SOCIAL VIOLENCE IN CANADA:

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND STATISTICAL IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract:

       This project will be comprised of two chapters. The first section will include a comprehensive literature review component defining violence, exploring the current theoretical explanations of violence, as well as coming up with a better way to categorize causal factors and the role of institutions. The triad of social violence is proposed as a more effective theoretical discourse towards effectual social policy. The first section is intended to establish a theoretical link between naturally occurring social violence and social indicators such as poverty and population increases. In section two, I seek to illustrate the argument that declining violent crime rates in Canada are unnatural. Attitudes and public perceptions of the justice system will be statistically analyzed using the data from the General Social Survey on victimization. The relationship between deteriorating attitudes and declines in reported violence are then discussed in greater detail.

1. The Sociology of violence

1.1 Introduction

Violent behaviour amongst Canadians is a collective concern. The truth is that the vast majority of individuals have been affected by violence, directly or indirectly, at some point in their lives. Statistically, it is very difficult to estimate the actual number of people affected by violence in society due to the large number of unreported violent crimes. The issue of the hidden or dark figure of violent crime due to unreported incidences of violence has always been a cause for concern. Enormous population increases, immigration, and the developing growth of large urban centers are the context in which violence occurs in contemporary Canada.

The criminal justice system is a key institutional component of the state charged with protecting victims of violence. Presently the justice system seems preoccupied with identifying, convicting, and imprisoning the perpetrators of violence in society. In the end, the public shows a tendency to be punitive and progressive, wishing the correctional system to achieve the diverse missions of doing justice, protecting public safety, and reforming the wayward (Cullen, 2000). Importantly for my work, the data on violence are not some objectively observable universe of criminal acts, but rather those events defined, captured, and processed as such by some institutional mechanism (Biderman & Ross, 1967).

The fact is that many reported incidences of violence in Canada today never lead to charges, and if they do, average punishments are minor. Presently, victims of violence require protection mechanisms that they can trust to be swift, severe, and certain. Otherwise they will not cooperate with the justice system or see the justice system as a viable solution to an act of violence. A difficult contradiction exists in terms of protection of the general public and

rehabilitation for offenders. Interestingly research has shown for decades that those with accurate information about the prevalence of violent crime in Canadian society tended to favour less severe sentences and that the only factor that had a substantial effect on the degree of punitiveness was the nature of the crime or how violent it was (Wanner, 1987). This general attitude continues to prevail amongst many people in the general public today.

But, the public is very fickle on what is acceptable violence; vigilante justice and police violence are often deemed acceptable in given circumstances. One example is the disputed yet sanctioned use of "tazers" amongst policing agencies. During the course of their duties, police frequently come into contact with the mentally disabled as well as people who are acting out of character. However, it is not unusual for police to use aggression, and weapons of violence to force conformity upon the general public using their own discretion.

The use of violence is both sanctioned and acceptable in society as well as being criminalized. An important socio economic condition often forms a barrier towards consensus; it has been found that issues of protecting society are most often expressed by educated and higher income individuals. Conversely, dissatisfaction with protecting the rights of the accused is most often expressed by individuals from lower socio-economic groups (Kaukinen, 1999).

For the most part, the collective values and belief systems within contemporary society would dictate that violence should be prevented and controlled, and that violence is a deviant and non-conformist behavior. However, how violence is perceived and reacted to in society is mediated through the mass media and the justice system, and this is a significant issue for social justice.

1.2 Theoretical frameworks

The sociological dilemma for studying violence is that there are many different types of violence, different trends occurring over periods of time, as well as many competing theoretical approaches to explaining violent behaviour. In addition, it is difficult to determine the social indicators of violence in society, as well as which factors determine a violent society, and which variables are important to consider in providing a complete understanding of the topic.

Proper methodology requires a definition of violence. From the perspective of the arguments developed in this paper social violence and violence in society are synonymous. Social violence can take many forms. For the purposes of this paper social violence can either be an individual act, a group act, or on a macro scale an act of the state (military and police). It can be interpersonal violence on a micro scale or war on a macro scale. Force and violent acts can be both rational (coercion) and irrational (instinctual aggression). Violence usually but not always involves an act which brings about physical harm to another person. Types of violence punishable by law include homicide, attempted homicide, manslaughter, three levels of assault, and three levels of sexual assault, robbery, and criminal negligence causing death (Tepperman & Curtis, 2004). There are also newly emerging types of violence. They are terrorism, hate crimes, stalking, and kidnapping (Winterdyk, 2006). These acts are punishable in Canada under the Criminal Code.

Research-based explanations of violence include the following associational factors: abusive families, competing cultural values, firearm availability, gang motivation, human instinct, personality traits, regional values, and substance abuse (Winterdyk, 2006). Theoretically-based sociological explanations for social violence seem endless. The following is

only a partial list of the different approaches. They include: exchange theory, resource theory,

patriarchal and feminist theory, inequality and conflict theory, rational choice theory, social

structure theory, social process theory, labelling theory, social constructionism theory, post

modern theory, social process theory, differential association theory, social bond theory, life

course theory, latent trait theory, biosocial trait theory, and psychological trait theory. The

majority of these theories are functional only when discussing the more general topics of

deviance, or social control, as opposed to a more specific yet complicated issue such as violence.

Micro theories of violence focus on why some people are more likely to engage in violence than

others, while macro theories focus on why certain groups have higher violent crime rates (Wright

& Miller, 2005).

The theories selected for this paper appear at first glance to be most appropriate to

logically explain and describe the social phenomenon of violence in Canada. After a review of

the contemporary literature and the theoretical possibilities, I chose to examine the following

approaches to violence in society. They describe the structure of violent society as well as

violence learning processes. These sociological theories have limitations; nonetheless they

provide a diverse contrast between differing schools of thought.

In this paper I propose a triadic theory of social violence as the best sociological theory to

explain the complexities of the recurring phenomenon. It synthesizes all other sociological

theories; each theoretical standpoint described above fits into one of the components in the triad.

Every violent act in society also falls into one of the three components described. Using the triad

of social violence as a framework provides a manageable way to identify the most serious issues

and possible solutions to the problem.

1.3 The Structure of violent society: Consensus theories

Many macro level theorists argue that the social environment causes violence (Wright & Miller, 2005). There is a body of knowledge surrounding the issue of violence, crime and deviance which I refer to as social structural theories. They include among others anomie, strain theory, and the functionalist perspective. These various theoretical approaches have been evolving since approximately 1831 when Quetelet released the book *The Propensity for Crime* (Siegel & McCormick, 2006). Later, in 1893 Émile Durkheim originated the concept called Anomie. It was adopted as a conceptual framework by Robert Merton among others (Siegel & McCormick, 2006).

Social disorganization theory has its earliest American roots in the Chicago school of criminology. The Chicago school was extremely influential. Social disorganization theory is interested in stability and the state of equilibrium in society (Winterdyk, 2006). This theory is also related to many of the other theories described in this paper because social disorganization and lack of appropriate and effective social regulation and control will result in violent outcomes. According to this theory, inherently, societies will strive to achieve a sense of balance. If there is societal disorder then there will also be personal disorder (Goode, 1996). Within socially disorganized societies, there is an absence of regulatory mechanisms preventing the occurrence of violent behaviour. Changes in the structure of the social environment can create unstable conditions which can lead to violence (Winterdyk, 2006).

The following societal changes form the core argument of this perspective. They are a trend from rural towards urbanization, migration, immigration, industrialization, and technological advancement (Deutschmann, 2002). Therefore on a micro scale something as

simple as increased immigration, or rapid population increases in urban centres might bring

about disorganization. These factors serve to alter the social environment. Rioting, for example,

is a group behaviour which demonstrates an obvious lack of effective adherence to social

regulatory measures.

