FROM THE SECTION CHAIR

Dear CLD Members:

As you are making plans for the summer, I hope that you are including a trip to Chicago in August for the annual meetings. We have a fine lineup of sessions. David Greenberg has set up a panel on “Crime and Deviance in Comparative Perspective,” Mathieu Deflem has arranged for a discussion session on terrorism; and Rachel Bridges Whaley has organized the roundtables. In addition, we have a superb cast for an invited session on the future of the sociology of deviance. Rosemary Gartner, Rob Sampson, and Charles Tittle will give brief presentations on the current state of the field and prospects for the future, which will be followed by remarks from Bob Crutchfield as a formal responder. We’ll then open up the floor for discussion. It should be lively, enlightening, and stimulating. Please try to make it to this session and the others sponsored by the section.

Another treat at the Chicago meetings will be the presentation of the first James F. Short, Jr. Award for a distinguished article. The selection committee, chaired by George Bridges, is hard at work, and they will undoubtedly come up with a highly deserving winner.

The winner of the student paper competition will also be honored at the meetings. And, of course, we’ll have our reception to facilitate informal socializing. All of these are very good reasons to make the trip to the windy city.

Also, let me remind you that the Executive Council has approved a change in section bylaws that will entail the creation of a formal office of “Past-Chair,” which now goes to the membership. If approved, the change will be implemented beginning with the new Chair-Elect. Please be sure to vote on the by-laws change when you receive the regular elections ballot.

Best wishes for an enjoyable and productive spring.

Steve Messner, Chair, 2001-2002

THE STUDENT EDITOR

Jeremy Kerr, University of Kentucky

Walking into a Minefield: Terrorism and Criminological Theory in the Classroom

Since the events of September 11th, undergraduate students in my Deviant Behavior and Criminology courses have raised questions regarding the usefulness of criminological theory for understanding terrorism. The unique nature of terrorism appears to have left some students with the impression that traditional sociological theories of crime are ill-suited to an understanding of the terrorist attacks of September 11th, or terrorism generally. In response, I have grappled with this problem and have come to some provisional answers. I have concluded that at least some of our criminological theories are useful for gaining a better understanding of the ‘causes’ of terrorism. I have shared these conclusions with my students, but
with mixed results.

My use of an electronic discussion board on the World Wide Web has greatly enhanced my ability to communicate with students and it has improved their ability to provide feedback with regard to what is covered in class. Without the use of this tool, it is unlikely that I would have learned as much about students' reactions to my application of criminological theory to terrorism as I have. What has emerged from the message board is the fact that at least some students have difficulties with the implications raised by applying certain criminological theories to terrorism. For example, some students have indicated their perception that I am 'justifying' terrorist attacks by providing a theoretical explanation of them—or that such theoretical explanations are tantamount to providing an "excuse" for terrorists. Likewise, some students have expressed their perception that I appear to be placing the "blame" for the 9/11 attacks on the United States rather than on the terrorists themselves. Discussions of terrorism, much more so than discussions of topics like drug use, prostitution, or corporate crime seem to much more likely to lead students to jump to conclusions about my own ideological or political views—conclusions that are often quite inaccurate. Some students have questioned whether or not I am "anti-American." Others have suggested that I leave the country if I "don't like the United States." These students seem to have confused healthy intellectual discussion and inquiry with having a particular political stance.

I respect my students' reactions to the application of criminological theory to the study of terrorism because the implications of these theories often leave me feeling a bit uncomfortable as well. Viewing terrorism through the lens of conflict criminology, for example, suggests that some forms of terrorism may be at least partly a response to widespread social and economic inequalities which the United States arguably plays a major role in creating and perpetuating. This theoretical approach can indeed be unsettling because it suggests that our economic and social policies, not to mention our "way of life," may help create a social and economic context in which terrorists are cultivated and terrorists' acts are more likely to be carried out.

I also like to remind students that the U.S. has been involved in its own share of state-sponsored terrorism as outlined by William J. Chambliss. I also point out that the Bush Administration gave $43 million to the Taliban just four months before the 9/11 attacks. Many students express disbelief at this fact and want to know where I got such information. It is hard for many students to accept that our own government gave such a large sum of money to a regime that Bush himself described as 'evil.' Of course, I point students to my sources so they can see for themselves that I'm not just "making it up."

