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 protec­
tion.
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
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 explana­
tion 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 it
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
colocation, 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 recommenda­
tions 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
behaviour. 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 criminolo­
gical 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 theo­
rists'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.