This theory is significant because it argues that human beings who engage in violent

crime are not unlike those who are not violent. Violence is not exclusively an act of the lower

class, for everyone is subject to the disorganized state of society (Goode, 1996). Given the state

of their immediate surroundings, however, it may be even harder for those individuals from the

lower classes to adapt. Contrary to popular beliefs at the time the theory suggests that violent

offenders are not demons, they are not biologically predisposed to be wicked, and they are not

sick or insane. Individuals who lash out in violence are products of their society. They have

simply been assaulted themselves by the geographical and spatial location in which they are

situated relative to their disorganized and rapidly changing social environment (Goode, 1996).

1.3.1 Strain/anomie

Social anomie describes a sense of normlessness resulting from deregulation in society

(Winterdyk, 2006). Crime and violence are more likely to increase when social conditions are

such that social norms and social organization break down and cease to remain an effective tool

for maintaining social order. This is most common in societies characterized by rapid social

change (Winterdyk, 2006). For example, rapid population increases through immigration may

drastically alter the shared values and common cultural beliefs of society in such a way as to

promote confusion and dysfunction amongst all citizens. Under anomic conditions many will

come to reject the norms of society and disregard the consequences of violence toward others

(Goode, 1996). Some may become incensed at the disorder of the regulation in society and become intent on changing them through violent means (Tepperman, 2006).

In addition, the laws, social regulations, and social control mechanisms regulating violence vary between countries. Therefore, differing values and cultural differences for understanding and reporting of violence create justice problems in Canada. For example, it is possible that spousal abuse is viewed as much more acceptable in certain countries and therefore upon arrival to Canada an immigrant woman who is assaulted may choose not to call the police.

The concept of anomie also applies to situations in which stressful outcomes experienced by individuals in society eventually cause them to become aggravated or strained and they lash out in violence or other deviant behaviour in an attempt to alleviate their frustration (Deutschmann, 2002). The following is a description of how the basic components of strain/anomie theory influence the social environment. First, social indicators such as poverty and racism come to reduce conventional or socially approved means of achieving social goals promoted by western culture (Winterdyk, 2006). These social goals can take many forms, material and non-material. Some might view success differently; however, Canadian culture promotes certain core common values which come to influence individual desires and goals. Theoretically the lower class and impoverished citizens will maintain the same desires of success as the middle and upper class citizens (Tepperman, 2006).

For example, it might become increasingly frustrating to watch nice cars drive by each day if you cannot even afford to take the bus. Therefore, the economically disadvantaged groups of society will always feel more strain and anomie. As the income disparity gap continues to grow and manifest itself in poverty clusters throughout Canada, the less conformity there will be

within this country. As the collective sense of community begins to fade, the individual

constraints and ability to control violent behaviour disappear as well (Siegel & McCormick,

2006). Strained individuals do not have the same opportunity to meet their desired goals for

success even though they are constantly exposed to others who are achieving. They will

therefore constantly be frustrated and envious of those who have what they do not. All of the

social control mechanisms begin to fail. This can bring about the formation of gangs and other

subcultures which will collaborate on alternative and socially unacceptable means of achieving

successful outcomes in their goals (Winterdyk, 2006). It is very likely at this stage of strain and

social anomie for individuals to lash out in violent crime, substance abuse, and other deviant

behaviour (Deutschmann, 2002).

1.3.2 Conflict

The functionalist perspective asserts that violence is a normal condition in any society

(Schmalleger et al. 2000). The functionalist perspective is the framework for anomie and strain

theories in that it focuses on ideal societal conditions in terms of stability of all the interrelated

parts (Kendall, Nygaard, & Thompson, 2004). Rapid change upsets social equilibrium and

social control. Violence can result from a lack of control mechanisms causing individuals to act

impulsively given certain situations (Tepperman, 2006). In addition, inadequate socialization of

children by parents leads to a tendency to act impulsively violent later in life.

Social conflict theory has its earliest roots in Marxism. In 1848, the *Communist

Manifesto* became the first in a long history of social conflict theories and bodies of literature

(Siegel & McCormick, 2006). Conflict theory is relevant to violence in several ways and has

several groupings related to its conceptual framework. They include inequality theory, critical

theory, and feminist theory. Conflict theories are similar to social structural theories in that crime and violence are related to larger structural phenomena. How they differ is that conflict theories are primarily concerned with distributions of power, how laws are enforced, and with elites in positions to criminalize those who are marginalized (Tepperman, 2006). Conflict theories attempt to explain violence in society and its relationship to subordinated groups based on the social variables of class, race, and gender (Kendall, Nygaard, & Thompson, 2004).

From this perspective, violence in society is a response to structural inequality. Poverty produces a sense of alienation amongst those poorer classes of the population (Winterdyk, 2006). As alienation increases due to the unequal distributions of power, so do the violent crime rates. Competing interests in society ensure that conflicts will always ensue (Winterdyk, 2006). For example, those impoverished citizens of lower economic status form sub cultural groups within their communities. In communities with higher levels of poverty there will be increased levels of violent crime (Gomme, 2002). In addition, those who are in positions of power will use violent force to maintain their interests (Tepperman, 2006). Therefore violence is inevitable as long as there are unequal distributions of resources in society.

There are several examples of how this perspective relates to violence and which help to illustrate the argument. Hurried crimes of violence such as robbery are quite common in poverty stricken areas of our country. Outsiders are usually not welcomed into areas marked by high levels of poverty. They might find themselves the victims of violence as individuals who feel the most alienation and exclusion from society might engage in violent behaviour to gain respect from others in their group. As for the powerful authorities in this country, the government of Canada has shown that it will use military violence against the Aboriginal community, if necessary, to protect its interests.

In order to regulate violence, according to this perspective, competing groups experiencing conflicting interests must willingly agree to a set of rules and guidelines. These negotiated frameworks for cooperation are very tedious; nonetheless, this might aid in producing some consensus, stability, and predictability to the actions of both sides (Winterdyk, 2006). It is important to note that it is very rare for those with power to make sacrifices which conflict with their interests. Often, rules and guidelines are imposed on those without power leading to even further separation between the groups.

The critical perspective focuses on which individuals are criminalized in society (Kendall, Nygaard, & Thompson, 2004). For instance, it is a well documented fact that Aboriginal persons are overrepresented in the populations of Canadian prisons. Aboriginal communities according to the critical perspective are over policed leading to higher violent crime rates. In addition, racism in the justice system further contributes to social inequalities (Kaukinen, 1999). Meanwhile, corporations which are often responsible for the death of thousands are never punished criminally within the justice system. This type of discrepancy raises the issue of whose interests are being represented by the Canadian criminal justice system.

From this point of view, it is equally violent and unacceptable for those in positions of power and authority to punish those who are marginalized for committing violent acts. In other words, the punishment and incarceration is as violent as the violent act itself. The power to criminalize rests with the state and those in power. Laws and legislation often serve capitalist interests, and it is not uncommon for those who are marginalized to argue that laws against violent behaviour are simply another tool for social control. From the critical perspective the legitimacy of the criminal justice system is often not respected by those who are marginalized nor is its authority adhered to, often resulting in violence. Recently in Canada for example, the

shooting of an unruly or violent young person by a police officer led to a violent riot in Montreal. In this case the citizenry rejected the objectives and the legitimacy of the justice system in favour of the so called offender.

From the feminist perspective it is gender that is the key variable which must be examined surrounding the topic of violence in society (Tepperman, 2006). It is obvious that males in society are responsible for the vast majority of violent crimes. Many cultures around the world place a great deal of value on the male propensity for violence. Sporting events and mass media in this country show violence as a natural male tendency and in many sub cultural groups violence is encouraged. From a feminist perspective, patriarchal values exist in the laws and throughout the components of the criminal justice system (Tepperman, 2006; Comack & Balfour, 2004). The justice system does not take the marginalized position of women seriously. This translates into laws that tend to give advantage to men and indirectly results in high levels of domestic and sexual violence largely perpetrated by men. This theory contends inequality will exist in society as long as women remain fearful of violence from males (Carrington & Hogg, 2002).

