

Violence and Value Orientations: an under researched combination

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Abstract

In this paper we will explore the correlation between violent and anti-social activity and (deviant) value orientations. We will describe theories about crime that assume a causal ordering between the two. After a careful literature review, we conclude there is a lack of actor oriented studies of youth violence and anti-social behavior that take account of the meaning that young people bestow on these acts and their interpretations of the social context in which they are undertaken. In order to increase the insight into why young people are violent or anti-social and what it is they are intending to do, we present some preliminary findings of the complexities of the relationship between violence and value orientations in Rotterdam and Antwerp. These findings come from our piloting of a large, international, intercity research (Antwerp, Rotterdam, Birmingham, and perhaps other cities) into violence and anti-social behavior among young people. Subsequently we explore potentially fruitful (new) theoretical approaches that inform an under researched combination / link.

Introduction

Scientific literature reports a growing body of evidence that much of the public's impression / perception of crime is based on ignorance and unnecessary / unfounded fear about the (unruly) intentions of young people acting this way (Smith 2005). There is a general lack of understanding on the part of citizens, often leading to a profound distrust, of the values, intentions and motivations of young people in relation to criminal and anti-social acts. Furthermore, the theoretical approaches that inform contemporary youth justice often do not take account of young people's attitudes. For example, risk and resilience theories adopt the concepts of 'crime' or 'anti-social behaviour' as unproblematic and given and often use risk and protective factors in the design of policies and programmes in isolation of the social context in which these factors come to play. When risk and resilience become the dominant approach underpinning government policy on youth violence and anti-social behaviour, these weaknesses run the danger of undermining the very goal that is to be achieved.

There is currently a lack of studies of youth violence and anti-social behaviour that focus on the meanings that young people bestow on these types of actions and their interpretations of the social context in which they undertake them. In this paper, we review old and new theories of crime which consider value orientations of so-called criminals and investigate the causal ordering / relationship between violent and anti-social activity and (deviant) value orientations that they, implicitly or explicitly, put forward.

This paper subsequently explores the range of attitudes of young people to crime and anti-social activities in Rotterdam and Antwerp. The paper has the following central research question: *What do young people in Antwerp and Rotterdam define as violent and anti-social activities themselves and how do their views connect to their actions?* In doing so we are presenting the preliminary results of the pilot testing of a questionnaire, which then lead us to a discussion of alternative / additional theoretical approaches that allow us to make sense of and explore those findings further.

Method

The University of Antwerp Political and Social Science Department, the University of Birmingham Institute of Applied Social Studies and the University of Rotterdam Pedagogic Department are currently working on a comparative research project on meaning and motive of youth violence and anti-social behavior. These research departments agree that not enough is known about attitudes and intentions of violent and anti-social young people living in the three cities.

In order to answer the central research question in this paper, we have performed a literature review of meta studies (see below for results). Studies have been analyzed on the causal ordering of attitudes, motivations, and behaviors concerning types of offending. The indicators used in the meta studies to measure attitudes, motivations and behaviors have been listed and compared. Four questions are formulated:

- What do the important theoretical perspectives say about the relationship between violence and value orientations?
- Is the causal ordering of value orientations to violence clear in theory and in empirical practice?
- Can another sequence be conceptualized?
- What relevant theoretical perspectives can be used to further increase the understanding of this relationship?

A pilot questionnaire was constructed with relevant and valid indicators and scales for testing questions on the meaning of violent and anti-social activities. It is part of a preliminary research in Antwerp and Rotterdam that serves as a pilot study for a larger quantitative and qualitative research in Antwerp, Birmingham, Rotterdam and possibly other major European cities. The pilot questionnaire was pre-tested several times with young people age 12-15 of all levels of school performance. Different questionnaires and sampling methods were used in Antwerp and Rotterdam in order to both test which type of questions were best understood by school boys and girls of this age group and delivered the best results. Also, different sampling procedures were deployed. In Antwerp, 15 sociology students of the University of Antwerp's Social Science Department, conducted 422 interviews with schoolboys and girls in schools they selected themselves in and around Antwerp. In Rotterdam, 4 teacher students of Rotterdam University of Professional Education asked 107 schoolboys and girls in their teacher practice classes in two schools with different grades in the city of Rotterdam to fill in the questionnaire.

The test instrument employed in this study was a revised version of the measures used by Johnson (1979: 143-162) in his integral theoretical approach of the origins of juvenile delinquency. Relevant theoretical constructs for this paper are: delinquent values, delinquent behavior, parental values, peer influence. Also employed in this study was the measure device used by Schinkel (2005: 304-307) in his studies into the aspects of violence. Relevant theoretical constructs for this paper are: the will to violence and violent behavior.

Both studies focus on the variables correlating to offending behaviour and the development of offending behaviour over time. The study that we intend to perform of which this paper discusses the first results is not oriented towards a causal explanation of the relationship but towards a further quantitative and qualitative exploration of the meaning attached by young people to their activities and the interpretation of the social context of which it is part.

The pilot questionnaire was tested intensively before being delivered to 12-16 year old school children in Antwerp and Rotterdam. The broad ranges of grades and school levels were fully included into the testing phase, both in Antwerp and in Rotterdam. Both questionnaires were filled in within the classroom under the supervision of trained 20+-year-old students. School children were not allowed to discuss the questions with each other. They could ask the students for clarification of questions. They could also write down comments on the quality and quantity of the questions.

