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The Legacy of INTERPOL Crime Data to Cross-National Criminology[1]

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INTERPOL crime data constitute the oldest and most continuous cross-national data series available to criminologists. Recently, INTERPOL has decided to forego its data collection efforts. This paper, based on a systematic and extensive literature review, will examine how criminologists and other social scientists have used INTERPOL data to examine critical issues in the description and explanation of cross-national crime. It will end with a critical reflection on the contribution of INTERPOL data to our knowledge base, as well as the possibilities that exist for using other data sources to continue research in this area.

INTRODUCTION

Crime data from INTERPOL are the oldest dataset of cross-national indicators of crime maintained by an intergovernmental organization. Thanks to these data, criminologists have created a literature that aims to explain national as well as cross-national differences and trends in crime rates. Created in 1923, the International Criminal Police Commission (ICPC, later abbreviated to ICPC-INTERPOL and now known as INTERPOL) was founded to facilitate police cooperation among countries, even where diplomatic ties do not exist. INTERPOL's International Crime Statistics were first published in 1950. In 2006, INTERPOL decided to cease collecting and disseminating crime data, and 2005 was the last year data were collected, covering 2004. INTERPOL Resolution AG-2006-RES-19 noted problems with the accuracy and reliability of INTERPOL's statistics; that the agency was not equipped to improve the quality of its statistics; that the number of members and National Central Bureaus who contribute statistics is insufficient; that, consequently, the statistics were not useful for international police cooperation; and, that "the publication of the statistics is likely to create difficulties in the way they are used."

Van Dijk (2008: 39) has called for a moratorium on international police figures, arguing that ''[t]he decision of INTERPOL in 2006 to remove its historical series of crime statistics from its public website is to be applauded and should serve as a model for the police community.'' Van Dijk claims that ''it is in the best interest of the international police community to fully convert to crime surveying as the method of data collection on crime.'' Police-generated crime statistics, he claims, are only good as indicators of input of police forces and criminal justice systems. They cannot be used comparatively or even longitudinally, since they are tainted by reporting and recording biases and differences in legal definitions across countries. Van Dijk also argues that

the domestic institutions in the security and justice sectors should not have ownership over the crime problem through the production of their data. Rather, citizens (victims and potential victims), through their participation in victimization surveys, should have ownership of the crime problem (2008: 41).

In 2006, at the request of INTERPOL, Rubin and her colleagues undertook an audit of INTERPOL data from 2004, which examined response rates and data anomalies. In a 2008 article entitled, ''Using Cross-National Studies to Illuminate the Crime Problem: One Less Data Source Left Standing'' (Rubin, Culp, Mameli and Walker, 2008), 2002 data from INTERPOL were examined.

This article seeks to take a broader look at the legacy of INTERPOL data and questions the nature of van Dijk's ''INTERPOL data obituary'' by systematically reviewing the research for which INTERPOL data were analysed, very little of which was cited by either van Dijk or Rubin, et al. Its aims are to get an approximation of how much published research literature has used INTERPOL data; the methods of research, including the sample of countries, years, and crimes chosen; the practice of researchers in checking for reliability and validity; the analytical strategies; sources for independent variables; theoretical contributions; consistent and contradictory findings; and policy recommendations. INTERPOL data now exist as a historical, static dataset. What is the value of the research that was produced with INTERPOL data, and what can we learn from this literature about how to use INTERPOL and other data sources in the future?

Global official data are those recorded by government agencies around the world. In the case of crime data, this includes the police, prosecution or judicial agencies, and prisons or correctional authorities. Apart from INTERPOL data, which represent crimes known to the police, criminologists have relied on the UN Crime Trends Survey (UNCTS), conducted since 1975, World Health Organization data on registered deaths and injuries, the European Sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics, which covers European countries from 1995 to the present in four editions, SPACE (Council of Europe prison statistics), and global prison statistics gathered by the International Center for Prison Studies.