1.4 Learning violence

1.4.1 Differential association

Social learning theory has many different theoretical approaches. It has also been called social process theory and it has its earliest roots in the work of Edwin Sutherland (Siegel & McCormick, 2006). The following social learning theories will be discussed as they are most relevant to violence. Differential association, sub cultural theory or cultural deviance, and social control theory. These theories have once again been linked together due to their similarities.

The focus of these theories rests with the effects of surrounding oneself with other violent individuals and the reaction society has towards these groups of individuals.

Differential association theory assumes that there is a greater tendency towards violence and other deviant behaviour if an individual surrounds themselves with others who practice non-conformity with society's norms (Kendall, Nygaaard, & Thompson, 2004). Living in areas with higher crime rates or even being exposed to deviant behaviour and violence can increase the likelihood of engaging in those behaviours. Without effective means for condemning those violent acts further techniques to efficiently carry out violence will develop over time (Tepperman & Curtis, 2004). Through frequent interactions the motives for committing violent crimes will expand as these behaviours are learned within that particular context (Winterdyk, 2006).

To elaborate on these claims, it seems logical that if groups of delinquent individuals are interacting on a regular basis then not only will they have violent conflicts with others in society outside of their group but they will also have feuding and violence amongst themselves. Duelling to settle disputes is quite common amongst many subcultures. If an individual feels as though they have been dishonoured by a comrade, then revenge and feuds often ending in bloodshed are quite common (Tepperman, 2006). Perhaps this is the reason for higher levels of violence amongst impoverished neighbourhoods where violent subcultures flourish.

As previously mentioned, around the world many cultures tolerate male violence as normal and expected. In Canada, violence and aggression is cheered and therefore rewarded in sports such as wrestling, football, and hockey. Bloodletting in these sports is often viewed as a positive sign of true effort and determination on the part of the athlete. Children of all ages are

exposed to this subculture of violence and are often encouraged or pushed by parents to become competitors themselves. Therefore, there is an undercurrent of violence deeply rooted within the cultural value system of Canada.

1.4.2 Violent subcultures and society

Sub cultural theory or cultural deviance posits that there is a wide discrepancy of cultural norms and values associated with violent behaviour. Within the lower social classes and working class neighbourhoods there is collective sense of social values resulting from status frustration (Winterdyk, 2006). This theory assumes that within those poor and marginalized communities of Canada where subcultures of violence and deviance tend to form, violence is normalized. From this perspective violence is not viewed in these communities with the same core values and common cultural beliefs systems shared by other communities. Honour and respect are often valuable resources within these communities which will be defended with violence. For example, lower class urban youth might live by a street code which differs significantly from the belief system of the majority of Canadians (Tepperman, 2006).

Another example is gang members who come to internalize these shared values. This contributes further to a subculture of violence within the group where cowardly behaviour is not tolerated and encouragement from the group serves to alleviate any feelings of guilt for violent offences against others (Tepperman, 2006). Under these circumstances, a gang will employ the use of violence in conjunction with weapons of violence as a logical progression to cope with their life within their perceived social environment. It is possible that the subcultures of violence are more readily detectable within the lower classes. This is due to the fact that lower class

neighbourhoods are over policed and those members of the upper class often find strategies for going undetected and unprosecuted by the law (Schmalleger et al. 2000).

Social control theory is related to both of these theories because it argues that violence in society can result when there are inadequate social roles and regulations to deter violent behaviour. In addition, the association with others who might be delinquent or violent will also usually result in higher rates of violence (Winterdyk, 2006). Unlike social conflict theory, social control theory claims that violence must be deterred through punishment which is swift, severe, and most importantly certain (Gomme, 2002). If there are weak social control mechanisms accompanied by fewer social bonds, less internalized socialization with conformist belief systems, and no conventional social networks to associate with, then the result will be unpredictable behaviours in society such as violence (Gomme, 2002). It must be noted that previous studies have found social control theory to be a poor explanation of violence (Cretacci, 2003).

1.4.3 Labelling

Social reaction theories are similarly concerned with how violent behaviour is learned within society. This concept also derives its roots in the interactionist perspective which claims that violence is learned through everyday interactions with significant others (Kendall, Nygaard, & Thompson, 2004). Howard Becker is responsible for contributing the most recognized of this group of theories which is the labelling theory (Deutschmann, 2002). Labelling theory become increasingly popular in the 1960s and has since been the focus point of a great deal of sociological thought (Schmalleger et al. 2000).

Labelling theory is concerned with the actions of society in response to those who are deviant or violent, and the subsequent reaction of violent offenders as a result of these actions. In basic terms a violent offender is an individual who has been labelled as such (Kendall, Nygaard, & Thompson, 2004). In this case it would be the Canadian criminal justice system or the media which attach stigmas onto individuals and criminalize them in society. Once a person has been branded as being violent it is difficult for him or her to shed this label. They often will act in their perceived character as it becomes a self fulfilling prophecy (Winterdyk, 2006).

This theory argues that there are two significant factors involved in any deviant behaviour. The first is primary deviance which in this case is the act of violence itself. Secondary deviance occurs when the individual committing the violent act begins to internalize the new social identity which has been created by his or her label as violent and begins to act according to this new social role (Kendall, Nygaard, & Thompson, 2004). The second type of deviance is also related to sub cultural theories. For instance, the gang member who has taken to the common values and the subculture of violence in the gang may increase their status through this type of labelling, and subsequent creation of a new identity.

Furthermore, labelling theorists have also observed that the individuals in Canada who are most often arrested for violent offences, and subsequently labeled as deviant by the justice system, are those individuals from the lower classes and minority groups (Kendall, Nygaard, & Thompson, 2004). Therefore, the over policing of lower income neighbourhoods, coupled with racism in the justice system, are determining factors in identifying who will be labeled as a violent citizen. According to labelling theory, the justice system is the perfect tool for perpetuating the interests of the elite, while simultaneously marginalizing those interests of the lower classes and minority groups.

This type of theory seems very logical when applied to the reality of the social world. For example, it only takes one violent offence to become stigmatized or labeled as violent (Schmalleger et al. 2000). People who have been convicted or even arrested for criminally violent behaviour might find it difficult to get a job. In addition, they might find it is increasingly difficult to gain the trust and confidence of people in their everyday life. Depending on their perceived identity, individuals who are labeled violent might very well feel as though they are no longer deserving of trust. This hopeless attitude might further contribute to violent behaviour, even suicidal tendencies.

Labelling theory has many shortcomings. Firstly, according to this theory people should not be arrested and prosecuted for committing acts of violence on others to prevent them from being labelled (Schmalleger et al. 2000). Certainly the justice system recognizes the impact of labelling theory and incorporates it. Throughout the justice system there are clues as to the usefulness of the approach. For instance, the publication ban on the names of children who commit crimes or who are sexually assaulted is a good example. Another is the fact that children cannot enter the justice system or be charged criminally, under certain circumstances, until they are deemed responsible enough to make their own decisions. Secondly, labelling theory fails to account for those individuals who work hard to erase any stigma and rise above the identity imposed upon them by the justice system and others (Schmalleger et al. 2000). Lastly, this theory fails to explain the occurrence of the initial act of violence or primary violence. It serves mainly as a possible explanation for continuing violent behaviour as opposed to how the behaviour originated in the first place (Schmalleger et al. 2000).

1.5 What is missing from these theories?

The theories outlined in this paper seem to provide a partial explanation for violence in society. They often fail to recognize the multidimensional characteristics of the social phenomenon. As such, if an individual theory stands alone, it comes up short of providing a clear or accurate depiction of the problem. The functionalist perspective, for example, fails to explain the occurrence of any planned or premeditated violence (Tepperman, 2006). In addition, many of the theories discussed explain deviance better than violence.

