EXPANDING CRIMINOLOGY'S DOMAIN: THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CRIMINOLOGY 2006 PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS*

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Democracy is directly linked to the two main components of criminology: crime and justice. Moreover, the scientific study of crime and justice has been limited in large part to researchers working in democratic regimes. In this article, I address the question of how criminologists through research and education can better nurture democratic, nonauthoritarian societies. I argue that our field would be strengthened by expanding the domain of criminology in five directions: 1) by providing more emphasis on historical data and analysis, 2) by broadening the scope of emotions we test for among offenders, 3) by doing more cross-national comparative analysis, 4) by bringing situational variables into our research, and 5) by making criminology more interdisciplinary. Although the most recent wave of democratization produced a record number of democratic regimes, we are observing ominous challenges to fundamental democratic rights from around the world. As criminologists, we have a vested interest in supporting the democratic, nonauthoritarian societies in which our craft has thrived.

In the last decade of the twentieth century our planet shattered a momentous political barrier: For the first time in human history, more than half of the world's countries were democracies (Boix, 2003: 82).[1] Figure 1 shows the number of democratic regimes among independent

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1.   This classification, provided by Boix (2003), defines democracy as requiring a freely elected legislature and executive and most of the population with the right to vote. Boix defines a country as a democracy if it meets three conditions: 1) the

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nations across the world from 1800 forward. A country is defined here as a democracy if most of the population has the right to vote and if the legislative and executive branches assume office through free multiparty elections. According to figure 1, during the first half of the nineteenth century, the world had only one democracy—the United States. After the revolutionary wave of 1848, the number of democracies grew from 3 to 18 in 1914 and to 28 in 1921. But the number of democracies fell again to only 13 in the turmoil leading up to World War II. After World War II, a second wave of democratization took place, bringing the total number of democracies up to 34 by 1950. After experiencing a shallow decline in the 1960s, the world witnessed a third wave of democratization in the 1970s and 1980s. By the mid-1990s, the number of democracies in the world had risen to 95—51 percent of all independent nations.

Figure 1.   Number of Democracies in the World, 1800 to 1994
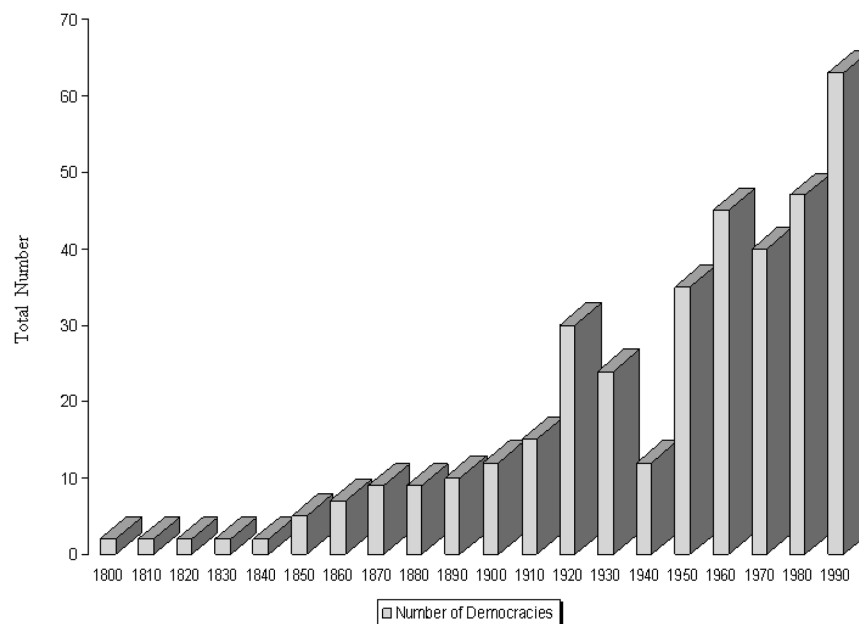
Based on data found in Boix, 2003.

The theme for this year's conference, "Democracy, Crime and Justice,"

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legislature is elected in free multiparty elections, 2) the executive is directly or indirectly elected in popular elections and is responsible either directly to voters or to a legislature elected according to the first condition, and 3) most of the adult male population has the right to vote.

links these historic developments to criminology. Ever since Edwin Sutherland (1947: 1) offered his famous definition of criminology as "the study of the making of laws, the breaking of laws, and reactions to the breaking of laws," the field has been divided into those concerned with either reactions to crime or to criminal etiology. At its most elemental, a concern with reactions to crime is a concern with justice; likewise, a concern with etiology is a concern with social order. This reasoning led Susanne Karstedt and I to argue (Karstedt and LaFree, 2006) recently that both of the main substantive branches of criminology have important connections to democracy.

The link between democracy and justice was clearly a concern that animated the founders of the American republic in the 1770s. Even a cursory reading of the U.S. Constitution shows the revolutionary generation's apprehension over connections between democratically imposed criminal justice punishment and civil liberties, including references to cruel and unusual punishment, the right to trial by jury, the right to confront your accusers, and the right to be free from unreasonable searches and seizures. But a concern with connections between democracy and criminal justice remains every bit as important today. Witness current debates in the U.S. Congress about the reach of the Patriot Act or the legality of indefinitely imprisoning noncitizens suspected of terrorism.

It is also clear that crime is directly linked to the strength of democratic institutions. High levels of crime raise feelings of insecurity and undermine levels of trust, which in turn undercut the legitimacy of democratic institutions. Crime thrives on high rates of economic inequality, and inequality undermines democracy. Rising crime rates drive a wedge between economic, racial, ethnic, and religious groups. And these processes are especially devastating for fledgling democracies like the newly emerging nations of Latin America and Africa and the transitional nations of Eastern Europe. Thus, the strength of democracies depends on the ability of society to provide justice and security.

But what is perhaps less obvious is that, to this point at least, criminology as a science has mostly taken root in democracies. Based on the most common measure of democracy used by political scientists, the POLITY index (Gurr, 1974), the countries with the highest democracy scores are the United Kingdom, most of the countries of Western Europe, Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, and the United States. Taken as a whole, the countries in this group account for a very large proportion of all criminologists, including those belonging to this association.

Connections between democracy and criminology are perhaps unsurprising when we consider how important openness is for any type of scientific study. As Donald Campbell (1988: 290) has pointed out, "the norms of science are explicitly antiauthoritarian." We are unlikely to find strong

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empirical criminology let alone reliable crime and criminal justice statistics being produced by nondemocratic, closed societies. Criminology, perhaps even more than branches of science that are less directly tied to public policy, requires what Campbell (290) calls a "disputatious community of truth seekers." Although contemporary democracies may not perfectly reach this ideal, they are nevertheless far more open to the science of criminology than the nations at the bottom of the democracy rankings. Thus, apart from our own political beliefs, criminologists as professionals have a strong vested interest in supporting open, democratic societies.

How can we as criminologists nurture democratic, nonauthoritarian societies? How well can we address the research and educational demands of democratic societies during the twenty-first century? What areas of research have we neglected in the past? More generally, how can we expand criminology's domain to make it more effective for supporting strong democratic institutions as we move into the next century?