INTERPOL crime data have always presented a number of advantages over other data sources and have been the data more often used by crime researchers. Some of these advantages are also disadvantages. First, it is the oldest series, published biannually from 1950 and then annually as of 1993. As of 2000, it was published free of charge on INTERPOL's website and was available in Arabic, English, French, and Spanish. This transparency, ironically, has much to do with its demise, since the politicization of crime has resulted in the unwillingness of countries to have their 'dirty laundry,' or crime statistics, aired. Second, although participation in INTERPOL's crime statistics program was voluntary, INTERPOL is one of the largest intergovernmental agencies in the world; it currently has 187 member countries. Rubin, et al. (2008: 60), examined response rates to INTERPOL from 1959 to 2004. The proportion of member states responding out of the total number of INTERPOL member

states has been declining since 1985; prior to that it fluctuated. Nevertheless, it has often provided researchers with data from more countries and a more diverse collection of countries in terms of socioeconomic development. The International Crime Statistics data collection sheet includes categories of offenses and offenders, and crime definitions are simple. Collaborating institutions have been given certain latitude to use their own crime definitions and fit their statistics into the INTERPOL crime categories. Minimal change has occurred over the years to this series. But it is this simplicity that researchers criticize as deceiving, because it masks the definitional and reporting problems that occur at the national level.

INTERPOL data represent police and judicial statistics. The data contain information on murder (''any act performed with the purpose of taking human life, in whatever circumstance, excluding abortion but including infanticide''), serious assault, theft (including aggravated theft, robbery, burglary, theft of motor vehicles), fraud, counterfeit currency offenses, drug offenses, and sex offenses, including rape. Offense data include the total number of cases known to the police, the percentage that are attempts, the clearance rate, and the rate of each offense per 100,000 population. In its offender data, INTERPOL records data on the total number of offenders and the percentage of known offenders who are females and/or juveniles and who are not citizens of a particular country (Howard, Newman and Pridemore, 2000; McDonald and Haberfeld, 2005).

INTERPOL made no effort to validate its data nor to tabulate them for users. Thus, one of the more popular datasets in the literature that uses INTERPOL data is the Correlates of Crime Archive (''COC'') compiled by Richard R. Bennett of American University, which covers the years 1960-1984 and holds indicators on 52 nations, sampled purposefully from seven regions of the world, including crime data from INTERPOL, as well as other indicators of theoretical interest in explaining crime from such sources as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. This archive is available through the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research. According to the description of the database in ICPSR, ''those nations are not a random sample, but were drawn from the seven major regions of the world and represent a wide range of levels of development, types of economy, political environments, and criminal justice system structures. Three criteria for selecting the sample were employed: (1) the nation had to be a member of INTERPOL between the years 1960 and 1984, (2) the nation had to report crime data to the Secretariat of INTERPOL between the years 1960 and 1984, and (3) the nation could skip no more than three of INTERPOL's two-year crime data reporting periods.'' The COC does not include nonmarket nations during that time period, such as Russia and China. Bennett is currently updating the Correlates of Crime Archive for the last time to include data up to 2003 (Bennett, personal conversation, 2009).

A more extensive but less popular database among crime researchers is Archer and Gartner's Comparative Crime Data File, with data on 110 nations

and 44 cities, covering varying but generally broader time periods. The CCDF uses 'native' categories of crime for the countries and cities in the database, and as such, single-nation research is more appropriate and feasible with the CCDF than pooled analyses or comparisons among nations. The Comparative Crime Data File uses INTERPOL data along with other data. It has not been updated since it was created in 1984.

The criticisms of INTERPOL include all the criticisms of official data, particularly police data. INTERPOL itself warned that its data should not be used for comparative purposes. Van Dijk has argued over the years that those using INTERPOL data have increasingly used 'warnings' about how the data should be interpreted, but ''that despite health warnings, people continue to smoke.'' Thus, this section will elaborate on the flaws of INTERPOL data and the various ways that researchers have used INTERPOL data critically and carefully to minimise its flaws. Linked to the flaws in INTERPOL data are the analytical flaws that occur in research using INTERPOL data, which also will be discussed.

All datasets have flaws that result in decreased validity and reliability, and INTERPOL data are no exception. Similar to domestic measures of police-recorded crime, INTERPOL data are subject to underreporting and underrecording. And similar to domestic measures of police-recorded crime in federal systems (such as the UCR in the United States), INTERPOL data are also subject to flaws that result from legal definitions that vary nationally and sub-nationally. INTERPOL data are subject to flaws that result from misinterpretation of its data reporting rules, given that they are delivered in four languages (Spanish, French, English, and Arabic). Finally, reporting of data by INTERPOL member states is voluntary, thus varying response rates determine the sample of countries in the INTERPOL dataset.

