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An Unfinished Journey: The Evolution of Crime Measurement in the United States

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American novelist, Henry Miller (1945), describes the study of crime as originating within ourselves beginning “with knowledge of oneself” and “all that you despise, all that you loathe, all that you reject, all that you condemn and seek to convert by punishment springs from you.” This portrayal of crime highlights the essential issue of crime measurement and its relationship with crime definitions. Crime is essentially the labeling of deviant behavior and Miller details the intimate, idiosyncratic, and emotional process of that labeling. In contrast, the academic field of criminology is the “rational” attempt at measuring and studying crime from a “neutral” perspective. The conflict, of course, is that defining and measuring crime takes place in a social world in which crime is socially constructed. Here lies the important dilemma and need for disentangling how sociologists and criminologists “objectively” measure crime while also being products of the social world.

To this end, the following paper traces the history of crime measurement in the United States beginning with the U.S. census in 1790 in an attempt to contextualize this crime measuring dilemma within the historical and social forces which brought us to where we are today. Throughout this journey several pieces of history will be magnified including the origins of collecting national crime statistics, the Chicago School, known for its influence in American sociology and criminology, the split between these two academic fields into their own separate entities, and, more recently, the development, criticisms, and historical forces of the Uniform Crime Reports, self-report surveys, and victimization surveys. These three methods are the most commonly used methods for studying and measuring crime today. The current paper will conclude with one of, if not the most important, lessons of this rich history of crime measurement.

BRIEF HISTORY OF US CENSUS

Mosher, Miethe, and Hart (2011) describe census data as likely being the first form of social measurement, not only in the U.S., but in the world as well, dating back to 2275 BC in China. The first U.S. census was conducted in 1790 with obvious flaws. First, 16 federal marshals were tasked with surveying a broadly dispersed population with an endless amount of land to cover. Due to lack of technology, many surveys were done through word of mouth with no contact with their actual subjects. Second, race could not be properly sorted or compared since Native Americans were not included and African Americans were counted as three-fifths a human (“History of the United States Census” 2000). With these flaws in mind, surveys, similar to the census gathering before them, were conducted in England to gather data on individuals’ average living conditions (Biderman and Reiss 1967). Although to this point, crime was not the social problem it was to later become and national crime statistics had not been generated or systematically collected, the U.S. Census Bureau began attempting to collect crime data in 1907 while conceding their efforts to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) shortly after.

THE BIRTH OF NATIONAL CRIME STATISTICS IN THE UNITED STATES

The importance of Adolphe Quetelet to the U.S. and the rest of the world interested in

criminology should not be understated. He was certainly a positivist and felt that the laws of the social world could be uncovered much like they had in the physical world using the scientific method. With his positivistic bent and coming from the physical sciences himself, Quetelet (1842), utilizing the first national crime statistics the world had ever known, made several influential observations of criminals in France and Belgium that reign similar to more recent findings. He was quite aware of the limitations of official data by making mention of the dark figure of crime well before it was seriously addressed (we will return to this later). Knowing these shortcomings, he established that the ratio between crimes known and unknown remained relatively stable over time allowing for researchers to be aware of this discrepancy, but ultimately its effects were not spuriously affecting the outcome.

Quetelet (1842) was a criminal statistics pioneer making discoveries about crime that have stood the test of time. First, he delineated that race had an impact on crime, specifically racial composition of an area. Although the racial categories were much different in his day, consisting of Celtic, German, and Pelasgian, racial composition is still an essential variable in criminology and particularly in social disorganization theory. Second, a link between alcohol consumption and violent crime was established by his early studies. Third, poverty and inequality were also noted as having an impact on crime. Fourth, men were found to commit more crimes than women, although the gap was not quite as large as it has been more recently. Fifth, age was declared one of the more fascinating correlates of crime and he even argued that crime, primarily crimes against persons, increased in young adulthood until about age 25 when it began to decline. This finding is remarkably close to what has been replicated throughout criminological history in relation to age and crime. Although there have been significant advancements beyond Quetelet's theories on the causes of crime, the legacy of his methodological approach remains strong, and he was a paramount force in the creation of quantitative methods utilizing national crime statistics in the U.S.

