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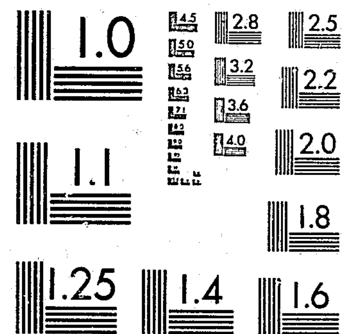

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WORKSHOP PAPERS

HISTORICAL APPROACHES TO STUDYING CRIME

OCTOBER 11-12, 1979

UNEDITED DRAFT

United States Department of Justice
Law Enforcement Assistance Administration
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HISTORICAL APPROACHES TO STUDYING CRIME

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THE NATIONAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESEARCH UTILIZATION PROGRAM

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Section I

The Politics of Criminal Justice Reform in Nineteenth-Century France*

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Thomas J. Duesterberg
August 25, 1979

* I have received invaluable assistance on this paper from Elizabeth Muenger. This paper has been prepared for delivery to the symposium on History and Crime sponsored by the NILECJ.

Section X

SOCIAL CHANGE AND THE INTERPRETATION OF RESEARCH

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Paper for the Symposium on History and Crime, Washington. October 11-12th 1979

Introduction

Generally, consistent findings are expected from research, and definitive statements or statements of fact of the kind "...the first born experiences guilt over his hostility to the later-born child," are preferred. In social science studies generally, and certainly in social science studies of crime such apparently universal statements are rarely made, and as the many hypotheses and theories about the causes of crime testify, they would be very difficult to demonstrate as true. Concepts of causes of crime range across a wide spectrum of debate from those especially concerned with the effects of social views and expectations, and the pressures imposed on the individual by the moral and religious values and the economic aspects of the society in which he or she lives, to those notions that are particularly centred on the individual's personal, mental and physical attributes and pre-dispositions. One sure, but costly way of beginning to sort out rival claims of these theories is to make use of time. If whilst time passes and social values and circumstances change, associations of these factors with crime also change, then we may reasonably assume social variables to play a part in causing crime. If, on the other hand, as time passed and values changed associations of social factors played relatively little part in explanation, then we should assume that personal and individual characteristics were of greater importance.

Thus, time could be used to hold one set of factors constant. This could be done in either of two ways. Time could be allowed to pass whilst a sample of individuals were studied, that is a prospective study could be carried out. Or else it would be possible to look back over time, avoiding the pitfalls of recollection by carrying out a retrospective investigation of research findings, rather than an investigation of individuals. These two methods will be illustrated with examples from an area where crime studies concentrate most energy, namely research into family life and circumstances. First, a longitudinal birth cohort study of a large group of

individuals is described, concentrating particularly on the findings about long term effects of divorce and separation, in order to demonstrate the opportunity that this type of investigation presents for assessing some of the many hypotheses about crime. Then an historical review of criminological studies findings on birth order is presented, and its usefulness discussed.

A Prospective Study of Individuals

These findings are from a large British national longitudinal birth cohort study and they have been presented in full elsewhere (Wadsworth, 1979), and are summarised briefly here.

The National Survey of Health and Development is a follow-up study, from birth in 1946 to the present day, of a population of 5362 individuals. The population comprises all single, legitimate births to English, Welsh and Scottish wives of non-manual and agricultural workers in the week 3rd to 9th March 1946, and one in four of similar births to wives of manual workers. The selection of one in four manual families may be compensated for by a statistical weighting procedure. Since birth the subjects have been studied at intervals of not less than two years up to age 26 years, and they are now contacted at slightly longer intervals. Information was collected on birth, growth, development, illness, social circumstances and home environment in the pre-school years, and then again together with school progress and behaviour data throughout the school years. After leaving school information was also collected on career selection and employment, further and higher education, and marriage and income. Cohort members' child rearing methods are being investigated at home interviews at which data are also collected for inter-generation comparison of certain measures. Thus, for each subject in the study there exists a life history unencumbered with problems of recollection. The study has been used for many types of medical and social investigations.

Information on law-breaking was made available from official sources, and comprised English and Welsh delinquency which was either a more serious infringement of traffic regulations or of the criminal law; any such non-criminal deviance as truancy was therefore excluded. Rates of delinquency committed between age eight years (which was then the age of criminal responsibility) and the twenty-first birthday were comparable with rates in the national population (Wadsworth, 1974). The percentage of subjects who were delinquent was 15.3% of the 2196 English and Welsh males (2.0% of the 2035 English and Welsh girls) before statistical weighting to compensate for sample selection procedures, and 17.9% after weighting (2.5% for girls).

