turn, undermines the assumption of a dose relationship. The rate of any particular form of deviance or crime is the result not only of strain but of two factors: the level of strain *and* the extent to which this adaptation is available to people located at various points in the social structure

(Cloward, 1959, p. 174; Cohen and Felson, 1979; Cook, 1986). By not recognizing this distinction, scholars risk confounding the effects of these two kinds of variables and erroneously attributing all variations in rates of deviant or criminal forms to variations in exposure to stress (Cloward and Piven et al., 1977).[9]

A brief illustration of this point is in order. Gove and Tudor (1973) have offered an important explanation of gender differences in rates of mental illness. Their empirical investigation led them to conclude that females, particularly married women, manifest greater mental symptomatology. What accounts for this patterned difference in emotional problems? Gove and Tudor's thesis is that women suffer greater amount of role stress. After all, housewives have fewer "sources of gratification"; "raising children and keeping house" is "frustrating"; the "unstructured and invisible" status of housewives allows them to "brood over their troubles," and their "distress may feed upon itself"; women who work outside the house must also do household chores and thus are "under greater strain than their husbands"; women's futures are often tied to that of their husbands, and this "uncertainty and lack of control" is "frustrating." At the core of this analysis, Gove and Tudor add, "is the assumption that stress may lead to mental illness" (1973, pp. 814-816).

Further verification for this reasoning comes from suicide data. Although "not a form of mental illness," suicide is relevant because it "reflects a high degree of distress." Because men have higher suicide rates, Gove and Tudor note, this fact "might be taken as suggesting that more men are distressed." But this apparent difficulty disappears and their theory remains intact when it is realized that though men *complete* more suicides, women *attempt* many more suicides. This finding thus reinforces their premise that "women are more distressed than men" (1973, p. 827).

So far, so good; or is it? Gove and Tudor's insight on suicide suggests that we extend their theory to other deviant forms. Take, for example, alcohol-related deviance and criminality. Following Gove and Tudor's logic, we note first that males have higher rates of alcohol abuse/addiction and of crime. The next step in the reasoning is inescapable, and reverses Gove and Tudor's prediction: because males have higher rates of the deviant forms being studied, they must be under *more stress (or strain) than females.* This is precisely the contention of the many theorists who have applied strain theory to juvenile delinquency.

The issue becomes even more complicated when we realize that males have higher rates of certain forms of mental illness (personality disorders) and women have higher rates of other forms (neurosis,

manic-depressive symptomatology). This finding indicates, as Dohrenwend and Dohrenwend caution, that gender differences in mental illness "cannot easily be explained by role theories arguing that at some time and place one or the other sex is under greater stress and, hence, more prone to psychiatric disorder in general." Instead, "the important question is, What is there in the endowments and experiences of men and women that pushes them in these different deviant directions?" (1976, p. 1453; see Smart, 1977, p. 166).

These observations reveal the fallacy of attributing differing rates of crime or deviance directly to different "dosages" of strain that women and men (or any other status groups) may experience. Thus, depending on which type of deviance or crime a scholar chooses to study (such as depressive disorders or gang delinquency) and which gender manifests a higher rate of involvement, two strain theorists would reach opposite conclusions regarding which gender is exposed to more socially induced strain. They would give little thought to the possibility that "opportunity variables," not levels of strain, may account in large part for the higher involvement of women in certain deviant or criminal forms and men in others.

A number of scholars studying female crime and deviance have avoided the fallacious approach of a pure strain theory. They recognize that sex status not only exposes women to certain levels of strain or other wayward motivations, but also constrains the adaptations women can make. These commentators have described how gender socialization and sex-specific structural opportunities push women into adaptations that are "an extension of the female role" (Smart, 1977, p. 10). Thus they attribute high rates of female shoplifting not to excessive strain, but to the fact that this adaptation is "role expressive" and that women are barred from many other illegal options (Smart, 1977; Rosenblum, 1977; Steffensmeier, 1983; Weis, 1976). Similarly, they attribute the (allegedly) growing involvement of women in traditionally "male" criminal acts (e.g., violence, felony thefts) not to increases in the stress that women are feeling—as do Gove and Tudor (1973, pp. 816, 828) in the case of mental illness—but to changing experiences and opportunities that give females access to adaptations from which they were previously excluded (Adler, 1975, p. 30; Steffensmeier, 1980).

In sum, Cloward and Ohlin's opportunity theory corrects potentially erroneous assumptions that lie at the core of traditional strain theories. As a result, it may allow for more complete explanations of crime and deviance, and may open the way for empirical research that expands our understanding of the distribution of various forms of crime and

deviance throughout the social structure (see Cohen and Felson, 1979; Cook, 1987).[10]

CONCLUSION

I would like to end by returning to the question informing this article: Were Cloward and Ohlin strain theorists? In a sense, they were; they embraced Merton's proposition that frustrated aspiration was the major criminogenic force burdening American society, particularly that segment mired in urban slums. Moreover, their framework was devised primarily as a way of revising Merton's strain theory.

But having admitted this much, I would caution that the real value of their writings has often been missed because scholars—for one reason or another—have reduced their work to little more than a variation of Merton's paradigm of structurally induced strain. This interpretation has obscured the fact that their "illegitimate opportunity theory" was drawn far more from the Chicago School than from Merton's structuralism. More important, it has led many criminologists and deviance theorists to assume that Cloward and Ohlin's writings are primarily of historical interest and contain few valuable insights. I have argued that this view underestimates the potential of Cloward and Ohlin's framework to allow scholars to think differently, and perhaps more correctly, about their subject matter. Therefore I would invite students of crime and deviance to "revisit" *Delinquency and Opportunity*; it may prove an enlightening adventure.

NOTES

1. Merton's paradigm is variously termed "anomie theory" and "strain theory." The "anomie" label comes from Merton's link to Durkheim and from the title of his classic essay, "Social Structure and Anomie" (1938). Yet because Merton's major proposition is that structurally induced strain precipitates deviant and criminal behavior, many theorists feel that the term *strain theory* is a more accurate characterization of his paradigm. See Cullen (1984, pp. 75-83).

2. Cloward and Ohlin (1960, pp. 178-184) also identified a third type of subculture, the "retreatist" or drug-using subculture, but they did not link this subculture to neighborhood organization. Instead, they proposed that most recruits for this group were drawn from youths who were "double failures": that is, youths who had failed to succeed in both the legitimate and the illegitimate prestige hierarchy.

3. Cloward and Ohlin (1960, p. 32) identified three other "questions a theory must answer." The first two dealt with the need to define the precise nature of the delinquent behavior being studied, so that one could then determine the distribution of the behavior

in the social structure (that is, across sociodemographic positions). The remaining question addressed what factors determine "the relative stability or instability of a particular delinquent pattern" once this pattern has arisen.

4. Two further comments are relevant at this point. First, some of the scholars who focus on the strain portion of Cloward and Ohlin's delinquency theory call this a "motivational theory" (as opposed to using the term *strain theory* per se). They use this terminology because they see Cloward and Ohlin as specifying why people are "motivated" to violate the law: the strain induced by blocked aspirations. Again, these scholars miss Cloward and Ohlin's message that explaining the source of general motivations to deviate (that is, strain), does not explain the content of the resulting adaptation. Second, some scholars who discuss or test Cloward and Ohlin's perspective do note their association with the Chicago School and may use them to justify examining the effect of subcultural affiliation on delinquent participation. Even so, these scholars do not take the next step of assessing how access to illegitimate means regulates involvement in different types of crime or deviance. As a result, their understanding of Cloward and Ohlin's framework remains incomplete.

5. Cloward and Ohlin also made no mention of Parsons's (1951) deviance theorizing in *The Social System*. This oversight is salient because Parsons sought to identify not only the sources of strain (mostly role problems), but also the circumstances that shaped the content of the behavioral adaptations to this strain, that is, the determinants of the "direction of deviant tendencies." See Cullen (1984, pp. 94-97) and Smelser and Warner (1976).