New York was the first state to have statewide criminal statistics on individuals entering its judiciary system in 1829, but it took another almost 70 years for many states to follow suit. Even in 1905, only 25 states had enacted legislation to mandate criminal statistics be collected (Pepinsky 1976). With half the country still not collecting criminal statistics, the U.S. was well behind having a database like that utilized in Quetelet's (1842) study. Throughout the early 1900s, crime statistics gathering was scattered throughout the country. Sometimes data collection would be limited to one state, one county, or one prison. In addition, communication among courts, law enforcement agencies, and the government collecting criminal data was poor.

An unorganized system of crime recording was not the only problem plaguing quality criminological research in the U.S. The definitions of several types of crimes varied by region and state with no standardization or universal agreement (Tibbits 1932). Police departments were greatly dependent and manipulated by politicians compromising their data on crime. Moreover, police discretion led to different police tactics and focusing on different types of crime, driving statistics up or down depending on their colloquial importance. All of these deficiencies severely limited the ability to make fruitful comparisons, especially of a nationally representative sample.

With these shortcomings of the current state of crime statistics in the U.S., the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) was formed with the intent on producing a national crime reporting system and data collection institution (IACP 1929). Only a few years later, the IACP established a uniform crime reporting system. Its operations were later handed over to the FBI and became known as it is today, the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR). By 1931, the UCR collected crime statistics that covered around 80 percent of the U.S. population (Tibbits 1932). Let us step away from the UCR and official crime data for a moment to consider another development occurring contemporaneously, germane specifically to the fields of sociology and criminology.

THE CHICAGO SCHOOL

In 1892, the first Department of Sociology was founded at the University of Chicago, which produced several sociologists and criminologists who later became known as products of the Chicago School. At a time when a massive wave of immigration was moving to America and into the metropolises around the country, Chicago experienced several changes in the city due to this great population influx along with rapid industrialization and urbanization. This rapidly transitioning city became fertile ground for sociological research.

Ethnographic fieldwork was commonly used to explore and test sociological and criminological theories in these urban areas. The early 1900s was a time before much of the technological advances known today for data collection, organization, and analysis. Suffice it to say, sociology was new and the measuring of crime was even newer in the U.S. Influenced by the dominating theoretical lens that human behavior was primarily determined, if not completely, by ecological and structural causes, the Chicago School theoretical stance was a break from much of the genetic and biological stated causes of crime that dominated Europe at the time (Rafter 2008).

While immigrants poured into Chicago, the city faced several social problems at never before seen magnitudes. Many people were forced to the edges of the economy, contributing to a rising number of homeless and unemployed and poorer living conditions (Anderson 1923). Some of these consequences were related to the intense competition for low-wage labor created by overpopulation in the city. As crime rates rose, criminology began to take on a new appreciation in the U.S. Cesare Beccaria's (1963) work long before this crime wave heavily influenced the shape of the criminal justice system in the United States through his philosophical guiding. Yet, Beccaria did little to inform the measurement and scientific study of crime.

Of the early Chicago School sociologists, none may be more important in furthering the measurement of crime than Robert Park and Ernest Burgess. Both Park and Burgess, with the help of their graduate students, began systematically collecting data throughout the city of Chicago (Burgess and Bogue 1964). They were intent on mapping the city of Chicago by demarcating neighborhoods in order to make comparisons between individuals and the areas in which they resided. These maps of the city have been instrumental in empirical tests of social disorganization theory and studies interested in neighborhood level variables. Census data went a long way in allowing them to construct this novel dataset. With this data, Park, Burgess, and McKenzie (1925) developed the Concentric Zone Model which demonstrated the demographic breakdown of Chicago—although it is applicable to other major U.S. cities—by zones or areas demarcated by their distance from the central metropolitan area.

Many of the early sociologists from the Chicago School laid the groundwork for those to follow, such as Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay. Influenced by the Concentric Zone Model, Shaw and McKay (1942) used official delinquency data to uncover a relationship between crime rates and residential locations (neighborhoods). It was one of the first studies to test a theory (social disorganization theory) empirically using official crime statistics in the U.S. Although the Chicago School has continued a tradition of ethnographic work and symbolic interactionism, Shaw and McKay sparked, at least, a curiosity and even an interest among most criminologists in quantitative empirical work.