Given the pilot phase of the study, descriptive statistics (frequencies and cross tabs) were used to analyze the results. The research material consists of indicators to measure the following concepts:

- Attitudes: How wrong do you think it is ... / is or is it not violent or anti social ...
- Motivations: Do you agree or disagree with these statements ...

- Behavior: How often do you ...
- Victim/Offender position: Have you been the victim of ... How often did you do ...?

Results

Here we will describe the results of our preliminary study. We will present the literature that we studied in section A and the empirical data we collected ourselves in section B.

A. Literature review

-Strain theory, subculture theory, and control theory

In a classical study into the causes of delinquent behavior, Johnson (1979) presents three theoretical perspectives: *strain theory*, *subculture theory* and *control theory*. Each theory gives different explanations as to how young people become offenders. Strain theory of delinquency is based on Merton's (1938) influential typology of goals-means discrepancies. In this theory young people are driven to delinquency in reaction to frustrations over unsatisfied wants. In subculture theory young people are seen as participating and socializing in groups with deviant values and behaviors and consequently developing likewise values and behaviors (Cohen 1955). In control theory, the lack of (emotional) bonds is seen to be the principal cause of criminal behavior (Hirschi 1969).

Each of these theories stresses differently the importance of personal or group value orientations on the prevalence of criminal activity. Subculture theory makes a distinction between mainstream socialization (middle class culture) and underclass socialization as separate sets of rules, norms and values that legitimize certain types of actions. Delinquent values are considered to be a variable with primary influence (Johnson, 1979: 139). Strain theory stresses the frustrating social circumstances that drive people to perform activities with illegitimate means to strive for legitimate goals. Young people seek to adapt the means or use alternative ones to be able to conform to established goals. Delinquent values are a variable with little importance (ibid). Control theory points to individual variation in the bonding to conventional society (attachment to others and commitment to rules) that can lead to criminal behavior. Where the bond is strong, conventional behavior is likely to occur; where the bond is weak, the opposite will likely happen. In this theoretical approach delinquent values are a variable with a moderate or indirect effect (ibid).

Whilst strain and subculture theories are essentially motivational theories, control theory is concerned with the factors that prevent deviance. Thus whilst all three theories assume a causal ordering between attitudes and delinquent behaviors several questions are posed: Do attitudes and orientations indeed precede behaviors or activities, or are they the result of behaviors by the subject and his or her social environment? In addition: are they the result of offending or victimization? Johnson cites Liska (1973) in showing that the causal relationship seems to depend on the type of activity. Empirical data are far from decisive / conclusive (compare Deutscher (1966), Wicker (1969) and Albrecht & Carpenter (1976) for views on the complex relation between attitudes and offending behavior). Johnson himself concludes that delinquent values have a total causal effect of .20 on delinquent behavior. Let us have a look at more contemporary theoretical constructs and see what these have to say about the relationship between values and behaviors.

-Risk & resilience, rational choice, and the will to violence

What can we say about the relationship between violence and value orientations in risk & resilience theories, rational choice theories and the will to violence theories?

-risk & resilience

Despite a wealth of research (Kemshall (2003); David Farrington (1996); Peter McCarthy, Karen Laing & Janet Walker (2004); Prior & Paris (2004); Hawkins (1999); Graham & Bowling (1995a; 1995b); Campbell & Harrington (2000); Roberts & Singh (1999); Vulliamy & Webb (1999); Vennand et al (1997); Harrington (2000)), there remains only a limited

understanding about the association of risk and protective factors to later offending and anti-social behavior. A number of longitudinal studies have identified several factors that are seen to correlate to future offending, yet there remains little clarity over causation. The efforts are on securing social bonding and subsequently the adoption of healthy beliefs and clear standards, which in turn will lead to 'healthy behaviors'. This is illustrated in the diagram below (Hawkins 1999):

Figure 1 The Social Development Strategy



The suggestion is that healthy beliefs and clear standards, derived from community cohesion act as a screen for negative behaviors. The arrows indicate the causal ordering, from beliefs and standards to behaviors.

Risk and resilience type of thinking draws heavily upon Travis Hirschi's (1969) social control theory. The Youth Justice Board (2003) in England and Wales bases risk-assessment amongst other instruments on 'Perception of self and others', 'Thinking and behavior', 'Attitudes and behavior', and 'Motivation to change', all of which fit in the category of meanings and motivations. The eventual 'risk score' of a young boy or girl is based for 33% on attitudes (a maximum of 16 points out of 48). Central to Hirschi's approach is the idea of 'bonding', presented as 'attachment to others; commitment to the rules of conventional society; involvement in conventional institutions; and a belief in the legitimacy of conventional rules.' A weakening of these social control mechanisms is seen to lead to criminal behavior. Hirschi therefore argues that the stronger a person is bonded to society, the less likely he or she is to break the law or act in an anti-social manner. Delinquent values are a variable with a moderate or indirect effect. Such logic however, oversimplifies the complex relationship between attitudes and action, and suggests an inherent coherence amongst a tangible community to which a young person can adhere. In reality notions of culture, values and norms, and thus perceptions of what constitutes 'healthy behavior' are contestable.

