

Challenging Criminological Theory

**The
Legacy
of
Ruth
Rosner
Kornhauser**

Advances in Criminological Theory, Volume 19

**Francis T. Cullen, Pamela Wilcox
Robert J. Sampson, and
Brendan D. Dooley, editors**

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Introduction: The Legacy of Ruth Rosner Kornhauser

Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox

In 1978, Ruth Rosner Kornhauser published *Social Sources of Delinquency*. This volume was marked by inordinate erudition and proved to have an enduring impact on theoretical criminology. Although not young of age—she was over 50 years old when the book appeared—she was a newly minted Ph.D. In fact, this book was based closely on her doctoral dissertation, which she had finished in 1975. Due to a debilitating medical condition suffered in that year, she would not publish another major work. Few criminologists would know her.

This volume is intended to honor Ruth Rosner Kornhauser and thus preserve her scholarly legacy. Whether through admiration, opposition, or extension, the chapters that follow show how the ideas expressed in *Social Sources of Delinquency* continue to shape the criminological enterprise. The first section of this essay briefly “tells the story” of Ruth Kornhauser and her authorship of *Social Sources of Delinquency*. The second section provides the “plan of the book”—how the five parts of the volume pay homage to and move beyond Ruth Kornhauser’s criminology. The remaining sections review three key themes that inform a contemporary analysis of this classic work.

A Criminological Classic

Writing but one major work and lacking the opportunity to train students to serve as apostles for her views, it might have been expected that Ruth Rosner Kornhauser would have slipped quickly from memory. In fact, most prominent authors from the 1970s are infrequently cited by today’s criminologists and their classic works are, at most, summarized as snippets in textbooks (Cohn, Farrington, and Iratzogui 2014). But as this volume in Kornhauser’s honor attests, she has

not been fated to fall from notoriety to obscurity. Many scholars, including the editors of this volume, keep a copy of *Social Sources of Delinquency* close at hand. It is common for the text to have been consulted so often that more of the book seems underlined than not—often with different color ink to differentiate different excursions through the work's pages.

Why does *Social Sources of Delinquency*—a work that soon will be four decades old—still matter? Three considerations help to explain the book's enduring relevance. First, Kornhauser focused on three theoretical models that remain today at the core of criminology: strain theory, differential association/social learning theory (which she termed “cultural deviance theory”), and control theory (see Agnew and Brezina 2012; Cullen, Wright, and Blevins 2006). These models have developed new variants over time (e.g., Agnew 1992, 2006; Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990), have been combined into integrated theories (e.g., Hawkins et al. 2003; Thornberry 1987), and have been incorporated into the now-major paradigm of life-course/developmental criminology (e.g., Farrington 2005; Sampson and Laub 1993). Accordingly, Kornhauser's subject matter still occupies much criminological interest.

Second, the quality of her assessment of criminological thinking remains unsurpassed. Her intent was not to test competing theories but, as the subtitle of her book proclaims, to provide “an appraisal of analytic models.” In this project, no work—before or since *Social Sources of Delinquency*—matches the sheer brilliance of the theoretical education that Kornhauser provided. The book's text is often dense and requires considerable concentration; it is a volume to be read in small doses and not in a single sitting. But the reader's investment reaps the reward of experiencing a penetrating conceptual analysis based on a masterful synthesis of the extant empirical literature. Her insights remain relevant today, as does her example of how theoretical analysis should be conducted.

Third, in *Social Sources of Delinquency*, she mapped out a distinctive vision for criminology that captured the attention, if not the imagination, of many scholars. She did not find value in all theories and thus did not seek to combine parts of different perspective into a unified paradigm for criminology (cf. Agnew 2011). Instead, similar to Travis Hirschi (1969, see also 1979, 1989) in *Causes of Delinquency*, her task was to separate the wheat from the chaff—to preserve what was useful and to discard the rest. She subjected strain theory to a withering critique; it would take nearly two decades for the theory to recover from her unraveling of its conceptual framework and empirical claims (see Agnew 1992, 2006; Messner and Rosenfeld 1994). She offered a similar attack of what she called “cultural deviance theory,” helping to incite (along with Travis Hirschi) a feud with the Sutherland differential association/learning tradition that has not yet reached a truce. And perhaps most important, she extracted from social disorganization theory—at the time discarded for pathologizing the poor—a community-level control theory that would inspire the emergence of the “systemic model” and a new generation of macro-level theoretical and empirical analysis.