In my lecture this evening, I want to offer five areas for strengthening criminology by expanding its domain. These areas are summarized in figure 2. In fact, I had a difficult time limiting my list to five. My goal tonight is not so much to convince you that I have identified the right five areas but to encourage a more general dialogue in our field about how best to strengthen criminology in the years ahead.
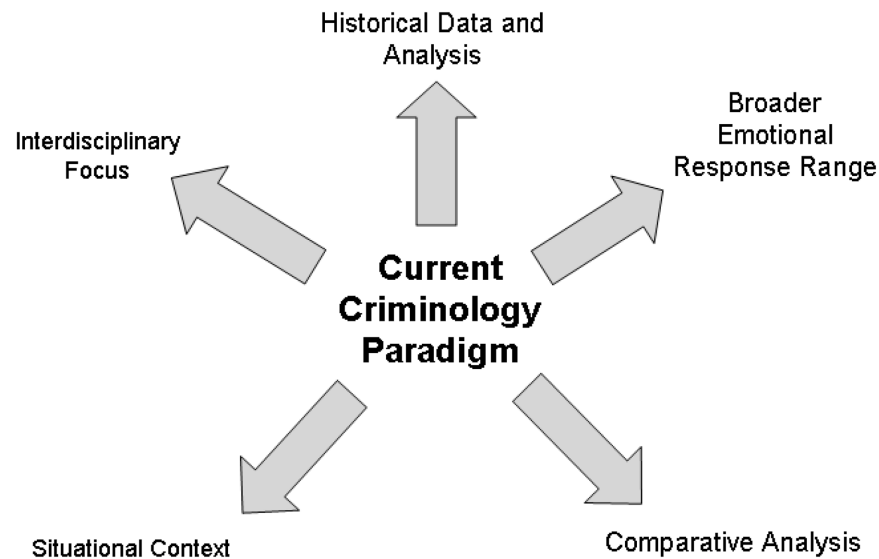
HISTORICAL DATA AND ANALYSIS

I received an undergraduate degree in history from Indiana University, and I suppose I have never fully escaped this experience. The importance of history for understanding contemporary events was articulated famously by a character in a play by William Faulkner (1951: Act 1, Scene 3) who notes that: "The past is never dead. It's not even past." Yet history has often been dead for criminologists. An overwhelming preponderance of criminology research to date has been based on cross-sectional "snapshots," comparing individuals or geographical units (e.g., cities, counties, and states) at one point in time. As a result of this cross-sectional emphasis, much thinking about crime is trapped in what historian Eric Hobbsbawm (1994: 3) has called "the permanent present." There are at least three reasons why historical data and analysis are so important for criminology. First, historical data provide theoretical insights that are simply unavailable in cross-sectional designs. Figure 3 provides a familiar example from U.S crime trends.

Figure 3 shows U.S. homicide and robbery trends from the end of World War II until the present. Homicide trends are multiplied by 25 to make visualization easier. In examining this figure, perhaps the most obvious insight is that postwar U.S. violent crime trends sometimes changed very

Figure 2. Expanding the Domain of Criminology

Historical Data and
Analysis

Interdisciplinary
Focus

Broader
Emotional
Response Range

**Current
Criminology
Paradigm**

Situational Context

Comparative Analysis

rapidly. In the space of just over 10 years in the 1960s and early 1970s, murder rates more than doubled and robbery rates more than tripled. Likewise, in the space of only 6 years in the 1990s, murder and robbery rates fell by about a third. The simple rapidity of these changes calls into question explanations of crime based on fixed biological characteristics, deep-seated psychological characteristics, or slow-moving social characteristics. These kinds of slow-moving explanations may still play an important role in explaining crime, but it is hard to see how they can explain these changes in crime rates over time.

Second, longitudinal data also provide direct information about the dominant assumptions of our field. At a macro level, consider how these crime trends have affected some of the most influential policy conclusions in criminology. For example, in his highly influential report called "What Works," Robert Martinson (1974: 25) examined over 200 rehabilitation programs in prisons and concluded that "with few and isolated exceptions the rehabilitative efforts that have been reported so far have had no appreciable effect on recidivism." This report, originally published in 1974, had an electrifying impact on the field. Commenting shortly after the article's publication, Stuart Adams (1976: 76) claimed that the Martinson report has "shaken the community of criminal justice to its root." Twenty years later, Alfred Blumstein (1997: 352) observed that Martinson's essay "created a general despair about the potential of significantly affecting recidivism rates." But observe from figure 3 where 1974 fell in terms of

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Figure 3.   Murder and Robbery Rates, United States, 1960 to 2004
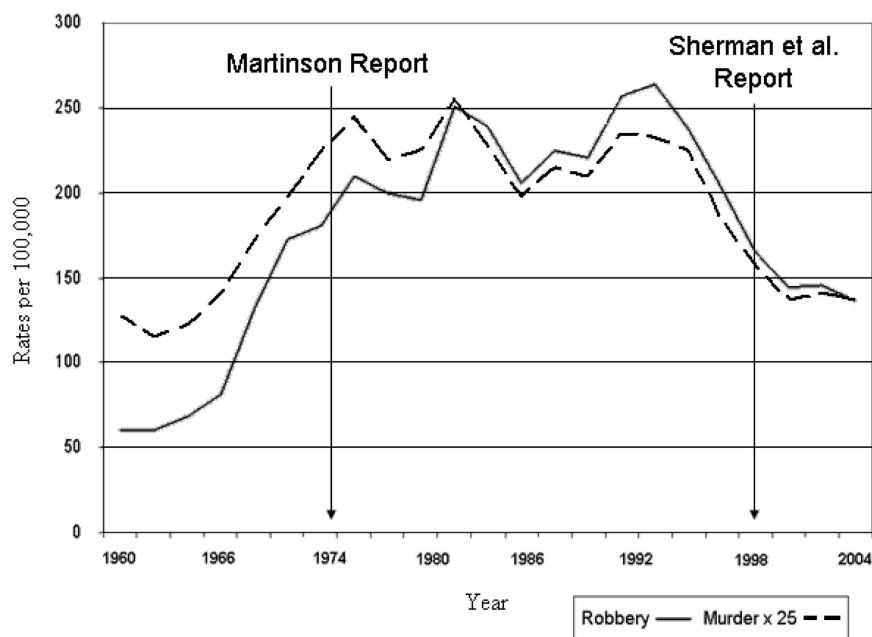
national crime rates—near the peak of a crime explosion that had begun 15 years earlier. Small wonder that no programs seemed to be working!

Now turn the clock forward 24 years to 1998—the year in which Larry Sherman and a group of my colleagues at the University of Maryland published a National Institute of Justice (NIJ) Research Brief called "Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't and What's Promising." This report has also been widely distributed and extremely influential. The researchers did systematic reviews of more than 500 scientific evaluations of crime prevention practices and the first line in their NIJ report (Sherman et al., 1998: 1) is that "many crime prevention programs work." But again, observe from figure 3 where 1998 falls in terms of crime trends—near the bottom of the largest sustained drop in serious crime rates in post-World War II history. Is it any wonder that as criminologists we were a bit more optimistic about crime prevention programs in 1998 than we were in 1974?

And finally, historical data underscore the obvious but often neglected fact that crime events like the crime boom of the 1960s and the crime bust of the 1990s are situated in distinct historical periods. This fact reminds us of the importance of considering not only what causes crime to increase or decrease in general but also, more specifically, what particular historical

events were directly associated with these changes. For example, the main thesis of my book *Losing Legitimacy* (LaFree, 1998) is that historical and social changes in America in the 1960s created an institutional "perfect storm" for what was to become the postwar crime wave. Perhaps the greatest threat to the legitimacy of American institutions during the 1960s was the growing urgency of protests against racial segregation and discrimination. Student sit-ins, protests, freedom rides, and mass action campaigns pressured federal courts to desegregate public facilities and interstate transportation in the early 1960s and eventually forced Congress to pass the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965 and the courts to more vigorously enforce the Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection clause. But as the 1960s wore on, peaceful protests and demonstrations gave way to riots and urban violence. And as the militancy of the civil rights movement grew and spread, the war in South Vietnam escalated. Opposition to the war became increasingly bitter, vocal, and widespread.