Despite the renowned reputation of the Chicago School using ethnographic methods, Shaw and McKay (1942) evince that this is not completely true. Even Ernest Burgess, who is considered more of an ethnographic researcher, utilized sophisticated data analysis techniques for his time. Once his data was gathered, using some ethnographic methods, he used a form of unit-weighted regression to predict one's likelihood of parole based on the individual's job skill (Burgess 1928). This technique has been utilized throughout the history of criminology without the knowledge of its roots.

CRIMINOLOGY BECOMES ITS OWN FIELD

Around the time sociology in the U.S. was flourishing at the University of Chicago, several things were happening that ultimately lead to the development of the first school of criminology in the U.S. in 1950. Despite its official development in the 1950s, its presence was felt starting in the 1930s. August Vollmer was an influential individual in the development of criminology. Vollmer was a police officer that eventually became the first police chief of Berkley in California while also being employed as a professor at the University of California at Berkley (Carte and Carte 1975). Through first-hand experience with the police force, Vollmer took issue with the fact that most police officers were not only without a college education, but were also generally uneducated. Using his clout at the university, he eventually was able to establish the country's first School of Criminology at the University of California, Berkley. His vision was to have a highly professionalized police force that was college-educated and capable of being both police officers and teachers at the university level (Morris 1975). In addition, Vollmer played an instrumental role in the creation of National Association of College Police Training Officials which is now known today as the American Society of Criminology. Thus, the first criminology school was intended as a police training program rather than producing the theoretically driven criminologists bent on discovering the causes of crime. Academic criminology began its focus on police training and the criminal justice system.

The education and professionalization of police were also the goal at Michigan State University where its School of Criminal Justice was created in 1935 (Rykert 1985). As stated earlier, Beccaria (1963) shaped the U.S. criminal justice system. He also appears to have had a major impact on the initial developments of criminology and criminal justice programs throughout the U.S. The academic programs at both Michigan State University and University of California at Berkley influenced most of the programs that began to sprout up throughout the country.

The twenty years from 1930 to 1950 coincided with a shift in emphasis of criminology and criminal justice programs. Courses covering the causes of crime were being offered transitioning the field of criminology away from educating cops to creating criminological theorists and practitioners. Then, the 1960s brought major media attention to crime as a social problem, changes in federal legislation, and funding from the federal government. The Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) is one of the most influential federal funding programs that funded the education of several criminologists and police officers (Ohlin and Remington 1993).

UNIFORM CRIME REPORTS AND ITS CRITIQUES

Returning to the UCR and official crime statistics, it has already been outlined how the UCR developed over time and specifically how the Chicago School of Sociology used official crime statistics to map the city of Chicago. Once the UCR were developed, criminologists were quick to utilize official statistics to explore the nature of crime. Despite the creation of a nationwide crime statistics system that revolutionized the scientific study of crime, it was not without its flaws and critiques.

The early years of the UCR exposed potential complications. High crime rates were thought to reflect poorly on a police department displaying the ineffectiveness of the police force in that municipality. For that reason, it was understood early on that many police precincts were likely underreporting crime to the FBI (Leonard 1954). Since the UCR are reliant on the integrity of the police departments reporting of crime, it was thought that several crime statistics were compromised. Another potential issue that inspired the education of police officers aforementioned was likely due to the dependency of the UCR on police officers ability to correctly classify crimes. With the UCR being a new innovation, it has been suggested that the majority of the police force did not have adequate training or could not

competently understand the processes of crime reporting (Maltz 1977). Overestimating crime may have also been an incentive for some of the police departments in need of additional funding. The manipulation of crime reports was one potential way to secure these funds if resources were distributed on a needs basis.

