



## **Criminology and the sociology of organizations**

### *Analogy, comparative social organization, and general theory*

DIANE VAUGHAN

*Department of Sociology, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA 02167, USA*  
(e-mail: [dvaughanbc@aol.com](mailto:dvaughanbc@aol.com))

**Abstract.** The sociology of organizations offers conceptual tools that can be used by criminologists. The logic of crossing intra-disciplinary boundaries to borrow conceptual tools rests in the analogical properties of structure and process across social settings that are fundamental aspects of all social organization. Analogy itself is underrecognized and used as a tool for conceptual thinking and analysis in sociology. In this article, I give examples of theories and concepts from the sociology of organizations that can usefully be applied to substantive criminological problems. Then I compare family violence and corporate crime as examples of organizational misconduct, foregrounding the organizational setting in order to examine links between micro-, meso-, and macro-levels of analysis. These two exercises demonstrate that incorporating organization theory into criminological research can provide new insights in data analysis of substantive problems, build toward general sociological theory, and toward integrative general criminological theory that escapes the levels of explanation problem.

### **Introduction**

My first awareness of the relevance of the sociology of organizations for criminology was in an undergraduate course in Penology in 1971. We read Lawrence Hazelrigg's edited volume, *Prison Within Society* (1968), which reprinted the classics of the prison literature at that time, and Rose Giallombardo's *Society of Women* (1967). Far from being a sociologist or even understanding what sociology was, I nonetheless was impressed by what seemed to be general principles common to both books. The Hazelrigg reader contained, among others, Wheeler's "Socialization in Correctional Communities," Galtung's "The Social Functions of the Prison," Cloward's "Social Control in the Prison," Street's "The Inmate Group in Custodial and Treatment Settings," Zald's "The Correctional Institution for Juvenile Offenders: An Analysis of Organizational 'Character,'" Grusky's "Role Conflict in Organizations," and Cressey's "Contradictory Directives in Complex Organizations: The Case of the Prison." Giallombardo's superb ethnography of the inmate social sys-

This is a final version of a paper presented at the 1999 Annual Meetings of the American Sociological Association, Chicago.