Data on official delinquency were ordered into a four-point scale which aimed to differentiate offences which were socially well-tolerated, and without primary victims, from those which were commonly seen as unacceptable. An example of a well-tolerated offence would be avoiding payment of a rail fare, and the most unacceptable offences were those involving sexual or violent attacks on others. Studies of policemen at work, of public views on what causes crime, and official statistics which reflect how much effort goes into the detection of crime, all indicate that there are generally held views on the acceptability of different kinds of crime. Whereas police and witness interest is commonly low for some kinds of thefts and for most household violence, it is usually considerably greater for robbery and serious public violence. Therefore a social acceptability of crime scale (SAC scale) was constructed in order to grade offences committed by members of this cohort study from those most generally acceptable and which arouse least police and public concern (scored 1 on this scale), rising to a score of 4 with increasing personal space violation and victim involvement for those which entail most police and public concern. Delinquents received a single score corresponding to the highest scoring offence they had committed by age 21 years, and their distribution on the SAC scale is given in table 1.

Table 1 The percentage distribution of male and female offenders on the social acceptability of crime scale

	SOCIAL ACCEPTABILITY OF CRIME SCALE					TOTAL (=100%)
	0 (No crime)	1	2	3	4	
Males	84.9	2.3	7.0	4.0	1.8	2191*
Females	98.0	0.2	1.5	0.2	0.1	2035

*four delinquents are omitted since they could not be classified on this scale. For details see Wadsworth (1979)

In this study of delinquency all the cohort data on health, personality, achievement, intelligence, and school and home circumstances and experience from birth to age 15 years were examined. The data on family life and home circumstances comprised information on the subject's birth order, completed family size, inter-sibling intervals, occupations of parents, loss or absence of a parent through death, divorce or separation, or because of prolonged absence from home for any reason, health visitors'(community nurses) assessments of this child's maternal health and home circumstances, and details of home physical surroundings. The strongest associations with delinquency were found in data on family disruption, and particularly divorce or separation of parents during the child's first five years of life. As table 2 shows this was especially associated with anti-personal crime, that is those seen as the most socially unacceptable offences, scoring 4 on the SAC scale.

But why should an event that occurs ten or more years before a particular kind of behaviour be in any way associated with it?

In this study there was evidence of support for two hypotheses. First, suppose that they exist because children living in disrupted families have to learn to handle stress much more often than others, and that if they are obliged to do so when they are developing their style of emotional response, then this effect will continue to be distinguishable in later life. Findings from this study showed that not only was this so in delinquent and criminal behaviour up to age 21 years, but also that these individuals, both male and female, suffered a higher incidence of some psychosomatic and psychiatric illnesses, at least up to age 26 years. In women this early life experience was also associated with an increased chance of illegitimate pregnancy in early adult life. Whilst taking these findings as partial confirmation of this first hypothesis it should nevertheless

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Table 2 Social acceptability of crime scale and the child's age at the time of the family break, through parental separation or divorce, or because of the death or prolonged absence of either parent

AGE OF BOY AT FAMILY BREAK	SOCIAL ACCEPTABILITY OF CRIME SCALE					
	0 No Crime	1 Most Socially Acceptable	2	3	4 Least Socially Acceptable	Total (=100%)
No family break	85.9	2.4	6.6	3.5	1.4	1911
Birth to 4y 3m	69.3	1.1	11.4	12.5	5.7	88
4y 4m to 8y 6m	78.5	4.6	10.8	4.6	1.5	65
8y 7m to 10y 11m	79.5	-	12.8	2.6	5.1	39
11y to 15y	90.1	1.4	2.8	5.6	-	71
Unknown age	(13)	(0)	(2)	(2)	(0)	17

be noted that such family disruption in early life is by no means an inevitable predictor of these things, in any event up to 26 years. At its best in men it accounts for only 36.5% of these circumstances and illnesses, and in women only 23.3%. Nevertheless, it is disruption in the earliest years that seems most strongly associated with these later illnesses and types of behaviour.

As a second hypothesis it might be argued that such associations could partially be accounted for by generally held social views and expectations of the effects of disruption family life. Teachers rated boys and girls from broken homes as significantly more often poorly behaved at school, with a lower interest in learning, poor classroom behaviour, and with parents who showed little interest in their education and school life. Just as the general public 'knowledge' of the cause of crime was lack of parental discipline, itself an important conceptual component of the social acceptability of crime scale, so the power of general knowledge about child rearing as affected by broken family life should also be taken into account. Perhaps at the basis of teachers' assessments there were expectations of the effects of a broken home, particularly of divorce or separation. There was evidence from this study that teachers and health visitors did indeed regard boys from broken homes rather differently. They gave significantly more adverse ratings of school behaviour and maternal care to those who had already experienced a family break caused by divorce or separation, but they did not distinguish children whose homes were in fact in the future (that is after their sixth birthday and before their fifteenth) to be broken in this way.

I do not wish to claim that one of these hypotheses is correct and the other incorrect, but simply to suggest that there is almost certainly a contribution both from the internalised effects of this sort of disruption, and from social expectations of its effects.

The next necessary step is to distinguish the relative strengths of these two hypotheses, and this will best be done with the help of time.

