

Delinquency in Australia

A Critical Appraisal

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Australian Delinquency: Research and Practical Considerations

JOHN BRAITHWAITE

Defining Delinquency

Stereotypes

It is interesting to note the historical development of popular and academic images of the typical delinquent.¹ Centuries ago, the conception of the delinquent was of a person *possessed* of the devil. A change of direction came with Lombroso's work in the late nineteenth century, which established the delinquent as a *biological* type—he was different physically from law-abiding people. With the emergence of the new discipline of psychology, the emphasis shifted away from physical differences as a measure of the delinquent type, to mental differences. The delinquent was then conceived of as a *moron*—mentally inferior in certain respects. In time, this view was elaborated into a conception of the delinquent as psychologically *abnormal*. Today, the dominant stereotype of the delinquent is of a *socially disadvantaged* person—poor, black, with uncaring parents, living in a "bad" area and dropping out of school.

Unfortunately, much delinquency research in Australia has been the study of youth who fit certain popular stereotypes of delinquency rather than the study of delinquents. A sociologist studies a group of youths who wear leather jackets, ride motor-bikes, hang around a working-class suburb, and he claims that the people he is studying are obviously delinquents. A social worker studies girls in a church home, girls who are mostly there for reasons such as "exposed to moral danger",

“promiscuity”, “uncontrollable”, “running away from home”, and “likely to lapse into a life of vice or crime or addiction to drugs”. Not many of them have been charged with any specific offences in the criminal code, yet the social worker claims to be studying delinquents. A psychologist studies people who have a high score on the delinquency subscale of a personality inventory such as the MMPI, and he claims to be studying delinquents. In fact, he is studying people who exhibit that cluster of attitudes and behaviours that an American psychologist decided, in an *ex post facto* interpretation of a factor analysis, were delinquent-like attitudes and behaviours. In short, he is studying people who fit the stereotype of delinquency held by that American psychologist. Stereotypes of this kind do not act as useful theoretical guideposts in directing our efforts, but only serve to cloud with irrelevancies our perception of the phenomenon.

In defence of a legalistic definition

I am assuming then that delinquency should be defined simply as behaviour that is in violation of the law. However, many criminologists would disagree that it is acceptable to adhere to the *status quo* definition of the law in this way. Their disagreement is firstly ideological—the law as it stands is seen as a tool in the hands of the ruling class for the purpose of protecting ruling-class interests. The second disagreement is methodological—the behaviours defined as delinquent are not so defined because of any inherent homogeneity in the structure of the behaviours themselves, but because some external authority decrees that they should all be illegal.

The answer to the ideological criticism must be that it is based on a false premise. The law as it stands has more protection to offer to poor and powerless people than it does to the ruling class. Lower-class people are more often the victims of delinquency, particularly violent delinquency, than are other groups in the community. Therefore, lower-class people fall back on the law for protection much more so than do the ruling class, who also generally have more effective means for protecting their interests at their disposal. Proponents of this

argument also ignore the great proliferation of laws geared explicitly to protecting the powerless from the powerful (e.g. consumer affairs, trade practices, pollution control industrial safety and labour relations legislation). Nevertheless, to say that the law as it is defined in books has more protection to offer the powerless than the powerful is not to say that the law is often implemented in practice in a way that is extremely biased against lower-class interests. This should give rise to an ideological objection to the way the law is implemented, not to the way it is defined in the statute books. Notwithstanding the above, there is the more general problem that many criminologists may find that the legalistic definition of delinquency encompasses behaviour that they consider should not be delinquent. Each researcher must apply his own ethics to the solution of this problem. Personally, I solve the problem by limiting the focus of my research as much as possible to delinquency that involves actual injury to persons or loss of property (so that offences such as homosexuality, promiscuity, drug offences, obscene language, vagrancy, etc. are excluded from the analysis).

To consider the second criticism, we must look to the data. The question of whether the universe of behaviours defined as delinquent is in any sense homogeneous is an empirical question. Is participation in one form of delinquency highly correlated with participation in other forms of delinquency? A recent multivariate analysis of self-report delinquency data by Braithwaite and Law² suggests that there is a general delinquency factor.

A further criticism of adopting the legal *status quo* as a basis for defining delinquency has been that such a position generally involves the background assumption of a consensus model of society. Positivist sociologists generally define delinquency as behaviour in violation of those societal norms that are enforced by the official agents of social control in the society (the police, courts, etc.). But radical criminologists correctly point out that the assumption that there is consensus in the society about such norms is problematic. They point out that there is clearly dissensus about the rightness or wrongness of such of-

fences as marijuana use, vagrancy, public drunkenness and various sexual offences. Nevertheless, if we eliminate such crimes without victims from the analysis, people are generally in agreement about the remaining legal norms.³ Most of us agree that the common offences of theft, burglary, fraud, assault, murder, should be illegal. One of the most prominent figures in the new radical criminology, Jock Young, has been prepared to concede this.

However much the new deviancy theorist talked of diversity and dissensus in society, the ineluctable reality of a considerable consensus over certain matters could not be wished away. This was particularly noticeable, moreover, in the widespread and uniform social reaction against various forms of deviancy (and, especially, against crimes against the person and certain crimes against property).⁴

The lack-of-consensus argument can be construed as an argument for limiting the scope of positivist criminology to those legal norms about which there is consensus—namely offences that involve direct harm to persons or their property. For the positivist criminologist, so fundamental is the assumption that a unifying theme among the diversity of behaviours labelled delinquent is that they are all violations of norms, that he is best to realize the limitations of his approach and eliminate from his analysis that area of delinquency where this assumption cannot be sustained. There is no reason why this restriction need apply to labelling theorists, phenomenologists and ethnomethodologists. They might meaningfully apply their methodologies to the study of crimes both with and without victims because their approach does not depend upon the consensus assumption.

Are there any real alternatives?

The literature is replete with critiques of traditional definitions of delinquency by liberal and radical criminologists alike, but notably absent have been formulations of alternative definitions. Exceptions have been Sellin's⁵ attempt at a redefinition based on "conduct norms" and the Schwendingers'⁶ attempt

based on politically defined human rights. Neither of these definitions has been operationalized in any empirical research work, not even by their own creators.

It is true that delinquency, traditionally defined as behaviour punishable by law, is a weak construct. The construct does not arise from the intrinsic nature of the subject-matter at hand; delinquency is not an attribute inherent in certain forms of behaviour; it is an attribute conferred upon these forms by external authority. But a stronger alternative construct has not been forthcoming, and the traditional legalistic definition at least has the strength that it is a construct that is understood by ordinary people and policy-makers alike. Public-opinion polls show that the people regard crime and delinquency, traditionally defined, as one of the very top priority problems to be combatted in this country.⁷ I believe that it is important to have a criminology that is relevant to the aspirations of the public and of the policy-makers, and the adoption of a conventional definition of delinquency makes this possible. As a result, one could be regarded positively as engaging in socially useful research, or negatively, as being a lackey of the existing power structure. Whether the researcher is one or the other depends less on how he defines delinquency than on how he carries out his research and uses his results. Our task now becomes to critically appraise the three kinds of data most frequently relied upon in delinquency research—official, self-report and participant observation data.