I have also experimented with using Merton's anomie theory as a way to understand or explain terrorism and suggest to students that modern-day terrorists, much like the terrorists of the American and French Revolutions may be seen as 'innovators' who, having been cut off from 'legitimate means' of creating the changes they desire, have turned to various 'illegitimate' means to attain their goals. Of course, the terrorists of today, like those of the past, might also be viewed as 'rebels' if not 'innovators.' In any case, to the extent that the United States has ignored, and continues to ignore the 'legitimate' efforts of people to effect social change through protest, dialogue, and petitioning of governmental bodies, we might very well expect the kinds of 'illegitimate' innovations modern-day terrorists appear to be turning to.

For at least some students exposure to these kinds of theories and facts is a bit unsettling. Although some, if not many, students would rather not think about these issues, it is important that they do. Those of us who study crime and deviance have just witnessed one of the greatest criminal acts of our time. If we are to avoid similar disasters in the future we must be willing to expose our students to the dark underbelly a global system that is increasingly marked by injustice, inequality, exploitation, and outrage. These are facets that many of our theories suggest are linked directly or indirectly to crime and, by implication, terrorism. While exploring these issues may place us in a metaphorical minefield both in and out of the classroom we must be willing to take that risk in order to expand our students' field of view, preserve the integrity of the university and our discipline, and fuel the fire of hope for a brighter future.
Invited Essay
TERRORISM AS SOCIAL CONTROL*
by Donald Black, University Professor of the
Social Sciences, University of Virginia

(*This is the first part of an essay in two parts: Part I,
"The Geometry of Destruction," addresses the nature of
terrorism and some conditions associated with its
which will appear in the Summer 2002 issue, addresses
the social control of terrorism and some elements of its
social evolution. For comments on earlier drafts,
Professor Black wishes to thank M. P. Baumgartner,
Roberta Senechal de la Roche, Christopher David
Stevens, and James Tucker).

Part I: The Geometry of Destruction

A bomb explodes on an airplane or a street
filled with shoppers. Or several individuals enter a
restaurant and spray the room with bullets,
indiscriminately killing men, women, and children.
Such events are typical examples of terrorism, a
phenomenon that proliferated in various parts of
the world during the twentieth and early twenty-
first centuries. Terrorists have represented diverse
groups, including Irish Catholics against Scottish
and English Protestants in Northern Ireland, Hindu
Tamilis against Buddhist Sinhalese in Sri Lanka,
and Muslim Arabs against French Catholics in
Algeria and Jews in Israel. A sociology of
terrorism, however, hardly exists. Specialists in
crime, deviance, law, and social control rarely
mention the subject. Even a sociological concept of
terrorism is difficult to find. Yet how we define
terrorism is fateful: A definition is the first step
toward identifying the empirical family to which it
belongs, the theoretical jurisdiction responsible for
its explanation, the social processes it may
engender, and possibly some of the practical
measures by which it might be counteracted. Here
I feature terrorism in its purest form.

What Is Terrorism?

Pure terrorism is unilateral self-help by
organized civilians who covertly inflict mass
violence on other civilians (see Senechal de la
Terrorism is social control because it defines and
responds to deviant behavior (Black 1976: 105;
see also 1984). It therefore belongs to the same
family as law, gossip, ostracism, ridicule, and
numerous other processes that define and
respond to conduct as deviant, express
grievances, or handle disputes.

Pure terrorism has several distinguishing
characteristics. First, it is a form of self-help --
the handling of a grievance with aggression (see
idem 1983; 1990: 74-79). It is also highly
violent -- a use of force that injures and kills
numerous individuals, or that attempts to do so.
It partly resembles lesser forms of violent self-
help labeled as criminal in modern societies,
including assaults and homicides, which similarly
resist or punish someone's conduct as morally
wrong (idem 1983, 1998: xiv-xvi; see also
Tucker 1989; Cooney 1998). Many homicides
are thus instances of private capital punishment,
though the state may in turn punish these
punishments as criminal.