The theories outlined in this paper point to a myriad of possible factors and theoretical links to violence including poverty, racism, and gender among others. Their arguments would have been much stronger if these theorists were to look at the longitudinal statistics on violence. If the violent crime rate climbs incrementally each year, then perhaps some structural theories are correct, violent crime is natural. If the poverty rates and other variables continue to climb in conjunction with rising violence then perhaps there is a causal relationship. Interestingly, however, none of the theories can satisfactorily explain declining violent crime rates. Most theories, given the current social environment, would argue that violence should be increasing in Canada. However, it is not. Although it seems highly unlikely, incidences of violence are decreasing according to statistics Canada. The trend has also recently been observed in the United States.

> Recent declines in rates of violent crime in the United States caught many policymakers and researchers off guard. These declines were perhaps more surprising in that they came on the heels of dire predictions about the rise of a generation of super predators who would soon unleash the full force of their destructive capacities on an already crime weary nation (LaFree, 1999).

Future research on the topic of violence and victimization should focus on possible explanations for the exponential growth of unreported violence in North America. And future

research should address the tendency to atomistic approaches in sociological analysis and explanation which reaffirms the need for theoretical pluralism in social sciences on the topic of violence (McKie, 2006).

1.6 The triad of social violence

The theoretical bodies of knowledge still generate perplexing questions. How is violence defined? What causes violence in society? What institutions are responsible for mediating and perpetuating violence? What are the social indicators of violence in society? What can be done to prevent violence or at least reduce its occurrence? These questions are very complex and difficult to answer. Perhaps it is the complexities which contribute to the confusion and limitations of the current literature and theoretical knowledge across all disciplines on the subject. Some say that class is the most important variable, some say it is gender. The differing perspectives seem endless and unmanageable. Although some theories seem to logically explain an act of violence, current sociological theories are limited in that very few of them can explain the re-occurrence of violence. Many theorists oversimplify the phenomenon through partial explanations and reducing their analysis to one or two variables. They tend to typify social violence on a case by case basis which only makes the problem seem hopeless and unavoidable.

For example a recent study in the United States contends that the sources of American murder rates lie in the greater availability of guns, the growth of illegal gun markets, increased racial discrimination, exposure to violence, and economic inequalities (Beeghley, 2003). This type of explanation fails to account for the phenomenon of violence anywhere else in the world, where lots of guns and inequalities exist, yet there are far fewer murders.

Also, although the Beeghley study correctly points out that exposure to violence is a key factor, there is no acknowledgement regarding the institutions of the mass media or justice system in mediating violence. It is my contention that theories such as this, which look at multiple social factors, would be better served including the institutional components of the issue. The triad of violence incorporates all of these social factors, or indicators of violence in society, in the social situation component as well as recognizing the institutions responsible for mediating violence. It is clear that violence in society is acted through and dependent upon the institutions of the justice system and the mass media.

Violence in society is linked to issues of power and domination. It is also linked to needs and interests. Sometimes violence is a logical and rational reaction to stimuli. Take for example coercion or war. If your needs and interests are not being met and communication continually fails than the use of violence to coerce might be a good strategy. Conversely, in times of war, extremely violent acts by the state might be a rational strategy employed by the military. At others, state violence is an aggressive and irrational act.

Violence is often linked to biology or psychology. It is important to understand that reducing the phenomenon of violence in society to one factor is misleading and inadequate. It is insufficient to claim that someone reacted violently because of their biological predisposition to violence because it ignores the social environment, structure, and institutions. The disciplines of biology and psychology presume that violence could be eliminated by medications. While this may be true in a particular case, it does little to explain or prevent the initial act of violence which led to the medication prescription in the first place or levels of institutional/structural violence.

In summary, violence is a social action. It is best explained by sociological theory which takes into consideration multiple factors, social structures, and institutions. The choice to use violence as a response to a given stimuli is often a socially constructed choice, based, for example, on gender roles. The problem with the sociological theories outlined to this point in the paper is that they fail to consider the fact that human beings are autonomous and that which separates human beings from animals is the ability to communicate needs and interests. Indeed, it is natural to see violence erupt when needs and interests are being ignored, marginalized, or thwarted. Therefore, violence is best dealt with by focusing on those institutions which contribute to violence in society and those situations and environments where violence has been known to flourish.

By using the triad of social violence, one is best able to address the various issues through sound social policy. It is essential to look not only at the theories that fall into the three components of explaining social violence, but to also provide micro and macro examples of how these transpire in reality. It is not new to attempt to combine theories for greater explanatory potential.

> Biological, psychological and sociological factors likely interact with one another in their effect on crime, so that crime is most likely when individuals with certain biological and psychological traits encounter negative social environments. Although integrated theories of this type are in their infancy, it has become increasingly clear that any comprehensive explanation of crime must draw from a variety of disciplines (Wright & Miller, 2005).

In the case of this interpretation the authors are correct to point out that violence is a multi dimensional phenomenon. However, I argue that violence must still take place within the boundaries of the social environment. Further, social interaction and social settings are still the most important factors in the examination of social violence.   Therefore, other disciplines such

as psychology and biology, and factors associated with those disciplines, still fit into the proposed triad of violence into the social situational component. For example, but for the fact that an individual had biological and psychological abnormalities, the violent act would not have transpired within the context of the given social situation.

The Triad of Violence Model:
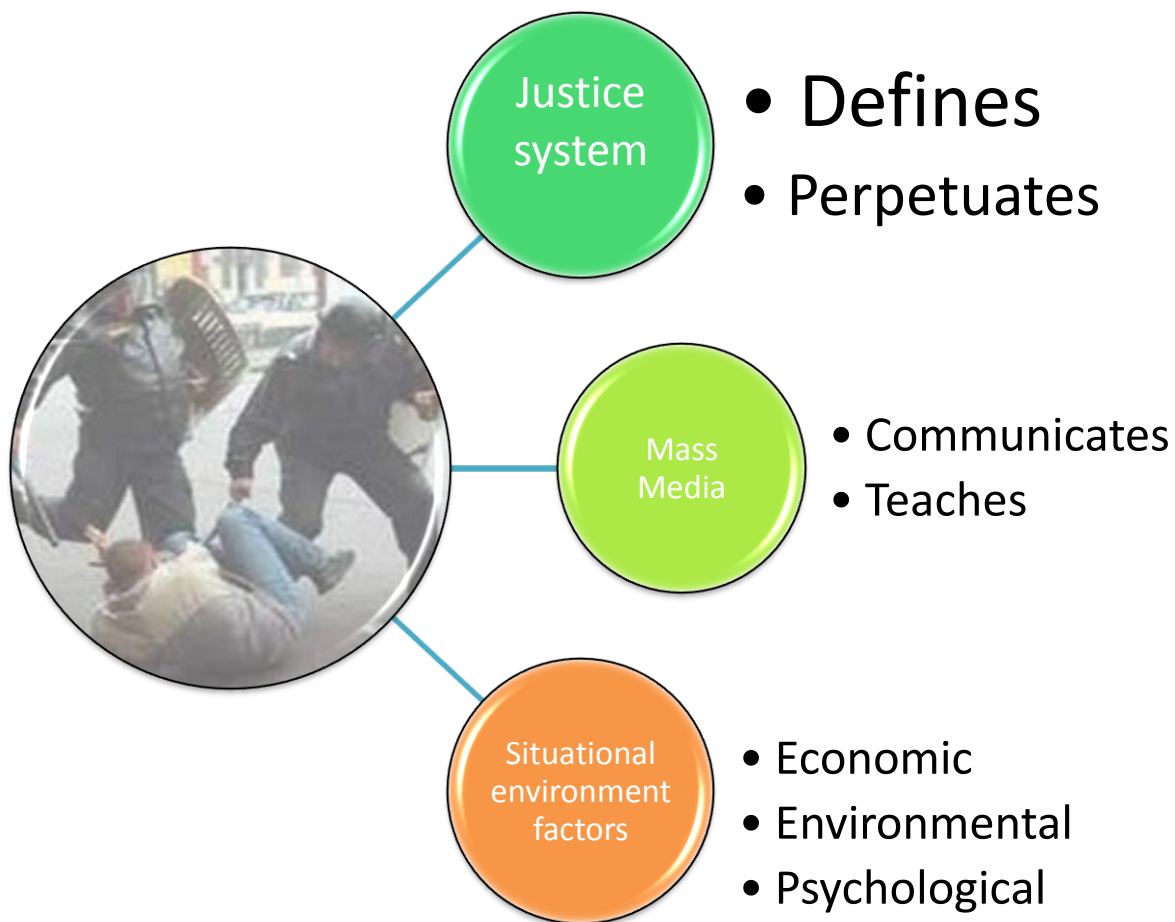
As previously mentioned, there are two institutional components in the triad which are distinct from each other yet both serve the overall function of mediating social violence. There is also a third component which has to do with a given social situation. They are as follows.