Official Records

Sources of data

Official records of delinquency are of three kinds—police records, court records and the records of institutions for the care and control of delinquents. All three are subject to the major limitation that they record only a fraction of the total delinquent activity that takes place in the community. Various biases operate to select out those offences that are recorded officially: whether the rate of reporting offences to the police is

high in a particular suburb; whether a policeman decides that a particular offender "deserves a break"; whether the offender is smart enough to avoid detection; the agreement between a policeman and an offender that he'll be let off if he "squeals" on one of his mates; plea bargaining; and so on. In Australia, we can suspect that the criminal justice system exhibits bias against working-class and Aboriginal youth,⁸ since overseas evidence is abundant to demonstrate that compared with middle-class or black youths are more likely to have their offence reported to the police by the general public; more likely to be picked up by the police for the offence; having been picked up, are more likely to be charged and sent to court; having been sent to court, are more likely to be convicted; and having been convicted, are more likely to receive a severe sentence.⁹ Thus working-class youth and blacks become grossly over-represented in official records of delinquency.

Because court records are further procedurally from the offence itself than are police records, there are more possible biases that can enter into the data. Similarly, more confidence can generally be placed in court records than in institutional data because of the extra selective procedures that intervene between going to court and being institutionalized. On the other hand, as the biased selectivity of the sample increases in moving from police to court to institutional data, the average seriousness of the delinquency of the sample also increases, so that one can have greater confidence that those in the sample are genuinely persistent law-breakers.

A great problem arising from the fact that most delinquency is not officially recorded is that in comparing the delinquency rates of different groups, one must assume that the selectivity operates in the same way for the different groups. That is, one must assume that officially recorded delinquency is a constant proportion of real delinquency for all groups compared.

These problems can be attenuated by concentrating on those offences that have the least proportions of unrecorded offences. Clearly, homicide is the best example here—very few homicides occur without being noted in police records, and

the sheer gravity of the offence invokes extra checks and balances in the system, which puts limitations on the extent to which biases such as class bias can operate. However, a sample of juvenile homicide offenders would be a very limited sample in any Australian state, so that some broader basis for including offences with acceptable reportability must be suggested. Sellin and Wolfgang have reviewed a deal of empirical evidence to show that what they call "consensual offences" (e.g. abortion, gambling, drug offences, most sex offences) and "offences against public order" (vagrancy, public drunkenness, prostitution) are the offences with by far the lowest reportability.¹⁰ Sellin and Wolfgang's "consensual offences" and "offences against public order" together constitute what I have called above "crimes without victims". This evidence is therefore a further argument for restricting the focus of positivist criminological research to crimes with victims.

Nevertheless, even after limiting the analysis of official records to offences of maximum reportability and minimum bias, there still remains the problem of interpreting what the official records mean in the context of the informal negotiation processes used to constitute official designations out of complex social situations. As Cicourel says,

The set of meanings produced by *ex post facto* readings of statistical records cannot be assumed to be identical to the situational meanings integral to the various stages in the assembly of the official statistics.¹¹

An Australian case-study in official statistics

A striking illustration of how official statistics can lead us astray arises in recent trends for officially recorded juvenile crime in Queensland. The number of charges preferred in Queensland Children's Courts increased from 2962 in 1971–72 to 5189 in 1972–73, a 75 per cent increase; and jumped again in 1973–74 to 7774, a 50 per cent rise. Press reports on this remarkable upsurge in juvenile crime have ranged from the *Australian's* circumspect headline "Child Crime Up", to the *Telegraph's* eloquent banner "Courts Urged to Slam the Bashers".

We are more likely to find an explanation for this "juvenile crime wave" in the behaviour of the police than in the behaviour of juveniles. In 1972-73, the Police Commissioner commenced a new punitive strategy for dealing with juvenile crime. The authority of the Juvenile Aid Bureau, a section of the Police Department with a counselling orientation, was gradually usurped by the newly formed Education Department Liaison Unit, with a decidedly punitive orientation. Starting in December 1972 with a humble compliment of two savage dogs and their police handlers, the Education Department Liaison Unit chalked up a remarkable 175 charges in its first few months of operation.

In March 1973, the Commissioner sent out a circular to all sections of the Police Force, urging them to step up the number of charges preferred against juveniles. The circular read in part:

There are specific laws to deal with specific circumstances and if a child is within the ambit of a specific law provided, that law alone should be availed of by the police in the taking of appropriate action. The law requires that if a child has committed an offence and the circumstances justify the preferment of a charge, the child should be so charged ...

Whereas in the past a child who had been found out on a number of counts was likely to be charged with only the most serious of those counts, now a number of charges were to be preferred. For example, in the past a child who stole a car would be charged with unlawful use of a motor vehicle; now he was to be charged with unlawful use of a motor vehicle and driving without a licence. The ratio of charges to court appearances almost doubled: 1.46:1 in 1971-72, 2.09:1 in 1972-73 and 2.30:1 in 1973-74.

The number of cases in which the police decided to apply for "care and control" of the offender by the Director of Children's Services, instead of pressing charges, dropped from 678 in 1971-72, to 600 in 1972-73, to 413 in 1973-74. This decrease prompted the Director of Children's Services, in his Annual Report, to engage in the rare activity of publicly sniping at one of his senior public service colleagues.

This decrease is entirely due to the fact that the Commissioner of Police has insisted that Police Officers charge children with offences, rather than having them make an application [for Care and Control] under Section 61 of the Children's Services Act, 1965-73. This in some degree is contrary to the spirit of the Act, which is to protect children from acquiring criminal records for minor offences in their formative years.

Most observers would agree with the Director of Children's Services that there has been a greater propensity to brand children with a criminal record in recent years in Queensland. Children have landed in court for offences such as stealing a ten-cent ice-block and swinging on a neighbour's rotary clothes-line.

The reasons for the "juvenile crime wave" are therefore transparent. In the face of these extreme changes in police policy, the present author had no choice but to abandon plans to analyse official data on longitudinal trends in Queensland delinquency over the past decade. I also had to treat with extreme caution data on differences among Brisbane suburbs in delinquency rates. Whereas the increase in delinquency rate over a certain time period was 56 per cent for the total Brisbane Statistical Division, for the Central City Statistical Areas, the increase was 163 per cent.¹² One of the probable reasons for this is that the Education Department Liaison Unit is located in the Central City, and consequently has disproportionate influence in this area.

This example should serve to illustrate how researchers cannot afford to turn the customary blind eye to how changes in police policy might effect conclusions that they base on data from official sources.