Unlike most crime that is social control,
however, pure terrorism targets those associated
with a collectivity such as a particular
nationality, race, religion, ethnicity, or political
party. Like rioting or feuding, it applies a
standard of collective liability: Accountability
arises from a social location, not wrongful
conduct by the specific individuals who are
attacked (see Black 1987: 49-50, 55-57;
Senechal de la Roche 1996: 103-105). Also like
feuding, terrorism is recurrent, a series of
episodes across time. But unlike most feuding,
its target is collective. It is mass violence. And
pure terrorism is unilateral, not bilateral -- one-
sided rather than reciprocal (see Black 1984: 5-
6; 1995: 855, note 130; Senechal de la Roche
idem: 101-102).

Pure terrorism is well-organized, too --
more organized than the crowds involved in riots
and lynchings (Senechal de la Roche idem: 103-
105). Terrorism shares with vigilantism its
unilateral, recurrent, and organized character,
but vigilantism -- like criminal justice or lynching
-- applies a standard of individual rather than
collective liability and punishes only those
deemed guilty of particular offenses (idem; see
also 118-121). Lastly, the covert nature of
terrorism distinguishes it from most (but not all)
vigilantism, rioting, and lynching. Terrorists
operate underground, possibly as lone
individuals, though their organizations frequently
proclaim responsibility for successful attacks.

Because it is a well-organized and highly
violent form of self-help that repeatedly attacks
mass targets on the basis of their social location,
pure terrorism resembles warfare more than other
collective violence such as rioting, lynching,
vigilantism, or feuding. It also resembles warfare
more than mass killings by unorganized individuals (illustrated by the Oklahoma City bombing of a
government building in 1995) or individual killings
by organized groups (illustrated by assassinations
of Spanish government officials by Basque
nationalists in the twentieth century). The
terrorism of the past likewise resembles warfare in
its typically interethnic, sometimes international,
character. Yet pure terrorism is not pure warfare.
It is a form of quasi-warfare.

Unlike pure warfare, terrorism is unilateral
and covert rather than bilateral and overt, and it
targets ordinary civilians rather than military
installations or personnel. Because terrorists wield
highly destructive weapons (conceivably
biological, chemical, or nuclear) capable of killing
and injuring civilians of both sexes and all ages in
otherwise peaceful settings, terrorism can be more
violent than traditional warfare -- and more
shocking and infuriating to its enemies. It also
lacks the game-like elements found in some forms
of warfare (see, e.g., Loy and Hesketh 1995). It
obeys no rules of fair play, such as rules that
prohibit particular weapons or rules about the
treatment of those who surrender. Former enemies
in conventional warfare may resume normal
relations much like former opponents in a sports
contest, but terrorism is effectively interminable.
Terrorists rarely take prisoners, except for ransom,
and may kill those they capture. And captured
terrorists may wait only for another chance to use
their weapons.

More akin to guerrilla warfare, terrorism
operates on a small scale and employs hit-and-run
or possibly suicidal tactics rather than the sustained
application of brute power characteristic of
conventional military campaigns for territorial
domination. Even so, guerrilla warfare is primarily
an embryonic form of territorial struggle that
evolves into more conventional warfare as it
becomes more successful. Guerrillas have also
historically launched most of their attacks from
rural and relatively inaccessible hideouts, while
terrorists prefer urban and other active settings in
everyday life where they can camouflage themselves as
ordinary civilians. For definitional purposes,
however, a key difference is that guerrilla warfare
has military targets, while pure terrorism has
civilian targets (see Ganor 1998). So-called
guerrillas may thus engage in terrorism (when they
attack civilians), and so-called terrorists may
engage in guerrilla warfare (when they attack
military installations or personnel).

A classic example of terrorism -- the most
violent in history -- occurred September 11, 2001,
when small bands of Arabic men hijacked four
passenger airplanes and successfully crashed two
into New York City’s World Trade Center and
one into northern Virginia’s Pentagon military
complex, killing several thousand civilians (and
some military personnel) and destroying property
worth billions of dollars. Those involved,
including their sponsors, originated in Middle
Eastern countries and shared a radical version of
Islamic religion and various grievances against
the United States, Israel, and other collective
to entities. Their attacks had all the characteristics
of quasi-warfare described above.

