BOOK REVIEW: MAD DOG

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Introduction

Through the application of diverse theories in criminology, this study offers a criminological perspective of the *Mad Dog*. Criminology is defined as body of knowledge which entails understanding of crime and delinquency as social phenomena (Fielder 2010). It focuses on motives and outcomes of both making laws in the society and breaking them. It presents the interaction of these two elements especially in addressing issues facing the society. The goal of criminology is to present concepts and principles, which are verifiable regarding the process of law breaking, crime as well as reactions to crime. This paper explores the criminal and terroristic activities of John Adair as presented in his book in context of relevant criminology theories.

Social Disorganization Theory

Adair shared the characteristics of a terrorist and a serial killer as defined by the FBI. Social disorganization theory has over years been used in explaining the behavior of criminals in various countries. John Adair emerges as a political terrorist brought up in Shankil Road in the Northern Ireland (Smith 2012). His mother as well as father was poor, with his father struggling to support his family (Adair 2009). As Adair grew up, he joined hands with the C Company’s military wing called UDA. The main goal of the wing was to retaliate towards Catholic IRA on their alleged attacks on Christians. This led to the wing qualifying as a terrorist group although Adair still considers himself as a freedom fighter.

The social disorganization theory of criminology can be applied to analyzing the environment in which Adair was brought up, which significantly enhanced his affinity towards crime. He grew up in an environment where violence was common. As a result of having been subjected to violence at a tender age, he was desensitized to terror. Adair indicates that while in
his bed, he could hear gunfire which was not only frightening, but also exciting; it indicates how social disorganization killed morals in Adair driving him to criminal activities.

Social disorganization theory indicates that one’s surrounding influences his or her behavior more than their individual characteristics. This is evident as the exposure to gunfire and violence eventually would usher Adair towards violence and terrorism. He witnessed numerous criminal acts which were not followed with the necessary penal consequences. Consequently, the prevailing circumstances in his surroundings framed violence as normal thing rather than something that generates negative consequences to those who engage in such criminal behaviors. It is mainly not the material interests which promote criminality in society, but rather it is the lack of the moral prohibitions to do so. Without enforcement of institutionalized moral authority, it is difficult for individuals to attain the moral perfection which they actually desire catalyzing criminality as well as recidivism.

This social disorganization theory developed by Chicago School indicates that by growing up in adverse social conditions and environment, the lives of individuals would undeniably be adversely affected. This theory is affirmed in the terrorist activities that Adair engaged in. As indicated in his book, he lived a life of ‘death sentence’ from his rivals even though being free and not in jail. Any time, he was at risk of attack and destruction. Every day, Adair lived with the fear that a politically driven terror attack would be carried out on him. In a reflexive response, he carried out terror on others. This implies that if the environment in which he lived in was not unleashing terror on him, he could not have engaged in such terrorist activities in retaliation (American Psychiatric Association 1987).

Social disintegration approach to understanding criminology emphasizes on the impact of the environment on the development of a deviant behavior among individuals. Even before Adair
joined UDA, he had witnessed the military wing unleash terror on IRA. If this was not exposed to him at an early age and in a boundless manner, his character as well as behavior would have been significantly different from what was witnessed. After being exiled to Scotland, the change of the environment positively altered his behavior. He was no longer exposed to paramilitary activities or even constant events of violence. Consequently, he abandoned his terroristic activities (Smith 2012). As he indicates in his novel, he no longer feels the need to hide or even run from anyone.

He lives openly in Scotland without the fear and engagement in his previous criminal activities. He indicates that now he is able to move on with a decent life, something that he has missed over the years. He no longer lives looking back for a possible attack from behind or even in an environment with constant police rumbles. This clearly indicates how change in the environment has significantly altered his behavior affirming the assertion that criminal acts are triggered by the environment in which the culprits live as brought forward by the social disorganization theory (Berry-Dee 2003).

Adair came at crossroads with authorities not only because of his paramilitary engagements, but also for having assaulted the mother of his child – Gina. After his release from prison, he had the feelings that Gina was no longer faithful to him as she was in an affair with Dowie. The text message that Dowie had sent to Gina indicated clearly the affairs in which the two had engaged in. This forced Adair to call Dowie to the bathroom as his mind raced on doing something to him that would destroy his life. Fortunately, being out of self-control, he avoided it. This indicates that the environment in which Adair was living could have driven him to injuring Dowie or even killing him in retaliation for having had an affair with the woman he loved. If such unfaithfulness had not occurred, this could equally not have occurred. This indicates how
circumstances and the environment in which he lived were contributing to inducing and sustaining his criminal behaviors (Berry-Dee 2005).

Strain Theory

Over the years, various theories have been brought forward in explaining criminal behavior. The strain theory is one of them (Molson 2010). This theory indicates that criminal behavior is socially learned. Adair was brought up in a society where the youth used to roam in the streets in allegation that they were safeguarding their protestant community. This created a need for him to do the same. Furthermore, anyone would find the term ‘safeguarding our community’ as ethical and non-criminal. Adair found the activities of the paramilitary captivating. He started discriminating some members of the society because of the confrontation between the UDA which consisted largely of protestant Christians in North Ireland and IRA which included Catholics in other parts of the country.