One of the findings that continually amazed me while doing research for the *Losing Legitimacy* book was the extent to which not only crime but also many different forms of civil disobedience and protest trended together during the 1960s—indicating that the United States was in a unique historical period. To illustrate the reach of the 1960s on different forms of social change, figure 4 returns to the graph showing trends in robbery for the post-World War II period. But this time I superimpose on the graph a very different measure of social change—the total number of civil cases filed in U.S. District Courts. Note that between 1960 and 1980, total civil cases initiated in U.S. courts more than quintupled.

But the 1960s were equally critical for a wide variety of other social behavior. In figure 5, I compare robbery and divorce rates. Although divorce rates reached a peak a few years after robbery rates, both rates climbed precipitously in the 1960s and early 1970s.

To provide some appreciation for just how widespread the revolution in norms was during the 1960s, I offer one final example—this one drawn from research by sociologists Stan Lieberson and Kelly Mikelson (1995) on the extent to which African-American parents give their children unique names instead of names from the standard repertoire—Lamecca or Husan instead of Susan or John. In figure 6, I compare robbery rates to standardized percentages of unique names for African-American girls born in Illinois from 1946 to 1989. Again, note the incredible change that took place during the 1960s and early 1970s.

Given the demonstrable importance of historical approaches, why have we been so slow to adopt them? Undoubtedly, a simple lack of usable time-series data has been a major impediment to the historical analysis of crime and deviance. Even in those relatively rare circumstances in which a given variable has been collected reliably over time, it is seldom possible

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Figure 4.   Robbery and Civil Cases, 1946 to 1994

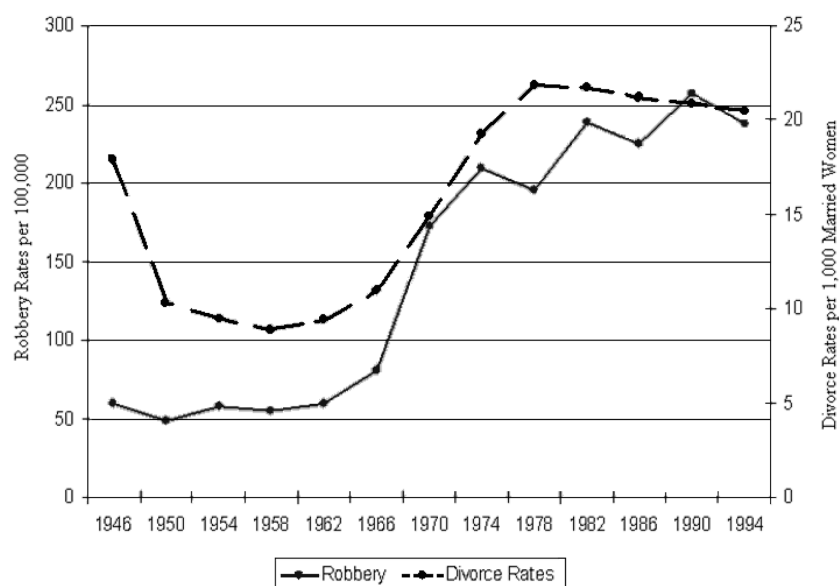Created using data found in LaFree, 1998, 107.

to gather more than 50 years worth of annual data. This limitation means that time-series analysis must confront small sample sizes, limited variables, and data based on convenience rather than on theory (Lieberson, 1991; Ragin, 1987). Although quantitative tools for investigating historical data have grown more sophisticated over time, methodological and analytical challenges remain formidable (LaFree, 1999: 157–9).

But beyond these technical difficulties, our field still seems to be characterized by a widespread ahistoricism. In his 2005 Sutherland Address to the ASC, my colleague John Laub (2006: 250) noted that "there is a presentism in the field of criminology that is contrary to the spirit of a healthy, intellectually vibrant enterprise." Hopefully, some of the next generation of criminologists in the audience tonight will improve on this situation in the future.

BROADER EMOTIONAL RESPONSE RANGE

In a recent review essay, sociologist Douglas Massey (2002: 20) concludes that human decisions, behavior, and social structures cannot be modeled solely as a function of rationality. Massey argues that rationality, far from being a dominant and deep-rooted force in human affairs, has arrived quite recently in human history and remains fragile. Nowhere is this fact more apparent than in our own field of criminology. In his 2002

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**Figure 5.   Robbery and Divorce Rates, 1946 to 1994**

Created using data found in LaFree, 1998, 114.

Presidential Address to the ASC, Larry Sherman (2003: 9) argues for a new paradigm in criminology that he calls "emotionally intelligent justice." By this Sherman means that governments should try to make its officials control their emotions and adopt a more rational stance while realizing that the actions of offenders and victims will often be highly emotional.

Sherman developed these arguments in response to common crime, but I believe they are even more applicable today to a particular form of illegal violence: terrorism. Terrorism is specifically designed to evoke strong emotional reactions. Accordingly, in combating terrorism perhaps more than in any other policy arena, our research evaluations must encourage governments to be rational while assuming that those using terrorism may behave irrationally.

Let me provide an example of how we can introduce a wider emotional range into our thinking about terrorism. Since the origins of modern terrorism in the late 1960s, deterrence-based thinking has dominated counter-terrorist policies in most countries. The belief that credible threats of apprehension and punishment deter violence is as old as criminal law itself and has broad appeal to both policy makers and the public. Deterrence models generally assume that human beings are rational, self-interested actors who seek to minimize personal cost while maximizing personal gain. Such models would seem to be especially appropriate for

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Figure 6.   Robbery and Unique Child Names, 1946 to 1986
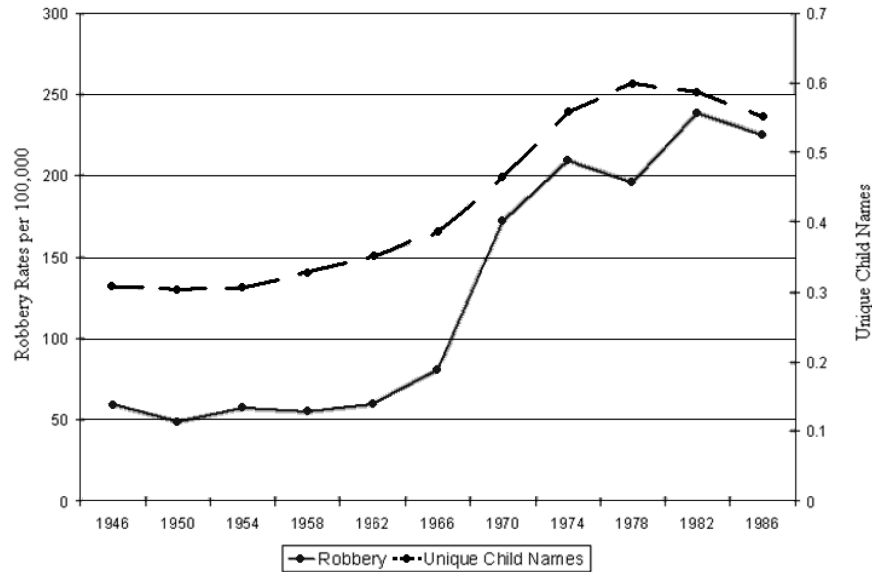
Created using data provided by Lieberson and Mikelson, 1995.

understanding terrorist violence, given that many terrorist attacks are
carefully planned and seem to include at least some consideration for risks
and rewards. And there is substantial research support for the argument
that deterrence-based policies can reduce the extent of terrorist violence
in some cases (Dugan, LaFree, and Piquero, 2005).

