

Introduction

This thesis deals with two subjects that are viewed as major concerns among the public, the media and in official governmental documents: poverty and exposure to crime. High levels of poverty and crime are often viewed as signs that something is wrong with the functioning of a society. Veit-Wilson (2000) argues, for example, that states with poverty cannot be regarded as *welfare states*. The criminologists Blumstein and Wallman (2000b) write that “the Americans’ pride of their nation” is tempered by concern and puzzlement over being the most violent industrial nation.

Although poverty and crime are often discussed, the common understanding in the public and the media is problematic. The perception of poverty is often on an intuitive level; i.e. the existence of poverty makes us feel morally disturbed, and there is full agreement that mass poverty should not exist. But nevertheless, the content of poverty is seldom concrete. Poverty is quite often viewed as ... just poverty. This is obvious when poverty is measured on an international basis using the per capita domestic production of a country (see, e.g., Sachs et al. 2001) or the World Bank’s ‘less than \$1 per day’ to define the poverty line. There are many problems associated with these measurements as such (Gordon et al. 2003), but most importantly, these measurements do not incorporate the concept of poverty or any discussion about poverty and the consequences of poverty. With these measurements, it is not possible to ask questions concerning what it means to be poor and how or whether poverty can be compared between countries.

Even the most common method of measuring and comparing the level of poverty in the European countries – which involves defining those with less than 50 or 60 percent of the median income as poor (Bradshaw and Finch 2003) – is problematic. Is poverty only about inequality of economic resources? Is such a measure commensurable across different countries and what kind of understanding of poverty underlies such a method (see Article I)? The question of how to measure poverty is of importance because poverty and the consequences of poverty are devastating. For example, UN statistics show that in the “developing world” 6.3 million children die of hunger related to poverty every year (United Na-

tions General Assembly 2001). In the rich countries, poverty is not related to starvation to the same extent. But poverty is still a problem, as it is related to social exclusion and causes deterioration in health (Bradshaw and Finch 2003; Hills et al. 2002; see also Article I). Furthermore, it is first when it is defined and accurately measured that poverty can be understood in relation to other social phenomena in society, and it is first then that effective policies to fight poverty can be put forward.

An apparent problem regarding the common view of crime is that the media and the public in almost every Western country believe that crime is becoming increasingly common and that the violence in society is steadily getting worse (Estrada 2001; Estrada 2005; Mason 2003; Pantazis 2000; Williams and Dickinson 1993), a belief that politicians often take advantage of (Garland 2001; Hagberg 2006; Tham 2001b). But in most Western countries, there has not been any increase in the crime rates since 1990 (Dolmén 2001; Nieuwbeerta 2002; van Dijk 1997; Westfelt 2001), and in the country most debated when it comes to crime, the U.S., there has even been a decrease in the crime rate during the 1990s (Blumstein and Wallman 2000a; Messner and Rosenfeld 2001; Rennison 2001). The use of violence also does not seem to be becoming more common or more serious. In a study using Swedish hospital data for the period 1974 to 2002, no increase in serious violence could be found (Estrada 2005). According to the British Crime Survey, violent crime in Britain fell by 36 percent between 1995 and 2000 (Kershaw et al. 2001). A correct understanding of crime and the risk of victimization is important, because crime and fear of crime are serious problems, both on a societal level and on the individual level. On the individual level, this is especially true for the poor, who are generally more afraid of crime and more vulnerable when actually exposed to crime (cf. Lea and Young 1993).

The aim of this thesis is to investigate different aspects of poverty and exposure to crime. The basis of the thesis is five independent papers that focus on poverty and social exclusion, poverty in a comparative perspective, the relation between poverty and exposure to property crime, and the relation between poverty and crime in a comparative perspective. The main purpose of the introduction is to interpret the results of the articles in relation to each other and to try to show how the results can be understood from a theoretical perspective. From this, new hypotheses and proposals for future studies can be developed.

Poverty

Poverty is a heavily discussed and complicated social phenomenon. Saunders et al. (2002) counts no fewer than eight different ways of understanding and measuring poverty. However, viewed more abstractly, there are two ways of understanding poverty, which in the scientific field of poverty have been labelled absolute and relative poverty (Halleröd 1991). The absolute way of understanding poverty involves an assumption that absolute needs exist, independent of social relations, and that these needs are based on objective knowledge about the human as a biological being. The classic example of research conducted using an absolute understanding is Rowntree's (1902) investigation of poverty in York in 1899. To define poverty, Rowntree estimated the amount of money needed to uphold physical subsistence in terms of a minimum of food, housing facilities and clothes.¹

The official American poverty line is also based on an absolute understanding of poverty. The basis for setting the poverty line in the 1960s, as part of President Johnson's War on Poverty, was a study by Mollie Orshansky using the Department of Agriculture's calculations of the lowest required nutrient intake. Based on that information, Orshansky counted, using different family weights, how much money one must have so as not to be poor (Orshansky 1965; see also Brady 2003; Halleröd 1991).

In the 1960s in Britain, critique was taking form against an absolute understanding of poverty. The background was that in the construction of the British welfare system introduced after the Second World War, there was an underlying understanding of poverty as absolute and related to material needs such as nutrition, clothes and housing, etc. The question of poverty was raised in discussions about the levels of contributions and benefits when the mean-tested benefit system was to be replaced by a universal flat-rate system. Sir William Beveridge, the most important contributor to the design of the social security system and the settlement of the benefit levels introduced in Britain after the Second World War, claimed:

¹ Rowntree also measured what he called secondary poverty, defined as "families whose total earnings would be sufficient for the maintenance or merely the physical efficiency were it not that some portion of it is absorbed by other expenditure, either useful or wasteful" (the same quote is repeated on page x, 87 and 115). The definition of secondary poverty relates to the possible living standard and lifestyle of the working class in York in the end of the 19th century, and thus has relative characteristics. As will be seen, this is more of a relative understanding of poverty (cf. Halleröd 1991).

“In considering the minimum income needed by persons or working age for subsistence during interruptions of earnings, it is sufficient to take into account food, clothing, fuel, light and household sundries, and rent, though some margins must be allowed for inefficiency in spending” (quote from Gordon and Pantazis 1997 page 9).

When the Beveridge report was published in 1942, principals and some calculations were presented for how the future post-war social system should be constructed and extended. But it was clearly established that the level of contributions and benefits could not be set in terms of money. The main reason was an assumption that the value level of money would change in the transition to a peace economy and that “human subsistence is to some extent a matter of judgement; estimates on this point change with time, and generally, in a progressive community, change upwards” (Beveridge 1942 page 12). Thus, Beveridge had a relative understanding of the policy applications of the welfare system. But with the prosperity, the development of a welfare state and the upheaval of the living standard that followed the war, this formulation was forgotten, and the needs that formed the basis for the system of social security were increasingly met by British citizens, implying the belief that poverty had been virtually eliminated. In the parliament, among commentators in the media and among academics, poverty was an issue of the past (Townsend 1962).

In the 1960s, researchers argued that the understanding of poverty must change and that poverty was indeed present in British society. The reason, they argued, was that the level of living standard, including the presumed development set up in the Beveridge report, was no longer relevant to whether or not people were included in the society, and that the concept of both poverty and subsistence must be related to the contemporary and particularly society in question (Gordon and Pantazis 1997; Halleröd 1991; Harris 1994; Veit-Wilson 1994). This can be illustrated by the ethical saying used during wartime: “bread for everyone before cake for anyone” (Harris 1994). But in the 1960s, bread or cake was no longer enough to keep one out of poverty. The reason is that the 1950s and 1960s were characterized as years of great economic expansion (Wee 1987). An economic expansion can only stem from an increase in the pro-

duction of commodities, both services and goods, promoting an increased supply. The prerequisite for this is increased demand, for which increased aspiration among individuals is necessary. The new level of aspiration raises the level of needs for economic resources that is necessary to avoid poverty (Passas 1997). Townsend argued that

“both ‘poverty’ and ‘subsistence’ are relative concepts and that they can only be defined in relation to the material and emotional resources available at a particular time to the members either of a particular society or different societies” (Townsend 1962 page 210).