During the lifetime of this cohort Great Britain experienced very considerable social change. The study population was born two years after the Second World War ended, food rationing was still imposed, the selective system of education was dominant, and there was no National Health Service. During the lives of the cohort members all these things have changed. And during these years social attitudes have also changed in very many ways. Divorce is, for example, much more readily obtainable now, and attracts far less disapproval than in the late 1940s and 50s when the children in this study were young; more girls are now officially described as delinquent; ways of bringing up children have changed very considerably, and so have the courses which train our teachers and social workers. It may be, for example, that as divorce and separation have become very much more common and socially acceptable events, the importance of this experience in the later lives of children from such families will diminish. And if it does so we may conclude that social attitudes have an important role in the transmission of early experience into later behaviour.

If the findings from this study could be compared with a similar study carried out on a population born twenty or thirty years later certain unique research opportunities would occur. There would be a chance to disentangle the effects of social views and expectations from those of personal attributes and predispositions, and it is only by such time sampling that these basic questions can be tackled. Fortunately an opportunity to do this will present itself, since a follow-up study of babies born in England, Wales and Scotland in one week in March 1970 is also being carried out. It is, of course, still too early to give findings from a comparative study of these two British birth cohorts, although I hope eventually to be able to do so.

But, whilst such prospective research requires considerable waiting - in this instance some ten or twelve years - important and quite similar questions can be examined immediately by retrospective or historical studies. If they show inconsistencies in comparisons of findings of criminological research, then it must be asked whether they are the result of differences in research material (i.e. in what researchers have thought of importance in causing crime) or of differences in research methods, or of actual differences in the causes of crime. For the sake of clarity exploration of the differences in research material will be reduced by tracing the history of findings in one measure that has been used by most researchers throughout this time, namely birth order.

HISTORICAL REVIEW OF FINDINGS ON BIRTH ORDER AND CRIME

It is, of course, necessary to ask why birth order has been so universally used, and although very few authors indicate their reasons a certain degree of desire for comparability with early work may be assumed. But in origin the reasons for the use of birth order in empirical studies of deviant subjects is to be found in the work of those who helped to lay the foundations of this approach to causality.

In medicine at the turn of the century it was clear that the germ theory of illness gave a satisfactory explanation of how the contemporarily predominant infectious diseases were transmitted, and that the resulting epidemiological method was successful in pinpointing causal factors in these diseases. The success of the epidemiological method lay in finding causes by seeking factors and combinations of factors which were present in the environment of the sufferer either uniquely, or in proportions greater than chance would lead one to expect, when comparing sufferers with non-sufferers. And from this way of accounting for an event or experience defined as deviant, came a whole tradition of research, strongly associated with the contemporary development of statistical methods, which itself was seen of universal value in establishing causality. Walker (1929) observed of

Quetelet's work that he published "his ideas on statistical methods again and again, and utilizing the same statistical technique no matter whether the investigation related to astronomy or to anthropometry, to meteorology or to morals" (p.40). She also quotes Quetelet's view, widely shared, that "we can judge of the perfection to which a science has come by the facility more or less great, with which it may be approached by calculation" (p.39). In medicine, statistical work claimed that in tuberculosis, insanity, epilepsy and imbecility first born individuals were at a disadvantage or handicapped, and Pearson (1914) speculated that

> "If this principle of the handicapping of the first born can be true, and I have little doubt that it is - and if a similar principle holds for the last born (to a lesser degree it is true) for some conditions like Mongolian imbecility - what must be the moral of the present lecture? Surely that the better born are the intermediates in families from 5 to 8, and that when families are restricted to twos or threes, or extended to twelves and thirteen's, there may be quite an appreciable tendency to increase the proportion of the less efficient in the community." (p.67)

Thus, birth order had been shown to be of importance in medical searches for causes, and of course its association with intelligence and achievement had already been demonstrated by Galton's (1874) work pointing out the greater likelihood of first or only born individuals amongst the scientific eminent.

Birth order, therefore, was not only a readily available measure, which was most amenable to statistical treatment, but was also an indicator of heritability, which itself was seen as important in the explanation of much illness, and differences in ability and behaviour. Therefore in view of the already established tradition of medical interest in crime it is only to be expected that explanations for criminal behaviour should in these early years receive their wider credence in the work of the medical men and psychologists who pioneered the English empirical tradition in criminological studies.

(a) <u>The Findings</u>

The first published English work of any scale in this field was that of a prison medical officer, Dr. Charles Goring, who was, Pearson wrote in his introduction to the 1919 edition of the original 1913 publication "...attracted by the ultimate humanity behind the vulgarity, the feeble mentality, and often the feeble physique of the convicts." (p.xi) Goring's study was carried out very much in the spirit of earlier work from the Galton laboratories, which had reported the incidence of pulmonary tuberculosis and of insanity to be greater in first born, and Goring (1919) concluded of convicts that

> "It is difficult to see how environmental conditions, peculiar to a limited family circle, could play any part of importance in the incidence of any of these heritable pathological states; the special incidence of these states in the earlier born can only be due to the fact that the taints of tuberculosis and insanity are inherited in greater intensity by older than by younger members of a family. We would, accordingly, be inclined to attribute the increased tendency of elder members to be criminally convicted to their possessing, in some way, an increased intensity of constitutional criminal taint." (pp.204-5)

In 1925 Burt compared delinquents referred to him for psychological diagnosis and/or advice and delinquents sent to remand homes and industrial schools, with non-delinquents of the same social class, age, school and usually from the same street. He found it "surprising to note how, again and again the delinquent is the only child in his family." (p.95) In 1933 Fortes undertook a study of sibship positions to examine in particular the findings of Pearson and of Burt, using a population of 870 case notes of probation officers. He found, in all sibship sizes, that there was an excess of delinquents amongst only and first born children, and amongst the third born, and "a deficiency of delinquents in fraternal positions higher than the fourth".