But research on terrorism as well as more general research from the
social and behavioral sciences also suggest the need to consider the possi-
bility that the imposition of punishment does not always deter future acts
of violence and may, in some cases, increase violence. Sherman (1993) has
called this alternative approach "defiance." Compared with research on
deterrence, research on defiance is less common and more scattered.
Researchers (Crenshaw, 2002; McCauley, 2006; Weisburd and Lernau,
2006) have commonly noted that those who employ terrorist methods fre-
quently rely on the response of governments to mobilize the sympathies of
would-be supporters. To the extent that government-based counter-terror-
ist strategies outrage participants or energize a base of potential support-
ers, such strategies may increase the likelihood of further terrorist strikes.
McCauley (2006) refers to this phenomenon as "jujitsu politics" and points
out that, because of this principle, responses to terrorism can be more dan-
gerous than terrorism itself. In fact, Osama bin Laden claimed that his
decision to support the September 11 attacks was based in large part on

his belief that American retaliation would inevitably kill innocent civilians and thereby demonstrate the extent of American hatred toward Muslims (Benjamin and Simon, 2005: 21).

There is also an extensive psychological literature (Brehm and Brehm, 1981) supporting the conclusion that, under the right circumstances, punishment elicits increases in proscribed behavior. This literature, known as "reactance theory," suggests that, when individuals or groups are threatened with some new form of social control, they are immediately motivated to act to eliminate this control and restore their original freedom. This principle can be humorously demonstrated with toddlers. If we observe a young child at play and identify two toys that the child likes equally well, then place these two toys the same distance away from the child but separate the child from one of the toys with a plexiglass barrier, the child will behave like a little robot, doing everything possible to go around, over or through the barrier, ignoring the toy that moments before had been equally desirable.

Criminology research also provides considerable support for defiance models. Thus, early labeling theorists (Becker, 1963; Tannenbaum, 1938) pointed out that punishment leads to identity changes in individuals as well as to social changes in society that result in criminal offenders increasing their deviant behavior after their official labeling, a concept Lemert (1951: 77) famously referred to as "secondary deviance." Building on similar themes, John Braithwaite (1989) argues that punishment sometimes results in the cessation of deviance and sometimes in increased deviance depending on the type of shaming society imposes on individuals. Support for the conclusion that punishment is more likely to be observed as legitimate by the punished when the punishment is perceived to be procedurally fair is also supplied in several survey-based studies by psychologist Tom Tyler (2006). For example, Tyler (1990) finds that the degree of legitimacy a sanctioned offender grants to a sanctioning agent is driven in part by perceptions of the sanctioning agent's respectfulness and procedural fairness.

I provide a conceptual model for putting emotional reactions on an equal footing with rational reactions in figure 7, which contrasts deterrence and defiance reactions. Figure 7 shows that, as the deterrence curve declines, the likelihood of future prohibited behavior declines; as the defiance curve increases, the likelihood of future prohibited behavior increases. In general, the likelihood of prohibited behavior depends on the joint confluence of deterrence and defiance curves. The optimal level of prohibited behavior will be obtained by the highest possible level of deterrence coupled with the lowest possible level of defiance.

Somewhat surprisingly, very few studies have actually collected data and

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Figure 7.   Deterrence and Defiance Curves for Prohibited Behavior
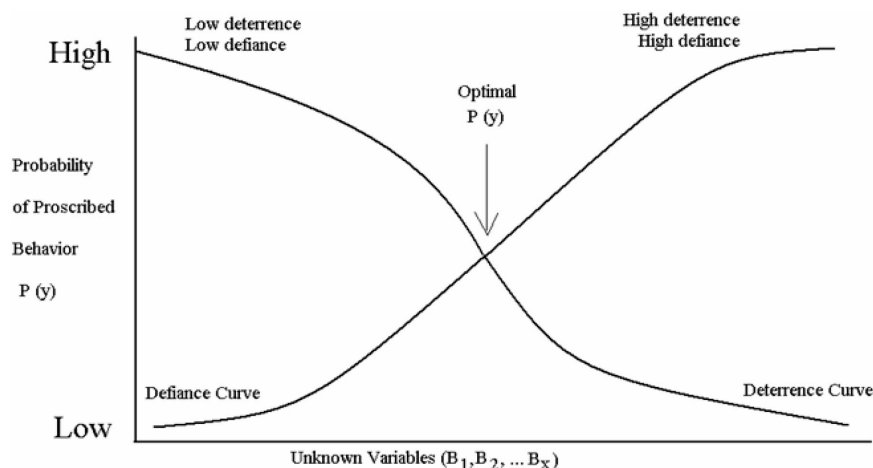
applied formal statistical tests to determine whether specific counter-terrorist measures taken by governments have actually reduced or increased subsequent terrorist violence. Among the studies that have been done (Lum, Kennedy, and Sherley, 2006), the support for deterrence and defiance models is mixed, with some studies showing support and others showing either no deterrence effect or a defiance effect.

In a recent study, my colleagues Laura Dugan, Raven Korte, and I (LaFree, Korte, and Dugan, 2006) specifically compared deterrence and defiance models after the implementation of several major British counter-terrorist interventions in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s. The escalation of terrorist violence in Northern Ireland can be traced back at least to 1920, when Britain divided Ireland into two administrative units in an attempt to ensure a loyalist (predominantly Protestant) majority that supported the union between Britain and Ireland. In the late 1960s, Irish republicans (predominantly Catholic) began a movement to protest perceived political and economic discrimination against Northern Ireland. The Irish Republican Army (IRA), a paramilitary group supporting the republican agenda, was committed to the goal of a united Ireland independent of Britain.[2]

My colleagues and I identified five highly visible British interventions aimed at stopping the violence in Northern Ireland: Two were primarily

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2.   Although the IRA is the most active and well known of the Irish republican groups that have employed terrorist methods, there are several less visible groups, notably the Irish National Liberation Army and the Irish People's Liberation Organization.

criminal justice based, and three were primarily military. The two criminal justice interventions were "internment" and "criminalization and Ulsterization." During internment, a total of 1,981 suspected terrorists were detained by the authorities, often without probable cause. After the implementation of criminalization, jailed terrorist suspects were treated as criminals rather than as political prisoners. Ulsterization, enacted at the same time, shifted the primary responsibility for providing security in Northern Ireland from the British military to the local police force—an effort to undercut the IRA's argument that their actions were political rather than criminal.
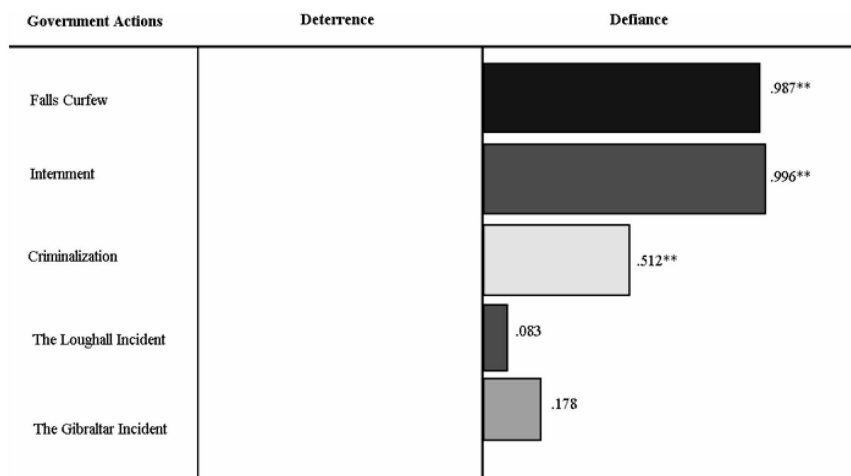
The three primarily military interventions were the Falls Curfew and the "Loughall" and "Gibralter" incidents. The Falls Curfew was designed to locate IRA members and weapons stockpiles and resulted in several deaths and the destruction of a large number of private homes. The Loughall and Gibralter incidents were both planned ambushes carried out by the British Special Air Service in which several IRA paramilitary group members were targeted and killed.

