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Book Review: Psychosocial Criminology: An Introduction

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Gadd, D., & Jefferson, T. (2007). *Psychosocial criminology: An introduction*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage. ISBN: 978-1-4129-00799. Price: \$54.00 (Paperback) 34.36 (Kindle Edition).

Review by Roger Schaefer, Washington State University

In their 2007 book, *Psychosocial Criminology: An Introduction*, David Gadd and Tony Jefferson address issues of criminology and criminality while also offering discussions of gender, race and restorative justice. The book opens with a discussion summarizing the unique aspects of the psychosocial approach to criminology. By way of the summary, the authors illustrate the various shortcomings of mainstream criminological theory while highlighting the need for their psychosocial approach. As articulated by Gadd and Jefferson, the psychosocial perspective suggests that criminality can be understood only through its relationship to what the authors identify as the psychosocial processes. Unlike previous versions of the psychosocial framework that relied on psychological and social variables and measurements, these essential psychosocial processes presented in the book contextualize criminality within the lived experience of the offender. Such contextual and experiential emphasis illuminates the necessity of a qualitative approach, specifically case studies, to gain a comprehensive understanding of criminality. Further support for their perspective is expressed in their discussion of its intellectual lineage and the evolution of psychological perspectives including the work of humanistic scholars such as Hans Toch and Jack Katz.

In chapter three, Gadd and Jefferson offer a typology that places socially-based criminological theory into four categories: ecological, strain, labeling and phenomenology. The authors' critique of Merton's notion of strain or anomie is based on his structural emphasis. Gadd and Jefferson argue that by focusing exclusively on structural forces, Merton fails to account for human agency, whereas the psychosocial approach does. Although the authors prize the sophistication of symbolic interactionism, they criticize labeling theory because it fails to account for differential responses amongst individuals,

which is strength of Gadd and Jefferson's perspective. The authors' discussion of phenomenology focuses on experiential and contextual dynamics as the core of such a perspective, which in-turn offers support for the authors' unique approach to criminology.

In fourth chapter, Gadd and Jefferson establish a gender-based lens through which to view the individual. Using gender to illustrate the complexities of social reality, the authors support their perspective by discussing Foucault's articulation of the development of subjective reality. From this perspective, truth or experienced reality of the individual is not constructed within a vacuum; rather it is the product of social discourse. Building on their notion of gender as a social construct, Gadd and Jefferson provide a sophisticated discussion of the complex relationship between gender and sexuality and how this relationship fosters the societal adoption of these constructs. Within the constraints of a phallogentric and patriarchal society, value as an assigned meaning, is reserved for those characteristics associated with masculinity. In an effort to explain social preoccupation on masculinity, the authors provide a discussion of Freud's psychosexual development; arguing that outside of patriarchy, Freud's approach to gendered authority is erroneous. Moving away from Freud, the authors summarize the work of more contemporary authors who examine the psychosocial development of individual during infancy. The psychosocial perspective view of gender and gendered authority then becomes the wedding of the social constructionist view and the gender neutral perspective which focuses on early separation, anxieties, and childrearing practices.

In chapter, the presence of social anxiety, defensiveness and fear of crime is addressed as an ever-changing social phenomenon. The authors begin by discussing the inherent paradox surrounding fear of crime: young men fear crime the least, yet are victimized the most. This paradox invites methodological criticism from the authors who maintain that quantitative methods fail to account for contextual forces within the social construction of fear of crime. To illustrate the complexities of context and construction, the authors highlight links between political climate, moral panics, racial prejudice and the

growing social dynamic of fear. Through their psychosocial perspective, Gadd and Jefferson offer an avenue of understanding that bridges the gap between the social origins of fear and the emotional responses of the individual. According to the authors, the psychosocial perspective examines fear of crime biographically. As such, the psychosocial method mirrors a phenomenological approach and produces a narrative filled with emotion, experiences and the lived reality of the individual. The benefit of the phenomenological approach in this area is that it eliminates the superficial paradox, allowing the researcher to explore how the person of interest understands his or her own subjective reality.