But whereas most findings up until the second world war revealed a greater likelihood of criminal behaviour amongst the first born, later a quite different trend emerged. The Gluecks (1950) found that "contrary to general expectations, lower proportions of the delinquents boys were only children, first children, or youngest children. Although the families are as yet incompleted, resemblance of the delinquents and non-delinquents in age distribution makes this finding significant." (p.120) Ferguson (1952), who was the first post war medical investigator of delinquency, obtained criminal records from ages 8 to 18 years of a sample of 1349 fourteen year old Glasgow schoolboys who left school at that age in 1947. He found the lowest rates of conviction amongst only children (7% had been convicted), next came first borns (8.5% convicted), and of those who were fifth or later born 15% were convicted. He felt that "this is probably a reflection of size of family rather than serial number as such, for, from study of the criminal records of boys drawn from families of 5,6 or 7 children it emerges that among boys from this group of families there is no significant variation with serial number." (p.20) Lees and Newson (1954) compared delinquency rates within birth positions for those from divorced or separated homes with those from 'good' homes and found that if they contrasted "youngest and only children with the others we can show that the former are significantly over-represented amongst those from disturbed homes... and tend to be under-represented amongst those from specifically good homes." Nye (1958) found that in his study of adolescent school children's self-reports of crime only and eldest children reported fewer offences than did middle or youngest children. The McCords and Zola (1959) followed up the later criminal records of the original Cambridge-Somerville cohort and found greatest offending amongst those from middle birth positions, and least amongst only and youngest offspring. And recently Hirschi (1969) has reported a similar finding from self-report data and he comments that "the recent and better studies all show that the middle child is most likely to commit delinquent acts."(p.241)

How are these differences in findings to be accounted for? Do they represent real changes in delinquent and criminal behaviour during the last fifty years, or are there methodological or interpretative changes which have led to these differences.

(b) Methodological considerations

There are, of course, considerable objections to comparing the results Goring obtained from studying a prison population with those from Burt's prosecuted juvenile delinquents, and with those of the juvenile self-report studies of Nye and of Hirschi. But when they are as closely comparable as possible in population selection (e.g. Nye with Hirschi, and Burt with Fortes), their results are in broad agreement and furthermore the different methods used are comparable within the two time periods, namely before and after the Second World War. However, there are two basic areas of methodological difficulty.

The first was identified by Pearson (1914), following Greenwood and Yule's (1914) comments on his work and that of Goring. Pearson pointed out that completed family size varies with social class, that chances of being a prisoner or criminal also vary with age, and he concluded therefore that the chances of being 'selected' as criminal are not equal, even for every family in any class, nor yet for all sibship positions, since there is a modal age for conviction. But whereas Goring derived population estimates for each birth position by simply calculating an expected number for each position from his observed data, Pearson's reworking of the material, checking his new expected birth order calculations against results from two Scottish population studies made no substantial difference to the tenor of Goring's findings. Pearson (1914) clearly indicated that he made

> "...no pretence at present to associate inferiority at beginning or end with too young parents or too old parents. I am only too aware that we want much fuller data, so that we can correct for parental ages at marriage, and for period after marriage of the birth of each child. We want to study not only the order and number of children but the interval between their births." (p.6

This detailed advice seems to have gone practically unheeded, although the more general observations about the need for control groups has been widely followed. In their discussion of the need for awareness of changes in the population structure when sampling for a study of birth rank differences, Price and Hare (1969) observed that

> "Changes in the birth rate of a population may be the result of changes in the number of families started or of changes in the size of completed families...an increase in the number of families started will result in an over-representation of early birth ranks for every sibship size. A decrease in family size will result in an over-representation of early birth ranks in small sibships."

Since the turn of the century there have been considerable changes in the population structure of England and Wales. Family size declined up to about 1940 and then rose, and also the percentage of children in each birth rank position has changed. There has been a consistent fall in proportions of children in high birth rank positions (4 and over), and a particularly notable rise in proportions of children in the second birth rank. At the same time class differences in family size have been reduced and it seems that since the second world war the rise in fertility has been greatest amongst the non-manual class. In any study of rank order effects it is therefore incumbent on the researcher as Price and Hare (1969) and before them Pearson (1914) pointed out, to control for age, social class and completeness of family, and this has been achieved with varying degrees of success in the studies reviewed.