1.6.1 The Justice System

Relevant theories: (labelling theory, social control theory, social conflict theory)

- defines violence and creates violent offenders

- perpetuates violence through the use of prisons and sanctioned violence.

Micro example: a young man feels he must be violent following several convictions and sentences for violent behaviour. (i.e. labelling theory)

Macro example: an entire city erupts in rioting because of a courtroom decision. (i.e. conflict theory, LA riots)

1.6.2 The mass media

Relevant theories: (social learning theory, social reaction theory)

- communicates violence in society giving particular attention to those most horrific violent acts. Also, participates in the dissemination of war propaganda for governments.

- teaches violent behaviour to society by programming and desensitization strategies.

Micro example: young boys are triggered to commit a series of horribly violent acts showing little emotion and later blaming music and video games for their actions. (i.e. social learning theory, Columbine)

Macro example: entire countries are mobilized for war following the continuous broadcast of horrific events and disaster. (i.e. social reaction theory, 9-11.)

1.6.3 Social situational factors

Relevant theories: (Social environment theory, social disorganization theory, social structural theory, psychological theory, biological theory.)

- But for the specific given social situation and context the violent act would not have transpired.

- Social Situation factors might include, but are not limited to, economic factors such as poverty, environmental factors such as being abused by a parent, biological and psychological factors such as a propensity for violence due to hereditary abnormalities, religious fundamentalism, and access to guns, or racial discrimination. Every violent act in society that can be explained by a specific social situation and context falls into this category.

Police employ a type of this situational evaluation when arriving on scene. They decide if force and violence is required given the specifics of the social situation. The component is applied in the context of this paper in the following ways. If you live in poverty, than that is your social situation. Your social environment is very different than if you are affluent. Your propensity and opportunity to engage in violence is determined by the amount of destitution that you experience. This does not presuppose violence in a given situation, but there are numerous situations and factors which increase the likelihood of violence. A recent study conducted in prisons helps to articulate my argument, it shows that a variety of causal social factors interact to create an institutional environment in which routine incidents can develop into full fledge riots (Boin & Rattray, 2004).

I assert that in some cases if the social situational environment had been different than so too would be the result. Human choices and aggressive reactions to social situations are largely based on our social environment. Here are some everyday examples. A woman is abused daily by her spouse, and she eventually retaliates. But for the years of abuse, the woman would not have acted violently. It is common knowledge that the Canadian justice system already acknowledges these social situational realities by implementing legislation such as "Battered Women Syndrome". Or, a young man goes to a nightclub, and after a few drinks, he is assaulted by a group of teenagers outside of the bar. Once again, but for the social situational environment, violence would not have ensued. In this case he was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Micro example: A Chinese hockey player is called a racial slur by an opponent and swings his stick in retaliation. (But for the racial slur and the resulting feelings of pride, anger, and hatred the player would not have reacted violently.)

Macro example: A country identifies a major oil reserve in the Middle East and seeks to claim that land through war. (But for the perceived economic and strategic benefits resulting from the discovery of oil, the attacking country would not have declared war.)

1.7 Policy implications

1.7.1 The Justice System

Reforms to those institutions which contribute to violence in society seem like common sense and good social policy. The importance of the role of the justice system in contributing to reduction of violence in society must not be understated. Research in both Canada and the United States indicates that the public has become increasingly critical of the criminal justice

system (Kaukinen, 1999). It has been found that repeat offenders in the United States were more likely to commit serious violent offences after three strikes legislation was implemented. Further, the same study found that there is evidence that mandatory arrest laws increased intimate partner homicides (Iyengar, 2006). Slight changes in legislation reverberate throughout society in ways which could not be predicted.

1) Change the justice system so that only the most serious offenders ever go to prisons. If the violent offender will be reintegrated into the community, then the last place they should go is jail.

2) Change the way violence is defined.

3) Change the adversarial nature of the justice system.

4) Change the overall goals and focus of the justice system from suppression of crime to prevention, including proactive and community policing strategies to replace the reactive policing strategy currently in place.

The policy arguments can be developed in light of a recent trend involving individuals who are typically predisposed to suicide and mental illness calculating and deliberately forcing a police officer to use potentially deadly force. It is called victim precipitated homicide and in roughly a third of all cases police officers have responded to such a situation with lethal force (Parent, 2005). This is a horrible trend which illustrates the need for institutional reform. A flexible organizational structure and progressive management philosophy will enhance institutional adaptability in policing and provide the opportunity to develop a nonviolent human relations approach to peacekeeping, thereby effectively addressing the needs of the community (Hodgson, 2001). Proposed solutions in the justice system must be accountable to the people

and the community as a whole. This must be an inclusive change which encourages cooperation

and promotes compromise.

> By freeing criminology from the traditional notion of community as a primarily local,
> territorially bounded phenomenon, the conceptualization of community as a network of
> personal networks draws attention to and facilitates insights into the nature of deviance,
> criminality, and the criminal justice system that might not otherwise be obtained
> (Leighton, 1988).

Therefore, the triad approach focuses on restorative justice principles as opposed to

retributive ones. Recently, the restorative justice focus on repairing harm has helped to link

victim involvement to a broader court mission that includes victims as well as offenders and

communities as stakeholders in the justice process (Bazemore, 2000).   We need to move from

deterrence to a rehabilitation model and provide alternatives to prison such as anger management

intervention, and drug and alcohol addiction services to inmates. In other words, we need to

treat the root issues and address the needs of so called violent offenders and turn them back into

people with interests and goals like everybody else.

1.7.2 The media

The transformative capacity of the mass media in today's knowledge society where

information is power should be utilized for the benefit of society. Yet, the media is instrumental

in the construction of criminality and criminal justice (Dowler, 2003). We need to change what

is taught through the use of the powerful media. If exposure to television violence does have a

small effect on violent behaviour for some viewers (Felson, 1996), we need to ban ultra violent

video games. Instead of showing gore and guts in movies, we need to transform the movie into a

learning experience on the consequences of violent behaviour. Large market crime stories are

more likely to report stories that present fear and sensationalism. Newscasts provide less

coverage for minority and male victims, and crime stories with a suspect displayed in handcuffs

were more likely to involve non white suspects (Dowler, 2003). People need to get talking about things other than the latest horror film or the latest beheading on the internet. Other suggestions include, stop broadcasting military propaganda, stop rewarding violent offenders with detailed descriptions of their actions and future movie deals, and prosecute individuals for displaying violence on the internet. Media agencies must address the needs and interests of parents who are trying to protect their children from over exposure to violence.

1.7.3 Community cooperation

This is the most complex and complicated of the three components to solve because the social situation component has a lot to do with human rights and ideology which are unfortunately often subjective and based upon competing cultural values. This component requires good social policy and collective cooperation. Most importantly, echoing the thoughts of Jurgen Habermas, we need to provide opportunities for open discourse and democracy. Communities must attempt to build forums and new institutions responsible for communicating the needs and interests of groups who currently have no voice. Prior to this occurring, there must be a commitment to provide increased social support mechanisms.

Education is also paramount to success within this component. Therefore, communities must collaborate to ensure equal access and opportunities for education and employment. Also, community based organizations ought to prioritize with the addition of an abundance of counseling services and outreach programs for young people experiencing violence. These processes would aid in teaching children about violence and its consequences at a young age. Finally, children as well as adults need healthy outlets for energy, stress, and aggression.

Communities need to begin a discourse in order to discover new and creative forms for entertaining young people, other than nightclubs.

Essentially there is a need to create a more tolerant, interconnected, peaceful environment through the elimination of individualistic and competitive normative behaviours which breed contempt and social conflict. Many of these issues emerge from the failure to address overall issues of social inequality, as well as those needs of young people and those impoverished communities and individuals who need alternative solutions to diverse sets of problems. This all sounds like creating a utopia where no one would need to use violence to address their needs and interests. However, in reality these are all reasonable and desirable characteristics of any progressive democratic country. These solutions are often championed on the political platforms of today's politicians in Canada and are always at the forefront of discussions around issues of human rights, equality, justice, and fairness. A great hypocrisy exists in that many people in Canada would claim to be progressive in these regards, yet they would question the successful implementation of aforementioned and similarly reasonable reforms.

To this point I have described a great deal about how violence occurs in Canada following an extensive literature review. Violence is a social phenomenon which will always exist and should be expected to occur particularly in western societies where anomie and conflict are rampant due to the competitive nature and structure of the economy. It is very clear that class, race, and gender are major social variables which are intimately related to violence. As inequality, poverty, and anomic societal conditions continue to reproduce and manifest themselves, violence in society will continue to increase. Social control mechanisms preventing violence from erupting are not very stable given the disorganized state of circumstances in contemporary society. Lastly, the justice system has a long way to go before it can satisfy the

needs of each individual or interest group. The justice system must also adapt in order to make those persons it is charged with protecting trust in its ability and capacity to promote safety.

2. Canadian perceptions about justice

In the previous chapter the theoretical arguments were elaborated upon. This chapter will switch the focus of discourse towards Canadian statistics on violence and perceptions and attitudes towards the justice system. A serious problem in Canada today is that there has been an enormous decline in reporting of violent crime. Violent crime has been falling sharply since 1994. Naturally, declining violent crime rates may initially seem like a great occurrence and accordingly politicians, policing agencies, and lawmakers use statistical declines in crime rates to their advantage. However, a decline in reporting of violent crime is nothing to be proud of. It is an insult to everyday victims of violence as well as an indication of a dysfunctional justice system. Prior to the present rate of decline, throughout Canadian history violent crime rates have been <u>increasing</u> since 1963. It is my contention that these minor increases were natural and that violence should increase in proportion with population increases.

Given the statistics which show that the following social indicators for violence in society are all increasing -- poverty, divorce rates, gangs, and violence in the media -- it is highly unlikely that violence is decreasing at all. It is my contention that the "dark figure" of crime is actually growing at an exponential rate leaving many victims defenseless and silenced. I argue that the declining violent crime rate is unnatural and that there is a relationship between the declining national violent crime rate and individual attitudes and perceptions about the justice system. In this chapter I test the significance of the variables which are related to attitudes about various aspects of the justice system. The findings are discussed in conjunction with current

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Canadian statistics. In addition using data from the 1999 General Social Survey, I comparatively evaluate the GSS with the 2004 data to see if attitudes are indeed declining over the last five years.

It is important to note that the justice system has responded very differently to violence in this country over the course of history. Many changes have occurred in the justice system over the course of time to adapt to changes in society. These changes are important to bear in mind as they were also directly responsible for guiding the progression of sociological and criminological thought and theory on the subject, as well as influencing changes in public attitudes. Protecting particular victims of violence has not always been a primary or necessary concern of the justice system.

For example, before women could vote in this country, women were marginalized to the point where it was very difficult for them to seek justice for a crime of violence. Advances in feminism in the 1970s led to several changes in the Criminal Code, and today it is quite common to see charges emerging from a domestic assault (Comack & Balfour, 2004). Another example is the gay rights movement which led to increased awareness of hate crimes and appropriate amendments to legislation.

The final example is victims' rights movements which have changed courtroom procedures in certain sexual assault cases to further protect victims of rape from having to answer particular questions, and to shield children from having to testify (Comack & Balfour, 2004). Public confidence in the justice system was particularly high in the 1970s due to the emergence of these several aforementioned social movements. Attitudes about the justice system were becoming increasingly positive as victims who were previously ignored and

marginalized were being given a voice and a sense of protection. Accordingly, there was a larger increase in reported violence for several years following 1977. It is my contention that reporting of violent crime increased as it should until 1993 when many people realized that they were not actually being protected by the justice system and began to lose trust.

As society becomes less tolerant of certain types of violent assaults, the justice system and those in charge of social policy normally introduce new legislation to protect the interests of different groups. Changes are reflected in amendments to the Criminal Code and this system of justice and control reflects the cultural values in society in terms of who is considered a victim. In essence, both victims and offenders are created by the justice system. In addition, there are the silent victims of violence who are not represented by the justice system, either by choice, or because the crown did not feel it had enough evidence to lay charges. A victim must be perceived as innocent to be deserving of coverage or assistance. Above all this, the media constantly promotes an idealized and unrealistic picture of the typical crime victim (Dowler, 2003).

Victims of violence are often from the marginalized groups of society (Gomme, 2002). This is the group with the least education, the least income, and often with the least knowledge about the workings of the justice system. Clearly, there will be those individuals considered to be real victims in society, and those who are viewed by the majority as having contributed in some way to their own plight. For example, the older woman of European descent who is walking to her car after work through the parking lot, and is sexually assaulted and robbed by a gang of youth, will be treated as a real victim by the justice system and by society at large. In contrast, the young Aboriginal woman who was attacked by strangers while drinking at a party in

a "bad" neighbourhood, or the drug dealer who was shot five times by a rival gang, will probably be seen as getting what they deserved.

The following Statistics Canada graph best illustrates the argument that declining violent crime in Canada is unnatural. From 1962 until 1993 violent crime climbed at a constant almost uninterrupted pace. In 1994, somehow recorded violence began to drop. Today, it is now lower than it was nearly two decades ago. Given the wealth of sociological theory examined in relation to the phenomenon of social violence, these government findings seem highly suspect.
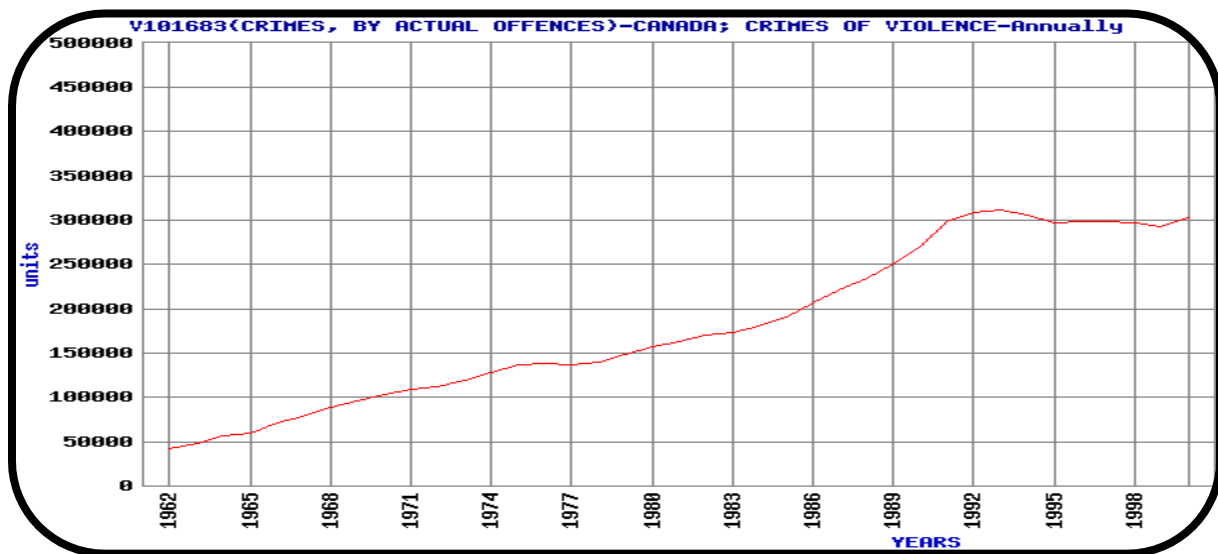
(Statistics Canada, Cansim II, Series # V101683, Table # 2520001, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey)

It is my hypothesis that many victims of violence no longer see the justice system as a viable solution to an incident of violent crime. Possibilities include that they no longer trust the police, feel violated by courtroom procedures, fear re-victimization, or have come to distrust the various undesirable workings of the Canadian adversarial justice system. Most people would agree that negative attitudes are contagious and trickle down through generations. Therefore, if a friend or relative has had a negative experience based on the failure of the criminal justice system to provide justice then it is likely that those affected will share those negative attitudes.

In the final portion of this paper I highlight that there are a disproportionate number of people with negative perceptions about the Canadian justice system and its major components – police, courts, and corrections.   At the present rate of decline, violent crime could be statistically invisible in approximately 40 years, even though that is absurd, and all the social indicators relevant to violence in Canada are increasing.

2.1 Data, methods, and results

The data set used for this analysis is from The General Social Survey of Canada (GSS), 2004. Cycle 18: Victimization. This was a phone survey with more than twenty thousand respondents from across Canada. There are a total of six hundred and fifty variables. The key dependent variable, overall attitude about the justice system in Canada, was created by adding perceptions on change in neighborhood crime level during the last five years + perception of the job the prison system is doing rehabilitating prisoners + perception of the job the parole system is doing supervising offenders on parole using the compute procedure in SPSS. This procedure created a sum of these included variables into a new overall attitude variable. I came to choose these variables because of the high number of respondents to these questions, as well as the fact that they reflect attitudes about several components of the justice system. In sum, I believe this reflects an overall attitude towards the justice system.

Table 1 provides a concise look at the descriptive statistics, the means, and the standard deviations. For this univariate analysis, I chose to use crime level as my dependent variable. In this case I am interested in the public perception on the change in their neighborhood crime level during the last five years. This variable was selected because it is an indicator of individual

perceptions and attitudes about the justice system. Respondents could either respond that crime

had increased, decreased, or remained about the same.

Table 1: Measurements of the Variables: Descriptions, Means and Standard Deviations (N=22120)

Variable Name	Definition	Mean	Std. Dev.
Dependent Variable			
Crime Level	Change in neighbourhood crime level during the last 5 years (1- Increased, 2-Decreased, 3- About the same)	2.26	0.55
Independent Variable		Proportion	Std. Dev.
Group Interest			
Visible Minority	Visible Minority Status (1-visible minority)	0.08	0.27
Marital Status	Marital Status of the respondent (1- Married)	0.55	0.50
Urban Rural Indicator	Urban Rural Indicator (1-Urban)	0.75	0.43
Socio-demographic Factors			
Age	Age group of the respondents		
	(1-Young)	0.28	0.45
	(2-Middle age)	0.39	0.49
Sex	Sex of respondent (1-Male)	0.45	0.50

I recoded those answers in the following way. It is still called crime level; however, if

the respondent claimed that crime had increased, then I used that as an indicator of the justice

system doing a poor job. If they responded that crime had decreased, then I recoded that answer

to mean that the justice system was doing a good job. Lastly, if they responded that crime had remained about the same, then I used this as an indicator that the justice system was doing an average job. I also took out the missing values originating from the responses "Don't know and not stated". It is my contention that the public perception of the crime level in their neighborhood is very important relative to actual statistical information released by Statistics Canada. Case in point is the reported declining crime rate in Canada. If it is difficult to find a Canadian citizen who believes that crime is decreasing, then it is likely that it is not decreasing at all. Hypothetically unreported crime would be increasing, as opposed to actual crime decreasing.

The independent variables chosen were labeled according to group affiliations or interests, and by socio-demographic factors. For instance, in the group interests heading the following independent variables were selected: visible minority status: 1= visible minority 0= non-visible minority; marital status: 1= married 0= not married; and urban/ rural indicator: 1=urban 0= rural. Similarly, under the heading socio-demographic factors, I chose to include age and gender as independent variables.

The first table also describes the various proportions of those respondents. For example, by looking at the table we can see that the majority, 75%, of respondents were from urban environments. Also, it is noticeably problematic that while an almost equal number of married and unmarried, as well as equal numbers of men and women were selected, the majority of respondents to this survey were from the non-visible minority group. This is significant and unfortunate because it is noted in the literature that members of minority groups can have very different attitudes about crime levels in their neighborhood, and about the overall justice system. In fact, when speaking of this particular issue, I am clearly more interested in the opinions and attitudes of those members from minority groups. This is a major flaw in this survey. What is

required in future research is a similar survey on victimization focusing on those opinions of

minority groups. It is my contention that the resulting data would be drastically different if the

survey had included more respondents from visible minority groups and included ethnic

affiliation as several variables. The next table tests the relationship between crime level and sex

using bivariate analysis.

Table 2: Relationship of SEX and CRIME LEVEL

		CRIME LEVEL			Total
		GOOD JOB	AVERAGE JOB	POOR JOB	
SEX	MALE	679	6265	2991	9935
	FEMALE	578	7590	4017	12185
Total		1257	13855	7008	22120
Pearson Chi-Square	56.76	p value : <0.0001			
Spearman Correlation	0.042	p value : <0.0001			

It seems logical that attitudes may vary substantially between the sexes, particularly

because the justice system can influence people in very different ways. It would be my

hypothesis that women would believe that the crime level is higher than men. It would be my

hypothesis that women would have more negative attitudes towards the justice system. It is

common knowledge that more women are victimized by violence in today's society than men

(Comack & Balfour, 2004). By this I mean that statistically the number of men who use

violence against women is much larger than the number of women who perpetrate violence on

men. As a result, men may believe that the justice system is effective in controlling crime, where

women may be less receptive to this belief; the inverse may also be true. Generally, women may

also be more fearful of crime than men and therefore believe crime levels are higher. For this

paper this variable did not need to be recoded in any way as respondents were offered either

male or female as answers. For this I ran the analysis for chi-square results as well as the

Spearman correlation. In this case I am interested in using the same dependent variable,

however, this time as an indicator of individual perceptions and attitudes about the justice

system.

It is fairly clear based on the data in table 2 that there are very few people of either

gender who responded that crime had decreased (1257) and therefore there are a small number of

people in the good job category for crime level. The large majority of people indicate that

representatives of the justice system are doing an "average or poor job". As previously stated,

the great majority of people believe that crime is either increasing or remaining at the same level.

In addition, in table 2 we see that the Pearson Chi-square indicates a statistically significant

relationship. Since the p value for the independent variable is < 0.05 when tested at the 5% level

of confidence then we can say that there is a relationship. Lastly, the correlation is obviously

small but positive (0.042). This means that as you go from urban to rural the correlation

increases by .042. Table 3 tests the relationship between crime level and urban/rural location.