In contemporary language, Kornhauser was not politically correct. She had no use for relativism or for the notion that inner-city neighborhoods were simply “differentially socially organized.” In her view, some communities were disorganized and this was not a good thing; crime and a diminished quality of life resulted. Socially organized communities—marked by moral consensus, strong informal controls, and the capacity to achieve shared values—were not just different but more desirable places. It was why, when given the opportunity, most people would choose to live there. She urged criminologists to embrace the concept of social disorganization and to use it to frame their thinking.

In retrospect, *Social Sources of Delinquency* (1978) seemingly stands by itself—a singular work by a prominent but mostly unknown scholar. But this classic book was bracketed by an interesting past and by a tragic future. Insights into the story of Ruth Rosner Kornhauser’s life are recounted in Chapter 1 of this volume by Anne Kornhauser, Ruth’s daughter, who is an intellectual historian at City University of New York. It appears that Ruth was a mother first and an academic second, dedicating *Social Sources of Delinquency* to her daughter: “For Anne.”

As Anne Kornhauser reveals, her mother suffered a stroke in 1975. She would live for two more decades, but spend this time convalescing. She found scholarly authorship laborious and ultimately not feasible. The tragedy of a quality life compromised and a scholarly career cut short is palpable. It is of little use to contemplate “what might have been,” but it also is human to have such thoughts. During the last 20 years of her life, criminology was a growing discipline that increasingly attracted many scholars that originally had only an episodic interest on crime. Given her work, Ruth Kornhauser likely would have been invited to comment on theoretical debates she had inspired and to participate in conference panels. We would have welcomed the opportunity to hear her speak—and perhaps to have read her essays or a revised second edition of *Social Sources of Delinquency*. We are not so certain that we would have similarly enjoyed her reviewing our work and providing incisive comments!

Prior to the publication of *Social Sources of Delinquency*, Ruth Kornhauser had followed her husband (the well-known political sociologist, William Kornhauser) as his academic career took him to Columbia University and then to the University of California, Berkeley. Notably, it was at Berkeley where two important experiences would bring Ruth Kornhauser into criminology.

First, as Anne Kornhauser notes in Chapter 1, Ruth often worked as a part-time instructor in the extension division of the University of California, Berkeley. But from 1962 to 1964, she was a researcher in Berkeley’s Center for the Study of Law and Society. It was during this period that her interest focused seriously on theoretical criminology and the intellectual foundation for her dissertation and *Social Sources of Delinquency* was firmly laid. The Center held seminars on delinquency—whose participants included Edwin Lemert, David Matza, and Sheldon Messinger—that “greatly influenced” her (Kornhauser 1978: ix).

In 1963, she presented a lengthy mimeographed manuscript—more than 100 pages—to scholars at the Center titled, “Theoretical Issues in the Sociological Study of Juvenile Delinquency.” In most respects, the analytical framework and substantive arguments that would form the core of *Social Sources of Delinquency* fifteen years later are present in this essay. Unfortunately, despite much investigation, a full version of this work could not be located. Only the first forty-five pages have been preserved. For historical purposes, and to show the continuity of Ruth Kornhauser’s ideas over time, the remaining version of the 1963 essay is reprinted here in Chapter 3 (an original typed version with handwritten notes is posted on the website of the American Society of Criminology). In Chapter 2, Brendan Dooley recounts the search for the full manuscript and explores the connection between the 1963 essay and Kornhauser’s 1978 classic book.

Second, because she had gone to Berkeley, Ruth Kornhauser came to know and eventually befriend Travis Hirschi, perhaps the most important criminologist of the past half century. In Chapter 4—entitled “Ruth and Me”—Hirschi notes that in the early 1960s, “Ruth and I frequented adjacent buildings on the Berkeley campus and were aware of each other’s work.” Although they had not yet met, Kornhauser sent Hirschi a copy of her 1963 manuscript that he later passed on to others—thus inadvertently ensuring the document’s partial preservation (see Chapter 2). Shortly after the publication of *Causes of Delinquency* in 1969, Hirschi had occasion to travel from the University of Washington, his first faculty appointment, to visit Berkeley. A mutual friend, Martin Trow, introduced Ruth and Travis, and, as Hirschi notes, they “became friends, and remained friends as long as she lived” (Chapter 4).