Adair’s criminal behavior falls under the seven pillars of strain theory. The first one is rebellion. Rebellion emerges when individuals fail to attain their goals and objectives legitimately. Due to the complicated nature of attacks by IRA, Adair was not in a position to legitimately stop them. Thus, there was a real need for him to use violence to attain his goals. He had to reject Catholics as well as their goals. This pillar of strain theory not only helps in understanding Adair’s criminal activities, but also the terroristic behavior of al-Qaida and other groups that reject their own social systems and western systems in an effort to create an all Islamic society where Shania law prevails (Smith 2012).

Rationale Choice

The rational choice of crime could be used in explaining criminal engagements of Adair. As brought forward by this theory, crime is an outcome of deliberate intentions based on the
perceived and real benefits of engaging in crimes and selecting criminal activities where the
benefits outweigh the costs. The theory indicates that in the society, the instances of crime could
be reduced significantly if the cost of such crimes was drastically increased. People would tend
to avoid crime in an effort to avoid the potential consequences. They would equally adopt a wait
and assess whether others involved in crime are punished (Carich, Fisher, & Kohut 2012).

In this particular case, it was a rational choice of Adair and his crew to safeguard their
minority protestant community from the tyranny of the catholic regime. This would have ensured
that by separation of Northern Ireland from the South, the minority community would have
freedom and would not be discriminated by the majority individuals in leadership. The soldiers
from the ruling regime often murdered members of Adair’s geographical region. The need to
wage war in retaliation was thus justified. Under rational choice theory, it is evident that in some
cases, the security forces impose minimal penalties on individuals who were convicted of crimes.
For instance, Adair was stopped by the police at Shamrock Club and forced to get out of his car.

The police knew about his criminal activities from previous records; even the community
members who were at the scene showed awareness of him and disgust of his actions and
behaviors. Instead of taking legal action of the fortunately spotted and arrested criminal (Adrian),
the police just opted to embarrass him in public among women and later released her. This
punishment was not severe enough to deter Adair from engaging in further criminal activities
since the consequences of his actions would be minimal.

In a separate incidence, rationality in Adair’s criminal activities is evident. At one point,
from human choice, he felt the need to help an individual whom he found tied up to a lamp post.
His name was Kenny Slavin. His fingers had been broken by the UDA wing. He was inhumanly
treated being plastered in white paints. Adair opted to help him as he was a brother to his fled.
His efforts failed when he was repulsed by UDA wing. Thus, it was a rational choice to help the person and equally a rational choice to avoid confrontation with UDA wing as costs would have outweighed the benefits (Comte 2006).

During the execution of the gang’s plans, it is evident that the gangs focused on rational choice and the benefits that they could get from such acts (Eisenhardt 2001). For instance, as indicated in the novel, UDA made a major mistake during an attack planning session. Other members of the group except for the hit men were informed of the plan. Instead of cooperating as loyal group members, they sold out the hit group to authorities for personal gain. This culminated with the arrest and imprisonment of Potts for 16 years, Muff and Skelly for 14.

**Differential Association Theory**

Differential association occurs when individuals align themselves with definitions of law deviance rather than law abiding (Sutherland 2013). Criminal behavior is normally learnt through interaction with deviant people in the society. In such a way, criminals not only learn the techniques employed when committing a crime, but also the specific rationales for engaging in criminal activities. Such associations normally vary in terms of duration and frequency.

This theory highlights peer influence on crime in the society. Differential association theory is affirmed in the behavior and actions of Adair and his group (Dietz 2003). They were a group of young people who had little understanding about life. Through peer influence with deviant people in the society, he joined young boys whose task was to signal when cars were leaving the Catholic Church compounds. They were trained how to make simple petrol bombs. Later on, having admired the activities of the bigger UDF, they were recruited in the paramilitary as its young unit. Throughout the study, there does not seem to be any voice of reason from stakeholders to guide the young paramilitaries to disengage from the group. Consequently, they
were adversely influenced by their peers who pushed them into engaging in criminal and terroristic activities.

During their early years, there seems to be no convincing motive for joining the group beyond peer influence and excitement. The young men went to town at night with the aim of unleashing mayhem to civilians for no particular reason (Dixon 2011). Just like any other young boys, they found the experience exciting as well as frightening. Peer pressure resulted in these young boys engaging in criminal and terrorist activities. This clearly indicates that interacting with peers who are antisocial is significant cause of crime. During his early years, Adair and his peers were confronted by criminal culture. Due to the lack of voice of the reason that could have subverted their efforts towards the same, they fell prey to the deviant and criminal young and mature gangs in Northern Ireland.

Conclusion

From the above presentation, criminology theories have been succinctly employed in analyzing the criminal activities of the author of the book *Mad Dog*. The analyses reveal that the author was brought up in a socially disorganized society, where the deviant and criminal conditions shaped his character. Strain theory presents the author’s immense need for rebellion especially when it became apparent that some of his aspirations could not be attained legitimately. Rational choice indicates that the criminals engage in illegal activities to protect their minority region in the country from the tyranny of the dominant Catholics. Nevertheless, differential association theory concludes that peer pressure at an early age and with no evidence of a voice of reason to guide their actions made the author and his friends weak preys of the existing young and old criminals.
Reference List


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