Thus, according to Townsend and others, poverty should be understood as a social phenomenon related to the context of a particular society, and not as absolute timeless norms concerning various needs. Thus, measuring the extent of poverty implies taking the particular society into account.

Today, most researchers claim that poverty has to be understood in relation to the actually society under study and that poverty is a relative social phenomenon. The relative understanding of poverty is also the official perspective of poverty in the EU and UN. For example, The UN definition of poverty is that poverty constitutes a “lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society” (Gordon et al. 2003).² From a research perspective, a characteristic definition of the relative understanding of poverty has been offered by Gordon and Pantazis (1997 page 9), who write:

² Even though most social scientists today understand poverty as a relative social phenomenon, the political debate as to whether an absolute or a relative understanding of poverty is the most plausible is still hot. For example, the Economist (2005) recently argued that the European relative poverty has unreasonable consequences, while the American absolute standard was considered sensible.

”People are not just physical beings, they are social beings. They have obligations as workers, parents, neighbours, friends and citizens that they are expected to meet and which they themselves want to meet. [...] Poverty can be defined as where resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that the ‘poor’ are, in effect, excluded from the ordinary living patterns, customs and activities”.

Which of the two understandings is preferable? The complication of an absolute understanding of poverty is that it assumes that poverty does not vary across different societies. It is, furthermore, dubious to understand poverty as only related to human biological needs and as something that transcends the social relations in the society. As Halleröd (1991) pointed out, even when poverty is defined in terms of minimum nutrient requirements, this minimum level is still related to the surrounding society. Thus, even the absolute understanding of poverty is in a sense relative. Townsend (1985) furthermore establishes that concepts such as hunger and starvation are indeed widely open to interpretation. In the latter instance, even the absolute understanding of poverty is relative. The difference between the relative and the absolute understanding of poverty is, then, that the relative understanding changes as a function of context, while the absolute understanding does not. But, given that all agree that poverty is a social phenomenon, how reasonable is it to claim that a social phenomenon does not change when society changes? For example, when Rowntree replicated his study for the third time in 1950, the absolute poverty rate in York had decreased from about 20 percent to about 2 percent. It is not likely that the poverty measurements really measured the same social phenomenon in 1899 and 1936³ as they did in 1950. In the case of the official American poverty line, it is obvious that having the same criteria in the measurement of poverty for more than thirty years undermines the validity of the measurement and ignores the implications of economic, demographic and policy changes (Brady 2003).

The relative understanding of poverty, on the other hand, implies that the separation of the poor from the non-poor is based on the assumption that the poor lack the economic resources necessary to have an acceptable

³ 1936 was the year of the second replication.

living standard in relation to contemporary society. With this understanding, poverty has a meaning in a sociological sense, and the main focus is related to the actual consequences of poverty, i.e. not being able to fully participate in society due to lack of economic resources. The relative understanding also frames poverty as a sociological concept. It is actually only with a relative understanding of poverty that poverty can be viewed as a social phenomenon.

Poverty: Relative and Objective

There are limits to how relative a relative understanding of poverty can be. As Sen (1983) pointed out, in the relative understanding of poverty, there is a core that has an absolute character. To understand the relative concept of poverty, this core has to be included in the understanding of poverty. To do that, poverty must be viewed from three levels: the level of resources, the level of capabilities and the level of function.

The function of poverty concerns social integration, i.e. being poor means not being able to participate in society owing to a lack of economic resources, but it also concerns avoidance of starvation. It is the function of poverty that is the absolute core of poverty. When comparing poverty across different societies, it is this level that is compared. Resources are about what it takes to be able to participate in society. The items and activities that are needed to participate in society may be and most probably are different in different societies. Resources are, therefore, the relative part of the poverty concept. The level of resources focuses on whether enough resources are at hand to allow an individual to function in society.

But having enough resources per se does not imply that poverty can be avoided. The ability to actually transform resources is also important. For example, different kinds of disabilities might demand more resources than are generally needed to participate in society.

That poverty is relative with regard to resources, but absolute with regard to functions is important because, as Sen (1983; 1985) has pointed out, this view gives poverty an absolute character and bridges the relativity of poverty over to an objective social phenomenon. Furthermore, this reasoning means that poverty cannot be related to inequality as such, or even to injustices as such. A country with a high degree of income inequality per se does not have a higher poverty rate than does a country with a low degree of income inequality. The concept of poverty is simply

about the clash between the norms for what it takes to be part of society and the means to achieve/acquire those things. Townsend writes:

“the question is how far peoples are bound by the same economic, trading, institutional and cultural systems, how far they have similar activities and customs and therefore similar needs. Needs arise by virtue of the kind of society to which individuals belong. Society imposes expectations, through its occupational, educational, economic and other systems, and it also creates wants, through its organization and customs” (Townsend 1979 page 50).

Thus, an individual is poor in relation to the goals, values and norms of the society. It is, furthermore, this understanding that links the theory of poverty to a theory connected to crime and in prolongation exposure to crime, ideas that will be presented below.

How to measure poverty – directly or indirectly?

Another dividing line regarding poverty is the question of how poverty should be measured. There are two methods: indirect and direct measurement of poverty. The difference between the two methods concerns the level at which poverty should be measured: resources, capabilities or functions. The indirect method measures poverty in terms of resources. It is the amount of resources that affects one’s ability to avoid poverty. The direct method measures the level of function. It is social integration in relation to economic resources that is in focus. The indirect method often focuses on the level of income, while the direct method focuses on the actual ability to consume goods and services (Ringen 1988).

But both methods of measurement have their weaknesses. The indirect method has problems associated with measurement accuracy. It is problematic to measure incomes as a reflection of economic hardship, because people may have incomes from the black market or relatives who provide support in the form of economic and material resources. When using cross-sectional data, the measurement of incomes also misses the aspect of time. People who are defined as poor because of low income may have savings and the timing of a low income is of importance to the con-

sequences that low income may entail (Halleröd 2000; see also Article I and Article II). This problem can be parried by using longitudinal data.

It is also possible that sharing within households is unequal, implying that a family with a high total income may have members who are poor (Nyman 2002, Cantillon and Nolan 2001). In other words, the relation between income and actual resources is problematic. The indirect measurement also has problems associated with the individual's ability to actually transform resources when these are at hand. As mentioned, some people need more resources to be able to participate in society owing to their different circumstances. When only income is measured, this aspect will not be taken into consideration.

The direct method also has problems regarding individual preferences. It is possible that, when measuring poverty on the function level, i.e. the ability to consume socially necessary items and activities, variations in expectations and priorities blur the measurement (Halleröd 2005; McKay 2004, Article II). It is reasonable to ask whether people who prioritize luxury consumption above basic consumption should be defined as poor. And the opposite may also be the case. Halleröd (2005) found that people with limited economic resources are more likely to say that they do not want various consumable items. Another weakness, mentioned by Ringen (1988), associated with direct measurement is lack of useable data. It is quite common that studies discuss poverty from a direct perspective, but actually measure it indirectly, using income, due to a lack of data, which of course is problematic (Ringen 1988). One of the strengths of the articles presented here is the access to data that enable measurement of poverty both directly and indirectly.