The criminological question is whether they moved beyond friendship to mutual scholarly influence. Reconstructing the past accurately is a daunting challenge. Still, two observations merit consideration (see Chapter 2 by Dooley and Chapter 4 by Hirschi on these points).

The first is that Hirschi cited Kornhauser’s 1963 manuscript five times in *Causes of Delinquency* (1969: 3, 4, 9, 12, 66). Most importantly, Hirschi (1969: 3, emphasis in the original) noted that one of the “three fundamental perspectives on delinquency and deviant behavior” was “*cultural deviance* theory,” which argued that “the deviant conforms to a set of standards not accepted by a larger and more powerful society.” In footnote 3 on the same page, Hirschi acknowledged that “I take the term ‘cultural deviance’ from a paper by Ruth Kornhauser”—her 1963 essay. It is not clear why Hirschi chose this particular concept to describe the Chicago School tradition that attributed crime to differential association and the learning of criminal definitions. One speculation is that Kornhauser’s phrase, cultural deviance, was fresh and had the advantage of subsuming the diverse theoretical labels already in existence. As Hirschi (1969: 3, fn. 4) stated later in the same footnote: “Other terms for theories of this type are ‘cultural conflict,’ ‘transmission,’ ‘subcultural,’ and ‘differential association.’”

At the very least, Hirschi read Kornhauser's 1963 manuscript carefully and, similar to other informative works of that era, drew upon those insights pertinent to the content of his book. He clearly found her critique of cultural deviance theory persuasive. But not all references to her essay were complimentary. Thus, Hirschi took issue with her more favorable view of Cloward and Ohlin's (1960) effort to integrate strain and cultural deviance perspectives in *Delinquency and Opportunity* (p. 4, fn. 4) and of her claim, which she would later (1978) relinquish, that the negative association between aspirations and delinquency does not falsify strain theory (p. 9). Most important, the impact of Kornhauser's essay on Hirschi's thinking was likely limited because it did not say much of consequence about the central purpose of *Causes of Delinquency*: to build an individual-level control (or social bond) theory.

The second observation is that, despite much continuity in her views across time, Ruth Kornhauser's theorizing also experienced a major transformation between her 1963 manuscript and her 1978 book. During this time, she became discouraged about the validity of strain theory and instead embraced the assumptions and arguments of control theory. This switch in her thinking came from reading many works, such as a critical essay of strain theory by Lemert (1964) and a range of empirical studies (1978: 167-180). Still, if Ruth Kornhauser herself is to be believed, the data presented in *Causes of Delinquency*—from which she reprinted two tables in *Social Sources of Delinquency* (1978: 176)—played a special role in loosening her allegiance to strain theory. Her 1963 manuscript was “a critique of Sutherland, but a defense of Merton's and other strain models. Then I read Travis Hirschi's *Causes of Delinquency* and was convinced his data disconfirmed strain models” (1984: viii).

Still, while important, it would be erroneous to make too much of Hirschi's influence on her thinking. Although both were sociologists, they approached the criminological enterprise from vastly different angles. They valued the interplay between theory and research, but, to use C. Wright Mills's (1959) terms, Hirschi leaned toward “abstracted empiricism” and Kornhauser toward “grand theory.” Thus, Hirschi's *Causes of Delinquency* sought to capture the sources of delinquency through individual students' answers to a self-report survey. His analysis is virtually devoid of how biography might intersect with the changing nature of social structures. For Hirschi, the juvenile's world is confined to the family, schools, and peers. What is transpiring in the larger society is of little concern. Given that *Causes of Delinquency* was authored in the midst of the tumultuous 1960s, this theoretical insulation shows a strong preference for developing a micro-level analytical framework that transcends any particular socio-historical context. Regardless, the vast majority of scholars would embrace Hirschi's approach to theory testing, becoming, in the words of Hagan and McCarthy (1997: 3-6), “school criminologists” rather than “street criminologists” (see also Cullen 2011; Laub 2004).