-rational choice

Rational choice theory starts from the premise that human beings are rational actors and that all action can be studied as rational acts. Individuals are motivated to act when the benefits of certain activities outweigh the costs. In the area of crime, the decision of an individual to act within or outside social expectations or rules is considered to be driven by (possibly unconscious) calculation of the costs and benefits alternative behaviors. It may well be a rational decision to break or not follow rules/conventions when the rewards are seemingly (or factually) high and the costs are low. Rational choice theory, when taken to its extreme, may argue there is no such thing as a senseless act of violence or anti-social behavior.

In rational choice theory it is important to understand how the individual perceives the possible future rewards or damages of his or her criminal actions and which course of actions will benefit most. If the result of rule abiding activities is perceived more positively than the result of rule breaking activities, then the individual will choose rule following activities and vice versa. The most common justifications given to deviate from socially accepted paths are: the need to draw attention to an issue; the deservingness of the cause; the strength of feeling of the protestors; and the need to challenge an unfair law. This type of thinking is closely connected with the *motivation and opportunity theory* of crime. Figure 2 below has elaborated on this type of reasoning with a third step: *to dare* deviate from the accepted paths (Elffers, H, P. Van der Heijden & M. Hezemans 2004. 'Explaining regulatory compliance.' *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*).

Figure 2 Rational choices: want (motivation), can (opportunity), dare (action).

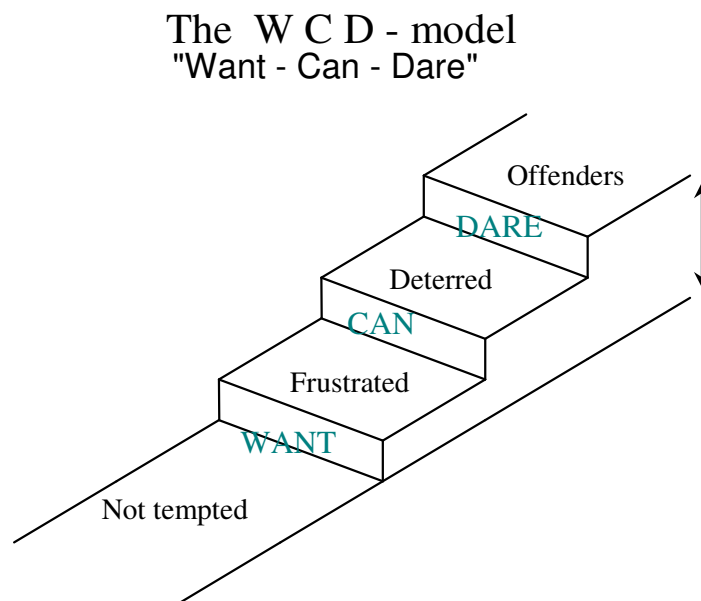


Figure 2 (taken from: Elffers, 2000)

Using the metaphor of steps, one might argue that if the total height of the three steps is made very high (unfavorable), few people will break rules. Rational choice theory hypothesizes: in step 1, people who have their desires fulfilled are not tempted; in step 2, people who are not frustrated in their goals do not want to break the rules; and in step 3, people who are deterred from breaking rules cannot or dare not break them. Thus, only offenders want, can and dare to break the rules. They estimate the possible costs to be worth the possible benefits. As such delinquent values are a variable with little importance in this model.

This theoretical approach is however criticized by institutional theory (Dulk 2001, *Work Family Arrangements in organizations. A cross-national study in the Netherlands, Italy, the United Kingdom and Sweden*, Rozenberg Publishers) and subcultural theory. It remains extremely difficult to understand why certain people who want, can and dare break rules in fact do not break them. And conversely, certain people who do not want, do not have the

opportunity and do not dare to break rules, sometimes do. Because individuals operate in different circumstances, i.e. institutional conditions and subcultural frames, the personal estimate of costs and benefits of certain activities will vary between individuals and between groups (subcultures).

-will to violence

The concept of the will to violence addresses the intrinsic attractiveness that can be attached to the phenomenon of violence. It goes back to phenomenologist researchers who focus on the (moral) meanings of violence, for instance, Jack Katz's *Seductions of Crime* (1999). In these studies, the violent action or form of violence itself is not reduced to means-ends relations. Instead, the violent event or activity itself is studied. "An aesthetic approach of violence seeks to uncover such intrinsic features of violence. There may be intrinsic features of violence that appeal to a will to violence." (Schinkel, 2004:17) The concept of autotelic violence can best be used here, a violence that serves as its own goal, is self-referential.

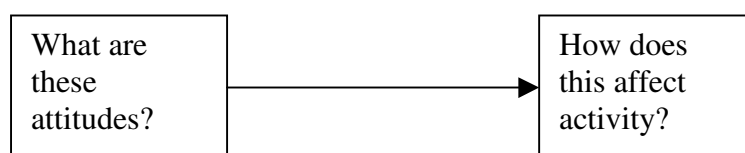
Schinkel has put these questions to empirical testing and presenting the findings here is interesting because they are so new. Schinkel constructed a scale of 8 Likert-items measuring one factor (the will to violence: Cronbach's alpha is .85), covering 51,6% of the total variance. This variable (the will to violence, the use of violence for the sake of itself) was related to the actual use of violence by the young people in his sample. A 15 items scale of violent behavior was constructed covering 36,4% of total variance. The correlation between the scores on the scale of violent behavior and the scale of the will to violence is .58. The variable 'will to violence' thus explains nearly 34 percent of the variance of the variable of the total of violent behavior (ibid, 307).