The abuse of official statistics

Clearly then, official records have severe shortcomings as a source of data for delinquency research. These shortcomings are frequently ignored by criminologists, who glibly induce sweeping conclusions from official data without taking stock of how the constitution of official designations from public-police-juvenile interactions might effect such conclusions.

However, a source of greater concern than the abuse of official statistics by researchers is their abuse by public officials.

Politicians and Police Commissioners frequently use official statistics as the ultimate criterion of how well they are faring in fighting crime. When official crime rates worsen, this is often treated as clear justification for draconian measures to rectify the situation. In fact, the change in recorded crime may be the result of a change in the procedures that police use for processing offenders, an increase in police activity in certain areas, or a variation in the definition of certain criminal categories. Some of these errors could be avoided if firm standard definitions of categories were adopted, along with standard procedures for processing and recording offences. The need for uniform crime statistics in Australia, which would consistently monitor variations in crime rates between and within states, has therefore been a constant plea from criminologists.

This raises the fundamental question of the impact of uniform crime statistics in generating constructive measures to improve the Australian criminal justice system. On a general level, Martin Rein argues that merely requiring better reporting can make agencies more accountable, fostering reform and innovation.¹³ He cites as an example a state department of mental hospitals that began to send out a monthly questionnaire to each hospital, asking how many patients were still being kept in straight-jackets—and found that the number declined sharply every month. When interviewers at an employment service were required to report how many Negroes got job referrals, the rate immediately went up. Accurate reporting is therefore argued to produce reform via greater accountability.

However, the fact that the delinquent content of any behaviour sequence is so open to multiple interpretations may render inappropriate the above argument. Any policeman is in a position to improve his department's delinquency statistics by opting for one interpretation rather than another. By interpreting a trivial act of interference with another person's property as vandalism, and prosecuting the offender accordingly, clear-up rates for vandalism can be improved. By in-

terpreting another minor act of interference with another person's property, in which the offender is not apprehended, as a trivial complaint that is not worthy of being recorded as vandalism, the number of (uncleared) instances of vandalism known to the police can be kept low. In other words, the police have the discretion required to make their own statistics look good. The real danger of increasing the emphasis on the monitoring of delinquency through official statistics is that the police will make decisions decreasingly on the basis of what they judge is best for reducing delinquency and upholding justice, and increasingly on the basis of what is best for their statistical record.

There is some suggestion that this is already happening in Australia. For example, it is widely believed that the reason the Education Department Unit was set up to gradually replace the Juvenile Aid Bureau in Queensland was that the latter body was not proceeding with sufficient prosecutions to maintain clear-up rates at a high level.

With the Australian Institute of Criminology now moving towards the establishment of uniform crime statistics, the criminal justice system in Australia should be wary that it does not become the victim of its own increasing methodological sophistication.

Self-reports

Validity and reliability

Many researchers who have become disenchanted with the validity of official statistics have turned to self-report measures of delinquency. Under this method, respondents are asked to say which of a number of offences in a questionnaire or interview schedule they have committed and how many times they have committed each one. The method rises or falls on the question of whether respondents will give honest answers about their delinquent involvement. Some may tend to hide their delinquency, others may tend to exaggerate. A list of self-report items from a University of Queensland study of delin-

quency in a working-class Brisbane suburb is presented in Table 1. The problem of honesty is clearly exemplified by the fact that 30 per cent of the sample responded "never" to the "lie" item, "Have you ever done anything that would have got you into trouble with your parents if it had been found out?"

Concurrent validity of self-report measures has been established by a large number of studies that have found either a

Table 1. Self-reporting delinquency data on 395 males and 123 females from a Brisbane working-class suburb.

	% admitting to offence	
	Males	Females
Have you ever taken little things (worth less than \$2) that did not belong to you?	69	38
Have you ever taken things worth between \$2 and \$50 that did not belong to you?	38	10
Have you ever taken things worth more than \$50 that did not belong to you?	6	2
Have you ever been in a gang fight?	35	24
Have you ever driven a car without a driver's licence?	41	24
Have you ever bought or drunk beer, wine or liquor with your friends? (Do not include drinking at home with your parents.)	53	42
Have you ever purposely damaged something that did not belong to you?	48	32
Have you even wagged school (been away from school without an acceptable reason)?	57	50
Have you ever used a weapon of any sort (knife, club, bottle, etc.) in a fight?	10	2
Have you ever run away from home?	15	18
Have you ever taken a car for a joyride or been for a ride in a car that you knew someone else had taken?	9	4
Not counting fights with a brother or sister, have you ever beaten up anyone or hurt anyone on purpose?	50	25
Have you ever broken into a building?	16	2
Have you ever smoked marijuana (also called pot or grass)?	7	5
Have you ever threatened or forced someone to give you money, cigarettes or anything else?	13	7
Have you ever lit fires on purpose which you knew would damage property?	11	3
Have you ever done anything that would have got you into trouble with your parents if it had been found out?	71	63

significant correlation between official and self-report measures, or that on self-report schedules official delinquents were highly likely to report specific offences that appeared in official records.¹⁴ However, this high admission rate may not apply to offences that have not been detected by the police, as such offences will not be so memorable and respondents may feel they have nothing to lose by reporting an offence that the police know about anyhow.

Other tests of concurrent validity have used as criterion variables the reports of peers on the delinquent behaviour of their friends,¹⁵ the ratings of misconduct by teachers and school counsellors,¹⁶ polygraph ("lie-detector") readings while being interviewed¹⁷ and a chemical analysis of a urine specimen to test for opiate use.¹⁸ These studies have generally provided acceptable validation for self-report instruments.

In addition to concurrent validity, Farrington has demonstrated the predictive validity of self-reports.¹⁹ Self-reports at age 14-15 were significantly associated with officially recorded delinquency over the next three years.

Validation studies thus provide reasonable support for the validity of self-report measures. The percentage of respondents who admit to specific known offences is typically very high. When the total number of officially recorded acts is correlated with the total number of self-reported delinquent acts, the correlation is typically low, though significant.²⁰ But it is important to remember that validation studies concentrate on offences that are memorable because the offence resulted in apprehension by the police, or because of the selection of unusual offences such as heroin use. In view of this inherent bias in validation studies, more attention than normal might be given to reliability as opposed to validity in assessing the adequacy of the technique.

Clark reported at the Syracuse conference on self-report measures of delinquency that he had obtained test-retest reliability coefficients on several instruments of approximately 0.80.²¹ Dentler and Monroe found that each of five items was given the same response by at least 92 per cent of subjects in a test and retest two weeks apart,²² while Belson obtained an

average figure of 88 per cent with a larger questionnaire and a one-week interval.²³ Undoubtedly, these studies underestimate the measurement error, since over such short time intervals, and particularly with short questionnaires, subjects are likely to recall their previous responses. Over a two-year test-retest interval on a 38-item schedule, Farrington produced very discouraging results indeed.²⁴ The measure of reliability used here was the percentage of those admitting to an act at age 14–15 who denied it at age 16–17. For example, 54 per cent of those who admitted to car theft at the first age denied ever having stolen a car two years later. Over the thirty-eight offences, the median percentage of admissions that were followed by denials two years later was 43 per cent. Although the majority of validation and reliability studies have supported the adequacy of self-report measures, the fact that the only long-term reliability study found a very well-constructed self-report measure to be characterized by considerable error must cast some doubt upon their use.