Thorsten Sellin (1938) was an early critique of official crime statistics. Equally influenced by both Marxist and conflict theory, he argued that crime must be analyzed for what it is, a conflictual outcome of a clash between social norms. Official statistics reflect one set of behaviors or conduct norms. However, for Sellin, every group of individuals had an unwritten code of conduct and many times these behavioral guidelines differed across groups. Thus, wrongful or deviant behaviors - what is institutionalized into crime - differs across cultures. Even more problematic, conduct norms are divergent even among groups within the same society and even between individuals. The conflict over these conduct norms (in other words, morality of behavior) was called culture conflict. Dominant groups - defined as those possessing power - have the ability and resources to institutionalize their conduct norms into criminal law. On the other side of this cultural conflict are the weaker groups that are incapable of legalizing their normalized behavior. At the behest of the law-making groups, less powerful cultural collectives must refrain from their traditional behavior that may now be illegal under the new legislation. It is no wonder then why Sellin would find the UCR and official crime statistics fruitless as a measurement for crime. These measurements of crime are viewed as only one list of deviant behaviors, and studies that utilize these statistics would neglect alternative forms of crime that may be deemed important. Sellin's critiques gained more support later and are influential in Richard Quinney's critiques explored later.

According to Sellin (1938), it can be implied that the middle and upper classes may be committing crimes, but they are not reported or even considered crime. Instead, these crimes are likely viewed as acceptable and do not appear in the legal code. Edwin Sutherland (1940) continues this riveting critique gaining notoriety within criminology. He simply criticized official statistics and studies based on them because these statistics did not include white-collar crimes. Much like Sellin, he realized that all crime was not being recorded in official statistics. The crimes of the powerful were realized to potentially be more harmful than the ubiquitously studied street crimes. Despite his insights, white-collar crime did not really gain favor in criminology for approximately another forty years.

Women were also notably neglected in official statistics. Otto Pollock (1950) produced a study of female criminality that revealed various flaws in these statistics concerning female offending and victimhood. Although he has since then been dismissed for his theory predicting female criminality, he made some early discoveries of shortcomings within official statistics and the measurement of crime which has since then been taken up by feminist scholars. It became understood that men and women were treated differently by the criminal justice system and that women were likely to underreport several types of crimes committed towards women (e.g. rape).

SELF-REPORT SURVEYS

In an attempt to address the various criticisms of official statistics above, a new method was developed. The primary impetus was a sum of several of the critiques referred to as the dark figure of crime. The dark figure of crime simply suggested that there is a large number of crimes that are unknown to authorities (Biderman and Reiss 1967). Since the UCR was dependent on police officers reporting crime, most crime in the end would not be reported partly due to some of the political maneuvering discussed earlier and some due to what is included in the official definition of crime. More importantly, however, was that even in the best case scenario, where these other issues are controlled for, there will still be a large number of unknown crime due to underreporting by victims and the limited surveillance by the police. Simply put, the criminal justice system cannot identify all crime always.

The philosophy of self-report surveys is to ask people anonymously or confidentially if they have committed various crimes or delinquent acts. These questions are usually supplemented with asking questions concerning the frequency of crime and delinquent acts committed. From their conception there were foreseeable issues: (1) there was a concern over the likelihood that individuals would honestly report their crimes to a researcher; and (2) the surveys would not be valuable unless they could efficiently include a wide group of people while asking pertinent questions about crime commission and frequency (Phillips, Mosher, and Kabel 2010).

Alfred Kinsey's studies on sexual behavior have become renown in the social sciences (Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin 1948; Kinsey et al. 1953). One of their major contributions was their demonstration that individuals may willingly and honestly discuss deviant behaviors they have committed. In this case, it was not necessarily criminal behaviors, rather sexual behaviors. However, both sets of behaviors were deviant and it was thought that people may not be willing to disclose such information. The Kinsey studies revealed shocking results of a high prevalence of sexual behavior before then considered unlikely.

The original self-report measures of delinquency are typically attributed to James Short and F. Ivan Nye (1957). In the 30 years to follow the initial self-report measures, several improvements were made as outlined by Thornberry and Krohn (2000). They offer four guidelines developed over the years for future self-report researchers to follow. First, a comprehensive list of delinquent behaviors that run the gamut of delinquency must be included rather than a few of the most common. Contrarily, Hindelang, Hirschi, and Weis (1981) concluded that small subscales with as few as 10 items may perform as well as large 63-item global scales. Yet, their conclusion was made with little evidence, and since then it appears that more than 10 but likely less than 63 items would be ideal. Second, Short and Nye (1957) were criticized for asking questions solely about petty offenses. Since then, self-report scales have included more serious crimes to address many of the inquiries of criminologists. Third, with the suggestions made by Hindelang et al. (1980), frequency measures have evolved as well. Frequency measures that ask "have you ever" tend to perform better than "last year" items due to telescoping (recalling events as more recent than they actually occurred) issues and have now been incorporated into self-report surveys. Lastly, strictly quantitative self-report surveys have recognized the value of qualitative follow-up questions (although these do not need to necessarily be open-ended). Self-report surveys often ask open-ended questions to elicit more information about reported crimes.

