

A bronx tale: sociological perspective

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



A Bronx Tale is set in the 1960 in Bronx, New York (DeNiro, 1993). This movie centers on the child of a hard working man, Lorenzo Anello. Lorenzo Anello has avoided the life of crime by working hard and holding firm to his beliefs of good and bad. However, his son Calogero Anello (C) becomes involved with the neighborhood gangster Sonny. Against the wishes of his father C's relationship with Sonny continues until the death of Sonny.

There are three sociological theories of crime that can explain C's continued friendship and growth in this life of crime; differential association, labeling, and strain.

C's career as a criminal begins with simple errands for Sony. As a child who did not know any better, C felt that making money would help his low class family. Here, the story begins by introducing the theory of strain. When an individual is under strain, in this case financial, that individual may be tempted to commit a crime (Blackburn, 1998). This theory applies to this situation because the crime continued to occur after C's father told him what he was doing was illegal. As C continues to work for Sonny it becomes clear that C's feelings of strain lessen. This is depicted in two scenes.

The first C is being punished by his father for continuing to work for Sonny. In this scene C seems to simply be putting up with the punishment that no longer has any effect. The other scene C shows up at his house to show off his new clothes to his mother. He is wearing an expensive suit with dress shoes. At this point other theories of criminality begin to emerge as explanations of the continued behavior.

Differential association is the theory that criminal behavior is learned by the interactions of a particular subculture of group (Blackburn, 1998). C is introduced to all the players of this neighborhood gang and at the same time given attention and praise for essentially being a “ good” criminal. At this point C has stopped attending school and he spends his days with the other men. One scene shows the other gangsters and C in a basement playing cards and dice.

The men loudly praise C. Later in the scene C is given the opportunity to play dice and as he wins, the men who bet on him win and the praise continues. This is a much different response than what he gets at home. Additionally, he has recruited some of his friend to help him with his work. C and his friends mimic the men by committing crime and “ hanging out” on the street during the day.

The final theory of criminality depicted in this film is labeling. While Blackburn (1998) suggests that labeling is meant to deter the criminal behavior, this film portrays the opposite. This is seen when C come out of court. After being caught selling cigarettes, C must face a judge and is later dismissed of all charges.

Upon leaving the courtroom C is greeted by a number of gangsters. Since he did not give the judge any names, he is applauded and given money. He, although he may have the label of being a gangster, he has achieved a higher status with these men. This acts to fuel the criminal behavior.

It is clear that there are a number of theories throughout this film. The main theory, however, is differential association. There is a running theme of

commitment and closeness. There seems to be nothing these men would not do for each other. Their belief system is one that they are above the law, and in turn they make up their own rules. By normal conventions of society this leads to criminal behavior. For C, like any child, he needed to be accepted and loved.

This was something that he did not outwardly receive from his father. Prevention or intervention efforts could have been in the form of family counseling. It is possible if shown more love and acceptance from his father, C may not have turned the Sonny and his gang.

As a society in general emphasizing nurturing parenting skills will go a long way to preventing negative behaviors in children. Looking at the relationship between Sonny and C one can clearly see that Sonny gave C this and in turn C was committed to Sonny. This same phenomenon can occur for the good. If C's father would have given C what Sonny had, C may have followed in his father's footsteps and become a hardworking, tax paying citizen.

References

Blackburn, R. (1998). *The psychology of criminal conduct: Theory, research, and practice*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DeNiro, R. (producer). 1993. "A Bronx Tale".