The Geometry of Terrorism

Shortly after September 11, many
observers (including the American Sociological
Association -- see 2001) described the events of
that day as "criminal acts." But to label terrorism
only as crime ignores its moralistic character and
its membership in the same family as law and
other social control. Terrorism differs
substantially from crime in other respects as well,
such as its highly organized and war-like nature.
Indeed, to classify terrorism as crime is the surest
way to obscure its sociological identity and
obstruct its scientific understanding (see Black

To call something crime implies that its
explanation should be criminological: a theory
of why people engage in deviant behavior such as
robbery, rape, or burglary. Because pure
terrorism is social control (though also defined as
crime), however, it requires a theory of social
control, specifically a theory that explains self-
help of this variety -- a form of justice pursued by
organized civilians who covertly inflict mass
violence on other civilians. What might such a
theory entail?

Roberta Senechal de la Roche includes a
preliminary theory of terrorism as part of a more
general theory of social control through
collective violence (1996, 2001). She examines
terrorism (along with rioting, lynching, and
vigilantism) from the standpoint of pure
sociology, specifying elements of its social
geometry -- its multidimensional location and
direction in social space (on the geometric logic
of pure sociology, see, e.g., Black 1995, 2000a,
2000b). She features, in particular, the
polarization of the social field that attracts
terrorism and other collective violence: a high
degree of relational distance, cultural distance,
functional independence, and inequality between
the aggrieved and their adversaries (1996: 105-
122; see also Black 1990: 75-79). Terrorism
also usually has an upward direction in vertical space, against social superiors (Senechal de la Roche idem: 114). It is a form of what M. P. Baumgartner calls "social control from below" (1984), a much larger subject seldom studied by sociologists.

Senechal de la Roche notes that terrorism typically expresses a "chronic" grievance -- one with a long history -- such as a demand for political independence or a return of disputed territory, rather than a grievance about a single incident at a single time, such as a theft or sexual assault by a single perpetrator (1996: 118-122). And the offense is collective, not individual. Lastly, terrorism and other collective violence arise with extremely strong partisanship and solidarity among those who participate (idem: 2001). Strong ties among the aggrieved and a lack of ties to their adversaries make a highly moralistic, explosive, and lethal combination (idem; see also Baumgartner 1988: 85-100; Black 1998: 125-132, 149-150, especially note 10; Cooney 1998: Chapter 4). Terrorism thrives in small, island-like, close-knit, and homogeneous units of larger organizations. These small groups are mainly brotherhoods of young men, often weakly connected to primordial families and largely segregated from women and children. Their enemies are physically close but socially distant in the outer reaches of social space. Most if not all terrorists also have contact with partisans who support their operations with financial and other resources. Terrorists likewise enjoy popular support, possibly acclaim, from those whose grievances they pursue. In short, terrorists are not mere individuals. They are agents of a multidimensional location in social space -- and agents of social control.

References to Part I


Resources submitted in response to the CLD Section's newsletter editor's e-mail query on terrorism are listed in this insert. There were too many responses for proper acknowledgment to everyone who helped. The editor is especially grateful for a detailed bibliography provided by Mathieu DeFlem (Purdue University). He will be organizing one of the CLD section's sessions, "Terrorism and Social Responses."

**Articles (Based on e-mailed information; not verified for accuracy):**


Encyclopedia. New York; M.Evans and Co.


**Books (Based on e-mailed information; not verified for accuracy):**


Relevant Journals:

*Technological Forecasting & Social Change*

*Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*

*Intelligence & National Security*

*Journal of Conflict Resolution*

*International Journal of Conflict Management*

*Journal of Contingencies & Crisis Management*

The February issue of *Sociological Focus*, the North Central Sociological Association journal 35 (Feb 2002) has a special section on terrorism (pp. 73-108)

