Book Review Essay
Manhattan Murder Mystery*

Franklin E. Zimring, *The Great American Crime Decline* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007)

Franklin E. Zimring, *The City That Became Safe: New York's Lessons for Urban Crime and Its Control* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012)

Patrick Sharkey, *Uneasy Peace: The Great Crime Decline, the Renewal of City Life, and the Next War on Violence* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2018)

David F. Greenberg†

In typical murder mysteries, one or more corpses are found, and the challenge is to determine who killed them. The Manhattan murder mystery of the last quarter century is of a different sort: It concerns the people who never became corpses even though they were expected to die. We do not know who those people are, because our expectations of deaths are not for particular individuals; they are for the collectivity of people living in Manhattan (or passing through). The unexpected survivors themselves do not know who they are, and yet we have good reason to believe that they exist. Based on past experience, it could reasonably be expected that a certain number of people in the city would be killed annually in recent years. Yet they were not. Worse than that, top-flight criminologists and expert criminal justice policy analysts predicted that violent crime rates would soon soar as a new generation of young Black male superpredators came of age. However, fewer—far fewer—actually died. Thus, we have among us the walking living, unknown to themselves or anyone else. The mystery is why they are alive.

* Apologies to Woody Allen.

† **David F. Greenberg** received his B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. degrees in physics from the University of Chicago. He has been a member of the New York University Sociology faculty since 1973. Over the years, he has been active in civil rights, anti-war, and prisoners' rights movements. His current research focuses on policing, imprisonment and capital punishment, criminal careers, statistical methodology, and number theory in mathematics.

The mystery is not restricted to Manhattan; it extends to all five of New York City's boroughs and to many other cities in the United States and other countries (Baumer & Wolff 2014, Griffiths & Norris 2019). It also includes the people who were not raped or assaulted and the property that was not stolen. It is these puzzles of the missing crimes—the crimes not committed—that have engaged criminologists for 20 years (Barker 2010, Blumstein & Wallman 2000, Levitt 2004). Franklin Zimring takes up the challenge in his book *The City That Became Safe* (2012) (henceforth *TCTBS*). Solving the mystery, in this case, does not mean identifying the individuals who were expected to be killed or stolen from but were not, or who did not kill when they should have. It means figuring out why the expected murders, assaults, and thefts did not occur.

Zimring's undertaking builds on *The Great American Crime Decline* (henceforth *TGACD*), his earlier effort to understand the national drop in crime that took place in the 1990s (Zimring 2007). In that book, he addresses the New York pattern, but only briefly. In the new study, more attention is given to a city whose crime trend has been heralded as exceptional—an amazing deviation from the national pattern.

In the usual pattern of book reviewing, reviews appear soon after the book's publication. In this instance, the delay is longer. The lapse allows us to assess Zimring's arguments more fully in light of more recent work. In so doing, I will pay particular attention to a newer book by urban sociologist Patrick Sharkey (2018), *Uneasy Peace: The Great Crime Decline, the Renewal of City Life, and the Next War on Violence*.

I encourage readers to read both publications, as they complement one another. The two books systematically collect and analyze data to support extended arguments in clear and lively prose. Graphs and tables are deployed liberally, without the technical apparatus of statistics that many nonspecialist readers would find off-putting.

Zimring's Strategy

To provide background for the more recent book, I begin with some remarks on Zimring's earlier study. My remarks are written from the point of view of someone who uses statistical modeling techniques to study spatial and temporal patterns in crime and criminal justice. Zimring begins by arguing that, starting in the early 1990s, index crime rates began to fall in the United States in a manner that was quite different from earlier trends, in which crime rates rose or fell for just a few years at a time. Annual drops in

the 1990s were individually unremarkable, but because they persisted for a longer period of time, they had a larger cumulative effect.

When viewed in the context of a longer time frame, the 1990s drop is, in fact, not entirely unique. In 1933, U.S. homicide rates began a sustained descent that, apart from a modest upsurge during the Second World War, continued until 1955, bringing about a reduction by a factor greater than two, comparable to the more recent drop (Goertzel et al. 2013, Sasinoski 2011). The trend can be seen in Figure 1.

An understanding of the recent drop could conceivably have been achieved by considering evidence of earlier long-term trends, but this was a path not taken, possibly for lack of data for the earlier years. Its potential lies in the likelihood that each decade is not totally unique. Factors that promote or prevent crime in one era may well have done so at other times as well.

