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PSYCHOLOGY AND THE CRIMINOLOGICAL SUBJECT

In Chapter 1 we introduced the case for a psychosocial approach to the study of crime and its control and explored how it was that criminology became so disinterested in questions of aetiology. Critical to our analysis was Garland's view that the 'science of causes' that became the Lombrosian project is 'deeply flawed' (Garland, 2002: 8). In lumping together psychoanalytical enquiries with medical and psychiatric approaches Garland effectively echoes the sentiments of Radzinowicz and King – key figures in the governmental project – who dismissed psychoanalytic criminology as a system of elaborate excuses invented by uncritical students of Freud:

Disciples of [Freud] ... who ventured into criminology acknowledged a debt to Lombroso but rejected his classifications and explanations. They used psychoanalytical concepts, particularly to interpret persistent delinquency. Such phrases as frustration, maladjustment, mental conflict, anti-social or a-social attitudes, passed into the currency of diagnosis and treatment ... By way of reaction there grew up suspicion that this whole approach offered elaborate excuses for offenders, implying that they could not help themselves.

(Radzinowicz and King, 1977: 63)

In this chapter we wish to evaluate this claim by looking at the works of M. Hamblin Smith, Edward Glover and John Bowlby. We concede that while each of these authors were reductionist in their approaches – Smith and Glover being particularly doctrinaire in their usage of Freudian concepts – the commitment twentieth century psychoanalysts made to understanding the unconscious dimensions of criminal behaviour needs reinstating. We go on to consider other psychological approaches to criminology that, to differing degrees, have been more circumspect or critical in their engagement with psychoanalytic ideas. We explain that the turning away from psychoanalysis has been to the detriment of a properly psychosocial grasp of offenders' subjectivities, with little theoretical attention now being paid to the intersubjective dynamics between offenders and their families, their victims, and those who treat them, even less to unconscious motivations. Although not an exhaustive survey, this chapter provides a brief overview of the major psychological approaches to crime

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that have had a significant impact within criminology, namely, psychoanalytic (Hamblin Smith, Glover, Bowlby), personality-based (Eysenck), developmental (Farrington) and forensic (Toch). Moreover, many of these theorists (Hamblin Smith, Eysenck, Farrington, Gottfredson and Hirschi) purport to deliver a general theory of crime. Control theory and its successor, the life course perspective, situated somewhere between psychology and sociology, constitute our bridge to the chapter on sociological approaches that follows.

Early psychoanalytic approaches: Smith, Glover, and Bowlby

First published in 1922 and republished in 1933, M. Hamblin Smith's *The Psychology of the Criminal* was a text 'devoted' to psychoanalysis, defined then as a 'new development of psychology' (Smith, [1922] 1933: v). During his 34 years as a medical officer in Birmingham Prison, Smith became convinced that the 'only hope of solving the problem of delinquency' lay with 'the patient, intensive investigation of the individual offender.' (ibid: vii). Whilst he acknowledged a debt to the works of Dr William Healy of Chicago (who, as we shall see in Chapter 9, had cause to assess Clifford Shaw's miscreant Stanley the jack-roller), Smith made no apology for being an 'unrepentant Freudian' (ibid). He regarded getting into 'the mind of the offender ... [and] the immediate mental mechanisms which produced his delinquency' to be critical to any attempt to understand crime, but particularly so when such understanding was to help devise 'correct methods of treatment' (ibid: 25).

Smith took from Freud the idea that if emotionally charged conflicts were dealt with through 'repression' they could give rise to unconscious 'complexes' of 'infinite variety', some of which would be 'causative' of 'delinquent conduct' (ibid: 97-100). Sadly, this claim was one Smith asserted more than demonstrated. On the few occasions when Smith cited evidence to back up his claims, it was through all-too-brief case summaries, selected almost exclusively because of the repressed sexual complexes of the 'patients' in question. The 'repression of sexual desire' in a man 'separated from his wife', Smith suggested, explained his 'indecent assault on small girls'; whilst 'nervousness' in relation to '[n]ormal sexual desires' had induced a 'complex' conducive to 'larceny' in another man; and the daughter of an adulterous woman had attempted suicide because of the trauma of discovering her mother's infidelity (ibid: 100). In sum, Smith's approach to crime was not only exclusively intra-psychic, but it was also inadequately empirical, with overly firm diagnoses seemingly preceding any critical interrogation of the case material with which he was presented.

A more sociologically inclined, but no less Freudian, approach can be found in the work of Edward Glover, probably the most senior psychoanalytic figure to pursue a career as a criminologist. In his book *The Roots of Crime*, a collection of papers published between 1922 and 1959, Glover (1960) made the case for 'team research' in criminology. By this he meant that sociologists and psychiatrists should conduct criminological research alongside psychoanalytical practitioners, reducing the tendency towards statistical abstraction favoured by the British Home Office:

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[T]he most effective way to achieve understanding of delinquency is for the clinical observer to soak himself in his material, and to permit his scientific imagination to play on the impressions he received; for controlled imagination is, when all is said and done, the most potent instrument of research ... It is futile to expect to discover the 'causes' of delinquency by a tip-and-run survey of 100, or for that matter 1000 cases. On the other hand, the happy analysis of an isolated dream fragment in an individual case *may* tell us more about the nature of delinquency than a nation-wide survey ...

(Glover, 1954: 187, emphasis in original)

Glover was as critical of medical psychiatry's biological reductionism as he was of the habit, common amongst sociologists, of borrowing psychological clichés to explain delinquency. He disliked penal-welfare professionals' use of 'derogatory terms' to describe those manifesting 'anti-social behaviours' (as offending was called then and again now), and argued that such derogation often revealed as much about the moral indignation of the observers as it did those deemed pathological (1960: 125). His analysis of prostitution, despite its tendency to over-pathologize, was similarly sensitive to the interrelationships between social reactions to the 'problem' and the reasons why some people regularly bought and sold sex. Without wishing to deny the economically impoverished backgrounds of many prostitutes, Glover disagreed with those who explained the trade purely in financial terms. Harsh moralism, Glover hypothesized, was part of the aetiology of some forms of prostitution, with prostitutes and their clients connected intersubjectively by their reciprocal and 'unconscious' denigration of 'normal sexuality' and/or the opposite sex (ibid: 256). Admittedly, Glover's suggestion that this unconscious attitude of denigration had roots in guilt reactions to 'early sexuality' was no less orthodoxly Freudian than Smith's earlier work. However, Glover also delivered a more properly reflexive analysis, pointing to the need for greater understanding of the 'hopeless' attitudes of many of those who bought and sold sex, the 'emotional disturbances' that blighted some prostitutes' family lives, and the seductions of tabooed desire, symbolized by illicit sex and the 'filthy lucre' involved in its sale (ibid: 253-60).

Expressing his psychoanalytic ideas more sociologically than Smith, Glover argued that punitive attitudes towards sexual deviants and offenders more generally were often more about the punisher's 'need for crime' (ibid: ix) – the public's desire for vengeance – than justice or rehabilitation, an idea central to much recent thinking about contemporary crime control (Evans, 2003; Garland, 2000; Maruna, Matravers and King, 2004). Indeed, Glover's view that 'the so-called normal person has closer affinities with the psychopath than he is willing to admit to himself, much less publicly avow' (Glover, 1960: 295) is contrary to the idea that criminals can 'somehow be scientifically differentiated from non-criminals' that Garland attributes to approaches interested in 'a science of causes'. The infliction of pain, for example, whether through state-sanctioned forms of punishment or a solitary offender's violent assault on another, could be interpreted as a 'symptom equivalent' to psychosis, entailing a process of 'acting out' that spares the punitive individual from experiencing their own psychotic mental symptoms, an idea we draw upon in Chapter 10.

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For us though, if not for Glover, it is necessary to go beyond drawing parallels between the cultural and the mental – Glover’s sociological analysis of punitiveness, in the final instance, proving little more than the summation of so many unresolved intra-psychic conflicts, and his claims about the aetiologies of violence and prostitution ultimately relying too heavily on the effects of unresolved Oedipal conflicts.

John Bowlby’s work, by contrast, is closer to the kind of psychosocial approach we advocate, not least because it was much more closely engaged with rich case material. Bowlby opened up more space for thinking about the intersubjective than Glover and Smith, his reading of Freud being more revisionist, borrowing, as it did, from the ideas of Melanie Klein. In Bowlby’s view, Freud had failed to incorporate his most radical therapeutic discovery into his theorizing.

[The] early formulations of psychoanalytic theory were strongly influenced by the physiology of the day ... cast in terms of the individual organism, its energies and drives, with only marginal reference to relationships. Yet, by contrast, the principal feature of the innovative technique for treating patients that Freud introduced is to focus attention on the relationships patients make with their therapist. From the start, therefore, there was a yawning gulf between the phenomena with which the therapist was confronted, and the theory that had been advanced to account for them.

(Bowlby, 1990, quoted in Holmes, 1993: 127)

In his most criminological publication, *Forty-Four Juvenile Thieves*, Bowlby (1946) developed his thesis that there was a link between prolonged separation from maternal figures during infancy and the kind of disturbances that led children into delinquency in adolescence. Bowlby collated and contrasted the clinical case histories of 44 children convicted of theft with those of 44 other children who had also been referred to psychiatric services. Amongst his sample of thieves Bowlby discovered an over-representation of three psychological dispositions. Amongst the 44 thieves there were 9 depressed children, 13 ‘hyperthymics’ – who tended to ‘constant over-activity’ – and 14 ‘affectionless characters’ – who showed little ‘normal affection, shame or sense of responsibility’ (ibid: 6). The complex case histories Bowlby constructed depicted children with experiences of severe abuse and neglect; children who were unwanted; children whose parents drank heavily, quarrelled frequently, and abused each other; children whose parents had died or fallen very ill; and children who had spent long periods in institutional care and hospital. Over the six weeks Bowlby and his team spent studying each of the cases they discovered that many of these children also had psychosomatic problems; were stigmatized for being born outside of wedlock; were badly bullied; had been sexually abused; had contracted sexually transmitted diseases; were struggling with religiously-inspired guilt; or had been brutally chastised, usually by their fathers. Perhaps unsurprisingly, many of these ‘thieves’ were also persistent liars, truants, bed-wetters and runaways.

Bowlby noted, however, that his ‘affectionless characters’ were generally the most recidivist and persistent group of thieves, and thus he devoted particular analytic attention to the characteristics of this sub-group. As it turned out the affectionless

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characters typically had few real friendships and harboured acute feelings of loneliness and misery, despite their surface-level indifference to the research team. One reason for this was that vast majority of affectionless children had suffered prolonged separations from their parents, or otherwise the complete emotional loss of their mothers and/or other primary carers during early childhood. This was why their stealing – according to Bowlby – was characterized by ‘a strong libidinal element’ and connected to:

... a failure of super-ego development [crudely, conscience] ... following a failure in the development for object-love [love of another]. The latter is traced back to lack of opportunity for development and to inhibition resulting from rage and phantasy on the one hand and motives of emotional self-protection on the other.

(Bowlby, 1946: 55)

As we shall explain in our chapters about Stanley the jack-roller and the serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer, the distinction Bowlby made between physical ‘separations’ from and the ‘emotional loss’ of parents can help us understand why some individuals become so callous in their desire to do harm to others and so indifferent with regard to the suffering they cause. It also helps explain why the majority of children who lose contact with a parent do not develop into ‘affectionless characters’, as Herschel Prins remarks:

Parents can be physically present, but not in spirit. A child does not have to be separated physically for it to be deprived. For example, there are many fathers ... who may be physically present but absent emotionally ... The reverse of this kind of situation can be true: a parent may be dead but his spirit kept alive successfully.

(Prins, 1973: 68)

In sum, our view is that Bowlby’s work was a significant step in the direction of genuinely psychosocial criminology, his research identifying some of the most important connections between the psychic and the social: the significance of childhood attachments to adult forms of relating; the intersubjective and contingent character of these attachments; and the relationships between these attachments and the symbolic, often defensive quality of much juvenile delinquency.

The psychosocial aspects of Bowlby’s analysis could have been pushed further however. Despite his attention to the consequences of poor attachment, Bowlby rather foreclosed the question of whether or not the emotionally impoverished child might find new possibilities for developing less destructive ways of relating. Are emotionally deprived children forever damned by their pasts, or can they learn to think and feel differently about themselves? How do the children of physically absent fathers and mothers imagine their mums and dads? And what kind of psychic substitutes do the children with emotionally unavailable parents seek out? With whom or what will the child with poor super-ego development identify? Unfortunately, these were not the questions subsequent generations of criminologists asked of Bowlby’s thesis. Those who were aware of it tended to ignore it, partly because its popularization (and over-simplification) in the post-war period lent itself rather too

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conveniently to a political discourse that blamed working mothers for the problem of wayward youth (Riley, 1983). Others, like Hans Eysenck to whom we now turn, remained deeply suspicious of all psychoanalytic work.

Criminological psychologists: Eysenck, Toch and Farrington

Whilst diligently empirical, Hans Eysenck's thesis is one of a number of biosocial approaches that Lilly, Cullen and Ball (2002: 205) characterize as implicitly 'conservative'. However, as it is 'perhaps to date the most complete *psychological* theory of crime' (Hollin, 2002, emphasis in original) it should not be ignored. Moreover, since it is an explanation 'based on an interaction of biological, social and individual factors' (ibid), we must consider it. For Eysenck, psychoanalysis was symptomatic of the permissiveness that came to demarcate the 1960s. In *Crime and Personality*, for example, he argued that greater lawlessness in the US relative to the UK could be explained in terms of the greater

stress on social conditioning in England than there is in the United States, where there has been a ... tendency for American parents to take some of the psychoanalytic and Freudian precepts of *laissez-faire* policy too literally.

(Eysenck, 1964: 135)

Eysenck believed that there was a strong genetic component to personality, and adopted a staunchly behaviourist model of human subjectivity. Rejecting the Freudian idea of a dynamic ego, id and super-ego in tension, Eysenck (ibid: 120) theorized the conscience as 'the combination and culmination of a long process of conditioning ... The failure on that part of the person to become conditioned is likely to be a prominent cause in his running afoul of the law and social mores more generally.' To explain the relationship between this failure of conditioning and crime Eysenck (1964, [1987] 2003) developed a two- and later, a three-dimensional model of personality, measured in terms of extraversion, neuroticism, and subsequently psychoticism.

The basic idea linking biological, social and individual factors was that genetic differences in the way that the cortical and autonomic nervous systems function (biology) underpin individual differences in personality types and different personality types respond differently to environmental (or social) conditioning. Extraverts, for example, suffer from cortical under-arousal and thus engage in impulsive, risky and thrill-seeking acts to increase cortical stimulation. This makes them difficult to 'condition'. Introverts, on the other hand, being cortically over-aroused, seek to avoid excessive stimulation by being quiet, reserved and avoiding excitement. In consequence, they are easier to condition. Similarly with neuroticism, the irritable, anxious behaviour associated with neurotics has a genetic basis and social consequences. In this instance, anxiety is a disruptive hindrance to efficient conditioning. The psychoticism dimension and its genetic basis was less clearly articulated by Eysenck (Hollin, 2002: 154). High 'P' scorers, he suggested, were simply more likely to be involved in crime because

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'the general personality traits subsumed under psychoticism appear clearly related to anti-social and non-conformist conduct' (Eysenck, [1987] 2003: 92).

Eysenck's personality theory was thus a psychosocial theory of crime, but a reductive one: ultimately, biology determined both personality and conditionability. Moreover, whether it moved criminology beyond the psychoanalytic orthodoxies it tried to surmount is questionable. Eysenck's meta-reviews of psychological studies that were similar to his own found considerable support for the idea that 'personality and anti-social and criminal behaviour are reasonably intimately correlated' (ibid: 105). But few working within more psychoanalytic paradigms would have challenged this assessment, just as Freud himself would have had no problem with Eysenck's claim that 'anxiety' could act as a 'drive', neuroticism turning minor irritations into obsessions. More problematically, the empirical basis of Eysenck's thesis was to prove little stronger than the ones being cited by his psychoanalytic counterparts. As Eysenck himself conceded, 'too little' research had been done 'to be very definitive [as] to one's conclusions' about how 'different types of criminal activity' relate to 'personality' (ibid:103). Eysenck rather too readily lumped many different forms of crime and anti-social behaviour together, drawing analogies with studies of traffic violators and unmarried mothers in some of his work, and rarely, if ever attending to the meaning of particular criminal acts committed by particular individuals. In sum, Eysenck was not only uninterested in the unconscious meanings of criminal behaviour; his interest in personality types also made him largely oblivious to the variety of conscious motives that underpin the miscellaneous problem of crime.

In stark contrast, the diversity of motives that contribute to the problem of crime was a starting point for Hans Toch, one of Eysenck's contemporaries (Toch, 1961: 171). In *Violent Men*, Toch (1972) suggested that psychologists should try to understand offenders 'as individuals' and then 'sort them into groups' and 'link them to the rest of humanity, while separating them from their violent acts' (Gibbens, 1971: 11). Ultimately, Toch sought to do this through the construction of typologies, but his analysis, unlike Eysenck's, attended in the first instance, to 'what it feels like to be prone to violence' (Toch, 1972: 27). Toch thought that such feelings would be better captured by ex-offenders than academics, and hence trained ex-prisoners to act as his researchers. The in-depth interview material these ex-prisoners-turned-interviewers generated revealed the diversity of circumstances in which people become involved in violence and the subtleties of meaning that perpetuate violence in some men's lives. Utilizing both parties' accounts of violent conflicts, Toch illustrated how false inferences about another's intentions and/or about what bystanders might think could contribute to a 'cumulative' sense of provocation amongst perpetrators: one man's feelings of threat and violation playing into the other's, intensifying their opposing desires to 'save face', regain a sense of 'respect', or put those they perceived as 'bullies' back in their place. As their egos become 'brittle' (ibid: 231) both protagonists might respond in kind to each other: one of them might become unwilling to concede to the other's demands, whilst the other may come to perceive forcing their will as a moral imperative. Henceforth:

the violent incident is cumulatively created by persons involved in it. As each sequence progresses, it takes on violence-prone connotations and reactions to

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match. Violence-prone connotations do not just spring out of the incidents themselves, but pre-exist in the shape of unconscious assumptions. The assumptions are both personal and social: personal, because they embody stable frames of reference; social because they take characteristic forms in the minds of violent men.

(ibid: 172)

To some extent, Toch's work anticipated Jack Katz's (1988) viscerally compelling analysis of the seductions of 'righteous rage'. Indeed, in his attention to the intersubjective dimensions of violence, and in his acknowledgement of the potentially unconscious, often fantastical, dynamics that underpin such violence, Toch superseded Katz's work, which, as we explain in Chapter 3, is ambiguous on the relevance of the unconscious and its constitution. Toch went further than Katz in this regard, explaining why some men habitually identify with the violence option: some perpetrators interpret their successful utilization of force as evidence that violence 'works', even though they have to contend with the perennial 'feelings of guilt, of being scared and of lack of worthwhileness' that go with inflicting pain on others – feelings that are liable to 'burst forth' in subsequent conflicts and confrontations (Toch, 1972: 180); while those for whom violence fails resort to it repeatedly in futile attempts to redeem themselves.

Yet whilst he showed that feelings of inadequacy could both precede and follow violence, Toch shied away from theorizing the relationship between these feelings and the 'unconscious assumptions' so evidently at stake in the aggressive behaviour his research participants described. The foreword to the British edition of his book highlights why this shortcoming should be considered a missed opportunity:

Ordinary parents tend to relive their own problems in the development of their children and quite unconsciously foster attitudes of which they do not consciously approve, at least in the excessive form which their delinquent children display.

(Gibbens, 1971: 20)

For us, Toch's failure to attend to the heritage of unconscious assumptions simply underlines the point that criminological explanation is impoverished when it lacks an adequate psychosocial account of the human subject and its development.

Against this backcloth, it is hard to disagree with David Farrington that criminology needs to take a more developmental perspective, even if this is not quite what Farrington's own brand of psychological criminology delivers. Much of Farrington's thinking draws on his analysis of the Cambridge Study of Delinquency, a longitudinal study of 400 white working class boys born in Camberwell in London during the 1950s. This study has not lacked ambition: it draws on diverse elements of existing theories; it attempts 'to integrate: developmental and situational theories' (Farrington, 2002: 680); it proposes a dynamic, processual model to link the elements of the theory; and it purports to explain the five risk factors revealed by the Cambridge Study to be independently related to delinquency, namely, 'impulsivity, low intelligence, poor parenting, a criminal family and socio-economic deprivation' (ibid). Once again, we have an attempt at a general theory that involves both psychological and social elements. However, the four-stage process linking the elements, what Farrington calls

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'energizing, directing, inhibiting and decision-making' (ibid), presumes a subject that is an eclectic mix of the radically different theories the model attempts to integrate, thus reproducing, not transcending, their problems. For example, at the 'energizing' stage, the presumed subject most likely to offend is the one who, in the long-term, desires 'material goods, status among intimates, and excitement' (ibid) and, in the short-term, is easily bored, frustrated, angry and drinks alcohol. This, essentially, is the social subject of 'strain' theory, suffering a disjunction between societal goals (material goods, status, etc.) and the institutional means to achieve them (hence the boredom, frustration, etc.) about whom we shall have more to say in Chapter 3. For now, we need only to point to Farrington's class-based gloss ('The desire for excitement may be greater among children from deprived families, perhaps because excitement is more highly valued by lower-class people' (ibid)) to secure the point.

'In the directing stage, these motivations produce antisocial tendencies if socially disapproved methods of satisfying them are habitually chosen' (ibid: 681). Once again, the socially deprived child with fewer opportunities 'to achieve goals by legal or socially approved methods' (ibid) is the presumed subject. 'In the inhibiting stage, antisocial tendencies can be inhibited by internalized beliefs and attitudes that have been built up in a social learning process as a result of a history of rewards and punishments' (ibid). Here, the presumed subject is the individual subject of control theory (see below), someone with strong or weak self-control depending on how well he or she has 'internalized [socially approved] beliefs and attitudes'. Although the subject is granted an inner world here, it is a very thin one – and one that is produced by a largely behaviouristic view of learning that is not dissimilar to Eysenck's notion of conditioning. 'In the decision-making stage ... whether a person with a certain degree of antisocial tendency commits an antisocial act in a given situation depends on opportunities, perceived costs and benefits, and on the subjective probabilities of the different out-comes' (ibid). At this stage, the presumed subject becomes the rational unitary subject of rational choice theory, weighing up the odds and acting accordingly. The exceptions to the rule are 'more impulsive people' who are somewhat less rational in their calculations (ibid). Finally, the consequences of offending may produce changes in any of the four stages: labelling, for example, may make the socially approved options more difficult and hence increase the antisocial tendency. We shall also discuss in Chapter 3 the inadequacies of the subject of labelling theory.

If the presumed subject is sometimes social, sometimes psychological and broadly rational (when not 'impulsive') he (and despite the references to 'children', the presumed subject is male because the Cambridge Study only included boys) is unremittingly deprived:

[C]hildren from deprived families are likely to offend because they are less able to achieve goals legally and because they value some goals (e.g., excitement) especially highly. Children with low intelligence are more likely to offend because they tend to fail in school and hence cannot achieve their goals legally. Impulsive children, and those with a poor ability to manipulate abstract concepts, are more likely to offend because they do not give sufficient consideration to the possible consequences of offending. Children who are exposed to

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poor parental child-rearing behaviour, disharmony, or separation are likely to offend because they do not build up strong internal controls over socially disapproved behaviour; while children from criminal families and those with delinquent friends tend to build up anti-establishment attitudes and the belief that offending is justifiable. The whole process is self-perpetuating, in that poverty, low intelligence, and early school failure lead to truancy and a lack of educational qualifications, which in turn lead to low status jobs and periods of unemployment, both of which make it hard to achieve goals legitimately.

(ibid: 681–2)

Thus, despite the dynamism implicit in the processual model and the possibility of things turning out differently, this subject who is an amalgam of risk factors is also a very passive, determined one: given a high loading of relevant risk factors, antisocial tendencies arise early and tend to persist; only the particular manifestations change through the life course. Consequently, in spite of his general endorsement of the 'maternal deprivation thesis' (ibid: 675), Farrington tells us little about how developmental processes actually work. This is because, as he himself admits, 'the causal mechanisms linking risk factors and offending' are 'less well established' (ibid: 659). The net result is a theory that emphasizes 'within-individual change over time' – for example, the progress from 'hyperactivity at age two to cruelty to animals at age six, shoplifting at ten, burglary at fifteen, robbery at twenty, and eventually spouse assault, child abuse and neglect, alcohol abuse, and employment and mental health problems later on in life' (ibid: 658) – but explains these different acts in terms of a single 'syndrome of antisocial behaviour that arises in childhood and tends to persist into adulthood ... the antisocial child tends to become the antisocial teenager and then the antisocial adult, just as the antisocial adult then tends to produce another antisocial child' (ibid).

This lumping together of many different crimes as evidence of an antisocial syndrome is a shortcoming we have already outlined in relation to Eysenck's work. In fairness, Farrington defines the syndrome more broadly than Eysenck, including psychological terms like 'impulsivity'; 'attention problems'; 'low intelligence' alongside more socially sensitive measures such as 'school attainment'; 'poor parental supervision'; 'parental conflict'; 'anti-social parents'; 'young mothers'; 'large family sizes'; 'low family incomes'; 'coming from a broken home'; and, the self-evidently biological, 'genetic mechanisms' (ibid: 671–80). But for all the effort to link genetic, social and psychological dimensions the Farrington theory fails to explain how these correlates variously contribute to the 'criminal propensities' the Cambridge Study has purportedly uncovered. Perhaps most oddly for a Professor of Psychological Criminology, what is genuinely psychological, let alone developmental, about Farrington's approach remains unclear even to those most committed to longitudinal criminal careers research (Laub and Sampson, 2001: 44–5).

Control theories: Hirschi and Gottfredson

It is control theory that most problematized the determinism intrinsic in Farrington's formulation. Sampson and Laub (2003: 333) suggest that the notion of an antisocial

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syndrome, whether or not it is meant as some form of criminological shorthand, tends to 'reify offender groups as distinct rather than approximations or heuristic devices' in the minds of policymakers. It was this kind of reification, they point out, that Hirschi's (1969) classic text, *Causes of Delinquency*, sought to overcome.

Like Eysenck and Radzinowicz and King, Hirschi was deeply suspicious of psychoanalysis. Despite the title of his book, Hirschi's interest was less in what caused people to commit crime and more in the social bonds that fostered conformity and compliance. There were four elements of the 'social bond' in Hirschi's original formulation: 'attachment', 'involvement', 'commitment' and 'belief'. Attachment was the driving force behind the other three elements:

The chain of causation is thus from attachment to parents, through concern for the approval of persons in authority, to belief that the rules of society are binding on one's conduct.

(Hirschi, 1969: 200)

Yet what these attachments meant – what they stood for, symbolized, or felt like in the minds of children – was not something that particularly interested him. Hirschi dismissed the research base from which Bowlby's formulations were derived as inadequate (ibid: 87), and argued for a conceptually 'thin' concept of attachment, defined as the child's perception that 'their parents know where they are and what they are doing'. In support of his theory, Hirschi found that the parents of non-delinquents were more likely to know what their children were up to when they were out of view than the parents of delinquents (Downes and Rock, 1998: 241). But Hirschi's data actually suggested that this measure was only a proxy for a more fundamental phenomenon: the child's 'affectional identification' with their parents.

Perhaps the best single item in the present data is: 'Would you like to be the kind of person your mother (father) is?'... As affectional identification with the parents increases the likelihood of delinquency declines.

(Hirschi, 1969: 92).

Given his commitment to empirically-driven research it is remarkable that Hirschi did not develop his analysis of this 'best single item' further. As we understand it, the issue of 'identification' refers to those mental processes that involve imagining parts of ourselves to be similar to, or compatible with, qualities we perceive in others: 'In identification something of the other gets into the subject, and forms him or her in its likeness' (Hinshelwood, 1994: 70).

This process, which inevitably involves both conscious and unconscious dynamics, helps explain how it is that children, despite their own claims to be different from their mothers and fathers, often adopt attitudes that their parents hold, even when their parents have drummed it into them that they should not make the 'same mistakes' they did. It is also through the process of identification that people form new bonds: bonds that may, in certain circumstances, compensate for the emotional unavailability of primary carers; bonds that might enable the feelings of vulnerability and rage that Bowlby's research suggested emotional deprivation could cause to be redressed.

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Hirschi moved even further away from the subjective dimensions of criminal motivation in his subsequent work. Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) *A General Theory of Crime*, took up the idea, also manifest in Farrington's work, that something like a stable criminal propensity exists. In *A General Theory*, this propensity was conceptualized as 'low control', defined as a tendency to pursue a range of 'risky', 'insensitive' and 'impulsive' behaviours – driving fast, gambling, truanting and smoking – of which crime is just one manifestation (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990: 90). Yet their neglect of the subjective dimension creates a conceptual problem for Gottfredson and Hirschi, who ultimately fall back on 'in-effective child-rearing' defined along four lines for their explanation of 'low self-control':

First, the parents may not care for the child ...; second, the parents ... may not have the time or energy to monitor the child's behavior; third, the parents ... may not see anything wrong with the child's behavior; finally, even if everything else is in place, the parents may not have the inclination or means to punish the child.

(ibid: 98)

To make this explanation work, the child's own perspective has to disappear from view. In *A General Theory* the child is either acted upon or not acted upon by its parents, depending on their levels of care and energy, moral integrity and/or inclination to punish. It does not matter how the child responds to its parents for it has no agency. And so it no longer matters if there is any attachment, let alone 'affectional identification'. It is not so much that social bonding has replaced the need for an adequate theory of the subject; rather the complexity of both social and psychic dimensions has been unduly neglected.

**The life course perspective and the problem
of desistance: Sampson and Laub**

For Sampson and Laub the age-crime invariance thesis (the idea that criminal propensity remains a stable property of people throughout their lives) is simply not supported by the empirical evidence. Their first study, *Crime in the Making*, demonstrated convincingly that the notion of stable criminal propensities was an over-simplification of most offenders' criminal careers (Sampson and Laub, 1993). Analysing the data sets initially collected by the Gluecks for their study *Unravelling Juvenile Delinquency*, Sampson and Laub explored the criminal careers of 500 men, all born in the 1930s, and identified as delinquents during their childhoods (Glueck and Glueck, 1950). The Gluecks interviewed their research participants at the ages of 14, 25 and 32. Having reanalysed the Gluecks' dataset, Sampson and Laub were able to show that there was both continuity and change in many of the delinquents' lives. As both the Farrington theory and *A General Theory* predict, adolescent problems with drink and drugs, family life and crime tended to continue into adult life even amongst the Gluecks' desisters: '[t]hose entering adulthood with a history of early trouble and vulnerability exhibit a 70 per cent

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higher rate of offending than low risk adolescents' (Laub and Sampson, 2006: 262). But even those with a history of early trouble witnessed changes in their criminal trajectories in adulthood – stable employment, military service and marriage, in particular, signalling turning points away from crime and periods of stability.

Sampson and Laub (1993) explained this complexity in terms of what they called an 'age-graded theory of informal control'. Briefly, their central hypothesis was that the social bonds that link people to each other and social institutions change over the life course, and can become stronger when people become invested in their work or their families. Responding to one of their critics' claims that they had remained overly wedded to a 'variable-based analysis' (ibid: 8), Laub and Sampson (2006) pursued life-history interviews with 52 participants from the original sample as they reached the age of 70. Tellingly, this new life-history data revealed the Gluecks' respondents to be a much more troubled population than the previous analyses had acknowledged. Their criminal careers were often much more 'messy and complicated', and the narratives of over one-third of the participants were 'filled with noticeably more pathos, pain and personal destruction' than had hitherto been acknowledged (ibid: 196–7). Laub and Sampson's analysis of this new data set nonetheless confirmed much of their original hypothesis. It also, however, revealed that the particular utility of the notion of 'attachment' in explaining why some men were able to desist from crime whilst their contemporaries, matched in terms of childhood problems and social demographic characteristics, persisted:

The persistent offender seems devoid of connective structures at each stage of the life course, especially involving relationships that can provide informal social control and social support. Men who desisted from crime led rather orderly lives, whereas the life of the persistent offender was marked by frequent churning, almost as in adolescence. Surely part of this chaos reflects an inability to forge close attachments or make any connection to anybody or anything.

(ibid: 194)

Disappointingly, Laub and Sampson have yet to provide a full theorization of the significance of this 'inability to forge close attachments' and tend to contradict themselves on the extent to which psychological change was involved in the desistance they noticed. Whilst many desisters had acquired a 'degree of maturity' Laub and Sampson perceive the significance of this primarily in terms of 'family and work responsibilities' and the concomitant change of 'routine activities' such responsibilities necessitate (ibid: 147). Likewise, Laub and Sampson note how their desisters 'forged new commitments, made a fresh start, and found new direction and meaning in life' (ibid), but explain this discovery of new meaning almost exclusively in terms of a rational weighing up of the odds, or otherwise 'situated choice': 'Before they knew it, they had invested so much in marriage or a job that they did not want to risk losing their investment' (ibid). We would not want to underplay the significance of such investments nor deny that people routinely and rationally weigh them up. But we would also point out that for most the calculation defies rational logic,

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such investments being unavoidably emotional. Some of Laub and Sampson's desisters admit as much, highlighting the considerable 'ambivalence' their new statuses as 'family men' aroused in them (ibid). One reason Laub and Sampson do not make more of this is that they expected their participants to be able to explain why they came to 'turning points', a questionable assumption given the revelation that 'unconscious' choices were very often at stake (ibid: 225). As Laub and Sampson later concede: 'We agree that offenders can and do desist without a conscious decision to "make good"... and offenders can and do desist without a "cognitive transformation"' (ibid: 279). What cannot be explained consciously is then attributed to the unconscious without further theorization of the links between the two:

In our life-history narratives, one thus sees strong evidence for both will/human agency and 'commitment by default' (H. Becker 1960), often in the same man's life. In other words, there is no escaping the tension surrounding conscious action and unconscious action generated by default.

(ibid: 281)

Conclusion

We take this admission of the significance of both conscious and unconscious action as evidence that it is necessary to assume a conflicted human subject – not necessarily rational in all their choices and by no means stable in their propensity to act in criminal or non-criminal ways. For us, Laub and Sampson's conclusion underlines the necessity of an adequate account of this conflicted criminal subject. The shortcomings Laub and Sampson identify in more conventional psychological approaches reveals that criminology ought no longer to dodge this issue. When offender types are reified in policy discourses the effects on people's lives are real, unjust and counter-productive, and the positive effects significant others can have on those at risk of criminal involvement are overlooked. As Bowlby pointed out, this was no less true of the earlier Freudian approaches to crime. But whatever the shortcomings of the early psychoanalytic criminology, its sensitivity to the issue of 'mental conflict' was not misplaced. Rather, what was needed was a more thoroughgoing attempt to free psychoanalysis from the discourses of psychopathology; greater commitment to empirical analysis; a more radical rethinking of the relationships between conscious and unconscious dynamics, including 'intra'- and 'inter'-subjective processes and 'identity formation' and 'identification'; and a more complex understanding of the subject's relation to the social world. This last, of course, is the province of the sociological tradition in criminology, to which we now turn.