Scaling procedures

Self-report measures in the literature have been further weakened by the use of inappropriate scaling procedures. Many studies have added items together to form *ad hoc* scales, without any empirical investigation of the way in which items in the scale intercorrelate;²⁵ while other studies force unidimensionality upon the data by the inappropriate use of Guttman scalogram analysis,²⁶ a deterministic scaling procedure that assumes unidimensionality.²⁷ It cannot be blindly assumed that a group of self-report delinquency items are all part of the one general delinquency dimension; it must be established empirically. Conventional parametric multivariate techniques such as factor analysis are inappropriate for investigating the dimensionality of a pool of self-report delinquency items because of the extreme variations in the skewness of item distributions and because interval scaling of data cannot be assumed. For example, one cannot assume that the difference between not committing an offence and committing an offence once is the same as the difference between committing an of-

fence once and committing it two or three times. Thus in forming scales from self-report items, we must use multivariate techniques that involve minimal metric and distributional assumptions.²⁸

Trivia or delinquency?

Another inevitable weakness of self-report measures is that they have concentrated on relatively trivial offences, which often have not even been illegal (offences such as “defying parents’ authority”, “gambling”, “having sexual intercourse”, “running away from home”). The reason for this is that the more serious the offence, the less the likelihood that there will be obtained a sufficient number of respondents admitting to the offence to justify its inclusion in the study. Clearly, it would be a waste of research resources to ask, “Have you ever committed murder or manslaughter?” because it would be surprising to have even one respondent say “yes”. But the inclusion of offences that are of too low a level of seriousness can destroy the validity of a self-report measure. A general delinquency factor emerged from the pool of self-report delinquency items analysed by Braithwaite and Law,²⁹ but the items tapping delinquency of a trivial nature (e.g. “sneaking into the movies without paying”) and the items tapping delinquency without victims (e.g. drinking beer) were relatively unrelated to this general factor. Yet it is the trivial items, the very items that do not measure general delinquency, that account for most of the variance in self-report measures. That is, if there are mostly serious delinquent acts in a scale with about 5 per cent of the sample admitting to each one, and one trivial delinquent act to which 50 per cent of the sample confess, then whether one scores high or low on the overall measure of delinquency is going to be determined more by the trivial item than by any other item.

Engaging in various trivial delinquencies such as travelling on a train without buying a ticket and drinking beer are normal activities for adolescent males in Australian culture. Yet when most of the variance in self-report measures is accounted for by such activities, we are investigating trivial delinquency, some-

thing that seems to be empirically unrelated to general delinquency.

Biases

Like official records, self-report measures have their biases. Undoubtedly, on paper-and-pencil questionnaires, children who can read well and understand the meaning of the questions are more likely to endorse a larger number of offences. The varying definitions that different cultural and subcultural groups place on delinquent acts is an important bias. A curious example appears in a study by Gold, where he compared the self-reported delinquency of Caucasians, Negroes and Orientals.³⁰ A larger percentage of Orientals than of either Negroes or Caucasians admitted to the offence "defying parents' authority". Yet clearly, this means something quite different to Orientals than it does to the other cultural groups.

It is possible that in some way the biases created by self-report measures are the opposite of those in official records. Gold was the first to argue that while official records exaggerate the proportion of delinquency committed by working-class youth, self-report questionnaires might exaggerate the proportion of delinquency committed by middle-class youth.³¹ He argued that middle-class adolescents are more likely to report "non-chargeable trivias" on the anonymous questionnaire, where the seriousness of the offence cannot be determined. For example, a child who steals and breaks a friend's pencil would be guilty of two of the self-report items that appear in Table 1: "taking little things (worth less than \$2) that did not belong to you" and "purposely damaged something that did not belong to you". It may be that middle-class youth set more stringent standards as to what constitutes "theft", "vandalism", a "gang fight", etc. Hackler and Luttig took up this debate by suggesting that middle-class youth would be more familiar with and less suspicious of the white, middle-class researcher with his probing questionnaires, whereas Negro boys would be more defensive.³² Indeed, Hackler and Luttig showed empirically that among seventh-grade boys (but not among ninth-grade boys) under-reporting of self-reported

delinquency as measured against criteria of police records, court records, teachers' reports and official school misconduct records was greater amongst Negroes than whites. Gould reported findings consistent with those of Hackler and Luttig.³³ He found that while there was a highly significant relationship between officially recorded and self-reported delinquency for whites, there was no correlation at all between the two for Negroes. However, the problem with Gould's findings is that we do not know whether it reflects the understanding of Negro self-reported delinquency or the overstating of Negro officially recorded delinquency.

In a later study, Gold found no significant tendency for lower-status youth to under-report more than higher-status youth against the criterion of information from peers.³⁴ But this is data on more serious delinquency—delinquency that is serious enough to be vividly recalled by peers—not the "non-chargeable trivia" that Gold referred to in his earlier work.

The last item in Table 1 is clearly a lie item. If a youth says that he has "never done anything that would have got him into trouble with his parents if it had been found out", we assume that he is not being honest. On two occasions when myself, Greg Smith and Paul Wilson have used this item on large samples of adolescents, there was a statistically significant tendency on both occasions for middle-class youth to be more honest in admitting to this "offence". Needless to say, the nature of the biases introduced by self-report methodology demands much further exploration.

Subjects' perceptions of self-report questions

I opened this section by stating that self-report measures rise or fall depending on the honesty of respondents. But validity is not simply a matter of honesty combined with good memory. Even when respondents are recalling accurately and honestly, what are they being honest about? When Gold probed the responses to his self-report schedule, he found that "some concealed weapons, upon questioning, turned out to be boy scout pocket-knives; gang fights shrank to minor playground scuffles; and instances of auto theft were exposed as quick spins

around the block in the family car.”³⁵ A problem with self-report schedules is, therefore, that we do not know how much of the data we get from them is really delinquency.

The problem of seriousness

A methodological problem in criminology that has been brought to a head with the widespread use of self-report measures is the problem of how to define and operationalize the concept of the relative seriousness of different delinquent acts. It is generally accepted that an overall measure of delinquent involvement should incorporate the number of different types of offences committed, the frequency with which each type is committed and the seriousness of each type committed. Ward points out that the seriousness of offences, even within a single offence type, varies widely.

Theft can be of a few cents or a million dollars, and assault can range from a slap in the face to something approaching manslaughter.³⁶

A measure of delinquency that treats all acts as of equal seriousness is grossly at variance with common-sense notions of what delinquency is and should be, and therefore advances knowledge in a manner that is of somewhat limited use for public policy to reduce delinquency.