By contrast, Kornhauser became a full-fledged member of the Chicago School, with its keen emphasis on the transformations that were reshaping the American social order. To use Merton's (1995: 5) construct, the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago was a unique "cognitive micro-environment" in which, as had long been the tradition, its scholars focused in detail on the fate of inner-city neighborhoods. Gerald Suttles (1968), one of Kornhauser's dissertation advisors, had recently authored his classic book, *The Social Order of the Slum*. With a strong interest in communities and crime, Albert Reiss also proved an invaluable mentor (see Reiss and Tonry 1986). In the Acknowledgments to the paperback edition of *Social Sources of Delinquency*, Kornhauser (1984: viii) noted how Reiss's "course in urban sociology" has "aroused" her "interest in Shaw and McKay's work. . . . His infectious enthusiasm in reporting their research results left me with a fascination that exists to this day."

Thus, *Social Sources of Delinquency* made a profound contribution not by mimicking Hirschi's criminology but by departing from it. As noted, her project was to revitalize social disorganization theory by mapping out a causal structure that, for the most part, had remained latent within Shaw and McKay's (1942) *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas*. Through a withering critique, she quarantined the cultural deviance (or transmission) half of Shaw and McKay's perspective, which allowed her to expropriate the social control half of their model. She used their insights to articulate a macro-level control theory that sought to explain community variation in delinquency. Crime would flourish, she proposed, in disorganized areas in which the conventional culture had attenuated to the point where it could no longer regulate conduct and in which residents' collective capacity to achieve their values, including a safe environment, could no longer be realized.

In short, to use Laub's (2004) construct, *Social Sources in Delinquency* functioned as a theoretical "turning point" for a number of scholars (see, e.g., Sampson 2011) and, more generally, for criminology. Social disorganization theory would experience a rebirth and guide theoretical development and empirical research. As many chapters in this volume attest, Ruth Rosner Kornhauser inspired a renewed interest in the connection between communities and crime. If anything, her legacy is not dimming but shining brighter than ever.

Plan of the Book

The title of this volume—*Challenging Criminological Theory*—was chosen purposively. The true legacy of Ruth Rosner Kornhauser is that her *Social Sources of Delinquency* has continued to challenge scholars to reexamine their comfortable assumptions, to be analytically more precise, and to think differently about crime. Kornhauser's style and substantive arguments were direct (some might characterize them as "in your theoretical face"!). This forthrightness inspired many and infuriated others. It gave clear direction to a new criminology, which some appreciated, and told others that they were wasting their scholarly time,

advice that was not appreciated. Kornhauser's challenging approach is captured in the final paragraph to *Social Sources of Delinquency* (1978: 253):

Strain models are disconfirmed. Cultural deviance models are without foundation in fact. To the more definitive formulation of control models, to the more adequate linking of macrosocial and microsocial control theories, and to their more rigorous testing, the study of delinquency might profitably turn.

In this context, the most appropriate way to honor Ruth Rosner Kornhauser's legacy is to take her ideas seriously and to illuminate further their ongoing relevance to contemporary criminological theory. The chapters to follow are not all of a piece; some are sympathetic to her views, whereas others are not. *Social Sources of Delinquency* is not sanctified as a sacred text that provides received wisdom that is beyond critique. Rather, it is treated as an insightful, critical analysis of major paradigms that should be a conduit for theoretical contemplation and development. The volume's chapters thus are written in response to core themes articulated by Kornhauser and, in so doing, demonstrate the continuing importance of her "appraisal of analytic models." Taken together, they provide an impressive assessment of what we know and need to know about the social sources of criminal conduct. Indeed, we anticipate that those who finish this volume will have decidedly increased their criminological literacy. We also expect that they will rush out to visit for the first time, or to revisit once again, Kornhauser's classic, the *Social Sources of Delinquency*.

Challenging Criminological Theory: The Legacy of Ruth Rosner Kornhauser is divided into five sections. Part I, "Ruth Rosner Kornhauser: Life and Criminology," is intended to provide a context for understanding the writing and importance of *Social Sources of Delinquency*. Two chapters, one by her daughter Anne Kornhauser and another by her friend Travis Hirschi, provide insight into the life and mind of Ruth Kornhauser. The other two chapters introduce (by Brendan Dooley) and then reprint Kornhauser's 1963 manuscript in which her assessment of criminological theories first appeared.

Part II, "Challenging Criminology," revisits Kornhauser's critique of strain and cultural deviance models through the lens of social disorganization theory. Contemporary responses are provided by Robert Bursik (Shaw and McKay's theory), by Ross Matsueda (cultural deviance theory), and by Robert Agnew and Francis Cullen (strain theory).