We identified 2,603 terrorist incidents claimed by republican groups from 1969 to 1992. We began our analysis in 1969—at the beginning of the British military presence in Northern Ireland and 18 months before the Falls Curfew was enacted—and ended in 1992—just before a major pause (1994–1996) in the republican insurrection and 45 months after the last of the five interventions. We assume that the British interventions may produce either a positive *deterrence curve* (i.e., declining future incidence of prohibited behavior) or a negative *defiance curve* (i.e., increasing future incidence of prohibited behavior). We then analyze terrorist attacks that occurred over a 23-year period in Northern Ireland to test the relative strength of deterrence and defiance explanations for the risk of new terrorist strikes.

Our results are summarized in figure 8. The bars on the right side of figure 8 show deterrence effects, and the bars on the left show defiance effects. As we can readily see from figure 8, we found no support for deterrence arguments. In fact, we found *increases* in the risk of terrorist strikes after all five cases, and in three cases (Falls Curfew, Internment, and Criminalization/Ulsterization), the increases were statistically significant.

In some ways, these results are unsurprising. For example, during the Falls Curfew, the British military successfully disarmed or killed several potentially dangerous activists. But it is very reasonable to guess that the unprovoked ransacking of private homes and the killing of civilians generated considerable animosity. This animosity no doubt increased support for terrorism among the local population. In fact, one IRA member at the

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Figure 8.   Violent Attacks in Northern Ireland, 1969 to 1992

Government Actions	Deterrence	Defiance
Falls Curfew		.987**
Internment		.996**
Criminalization		.512**
The Loughall Incident		.083
The Gibraltar Incident		.178

time noted only half jokingly that "the British security forces are the best recruitin' officer we have" (Geraghty, 2000: 36).

Of course these results are based on a case study. We have no way of knowing whether government counter-terrorist strategies have had similar effects in other regions of the world, on different groups or individuals, or indeed, even on this region of the world during different time periods. Still, this case study clearly shows the importance of not simply assuming that all those willing to use criminal violence will be deterred by the threat or use of harsh punishment.

CROSS-NATIONAL COMPARATIVE RESEARCH

Stating that you are in favor of more comparative cross-national research in criminology is a bit like saying that you are opposed to pre-meditated murder—hardly anyone will disagree with you. In looking over past presidential ASC speeches, I am struck by how many argue for more comparative research, including recent presentations by Freda Adler (1996), Margaret Zahn (1999), and David Farrington (2000). And yet whether criminologists are actually doing more comparative research over time remains an open question. For example, Rosemary Barberet (2004) used a content analysis to show that comparative research involving two or more countries occurred in only 5.8 percent of all ASC presentations given between 1991 and 1999.

Just to reinforce the arguments of my colleagues who have already made the case for more comparative research, I want to emphasize four

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benefits resulting from cross-national comparative approaches to criminology. First, probably the most common justification for comparative cross-national research is the concern that theories developed in "one rather small corner of the world" (Marsh, 1967: 6) may not generalize to other parts of the world. This concern was addressed by Radcliffe-Brown (1952) when he noted that "It is only by the use of the comparative method that we can arrive at general explanations." Too much criminology research since World War II has been developed and tested in a handful of western, industrialized nations, most notably the United States. Theories developed in highly industrialized nations may—or may not—apply to the same extent or in the same way elsewhere. Moreover, by examining crime patterns elsewhere, we may learn more about the conditions under which theoretical arguments hold.

A classic example of variation in cross-national patterns in criminology relates to social disorganization theories. Going all the way back to Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay's (1932) research in the 1930s, crime studies in the United States have generally found that crime and delinquency are most prevalent in the central areas of cities and decline increasingly in the more distant suburbs. However, when Lois DeFleur (1970) tested these theories in Latin America, she found that in cities like Buenos Aires and Caracas, the poorest, most crime-ridden areas were not located in the center of cities but in the suburban outskirts. In fact, this pattern of more crime and violence in the suburbs than in the central cities may not be limited to industrializing nations as the recent violence in the suburbs of Paris shows.

Second, comparative research forces researchers to treat their own nations or cultures as the unit of analysis. Researchers who limit their work to a single nation can do little to study such issues as the impact of economics or politics on legal systems because they have only one case. In the classic social science studies of the past, great thinkers like Marx and Durkheim typically expanded their arguments far beyond the country in which they happened to be working. But after the birth of American criminology at the University of Chicago in the 1920s, much of this comparative focus was gradually lost. Instead, researchers like Shaw and McKay emphasized the immediately observable and developed powerful new research methods for demonstrating within-culture variation. Instead of the private musings of intellectual giants like Marx or Durkheim, research depended increasingly on small armies of poorly paid students who collected and later analyzed vast amounts of data. Throughout the twentieth century, most mainstream American criminology focused on collecting directly observable data from social groupings within the United States. But as several generations of critics have noted (Chambliss, 1969; Mills, 1959), this emphasis on one society is inherently conservative because it

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does not allow any empirical avenues for assessing macro-level characteristics of the society being examined.

Third, comparative criminology is becoming increasingly indispensable quite simply because the world is shrinking. This reality has at least two implications for criminology, one elementary and the other more complex. The more elementary observation is that, increasingly, new ideas or policy innovations uncovered in one society may have applicability in others. For example, policy makers in the United States may learn much from crime prevention programs in Europe and Asia.

The more complex implication of a shrinking world is in the growth of transnational crime. Increasingly, we are seeing areas in which norms are emerging, evolving, and expanding not at the societal level, but at the global level. Perhaps the most obvious examples of these developments to date are observed in the areas of terrorism, aerial hijacking, trafficking in drugs or controlled substances, and money laundering and counterfeiting. In all of these areas and to varying degrees, we are beginning to see the development of what Ethan Nadelmann (1990: 479) calls "global prohibition regimes." These regimes exist not only in the conventions and treaties of international law and the criminal law of individual nations but also in the rules and norms that govern the behavior of state and nonstate actors as well as in the moral principles embraced by many individuals living in these regimes. For criminological research related to transnational crime issues, cross-national research is a necessity rather than an option.

A final justification for comparative criminology is that it is ultimately necessary to understand global trends to make sense out of national or local outcomes. Call this thinking globally to act locally. This fact has struck me repeatedly in my research examining trends in U.S. crime rates over time. One of the best predictors of post-World War II violent crime rates in the United States is economic inequality. But in an increasingly global economy, national economic measures like income inequality are strongly affected by world economic trends. The growing importance of the transnational flow of goods and capital has been a universal feature of postwar economic development for all countries. The way that this globalization feeds back to crime in individual countries is well illustrated in an essay by journalist Eric Schlosser (1995), who describes the migrant farm camps that have sprung up in southern California in response to the increasingly lucrative strawberry market. Schlosser points out that the low wages, lack of benefits, and poor working conditions of these laborers are increasingly being set not by rational planning within nations but by global laws of supply and demand. Says Schlosser (1995: 108): "The market will drive wages down like water, until they reach the lowest possible level.