From these three currently influential concepts in modern criminology, neither the risk theory of healthy beliefs nor the rational choice theory of possible benefits does adequately help to understand the context dependent meanings attached to violence and anti-social activities by young people. The will to violence theory addresses the violent act itself in order to understand its inherent meanings. However, the theory does not speak of the context dependent interpretations of legitimate violence as seen from the eyes of the young offender. Therefore, we state that there is a lack of studies of youth crime that focus on or even take account of the meaning that young people bestow on these acts and their interpretations of the social context in which they are undertaken and adequately explain the causal ordering of violence and value orientations. What do so-called violent and anti-social activities mean to young people? Why do they engage in them?

B. Empirical data Antwerp and Rotterdam:

Given these questions we might consider the following exploration of the attitudes of young people regarding violent, criminal and anti-social behaviour described in figure 3.

Figure 3. Conceptualisation



Beneath, we will test this model with the data we obtained from the Antwerp and Rotterdam pilot questionnaire. One should keep in mind that the sampling procedures and the instruments used to obtain these data are still being tested. Results are therefore not generalisable. In the 'method' section we have described how we obtained data from 422 schoolboys and girls from schools in and around Antwerp and 107 schoolboys and girls in

two schools with different grades in Rotterdam. We use the pilot data to shed light on the relationship between attitudes and activity, further studying the theories and arguments given above.

-Rotterdam

I. How wrong is it to...?

We were interested to find out how the respondents classify so-called violent and anti-social situations, what their attitudes are, whether they have ever acted this way themselves, and have ever been the victim of such actions. First, we asked them to give a normative judgment on activities – grouped around themes like vandalism, stealing, fighting, threatening and pestering – on the criteria of ‘wrong’, ‘a little wrong’ and ‘not wrong’. Next, we asked them if they ever actively participated in such activities and how they experienced them, from fun and exciting to scary. We will describe the results below, starting with vandalism. In each section, we will compare the judgments of boys and girls.

a. Vandalism

A combination of five items on forms of vandalism shows moderate homogeneity of .67. Around 25 percent of our respondents stated that damaging public objects and objects that belong to somebody else (cars, buildings, toilets, seats in a train or bus, traffic signs) is a little wrong or not wrong. Damaging cars and buildings is considered to be just a little wrong by 5 percent of the respondents. Damaging seats in public transport is more accepted: 16 percent. In comparison, relatively more girls than boys (correcting for the fact that our sample consists of 56 percent boys and 44% girls) consider it a little wrong or not wrong (keep in mind the small sample size).

b. Stealing

A combination of eight items of stealing shows good homogeneity of .88. Stealing in some form is a little wrong or not wrong according to 21 percent. More people think stealing from a house, a school, or shop is not wrong or a little wrong (around 10 percent) compared to stealing from a purse, pick pocketing, grabbing somebody’s bag (around 5 percent). Stealing from classmates (around 15 percent). In comparison, relatively more girls than boys consider stealing from classmates a little wrong or not wrong (again keep in mind the small sample size).

c. Fighting and threatening

The moral attitudes towards fighting, threatening and carrying weapons show a different pattern. In total, 42 percent of the respondents judge fighting, threatening and carrying weapons as a little wrong and 2 percent as not wrong. A combination of eight items of fighting and threatening with physical violence shows homogeneity of .84. Participating in a fight is a little wrong or not wrong according to 40 percent. Beating up somebody is not wrong or a little wrong according to 27 percent. Fighting within your own group is considered not wrong or a little wrong according to 30 percent. In comparison, more boys than girls consider fighting and threatening with physical violence a little wrong or not wrong (again keep in mind the small sample size).

((If we have a quick look at our respondents reports of actual fighting: 55 percent of the respondents have at least once participated in a fight. Twice as many of them considered this exciting, compared to scary. A majority of the boys say they fight now and again (65%). In comparison, 43 percent of the young ladies fight now and again. Can fighting be considered an accepted activity (in attitudes towards it and actual behavior) among young people? It definitely seems that a better insight into this type of attitudes and activities requires additional life world research.))

d. Teasing and pestering

A combination of three items of teasing other people shows moderate homogeneity of .70. In total, 44 percent of the young people in our research consider teasing others as a little wrong or not wrong. An even distribution of people consider teasing shop personnel or owners, persons in the community and other classmates as a little wrong or not wrong at all (35 percent). Relatively more boys than girls consider teasing from classmates a little wrong or not wrong (again keep in mind the small sample size).

We can see that the pattern is not very consistent. Sometimes activities are considered less or not violent / anti-social (normal?) by girls and some by boys. We cannot conclude that this is caused by one category filling in the questionnaire more honestly.

How wrong is it to...?	homogeneity	% not wrong	% boys/girls
Steal	.88	21 %	more girls than boys
Fight	.84	44%	more boys than girls
Tease	.70	44%	more boys than girls
Destroy	.67	25%	more girls than boys

II. 'Fun'-thesis

We used a tested instrument (Schinkel 2005) to increase our understanding of the role that fun and excitement play in violent and anti-social activities. We tested how the respondents react to statements on a five point Likert scale from total disagreement to total agreement.