The second area of methodological difficulty is the definition of the term birth rank, or position or serial number. Fortes (1933) drew attention to the need for definition in the separation of his study population into the "true-sib" group, where all family members were biologically related, and the "step-sib" group where this was not so. Burt (1925) is one of the few researchers who referred to the importance of definition of these terms. However, he counted as only children all those who grew up more or less without

siblings nearby in age, irrespective of their birth position, thus getting the worst both of what might have been a control for size of inter-sib interval, and of a real attempt to define only children. It was Miller (1944) who set out three possible definitions of birth order, which were

(a) Pregnancy order (including all still births and miscarriages)

(b) Birth order (comprising only live children)

(c) Fraternal position (those living in the surviving sibship at a specified time)

(c) <u>The explanations that were offered for study findings</u>

Although Goring's conclusion was that a very large part of criminality was explained by "constitutional proclivity" the only other explanation he considered was whether criminal behaviour was the result of "the alleged spoiling of first born children, and especially of 'only sons'?" (p.202) Just how much he favoured this sort of 'social' explanation may be seen in his comments on the effect of maternal death.

> "We conclude that the ages of our convicts at the death of their mother, whether they were infants at the time, or had reached maturity, was an environmental accident, without any significant relationship to their subsequent degree of recidivism."(p.206)

Burt (1925), who in many ways seems to have approached the problem with a more open mind than Goring, also drew attention to the spoilt child.

> "The spoiling of the oldest child, of the youngest child and of the only child, has become a commonplace with those who study the neurotic. But it is not sufficiently noted that the child who comes second or later in the family without being the last, may suffer and react, just because another is indulged and he is not. Parents are seldom versatile enough to adjust themselves with equal fairness to all the different types of temperaments they may launch upon the world."(p95)

Similarly, Fortes (1933) too, hints at this kind of explanation as he casts about, rather vaguely, for a reason for his findings.

"Our data, we venture to suggest, imply that first children are in excess amongst juvenile delinquents not because of psychological qualities they may lack or possess, as opposed to children in other fraternal positions, but because among those sibships marked out by social factors or psychological conditions, or what not, to produce a delinquent child ('boy' would be more accurate) either the early, especially the first children suffer the brunt of the pressure, and become delinquent when they reach the appropriate age; or else, at a given time, when the constellation of pressures is such that delinquency is bound to occur in a particular sibship, the early children, especially the oldest, are in the most vulnerable position, mainly because of age, and the habits, obligations, and conduct associated therewith."

Of course, such social or psychological attempts at explanations of findings on birth order and criminal behaviour only fitted uneasily with the aetiological or epidemiological model within which the research was approached, and it was Goring who left no doubt as to the importance of such 'non-scientific' explanation. He complained of the

"...intuitive, introspective, and descriptive method of inquiry pursued generally by criminal sociologists.(sic) Poverty, lack of education, parental neglect, are often prominently associated with the committing of particular crime; it is reasonable that these conditions should conduce to crimes; therefore parental neglect, illiteracy and poverty are causes of these particular crimes. This is a form of argument adopted by the descriptive sociologist; and it exemplifies how unexplicably confused the notion of causation has become with the kindred idea of association." (pp.187-8)

It is in the writings of Adler (1932) that signs of recognition of the social context of the importance of birth order are to be found together with discussion of its psychological significance. Adler pointed out that an advantageous status of the oldest child is traditional among many peoples and classes, and whilst agreeing with others that the first born was liable to "a good deal of attention and spoiling" he noted that this was true of youngest children too. The unique feature of the first born is what Adler referred to as the experience of being ousted from his position, or "dethroned", whereas the youngest child never has this experience. Adler claimed that experiences is early life laid the foundation for the individual's interpretation of his life in society

thereafter. "The main features of the criminal's personality have already been decided by the time he is four or five years old; by that time he has already made those mistakes in his estimate of himself and of the world which we see displayed in his criminal career".(p.218) Criminals who were oldest children, for example, were those "who felt very deeply the arrival of another child and their sense of deprivation had moulded their whole life style".(p.144)

Miller (1944) considered both the epidemiological model or 'scientific' approach and those concerning the development of personality. He pointed out the quantity of relevant work in this area, although he was careful to make no claim for its validity. "The dogmatic statements made by many eminent clinical psychologists and psychiatrists generally rely for support upon case studies only, and these often shaped from the outset to fit the particular theory sponsored by the interpreter. Careful statistics are never offered in confirmation of these theories." After reference to Adler's observations Miller reviewed the field work of eight studies, and although none of them was concerned with crime it is worthwhile to note in particular his interest in the work by Goodenough and Leahy (1927), whose "statistical checks are as careful as the material permits." They found only children to be aggressive, self-confident and "flighty" oldest children to be lacking in aggression, self-confidence and leadership, and youngest to be the best balanced of all. Their explanations for the apparent "short comings" of oldest children were the inexperience of parents at this time in the family development, the strain of the responsibilities placed on oldest children, such as the care of younger siblings, and the fact that the oldest is the only child who must adjust from being sole companion of his parents to having a sibling.