In distinguishing the sustained drop from the more common short-term fluctuations (which he misleadingly calls "cycles"[1]), Zimring observes that the latter can easily occur by chance. Though not elaborated in the text, the observation is a valid one. Potentially, crime rates can be affected by lots of shocks, none of them very strong and none of them enduring. Trying to chase them down can be a fruitless enterprise. However, a series of randomly occurring, short, independent shocks can, once in a while, produce what appears to be a sustained directional effect—one that persists over a number of time points. It is improbable that a long drop arose in this way, but it is not impossible.

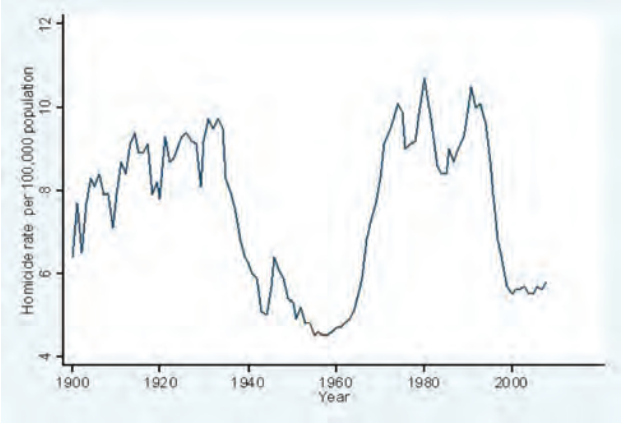

Figure 1. U.S homicide rates per 100,000 population. This figure reproduces part of Figure 1 in Goertzel et al. (2013) using data given to the author by Ted Goertzel.

This possibility can be checked statistically. I carried out such a test (the generalized least squares [GLS] version of the Augmented Dickey–Fuller unit root test) using time series data for each of the seven index crime rates for the United States, for the years 1946–2013.[2] For each offense, the patterns were consistent with a unit root process—one in which annual changes were completely random.

However, the statistical power of the test is low, which implies that this finding is inconclusive.[3] This does not mean that Zimring's project of identifying causes of the change is misguided. It does suggest that his project of distinguishing short-term from long-term changes may be difficult to carry out. Below, I will present evidence that the annual changes in crime rates were not totally random.

To advance our understanding of what did—or did not—explain the drop of the 1990s, Zimring eschews the statistical modeling adopted by economists and quantitative criminologists, pointing out (to a degree correctly in my view) that these models sometimes require strong assumptions whose validity is uncertain and difficult to assess. Whether avoiding this method altogether is a satisfactory approach is not so clear. I personally think not. In any event, Zimring examines the possible impact of several candidate causes, one at a time. In one chapter, Zimring considers the expansion of prison populations, demographic change, and improvement in the economy as possible explanations and finds that, although they may have contributed to the decline, they still leave a substantial fraction of the decline unexplained.[4]

Though Zimring's discussion of these topics is smart and insightful, some of the details allow room for quibbles or comments. Zimring dismisses the fizzling out of the crack epidemic in a single sentence, by pointing out that other illegal recreational drugs were still being marketed. However, the relevant process for crack may have been the stabilizing of the market rather than its disappearance. The market for heroin was older, and by the1990s it may have already stabilized.

Zimring also takes up the possibility of regression to the mean—and rejects it. He was right to do so, but I wish he had said more about this, because Harcourt and Ludwig (2006) have argued, in an essay that no doubt appeared too late for Zimring to take into account, that mean reversion, not arrests on marijuana charges, could have explained the New York decline.

However, Zimring does not demonstrate that regression to the mean cannot explain the crime drop. Actually, Harcourt and Ludwig (ibid.) use the phrase "mean reversion" to refer to something different from what most

statisticians mean by this phrase. In standard statistical usage, regression to the mean is a selection effect. Suppose a crime rate was level over the long run but fluctuated randomly from year to year about that level. Someone who began tracking the crime rate in a year when it was unusually high would probably see lower rates in subsequent years but would actually be seeing only random fluctuations about a level. Someone who thought that the introduction of COMPSTAT in the early 1990s led to the crime drop would need to consider that COMPSTAT was introduced at a point in time when crime rates were exceptionally high, with subsequent drops being due to mean reversion.