INTERPOL data quality is affected by missing data, including key categories such as the percentage of attempts vs. completed crimes and anomalies that are most often seen from year to year.Over the years that crime researchers have been using INTERPOL data, a number of strategies have evolved to minimize the flaws. In dealing with missing and anomalous data, researchers use mean substitution by calculating means over a number of years of data; compile aggregated measures or indices of crimes; eliminate series or countries from the sample of variables or countries, respectively; or, substitute data from other data sources (WHO, UNCTS).

Many of the flaws in INTERPOL data lead to analytical restrictions. INTERPOL itself recommended that comparative research of crime levels among nations was not an appropriate use of the data. Bennett and Lynch (1991) concluded that INTERPOL data were as appropriate as other cross-national datasets ''for studies seeking aggregate descriptions of world crime or analytic explanations of cross-national crime rates'' (1990: 153) and noted that in any event, there is no real way to assess the validity of crime reports, because all data gathering strategies measure different phenomena (1990: 153, Note 1). But even the analytical strategies recommended by Bennett and

Lynch have been seen to be conditioned by the sample of countries (Gottschalk, Smith, Howard and Stevens, 2006), which is often a product of which countries have the least missing data and can thus be included in analyses. Researchers have responded by triangulating data sources and using carefully selected independent and control variables; they have also sought to ensure geographical representation in their sample of countries, as well as diversity in terms of level of development.

Finally, given the virtually endless possibilities of combinations of variables in cross-national analysis, one of the flaws of INTERPOL data-based analyses are studies that are the results of exploratory 'fishing expeditions' or 'cherry picking.' Researchers have striven to undertake theoretically-guided, hypothesis-based research.

Literature Search

The aim of this literature search was to locate research literature that used INTERPOL data from 1950 to 2008. Research literature was understood to mean books or journal articles of an empirical nature in the social or behavioral sciences. Dissertations were excluded unless they had been published as books or journal articles. Although some 'gray literature,' such as government reports, surfaced in the literature search, no special effort was made to locate it. Literature reviews of collections of empirical studies using INTERPOL data, such as LaFree (1999), are included, as are citations that counter or debate previous citations (e.g., the controversy over Rushton's race and crime analysis). Textbooks are excluded.

Besides a library holdings search at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice Lloyd Sealy Library, the following databases were used: ICPSR Correlates of Crime Archive, a listing of literature that used the COC data; Criminal Justice Abstracts (1968-2008); PsychINFO (1887-2008); World Political Science Abstracts (1975-2008); Sociological Abstracts (1952-2008); and, Econlit (1969-2008). In addition, the author searched the database at the UNOV (United Nations Vienna) Documentation Centre, which serves the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in April, 2009. The keyword used for all fields was INTERPOL. Literature was excluded if INTERPOL data were not used in analysis. Due to the nature of the databases, all but two of the pieces of research were in English, and few book chapters were found. The reference lists for those sources that did include INTERPOL data were also examined to locate additional literature.

Findings

Sample Description

Eighty-nine studies were found, published between 1967 and 2008. The number of studies published grew from 1 in the 1960s to 8 in the 1970s and 22

in the 1980s, before peaking with 35 studies in the 1990s. From 2000 to the present, 23 studies were published. Some scholars prevail over others. Those authors with 3 or more citations include Arthur, Barber, Bennett, Krohn, LaFree, Messner, Neapolitan, Rushton, Savage, and Wellford. Journals that featured 2 studies or more included criminology or criminal justice journals (*British Journal of Criminology*, *Canadian Journal of Criminology*, *Criminology*, *International Criminal Justice Review*, *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice*, *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, and *Justice Quarterly*), and to a lesser extent, sociology journals (*Sociological Quarterly*, *Comparative Social Research*.) A little more than half (48) are single-authored publications.

Aims: Why Use INTERPOL Data?