Although self-report surveys appeased some of the critiques of official statistics, feminist scholars as aforementioned still claimed that women were likely underreporting crime and men were not likely to make up for this by admitting crimes they had committed. Criminologists interested in white-collar crime also claimed that self-report measures were not gauging for crimes of the powerful. The lack of trust in men's reporting may have been due more to the zeitgeist of the 1950s, when popularity was growing in self-report surveys, rather than any deliberate attempt to lie. This was also a time when white-collar crime was not in the forefront and before domestic violence was even viewed as a crime in greater society. It was not until feminist criminologist offered their critiques of the ignorance of women's victimhood when some of these dark figures of crime became uncovered.

VICTIMIZATION SURVEYS

Joanne Belknap (1996) summarizes some of feminist scholars' concerns with mainstream criminology. She attempts to bring to light the "invisible woman" in crime and criminal justice. Women are made invisible through their treatment by men, being neglected by the criminal justice system, their own denial of victimhood, and by social structures and society as a whole primarily through gender role indoctrination. Women's victimization is inextricably linked to the power imbalance among the genders. Furthermore, when women

victims become visible (which can be rarely), they are overwhelmingly downplayed or blamed for their victimization (e.g. women described as “asking to be raped” because of their clothing or behavior). Her work begins to address the identified literature gap emphasized by the neglect of gender in most criminological theories and an outright obsession with men considering they constitute the vast majority of criminal offenders.

Although asking people if they have committed a crime had uncovered some of the dark figure of crime, it was still speculated that there was more unknown than known crimes. As more of a response to official statistics than self-report surveys, victimization surveys were created with the logic encapsulated by Belknap. It was thought that if people would honestly admit to crime, they would certainly discuss their own victimhood (although some crimes may be underreported for reasons discussed by Belknap). As a result of rising crime rates and urban riots in the 1960s, the President’s Commission of Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice (1968) was created under the purview of the U.S. government to address the measurement of crime in America. The Law Enforcement Assistance Administration was established in 1968 that allocated federal funding to criminal justice agencies for training, education, and research. Money poured into the study and treatment of crime. One of the most pertinent conclusions of the President’s Commission was that victims have all but been completely neglected in the study of crime. In turn, they sponsored three of the original victimization studies that laid the foundation for victimization surveys to follow.

DEFINING CRIME

Found among the three main forms of crime data collection (i.e. official data, self-report surveys, and victimization surveys) is an assumed agreement on the definition of crime generally speaking. In other words, the evolution of data collection for crime statistics, until this point, has mostly been consumed with the question, “How do we measure crime?” However, the measurement of crime (or its operationalization) is contingent on the definition of crime (or its conceptualization). Although some criminologists had hinted at the potential problems of conceptualization, Richard Quinney (1970) devoted an entire book to that issue. Most criminologists around this time were using one of the three forms of crime data collection to establish their dependent variable (crime). All of which are fundamentally based on the conceptualization of crime as being an illegal act, but Quinney understood quite well that the law was socially constructed and, in turn, that crime was also socially constructed. Quinney’s critique and others like it allowed some researchers to expand their definition of crime on self-report and victimization surveys.

Quinney (1970) came to four important conclusions about the law and crime that impacted criminologists to come. First, laws are formulated through conflicting interest groups vying for power of defining crime. The most powerful and resourceful groups tend to define crime through the legal system. Second, the application of criminal definitions via the legal and criminal justice system is influenced by several variables, some of which are extralegal (e.g. police basing arrest decision on offenders’ demeanor, socialization of police, public morals). Furthermore, the applications of criminal definitions result in several social realities despite the social construction of crime. Third, different subgroups (categorized by race, gender, class, age, etc.) vary in their normal patterns of behavior and these behavioral patterns differ in their likelihood to being labeled and categorized as crime. Individuals of the less powerful groups tend to have their normal behaviors criminalized because they are in direct conflict with the interest of powerful groups in control of defining crime. Fourth, public conceptions of crime are driven by various factors, most influential being media and politics. These public conceptions also play a role in political motivations and policy. For instance, the public desire for harsher punishment of criminals has led politicians to run “tough on crime” campaigns and vice versa.