Harcourt and Ludwig's (ibid.) analysis, however, proceeds by introducing a lagged dependent variable into their model. It has a negative effect on change in the crime rate. This is a way to model a homeostatic process—the sort of self-regulating process that governs the operation of a thermostat (Kessler & Greenberg 1981). In the criminological context, this might mean that an unusually large increase is crime in the 1970s and 1980s set in motion social processes that reduced crime. Sharkey proposes this sort of model in his book, and we will discuss his proposals later in this essay. For the moment, though, the important point is that Harcourt and Ludwig's analysis did not demonstrate the existence of regression to the mean, only that marijuana arrests probably did not contribute to the kind of self-regulating process just described. Looking only at murder rates, I found the temporal pattern consistent with no regression to the mean,[5] but also consistent with a fairly slow regression to the mean effect—something Zimring wrongly thinks to be impossible.

Zimring's discussion of demographic change does not mention immigrants (he does, however, discuss immigration in *TCTBS*—in a narrative I had trouble following). Several recent studies conclude that immigration to the United States reduces crime rates (Kim et al. 2019, Martinez et al. 2016, Ousey & Kubrin, 2018, Stowell et al. 2009). Unfortunately, none of those studies estimates the contribution immigration has been making to the long-term downward national trend. Zimring also does not consider the removal of lead from the environment as a contributor to the drop. It is well established that early childhood exposure to lead can result in impulsivity and other psychological traits predictive of conduct problems years later (Marcus et al. 2010, Nevin 2007, Wright et al. 2008). A recent study of crime trends in Argentina found that lead removal made a large contribution to crime reduction (Taylor et al. 2016).

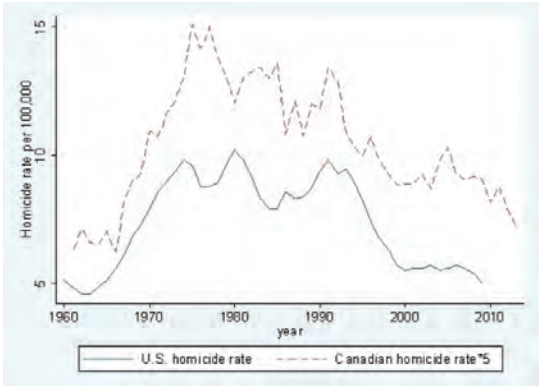

Figure 2. Canadian and U.S. homicide rate

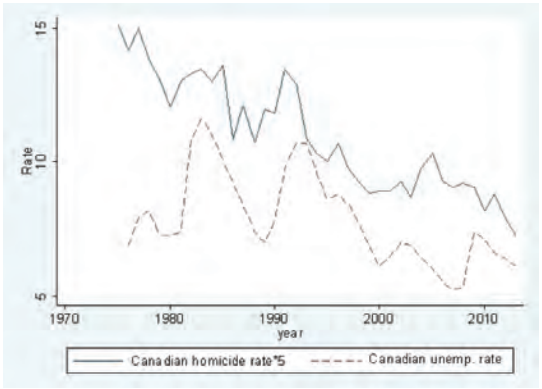

Figure 3. Canadian homicide rate (×5) and unemployment rate

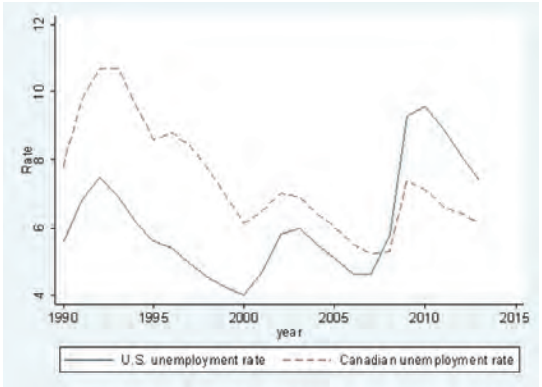

Figure 4. Canadian and U.S. unemployment rates, 1992–2018

Although allowing for the possibility that the changing of the age composition of the U.S. population—to be specific, the aging of the baby boom cohort—could have made a difference, Zimring may be underestimating its impact by implicitly assuming the effect to be compositional, linear, and additive. One can certainly imagine that the swelling of a birth cohort increases crime more than proportionately (e.g., by encouraging the formation of poorly supervised male cliques or gangs, by increasing competition for jobs, and by facilitating procriminal subculture formation). Still, Zimring's dismissal of the changing age structure of the population is in accord with other research, which finds that the age structure of the population is not a strong predictor of crime rates (Blumstein & Wallman 2000; Levitt 1999, 2004; Marvell & Moody 1991).

