

Critiquing the Crime Drop

Abstract This chapter introduces readers to a body of work developed by political scientists and known as ‘historical institutionalism’. The ideas developed by historical institutionalists, along with those developed by ‘constructivist institutionalists’ and comparative political historians, are used to critique some of the core assumptions made by those who have studied the crime drop thus far. I propose a new way of explaining the crime drop which draws on an understanding of political processes.

Keywords Historical institutionalism · Constructivist institutionalism
Crime drop

The crime drop literature, I would contend, is a paradigm within criminology. That is to say that it exhibits a set of largely agreed upon epistemological, conceptual and methodological commitments, which include an agreed set of objectives and *modus operandi*. The agreed objective is to explain the decline in crime identified in many westernised countries since the early 1990s. Whilst there is divergence over the understanding of the exact causal processes which led to the crime drop, nevertheless, a set of methodological positions have been developed in order to assess these theories. These methodological positions rely mainly on the ‘linear’ analysis of quantitative data overtime. My aim with this book is to develop a critique of this body of work, not because I think that the main finding (that levels of security are strongly associated

with crime is *per se* wrong), but rather because I think that the reasons why security has been adopted as a response to rising crime are driven rather less by sound empirical evidence, but by a rather more complex set of factors involving political choices, public opinion and ideologies. Because of my interest in charting ‘slow-moving’ political processes, I start my critique of the crime drop paradigm with a review of the key aspects of historical institutionalism and associated ideas, and insights drawn from comparative historical analyses, since these provide the bedrock of my own thinking.

HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALISM: AN INTRODUCTION

Historical Institutionalism is concerned with illuminating how institutions and institutional settings mediate the ways in which processes unfold over time (Thelen and Steinmo 1992: 2). Peter Hall defines an institution as: ‘... the formal rules, compliance procedures, and standard operating practices that structure the relationship between individuals in various units of the polity and economy’ (1986: 19). For others, the focus of historical institutionalism is on the state, government institutions and social norms (Ikenberry 1988: 222–223). Sanders, in keeping with the above, asserts that ‘If [historical institutionalism] teaches us anything, it is that the place to look for answers to big questions ... is in institutions, not personalities and over the longer landscapes of history, not the here and now’ (2006: 53). Historical institutionalism, then, is an attempt to develop understanding of how political and policy processes and relationships play out over time coupled with an appreciation that prior events, procedures and processes will have consequences for subsequent events. Thelen (1999: 375) argues that historical institutionalists’ approach is premised on the idea that institutions do more than just channel policy and structure political and policy conflict and formulation, rather they define the interests and create the objects of the policies themselves.¹ As such, who articulates which interests, how and under which circumstance(s) is a consequence not just of political desires and imperatives, but is itself a consequence of the sorts of institutions which

¹As an example of this, as we shall see in Chap. 4, the Home Office encouraged car manufacturers into fitting alarms to cars. This also promoted the concept of ‘security’ more generally (King 1989).

are created and the contexts which they give rise to. As one of the leading proponents of historical institutionalism argues, ‘many of the implications of political decisions... only play out in the long term’ (Pierson 2004: 41). Yet politicians are often only interested in the short term, creating the possibility of a series of unintended and unplanned consequences which unfold and are realised only with the passage of time. In outlining historical institutionalism, I focus on four key aspects of this body of work, namely path dependencies, positive feedback Loops, the role of critical junctures and the concept of punctuated equilibrium.

PATH DEPENDENCIES AND POSITIVE FEEDBACK LOOPS

For Sewell (1996: 232–233), the concept of path dependency implies that ‘what happened at an earlier point in time will affect the possible outcomes of a sequence of events occurring at a later point in time’. Levi provides a rather longer (and more thorough) definition which is worth quoting at length:

Path dependence has to mean ... that once a country has started down a track, the costs, of reversal are very high. There will be other choice points, but the entrenchments of certain institutional arrangements obstruct an easy reversal of the initial choice, perhaps the better metaphor is a tree, rather than a path. From the same trunk, there are many different branches and smaller branches. Although it is possible to turn around or to clamber from one to the other – and essential if the chosen branch dies – the branch on which a climber begins is the one she tends to follow (1997: 28).