Internet Sites (None of these sites or addresses have been checked by the editor):

http://terrorismissues.wadsworth.com

www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/

http://people.morehead-st.edu/fs/p.becker/rhcgguide.html

www.asil.org/insights/insigh77.htm


www.undcp.org/terrorism_convention_aircraft_seizure.html

www.un.org/law/icc/statute/rome.htm

www.un.org/aboutun/charter/chapter7.htm

www.nato.int/docu/basics/txt/treaty.htm

www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/nato.htm#art5

www.domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/(Symbol)/S_PV_2615

www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/un/un573.htm

www.domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/(Symbol)!OpenView&Start=5997

www.state.gov/www/regions/sa/factsheet_terrorism.htm

www.igc.org/intacad/cwl/terror5.html

www.asil.org/insights/insigh24.htm

www.asil.org/insights/insigh26.htm

www.news.findlaw.com/legalnews/us/terrorism/

www.law.cornell.edu/background/warpower/


www.foreignaffairs.org/home/terrorism.asp which contains links to

www.globalsecuritynews.com/

www.state.gov/s/cf/index.cfm?id=4291

usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/

www.fo.state.gov/topical/pol/

www.abanet.org/natsecurity/nslr/natres.html

www.virginia.edu/cnsi/

www.cato.org/current/terrorism/index.html and

www.heritage.org/library/keyissues/natalsecurity/

www.heritage.org/library/keyissues/middleeast/ and

www.cfr.org/index_public.html

Note: Corrections to Recent Criminological Research Due to a Problem with Stata.
By David Jacobs

Some reported findings in "Interracial Conflict and Interracial Homicide" by David Jacobs and Katherine Wood, published in the American Journal of Sociology in the July 1999 issue, are inaccurate due to an error that the programmers of Stata corrected after this article was published. To adjust for heteroskedasticity in this and in a prior AJS article, the Tobit analyses were weighted using the most current version of Stata at that time (Version 5). In March of 2000, however, Stata altered the weighting procedure for Tobit. When the corrected weighting procedure is used to estimate the determinants of white killings of blacks, the black mayor variable no longer is statistically significant when these equations are weighted by the number of whites in cities. Yet, the reported findings persist when heteroskedasticity is, instead, corrected by weighting by city populations.

The corrected weighting procedure also alters the findings about the determinants of black killings of whites. In the first three reported models, the black-white unemployment ratio no longer quite reaches statistical significance, but this variable continues to be significant in the last two most comprehensive and accurate models. Note that all weighted Tobit findings reported in the prior AJS paper by David Jacobs and Robert M. O'Brien ("The Determinants of Deadly Force" AJS January 1998) hold when the corrected weighting procedure is applied to these analyses.

(E-mails between the senior author and Stata documenting these difficulties are available on request).

The ASR's Deputy Editors and the members of the journal's Editorial Board for 2002 comprise the largest and most intellectually diverse editorial team in ASR's history. The editorial team joins the Editors in welcoming a wide range of theoretical and methodological approaches and contributions from all substantive areas of the discipline. Also, ASR's current editorial policies are highly flexible as to form and can accommodate manuscripts of various lengths and styles. (Full information about manuscript requirements is available in the August 2001 and February 2002 issues of the journal, at the ASR website (www.pop.psu.edu/ASR/asr.htm <http://www.pop.psu.edu/ASR/asr.htm>), or upon request to asr@ssc.wisc.edu <mailto:asr@ssc.wisc.edu>.)

As a result of these editorial arrangements, we hope to publish more than our fair share of the best contemporary work on crime, law, and deviance. We therefore strongly encourage Section members to submit their manuscripts to the American Sociological Review.
Charles Camic and Franklin Wilson, Editors

Please send materials for subsequent issues of the newsletter, including responses to invited essays, spotlights on programs, and other matters of interest to CLD members to Gary Jensen at:

jensengf@ctrvax.vanderbilt.edu

The February issue of Sociological Focus, the North Central Sociological Association journal 35 (Feb 2002) has a special section on terrorism (pp.73-108). Gerald Turkel discusses sudden solidarity and terrorism. Thomas Badey explores the relationship between religion and terrorism. Gary Webb reviews literature on terrorism and disaster relief and Violet Kaspar reviews literature on post-traumatic stress.

The Assistant Editor and Website Manager, Jeremy Kerr, has moved the web site onto the ASA server. The site includes Adobe Acrobat (pdf) versions of the newsletter and other information. The address is as follows: http://www.asanet.org/sectioncld/index.html