Part III, "Inspiring New Theoretical Visions," includes chapters that build on Ruth Kornhauser's advice to root criminology most fully within control theory. Thus, Chester Britt and Barbara Costello discuss the "strength of control theory," Charis Kubrin considers the influence of "cultural disorganization," and Barbara Warner and Robert Sampson examine systemic ties and collective efficacy theory—a perspective that is a clear child of the Kornhauser perspective.

Part IV, "Beyond Kornhauser," presents chapters that depart from Kornhauser's theorizing in *Social Sources of Delinquency* but remain consistent with

this tradition. Although prognostication is a risky enterprise, they present ideas that Kornhauser likely would have found consistent with her criminological worldview. In this regard, Pamela Wilcox and Kenneth Land explore the interconnection between social disorganization and crime-event opportunity; David Kirk and Andrew Papachristos show how legal cynicism—a form of attenuated culture rooted in concentrated disadvantage—underlies inner-city crime; and John Hipp and Adam Boessen illuminate the importance of social networks for understanding neighborhood variation in criminal conduct.

Finally, Part V, “Criticizing Kornhauser,” examines potential causal factors either dismissed or neglected by Ruth Kornhauser. Thus, David Greenberg focuses on the salience of criminal motivation, Darrell Steffensmeier and Jeffery Ulmer discuss the causal significance of criminal opportunity, and Cheryl Maxson highlights the need to consider gangs and girls in explaining delinquent involvement.

In the remainder of this chapter, we examine two themes that are at the center of Ruth Rosner Kornhauser’s *Social Sources of Delinquency*: the unimportance of motivation and the importance of community control. These themes also inform the chapters that follow—either in their direct discussion of *Social Sources of Delinquency* or in attempts to move beyond Kornhauser’s criminology.

Theoretical Theme 1: The Unimportance of Motivation

As noted, Kornhauser (1978) focused on three core or “fundamental” theories. Two of them—strain and cultural deviance (to use her label)—were motivational theories. That is, they explained variation in criminal involvement by explaining variation in the motivation, propensity, or desire for crime. For strain theory, blocked aspirations for monetary success or social status created the need for some deviant adaptation, which could include crime under certain circumstances. For cultural deviance theory, learning criminal attitudes and skills led individuals to see crime as an option to be positively valued. These two perspectives differed in the source of criminal motivations but not in embracing their importance. They both proposed that those more motivated to engage in crime—whether because they were more strained or viewed crime more favorably—would commit more criminal acts.

Control theory ignores motivation and instead links variation in crime to variation in the presence, or absence, of control. It would seem possible to incorporate both sources of variation—motivation and control—into a single model. But control theorists have rejected this option, perhaps most famously by Hirschi (1969, 1979, 1989) who argued that theories were “separate but unequal” and should not be integrated (see also Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990). Kornhauser shared this predilection. In fact, her explanation of why motivation was theoretically superfluous was perhaps more extensive and sophisticated than other control theorists (see, in this volume, Chapter 7 by Agnew and Cullen; Chapter 14 by Greenberg). In fact, establishing the *unimportance of motivation* was central to

her rejection of strain and cultural deviance theories and her embrace of control theory as the guiding paradigm for criminology.

The gist of Kornhauser's argument is as follows. Human beings are not blank slates who, if left to their own devices, would be bereft of all motivation. Instead, humans have wants and needs that are natural and not evidence of some underlying pathology, whether psychological or socially induced. Humans thus naturally want things (e.g., material comforts, status, excitement, security, revenge, sex), and prefer to meet their needs quickly and easily. Once wants are satisfied, humans in turn desire even more of what they have experienced. As Kornhauser (1978: 141) observed, "wants are unlimited, for there is no fixed level at which gratification for any want is assured." Even if gratification occurs, humans are not pacified. Thus, "if one or another want is satisfied, it must be at the frustration of other wants" (p. 141). Further, "the means needed to gratify them are always scarce relative to wants" (p. 49). Social stratification makes matters more problematic by ensuring that such means are "unequally distributed" (p. 49). Finally, faced perpetually with unfulfilled wants, humans also always have a ready alternative—crime. According to Kornhauser, "nonnormative means" to humans' gratification of wants "are usually quicker and easier than normative alternatives" (p. 141).