A real 'flying kick' and occasionally hitting a person were considered fun by about 40 per of the respondents. Fewer respondents agreed with the statements: arguing is better than talking, violence on TV is fun, and being violent makes you feel good (around 15%). More boys enjoy physical violence than girls. This Likert scale constitutes one factor: the will to violence. It has a scale reliability of .82 (Cronbach's alpha). In Schinkel's research with a little over 600 respondents it was .86. *Our sample is too small to justify any conclusions from the analysis of the relationship between the scores on the scale of violent behavior and the scale of the will to violence.*

It turned out that the concept of 'flying kick' is not familiar to every respondent. We have also observed that the scale may theoretically be improved by adding additional 'negatively' formulated items: I would never be able to enjoy violence, I cannot possibly imagine hitting somebody can be fun.

Is it fun to...?	homogeneity	% fun	% boys/girls
	.82	40%	more boys than girls

III. Have you ever ...?

The 11 items measuring incidence of violent and anti-social activities show good homogeneity (0,94). 46% of the respondents did not do any of the 11 mentioned activities; the rest did it once or more often.

The group of respondents that condemn violent and anti-social activities and still engage in them is interesting for our research. The sample is too small to draw hard conclusions. We can only point at some regularity. Especially the activities of fighting and stealing are actually

done by more people than condemn them. We did not find this pattern with pestering and vandalism. We are unsure how to understand this difference.¹

IV. Attitudes of friends and parents and support

Measures for attitudes of friends and attitudes of parents show moderate homogeneity (.78 for friends) to good homogeneity (.83 for parents). However, the amount of missing values is very high.

Measures for support show a moderate homogeneity (.73 on a three items measuring support for stealing, vandalism and teasing). When we add support with fighting it drops to .59.

Group activity

Our preliminary study confirms the hypothesis that violent and anti-social activities are performed in groups. It turns out that 70% of the respondents were supported by others while performing the violent and anti-social activities.

V. Victimization

How often have you been the victim of ... in the last year? Eight items measuring victimization show moderate homogeneity (.69). It turns out that 33 percent of the respondents have not been the victims of any of these eight items in the past year. Two thirds of our respondents have personally been confronted with these activities once or more in the past year. They classify themselves as victims. More than 80 percent of them do not talk about it with other people. If they do talk about it, it is mostly with friends or with parents/siblings. They do not talk about it at school or with the police (again we have a very high proportion of missing values).

A closer look at the data shows some interesting and predictable (preliminary) results. We asked the respondents who the victim of their activities was. When we asked about fighting, 97 percent of the boys said the victim was a boy, and 83% of the girls said the victim was a girl (N=46). This finding confirms that boys and girls fight within their own sex. When we look at teasing, the percentages change slightly: 87 percent of the boys said the victim was a boy, and 65% of the girls said the victim was a girl (N=43). Although the theory was confirmed (considering the small sample size) that the sexes engage mostly in violent and anti-social behavior within their own group, this seemed to be more the case among boys than among girls. We need to check further if the victims of these actions say the same, because we might be dealing here with problems of social desirable answering of the questionnaire.

Preliminary conclusions from the data from Rotterdam

Two preliminary findings (keeping in mind the small sample size and relatively high proportions of missing values) are of interest to our study:

- *There is a substantial group of respondents that condemn violent and anti-social activities and still engage in them.*

- *Peer pressure (peer support and group activity) is relatively common.*

-Antwerp

¹ Hindelang (1974: 383) says: "The data show quite unequivocally, for a wide variety of acts as well as for several groups of respondents, that those reporting involvement in a particular illegal act are substantially more approving of that act than those who report no involvement". Thus, according to Hindelang, there is no need to postulate temporary "techniques of neutralization" of conventional values (Sykes and Matza, 1957) or "drift" (episodic release from moral constraint; Matza, 1964).

Because of the sample size in Antwerp, we can study (some of) the relationships between (violent) attitudes and behaviors in some more depth. However, we used a different questionnaire in order to test different measures. We made cross tab calculations on the following questions: Have you ever (behaved in such a way) ... and do you think (this behavior) is violent or not? In Antwerp we used a different sampling technique (see above) and a different phrasing of the question (do you consider an act violent or not violent). We found some interesting results.

We asked about fighting and the perception of it. We looked at the category of self-reported victims. It turned out that 46% (N=41) of the respondents in Antwerp that reported they had been the victims of a fight thought this activity to be violent and 54% (N=48) thought it not to be violent. In comparison, 60% (N=173) of the respondents who were never the victim of a fight thought it to be violent and 40% not (N=113). This is a result different from what we expected. We expected more victims of (this form of) violence to consider the act violent. Instead, we found that both victims and offenders of violence frequently consider such actions not violent. Consequently, more young people who have been in a fight, either as offender or as victim, state this activity is not violent. Are the respondents reporting non-serious events? Are they overreporting victimization? Or are the victims the very ones who are regularly involved in fights or even start fights themselves? We do not know the answer.²

We also looked at another form of offending: stealing. It turned out that both 45% of the young people who were robbed and were not robbed, considered stealing to be violent. Again, this is not what we expected. We expected more victims of (this form of) violence to consider the described act 'violent'. Again, the data raise doubt on the specific meaning of the activity that is being reported.

Peer pressure is an important intervening variable in the complex relationship between attitudes and activities. Some respondents have participated in actions that their group enjoyed and stimulated while they themselves hated doing it. This may be a strong indication of peer pressure. It may also help to explain why some engage in this activity while still thinking it is 'morally wrong'. As such, this finding could be linked to the finding in Rotterdam that there is a substantial group of respondents that condemn violent and anti-social activities and still engage in them. How do we explain this?