The aims of using INTERPOL data in the literature examined are very broad. The bulk of criminological research uses INTERPOL data in macroanalyses of crime. Fewer pieces of research use INTERPOL data at the national level to examine trends over time. INTERPOL data have served many different purposes over the years. In its simplest form, the INTERPOL dataset is used as a background against which to frame a study with a larger purpose. Brantingham and Easton (1998), for example, use INTERPOL data to show how Canada fares compared to other countries in terms of its crime rate, before embarking on their larger study of the costs of crime. Yang (1994) uses INTERPOL data to frame his larger study of crime in China. Yang compares INTERPOL-gathered data to Chinese data and argues that the reason China has such a low crime rate in INTERPOL tables is because the definitions exclude public order crimes, because they are considered administrative infractions. However, Yang argues for their inclusion as acts comparable to crimes. Kalish (1988) pioneered the efforts within the Bureau of Justice Statistics to use international crime data, including INTERPOL data, to compare the United States' crime rates to other countries.

INTERPOL data are also used for descriptive single, regional, or multicountry studies. Newman's massive *Global Report on Crime and Justice* (1999) uses INTERPOL data to compare country figures from the UN Crime Survey, particularly on homicide. Fujimoto and Park (1994) use INTERPOL data to compare Japan to other countries in their questioning of Japan's uniqueness as a low-crime nation. INTERPOL data help them conclude that Japan's low crime rate is a relatively recent phenomenon, that its crime patterns are similar to the rest of the world, and that on certain indicators, Japan fares the same or worse when compared to other nations. Oftentimes INTERPOL data are used to supplement another incomplete data source. Arthur (1992), for example, uses INTERPOL data to supplement UCR data for his study on social change in Puerto Rico. Austin and Kim (1999), in examining education and crime in sub-Saharan Africa, claim that INTERPOL data are the only comparative data source for that region of the world.

Along with descriptive research is the use of INTERPOL data in methodological research to discern the difference in using the various data sources available or to validate other crime indicators. Fourteen of the 89 studies can be placed in this category (Aebi, Killias, and Tavares, 2002; Bennett and Lynch, 1990; Clifford and Mukherjee, 1979; Deane, 1987; Dijk, J. van, Killias, and Mayhew, 1990; Gottschalk, Smith, Howard, and Stevens, 2006; Howard and Smith, 2003; Huang, 1993; Huang and Wellford, 1989; Kalish, 1988; Marshall and Block, 2004; Messner, 1992; Neapolitan, 1996; Vigderhous, 1978). Messner (1992) explored alternative forms of compensating for missing data and Gottschalk, Smith, and Howard examined the importance of the sample of countries chosen. Neapolitan (1996) argued for the importance of theoretically relevant variables, controlling for attempts as opposed to completed crimes and purposefully planning the sample of countries used as opposed to letting the sample self-select by eliminating countries with missing or anomalous data. Bennett and Lynch (1991), along with Aebi, Killias, and Tavares (2002), looked at the differences in datasets and the correlation among them; Marshall and Block (2004) argued for composite indices. Rubin (2008) audited 2002 data from INTERPOL as well as the UN UNCTS to examine missing countries and missing data and to categorize and count data anomalies.

The most popular use of INTERPOL data is to conduct cross-national explanatory research of crime trends and test theory. INTERPOL data have been very important to theory testing in the field of homicide studies, as well as to research on modernization theory. They are also used by researchers outside of criminology who wish to use international crime data as part of noncriminological theory testing. In 1990, J. Philippe Rushton sparked a huge debate when, using INTERPOL data, he argued that he had found support for his evolutionary theory about racial inferiority. Ten of the citations in the literature located for the present article deal with either Rushton's work or reanalyses of his data (Cernovsky and Litman, 1993; Gabor and Roberts, 1990; Neapolitan, 1998; Roberts and Gabor, 1990; Rushton, 1990, 1994, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c; Rushton and Whitney, 2002).

Surprisingly, despite much theory testing in the literature using INTERPOL data, there is a near absence of policy-related aims indicated in the literature examined. We will return to this in the discussion.

Methods: How Are INTERPOL Data Gathered for Inclusion in Analysis?