Seriousness could be defined either normatively, on the basis of some moral philosophical stance; or consensually, on the basis of the aggregated judgements of the people as to which offences are more serious. The former possibility has been ignored, largely because the latter seems to have a clearer rationale arising from the consensus definition of delinquency. If delinquency is the violation of those societal norms that are policed by the official agents of social control in the society, then more serious delinquency is the violation of such of those norms that the society regards as more important.

However, the question is whether this is stretching the consensus assumption too far. While there seem to be grounds for assuming that at least for offences with victims, there is reasonable consensus that what is currently illegal should be il-

legal, there is probably not such consensus about which crimes are the most and least serious. Ward has shown this to be the case empirically on Australian data.³⁷ He found that some people rated all of the sexual offences in a list of offences as the most serious, followed by crimes of physical violence, while other subjects tended to reverse this order.

Until more research such as Ward's is done to establish in what sense people do agree as to which offences are more serious, we have no rationale for incorporating seriousness weightings into Australian measures of delinquency, even though that means treating "a slap in the face" equally with "something approaching manslaughter" as an "assault".

Participant Observation

Why participant observation?

Let us imagine that data from either official records or self-reports shows us that youths who own motor-bikes are more delinquent than youths who do not. We might interpret this finding to mean that youths who own motor-bikes become involved with organized groups of motor-bike enthusiasts, who pass on an anti-authority subculture supportive of delinquency. Clearly, however, such an interpretation is dependent upon our having some prior knowledge of what youths with motor-bikes do. In fact, our interpretation of any empirical finding is dependent on what we already know about the phenomena under consideration. Thus if we had lived all of our lives in New Guinea and had never seen or heard of a bikie gang, we would be less likely to correctly interpret the data. That is, correct interpretation of data about a phenomenon always depends on some kind of experience with the phenomenon, and the more extensive is that experience the better.

The most direct way of acquiring the familiarity necessary to make valid interpretations is to participate in the symbolic world of those being studied. Participant observation is the methodology where the researcher joins in with his subjects,

recording and observing their day-to-day interaction. In doing so, the researcher looks at the ways in which individuals give meaning to social phenomena. Consequently, the emphasis is away from deterministic theories and towards intentional action. Participant observation has the strength of making it possible to look at the subject not only as an object that is shaped by external forces but as someone who himself shapes and makes choices. That is, activity can be studied more humanistically and less deterministically, via an actor's intentionality.

The methodology has as its underpinning the unarguable premise that what the actor thinks is going on can be more important in shaping an outcome than what actually is going on. For example, if a youth thinks that the police beat up every suspect they take to the watchhouse, even though they do not, it is what he thinks that will shape the way he interacts with the police rather than what is the objective reality. The clear advantage of participant observation is that, unlike the positivist criminology based on official records and self-reports, it does not have to take reality as given, but can look instead at the social construction of reality by the subjects themselves.

A major advantage of participant observation is that it looks at delinquency in its natural setting, as opposed to the contrived and hypothetical contingencies that the respondent confronts in a questionnaire, for example. Concomitant with this advantage, one can look at delinquency as a dynamic phenomenon rather than statically as the relationship between variables *x*, *y* and *z* and delinquency. Delinquency can be portrayed (realistically) as the outcome of an unfolding interaction process, rather than as a regression equation. It becomes possible to look at delinquency in terms of an ecological model—delinquency as one of many variables, all subtly inter-related—and thereby avoid the error of attempting to deal with one or two variables without reference to such inter-relationships.

The rounded picture

Participant observation permits a more rounded picture of the delinquent enterprise. There are two sides of the delinquent coin—the social processes that lead up to the behaviour, and social processes that lead up to the conferring of the delinquent label upon the behaviour by those in authority. Studies based on self-report and official data simply look for the causes of the behaviour, while treating the assignment of the behaviour to a delinquent status as unproblematic or given. In contrast, through participant observation the researcher can look at both sides of the coin and the interactions between the two. He thus avoids many of the traps that the positivist researcher sets for himself by ignoring one half of the delinquent process and thereby ignoring the confounding that this neglected half imposes upon his conclusions.

*The New Criminology*³⁸ suggests that there are three basic approaches to the study of deviance:

- (a) how rules are made (political power perspective);
- (b) why people break these rules (objective cause perspective); and
- (c) how rule-breaking is subjectively perceived by actors (phenomenological perspective).

It is then argued that both an overemphasis by the positivists on the objective cause perspective, and an overemphasis by the phenomenologists on their perspective to the exclusion of the other two, result in an artificial truncation of reality. However, there remains in practice wide variation in the relative emphasis that the researcher accords to each of the three approaches. Fundamentally, the proportionate emphasis on each depends upon the moral perspective that the researcher brings to the particular form of deviance being studied. If I study homosexuality, I regard the objective causes of the behaviour as a non-problem. What I am interested in is why people exercise their political power to make outcasts of people who engage in a harmless and even positive form of sexual diversity. If I study murder or rape, the question of why people use their political power to define the behaviour as deviant seems to me inconsequential. It appears so obvious to every moralist that

murder and rape should be (and universally is) defined as illegal, that to painstakingly study how it becomes so would be socially irrelevant. My concern here would be to find out why people commit murder or rape, in the hope of making a contribution to reducing the incidence of such behaviour. Thus the emphasis we accord to each of the approaches will vary for different forms of deviance, and that variation in emphasis is determined more by moral/political strictures than by methodological ones.

It is currently popular for deviance theorists to argue on quasi-methodological grounds that the "correct" or "balanced" approach is to give equal emphasis to each of the three perspectives, or to give relatively more emphasis than is being given at the moment to one or another of the perspectives (see, for example, the exchange between Altman and Edwards and Wilson).³⁹ Such arguments are overstated because they attempt to find a single methodological answer to a number of different questions that are not essentially methodological. While it is an advantage of participant observation that there is the option of exploring the political power, objective cause and phenomenological perspectives simultaneously, the decision to take up this option is less a methodological imperative than a judgement reflecting one's purposes in doing the research.

Limitations

Critics of participant observation claim that researchers who use this methodology find with alarming regularity exactly what they set out to find. The problem is that the participant observer is confronted with an absolutely massive amount of data, so that he must make decisions about which data to construe as significant. A perfectly natural human response is to construe as significant those data that fit one's preconceptions. Moreover, the nature of the data is usually such that the rigorous checks for internal consistency, validity, reliability and statistical significance of data trends, developed by quantitative methodology, cannot be applied.

However, a more fundamental drawback in the area of

delinquency research is that no matter how many hours of fieldwork are put in, only a very small amount of delinquency will be observed. In Australia, the highly organized gangs with delinquency as a central activity, about which we have read so much in the overseas literature, are a rare phenomenon. The number of seriously delinquent acts that a researcher actually observes during several months of sustained fieldwork in an Australian city can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Granted, the fieldworker will be told about many other delinquent acts. But the strength of participant observation inheres in the fact that it is possible to see the production of the delinquent act, and its labelling as such, as an unfolding interaction process, not in the obtaining of (exaggerated and idealized) accounts of it after the event.