Following in Quinney's footsteps, Taylor, Walton, and Young (1973) attempt to reintegrate sociology and criminology. The splitting of the two fields has been highlighted earlier in this paper. They felt that a "new criminology" must be fully social in that it must incorporate the foundational elements of sociology theorized by Marx, Weber, and Durkheim. Criminology had lost its social roots and because of that has perpetuated social and economic inequalities.

During an era of turbulent change and seeming disorder, Taylor et al. (1973) were a product of the 1960s. The radicalism of this time found its way into criminology and stressed the importance of a social understanding of crime which specifically suggested that crime must be understood within its wider structural origins, criminals must be seen as possessing free will, and crime must be situated within the social setting it occurs. Furthermore, they emphasized the often neglected importance of the societal reaction to crime which was introduced before them by Edwin Lemert (1967) and Howard Becker (1963). Becker and Lemert also understand the importance of official labels something hinted at earlier by Sellin (1938).

HISTORICAL, SOCIAL, AND POLITICAL INFLUENCES FELT TODAY

These criticisms over the definition of crime and crime being a social construction littered throughout the paper have not been really addressed by the majority of mainstream criminologists and quantitative researchers. Although there are likely several reasons why quantitative researchers have not heeded some of the suggestions made by qualitative critics, two cultural changes in particular affected multiple facets of social life. The following two changes seemingly have had an impact on the measurement of crime as well.

Neoliberal Economic Movement

Neoliberalism can be defined as the various policies and procedures that have taken hold in multiple facets of society - not only the U.S. but throughout the world as well – predominately focused on privatization of all realms of social life and with the pursuit of profit maximization (McChesney 1999). An ideological and organizational shift has come to make universities resemble corporations. This shift has the potential to completely reshape the foundation of higher education and has led Giroux (2002: 428) to label neoliberalism as "the most dangerous ideology of the current historical moment". Academic fields that are not profitable run the risk of being eliminated, or at the very least, underfunded. As Snider (2000) highlighted, certain academic fields were more likely to receive funding for research, and those fields lacking funding opportunities tended to be the same fields with research that was not profitable. These affected fields are those related to or with a major focus of "critical theory, literature, feminism, ethics, environmentalism, postcolonialism, philosophy, and sociology" (Giroux 2002: 434).

An exemplar case of neoliberal personnel in academia is that of James Carlin who gave a speech in 1998 as the chairman of the Massachusetts State Board of Education. Carlin was a formal insurance executive and a millionaire with neoliberal ambitions for the education system. In his speech, he insisted on increasing professors' teaching workloads by having them teach four, three credit courses each semester opposed to the traditional two (Honan, 1998). The proposed changes would directly interfere with the time professors have to conduct research. He also attacked the soft sciences in his speech by proclaiming that "at least 50 percent" of their research is "foolishness" and should be removed from universities.

With the rise of neoliberalism, corporations now have more power and control over research than ever before. Giroux (2002) exemplifies this point by using the case of the University of California, Berkley. Typically, the faculty of a particular department has meetings in which they determine how they will allocate research funds. In the case of Berkley, business executives are now being invited to participate in these research fund

allocation meetings where they are able to exert considerable clout on what and how research is done. There are numerous examples of corporate-sponsored research that have removed entire passages that were critical of the corporation or were damning to their potential profits (Berube 1998; Press and Washburn 2000).

This economic shift has influenced the type of research that takes place directly and indirectly. Its direct effects have made many academic researchers responsive to the needs of the state and corporations. Furthermore, indirect effects from funding via grants have also affected research methods. Underfunding is a barrier much more prevalent among qualitative research (Carey and Swanson, 2003) which suggests criminologists may find it easier to use quantitative methods to secure funds. In relation to the increased workloads accompanied by the neoliberal shift, quantitative research is thought to be less time consuming and may have led researchers to utilize these methods over their counterparts to ensure they meet the needs of their employer. Several difficulties common to qualitative research including lack of generalizability, lack of objectivity, more spuriousness, and potential influence of common sense thinking (Diefenbach, 2009) have been problematic for the needs of these research financiers.