According to Ringen (1988), choice of measurement depends on one's theoretical (or ideological, as he also writes) understanding of poverty. Indirect measurement is associated with the principal of equality of opportunities, while direct measurement is associated with outcomes and how people in fact live. In this thesis, poverty is understood as the inability to be part of the ordinary lifestyle in society, due to a lack of economic resources. The measurement of poverty in this thesis is therefore a direct one, focusing on lifestyle. This is accomplished by measuring consumption of socially perceived necessities, both goods and activities. For poverty to be at hand, not consuming some of the goods or not engaging in some of the activities must be caused by a lack of economic resources. In this way, the problem of preferences is reduced. However, there may still be systematic bias affecting the measurement of poverty (Halleröd

2005; see the present articles for a more detailed description of the measurement of poverty, in particular Article II).

Table 1: The understanding of poverty

	Direct	Indirect
Relative	X	
Absolute		

It is important to keep clear that there is no relation between the two dividing lines *per se*. It is possible to have a relative understanding and measure poverty indirectly as well as directly. Likewise, it is possible to have an absolute understanding of poverty and measure poverty directly as well as indirectly. My position is, thus, a relative understanding of poverty combined with direct measurement of poverty, as indicated by the mark in Table 1.

To sum up, poverty is a condition of being unable to participate in an acceptable way in society. Hence, poverty is clearly related to material and economic resources, which in turn may have meaning for other spheres.

Exposure to Crime

Before discussing exposure to crime, what is meant by crime must be discussed. Crime is obviously a problematic phenomenon, because what criminal behaviour is in every case is a matter of definition. Furthermore, what a criminal act is and what it is not is constantly changing and is different in different societies. It was not long ago that forcible sexual intercourse with one's wife was not considered a crime (for example in England, it was first in 1991 that husbands lost immunity from marital rape, see e.g. Muncie 2001), and for example in Britain, use of physical force in the process of training and controlling children is not considered a crime, while it is in Sweden. Over the course of time, a given act may even change from being considered a duty to being criminal. It was a duty for the guards and soldiers in East Germany to shoot and kill East Germans who tried to flee over the Berlin wall. After the reunification in 1989, these shootings have been considered crimes, and some of the "shooters" have been prosecuted for their acts (Fattah 1997). We must have a principal for understanding what crime is, so that a demarcation

can be made between what constitutes crime victimization and what does not.

Just as with poverty, there are many ways of defining and understanding crime. In an exposition of definitions, Muncie (2001) mentions as many as eleven different definitions of crime. But when investigating the literature that discusses what crime is (e.g., Christie 2005; Fattah 1997; Lea and Young 1993; Muncie 2001), three axes can be crystallized on which most specific definitions can be placed. I define these axes as the legal view, the ideological view and the interactionistic view. The legal view defines acts that are legally established as criminalized as crimes. This kind of definition is often more of a practical demarcation made to improve the selection of crimes that can be reliably defined in an empirical study (see, e.g., Estrada 1998) than an etiological understanding of crime. The ideological view has its foundation in the notion of who has sufficient power to define acts as criminal deviance, and that laws are defined from the viewpoint of maintaining power in society (Chambliss 1975; Taylor et al. 1975). It may be stressed, for example, that those who have control over the means of production also, when needed, have sufficient resources to pressure politicians to legislate laws to protect their own interests, and that laws sometimes protect the general superiority that men have over women. From an interactionistic view, the definition of crimes depends on the moral values that are created in all interactions between individuals in the society. According to this view, acts that are defined as criminal are determined at the grass-root level in society. Laws grow, so to speak, from the bottom of the society up to the statue book.

Our understanding of the relation between the individual and society is another important division regarding the understanding of crime. The classical criminological view refers to the idea put forward by Beccaria, Hobbes, Rousseau, Bentham and others that society can be understood as a contract between individuals (Hauge 1990). The standpoint is that the actions of human beings may be understood as a balance between searching for pleasure and experiencing pain by performing actions that are sanctioned in some way. In the "state of nature", sanctions stem from force and violence, which makes life brutal and short. To overcome this state, an agreement has to be made between the individuals who regulate sanctions. That agreement is the social contract, the aim of which is to protect the individual by creating order through common rules. The other side of the social contract is that the individual has to sacrifice some of its individuality to the collective, and that the amount of pleasure is restric-

ted. Committing crime is understood as a pleasure for the individual, and what holds him/her back is the pain caused by the sanctions. The offender then calculates the pleasure of committing the crime in relation to the pain caused by societal sanctions, if caught by the sanction system. In this view, committing crime is the natural state, while it is the mechanism of control set up by society that is of interest (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990; Hirschi 1969). This view of criminality may be viewed as the pull version, i.e. the society pulls the individual into the collective, and it is a lack of mechanisms to pull the individual into the society that underlies criminal activity.

The other view is more of a push model, which primarily understands human beings as social animals and which takes for granted human sociality. There is no need for a social contract; the bond in the social community creates a collective consciousness concerning moral values and rules. To commit a crime is to “compromise acts universally condemned by the members of each society”, as Durkheim (1997/1893 page 33-34) once put it. With this view, people want to be integrated into the society. The question is: Why do people commit crime? And the answer is often sought in how the society is structured (see, e.g., Merton 1938; Merton 1967; Taylor et al. 1975; Young 1999). It is mechanisms in society that push the offender to commit crime.

All of these views are of importance. If laws are not backed by moral values from the bottom, i.e. if some laws are constantly broken, then the law is no law in reality. Many laws are clearly based on some kind of power relation, and using a legalistic definition as a demarcation for what is a crime and what is not is both practical and relevant. Moreover, control and sanction systems are of importance and must be taken into consideration, but it is a hopeless task to try to understand an individual individually in the absence of sociality. Thus, the theory of the social contract and the human being as an individual who maximizes pleasure in relation to individuality (that is not related to the society) must be rejected. Instead we must understand crime as a deviant behaviour in relation to the common norms of society. The crimes that are in focus in this thesis (exposure to violence, threat and property crime) are defined as crimes from both a legalistic and an interactionistic view. They are defined as crimes both in the statute book and among a majority of the population. It may be argued that power relations have also caused the act under investigation to be defined as a crime, but that is less obvious and relatively far-fetched. To put forward a simplistic model, the crimes used in the thesis

fall into Durkheim's (1964) description of crime as a social fact, and that an act is criminal if it offends vital and well-defined states of the collective consciousness.

The Victim of Crime

Then what about victims of crime? Lindgren et al. (2005 page 18) writes that "anyone can become a victim of crime, and that nearly all crimes results in victims, regardless of whether the crime is reported to the authorities and a suspect is apprehended or other action is taken by the justice system". This view is in a sense true. Many people have at some time been exposed to some kind of crime. Every year about 25 percent of the Swedish population lives in a household that has been exposed to property crime during that year, and about 8 percent have been exposed to violence and/or threats during the same amount of time (Häll 2004). But even though exposure to crime is quite common, the probability of being exposed to crime is not equally distributed in the society. It is well known, for example, that poor people are more exposed than the general population, that the young are more exposed than the elderly, that ethnic minorities are more exposed than the majority population, etc. (see, e.g., Fattah 1989; Mawby and Walklate 1994; Nilsson and Estrada 2003; Pantazis and Gordon 1997; Smith and Jarjoura 1989; see also Article III, IV and V). Moreover, the extent of exposure to crime is concentrated among a small group of individuals. Carlstedt emphasized that in Sweden about 40 percent of the crimes reported in the survey ULF (Statistics Sweden Survey of Living Condition) are perpetrated against 4 percent the population, a pattern that, according to Carlstedt, is similar in other comparable countries (Carlstedt 2004). There is, in other words, a clear pattern regarding the risks of being exposed to crime.