The flaw in Merton's (1938) classic strain theory is that it assumes that there is one overriding want—material success rooted in the American Dream—that is induced by cultural socialization. It is only when this one want (or goal) is blocked that strain and crime, a way to relieve this strain, are forthcoming. For Kornhauser, Merton's view ignores the diversity of individuals' wants and the corresponding fact that everyone has wants that are frustrated all the time. If strain is thus invariant, then it cannot explain variability in criminal involvement. In Kornhauser's words, "strain levels do not vary sufficiently across individuals to account for delinquency" (p. 141). That is, everyone is motivated to break the law.

If everyone experiences strain and is, in this sense, motivated to offend, then why is there variation in criminal involvement? One possibility is that opportunities for crime vary (see Steffensmeier and Ulmer, Chapter 15). But, as noted, this option is incompatible with Kornhauser's approach because nonnormative means to gratify wants are said to be widely available. Of course, something has to vary to account for differential participation in crime. Her answer is that "costs," or controls, vary.

According to Kornhauser, strain theory sees crime as offering a benefit, because this act satisfies a want and relieves strain. By contrast, "control theory assumes that delinquency is not caused in a positive sense (motivated by the gains to be derived from it) but prevented (determined by the relative costs of alternative benefits)" (1978: 140). The theoretical task is thus to uncover the social controls, at the micro level and macro level, that make crime too costly a choice.

Two other observations are important. First, Kornhauser seeks to strip culture from any involvement in creating the motivation for crime. If the motivation for crime is ubiquitous, then nobody needs to be socialized into deviant cultural values to break the law. If such definitions favorable to crime even are present, they are redundant with existing motivations and thus theoretically beside the point. Similarly, Kornhauser disputes Merton's claim that Americans are socialized into material success goals. She rejects such "cultural determinism" that assumes that people are "religiously devoted to following the dictates of their culture" (1978: 145). If faced with a success goal that could not be met, they would not—as strain theory contends—retain their allegiance. Rather, they would "scale down their aspirations to make their goal more nearly accord with their realistic expectations; they would not then be strained, and in fact this is the course most people appear to take" (p. 145).

Second, Kornhauser's assumptions about human nature are plausible and more sensible than the view that human nature is a blank slate with no content. But ultimately, it is based on speculation and offers a naïve biosocial criminology. Her conception of human nature thus ignores four considerations. First, she argues that human nature and social interaction combine to create a largely invariant motivation to offend. This ignores the fact that there are substantial individual differences in "human nature," such as temperament, and in how people evoke responses from the social world they not only live in but also create (DeLisi and Vaughan 2014; Wright, Tibbetts, and Daigle 2008). Second, her view ignores that human nature is not only oriented toward gratification and self-interest but also toward social concern for others (Agnew 2011, 2014). Third, her view ignores the evidence from stress research and from later research on Agnew's (2006) general strain theory that blockage of success goals is only one possible strain. Other stressful life events and types of strain more conducive to offending create variation in the propensity to commit crimes (see Agnew and Cullen, Chapter 7). Fourth, her view ignores empirical research from the social sciences, including criminology, showing variation in offender motivations. In Chapter 14 of this volume, Greenberg presents an extensive review of this literature.

Kornhauser's (1978: 40) stance on human nature is common to control theory, especially to the work of Hirschi (1969; see also Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990). It is a weak, almost rhetorical, tool used to try to dismiss strain and cultural deviance theories. The control theory critique of these perspectives, including by Kornhauser, is stronger when it focuses on conceptual inadequacies and empirical data. Regardless, motivation is involved in a range of human conduct; criminal behavior does not appear to be the exception. A remaining challenge for control theory in the Kornhauser-Hirschi tradition is to take criminal motivation seriously.

Theoretical Theme 2: The Importance of Community Control

While dismissing the notion of motivation (and, thus, strain theory) is an important theme of *Social Sources of Delinquency*, the heart of Kornhauser's

appraisal of analytic models lies in its rejection of differential association/social learning theory (which, as noted, she referred to as “cultural deviance theory”) and its acceptance of control theory. This critical dismissal of cultural deviance and an embrace of social control are most clearly illustrated in her famous reformulation of Shaw and McKay’s social disorganization theory. The end result of this reformulation was a macro-level control theory of community crime devoid of any reference to cultural transmission of criminal values. It is this macro-level control theory, elaborated upon below, that she elevates above all others in *Social Sources of Delinquency*.