INTERPOL data are used in a variety of ways in the research examined. They are used within established datasets (Correlates of Crime Dataset, Comparative Crime Data File) or gathered by the author or authors. They are used in combination with other data (UNCS, WHO, ICVS, European Sourcebook), alone and independent of other datasets, longitudinally, cross-sectionally, for multiple countries, or for a single country. More than half the studies (50) used INTERPOL as their only crime data source. Most importantly, the

variation in how researchers use INTERPOL data is enormous. Fourteen of the 89 citations were cross-sectional studies that used INTERPOL data from only one year. The rest either conducted longitudinal analyses or used means of various years of INTERPOL data. Only one study analysed a single location (Arthur's 1992 study of Puerto Rico), although two other studies were comparative relative to one country (Fujimoto and Park, 1994, for Japan, and Yang, 1994, for China). The rest analysed multiple countries' data, ranging from 4 to 140 locations. Similarly, various combinations of crimes were used. Homicide-only or 'murder'-only only studies accounted for 22 of the total.

The vast majority of studies use INTERPOL offense data. INTERPOL also gathered offender data. Those data are used less often and mostly when researchers are interested in women or juveniles (Anderson and Bennett, 1996; Marshall, 1982; Bennett and Basiotis, 1991; Hartnagel, 1982; Hartnagel & Mizanuddin, 1986; McDonald, 1976; Bowker, 1981; South & Messner, 1987; Steffensmeier, Allan, and Streifel, 1989).

How Do Researchers Cope with Incomplete, Missing or Anomalous INTERPOL Data?

Researchers using INTERPOL data are generally aware of the incomplete or fluctuating nature of INTERPOL data. Nevertheless, 24 of the 89 studies make no adjustments for fluctuating or missing data. For those researchers who did adopt strategies, they undertook the following measures: selection of only some crime types; creation of index variables (e.g., theft); elimination of attempts where possible; elimination of outliers; selection of only some years; selection of only some nations or self-selection; mean substitution for missing values; and, computation of multiyear averages. They also complemented or compared with data from other datasets. Neapolitan (1996), Messner (1992), and Gottschalk, et al. (2006), are the only authors who have examined the effects of these various strategies. Neapolitan argues for the purposeful selection of country samples, as do Gottschalk, et al., who argue for the importance of context in general. Messner found that for moderate- and high-reporting countries, estimates using averages will not change the findings greatly. But for low-reporting nations, estimates using averages do change the findings.

Analytical Strategies

The analytical strategies used in the literature include descriptive comparisons of crime rates, ANOVA, correlational studies, and multiple regression. In the vast majority of studies, INTERPOL data are used for the dependent variable or variables. Only recently has research featured INTERPOL data as independent, as opposed to dependent variables. Ruddell and Urbina (2004) and Ruddell (2005) use the INTERPOL homicide data as a predictor of punishment across nations.

Sources for Independent Variables

Although the literature that uses INTERPOL data makes frequent mention of the limitations of the data as a dependent variable, it is rare to find any mention of the quality of the data for the independent variables. Sources for independent variables in explanatory studies are varied. Some independent variables are included in the Correlates of Crime and Comparative Crime Data File datasets. The various sources for independent variables include Polity III, Handbook of Political and Social Indicators, World Bank, United Nations Demographic Yearbook, United Nations Statistical Yearbook, the Dimensions of Nations data, Human Development Report, CIA Factbook, Amnesty International, International Monetary Fund, Economist World in Figures, and Handbook of International Data on Women, as well as data published by individual authors (e.g., Kurian, Walmsley).