Participant observation thus generates data on a very limited number of delinquent acts, on a very limited sample of people, in a very limited geographical area of the city. Australian "gang studies" are likely to end up as descriptions of the day-to-day interactions of floating networks of pairs, triads and slightly larger groups of youths, which in no sense are structured as gangs, and the behaviour of which is mostly legal most of the time.

Choosing a Methodology

It should be clear that the major methodologies available to the delinquency researcher all have substantial weaknesses. However, the encouraging thing for criminologists is that they are different kinds of weakness in each case. In some instances, one weakness might even be the inverse of the other—for example, with official statistics exaggerating the proportion of delinquency committed by working-class youth and underestimating the proportion committed by middle-class youth, and self-reports doing possibly the reverse.

This is encouraging for the criminologist, because if his hypothesis can stand up under testing by the three separate methodologies, he can have confidence that his result is not the reflection of some artifactual relationship with the large error

variance in each case. The need for, and the advantages of, a multi-method approach are probably greater in criminology than in any other area of social science.

Unfortunately, however, it is not always possible to test an hypothesis against the three disparate methodologies, since some of them are totally inappropriate to some purposes. Ultimately, which one or two or three of the methods one uses will depend on one's purposes. If one is interested in concentrating on very serious delinquent acts, such as car theft, self-reports and participant observation will have to be bypassed and reliance placed solely on official records or interviews with people from official records. If one is interested in hidden delinquency, delinquency that the police choose to ignore, then self-reports are most appropriate. The social reformer who is looking for macro-analysis to guide him in deciding how to change the fundamental structure of society so as to reduce delinquency will find little of value in the micro-analysis of the participant observation literature. However, if he wants to find out something about labelling, the situational determinants of delinquency, or police–juvenile interaction, then that is precisely where he should look.

In all of this, it should be remembered that the methodological traps for the delinquency researcher are deep traps, so that to draw a conclusion from a study based on one demonstrably feeble methodology is foolish, and to call into question the results of one study by pointing to the contrary results of another, without weighing up which has the better methodology, is to be glib.

Linking Delinquency Research to Policy-making

Many of us hope that our delinquency research will make some small contribution towards the explicit policy goal of reducing delinquency. The first requirement for achieving this is for definitions and conclusions (though not necessarily method) to be in terms that are meaningful to policymakers—phenomenological mumbo-jumbo and mathematical reification alike must be out!

Inducing policy recommendations from the results of criminological research involves a range of methodological problems, not to mention value judgemental problems, that are of extensively greater magnitude than the methodological problems discussed so far. There is no graceful movement from delinquency research to policy implications; the transition is usually abrupt and rash. So many reformist criminologists naively assume that the facts speak for themselves, that merely examining the data logically impels the researcher to support certain programmatic implications and to reject others.

To illustrate this, the research finding that black slums have high delinquency rates has variously been interpreted as leading to the obvious policy ramification, that black poverty should be eliminated; that blacks should be given employment opportunities equal with whites, so that they have a chance of getting out of their predicament; that social workers should be employed to launch an assault on the "culture of poverty" in these areas; that urban renewal should be used to clear the slums; or that more police should be stationed in slums. Which policy recommendation one opts for has very little to do with the data, and it is certainly not possible to deduce from the data which is the "right" policy implication. Each policy inference implies a range of assumptions extrinsic to the data, which need to be critically analysed. The first policy implication perpetrates the ecological fallacy—to show that black *areas* have high delinquency rates does not mean that black *people* have high delinquency rates. It is possible that the high delinquency rates of black areas is caused by the excessive delinquency of the white minority in those areas, or that black people who live in predominantly white areas have very low delinquency rates. Even if black people are more delinquent, it might not be their poverty or their "culture of poverty" that makes them so, and even if it is, how do we know that policies to combat this will not produce a white backlash that results in a greater net harm than good? In a capitalist economy where jobs for the unskilled are always scarce, increasing employment opportunities for blacks might result in more unskilled whites being out of work, thus increasing the propensity for delinquency among *their* children.

It is incumbent upon the reformist criminologist to critically analyse the assumptions that underpin his policy recommendations, rather than exhaust all of his methodological rigour upon establishing the relationships among variables, while relegating the policy analysis to a glib assertion, not inconsistent with his findings, ignominiously tagged on to the conclusion. Having clearly established a correlation between a variable (which we will call the policy variable) and delinquency, there are a number of questions that need to be answered before a particular policy to change levels of the policy variable can be recommended. Listed below are what I regard as the most critical questions.

Questions of political choice

1. Is the policy politically feasible?⁴⁰
2. Why opt for this policy rather than other policies that would change the policy variable?
3. What will be the desirable and undesirable effects of the policy change on goals of public policy other than reducing delinquency? For example, after reducing opportunities for delinquency in lower-class areas, it is possible that the frustrations of lower-class people might be expressed in other harmful ways (perhaps psychopathology or alcoholism).
4. Will the policy produce a community backlash against the change, which undermines its effect?

Questions on the nature of causality

5. Is it high levels of delinquency that cause the policy variable to be high, rather than the reverse? That is, what is the direction of causality?
6. Does the correlation between the policy variable and delinquency simply reflect the fact that both variables are correlated with a third irrelevant variable? For example, a correlation between poverty and delinquency might simply result because poor people have low I.Q. and delinquents have low I.Q. If this were so, it could be policies to change

- I.Q., not policies to change poverty, that are needed.
7. Does the delinquency-producing system of variables, which the policy sets out to change, have a tendency towards stable equilibrium? For example, does an increase in policy variable X produce an increase in system variables Y and Z , which produces a proportionate decrease in X ?⁴¹
 8. Will improving the position of some people on the policy variable worsen the position of others on the same variable? In other words, is the position of people on the policy variable a zero-sum game (as in the example of providing more employment opportunities for unskilled blacks, leaving fewer opportunities for unskilled whites)?
 9. Is a change in the policy variable (X) a necessary but not sufficient condition for a reduction in delinquency? Must there also be a change in policy variable Y , and if so, in what order should the two policy variables be changed (XY or YX), and does it matter whether there is a time gap between the two changes?
 10. Are there any levels of the policy variable at which further changes on it will have no impact on delinquency? For example, when the policy variable is increased past a certain limit, no further increase will effect delinquency.
 11. Is the effect of the policy variable on delinquency reversible. For example, if poverty leads to delinquency, will a reduction in poverty reduce delinquency; or does the fact that a person has been poor scar him for life, as it were, so that an alleviation of his poverty that is too late makes no difference? This is a particularly crucial question, the significance of which has been clearly formulated by Rosenfeld.