This is the definition used by Pierson (2004: 20), who adds that path dependence refers to a dynamic process which involves positive feedbacks which generate a series of further outcomes depending on the sequence in which these events and processes occur. As such, once a path has been selected and embarked upon, decisions, events and processes tend to reinforce this path, making the change to an alternative path harder with each step. Over time the paths not taken become harder and harder to navigate back towards and the chosen path becomes more dominant. This approach has tended to make historical institutionalism rather conservative, in that it focuses on how paths are *maintained*, rather than changed.

As Bulmer cautions us, the idea of path dependency does not mean that *all* policy areas will be affected (or affected at the same time or in the same ways, Bulmer 2009: 310). It is also true that policy areas may be affected at different speeds to one another; pension reforms will take years to affect widespread change, but schooling policies may operate faster. Similarly, whilst a particular historical moment may create a critical juncture (see below) for one institution, it does not mean that *all* institutions will be similarly effected (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007: 349). Even though an entire political system may face periods of widespread change, some institutions will remain unaffected. Similarly, an unrecognised problem with the approach adopted by historical institutionalism is the consideration that a pathway may become cumulatively destabilising over time. That is to say that continuing along a path may initially produce beneficial outcomes, but these may reach a critical threshold at which the benefits start to become outweighed by the negatives or lead to dramatic change (an analogy might be blowing air into a deflated balloon; this inflates the balloon, but continuing to inflate it will lead it to burst at some point).

Summarising the work of Ikenberry (1994), Thelen (1999: 392–396) points to two mechanisms by which feedback occurs. The first suggests that once a set of institutions are in place, social actors and other institutions adapt their repertoire of activities in ways which reflect (and hence reinforce) the logic of the system (even if such systems do not operate in terribly efficient or ‘logical’ ways). With regard to crime rates, for example, as these rose and insurance claims increased in frequency, so insurers started to ask for a crime number before claims were processed, reinforcing recorded increases in crime. The second mechanism suggests that institutions are not ‘neutral’ coordinating bodies but are designed or evolve to reflect and reproduce certain forms of power distribution in society. It is via this mechanism that some sections of society find that power and influence accumulate to them, whilst others find that their stocks of these resources are diminished over time. As one group accumulates power and influence, so it is able to influence institutions in such a way as to reproduce power inequalities and accumulate still more power (Hope and Trickett 2004).

CRITICAL JUNCTURES AND THE CONCEPT OF PUNCTUATED EQUILIBRIUM

Pierson describes ‘critical junctures’ as moments when institutional arrangements are placed on particular pathways which are difficult to subsequently alter or change. For Capoccia and Kelemen (2007: 341), such moments are rare and represent ‘brief phases of institutional flux ... during which more dramatic change is possible’. They add that critical junctures are often the starting points for path dependent processes. Such moments are considered to be relatively short periods of time (2007: 348) during which there is an increased chance that agents will be able to affect significant change. In this way, agents can more easily initiate new policies or procedures during periods of change than during periods of equilibrium. Sometimes critical junctures may emerge slowly, being produced over time by the accumulation of related events which reach a tipping point. Of course, if a number of outcomes are possible from a critical juncture; it is possible that one of these may be the return to an earlier ‘pre-critical’ arrangements (2007: 352). Wuthnow (1989) shows how new schools of thought, once they reach a critical mass, are able to extend their reach by the generation of institutions and organisations which reproduce their ideological position (Pierson 2004: 39). Thelen, rather critically, notes that many authors do not articulate sufficiently how the outcomes of critical junctures become translated into lasting legacies (1999: 390). Such theorising has obvious similarities with the theory of punctuated equilibrium (Thelen and Steinmo 1992: 15).

Although not formally an element of the work on historical institutionalism, both Thelen and Steinmo (1992) and Zehavi (2012) argue that work on punctuated equilibrium could, at least in theory, operate alongside historical institutionalism (see also Bulmer 2009: 308). The theory of punctuated equilibrium in public policy suggests that long-run stability in policy-making is subject to occasional seismic shifts when existing institutions and issue definitions breakdown and pressure for change accumulates to the point where it cannot be ignored (Krasner 1984; Jones and Baumgartner 2005). As Zehavi describes it, ‘at some point the growing inadequacy of [a particular] policy [is] sufficient enough to merit media and public attention, and policy-makers, due

to public criticism, would react—perhaps even overreact—with a major reform that would shift the policy point of equilibrium’ (2012: 736). As such, the widespread recognition, over time, that some policy or approach is ‘failing’ and that change is required brings about the end of a period of equilibrium, and starts the processes by which a new equilibrium is reached. In Krasner’s model, the impetus for this change is external (Thelen and Steinmo 1992: 15). Hence punctuated equilibrium; a moment or period during which the current equilibrium is ‘punctured’ and a new one is given the chance to emerge.

CONSTRUCTIVIST INSTITUTIONALISM: RECOGNISING THAT IDEAS SHAPE PATHWAYS

More recently another body of ‘institutionalist’ thinking has emerged out of a dialogue with historical institutionalism. Going under the name of ‘constructivist’ institutionalism, this argues that historical institutionalism overlooks the role which ideas play in shaping political outcomes (Ross 2011; Hay 2011). Ideas, as Jacobs (2015: 41) notes, are difficult to measure, but this does not make them any less important, since they structure actors’ understanding of the world. The basic observations of constructivist institutionalists are that historical institutionalism is too ‘sticky’ (Bell 2011: 883) in that it cannot easily allow for individual agency. This form of institutionalism focuses on the ways in which *ideas* can change or mould institutions and processes. In short, ideas can influence many processes. Pierson’s observations that ‘institutional arrangements in politics are typically hard to change’ (2000: 490) and that ‘actors find the dead weight of previous institutional choices seriously limits their room to manoeuvre’ (2000: 493) are taken as suggesting that agency is seriously hampered. Indeed, and as Hay notes, within the auspices of historical institutionalism, change is seen as the outcome of path dependent processes or from shocks from outwith (Hay 2011: 66). This overlooks what Hay refers to as ‘path-shaping’ (as opposed to path-dependent) possibilities (Hay 2011: 66). Hay’s critique of much current historical institutionalism stresses that whilst it continues to focus on path dependencies, it will remain unable to fully account for *radical* change in institutional forms or processes (Hay 2011). By bringing a focus on ideas into play, constructivist institutionalism forces us to grapple with the concept of *ideational* path-dependence (as well as *institutional* path-dependence, Hay 2011: 68–69). As Blyth suggests,

‘institutional change only makes sense by reference to the ideas that inform agents’ responses to moments of uncertainty and change’ (2002: 251). Through these lenses, ideas become codified and start to serve as the cognitive filters through which actors are able to conceive of their interests (Hay 2011: 69). Blyth (2002: 15) argues that ‘ideas give substance to interests and determine the form and content of new institutions’. Because ideas are part of what motivates the voting public, the focus on ideas also motivates researchers to explore how the electorate response to political messages and how voters can shape political discourses.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL CRITIQUE

Epistemology refers to how we know how the world around us works. I use the term to refer to both the assumptions which have been made about the nature of the social world but moreover about how we ought to best to explore it and the causal relationships within it. These sorts of assumptions may be explicit in a theory but often are not. Either way, the epistemology adopted is crucial to the methodology employed, since the validity or otherwise of a set of methodologies rests on the assumptions made about the social world being explored and the causal relationships under investigation. Hence, in adopting one epistemological position researchers are committing themselves to employing methodological approaches consistent with that epistemology.

My critique of the epistemological basis of this field runs at two levels. The background assumptions about crime and trends in crime held by many criminologists and policy-makers are one level. The second level relates more narrowly to the epistemological positions which stemmed from this and which were adopted by those researching the crime drop from around the mid- to late-1990s. With regard to the first of these, one of the things which pretty much all criminologists started to believe (quite reasonably) during the 1980s, and based on the recorded and later self-reported data about crime, was that crime was going to rise inexorably. Evidence of this can be found in publications authored not just by criminologists, but by UK Home Secretaries.² For example, in

²For example, Farrington and Jolliffe wrote, even as late as 2004, that ‘...most crimes tended to increase over time...’ (p. 25).

an interview I conducted with Michael Howard (Home Secretary from 1993 to 1997) he recounted that

The first presentation that I was given by the officials of Home Office said ... they showed me a graph, and they said, “Home Secretary this is what’s happening to crime over the last 50 years it’s going to go up at an average rate of about 5% a year. And the first thing you must realise is that it’s going to carry on going up at an average 5% rate a year and there’s nothing you can do about it. Your job is to manage public expectations in the face of this inevitable and continuing rise in crime”.

Given that most informed commentators simply assumed that crime was going to rise, crime rises ceased to be something which in and of itself surprised criminal justice system practitioners, policy-makers or criminologists and ceased to attract much attention. However, when crime started to *decline* (and of course, one needs several years of data to be sure of a sustained decline) this became ‘news’, simply because it went against the grain of what was expected. Accordingly, scholars started to search for the causes of the decline. The observation that I would offer on this epistemological position (that crime rises were inevitable) is that it seduced us (as a community) into believing that increases in crime were a *stable* condition, when in fact, an increase in anything is far from representing ‘stability’.

I turn now to the epistemological position adopted in the light of this by those researching the crime drop. A key basis of my critique is the notion that the epistemological position adopted by crime drop analysts has (a) predisposed them towards a particular set of methodologies within the social sciences and (b) in so doing overlooked other (equally valid) methodological approaches. The experiences of the countries which have been studied, it is assumed, are more or less similar to one another. It is further assumed that the explanatory variables which account for the observed declines will operate consistently across most, if not all of the countries studied.

The assessment of the seventeen theories which have been developed (see Chap. 1) is based on the degree to which the theories pass the four tests outlined above. The ways in which these theories are tested assumes a general, linear reality (Hall 2003). This manner of explanation has a number of characteristics. Most obviously, it is quantitative (rather than, say, based on detailed cases studies of countries). It assumes relationships

which are (more or less) consistent over time. Ruled out, therefore, are those processes in which one factor drives a process of change for a period of time, only to be succeeded by a different process which drives the same outcome. Because a key test of the theories to be examined is based on cross-national equivalence, this approach assumes that countries start at (more or less) the same state, proceed in (more or less) the same manner and at (more or less) the same pace and react to processes and events at the same speed and in the same manner. Political or ideological influence (i.e. ideas) in the processes is not considered. The methodological approach which has been developed (based on the epistemological position adopted) can be critiqued in a number of ways. Most obviously, it is *assumed* that human societies, their institutions, organisations, cultural values and so on, are invariant in a number of ways (in the same way that, say, the laws of physics operate). Whilst gravity may operate identically across countries, I am far from convinced that the same can be said for political systems, cultural values or criminal justice systems. In this respect, the epistemology adopted is overly deterministic. Another aspect of this approach is that it assumes that all of the units of analysis (in this case countries) are (a) equally weighted (all are more equally important) and (b) that they do not breach rules of independence of observation. That is to say that countries are independent of one another (so what the USA does with regard to crime rates has no bearing negatively or positively on what, for example, Canada or England and Wales does).³ These assumptions, which work well when we are dealing with *individual* respondents in cross-sectional surveys who have been randomly selected and who can be reasonably assumed to be independent of one another on the basis of stratified random sampling, are more questionable when it comes to countries, and when the processes we are interested in extend over time. Jones and Newburn (2006) for example, have explored and charted the ways in which crime policies travel between countries, suggesting that ideas are exchanged between policy elites and that these are developed over time. This being the case,

³ Another assumption, which I do not develop herein, is that each country is co-terminus, which is to say that no country deliberately interferes with the internal governance of another country. This is empirically unsustainable in the light of US drug policy in many Southern American countries such as Mexico or Columbia, for example. Similarly, there are supranational bodies (such as the EU) which have attempted to harmonise crime prevention policies (see Crawford 2009).

it is hard to assume that Ministers in the UK Home Office are more likely to listen to ideas developed in (say) Paris than they are in those developed in (say) Washington. Linguistics, cultural, political and ideological considerations mean that it is very much not the case that all countries are equal (Newburn 2002). My argument is that crime drop analysts have made a number of assumptions about both crime trends over time and the countries which have experienced them which have driven them towards one particular methodological approach.⁴

COMPARATIVE HISTORICAL ANALYSES

In a series of publications, a number of historically minded political scientists have developed a critique of previous efforts to account for (amongst other things) state formation, political revolutions, adaptations in social policy, monetary policies and labour politics. Comparative historical analysis has been defined as involving a focus on causal analysis, especially those with an emphasis on processes which unfold over time, and the use of systematic and contextualised comparisons of similar and contrasting cases (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003: 10–13). An in-depth engagement with cases provides analysts with opportunities to discover previously unrecognised causal mechanisms and processes (Jacobs 2015: 56). Analysts in this tradition are interested in ‘first order questions’ which draw people into studying the social sciences in the first place (Mahoney 2003: 131) and which offer substantive enlightenment about the social structures which surround us and which shape much of our lives and life-courses (Skocpol 2003: 407). The approach relies upon developing highly contextualised accounts (Thelen and Maloney 2015: 8), which avoids one of the pitfalls of large-N studies in which analysts are required to code processes relatively crudely, missing key information and processes (Jacobs 2015: 69). Amenta (2003) argues that this body of work attempts to understand key processes comparatively (that is, using two or more cases, or relying on one case but relating it to the experiences of other cases); remains historical in that it ‘situates the study within the relevant historical contexts, takes a sophisticated approach to historiography, thinks seriously about issues of process, timing and historical trajectories,

⁴Furthermore, it remains the case that not all crimes have declined. Walby et al. (2016) make a compelling argument that violence has increased.

and gains a deep understanding of the cases' (p. 94). Three key characteristics of comparative historical analysis have been identified by two of the key proponents of this perspective (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003: 1–14). They suggest that analysts working in this tradition are chiefly interested with 'the explanation and the identification of causal configurations that produce major outcomes of interest' (2003: 11). That is to say, those analyses are preoccupied with identifying the causal processes associated with some key event or process to be explained. Secondly, they argue, such researchers 'explicitly analyse historical sequences and take seriously the unfolding of processes over time' (2003: 12), meaning that there is an assumption that the event or process being explored has its causal roots embedded in prior historical events and processes and which may play out differently due to the sequencing of these events or their duration. In order to fully explain the outcomes a comparative historical analyst is interested in, the analyst will need to take account of not just what happen, but the order in which events and processes unfolded and the duration of key elements in the causal chain. Finally, Mahoney and Rueschemeyer claim that comparative historical analysis is particularly concerned with an engagement in systematic and contextualised comparisons of similar or contrasting cases, which, taken together enable the analyst to develop both a causal understanding of an event or process and to develop insights as to why similar cases may produce dissimilar outcomes and vice versa (2003: 13).

The insights developed as part of this approach provide the ideal starting point not just for the critique of the crime drop literature outlined above, but also the inspiration for rethinking the epistemological, conceptual and methodological approaches for exploring, theorising and explaining some of the recent trends in crime experienced by some nations. At this juncture, I want to outline some of the contributions which could usefully extend our knowledge about such trends. One of the key elements in the methodological toolbox associated with this body of work is what is known as process tracing. Process tracing consists of the analysis of a case (or cases) in a temporally ordered sequence of events and processes such that the causal relationships between them are illuminated. The analyst is interested in the goals and actions of individual actors, organisations and informal groups and communities of space or identity. The analyst will not assume that all of these entities operate rationally or are equally powerful or are able to achieve their goals in the short term or ever. As Goldstone summarises it, 'process tracing involves

making deductions about how events are linked over time, drawing on general principles of economics, sociology, psychology, and political science regarding human behaviour' (2003: 48).

Another key aspect of comparative historical work is the attention to what is termed congruence testing (Goldstone 2003). Having developed for each case included in the study the processes which link the causal antecedents with the outcome, congruence testing seeks to 'challenge and improve our understanding of how particular cases of interest are related or different [from one another]' (2003: 50). Mahoney (2003: 361) refers to a very similar process known as 'pattern-matching'. Pattern-matching is a powerful tool in the falsification of additional hypotheses derived during the developmental stage, since ideas developed from cross-national analyses are then tested within cases, providing an assessment of whether or not these hypotheses are supported at the individual case level. In short, using process tracing, the analyst seeks to uncover and understand the causal sequences that produced the result of interest, and then through comparison, using congruence testing, they try to assess the number of cases which 'fit' a particular sequence or causal patterning. The beauty of the approach, as Rueschemeyer points out, (2003: 324) is that hypotheses can be tested at two levels; firstly in terms of 'within case' analyses and secondly in comparative terms (with the added advantage that additional hypotheses which emerge from cross-case analyses can be tested within cases too). This allows the analyst to identify multiple pathways of causation, that is to say the ways in which each case's unique causal processes may produce outcomes which are similar to other cases, even when the causal processes were different. This final point is key since the social science literature which has adopted this approach has pointed to (see Hall 2003: 383):

- i. Cases in which an increase in x leads to an increase in y , but additional cases in which an increase in y was caused by a different set variable (known as equifinality, Bennett and Checkel 2015: 19).
- ii. Cases in which x leads to y at time 1, but z leads to y at time 2.
- iii. Cases in which an increase in x leads to an increase in y at time 1, but not at time 2.
- iv. Cases in which an increase in x leads to an increase in y for some cases, but is modified by z for other cases.

- v. Cases in which an increase in an outcome (y) depends on many other variables, whose values may (or may not) be dependent upon one another,
- vi. Cases in which an increase in x leads to an increase in y , which, over time, tends to increase x , and, finally,
- vii. Cases in which both x and z simultaneously lead to changes in an outcome (y).
- viii. Cases in which x is an important variable in the onset of a process, but in which other variables determine the progression of that process.

For example (as an example of iv), Jacobs and Kleban (2003) find that rates of imprisonment can be reasonably well modelled using the murder rate, the rate of births out of wedlock, the percentage of ethnic minorities in a society and the GDP. However, the same model performs *far better* when political governance regimes (federalist or corporatist) are included (suggesting that some relationships can be mediated by other processes). Similarly, Sutton (2004) finds that the relationship between business cycles and imprisonment rates was mediated by political regime. Atkinson (2000: 364–365) notes that between the end of the Second World War and the late 1970s economic inequality in the UK declined. Between 1979 and 1985, it increased and was due to unemployment. From 1985 to 1990, however, the inequalities were due largely to *government policies* (an example of ii). As an example of viii, see O’Rand (2009: 125) who reports that education levels influence the onset of some illnesses, but income and healthcare shape its progression. Similarly, and as an example of iii, consider the relationship between age and likelihood of marriage. Between 18 and 40, every year unmarried increases the likelihood that an individual will marry the following year. However, after 40, each additional year unmarried decreases the likelihood of marriage the following year (George 2009: 167). Key thinkers in this tradition have started to refer to the idea of ‘causal packages’ of processes which operate in tandem, even if not all may be present in all cases (Thelen and Maloney 2015: 7). As such, this approach enables the analyst to approach matters in a non-deterministic manner (since causal mechanisms interact with the context in which they occur and operate, the outcome cannot be determined a priori, Trampush and Palier 2016: 6; Pawson and Tilley 1994). This approach is at odds with much of

the thinking which characterises the work of many crime drop analysts, which assumes a generally linear reality.

In essence, the causal processes identified by such studies point to the problems of identifying and teasing out the interactions between causes and contexts. Ragin (1987) pointed to the possibility of multiple conjunctural causation. This is the phenomenon whereby an outcome is caused not just by the operation of one or two variables, but by a diverse combination of many factors some of which may be present in some cases but not in others. In short, in country 1 cause A may result in outcome C, whilst in country 2 cause B results in outcome C, depending on the specific context in each country. Whilst structural equation modelling (in which multiple causal processes can be modelled and in which structural variance between countries can be tested formally) shares some properties with regression, its abilities to handle multiple and differentiated causal processes significantly improves upon 'basic' regression modelling, the routes of the causal theorising lie in systematic case studies.

Taken as a whole, this body of work suggests that methodologies which assume (and seek to find) cross-national equivalence may contain various weaknesses which, in turn, may mean that incorrect causal inferences are drawn. Law-like statements ought to be avoided, or treated with scepticism (Pouliot 2015: 237). The possibility of using detailed case studies offers criminologists 'thicker', more contextualised, and arguably more rigorous assessments (Hall 2003: 399) of social science phenomena. Such an approach could be used to (a) develop additional theoretical insights to explain 'deviant' cases, and (b) make more rigorous assessments of the causal processes already developed.

WHAT I HAVE ARGUED SO FAR

I contend that the crime drop literature has developed an epistemological position which is heavily reliant upon one style of social science explanation and consequently becomes overly reliant on a limited set of methodologies from the social sciences. An assumption that a cause must work in *all* cases ('constant cause' thinking, Levitsky and Way 2015: 97) has been developed and has led, I fear, to the discounting of several otherwise plausible hypotheses as contextual effects have been ignored. The result has been that we have been seduced into thinking that security is the *sole* explanation of the crime drop and have lost sight of interaction effects, joint causation and variations in processes of implementation

(see also Rosenfeld and Weisburd 2016: 330). A key purpose of this book is to propose an additional approach, based much more on a narrative style of criminology. The methodology I will propose (and illustrate by way of one example and a handful of supporting cases) is based on small-N case studies which involve analyses of specific countries in order to develop more thoroughly grounded explanations of the crime drop. This approach, whilst complicating matters to some degree, may also offer both additional hypotheses and explanations of recent trends in crime rates.

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Re-Examining The Crime Drop

Farrall, S.

2017, XI, 116 p. 13 illus., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-67653-1