Theoretical Contributions

INTERPOL data have been used to test a wide variety of theories. These include routine activities/opportunity (Anderson and Bennett, 1996; Bennett, 1991a; Bennett, 1991b; Kick and LaFree, 1985); deterrence (Archer and Gartner, 1984); modernization/Durkheimian/Anomie theory (Archer and Gartner, 1984; Arthur, 1991; Arthur, 1992, Arthur, 1997; Bennett, 1991a; Bennett and Lynch, 1997; Bennett and Shelley, 1985; Krohn, 1976; Krohn 1978; LaFree and Kick, 1986; Neapolitan, 1994, 1995; Ortega, Corzine, Burnett, and Poyer, 1992; Sichor, 1985; Sichor, 1990; Wolf, 1971); strain or relative deprivation (Austin and Kim, 1999; Bennett and Lynch, 1997; Lee and Shihadeh, 1998; Messner, 1980; Neumayer, 2005; Savage, Bennett, and Danner, 2008); conflict (McDonald, 1976; Mehrtens, 1994); gender theory female emancipation (Anderson and Bennett, 1996; Austin and Kim, 2000; Bowker, 1981; Hartnagel, 1982; Marshall, 1982; South and Messner, 1987; Steffensmeier, Allan, and Streifel, 1989); medical care and social welfare (Chon, 2002); radical conflict, legitimation of violence (Archer and Gartner, 1984); race and crime (Rushton, 1990, 1995a, Rushton and Whitney, 2002); minority threat (Ruddell and Urbina, 2004; Ruddell, 2005); evolutionary (Barber, 2000, 2004, 2006; Savage and Vila, 2002); subculture of violence (Austin and Kim, 2000); and social control (Austin and Kim, 1999). The literature leads to consistent and contradictory findings. The more consistent findings have to do with the positive relationship across nations between inequality and homicide, the lack of support for the female emancipation hypothesis as causing female crime, and the qualified support for modernization theory, which has undoubtedly received the most attention.

Discussion

This data-driven review of the literature that has used INTERPOL data from 1967 to the present is revealing in a number of ways. First, there is a real

legacy in academic criminology thanks to INTERPOL data. The research reviewed spans four decades and 89 published studies. For many of the more prominently published and productive authors, these studies marked their careers. This would also be the first opportunity for cross-national analyses to make their way into mainstream, high-ranking criminology journals. Although one cannot accept all the research without a critical eye, a majority of the research conducted has been cross-national, trend-based, and theory-driven. Although for the first 20 years of INTERPOL data collection (1950-1970) few published studies were located, the bulk of the studies were published from the 1980s onwards. This can be explained by the increased use of computers in social research, which made quantitative analysis of large datasets easier, the compilation of the two cross-national datasets (COC and CCDF), which saved time and effort, and the academic trend towards quantitative theory-testing. In the past three decades, INTERPOL data have been used to their fullest, and a true research tradition in macrosocial criminology evolved out of their use. Thus, upon the advent of the availability of other global crime indicators, such as the UN Crime Survey, the International Crime Victimization Survey, and the European Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, theory-testing was accompanied by a methodological impetus whereby data from the various datasets were compared and contrasted, reliability and validity examined, and solutions offered for common problems in estimating missing or anomalous data.

What is most striking about the legacy of INTERPOL data is that no study ever appears to use exactly the same dataset more than once, and it is impossible to control for all the variables that one would like. This variability is an advantage of INTERPOL data, as well as to researchers' search for appropriate independent variables, and thus a tribute to the creativity of secondary data analysts in criminology. It is also the dataset's downfall, in that the lack of standardization of indicators, country samples, selection of crimes or offenders, years, and independent variables means that INTERPOL data have supported a great many findings. Virtually every theory has found a modicum of support with INTERPOL data. This is likely to occur with virtually any international dataset gathered over time, but one also has the sense that given the lack of standardization in the literature, the authors of these studies have never really formed a true research community, except perhaps the homicide researchers. It is time to form that research community, for the continued use of INTERPOL data as well as for the use of the alternative sources of data.

In his 2008 book, *The World of Crime*, van Dijk tells us that INTERPOL's decision to stop gathering crime data is criminologically sound; police recorded data are tainted with police decision-making, which biases the data, he argues, and International Crime Victim Survey data are bound to be a better source of crime data. To date, however, the ICVS has not undergone as many sweeps as would allow good trend analysis, and funding for future sweeps is never guaranteed. What is left? WHO data cover homicide only. UNCS data is the only versatile dataset left. But Rubin, et al., in their audit of 2002 INTER-

POL data, show that INTERPOL's data are more regularly reported and with fewer anomalies than UNCS data.

Perhaps we need to explore the real reason why INTERPOL discontinued its dataset and what this tells us about the usefulness of the research published to the international policymaker. It is understandable that as an underfunded agency, INTERPOL would do well to prioritize crime fighting and intelligence sharing instead of data gathering. Crime has also become politicized, so it is easy to understand that member states would become more and more uncomfortable submitting reports that could easily be used for international league tables by uncritical analysts.