Knowing the forces that *contribute* to a social evil tells us nothing about how to eradicate the evil. In fact, why should it? There is no logical reason why the weapon most effective in destroying a social phenomenon should be in a direct way related to the forces that make it grow.⁴²

12. Is the kind of delinquency we are concerned about reducing, as Matza says, "just part of growing up"?⁴³ That is, will

the behaviour disappear as the child matures, irrespective of what policy changes are made?

Questions of the resources required to produce a significant impact

13. How elastic is the policy variable in response to policy change? Some variables correlated with delinquency (e.g. "family disharmony") may be extremely difficult to change through any public policy, while others (e.g. "lack of youth clubs") are easily manipulated by public policy.
14. What is the monetary and administrative cost to the public of a given unit change in the policy variable, and at what cost is a given unit change in the incidence of delinquency produced? How do the monetary and administrative savings from reduced delinquency measure up against these costs (the cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit questions)?
15. What is the time-lag between a change in the policy variable and a change in the delinquency rate, and what is the time-lag between a change in the policy and a change in the policy variable?
16. In the causal chain of variables that link up with delinquency, how close is the policy variable to delinquency? If the policy variable is removed from delinquency by a large number of intervening variables, its impact on delinquency is likely to be weakened by the very indirectness of the relationship. Moreover, the more variables intervening between the policy variable and delinquency, the greater the chances that the programmatic strategy will become confounded in a counter-productive way with one of these variables. Or, put more plainly, the more straightforward the relationship, the less we have to worry about messing up a complicated intervention strategy.
17. How many different causal chains connect the policy variable with delinquency? The more causal chains connecting the policy variable with delinquency, the stronger is the relationship between them likely to be. If there are many causal chains, we do not have all of our eggs in one basket. If we mess things up so that the desired effect on delinquency is not produced through one causal chain, we

still have the chance of having the desired impact through the other chains.

These critical questions highlight the enormity of the problem of making policy inferences from data about the relationship between delinquency and an independent variable. Probably the single factor that makes policy recommendations most difficult for criminologists is that most of the data we have on which to base these recommendations are data about the effect of naturally occurring differences on delinquency, rather than data about the effect of planned change on delinquency. For example, we have data about whether poor people are less delinquent, and even data about whether people became less delinquent when they became less poor, but not data about whether a planned reduction in poverty will reduce delinquency. There is a great difference between a natural ongoing change in a system of variables and a planned introduction of imbalance into the system. People react to planned changes by governments in a way that they do not react to spontaneously occurring social changes. For example, we realize that it would be foolish to make a judgement on how the public would react to a tax increase in a budget on the basis of how they have reacted to increases in tax scales naturally occurring as a result of inflation.

The sources of unpredictability in determining what will be the impact of a given policy on delinquency are therefore many and great. Indeed, when I showed one of my colleagues the first draft of this chapter, of the list of seventeen critical questions, he wrote: "An impressive list of critical questions! Do you think you have left any possibility to make any policy inferences at all?" My answer to that is decidedly "yes". For most problems, a number of the critical questions can be dismissed quite easily. For instance, if we know that Aborigines have a higher delinquency rate than whites, there is no problem with the crucial question about the direction of causality. Clearly, being delinquent does not cause people to turn black! Or if we are analysing a highly respectable kind of policy solution such as more youth clubs, then all of the political choice questions will be unproblematic.

Notwithstanding this, it will almost always be impossible to give an adequate answer to all of the critical questions. However, that does not mean that we give up trying to predict the outcome of policies. No one suggests that we should give up the whole business of criminology because we can never possibly control for all of the variables that might confound a relationship we are studying. What we do is to select out and control for only those variables that, for theoretical and empirical reasons, seem most important to control. Similarly, with unpredictability in planned social change: we should analyse theoretically, and if possible empirically, what we have reason to suspect to be the greatest sources of unpredictability.

I simply submit that if criminologists were to systematically attempt to answer these critical questions about policy inferences, then they would induce more viable policy solutions that were more in tune with empirical reality. Unless criminologists do elevate to a higher level of importance and rigour the methodological problems entailed in policy inference, the discipline will be doomed to perpetual irrelevance by the truth of Jay W. Forrester's dictum:

With a high degree of confidence, we can say that the intuitive solutions to the problems of complex social systems will be wrong most of the time.

Notes

1. For a detailed discussion of this development, see W. Reckless and M. Smith, *Changing Conceptions of Delinquency* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1932).
2. J. Braithwaite and H. Law, "The Structure of Self-reported Delinquency", (soon to be completed).
3. Wilson and Brown found that while large numbers of respondents in a national sample felt that various offences without victims should not be a crime, there were virtually no dissenters from the legal *status quo* for all of the offences against persons or property. Similarly, the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research found on a Sydney sample of 1193 that there were substantial numbers of people who felt that "public drunkenness", "prostitution" and "vagrancy" should not be punished. See P. R. Wilson and J. W. Brown, *Crime and the Community* (St

- Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1973), pp. 53-54, and *Crime, Corrections and the Public* (Sydney: New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, August 1974), Statistical Report no. 17.
4. J. Young, "Working-class Criminology", in *Critical Criminology*, eds. I. Taylor, P. Walton, and J. Young (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 71.
 5. T. Sellin, *Culture Conflict and Crime* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1938), Bulletin no. 41, pp. 19-32.
 6. H. and J. Schwendinger, "Defenders of Order or Guardians of Human Rights", in *Critical Criminology*, eds. I. Taylor, P. Walton, and J. Young, pp. 113-46.
 7. Both Wilson and Brown (*Crime and the Community*) and Congalton and Najman found "crime" to be rated as the second most important problem confronting Australia, in a list of problems including inflation, education, poverty, unemployment and race relations. See A. A. Congalton and J. Najman, "Who Are the Victims?: A Study of the Victims of Reported and Unreported Crimes", mimeographed (Sydney: School of Sociology, University of New South Wales, 1973), p. 205.
 8. For a discussion and review of Australian evidence about police bias against Aborigines, see "Aborigines and Criminal Justice in Australia", in *Proceedings of the Seventh National Conference of the Australian Crime Prevention Correction and After-Care Council* (Melbourne: 1973), pp. C1-C9.
 9. W. Arnold, "Race and Ethnicity Relative to other factors in Juvenile Court Dispositions", *American Journal of Sociology* 77 (1971): 211-22; D. Black and A. Reiss, "Police Control of Juveniles", *American Sociological Review* 35 (1970): 63-78; W. Chambliss, *Crime and the Legal Process* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969); A. Cicourel, *The Social Organization of Juvenile Justice* (New York: Wiley, 1968); S. Box, *Deviance Reality and Society* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), ch. 6.
 10. T. Sellin and M. Wolfgang, *The Measurement of Delinquency* (New York: Wiley, 1964). See also Congalton and Najman, *Who Are the Victims?* (p. 24), who found that "sex crimes" had a reportability exceedingly lower than other offences, on a Sydney sample.
 11. Cicourel, *Social Organization of Juvenile Justice*, p. 29.
 12. The time period was the two years 1970-71 and 1971-72, compared with 1972-73 and 1973-74.
 13. M. Rein, *Social Policy: Issues of Choice and Change* (New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 150-51.
 14. J. Blackmore, "The Relationship between Self-reported Delinquency and Official Convictions among Adolescent Boys", *British Journal of Criminology* 14 (1974): 172-76; K. Erikson and L. Empey, "Court Records, Undetected Delinquency and Decision-making", *Journal of Criminal Law Criminology and Police Science* 54 (1963): 458-59; H. Voss, "Ethnic Differentials in Delinquency in Honolulu", *Journal of Criminal Law Criminology and Police Science* 54 (1963): 325-26; T. Hirschi and H. Selvin, *Delinquent Research: An Appraisal of Analytic Methods* (New York:

- Free Press, 1967); R. Fisher, "Borstall Recall Delinquency and the Cloward-Ohlin Theory of Criminal Subcultures", *British Journal of Criminology* 10 (1970): 52-63; D. Farrington, "Self-reports of Deviant Behaviour: Predictive and Stable?", *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 64 (1973): 99-110; H. Gibson, S. Morrison, and D. J. West, "The Confession of Known Offences in Response to a Self-reported Delinquency Schedule", *British Journal of Criminology* 10 (1970): 277-80; L. Gould, "Who Defines Delinquency?: A Comparison of Self-reported and Officially Reported Delinquency for Three Racial Groups", *Social Problems* 17 (1969): 325-36; M. Gold, *Delinquent Behaviour in an American City* (Belmont, Calif.: Brooks/Cole, 1970); J. R. Williams and M. Gold, "From Delinquent Behaviour to Official Delinquency", *Social Problems* 20 (1972): 209-29.
15. Gold, *Delinquent Behaviour in an American City*.
 16. R. Jessor, T. Graves, R. Hanson, and S. Jessor, *Society, Personality and Deviant Behaviour*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), p. 216; Gould, "Who Defines Delinquency?"
 17. J. Clark and L. Tift, "Polygraph and Interview Validity of Self-reported Deviant Behaviour", *American Sociological Review* 31 (1966): 520.
 18. J. Ball, "The Reliability and Validity of Interview Data Obtained from 59 Narcotic Drug Addicts", *American Journal of Sociology* 72 (1967): 650-54.
 19. Farrington, "Self-reports of Deviant Behaviour".
 20. Williams and Gold ("From Delinquent Behaviour to Official Delinquency") could only account for 9 per cent of the variance in officially recorded delinquency by self-reported delinquency.
 21. J. P. Clark, reported in R. Hardt and G. Bodine, *Development of Self-report Instruments in Delinquency Research: A Conference Report* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Youth Development Centre, Syracuse University, 1965).
 22. R. Dentler and L. Monroe, "Social Correlates of Early Adolescent Theft", *American Sociological Review* 26 (1961): 546-54.
 23. T. Belson, "The Extent of Stealing by London Boys and Some of Its Origins", *Advancement of Science* 25 (1968): 173.
 24. Farrington, "Self-reports of Deviant Behaviour".
 25. Williams and Gold, "From Delinquent Behaviour to Official Delinquency"; T. Hirschi, *Causes of Delinquency* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1969); P. Hassall, "Schools and Delinquency: A Self-report Study of Delinquency in Christchurch, New Zealand" (Paper delivered at the 1974 Conference of the Sociological Association of Australia and New Zealand, University of New England, Armidale); N. Christie, J. Adenae, and S. Skirbekk, "A Study of Self-reported Crime", in *Scandinavian Studies in Criminology* (London: Tavistock, 1965) vol. 1, pp. 86-116.
 26. I. Nye, J. Short, and V. Olson, "Socio-economic Status and Delinquent Behaviour", *American Journal of Sociology* 63 (1958): 381-89; I. Reiss, "Sociological Studies of Sexual Standards" in *Determinants of Human Sex-*

- ual Behaviour*, ed. G. Winokur (Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas, 1962); Dentler and Monroe, "Social Correlates of Early Adolescent Theft".
27. The more general defects of scalogram analysis have been known for a long time; see J. Guilford, *Psychometric Methods* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2nd edn, 1954), pp. 460-61; and J. Nunnally, *Psychometric Theory* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), pp. 64-66. Criminologists who use this procedure often proudly report high reproducibility coefficients when these probably merely reflect the piling up of responses in one category—something that is a feature of the skewed distribution of self-report scores.
 28. For a fuller treatment of these issues, see Braithwaite and Law, "The Structure of Self-reported Delinquency", on the application of hierarchical clustering analysis, multidimensional scaling, non-metric factor analysis and multiple scalogram analysis to a set of self-report items.
 29. Braithwaite and Law, "The Structure of Self-reported Delinquency".
 30. Gould, "Who Defines Delinquency?"
 31. M. Gold, "A Note on Voss's Article", *Social Problems* 15 (1967): 114-20. See also M. Gold, *Status Forces in Delinquent Boys* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Institute for Social Research, 1963), pp. 4-7.
 32. J. Hackler and M. Lutt, "Systematic Bias in Self-reported Delinquency", *Canadian Review of Anthropology and Sociology* 6 (1969): 92-106.
 33. Gould, "Who Defines Delinquency?"
 34. Gold, *Delinquent Behaviour in an American City*.
 35. Ibid.
 36. P. G. Ward, *The Uses of Multidimensional Scaling in Criminology*, Australian UNESCO Seminar on Mathematics in the Social Sciences (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1972), p. 8.
 37. Ibid.
 38. I. Taylor, P. Walton, and J. Young, *The New Criminology: For a Social Theory of Deviance* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973).
 39. In A. Edwards and P. R. Wilson, *Social Deviance in Australia* (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1974).
 40. This, like all of the other questions, implies a number of sub questions. Is the policy politically acceptable to (a) parliamentarians, (b) public opinion, (c) rank-and-file members of the party in power, (d) public servants who will implement the policy, (e) key interest groups, etc. Can the policy be introduced incrementally or does it imply a dramatic overnight change? Does the implementation of the policy depend upon the co-operation of governments, ministers or departmental heads who do not see eye to eye? Is the rationale for the policy so complicated that it cannot be explained to the people at election time? Thus the single question of political feasibility ramifies into a wide range of subsidiary questions.
 41. As a concrete illustration, imagine that we wished to reduce delinquency by attacking a condition strongly associated with it—parental un-

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employment. Unemployment is reduced, which increases demand and causes inflation, which in turn forces the government to create unemployment.

42. E. Rosenfeld, "Social Research and Social Action in Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency", in *Prevention of Delinquency: Problems and Programs*, eds. J. P. Stratton and R. M. Terry (London: Macmillan, 1968), p. 37.
43. D. Matza, *Delinquency and Drift* (New York, Wiley, 1964).

Part II

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS