

liberties issues that this presents. This book highlights not only 'stranger danger' but also the predominance of sexual offending by perpetrators who are known to the victim and reviews some initial steps towards public protection.

This is an interesting and balanced introduction to the issue of sex crimes at the turn of the 21st century. This book will certainly be added to the reading list I give to my students to provide a context and broader perspective to the assessment and treatment of sex offenders.

Mark Colvin

Crime and Coercion: An Integrated Theory of Chronic Criminality
Palgrave: New York, 2000. 216 pp. (incl. index). \$49.95
ISBN 0-312-23389-2 (hbk)

• Reviewed by David R. Karp, Skidmore College, New York, USA

Mark Colvin, in *Crime and Coercion*, joins a recent trend by articulating a new general theory of crime. In this version, an integrated theory of crime is organized around two central dimensions of social control, coercion and consistency. Whether or not these are 'the' central dimensions in the explanation of all crime, this book provides a compelling argument for their inclusion in the top rungs of the ladder. Nevertheless, this is a theoretical account, and their ultimate acceptance will have to wait upon empirical validation.

Colvin builds upon his earlier 'integrated structural Marxist theory' which argues that various institutional arrangements, but particularly class-based labour markets, are coercive in their exercise of social control. Such coercion produces alienated social bonds and chronic delinquency. Expanding upon the coercion hypothesis, Colvin analyses the nature of coercion, and argues that it is a key missing ingredient in other general theories of crime.

Colvin is positing a general theory of crime because he believes it can explain 'exploratory' street offending (generally infrequent and less serious), 'chronic' street offending (persistent and more serious) and white-collar crime. He places his work in the context of several other general theories, particularly Agnew's general strain, Gottfredson and Hirschi's self-control, Akers' social learning, Cullen's social support and Tittle's control balance. Notably absent, but one that could also capably inform Colvin's theory is Braithwaite's shame theory.

Colvin describes his theory as one of 'differential coercion' since it focuses on variation in the intensity of coercion and the consistency of its application. He links micro and macro levels of influence by differentiating between 'interpersonal coercion' and 'impersonal coercion'. Interpersonal coercion is defined as 'the use of threat of force and intimidation aimed at creating

compliance through fear' (p. 5). This form of coercion is directly applied at the individual level and involves the potential or real use of force or the potential or real removal of social supports. Impersonal coercion is defined as 'the pressure arising from structural arrangements and circumstances that seem beyond individual control, such as economic and social pressure caused by unemployment, poverty, or competition among businesses or other groups' (p. 5). Such macro-level coercion operates indirectly on individuals by creating 'a sense of desperation' or anomie.

Colvin's differential coercion theory is organized by two central dimensions. First, individual and institutional social control varies by the intensity of coercion, ranging from non-coercive to highly coercive. Second, control varies by the consistency of its application, ranging from highly consistent to highly erratic. Social control, therefore, is manifested in four ways, each representing a quadrant in his two-dimensional model. With an unfortunate lack of creativity, Colvin describes these as Type 1, Type 2, Type 3 and Type 4. I am not intending to be facetious here, because each of these types do seem to represent recognizable styles of control, and Colvin's argument could be strengthened by a prose that, through metaphor, captures the essence of these styles. If a descriptive nomenclature does not ring true, then his theory loses face validity. I suspect it would survive such a simple test.

Type 1 refers to the combination of consistent and non-coercive, and is the one Colvin advocates. The final chapter provides a set of policy recommendations for the reduction of coercion, and the list is a familiar liberal one—improved parenting, better schools, supportive workplaces and community justice approaches to policing, courts and corrections. Type 2 refers to the non-coercive, erratic domain. This is characterized by permissiveness, and Colvin predicts that such social control will lead to exploratory street crime or white-collar crime. Type 3 refers to consistent, coercive social control that he predicts will lead to self-directed anger, mental health problems, but little criminal behavior. Type 4 is the most criminogenic—coercive and erratic—because it produces other-directed anger and defiance. Interestingly, the distinction between Type 3 and Type 4 may explain gender differences in criminality since females are more likely to experience Type 3 control, while males Type 4.

While Colvin's analysis is lucid and clearly draws upon established criminological traditions and while its terminology provides continuity to a theory organized around a singular concept, I was never fully convinced that coercion is the best term for describing the great range of theoretical issues embraced in this (or any other) general theory. As the current generation of criminologists strives for a parsimonious account of crime, I increasingly worry about reductionism, oversimplification and overgeneralization framed by each theorist's particular ideological perspective. If Colvin's account does not win the race, or if such a race cannot be won, his attempt certainly deserves as much attention as the aforementioned theories, and effectively makes coercion an important new sensitizing concept.