How can this pattern be explained? The most used theoretical explanation of victimization, the routine activity theory, has its roots in common criminological questions and starts from the view that it is the interaction between the offender and the victim that is in focus (Cohen and Felson 1979; Hindelang et al. 1978). The major question for Cohen and Felson (1979) was why crime rates increased in all Western countries during the golden age of economic prosperity between 1945 and 1975 – a period characterized by full employment, a decrease in conflicts and segregation, and a general increase in prosperity among ordinary people. Traditional criminological theories associate crime with inequality, unemployment, cultural conflicts, segregation, etc. (Miethe et al. 1991). Thus, the in-

crease in crime rates during the golden age contradicts the traditional theories. Cohen and Felson (1979) argued that the growing prosperity restructured people's lives such that interaction with presumptive offenders increased. Together with the increased opportunity to buy items worth stealing as a result of the increase in prosperity, and the heightened problem of guarding one's property following the restructuring of people's lives, the crime rate increased⁴. The conclusion was that for a crime to occur, three elements are presumed to exist: 1) motivated victims, 2) suitable targets and 3) the absence of a capable guardian.

The addition made by Hindelang et al. (1978) is that there has to be an occasion on which offender and victim intersect with each other, and that these occasions differ depending on structural constraints and role expectations, which are in turn dependent on structural factors such as age, gender, class, etc. According to the precondition outlined by Cohen and Felson, and Hindelang et al., the kind of lifestyle and daily routine activities a person has affect the risk of becoming a victim of crime.

The other dominant explanation for the patterning of victimization of crime takes its point of departure in geographical units. According to these theories, it is the proximity of crime situations that can explain the patterning of victimization and the fact that certain segregated areas have high crime rates. The main explanation for why crime is clustered in certain neighbourhoods has traditionally been that the social problems in these areas undermine institutions, followed by a decrease in social bonds and control. There are no norms that can hold back criminally deviant behaviour (Hagan 1994; Shaw and McKay 1969; Tseloni 2000; Wikström 1998; Wilson 1987). Theories emphasizing sub-cultures, drawing on the theory of differential associations, are also quite common. Recently, the relation between segregation and crime has also been explained by motivation caused by the strain the population in deprived areas is exposed to as a result of obstructed opportunities (Agnew 1999; Hoffman 2002).

Blaming the Victim

One important discussion regarding crime victimization is the risk that the victim will be blamed for the committed crime when the focus is on the victim and identification of factors that are important to the pattern of victimization (Mawby and Walklate 1994). It is therefore important to avoid that position and still emphasize the factors of importance to the

⁴ For a complementary discussion on the increase in crime rates during "the golden age" that includes inequality, poverty, etc., see Norström (1988).

pattern of victimization. In fact, such a discussion may even enable an explanation of why the poor have a higher risk of being exposed compared to the non-poor.

The problem of blaming the victim for the committed crime is as old as the discussion on victimization. When von Hentig (1948) introduced the modern academic discussion on crime victims, considerable emphasis was put on the role of the victim and the characteristics of the victim when a crime is committed. Von Hentig (1948) writes that “the victim is considered as a prospective and ill-fated business partner” (page 388), that “[in a sense] the victim shapes and moulds the criminal” (page 384) and that “the genesis of the situation, in a considerable number of cases we meet a victim who consents tacitly, cooperates, conspires, or provokes” (436). Such a “victim-blaming” standpoint is problematic. It cannot be ruled out that the victim is totally passive, and it is always the case that the offender is the active party who must be considered first, even if the victim has provoked the offender. This is also a problematic argument with regard to property crimes. Even though the car or the bicycle is unlocked, it is the offenders who are active when entering or stealing. Furthermore, putting too much emphasis on the victim in the relation between offender and victim, and even describing criminal acts as a result of the behaviour of the victim, may lead to making the victim responsible for the committed crime (for more discussions about victim-blaming see Lindgren et al. 2005; Mawby and Walklate 1994; Miers 1989; Nilsson 2003; Zedner 1997).

On the other hand, victimology as an academic field is more or less a response to political debates (Tham 2001a). For example, strengthening and protecting the victims of crime was one of the showpieces of the conservative president candidate Barry Goldwater in the US presidential election of 1964. Even though Goldwater lost the election, President Johnson appointed a commission to work with crime victims. The work of the commission resulted, among other things, in the first victim survey in 1967 (Lindgren et al. 2005). The breakthrough for the issue of victimization came with the second wave of feminism and in particular the struggle against rape and domestic violence (Lindgren et al. 2005; Mawby and Walklate 1994; Walklate 2001). It is symptomatic that the breakthrough for crime victim questions in Sweden is associated with a feminist book entitled *Only Yourself to Blame – a book about rape* (my translation) [*Skylla sig själv – en bok om våldtäkt*] (Boëthius 1976).

But the relation between the politics of victims of crime and the science of victims of crime may be problematic, because the characteristics of the victim can be easily idealized and political, thus influencing the research agenda (Åkerström and Sahlin 2001; Fattah 1979; Fattah 1989; Tham 2001b). There is an important point in maintaining that the risk of being exposed to crime is not equally distributed among the population, and that the profile of those who are most often victims of crime is the same as that of those who most often commit crime, a fact that caused criminologist Fattah to draw the conclusion that: “who will end up being victim and who will legally be qualified as the offender depends quite often on the chance factors rather than deliberate action, planning or intent” (Fattah 1989). Another common statement that reveals the problems is that “the victims in almost every case, in some or another way, contribute to their own victimization” (cf. Fattah 1997; Hentig 1948; Hindelang et al. 1978; Miethe and Meier 1994). This is a politically sensitive area, particularly when it comes to rape and how rape victims have been treated in court (see, e.g., Wennstam 2004; Fattah 1997). On the other hand, on the research agenda, victim demographics should not be a judgmental matter, but as Fattah (1979) points out, an analytical matter.

One conclusion that can be made at this point is that, when investigating facts about crime victims, we are very close to actually being in a position of “blaming the victim” for the crime. To avoid that position, an adjustment must be made in the relation between the offender and the victim. The relevance of victim characteristics is a reflection of the acts and deeds of the offender. It is the offender who must be viewed as the active party when a crime is committed, the one who, so to speak, leads the dance. Thus, to understand the pattern of crime victimization, we must begin with the offender and try to understand the behaviour of the offender. Helpful here is the work of Miethe and Meier (1994), who point out that a crime demands not only an offender, but also a victim and a context, and that victimological theory pays too little or no attention to the importance of the social forces that promote the motivation to offend. And yet, these social forces are crucial to understanding the pattern of victimization. Thus, before discussing why the poor are overrepresented among victims of crime, the motivation of the (poor) offender will be considered.