Table 3: Relationship of Urban Rural Indicator and CRIME LEVEL

		CRIME LEVEL			Total
		GOOD JOB	AVERAGE JOB	POOR JOB	
Urban Rural Indicator	URBAN	987	10067	5443	16497
	RURAL	270	3788	1565	5623
Total		1257	13855	7008	22120
Pearson Chi-Square	72.50	p value : <0.0001			
Spearman Correlation	-0.036	p value : <0.0001			

It is likely that more frequent exposure to crime and violence in the city is responsible for changing attitudes about the justice system. Although it is difficult and often problematic to generalize these to the entire population, the findings are very helpful. Once again it is notable that table 3 demonstrates that regardless of urban/ rural location, very few people think that crime is decreasing in Canada. As a result, a very small number of the total respondents fit into the "good job" category.

Upon further evaluation of table 3, it is clear that there is also a relationship in this case. Since the p value of the Chi-square test is 0.0001 when tested at the 5% level of confidence. The p value is < 0.05, therefore, this regression is significant and we can say that the crime level attitude and the urban rural indicator are related. The correlation indicates a weak negative association (-0.036). Therefore, going from the urban category to the rural will decrease the correlation by 0.036.

Table 4 presents the results of the multivariate analysis. This type of analysis allowed me to control for the three age groups while looking at the relationship between several variables. I recoded the age variable into three age categories; young, middle, and older. In the original data set there were fifteen categories and this number needed to be reduced in order to provide clear results. The independent variables selected for multivariate analysis were again visible minority status: 1= visible minority 0= non-visible minority; marital status: 1= married 0= not married; and urban/ rural indicator: 1=urban 0= rural. Similarly, under the heading socio-demographic factors, I chose to include gender as an independent variable.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Variables Used in the Multivariate Model

Variable Name	Definition	Age groups			
		Young	Middle	Older	Total
Dependent Variable (Mean)					
Overall Attitude	Overall Attitude	8.32	9.04	9.02	8.81
		(1.81)	(1.81)	(1.85)	(1.85)
Independent Variable (%)					
Group Interest					
Visible Minority	Visible Minority Status (1-visible minority)	12	9	3	8
Marital Status	Marital Status of the respondent (1- Married)	38	66	55	55
Urban Rural Indicator	Urban Rural Indicator (1-Urban)	79	76	72	75
Socio-demographic Factors					
Sex	Sex of respondent (1-Male)	46	46	42	45
Number of Individuals		6775	9180	7811	23766

Note for table 4: Standard deviations of overall attitude for each case group are in parentheses.

The ordinary least squares regression results for overall attitude with age groups table is very useful for determining a relationship. Upon examination of the statistical analysis the R square model summary in table 5 we can observe the mean percentage of the total variability explained by the all the variables is only 15%. This is important because it shows that measuring attitudes is very difficult and complex. Once again, countless other variables would need to be

added into the analysis to raise the level of explanation. However, upon further evaluation, there

is a relationship. With all of the age group categories, except for two, we see that there is a

statistically significant relationship.

Table 5: OLS Results for Overall Attitude with Age Groups

	Young	Middle	Older
Sex	0.184**	0.099*	-0.110
Visible Minority	0.222*	0.630**	0.859**
Marital Status	-0.307**	0.010	-0.155**
Urban Rural Indicator	-0.369**	-0.284**	-0.489**
R-square	0.19	0.11	0.15
N	6775	9180	7811

Note for table 5: Coefficients are significant at *0.05, **0.01

Table #6 is three pages long; however, it shows the data from the General Social Survey

on victimization from both 1999 and 2004. It is clear that there is very little change in public

attitudes over this five year period. This was not surprising. It might be more useful to go

further back in history to see if the attitudes have been in decline in conjunction with declining

violent crime. Therefore, in future research I will be evaluating the data from as far back as the

1970s up until 1994 when violence began to drop.

Table 6: Comparative Study of General Social Survey of Canada 1999 (cycle 13) and 2004 (cycle 18).

	Year	
Variable (%)	1999	2004
Sex		
Male	45	45
Female	55	55
Age groups		
Young	32	28
Middle	39	39
Older	29	33
Marital Status		
Married/ living with partner	55	55
Widowed/Divorced/Separated	19	19
Single	26	26
Urban-rural indicator		
Urban	77	75
Rural	23	25
Visible minority background		
Visible minority	10	8
Non-visible minority	90	92

Canadian criminal courts.. Providing justice quickly		
Good Job	14	16
Average Job	38	42
Poor Job	48	42
Prison system.. helping prisoners become law-abiding citizens		
Good Job	19	23
Average Job	43	46
Poor Job	38	31

	Year	
Variable (%)	1999	2004
Parole system.. supervising offenders on parole		
Good Job	17	18
Average Job	39	42
Poor Job	44	40
Satisfaction with Police**		
Good Job	49	40
Average Job	37	38
Poor Job	14	22

Past 5 years, Crime level		
Increased	33	32
Decreased	6	6
About the Same	61	62
Descriptive Statistics		
Overall Attitude*		
Mean	9.06	8.81
Standard Deviation	1.87	1.85
Minimum	4	4
Maximum	12	12
Number of Observations	15067	14961

* Overall Attitude = Crime level+ criminal courts+ Prison system+ Parole system

**This variable has many missing observations, therefore did not consider for overall attitude

Lastly, table #7 is a concise way of looking at the various attitudes considered from this survey. It provides the contrasts in opinion between men and women and again as you can see from the table a large majority of the respondents both male and female fit into the "average job and poor job" categories. This clearly illustrates once again the small minority of respondents who feel the justice system is doing a good job in multiple categories.

Table 7: Overall Attitudes towards Justice System

	Crime Level (N=22120)		Satisfaction with Police (N=299)		Parole System (N=18811)		Courts System (N=20960)		Prison System (N=18042)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Good Job	6.8%	4.7%	36.8%	40.7%	19.8%	16.3%	16.7%	15.8%	24.0%	22.4%
	679	578	25	94	1685	1678	1589	1805	1971	2201
Average Job	63.1%	62.3%	35.3%	39.4%	42.0%	42.9%	38.7%	44.4%	44.8%	47.6%
	6265	7590	24	91	3569	4425	3686	5082	3681	4672
Poor Job	30.1%	33.0%	27.9%	19.9%	38.2%	40.8%	44.6%	39.8%	31.2%	30.0%
	2991	4017	19	46	3248	4206	4242	4556	2567	2950
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	9935	12185	68	231	8502	10309	9517	11443	8219	9823
	Chi-Square: 56.762 DF: 2 Sig:0.000		Chi-Square: 1.991 DF: 2 Sig:0.370		Chi-Square: 41.601 DF: 2 Sig:0.000		Chi-Square: 70.837 DF: 2 Sig:0.000		Chi-Square: 41.601 DF: 2 Sig:0.000	

2.2 Conclusion

Although the data demonstrate a relationship between the variables examined in this paper, it is important to observe that all associations and correlations are weak. The most notable statistic relative to my argument is the remarkably small number of people with positive attitudes towards the justice system. Whether urban or rural, male or female, and regardless of age, very

few people seem to believe in the effectiveness of the justice system. Therefore, no definitive conclusions can be reached based on the data in the General Social Survey.

However, these findings exemplify the small minority of Canadians who feel the justice system is doing a good job contributing to enormous disparity between actual incidences of violence and those which are reported and recorded in Canadian statistical information. Perhaps certain things will always remain indefinite on this issue; however, more research is necessary to add to the existing knowledge base and give voice to silent victims. The existing literature and Canadian statistical information on the subject seems incomplete, insufficient, and at times improbable.

Lastly, finding a way to restore public confidence in all aspects of the justice system in order to achieve an increase in reporting of violence should be a top priority of politicians and law makers in this country. It should be the primary aim of the justice system to reestablish natural increases in violent crime.

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