During the war years a very large number of studies were carried out on soldiers in the American army, and these gave what was probably the first opportunity to carry out behavioural and sociological research on large populations which could

be drawn reasonably to represent any kind of characteristics desired (Stouffer, et al 1949). One of the studies was concerned with how personal behaviour varied with 'background characteristics' in 4,800 soldiers, and findings were considered in the knowledge of current psychological theory.

> "A theory currently of considerable interest in psychiatry seeks to trace some types of neurotic behaviour to over-protection by the mother. If men were conscious of having an unusually close attachment psychologically to their mothers, it should be evident in responses to the question, 'were you your mother's favourite child' ... If anything, the 'best adjusted' were more likely than the psycho-neurotics to say that they were their mother's favourite child, but the differences are too small to be significant. These data certainly do not support dramatic popular accounts of the prevalence of psychiatric breakdown in the Army as traceable to maternal overindulgence. If anything they are slightly in the direction of supporting a deprivation rather than an overindulgence hypothesis. The actual situation might be that extremes of overindulgence and extremes of deprivation are both likely to be productive of psychoneurosis; an hypothesis susceptible to statistical test but requiring more detailed data than are available for the present study." (pp.135-6)

This study also found that

> "a slightly larger proportion of the high school graduates tended to be only children, as would be expected because of the well-known relationship of the birth rate and income. Families with larger income are more likely than others to see that their children have a good education, and also are likely to have fewer children. In addition, the better educated were somewhat more likely to say they were favourite children, as were the unmarried and the younger - although all the differences are too small to merit such speculation." (p.137)

In the years after the Second World War explanations of the relationships between birth order and offending were almost entirely in this social/psychological tradition, and usually referred to tension and changes within the family. The Gluecks (1950) concluded that interruptions in the family's way of life were of considerable importance in explaining delinquency, and noted that "31.3% of the delinquents compared with 16.8% of the non-delinquents had half - or step - brothers and sisters." (p.120) In England Lees and

Newson (1954) found that any delinquent outcome from a broken home was related to sibling position. The McCords and Zola (1959) explained their findings of greatest delinquency amongst middle children followed by the youngest, as the lack of a period as the only child, and the likelihood of infancy at a time when "burdens of the family are most pressing." Nye (1959) felt that the oldest child was least delinquent in his investigation because "the oldest child often plays a semi-adult role in that he exercises control over, and to some extent is responsible for, younger siblings. Successful performance of this role requires acceptance of adult behaviour patterns." (p.37)

(d) <u>Discussion of birth order studies</u>

The popularity of explanations of birth rank differences in terms of heredity or of partially inherited traits declined after the second world war, and they were very little used thereafter. There was instead an increasing interest in environmental explanations, especially those concerned with family life and structure, and the relative opportunities these gave for children to be obliged to behave as adults and to receive either more or less parental attention. But explanations about the effects of family life and structure were quite different before the second world war as compared with the time since then. Although during both periods it was maternal attention that was most often discussed, the pre-war conclusion was predominantly that too much maternal attention caused the child to be spoilt, and that this accounted for greater criminality in the first born. After the war it generally seems to have been felt that too little maternal attention accounted for the greater criminality of middle and later born children. What could account for this change?

It could be, of course, that the change is real; that is, perhaps the findings themselves were correct and there were indeed more first born offenders in the

period between the turn of the century and the beginning of the second world war, and that offenders are now not so predominantly first born.

Although statistical evidence is not available, it is reasonable to argue that before the second world war poverty increased the individual's chances of being labelled criminal and socially disadvantaged. Poverty certainly increased the likelihood of being born at a physical disadvantage. Even in 1930 mortality at 1 to 2 years of age in England and Wales was 4.5 per thousand for children in social class 1 and 23.0 per thousand in social class 5 (Morris, 1967, p.65). And not only was there an increased chance of death in infancy but there was too an increased chance of losing one or even both parents through death, for as the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws (1909) noted

> "... the increasing proportion of pauper children per population at ages up to the group 10-13 may probably be due to the fact that as children grow older there is a greater risk of their losing one or both of their parents. Upwards of 60% of the pauper children are orphans who are dependent on widows."
> (para 106, p.40)

There was, therefore, a greater chance of being brought up by a step-parent or in a Poor Law Institution. Many of the children in these institutions were illegitimate. The Royal Commission estimated that the number of Poor Law Institution births in England and Wales probably exceeded 11,000, and that 17% of these were illegitimate (separate report p.778). Illegitimate births were likely to have been first births, and as Illsely and Gill (1968) pointed out illegitimate births at this time were associated with poverty and family disorganisation, and, like first births generally, they were at a medical disadvantage. And there were those who saw a natural progression from early medical disadvantage to later social inferiority, for, as the Medical Officer of Health for Glasgow reported to the Royal Commission

> "The dead baby is next of kin to the diseased baby, who in time becomes the ill-fed and educationally backward child, from whom is derived later in life, the unskilled 'casual', who is at the bottom of so many of our problems."
> (separate report p.777)