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Today that level is being set not in Washington or New York or Sacramento but in the fields of Baja California and the mountain villages of Oaxaca."

SITUATIONAL CONTEXT

In 1947 Edwin Sutherland proposed that explanations of deviance and crime are either situational or dispositional, and that of the two, situational explanations might be the more important. Nevertheless, with a few notable exceptions, for the next half-century, criminologists focused on dispositional theories to the near total exclusion of situational variables. As Julie Horney argued in her ASC 2005 presidential address (2006: 6), there is a pervasive tendency in criminology "to look for an underlying trait that explains crime, to compare individuals on that trait, to look for its origin, and to assume it has a causal connection to diverse instances of criminal behavior." Thus, if we hypothesize that a lack of self-control causes crime, we assume that individuals possess underlying amounts of self-control and that this trait explains their criminal behavior. The problem is not that this view of traits is irrelevant but that it is simplistic, because it excludes any concern for the situations in which individuals find themselves.

Although as far as I know Mat Perez (the 2006 recipient of the President's Justice Award) and Chris Birkbeck (who introduced this lecture) have never met before this evening, they are linked in my mind by situational thinking. At about the same time that Chris and I were working together on a couple of articles about the importance of crime situations, I was also spending quite a bit of time with Mat Perez in connection with the *Perez v. FBI* case. Hanging out in Washington, DC with a group of heavily armed FBI agents greatly changes your assumptions about situational crime risk in large cities!

Several plaintiffs in the FBI case were Latino agents that had been assigned to do drug-related cases originating in South America. Three of these agents related to me a story about a drug sting operation that had been planned for months. The plan was to show up at a prearranged location with a suitcase packed with government money, to negotiate with a group of Colombian drug dealers for the purchase of a large quantity of cocaine, and at precisely the right moment, to call in all of the FBI and DEA back up that would be hiding in nearby locations.

The night of the drug sting operation everything went smoothly, the drug transaction began, the back up agents made their play, and the drug dealers were arrested and taken into custody. And my three FBI colleagues found themselves with approximately $5 million in cash and $5 million in drugs, on a Saturday night, with no one else around and their

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offices closed until the following Monday. And did I mention that all three
were fluent in Spanish and had spent several years living in Latin
America? How much situational temptation is this? At the time it struck
me that most of us will go through our entire lives without a similar oppor-
tunity to take the next flight to Buenos Aires with a few million dollars in
our pockets. Likewise, apart from our levels of self-control or anomie,
each of us will face different opportunities to engage in embezzlement, the
distribution of crack cocaine, or price fixing. This kind of thinking makes it
seem obvious that any comprehensive explanation of crime must incorpo-
rate situations.

Although situations have generally been neglected by criminologists,
there has long been a small but persistent interest in situations in the
behavioral sciences in general and in criminology in particular and there is
evidence that in recent years this interest has been growing. Most research
that explicitly examines situational dynamics in producing crime has
originated in experimental psychology, symbolic interactionism, or oppor-
tunity theories. Much of the experimental psychology literature has
focused on aggression (Argyle, Furnham, and Graham, 1981). Symbolic
interactionists (Cooley, 1922; Mead, 1934) have contributed to situational
crime perspectives by insisting that all actors select, weigh, check, suspend,
and transform the meanings of the situations they encounter. The interac-
tionists remind us that interpretation is not an automatic application of
previously established meanings but a formative process in which new
meanings are continuously developed and revised to guide behavior. Thus,
rather than treat humans as neutral mediums through which antecedent
variables express themselves, symbolic interactionists assume that the key
to understanding social behavior is found in the processes by which indi-
viduals actively interpret situations.

For criminologists, the most direct connection between crime and situa-
tions is found in the various opportunity theories of crime. In general, the
opportunity perspective in criminology is concerned with the incidence
and location of crime events in social systems, and its theories are based
on the premise that some situations are more favorable for crime than
others. The origins of these theories are diverse, ranging from the study of
victimization surveys (Hindelang, Gottfredson, and Garofalo, 1978), to the
application of human ecology (Cohen and Felson, 1979), rational choice
(Cornish and Clarke, 1986), and economic perspectives (Cook, 1986).
More recently, an interest in crime situations has been advanced in work
examining crime "hot spots" (Sherman, 1995; Weisburd, 2002). Although
these perspectives and approaches are diverse, they share a common
assumption that understanding crime situations is indispensable to under-
standing crime causation.

Although the growing interest in situations is positive, several major

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challenges remain. First and most basically, it is only by actually examining situational variables that criminologists can begin to explain the ecological distribution of crimes in social systems. For example, opportunity theory, which attempts precisely this task, has so far relied mainly on simple assumptions about the situations in which crimes occur. Thus, research on crime victimization (Hindelang, Gottfredson, and Garofalo, 1978: 251) often assumes that most personal contact crimes occur in public places, at night, and at the hands of strangers. But in a survey that Chris Birkbeck and I completed several years ago in Maracaibo, Venezuela, we found (LaFree and Birkbeck, 1991) that the proportion of crimes that occurred at night varied from a high of 57 percent for Venezuelan assaults to a low of 12 percent for Venezuelan snatchings. In fact, snatchings, which were quite common in Venezuela, are relatively rare in the United States outside of cities with large Latino communities (especially Miami). Similarly, 100 percent of U.S. pickpocketings occurred in public places compared with 69 percent of Venezuelan assaults. Clearly, the validity of assumptions about the situations under which crime will occur varies greatly by crime type and sample.

Second, the situation has no obvious relation to criminal behavior unless examined in terms of potential offenders' perceptions and motivations. This contradicts the common assumption that situations are simple determinants of behavior, and more generally, it questions the validity of excluding offender motivation in opportunity theory. On this point, I strongly agree with Julie Horney, who in her 2005 ASC presidential address (2006: 9) argued that most empirical research has included "no link to individual histories or individual patterns of behavior." I would argue that theoretical predictions in this area ultimately require more adequate models of the interaction between potential offenders and situations.

Third, the strength of the relation between crimes and situations depends on the mediating variables considered. Criminologists already know a great deal about the situations under which particular crimes occur—for example, the tendency for robberies to happen in public places at night at the hands of strangers. However, we know much less about the extent to which these descriptions are true both across crime types and for different samples. I can illustrate the importance of this consideration by referring again to work I did with Chris Birkbeck (LaFree and Birkbeck, 1991) several years ago. We administered surveys to adult members of a sample of 3,000 households in Maracaibo, Venezuela, identified crime victims through a screening questionnaire, and then asked them detailed information about their personal attributes and the characteristics of their victimization. This procedure allowed us to examine the extent to which different types of crimes were clustered across situational variables.

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Figure 9 shows that, based on five situational variables, 83 percent of the snatchings in Venezuela happened in exactly the same way: they involved one victim, located outside, in a public space, the victim was female, and the assailant was a stranger. By contrast, the most important five situational variables could only explain 26 percent of Venezuelan assaults—which happened inside, against a male, with a single victim, who was an acquaintance, and in a private location. As we do situational comparisons based on fewer variables, a higher proportion of cases of both assaults and snatchings can be classified within specific situational categories. Thus, the two most highly clustered situational variables for snatchings account for 97 percent of all snatchings—which were against a single victim in an outside location. By contrast, with only two variables the greatest situational clustering we could obtain with two variables for assaults was 67 percent—which happened inside against male victims. This exercise demonstrates that it is much easier to characterize the situational characteristics of snatchings than assaults—a point that is usually missed in both research on opportunity theory and on situational crime prevention.