INTERPOL has never been a research organization. INTERPOL did little to check on the crime figures submitted by member states or even compile the data in a way to be useful to analysts. Over the years, categories were only modified slightly and new crime types have never been introduced in order to modernize the series. A review of articles in the *International Criminal Police Review* from 1950-2001, an INTERPOL publication that has been discontinued as well, revealed no article except Bowker (1981) (reprinted in the *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice*) that used INTERPOL data in a sophisticated way. One has to question, then, how useful these data were to INTERPOL itself and whether any of the academic criminological research published was ever read by or deemed of use to INTERPOL, the data owner and supplier. None of the 89 articles in this literature makes any mention of disseminating its research to INTERPOL or, with the exceptions of Bennett and Archer and Gartner, of any direct relationship at all with the data provider for the creation of their own datasets.

Criminologists are partly to blame for this. Most of the research cited in this article is useful only to academic criminologists. Policy aims are absent in virtually all of the articles or books listed herein, and virtually no policy recommendations are drawn in the conclusions sections either. Only Braithwaite (1980), Neumayer (2003), and Savage and Vila (1997) dare to recommend a more equal society, humanitarian state policies, and increased social welfare spending, respectively, while most of the methodological analyses (e.g., Bennett and Lynch, 1991, and Rubin, et al., 2008) argue for more and better data. One could argue that the variables analyzed are far too abstract and general to generate policy recommendations. But it is the United Nations that produces most of the independent variables that this research uses in its statistical and demographic yearbooks and routinely incorporates them in their policies. Even the simplest sounding variables, such as sex, primary school enrollment, or income inequality, are of use in the United Nations campaigns—such as the Millennium Development Goals—for gender equality, poverty reduction, and combating illiteracy. And ironically, perhaps the most conspicuous absence in the Millennium Development Goals is a mention of crime reduction.

Finally, the research, while mainly cross-national in nature, is not fully cross-cultural research. To use nations as units of analysis and analyze 30 or

50 or 70 nations over time in a pooled cross-section time series analysis does not make one a good comparative criminologist. In this research, besides being policy-silent, we have taken little account of history, politics, context, and geography in our sampled nations. This has been the critique made by Gottschalk, et al. (2006), and others.

CONCLUSION

Unfortunately, INTERPOL data now remain as a source of data for a specific period in history. Our discipline has been nourished and shaped by those data. For updated official data, our remaining source is the UN Crime Trends Survey. But because INTERPOL data no longer exist, that does not mean they are useless. The data from the Correlates of Crime Dataset continued to be used for research even as recently as 2008.

We need to become more involved in encouraging intergovernmental organizations to continue gathering this data and encouraging our own governments to fund this data collection and contribute our national data to the international datasets. Besides victimization and self-report surveys, official data present a number of advantages, and their collection encourages governmental accountability. We need to contribute our methodological expertise to the better collection of UN data. It is notable how, in recent years, criminologists have mobilized to protest funding cuts at the Bureau of Justice Statistics that affect the quality of the data of the National Crime Victimization Survey. Why have scholars not been active in supporting data collection efforts at INTERPOL and making their research policy relevant to INTERPOL in exchange for using their data? INTERPOL has no mechanism to allow scholars to play an organized role, but by playing a more active role at the United Nations, as criminologists, we can ensure that member states know the value and relevance of providing good data for the use of the international community of scholars and policymakers. In recent years, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has published manuals on the gathering of crime statistics, conducted technical assistance projects, and held expert meetings designed to improve response rates and data quality for the UNCTS. Country contacts have been suggested as the way to ensure better reporting of better data, similar to those used in the compilation of the *European Sourcebook on Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics*, as well as other mechanisms that make providing data easy and rapid (see, E/CN.15/2009/13, E/CN.15/2008/7, E/CN.15/2007/2, and A/CONF.203/3 at www.unodc.org). Nevertheless, in the face of resistance from many member states to the provision of their crime data, criminologists' voices must be heard.

We also need to rethink how we design our secondary data research, how we can contextualize it in time and space, and how it can be translated into relevant policy recommendations. Despite the complaint that international data is always flawed by domestic legal definitions, very little research has been

conducted on why and how those definitions differ and what cultural and structural factors impede harmonization efforts.

If all of this occurs, we stand a chance to save the remaining official data sources for comparative criminologists of the next generation.

NOTES

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