The motivation of the poor offender

So what are the social forces that promote the motivation to offend? To answer that question, I have reviewed common criminological theories. There are three main, sociologically relevant theoretical viewpoints on the motivation of the offender. Social control theory relates criminal behaviour to the absence of social and cultural integration, stemming from the institutions in society (Hirschi 1969; Shaw and McKay 1969). Differential association/social learning theory argues that delinquent norms and values are learned in a subcultural context, and that criminal behaviour in that context is defined as justifiable and desirable (Cloward and Ohlin 1960; Cressey 1969; Sutherland 1949). Strain/anomie theory argues that inequality causes feelings of frustration in those who have few economic resources, and this frustration is thought to motivate criminal activity (Merton 1938). The implication is that each of the theories do not exclude the other theories. Rather the theories explain crime from different and complementary views. Agnew (2005 page 3) writes how the theories explain the relation between child abuse and crime:

Strain theorists, for example, argue that a factor like child abuse increases crime because it upsets individuals, who then engage in crime to escape from the abuse (e.g., running away), end the abuse (e.g., assault on the parents), take their anger out on others (e.g., assault on peers), or make themselves feel better (e.g., drug use). Control theorists argue that child abuse increases crime because it weakens the bond between parent and child, thereby lowering the cost of crime. Individuals who do not care about their parents have less to lose by engaging in crime, and so are more likely to respond to temptations and provocations with crime. Social learning theorists argue that child abuse increases crime because it teaches the child that aggression is an appropriate response to certain problems.

A consequence of this is that there have been many attempts to integrate two or all three theoretical viewpoints in order to present a general

theory of crime (see, e.g., Agnew 2005; Braithwaite 1989; Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990; Messner and Rosenfeld 2001; Sampson and Laub 1993). Most relevant from my point of view is the strain/anomie theory of crime. The reason is threefold. First, the strain and anomie theory is largely built on the theory of relative deprivation, and is therefore related to the understanding of poverty. Second, the other two theories to some degree lack a relation to the social structure, while the strain/anomie theory bases its explanation of the motivation to commit crime on the social structure, and therefore has to do with social forces. Third, the strain/anomie theory is the one that places most focus on the offender's motivation. Thus, even though the strain/anomie theory of crime does not provide a general explanation of crime, it is the theoretical viewpoint that can probably best explain crimes related to poverty. The version of strain theory used here draws heavily on Merton's version presented in a couple of articles (see, e.g., Merton 1938; Merton 1967).

The main feature of the strain/anomie theory has its origin in Durkheim's theory of anomie. Durkheim (1997/1893) used the term anomie to describe one of the three abnormal forms of division of labour in societies resulting from imperfect organic solidarity, which Durkheim meant was the form of complex societies developed in Western Europe in the wake of the growing industrial society (in contrast to the mechanical solidarity in "simpler" societies). Anomie in the perspective of division of labour is when labour does not create social regulations that integrate the members of the society in a social relationship. The result of anomie was, according to Durkheim, industrial crisis and conflicts between labour and capital. In his study of suicide, Durkheim (1993/1897) further developed the concept of anomie. Now the concept described a condition in which the rules governing people's desires have become uncertain, caused by rapid changes in the society, which in turn cause normlessness. Under conditions such as these, there are no rules and norms for what is proper to desire, and there easily arises a clash between *what is desired* and *what is possible to have*. When such a clash arises, a sense of anger and frustration sets in. Suicide caused by anomie is then a result of a situation in which the individual does not have rules for how to behave and experiences this situation with pain and frustration.

Durkheim also discussed the situation of anomie as important in explaining other types of deviant behaviour (than suicide), for example committing crime. It is from this perspective that Merton takes the theory of anomie (and later strain) into the criminological literature (cf. Konty

2005). Merton's most important contribution was to more concretely implement the social structure and cultural values in such a way that the theory of anomie became both more concrete and broader (cf. Clinard 1964). By culture, Merton meant both central goal orientations and central values, and those institutional means to attain the central goal orientations in society. An important difference between Durkheim's and Merton's anomie theory is that when Durkheim describes the condition of anomie, the focus is mainly on the effect of deregulation of traditional institutions when rapid changes take place, which is characteristic of the era of industrialism, which causes disorganization of regulation of desires. In Merton's version, much more emphasis is placed on values and goals set by the culture, on the one hand, and structurally unequal possibilities to reach these goals, on the other. In Merton's perspective, the paradox is that committing deviant behaviour does not go against the values, norms and goals of American society. Instead, deviant behaviour is an act in line with the norms, values and goals of the society – even though it is a caricature. The consequence of this change is that anomie is more clearly connected with interactions based on class status, compared to regulation/deregulation in Durkheim's discussion⁵. Merton (1938) writes, for example, that the aim of his paper *Social Structure and Anomie* “lies in discovering how social structures exert a definite pressure upon certain people in the society to engage in nonconformist rather than conformist conduct” (page: 672).

Important to keep in mind is that, according to both Durkheim and Merton, anomie is something that happens on a societal and contextual level. In Merton's view, anomie is characterized as a clash between culturally established goals and values and the unequal distribution of resources in the structure. In the US (and in most other Western nations, as Merton adds), these goals and values are related to economic and material success. Furthermore, Merton claims that there is also a general societal value implying that economic success may be achieved “by any means

⁵ The essential cause to the difference between Durkheim's and Merton's understanding of anomie is different understanding of law and justice, and different understanding of the essence of being a human. Durkheim had a transcendental view of the relation between the law and the people, implying that the law exists more or less independent of the people, rooted in the culture, regulating the behaviour of people. Furthermore, Durkheim believed that man have a double nature, “is homo duplex, part egoistic, anarchistic and self seeking, part moral in so far as he is regulated and constrained by society” as Horton writes (1964). Merton's understanding of man is related to interactions and situations of roles, i.e. an immanent understanding of the relation between man and the society. Deviant behaviour in Merton's perspective is primary not about deregulation, but frustration of not being part of a social group or the society (cf. Orrù 1987).

necessary”, i.e. the means by which goals are achieved are not important – just the achievement. Moreover, the society is viewed as a meritocratic and “an open class society”, i.e. anyone can become what they want if they only put enough effort into their aspirations⁶. Together they form the “meta ethic” of the *American Dream*.

The second leg of Merton’s theory is that some have the possibility to achieve the economic and material goals, while others do not – and this inequality has its roots in the class structure of the society. According to these cultural values and norms (the American Dream), those who do not have the institutional means to attain economic and material success (or even the goals set by the culture) have only themselves to blame. Thus, those who have a low class-related status will be in a situation of strain between the culturally established goals and values and the means to live up to these goals and values, and it is the attempt to cope with this strain that (for some) motivates criminal behaviour. This means that Durkheim’s theory of anomie is the structural prerequisite, but it is the situation of strain in the anomic situation that can explain motivation to commit crime. But being under strain is not enough to explain whether or not there is motivation to commit crime. According to Merton, people have different responses when in a situation of strain. The response that causes frustration and motivates criminal behaviour is characterized by accepting the common cultural goals and norms, not having sufficient institutional means to live up to these goals and norms, and furthermore viewing the situation as unfair. Merton calls this social type the “innovator”, i.e. there is a tendency for innovators to either try to make a private redistribution of resources to obtain success symbols, or to become frustrated, which entails a risk of becoming violent (Merton 1967). The strain theory implies that the mechanism behind criminal behaviour is the same as the mechanism behind the deprivation of poor people in the theory of poverty presented above. Because relative poverty is related to the goals and norms of the society, a precondition of being poor is also “acceptance” of the goals and norms of the society combined with a lack of means. A person who cannot afford certain items that are viewed as necessary by the majority, but who does not desire the items can hardly be regarded as deprived, and will hardly have the motivation to commit crimes for that reason. Merton calls that kind of social type for the “retreatist”; a person who has no institutionalized means and has abandoned

⁶ This is sometimes called an egalitarian ideology. In the public consciousness is the society classless, while in reality the society has a clear pattern of classes (Passas 1997).

the goals of the society. He further claims that this social type is the least common and is characterized as *in* the society but not *of* the society⁷. Anyway, being poor in a relative sense must then be understood to implicitly imply having incitements to commit crime, and thus the incentive to commit crime is generally greater among the poor than among the non-poor.⁸

Back to the victim – the poor one

Thus, being in a situation of poverty implies having a greater motivation to commit crime. Then what about exposure to crime? This lack of economic resources refers the poor to similar contexts and places, implying that the relatively deprived intersect and interact with each other, for example on public transport or at certain pubs and private parties. It is well known that “busy” places, available for public activity, have a high rate of victimization (Miethe and McDowall 1993) and that a “deviant lifestyle” correlates highly with exposure to crime (Agnew 2005; Lauritsen et al. 1991). Interaction with the poor thus increases the risk of being exposed to crime, primarily crimes related to violence, threats and property crimes such as pickpocketing and robbery. The assumption is that offenders who are poor generally perpetrate their crimes against others who are poor (cf. Lea and Young 1993). There is also some evidence to support this notion, both with respect to property crime and crimes related to violence and threats (see, e.g., Fattah 1989; Hindelang et al. 1978; Stevans 1988). In line with the theory presented here, it is not unreasonable to suggest that in some cases the poor person who becomes a victim of crime is sometimes an offender as well. This does not mean that persons with a criminal past are less “deserving” victims than are persons without a criminal past.

What are the implications of the theories of crime victimization presented above? According to the routine activity/lifestyle theory, the

⁷ The other modes of adaptation that Merton lists is: Conformity – that accepts the cultural goals and have the institutionalized means; Ritualism – that have the institutionalized means, but do not accept the cultural goals; and Rebellion – that do not accept the goals and/or the institutionalized means, but have other goals and tries to change the existing goals, and/or how means are institutionalized (Merton 1967).

⁸ Of course, the theory of anomie and strain does not explain every reason why crime is committed, nor does it only explain motivation to commit crime among the poor. Strain originating from reference groups can explain, for example, sub-culture-related crimes (see, e.g., Cloward and Ohlin. 1960; Hagan et al. 1998) and white-collar crimes (see, e.g., Coleman 1998; Passas 1997). But here it is the all-embracing goals and norms on the societal level that are in focus.

poor are more exposed to crime because they have lifestyles that are different from those of the non-poor, and these lifestyles imply a higher degree of interaction and intersection with presumptive offenders. According to the theories based on the significance of geographical units the poor are more exposed to crime as a consequence of living in areas that have high crime rates, which through proximity to presumptive offenders entails a higher degree of interaction and intersection with presumptive offenders.

Fear of crime

The most common way to be victimized by crime is through a collective fear of crime. As with crime victimization, there is a clear pattern regarding who is afraid of being exposed to crime. Women, the elderly⁹ and ethnic minorities are more afraid than the general population (Hale 1996), and furthermore, the poor are more afraid of crime than are the non-poor (Nilsson and Estrada 2003; Pantazis 2000). There are three different general understandings of fear of crime. The first explanation focuses on experience of crime, suggesting that those who once have been victimized believe that the risk of being exposed once again is higher compare to those who have not been exposed to crime (Wittebrood 2002).

Another explanation of fear of crime focuses on the impact of the aggregate crime level. If crime rates are high where one lives, the argument goes, crime is in a sense experienced collectively through media reports and social interactions (Innes 2003; Quann and Hung 2002). This form of collective experience increases one's belief in the probability of becoming a victim oneself (Kershaw et al. 2001).

Another view is that fear of crime is related not to the risk of being exposed to crime, but to the damage that victimization might cause, i.e. the vulnerability. The risk of being seriously injured is greater for older women than for younger men, even though older women are less exposed. The poor are economically more vulnerable if they are exposed to property crime than are the non-poor. Loss of property is more problematic if one is unable to afford insurance and lacks the money to buy necessary items (Hale 1996; Killias 1990; Pantazis 2000).

Lastly, it has been suggested that the emphasis should not be on crime but on fear, and that fear of crime should be seen in a broader light. Taylor (1999) argues that fear of crime is related to general insecurity and

⁹ Whether the elderly are actually more afraid than young people are has been questioned by Pain (2003) and Ferraro (1995).

the uncertainty that an insecure condition creates. General insecurity can also be related to a feeling of vulnerability and related to fear of crime through that feeling (Hale 1996; Pantazis 2000).

The Comparative Analyses

Three out five articles in the thesis are of a national comparative nature. The countries compared are Sweden, Finland and Britain in one article, and Britain and Sweden in two articles. The remaining two articles contain analyses of Swedish data only. The choice of countries is primarily practical, and based on a collaboration between researchers (see Article II) who wish to merge national data in order to create a single database that can be used to analyse relative deprivation using a method based on the consensual approach to poverty developed by Mack and Lansley (1985).

The focus in the comparative data has therefore been on poverty measured as relative deprivation. Data on exposure to crime and fear of crime are added, but there are some problems associated with the variables measuring various forms of exposure to crime and fear of crime. First of all, in the Finish data, no question about crime was available. Regarding Britain and Sweden, the questions posed about exposure to crime and fear of crime are not worded in exactly the same way. The questions about exposure to crime are more detailed in Sweden, while the question about fear of crime is more detailed in the British data (see Article III and IV). When investigating both crime victimization and fear of crime, it has been found that the wording of the questions is of importance to the result (Ferraro 1995; Kury 1994). It is therefore important to use caution when investigating the proportion of the poor in Sweden in relation to the proportion of the poor in Britain. The focus of the thesis is therefore on the relation between the poor and the non-poor in Britain and Sweden. Although the questions are not worded in exactly the same way, they should capture the same structural patterns.

The foundation for interpreting the comparative analyses

It is between the countries that the comparative results are interpreted, and it is the contextual and institutional differences between the countries

that are in focus, and that can explain different comparative results. On the other hand, it is the relative similarity between the countries that makes the differences possible to interpret by holding some contexts and institutions constant. Britain, Finland and Sweden are not all that different in an international perspective. All three countries are well-developed welfare states, capitalistic democracies and relatively rich countries. But there are also differences between the countries that are well documented and known. For example, the three most influential attempts to cluster welfare states all place Sweden and Finland (social-democratic/encompassing) in the same cluster and locate Britain (liberal/basic security) in similar clusters (Esping-Andersen 1990; Huber and Stephens 2001; Korpi and Palme 1998). Below, Britain and Sweden are in focus.

Poverty in a comparative perspective

Retrenchment of the welfare state started earlier in Britain (about 1979) than in Sweden (the beginnings of the 1990s) and has gone further in Britain (Korpi and Palme 2003). As a consequence, British society relies more on the market than does Swedish society. Furthermore, the social insurance system in Britain is based to a greater extent on a flat-rate system, while the Swedish social insurance system is based more on an income-related system. It has also been suggested that there is more inequality between the classes in Britain than in Sweden (Western 1998), and that the number of low-paid part-time workers is greater in Britain (Carlén 1998; Jones and Novak 1999; Rhodes 2000; Myles and Turgeun 1994). Together, this should mean that inequality and poverty are more extensive in Britain than in Sweden. There is also empirical evidence indicating that this is the case. The proportion of the population earning less than 60 percent of the median income is larger in Britain, and the Gini-coefficient, which measures the degree of inequality, is higher in Britain than in Sweden (Eldin and Gordon 2004; Ritakallio 2002; Sainsbury and Morrisens 2002; Article II).

Crime in a comparative perspective

Regarding the comparison between Britain and Sweden with respect to crime, crime has received more attention in the debate and policies related to crime have been more prioritized in Britain than in Sweden (Tham 1998). Most scholars seem to agree that the US is the trendsetter with regard to crime policies, and that most countries are moving closer to the situation in the US. Most scholars also agree that Britain is the

country that most closely follows in the path of the US, with implementation of zero tolerance policies, night curfews, electronic tagging and private prisons (Christie 2001; Garland 2001; Muncie 2005; Tham 2001b). Although there has been a change in Sweden, which in a relative sense is remarkable, from a crime policy focusing on rehabilitation and humanitarian values to a crime policy focusing more on penalizing and repression, Sweden still has a less repressive crime policy than Britain does (Muncie 2005; Tham 2001b; Wacquant 2004). One indication of this is that the lowest age of criminal responsibility is very low in the UK countries, ranging from 8 years in Scotland to 10 years in England and Wales, and England and Wales abolished the principle of *doli incapax* (incapable of committing crime) for 10- to 14-years old in 1998 (which resulted in complaints from the UN – see Muncie 2005). In contrast, the lowest age of criminal responsibility in Sweden is 15.

Studies on the level of crime in a comparative perspective have shown that it is about equal in Britain and Sweden (Dolmén 2001; Kesteren et al. 2000; Article IV). Considering the theory of the relation between crime and poverty, this should not be the case. According to the theory presented above, having more inequality and more poverty should imply that Britain also has a higher crime rate and more crime concentrated among the poor. Regarding fear of crime, studies have shown that Britons are generally more afraid of crime than Swedes are (Dolmén 2001; Kesteren et al. 2000; Article V). One reason for this might be that the discussion about crime, zero tolerance, etc., has caused a social environment of fear with regard to crime.

Relevant findings

How then are the theoretical descriptions related to the empirical material used in the thesis? In the first article, using Swedish data, the relation between 19 different welfare problems was investigated. Examples of the welfare problems investigated are exposure to crime, different kinds health problems, unemployment, political inactivity (for example not voting) and low education. Poverty was included among these 19 welfare problems. In the article, two definitions of poverty were presented: income poverty and deprivation poverty. Income poverty defined as poor

those who have less than 60 percent of the median income. Deprivation poverty was based on direct observations of consumption of socially perceived necessities. Those 10 percent of the population that are least able to consume socially perceived necessities were defined as poor (10 percent is the proportion of the population that is defined as income poor). As other studies have shown, the overlap between the two poverty measurements was fairly limited (Bradshaw and Finch 2003; Halleröd 1991; Halleröd 2000). Only about two percent of the population is both income poor and deprivation poor. It was also found that income poverty was weakly related to the other welfare problems, while deprivation poverty was strongly correlated to the other welfare problems. A cluster containing about 10 percent of the population was found, where a number of welfare problems are closely related. These welfare problems are health problems, headaches, anxiety, sleeping problems, loneliness, lack of cash margin, unemployment and deprivation poor. In other words, it is these welfare problems that are most associated with being poor. It was furthermore found that unskilled workers, single adults with children, youth and women have a larger risk of falling into that cluster than do others. An important conclusion drawn in the article is that the choice of measurement of poverty is important, and that income poverty is weakly related to other welfare problems. Moreover, poverty measured directly as relative deprivation is strongly related to other welfare problems, meaning that poverty is a severe problem for a portion of the population in Sweden.

The second article is a comparative investigation of economic hardship in Britain, Finland and Sweden. Earlier comparative studies have often found that inequality and poverty are more extensive in Britain than in Sweden and Finland. But these results are often based on income poverty or on use of the gini-coefficient. In this article, poverty was measured in another way. Poverty was defined as relative deprivation, and the measurement was based on direct observation of deprivation and its effects on consumption of goods and services. The results contradict those of earlier studies. The highest rate of economic hardship was found in Finland, while relative deprivation was equally common in Britain and Sweden. The reason why Finland has the highest rate of economic hardship is that the unemployment rate is higher in Finland and that the unemployed in Finland are generally worse off. In all three countries, it was found that having a weak labour market position was related to poverty.

In the three following articles, exposure to crime is added to the analysis of poverty. The relation between poverty and exposure to crime is complicated, such that it is not the case that the poor are more exposed to all kind of crimes than are the non-poor. The third article, based on Swedish data, investigates whether the poor are more exposed to property crime, and if they are why this is the case. Results show that the poor are more exposed to property crime related to the home, the form of property crime that most violates personal integrity. Neither the routine activity theory nor living in a socially disorganized area could explain this. It seems that it is the situation of poverty as such that is of importance. It was also found that the poor are not more exposed than are the non-poor to other kinds of property crimes.

In the fourth article, which deals with exposure to property crime and violence among the poor in Britain and Sweden, the relation between poverty and exposure to crime is even more complicated. It was found that the poor are only more exposed to some categories of crime and that the relation between the poor and the non-poor was different in Britain and Sweden. Poor Swedes are more exposed to violence, property crime in the home and property crime outside the home than are non-poor Swedes, while poor Britons are only more exposed to property crime in the home than are non-poor Britons. It is important to remember, though, that property crime related to the home is the property crime that most violates personal integrity. In the multivariate analyses based on the theoretical assumption presented above, part of the differences in exposure to crime between the poor and the non-poor could be explained by other factors not related to poverty. Demographic factors, weak labour market position and living in socially disorganized areas explained the main part of the difference between the poor and the non-poor.

The results also indicate that poverty correlates more with exposure to crime in Sweden than in Britain, and that the greater economic inequality that exists in Britain does not seem to generate more inequality regarding exposure to crime. On the other hand, considering the results in Article II – which show that the extent of poverty when measured directly as relative deprivation is about equal in Britain and Sweden – crime should be as much related to poverty in Britain as in Sweden. Understanding why this is not the case is an important task for future research.

In the fifth and last article, fear of crime among the poor in Britain and Sweden is investigated. One important result is that the poor in both Britain and Sweden are more afraid of crime than are the non-poor. In Bri-

tain, the poor are more afraid than are the non-poor as a consequence of vulnerability on the labour market and in general. In Sweden, no explanation could be found for why the poor are more afraid. Thus far, it seems that it is the situation of poverty as such that is related to fear of crime in Sweden. The results show, furthermore, that in general fear of crime is more related to experience of crime in Sweden, while vulnerability on the labour market is more related to fear of crime in Britain. It was also found that fear of crime is generally more common in Britain than in Sweden. Due to measurements problems, this result is not certain, but does find support in other studies showing similar results (Dolmén 2001, Kesteren et al. 2000).

Conclusions

First of all, the results presented in the thesis have shown that poverty – understood as a relative phenomenon, measured with direct observation of ability to consume socially necessary goods and services – is highly relevant. How poverty is measured has also been found to be of importance. When measuring poverty as relative deprivation, the established “truth” that Britons are worse off than Swedes and Finns, based on studies using income to measure poverty, is contradicted. Instead, the extent of poverty is about equal in Britain and Sweden, while more extensive in Finland. Whether this is actually the case remains to be established.

As far as I can see, there are two possible reasons why poverty measured using income is more extensive in Britain compared to Sweden, while poverty measured directly as relative deprivation is equal in Britain and Sweden. The first reason is that inequality and low income generate more deprivation in Sweden than in Britain. It is reasonable to assume that the social democratic party’s long time in power in Sweden has strengthened the impact of an egalitarian ideology among the citizens in Sweden that makes it harder for Swedes to accept large income gaps. If this is the case, there are problems associated with preferences in the poverty measure used here. The second reason is that the weakness of the indirect method of measuring poverty is greater in Britain than in Sweden. It is possible that incomes from the black market are more extensive in Britain than in Sweden, and that Britons have better social net-

works between friends and relatives that can help in cases of low income. But the differences may also depend on different methods of collecting data. In Sweden, data are often official register data, while the data in Britain are often collected via questionnaires in which people estimate their own income.

The fact that poverty measured as relative deprivation is related to other welfare problems such as unemployment, health problems, etc., while poverty measured as low income is weakly related to other welfare problems indicates that deprivation poverty measures poverty in a better way than does the income poverty measurement. Thus, it seems that it is the second explanation that best explains the results.

Naturally, the fact that poverty is related to other welfare problems is also important. Some of these problems are related to crime victimization, such as exposure to property crime, exposure to violence and fear of crime. This brings us to the relation between poverty and exposure to crime.

In the articles in this thesis, which deals with the relation between crime and poverty, a clear relation was found. But the relation is not as simple as was presumed. The poor are only more likely to be exposed to some types of crime. Different kinds of crime have different meanings, and in future research there is probably a need to differentiate between different categories of crime to a greater extent than was done in this thesis.

Another complexity regarding the relation between poverty and exposure to crime is that it was found that poverty is related to crime victimization in a different way in Britain than in Sweden. This indicates that there are contexts that regulate the relation between poverty and exposure to crime, and that these contexts may be different in different societies. An important task for future research is to find out more about these contexts.

Based on the results presented here, there is one startling conclusion that can be drawn. The greater economic inequality and income poverty in Britain compared to Sweden does not seem to structure exposure to crime more unequally in Britain than in Sweden. The reason for this may be that the mechanisms behind crime and exposure to crime, especially related to the poor, are not more common in Britain than in Sweden. Regarding the result showing that the extent of relative deprivation is about equal in Britain and Sweden, it can be suggested that those who want to have certain consumption items or engage in certain activities, but who

cannot owing to lack of economic resources, are not more common in Britain than in Sweden. Therefore, although income inequality is more common in Britain than in Sweden, the pressure to commit crime among the poor may be similar in Britain and Sweden. A logical conclusion based on this reasoning is that the reason why crime is generally not more common in Britain compared to Sweden is that the level of strain among the poor is equal in the two countries. This is a possible link that requires further investigation.

One reason why the specific theories presented concerning exposure to crime do not explain why the poor are more exposed than the non-poor may be that the theories at hand are too simplistic with respect to the intersection of and interaction between individuals. Moreover, routine activities are of importance for the risk of being exposed to crime, but it is the interaction that must be at the forefront, because it is the content of the interaction that is important for the probability of intersecting with potential offenders. Being involved in activities outside the home increases the risk of being exposed to crime. But if the risk is higher for the poor who are highly involved in activities outside home than for the non-poor who are also highly involved in activities outside the home, this theory cannot explain the difference between the poor and the non-poor. The results indicate that poverty as such implies a higher risk of being exposed to crime, and that poverty therefore must be more and better integrated into theories of crime victimization than has been possible here. But it is probably also important to integrate the offender and the structure of the opportunities to commit crime into the theories. Lack of economic resources refers poor people to certain contexts, and in these contexts, it is the content of the possible interactions that should be of importance. Thus, the question that must be asked is whether that content implies a heightened risk of being exposed to crime. For some crimes, the answer will be “yes”, but for others it will be “no”. Future theoretical and empirical work must work these relations out, and a good help would probably be if the data used also contained information on criminal activity. Questions such as in what contexts there is an overrisk for certain crimes and whether the poor are more involved in these contexts, both as offenders and victims, must be put forward.

Regarding fear of crime, the theory of insecurity could explain why the poor are more afraid of crime in Britain, while no explanation could be found for why poor Swedes are more afraid than are non-poor Swedes. One possible explanation for this is that Britons are generally more afraid

of crime than Swedes are (Kesteren et al. 2000) and that the poor in Britain cannot therefore be easily differentiated from the non-poor, except in terms of different levels of insecurity. But also the fact that crime and crime prevention have been more in focus in the public debate in Britain may be one reason for the higher level of fear of crime there. Fear of crime has to be regarded as an important welfare problem, and therefore it is important to discover the mechanisms that are decisive for the general level of fear. This kind of difference probably exists between other countries as well. Discovering the mechanisms behind fear of crime is of importance to future research.

The basis for understanding the differences in fear of crime between Britain and Sweden in a broader way lies in the relation between crime policy, ordinary social policy and the requirements of discipline among ordinary people in the society. From the perspective of the state, crime and punishment are about social order and discipline among the citizenry. This is evident in a historical perspective. Foucault (1987) has shown that the historical role of the prison system has been to implement a new kind of discipline in the new society, characterized by a free working class, and it is symptomatic that the modern police emerged as a response to social unrest during protests in some European countries, including Sweden, in 1848. The modern police in Britain emerged earlier, also as a response to social unrest (Furuhagen 2004).

This view must be incorporated into the analysis of crime and poverty in our own time, which is largely characterized by the two oil crises in the 1970s (Gordon 1988). Three changes in the wake of the oil crises are of relevance here. The first is the retrenchment of the welfare state. This process has proceeded differently in different countries, but the consequence has been the same everywhere. The scope of the market has increased. As a consequence, the significance of private consumption and the consumption culture has increased. The second change is the rapid increase in inequality, and the emergence of marginalized groups. The third change is the re-emergence of mass unemployment and surplus of labour in relation to the demands for labour.

These three changes should have implied that the potentiality for strain between cultural norms and the economic means necessary to live up to cultural norms has increased (cf. Young 1999). In Britain, which was one of the first countries governed under a neoliberal ideology, the politicians behind retrenchment of the welfare state should have two interests in relation to crime and punishment. The first is to prevent people

from responding to the degeneration of social welfare by becoming rebels. Rebels are the social type that Merton (1967) characterized as not accepting cultural goals and norms, not accepting the structure of institutional means (how economic resources are distributed), and having alternatives to how society works today. One strategy to avoid a huge increase in the number of rebels is to change focus towards another social problem and to individualize that problem (cf. Pierson 1994). Nothing is more suitable to that task than the problem of crime. Crime can easily be described as a threat, and it is easy to inflate the extent and seriousness of crime. The second interest is to discipline the behaviour of those who are marginalized, especially youth, to avoid social unrest such as the 1992 riots in Los Angeles (Jonsson 1995). This is what the policy of zero tolerance is about. It is not crime and criminal behaviour that zero tolerance focuses on, but other behaviour defined as “anti-social”.

In Sweden the situation is different. The social democratic workers party has had power for most of the post-WWII period. The party has been associated with social reforms and the construction of the welfare system in Sweden. But during the 1990s, the social democrats have been involved in the retrenchment of the welfare state and the degeneration of social welfare. This has implied that social democracy has gone from a situation in which an egalitarian and progressive ideology dominated the activity of the party to a situation dominated by political activity that is, in relation to the ideology, regressive. The increased focus on crime and punishment may be a strategy used to avoid losing voters. Focusing on the problem of crime may be used as way to divert attention from the retrenchment of the welfare state (cf. Tham 2001b). But the focus on crime and punishment may also be a logical consequence of going from a situation of building up the welfare state to a situation of retrenchment of the welfare state. When social welfare expanded, the problem of crime could easily be viewed as a social problem that could be cured by social reforms. But if it is assumed that the possibilities of social reforms are limited, the problem of crime can easily be understood as an individualized problem that must be solved through increased repression and control.

The most like reason, then, for why there has been more focus on crime in Britain and why repressive crime policies have gone further in Britain is that the British government has had an offensive policy towards the problem of crime based on its neoliberal ideology, while the Swedish government has had a crime policy formulated from a defensive position. It is possible that the reason why fear of crime is more extensive in Bri-

tain than in Sweden may be found in between-country differences in social policy, and especially in policy related to crime.

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