Penal Paradigm Shift

Occurring contemporaneously with the neoliberal economic movement, David Garland (2002) explains the paradigm shift in penal philosophy from rehabilitation to retribution as beginning in the mid-1970s, gaining momentum over the next couple decades, and still has its influence felt today. The downfall of rehabilitation as a guiding philosophy is attributed to several conditions coalescing including, most prominently, academic reports of rehabilitation's lack of efficacy, a rising crime rate paired with a growing fear of crime, and a political platform of "tough on crime" politics that became essential for political success. Instead of fixing criminals or addressing their problems, a view of criminals as being incorrigible led to a penal system more focused on quarantining career criminals in the name of public safety and order.

Several factors have contributed to building the "culture of control" as Garland calls it. The public and politicians alike have fed into the punishment frenzy requesting increasingly more punitive responses to crime. Late modernity has brought about some turbulent changes in society resonating to a chaotic image of society. In response, the public has requested more control and order through warehousing of criminals, personal responsibility in welfare, and surveillance. The neoliberal economic movement has also brought an economic style of reasoning to the criminal justice system. Now, evaluators of the criminal justice system are more interested in economic efficiency rather than the outcome of offenders. Overall, Garland attempts to demonstrate that the retributive shift in penal philosophy was a part of the larger cultural shift (including the political and economic system primarily) that also drifted from a rehabilitation focus to a more punitive one.

The influence of these two paradigm shifts – the neoliberal economic movement and the growing popularity of retributive penal policies – along with the impact of positivism and the advent of the computer capable of conducting sophisticated data analysis techniques, led to the favoring of quantitative methods and the big three methods of crime measurement (i.e. UCR, self-report surveys, and victimization surveys). The milieu of all these influences seemed to create a high demand for expedient results that could be instantaneously applied. A demand that was, at least, felt to be met by quantitative methods. To the untrained observer, and even to some trained researchers as well, quantitative methods appeared to be more objective and possess the ability to quickly reduce the complexity of a sophisticated social issue with extreme efficiency.

SUMMARIZING A HISTORY OF CRIME MEASUREMENT: MIXED METHODS

To benefit from the history of crime measurement, we should come to some conclusions on the best ways to measure crime. It should be clear from this paper that official statistics, self-report surveys, and victimization surveys are most commonly used. Generally, dissimilar crimes are measured better via different methods. For example, official statistics are good for acquiring the murder rate not likely admitted on self-report surveys and murder victims obviously cannot respond. Child sexual abuse and other underreported crimes that are highly shunned by society may best be uncovered using victimization surveys. Status offenses and other fairly petty infractions like drug use can best be surveyed through self-report. Also, qualitative studies have been useful in uncovering crimes of the state and corporations despite the several forces directing researchers towards quantitative methodologies. Yet, there is certainly no one perfect way to measure crime, and many of these methods are used in collaboration.

Robert Sampson's (2012) book, *Great American City*, exemplifies the use of multiple methods to measure crime. He utilizes a series of methods to triangulate the reality of crime and incorporates several of the elements discussed in this paper. Utilizing much of the work of the Chicago school criminologists to come before him, he further developed the mapping of Chicago and advanced the theory of neighborhood effects on crime. More importantly, his book is a good example of how a researcher can begin with empirical observation (as he did when walking through the streets of Chicago), conceptualize these observations theoretically within the available literature, construct operational definitions of a complex social phenomenon, collect data over various years using several different methodological techniques, analyze that data in turn testing theoretical presumptions, and finally proposing the future direction for research.

Above all else, this tracing of history should inform future criminologists and sociologists alike that all measurements of crime have their own unique merits while also possessing idiosyncratic shortcomings. Qualitative methods may be better for contextualizing crime with immense detail specific to individuals and cases while quantitative methods allow us to reduce this complexity in order to make accurate predictions about crime. More qualitative methods allow us to place our crime predictions (engendered through quantitative methods) within their historical, political, and cultural context. Both criminologists and sociologists should familiarize themselves with all available measurements of crime building a large method repertoire and use them when most appropriate.

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