It therefore seems very likely that illegitimate children, and those born and brought up in Poor Law Institutions had both an increased chance of being first born and of being socially and medically disadvantaged from birth. They were also clearly regarded as, in the broadest sense, a deviant group and it is in this disadvantaged part of society where criminals are most likely to be sought, and where the criminal label is most likely to be made to stick. After the second world war improvements in the distribution of wealth, in preventive and curative health care, and in contraceptive techniques all helped to change this picture, as did the fact that poverty ceased to be institutionalised, and the social stigma of illegitimacy was in decline. There are, therefore, reasons to believe that if these apparently contradictory research findings are seen in their social context they can be argued to be, in fact, complementary. Before the second world war there might well have been a greater chance of first born children coming to be officially labelled as criminals, and of them being over-represented in prison populations, and after the second world war this likelihood was reduced.

On the other hand these changes and conclusions about the role of birth order in time also fit rather well with contemporary views and practices of child rearing in the two time periods concerned. Researchers in crime and delinquency concluded before the second world war that too much maternal attention caused the child to be spoilt and after the war that too little maternal attention was a form of deprivation, and in each of the time periods saw these experiences as predisposing children to later criminality. Between 1920 and the second world war, a period characterised by the Newsons (1974) in their review of cultural aspects of child rearing as dominated by "medical morality", the importance of child rearing in the development of adult character was fully acknowledged, and preparations for adult life were made accordingly.

> "Never play with or excite a baby before bed-time...half the irritability and lack of moral control which spoil adult life originate in the first year of existence. The seeds of feebleness and instability sown in infancy bear bitter fruit afterwards." (King, 1937)

Anything that looked like spoiling had to be stifled, and the Newsons quote Watson's (1928) advice that

> "There is a sensible way of treating children. Treat them as though they were young adults. Dress them, bathe them with care and circumspection. Let your behaviour always be objective and kindly firm. Never hug and kiss them, never let them sit in your lap. If you must, kiss them once on the forehead when they say goodnight. Shake hands with them in the morning. Give them a pat on the head when they have made an extraordinarily good job of a difficult task. Try it out. In a week's time you will find how easy it is to be perfectly objective with your child and at the same time kindly. You will be utterly ashamed of the mawkish, sentimental way you have been handling it." (Watson, 1928)

Since the secondworld war, however, attitudes to child rearing have become more relaxed, and less attention has been given to 'expert' theories, and as the Newsons (1974) observed

> "...virtue could be acknowledged in the toddler as he freely followed his own natural pursuits and interests - not excluding the exploration of his own body - the ground was finally prepared for an acceptance of babies' desires and needs in themselves: 'babies want attention; they probably need plenty of it' (Children's Bureau, 1945). In Wolfenstein's words (1955), 'what the baby wants for pleasure has thus become as legitimate a demand as what he needs for his physical well being, and to be treated in the same way."(p.64)

Thus, when before the second world war apparently greater criminality in first born children was explained by their supposedly greater likelihood of being spoilt, at the same time the popular view of child rearing was at pains to emphasise the dangers that spoiling and too much maternal attention held for childhood and for the child's adult life. After this war, when greater maternal attention was popularly advocated in child rearing, apparently greater criminality in middle and later born children was said to be related to the relative lack of maternal attention that these birth positions entailed. It is arguable, therefore, that explanations for 'scientific' findings about birth order and

delinquency have been grounded in their own contemporary culture. If so it is unfruitful and unrealistic to expect the researcher to be, as Pearson (1914) said of Goring, "enslaved to no prejudice of his own, nor (was he) infatuated by the opinion of others" (p.x.); but recognition of this fact is helpful in understanding change in sociological explanation.

CONCLUSIONS

What may be drawn that is of practical importance from these two examples of historical studies of crime?

Each shows the power and importance of personal interpretation of events. From the first example it seems inevitable that people have views about what causes crime and about what predisposes others to criminal and other forms of misbehaviour. The second example suggests that research workers are bound to be involved in their own culture's views of causes and predispositions; research is comparable with Carr's (1964) first definition of history as "a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the past and the present" (p.30). This may not only be inevitable but also necessary, since there may be no such thing as causes of crime that are independent of their own culture. This is perhaps a notion worth pursuing, if only because it takes us into practically virgin empirical territory. It invites us to do as Walker (1978) suggests, and go beyond analogical explanation to examine the idea of genesis of crime.

Definition of crime takes place at two levels. First the everyday definition, in which crime is defined by the immediate social circumstances, that is by the eye of the policeman and the witness, as well as by the judicial system, and it is this definition that I have tried to utilise for research purposes in constructing the social acceptability of crime scale (Wadsworth, 1979). But crime must also

be defined by notional views of what each society finds most disruptive and least tolerable according to its ethical codes. Most empirical work has gone into the first kind of day to day definition of crime. The mainly speculative studies of the broader definition are fewer and have tended to concentrate particularly on social class and economic issues. But it is in this second area that some progress with the idea of genesis of crime remains to be made.