Figure 9.   Situational Concentration of Assaults and Snatchings in Maracaibo, Venezuela

Source: Gary LaFree and Christopher Birkbeck (1991).   □ Assaults ■ Snatchings
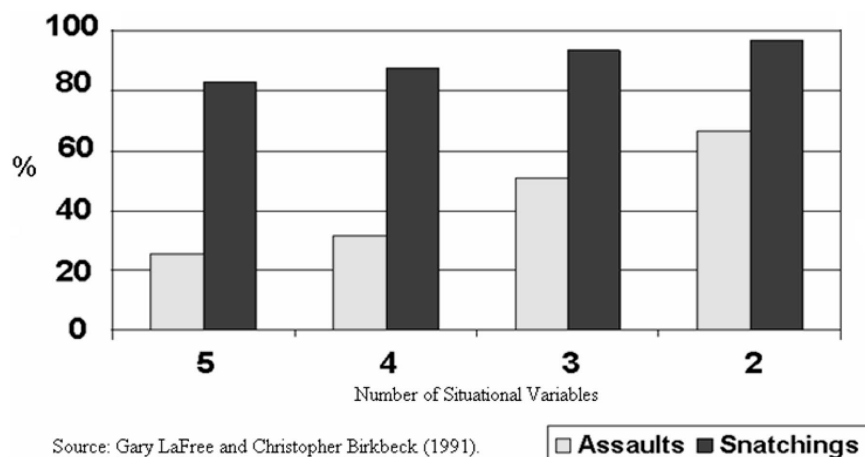
And finally, the search for empirical regularities between crimes and situations is especially challenging because the concept of situation is hard to operationalize and measure. Adequate operationalization requires more research on the subjective (Brantingham and Brantingham, 1984; Carroll and Weaver, 1986) and symbolic (Stebbins, 1981) aspects of situational perception. Measurement is complicated by the inherent complexity

of situations and by the fact that enormous samples are required to generate sufficient crime data. Despite these difficulties, the application of situational analysis to crime is critical for advancing criminology.

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOCUS

One of the unique aspects of criminology in the United States is the especially close links it has had to the discipline of sociology. This of course distinguishes criminology in the United States from criminology in most of the rest of the world—where people identified as criminologists are much more likely to come from a law background. Criminology received a major boost from the delinquency studies carried out by Shaw and Henry McKay in Chicago and other American cities from 1929 through the 1930s. Shaw and McKay had strong ties to the University of Chicago Sociology Department, especially through Ernest Burgess and several of his students. However, the link between criminology and sociology in the United States was solidified most effectively by sociologist Edwin Sutherland, when he published the first version of his influential differential association theory in his 1934 *Criminology* textbook. For the next half-century, American criminology was completely dominated by sociology.

Although criminology has benefited greatly from the theoretical and methodological developments that have taken place in sociology over the past century, it is critical that criminology become more interdisciplinary in the future. A few years ago Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi (1990: 73) warned against the tendency to confuse the interests of one's discipline with the interests of scientific explanation. In his Sutherland Address to the ASC last year, my colleague John Laub (2006) argued that Sutherland's exclusive emphasis on a sociological explanation of crime may well have been in direct response to a scathing critique of criminology by Jerome Michael and Mortimer Adler, published in 1933. Among other conclusions, the Michael–Adler report concluded that "the body of knowledge called criminology does not contain a single scientific proposition" (Sutherland, 1932-33/1973: 231) and "has not achieved a single definite conclusion" (Sutherland, 1932-33/1973: 231). Sutherland clearly got the best of this debate: He went on to become the most influential criminologist of the twentieth century, and most students have never heard of the Michael–Adler report. But ironically, by embracing only one perspective, Sutherland may have greatly reduced criminology's utility as a science and its ability to build an intellectual core.

During the past 2 years, I have had some real-world experience with designing an interdisciplinary research enterprise. In January 2005, I

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became the director of The National Consortium for the Study of Terror-
ism and Responses to Terrorism (START), a research center funded by
the Department of Homeland Security. START is a consortium of about
60 researchers drawn from diverse social and behavioral science disci-
plines, including criminology, sociology, psychology, geography, and politi-
cal science, but also mass communications, history, and engineering. In the
18 months since we received funding, START has published a series of
papers that involve collaborations within the social and behavioral
sciences.

Although I will not say that I have enjoyed all of the administrative
headaches at START, I have to say that being exposed to such a diverse
group of perspectives has been an incredible learning experience. For the
past few years, Laura Dugan at the University of Maryland and I have
been heading a team that is developing an open-source database on terror-
ist events that now includes more than 73,000 incidents from around the
world, going back to 1970 (LaFree and Dugan, 2007). To illustrate the
importance of interdisciplinary approaches, let me show you three exam-
ples of analyses being performed on these data, from three different aca-
demic specialty areas.

In figure 10, I show a preliminary trajectory analysis of total terrorist
strikes over time by country from our Global Terrorism Database. The
figure presented here was prepared by Nancy Morris from the University
of Maryland. Trajectory analysis was developed especially by Dan Nagin,
the ASC Sutherland Fellow this year. Dan's background is in public policy
and statistics. According to figure 10, countries of the world can be divided
into four categories, based on a trajectory analysis of total terrorist strikes
per year. Most nations of the world—about 90 percent—fit into two tra-
jectories with relatively few occurrences. We see a small increase in these
rates over time. Countries in trajectory group three have considerably
higher annual terrorist attacks than groups one and two, and they exhibit a
fairly high average of attacks throughout the series. There are seven coun-
tries in trajectory group three, including the United States and the United
Kingdom. Trajectory group four is especially interesting because it resem-
bles a wave—large increases in the 1970s and early 1980s followed by
declines in the late 1980s and 1990s. Trajectory group four includes only 16
countries—8 percent of the total—and yet is responsible for nearly 70 per-
cent of the terrorist incidents in the database. Countries in this category
include Colombia, Israel, South Africa, Sri Lanka, and Northern Ireland
(treated here as a country).

Now let us take a look at the same data set with an analysis produced by
a different branch of science. Figure 11 was prepared by Adam Perer, a
computer science student who is affiliated with the START Consortium

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Figure 10. Trajectory Analysis of Terrorist Incidents, 1970 to 1997
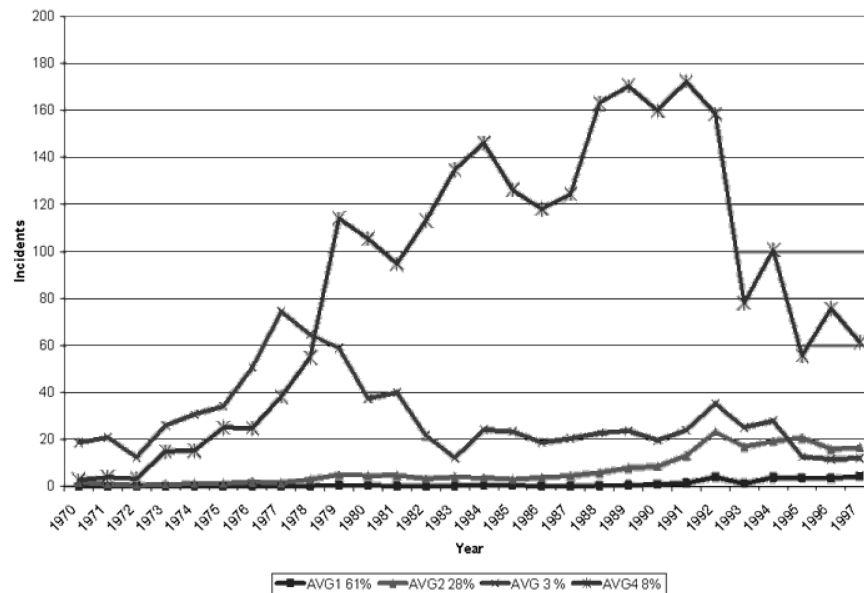
and specializes in the visualization of data. Figure 11 displays a set of especially dense network connections between countries and terrorist groups operating in those countries. For example, the figure shows that Colombia, Bangladesh, Peru, Pakistan, Corsica, France, Algeria, and India are all locations with highly centralized terrorist networks. One of the things we are learning from this type of analysis is that groups most likely to use terrorism are large, persistent, and highly networked.