If we look at educational attainment and forms of violence, we find that fewer young people who strive hard to perform well in school participate in fights (either as victim or offender) than those who are not striving/indifferent. When we look at stealing, the difference is even bigger. 25% of the young people who strive for good results in school has ever stolen, compared to 50% of the young people who are indifferent to school results. In all the other items (damaging objects, pestering other children, etc.) the pattern is the same. When we ask if they 'like school or not', the differences in offending become even sharper. In Johnson's study, educational attainment is one of the important variables that explain Violent and Anti-social Activities (-.14 attachment to school and -.11 school performance).

Discussion – the need for a new approach

Some of the above mentioned preliminary results justify the need for a new approach to considering the relationship between behavior and values. Firstly, the differences between the moral judgments on fighting, vandalism, stealing and teasing (activities that young people consider more or less normal in different degrees) need further exploration. Secondly, the differences between boys and girls need some more explaining. Thirdly, the different patterns between young people condemning activities, as wrongful and still performing them, needs

² It seems Hindelang's conclusion of overreporting can be extended to victimization.

some exploration. Fourthly, the relatively high incidence of peer pressure asks for the further theoretical inquiry to address the issues emerging. Whilst the pilot might not offer firm and strong conclusions it clearly throws up issues and problems for traditional theoretical approaches.

Whilst each of the above-mentioned theories stresses differently the importance of personal or group value orientations on the prevalence of criminal activity, the relationship between value orientations and violence is most strongly advocated in subculture theory. Still, we do not know whether attitudes and orientations indeed precede activities. There is no reason to dismiss the idea that values are affected by behavior. When we study the meaning and social interpretation of youth activities this becomes one of the vital questions.

Early literature on delinquency discusses the subject of lack of congruence between norms and practices in society. The classical concepts of 'subterranean values' of Matza and Sykes and 'infraculture' of Empey for instance provide some insight. The view of a monolithic conventional set of conduct norms seems not reasonable according to both researchers. Instead, we should accept the notion of "conflict of values" or "plurality of conduct norms". Adolescents are in social limbo between childhood and adult status, and constitute a form of "leisure class". Adolescents throughout society are open to values and norms favoring adventure, thrills, kicks, conspicuous consumption, easy jobs, and (for boys) proof of masculinity. There is a society-wide concern with "toughness". The practical norms and values of everyday life allow for situational and group based deviation from ideals.

Among adolescents there seems to be a common perception that delinquent behavior is situationally accepted, expected and/or approved by their associates. Alcohol consumption and sexual promiscuity, for instance, are neither highly valued nor rejected, whereas fist fighting appears to be a generally accepted activity as a contrast to 'situationally accepted' activity mentioned in the above. If so, then how do we decide what is situationally or generally accepted? The conclusion may be that delinquent activities may frequently be viewed as consistent with norms and values shared by many young people. These are the sorts of data we want to do further work on. The Rotterdam data seem to confirm our hypotheses of differences between meanings on violent and anti-social activities between young people and grown ups. General normative support for deviant activities can readily be found in conventional society. Situational departure from verbal ideals is not necessarily condemned but is recognized as relatively common and sometimes desirable or necessary. Considering this, there seem to be intermediate variables that affect the relationship between attitudes and activities, in certain situation, among certain social categories.

Jock Young's development of subcultural theory provides a useful means to begin to further explore the complexity of this relationship. Crucial to this is an understanding of 'children's perspectives' in interpreting their worlds, and in particular how they might vary to those of adults (Armstrong, 2003). Indeed without due attention to this variation 'the success of interventions designed to promote their resilient characteristics is likely to be compromised.' (Howard et al 1999). An explanation of children's 'problematic' behaviour as springing from a lack of, or inadequate, socialisation – as the popular phrase 'unruly behaviour' suggests – is reinforced in the area of crime, where common-sense discourses depict criminals as deviant or abnormal individuals. As the social bonding or control theory suggests, a malfunctioning conscience – or the internal policeman, as Durkheim referred to it – and the absence of external control mechanisms allow these individuals to stray into criminal behaviour and be free of the consequences of their behaviour.

This kind of anomic approaches to crime is successfully challenged by subcultural theory. Subcultural theory questions the existence of common norms, the idea that successful socialisation constitutes the key to the survival of social systems and subsequently that those individuals or groups who deviate from the (dominant) norm are to be understood as

unsocialised or pathological human beings. Instead, subcultural theory highlights the sets of alternative norms and values that are developed and reproduced within (systems of) social relationships and which guide the actions of the social actors involved. With regards to the risk and resilience approach to crime, this reinforces the need for more analysis on the perceptions and attitudes of young people involved in crime and anti-social behaviour (which, initially deemed absent, might now be found to be different).

Young (website) defines subculture as 'learned problem solutions.' Structural factors such as age, gender, class, and race, are seen to position individuals such that they face particular societal problems, 'varied and stratified throughout society' (Young, website). There is the need therefore for an understanding of how individuals from the perspective of their cultural frame assess situations, and subsequently how subculture is developed through this response. These groups and individuals therefore evolve particular cultural responses to these particular and uniquely experienced structural problems, rather than producing obvious responses or reflecting past traditions within that group (Lea & Young 1993:80).

Such an approach implies an appreciation of the subjective viewpoint of the individual, as they experience particular factors and circumstances. This approach has been applied to the study of crime and anti-social behaviour. Subcultural theory sees crime as normal behaviour: 'not a product of lack of socialization and culture but of different cultures and values.' (Young, subcultural theory) Thus so-called deviant subcultures

are viewed not as pathological groupings of maladjusted individuals who lack culture, but rather as meaningful attempts to solve problems faced by the individuals concerned. (Lea & Young 1993:77)

This clearly represents a critique of any risk based model that does not assess how children and families experience particular circumstances and therefore act in particular ways, reiterating the need for contextual validity. The instance of (disputably) 'objective' risk factors tells us little without an appreciation of the subjective factor of an individual or group reaction to and interpretation of the situation.

Subcultural theory is therefore critical of the ways in which conventional theories rob the social meaning from criminal or violent acts. In addition, subcultural theory and the theory of criminal embeddedness (Sutherland in McCarthy & Hagan 1995) claim that these conventional theories underestimate the significance of embeddedness in social relations and often fail to recognise that such actions are guided or informed by norms, attitudes and values that persons acquire in those social relationships. Without this appreciation acts of crime, violence and anti-social behaviour are often explained away through the use of terms such as 'mob, psychopath, under socialized, hyper-active, primitive, animal, mindless (as in 'mindless' violence), immature, mad' (Young, website). Thus the observer's perspective is assumed to be dominant, and used to belittle the solutions developed by others.

Instead subcultural theory presents crime as a potential means of manipulating the world, as it is perceived, in order to adapt to exclusion from mainstream achievements. In this regard criminal subcultures are not simply the 'response of automatons to material conditions', but an innovative adaptation 'to situations as they find them with the materials at hand.' (Lea & Young 1993:x)

It is a natural progression from these ideas to question the definition of crime and deviance. It follows that if it is the norms of the community that are being broken, then it is this same 'dominant culture' that is defining the act as deviant. It becomes a quality '*bestowed*' on an act 'by human evaluation', rather than an '*inherent*' description (Young 1999:39). For example, Webber, Bessant & Watts (2003: 249) argue that social actions are not violent until they are interpreted or defined as violence by others. In particular young people are seen to

have little access to discourses about violence even when they are directly involved. Such a subjective perception of crime is seen to brand the activity of particular groups as criminal, whilst portraying others as merely delinquent.

Criticisms of Subcultural Theory

Having welcomed the focus of subcultural theory, we must be cautious in its application. Given the elastic nature of the term 'subculture', used in a wide range of literature to apply to a variety of groupings, there is a danger of oversimplifying the complex activity of groups and individuals by applying convenient labels to it. Portraying such activity as occurring in discrete and observable groupings appears precariously similar to the approaches of administrative criminology opposed by subcultural theorists.

Indeed the use of subcultural theory within cultural studies has been critiqued in recent years by a number of theorists and empiricists, who argue that notions of discrete, bounded subcultures, no longer hold, and therefore call for a postsubcultural analysis. Andy Bennett (1999), Geoff Stahl (1999) and others perceive subcultural theory to be overly focussed on structuralist accounts, based on factors such as gender, race and in particular class, leading to a theorisation of coherent subcultures. Such a focus is seen to 'neglect the complexities of identity formation, failing to assess the multiple determinations and motivations drawing individuals toward a certain range of subcultural practices.' (Stahl, 1999) Instead postsubculturalists consider groupings to be 'better understood as a series of temporal gatherings characterised by fluid boundaries and floating memberships.' (Bennett, 1999: 600) Thus one must consider the full array of interactions from which an individual develops a cultural frame through which activity and perspective is mediated. Thus the individual's cultural frame may be seen to be derived from multiple and disparate sources within a 'globalised cultural economy' (Stahl, 1999), implying a uniqueness formed by the internalisation of a range of influences, as opposed to a common group identity as is seen to be implied by subcultural theory.

Towards a sociocultural understanding of crime

To respond to the problems identified by postsubcultural theory we are able to draw on sociocultural and activity theory. Activity theory has developed from Vygotskian theory of individual action through cultural mediation, in order to overcome perceived inadequacies of contemporary psychology in explaining the relationship between individual and society. Vygotsky developed a framework to allow us to begin to understand how people are making sense of their world. This sense making is seen to occur through the dual existence of consciousness and activity, such that the human mind 'comes to exist, develops, and can only be understood within the context of meaningful, goal-oriented, and socially determined interaction between human beings and their material environment.' (Bannon, 1997) These interactions are seen to be culturally mediated 'in the sense that humans use concepts and tools that the society has developed during its history.' (Virkkunen and Kuutti, 2000, p.298) These concepts and tools are seen to be historically constituted, thus recognising that the use of these tools is shaped in and by the cultures in which they are used, and that all such use of tools is therefore historically grounded.

Thus Vygotsky offers us a framework for considering human actions in relation to cultural artefacts, suggesting a subject-object oriented analysis focusing on the tools developed by the actor to work on the object of activity. This suggests that the action of an individual is only made meaningful if it is understood in the context of the collective activity, and that it is through the collective activity that individuals' actions are mediated.

Activity is taken to be a collective endeavour necessarily based on an identified need or motive, giving way to an object. All activity is connected to an object: 'there is no such thing as objectless activity' (CATDWR website, Activity System, last accessed 26/10/04), although this object is not necessarily consciously known to the individual. Activity is then realised

through individual or collective actions, or chains of actions. These actions, as defined by Vygotsky, can be seen to be geared towards particular, conscious goals, connected to the overall object of activity. These goals are 'images of the foreseen result of the creative effort' (Davydov, 1999, p.39). In turn actions consist of automatic operations, determined by conditions and tools available. Operations can be routinized and unconscious. (CATDWR website, CHAT, last accessed 26/10/04; Decortis et al, website; Engestrom & Mettinen, 1999). Given the collective nature of activity

the projected outcome is no longer momentary and situational; rather, it consists of societally important new, objectified meanings and relatively lasting new patterns of interaction. It is this projection from the object to the outcome that, no matter how vaguely envisioned, functions as the motive of this activity and gives broader meaning to my actions. (Engestrom, 1999, p.31)

The application of activity theory to the study of crime and deviance therefore presents criminal or anti-social behaviour as merely an action forming an element of wider activity motivated by an attempt to deal with a problem space. The action of crime or deviance must therefore be explored in relation to the collective cultural frame in which it takes place, and may be seen to be unmotivated or inexplicable without reference to the object, the actions of others, and mediating factors. The unit of analysis is therefore not the act itself but the mediated interaction between individual and environment that results (or does not result) in that person carrying out a criminal or anti-social act in order to work towards the object. Thus, whilst being of interest due to the nature of the action, the study of crime should in fact be the study of object-oriented activity that develops such that a criminal act is seen to be justified.

Activity theory also addresses the concern noted above regarding the portrayal of crime as occurring in discrete and observable groupings. In contrast activity theory requires the unit of analysis to be the system in which the object-oriented activity is collectively meaningful. The focus must therefore be on the concrete situation: the domain of shared understanding where a locally held meaning holds true. Furthermore activity theory is guided by an appreciation of the multivoicedness of any such activity, even within a seemingly homogenous group (Engestrom, 2001).

Conclusion

The above discussion suggests a need to understand attitudes and concepts of crime from the historical, sociocultural perspective of the individual or peer group under investigation. This is not to deny the importance of risk and protective factors in predicting negative outcomes and intervening to prevent them, nor is it to deny the nature of criminal or anti-social behaviour as a negative event, given that the subsequent labelling of the offence and the offender by societal institutions constitutes a negative outcome in itself. Instead this approach seeks to build on the pathways model by considering the historically constituted, sociocultural nature of activity, and to develop this further by focusing not on the act of criminal or anti-social behaviour, but the collective, object-orientated activity of which it is a part. This approach seeks to understand the perspective on what constitutes crime and anti-social behaviour held by the young person, and the subsequent influence of his or her perceptions on actions, as a means to explore notions of risk and protection and thus prevent negative outcomes.

In doing so we believe such an approach has the potential to address the issues raised within this paper and this to explore the correlation between violent and anti-social activity and (deviant) value orientations. In particular several questions emerge from the above discussion that we shall seek to address:

- How can we understand why groups of respondents reporting involvement (as an offender and as victim) in a particular illegal act are more approving of that act than those who report no involvement?
- How can we understand how and when certain behavior is seen to be situationally accepted but generally condemned?
- The more troublesome question about the role of delinquent values is one of causal ordering. Do personal attitudes and outlooks regarding certain behaviors precede or result from the degree of participation in those behaviors? Furthermore what other values might shape or override those regarding the acceptance of anti-social or violent behavior?

We will further elaborate on this under-researched combination when the University of Antwerp Political and Social Science Department, the University of Birmingham Social Policy Department and the University of Rotterdam Pedagogic Department start a comparative research on meaning and motive of youth violence and anti-social behavior.

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He has been actively involved in evaluations of urban renewal policy, citizens' participation, and urban policy. He evaluated the legalisation of prostitution and illegality for the Dutch Ministry of Justice. Also he did extensive work in the field social exclusion, specifically the issues of homelessness, poverty and long-term unemployment, community mediation, and cultures of healthy behaviour in ethnic groups. He (co-) wrote about 60 articles and chapters of books, both in Dutch and English.

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With a first degree in mathematics and a masters in social policy, both obtained from the University of Warwick, his background is in quantitative research methods. Prior to joining the NECF team he was employed at the School of Health & Social Studies, at the University of Warwick, where he was involved in a wide range of projects, including an exploration of the potential for ICT to meet the information needs of carers, a national survey of the use of children's Hospital at Home services, the development of a tool to ascertain the information needs of prostate cancer patients, and the development of social science teaching in postgraduate medical education.

With the NECF team he is currently undertaking an exploration of approaches to the targeting preventative services, and is also engaged in research relating to the provision of preventative services for refugee and asylum seeker children and families.

Nathan is also near completion of a PhD exploring bail supervision and surveillance services as an alternative to custodial remand for young people awaiting trial, reflecting a particular interest in the treatment of unconvicted children within the youth justice system.

Publications of Nathan Hughes

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Part of the fieldwork in South Africa consisted of conducting a pilot study for the ILO IFP/Crisis project *Young Soldiers: Why they choose to fight*. At UNHCR, Hanne worked as an intern on the *Independent Evaluation of the impact of UNHCR's activities in relation to the protection needs and rights of refugee children* and on the revision of the *Action for the Rights of Children* manuals. At the University of Warwick, she was involved in several research projects and worked as a Graduate Teaching Assistant for the Department of Sociology.

At NECF, Hanne is now working on the thematic research in relation to crime and anti-social behaviour, refugees and asylum seekers, and Gypsies and Travellers.