In chapter six the authors discuss how the psychosocial perspective can be applied to sexual assault. Relying on the general feminist perspective, Gadd and Jefferson discuss rape as an exhibition of personal, social, and masculine dominance. The authors provide qualitative accounts from male rapists suggesting that women often solicited a feeling of inferiority or inadequacy within the perpetrator. Gadd and Jefferson argue that the feelings expressed by these men illuminate a gap in the feminist perspective which fails to account for human agency on the part of the perpetrator. In particular, they identify the gap as a failure to address the anomie created by sexual scripts, social expectations and indirect dialog. The psychosocial perspective then views rape as a reaction to individual feelings related to the self rather than social dominance. Unlike the feminist's theory of rape, the psychosocial perspective can be applied to the various types of rape and victim-offender relationships.

In an effort to further illustrate the scope of this theoretical perspective, chapter seven discusses its application to serial murder. The authors are critical of the methodologies and theories provided by others who have studied serial murder. Consistent with their phenomenological orientation, the authors argue that mainstream theories on serial murder are inadequate due to their inability to provide depth and context. To demonstrate the strength of their perspective, the authors highlight a case study of Jeffery Dahmer. By examining Dahmer from the psychosocial perspective, the authors argue that

the subtle nuances of Dahmer's life can be linked together, thus providing a clearer, more sophisticated understanding of his criminality.

Chapter eight continues to broaden the scope of this perspective by discussing how the psychosocial perspective applies to racially motivated crimes. Using the case study method for which they have advocated throughout their book, Gadd and Jefferson explore the psychosocial dynamics of an adult who engaged in racially motivated violence. The authors maintain that the psychosocial perspective allows for an integration of current theoretical frameworks, thus producing a more-comprehensive understanding of the offender's criminogenic trajectory.

While the psychosocial perspective celebrates epistemological orientation, the authors critique traditional qualitative approaches, arguing that the subject's accounts can be overshadowed or disguised by the researcher's agenda. To demonstrate their point, the authors provide a discussion of Shaw's (1930) book "The Jack-Roller" in which they question the purity of the subject's accounts. Gadd and Jefferson suggest that the subject's statements in interviews may have been coached or directed by the researcher. The authors believe that directing was done to produce an account that supported the social-structural theories of delinquency while circumventing the integration of social-structural and social-psychological theories. Again, the psychosocial perspective is shown to provide a holistic understanding of the subject. Such understanding is important because it increases the utility, or usefulness of related theory.

The authors address the utility of their perspective in chapter ten, suggesting that the psychosocial approach provides the most stable theoretical foundation on which to build effective treatment or intervention modalities. This assertion is based on the individualized, holistic approach to offender treatment that aims to address the multiple forces that construct an individual's criminality. To illustrate their point, the authors provide the reader with three case studies of male perpetrated domestic violence. The case studies show that the social construct of masculinity and the individual experiences of the offender

are problematic. Based on these observations, the authors advocate for psychodynamic treatment rather than the widely popular cognitive behavioral approach.

In chapter eleven the authors bridge the gaps between theory, practice and policy by discussing the policy implications of their perspective. Starting with a discussion of Braithwaite's contributions, the authors show how the notion of shamming fits into the psychosocial perspective. They argue that while the shamming process is social, the experience is manifested psychologically. Although shamming has both components, the strength of the psychosocial perspective is its ability to show the complexities of shamming in a sophisticated manner. This perspective, unlike most mainstream frameworks, does so by examining social nuances as well as the structural, cultural and the intersectional elements of race, class and gender.

The authors conclude their book by offering a summation of their unique criminological perspective. In this final chapter the authors recognize the phenomenological undertone of their perspective. The authors maintain that the psychosocial perspective fills the gap left by Katz's articulation of phenomenological criminology. The relationships between the social and the psychological forces discussed through the numerous cases studies provided, illustrate the complexities of criminality. Rather than dismissing these complexities in the name of parsimony, Gadd and Jefferson have provided a sophisticated theoretical framework that is equipped to address the reality of the human experience within the realm of criminality, deviance and consequences.