Finally, in figure 12, again based on the same data set, I include an example of spatial analysis, developed especially by geographers. The work presented here was prepared by Pyusha Singh at SUNY-Albany. It shows a map of Spain with the number of terrorist strikes by Euzkadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) over time. According to figure 12, by the 1990s, a small group of individuals who initially started by organizing a few isolated strikes in the far north Basque region of Spain had developed the ability to strike widely across the entire country. My point here is not to provide substantive details about any of these ongoing research projects but simply to illustrate the richness of opportunity we gain when we sample broadly from other disciplines.

There is evidence that criminology is becoming more interdisciplinary and moving farther away from its exclusive ties to sociology. Ron Akers (1992) has summarized some key landmarks in this development. The first nonsociological degree program in criminology was established in 1966 at

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Figure 11.   Network Connections between Terrorist Groups and Countries with Terrorist Events
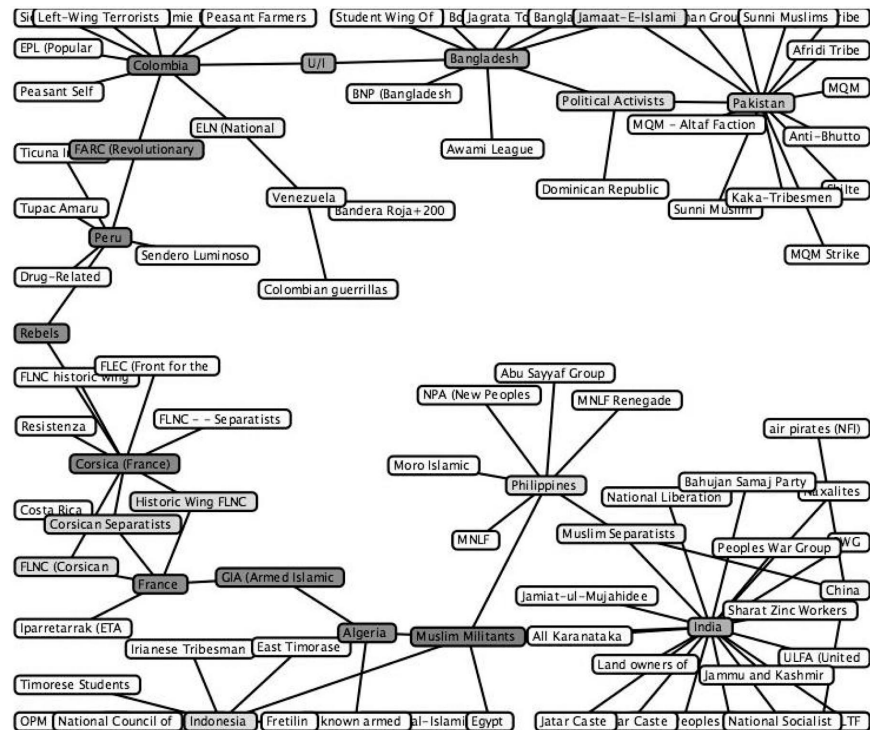
the University of California, Berkeley. By the mid-1970s, 729 Associate of Arts criminal justice programs had been established. By 1990 there were over 1,000 universities and colleges offering separate degrees in criminology, criminal justice, or law enforcement (Akers, 1992: 8). These programs now annually have over 140,000 students and grant 28,000 degrees (Latessa, 1991). By the early 1990s, the total number of criminology Bachelor of Arts degrees began to surpass that of sociology degrees.

But making criminology into a truly interdisciplinary field is likely to be a challenging process. Perhaps in part because of the long-term dominance of a single perspective, criminologists have not yet succeeded in developing a unified theoretical framework. In a recent review, Joachim Savelsberg and Rob Sampson (2002) make this argument forcefully by claiming that currently criminology has no intellectual core and, hence, cannot consider itself to be a true discipline. But despite these challenges, I cannot see how there is any viable alternative to a stronger interdisciplinary focus for criminology. Because criminology is so obviously an interdisciplinary

Figure 12.   Terrorism Incidents Committed By ETA, Spain 1997

field, we could become real leaders in the general movement toward more
interdisciplinary approaches. In fact, I found a criminology background to
be a real advantage in the competition that resulted in the START Center.
And we can clearly see the importance of interdisciplinary work in the
legacy of several recent interdisciplinary projects in criminology, including
the project on Human Development in Chicago neighborhoods, the stud-
ies conducted as part of the Program in the Causes and Correlates of
Delinquency, and the National Consortium on Violence Research.

CONCLUSIONS

In an influential article several years ago Francis Fukuyama (1989)
declared the "end of history." Fukuyama reasoned that, with the collapse
of the Soviet Union, there was no longer a serious political alternative to
liberal democracy and hence history—largely the story of warring societies
and nations—was over. But looking back on this prediction with the sub-
stantial advantage of another 15 years, we might be tempted to paraphrase
Mark Twain and conclude that reports of the demise of history have been
greatly exaggerated. In fact, it is by no means certain that the historic rise
of democratic institutions at the end of the twentieth century will continue
into the twenty-first century. Modern democracy, including popular sover-
eignty in the form of majority rule, respect for minorities, equality before

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the law, and the guarantee of basic civil and political rights, is not a fore-gone conclusion. Historian Alex Schmid (1992: 15) points out that even using the least restrictive measure—competitive elections—there have been only 23 countries in the world that have continuously qualified as democracies since 1948—about 12 percent of the world's nations.

Although the third wave of democratization produced a record number of democratic countries, there are ominous challenges to fundamental democratic rights showing up around the globe. Western democracies in general and the United States in particular are facing tremendous pressures on long-standing democratic institutions related especially to government efforts to combat terrorism and crime. There are also worrying signs of movement away from democracy coming in regularly from Latin America, Africa, and Eastern Europe.

In his 1996 Presidential Address to the ASC, my colleague Charles Wellford (1997) concluded that, at its most elemental, criminology is about "controlling crime and achieving justice." I would agree with this assessment and add that these two goals are directly tied to the rise and continued functioning of democratic governments. The character of a society's reaction to crime can undercut civil liberties and shake the foundations of democratic institutions. It is also clear that crime is directly linked to the strength of democratic institutions.

My prediction is that in the years ahead, democratic societies and those aspiring to be democratic are going to turn increasingly to criminologists to better understand issues of providing justice and controlling crime. Will we be prepared? I propose to you that we will be better prepared if we expand the domain of criminology in the five directions I have described tonight. By providing more emphasis on historical data and analysis, by broadening the scope of emotions we test for among offenders, by doing more cross-national comparative analysis, by bringing situational variables into our research, and by making criminology more interdisciplinary.

As a professional association, we need to continually strive to build a criminology that will provide answers to the important questions that we will be asked to address. The prospects for our field are excellent, but the challenges are also great.

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