Kornhauser’s Perspective: Macro-Level Control

The identification of cultural breakdown as a major cause of crime arguably reached a pinnacle in the 1960s, when crime was rising and riots were breaking out in a number of cities. Crime and violence during this racially divisive time was increasingly seen as an urban, Black problem. At the same time, urban Black families were depicted as pathological on a number of fronts: marriage rates among Blacks were low while unemployment, out-of-wedlock births, and dependency on welfare were higher than White rates, giving rise to the popular depiction of the urban Black “welfare queen.” The famous Moynihan Report, prepared for the U.S. Department of Labor in 1965, characterized the family patterns of urban Black families as creating a “tangle of pathology,” and many interpreted this report as suggesting that Black families were thus caught in a self-perpetuating cycle or culture of poverty.

However, there was serious scholarly and political backlash against the implications of the Moynihan Report. The view that families might promote values that serve to ensnare their members in impoverished and criminogenic conditions generation after generation came to be seen as “blaming the victim” in many circles, including sociological circles. With that, observes Cohen (2010: A1) of *The New York Times*, “the word ‘culture’ became a live grenade, and the idea that attitudes and behavior patterns kept people poor was shunned.”

It was within this historical context—in which culture’s perceived role in community crime was being intensely debated—that Kornhauser pursued her famous appraisal of analytic models of delinquency. In this regard, it is thus not surprising that she took such a strong stance on the issue of culture’s role. But in addition to the contentious broader historical context regarding the role of culture, it is also important to note that Kornhauser was appraising criminological theories during the period in which Hirschi’s perspective on social control was gaining considerable momentum (see Hirschi, Chapter 4). Indeed, the control perspective’s view of value consensus fueled an already strong fire against many cultural perspectives of the era.

Similar to strain theory, control theory is based on the assumption that there is *value consensus* in society in the sense that all segments condemn crime. Thus,

control theory is at complete odds with the notion of “deviant subcultures” that espouse the virtues of crime. According to control theorists, *different values* (in terms of content) do not distinguish criminals from noncriminals. Instead, *variable ties, or bonds, to the conventional cultural value system* serve to differentiate these two groups. Some individuals are more closely tied to the system than others due to their personal attachments and commitments and their institutional involvements. These ties serve to control behavior, keeping it in line with conventional values. Those with weakened bonds, however, are less invested in conventional values. They share the values, but they simply have less of an investment or stake in abiding by them.

Kornhauser was keenly interested in contextual effects on crime, and she used *community-level control theory* to understand such effects. More specifically, she advocated an approach to understanding community rates of crime that relied purely on variation in macro-level resident-based control. Her perspective was rooted in Shaw and McKay’s (1942) famous work, though it represented an important reformulation of their theory.

Shaw and McKay had suggested that a mixture of theoretical processes—including strain, weak informal social control, and cultural transmission of criminal codes—was behind persistently high rates of crime in “disorganized” Chicago neighborhoods. Kornhauser, however, appraised this mixed model as contradictory. Strain and control theory were rooted in an assumption of value consensus; people endorsed cultural goals (strain theory) and conventional moral beliefs (control theory). By contrast, the idea of cultural transmission of crime was rooted in an assumption of value conflict. Crime would occur in those areas in which criminal cultural beliefs competed with conventional cultural beliefs; there could be differential association. Kornhauser viewed Shaw and McKay’s incorporation of both types of theoretical processes—those based on an assumption of value consensus and those based on an assumption of value conflict—as inherently illogical, and she clearly sided with processes rooted in an assumption of value consensus. Further, she contended that strain and cultural transmission were unnecessary components of Shaw and McKay’s theory and that control, alone, was a sufficient explanation of criminal conduct. Therefore, her suggested reformulation of Shaw and McKay’s theory viewed community indicators of “disorganization” as related to crime, largely because they diminished the community’s capacity for forming strong neighborhood-level systems of personal and institutional ties that could effectively control unwanted behavior.

Building on Kornhauser: Structural Ties and Crime

How did Kornhauser’s treatment of culture and control in understanding community crime play out in the field of criminology, particularly the criminology that is represented by the various chapters in this book? Two major lines of inquiry stemming from Kornhauser’s treatment of culture and control are reflected in