6. Some scholars might be tempted to note that Durkheim identified and sought to explain the origins of four types of suicide: anomic, egoistic, altruistic, and fatalistic. This logic would be misleading, however, because Durkheim's intention was not to demarcate four types of behavior, but rather to specify four etiological states that could produce the same behavior, namely, suicide. In this light, Durkheim's "anomie theory" is a "classic example" of the methodology of selecting one form of deviance—in this case suicide—and then searching for a stress state—escalating, unfulfilled aspirations unleashed by anomic social conditions—that can account for the behavior under investigation. Although Durkheim touched on the idea that anomic conditions might lead to other adaptations, such as homicide, he did so only in passing and it did not exert a meaningful influence on his methodology or theorizing. The issue of why people facing anomic strain might turn in one deviant direction rather than another did not gain his systematic attention.

7. Thus stress models have already been applied in the study of the emotional difficulties faced by criminal justice employees (see Cullen et al., 1985; Terry, 1983). The next step, I suspect, is to use these models to explain the behavior of offenders.

8. Clearly, Cloward would share the conclusion that "opportunity theory" would be relevant to all strain/stress theories, not only to Merton's paradigm. See Cloward and Piven (1979) and Cloward and Piven et al. (1977).

9. In keeping with Cloward and Ohlin, a number of theorists have questioned the formulation that strain leads ineluctably to deviance or criminal behavior. In the criminological literature, one need point only to "control theorists" who argue that strain does not result in illegal behavior unless society's power to regulate conduct is attenuated (Hirschi, 1969; Toby, 1974). Similarly, among stress theorists in the mental health field, there is a growing perspective that has asserted that "social supports" may mitigate the effects of stressful circumstances and thus prevent disorders from arising. Neither control nor social support theorists, however, explore the broader implications of their insight: that the factors they have identified may not only influence if deviance/crime occurs, but

may also determine the type of adaptation to strain that is possible for people variously located in the social structure.

In addition, in asserting that strain has an "indeterminate" relationship with any deviant or criminal outcome, Cloward and Ohlin did not mean to imply that structurally induced strain would necessarily lead to all adaptations (as Merton implied in his typology) or that a strain might not have some influence on the kinds of adaptations that would be most likely to occur in response:

> We do not argue that there is no relationship between problems of adjustment and the resulting deviant adaptation, but we contend that there is no necessary deterministic relationship between them. The problem of adjustment [e.g., frustrated aspirations] may limit the range of satisfactory outcomes, but which alternative will emerge remains problematical. As long as there are at least two conceivable deviant outcomes to a given problem of adjustment, the problem of adjustment cannot be said to determine the outcome [Cloward and Ohlin, 1960, p. 41].

10. Cohen and Felson's "routine activities theory" and Cook's "criminal opportunity theory" offer promising extensions of Cloward and Ohlin's initial work. To be sure, differences in focus and assumptions exist. While Cloward and Ohlin embraced structurally induced strain as the source of deviant motivation, Cohen and Felson take criminal inclinations as a given, and Cook prefers an econometric model of human choice. Further, neither Cohen and Felson nor Cook address systematically the issue of how the social context shapes why actors engage in one form of deviance or crime and not another (though their work has clear implications on this issue). Nonetheless, these authors recognize and present data confirming Cloward and Ohlin's point that, in Cook's (1986, p. 18) words, "the quality of criminal opportunities influences the crime rate." Moreover, they extend Cloward and Ohlin's perspective by showing that criminal (and deviant) opportunities not only involve the characteristics of offenders (derived primarily from status-specific learning environments), but also are influenced by transformations in the larger social structure that change "routine activities" and make certain kinds of victimization more accessible than others. For example, Cohen and Felson (1979) have observed that changing social roles that take women outside the home and into the work force may increase the opportunity for rape by furnishing more "targets" and the opportunity for household burglary by removing "guardians" from the home.

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