In any society there will be generally held views about the kinds of behaviour that may be least tolerated and about how that behaviour is produced. The origins of such behaviour form a subject matter that an historical perspective on crime, either as studies of individuals or as reviews of research results, can help to investigate. Just as the power of witnesses', bystanders' and victims' views shape the tip of the crime iceberg that is seen in the judicial system, so the power of social views of what is desirable and undesirable, both ethically and materially, will shape the individual's behaviour.

An example of this may be seen in the British National Survey of Health and Development. (Wadsworth, 1979) Associations of life history data with later delinquency were much the same for both sexes, in that it was particularly associated with emotional disruption at an early age. Nevertheless rates of delinquency were very different, being seven times greater for males. Of recent time differences in male and female crime rates show signs of narrowing, although it seems clear that exposure to emotional disruption in early life evidently is still much the same for both sexes. Differences and changes in social attitudes to behaviour in males and females have played an important part in this change.

In sociological studies of crime there has been a necessary widening of the material traditionally considered by researchers. Importance of the social

context has been argued by Taylor, Walton and Young (1973) largely in political and economic terms, and identified by others such as Matza (1969) and Box (1971) in the processes of the identification of suspects, of arrests, of charges being made, of plea bargaining and sentencing. And as Erikson (1962) noted "deviance is not a property <u>inherent</u> in certain kinds of behaviour; it is a property <u>conferred upon</u> these forms by the audiences which directly or indirectly witness them. Sociologically, then the critical variable is the social <u>audience</u>." However, if we leave aside work on the social audiences who are actually involved with the crime itself - for example Piliavin and Briar's (1964) study of policemen at work, or the Black and Reiss (1970) study of policemen and complainants, or the more recent work of Sparks, Genn and Dodd (1977) on victims - there is surprisingly little empirical work on formation and maintenance of views in the wider social audience. Sellin and Wolfgang (1964) observed that "The philosophy and the sociology of the criminal law suggests that principle cultural themes of legal proscriptions and sanctions come from the middle-class value system" (p.249), and it was, perhaps surprisingly, Mannheim (1965) who drew attention to the law's predominantly masculine dominance and bent. More recently Rossi <u>et al</u> (1974), Banks <u>et al</u> (1975), Sparks <u>et al</u> (1977), and Walker (1979) have all studied public attitudes to crime and its seriousness, and in some measure also concepts of the causes of crime.

But although these studies are important bench marks against which to monitor changes in public attitudes to crime, we also need markers of trends in wider views of morality, and it is here that we should anticipate the particular relevance of studies of child-rearing and of adult views of children's behaviour. In Western urbanized countries, particularly those with a christian tradition, childhood is seen as a time when foundations are laid, upon which depend the later structures of morality and intelligence, as well as those of physical and

mental health. The importance of early life as a basis for adult character is a part of our traditional 'knowledge', and the majority of people believe that the child's upbringing in the first six or seven years has a profound and lasting effect on behaviour, morals and beliefs throughout the rest of life. Banks et al (1975) showed the importance, in the public attitude, of the child's upbringing as a perceived cause of crime, and it is generally true that when adults disapprove of adolescent behaviour, whether or not it is criminal, they commonly attribute it to poor parent/child relationships and errors in early upbringing. The examples used in this paper give some idea of the scale of changes in views of child rearing that have come about in the last eighty years.

An obvious next step is to broaden this work on parental values and ideal standards of child behaviour and education, which we know to be very influential in children's school achievement (Douglas, 1964) and behaviour (Wadsworth, 1979), to include investigations of the role of parents' personal and social values in religion, sexual behaviour and political ideology.

If, as this paper speculates, society expects an adverse outcome from a particular childhood experience, and if this attribution or expectation plays an important part in bringing about that outcome, then empirical work on child rearing and on parental moral and social values is of the greatest importance for the interpretation of criminological findings. It is necessary to help us to understand the cultural setting of criminological research work and the effect that this is likely to have on the selection of measures or variables, and their interpretation. For empirical sociological research such a suggestion and the changes in findings described in this paper raise the difficulties identified by Gouldner (1970) in his call for a reflexive

sociology, and his questioning of the traditional scientific wisdom of the possibility of the researcher remaining free from influence by external factors.

Changing social values need to be monitored and used as a tool in the work of understanding changes in social behaviour, and in empirical research controlling for time in one culture and for cultural setting in cross national studies will help to achieve this. As I have been led to argue elsewhere (Wadsworth, 1979) from experience of time controlled empirical research, when we know the kinds of behaviour which people think are particularly wrong or damaging, and the kind of experiences which are thought to put those who have them particularly at risk of 'going wrong', then we have some further understanding about how crime is defined and constructed. This should be one of the next steps in research. Sociological studies of crime have shown how others views are important in the definition of crime in individuals; the genesis of crime should now be empirically examined on a social and cultural scale. But, if as is speculated in this paper, at least part of the cause of crime is rooted in time and culture then we should not expect consistent findings from research over long periods of time, nor should we hope to find a philosopher's store to 'explain' crime once and for all.

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