Another issue concerns the overall explanatory power of the variables under consideration. Do they explain 25 percent of the drop or 75 percent? If the latter, the predictor variables would be performing quite well. If the former, obviously not. To make matters worse, the aggregate explanatory power of a set of explanatory variables cannot be assessed by adding up the effects of the individual variables. Consider three variables X, Y, and Z, whose mutual correlations are all 0.48. Taken by itself, X only explains 23 percent of the variance in Y, making it a fairly weak predictor. The same is true of Z, taken by itself. However, because of their relationship to one another, X and Z together explain 92 percent of the variance in Y, making them strong predictors collectively. Regrettably, none of Zimring's analyses furnishes a good estimate as to how much the factors under study contributed to the crime drop.

Zimring's discussion of economic change, summarizing a few studies carried out by economists, is careful, but in light of more recent work by Rosenfeld (2014) and Rosenfeld and Levin (2016) highlighting the contribution inflation makes to crime causation, he may have underestimated the role of economic factors.

A more thorough examination of Canadian crime rates might have inspired additional research strategies for assessing economic explanations for the drop. As Zimring notes, Canadian and U.S. murder rates per 100,000 move in close parallel (see Figure 2). Movement in the Canadian homicide rate is strongly governed by the unemployment rate (see Figure 3)—something Zimring considers mysterious. Zimring's (2007, 121–22) graph shows that U.S. and Canadian unemployment rates also track closely[6]—an indication that the two economies are substantially integrated (see Figure 4).

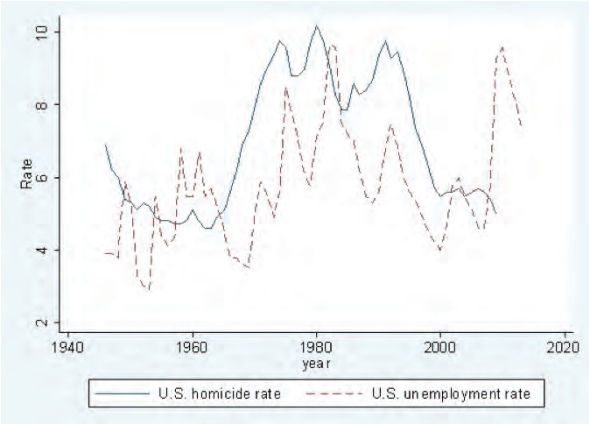

Figure 5. U.S. homicide rate per 100,000 and unemployment rate

Moreover, Canadian unemployment fell steadily in the 1990s, suggesting that economic factors contributed to the drop. Zimring dismisses this possibility, perhaps too hastily. Given the similarity in trends for homicide and for unemployment, along with the existence of a relationship between unemployment and homicide in Canada, one would expect to find a strong positive correlation between U.S. unemployment and U.S. homicide rates. This would be consistent with the notion that improvement in the economy helped bring crime down. Indeed, the correlation between the homicide rate and the unemployment rate for the years 1946–2009 is 0.48—a moderately strong correlation (see Figure 5).

The graph strongly suggests that an improving economy played a major role in reducing crime in the 1990s. However, the relationship is weaker in recent years and does not hold up in a multivariate analysis. There are two possible lessons here: either economic factors played a larger role in the crime drop than Zimring thinks, or simple bivariate relationships can be misleading.

To illustrate one possible strategy for investigating the effects of the state of the economy and other social indicators on murder, using a time series regression with the Prais-Winsten correction to handle first-order serial correlation of errors, I regressed the U.S. murder rate (logged) from 1976 to 1998, as recorded by the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports, on the inflation rate (defined as the annual percent change in the consumer price index, the divorce rate, and the rate of pregnancies per 1000 girls age 15–17).[7] Together,

Table 1. Prais-Winsten estimates of logged U.S. homicide rate regression, 1976–1996

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t	Prob
Teen pregnancy rate per 1000	.0094	.0007	5.50	.000
Divorce rate	.0548	.0372	1.47	.252
Inflation	.0004	.0034	1.16	.282
Constant	.8867	.1422	6.24	.000

Durbin-Watson statistic = 1.15; R-squared = 0.92.
Divorce rates are taken from the Centers for Disease Control; teenage pregnancy rates are taken from the "Pregnancies, Births and Abortions among Adolescents and Young Women in the United States, 2013: National and State Trends by Age, Race and Ethnicity" by Kathryn Kost, Isaac Maddow-Zimmet, and Alex Arpaia (Guttmacher Institute, August 2017); the inflation rate is the change in the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U).

they explain 92 percent of the variance. Of the estimated coefficients, shown in Table 1, only the cultural one (teen pregnancy) achieves significance at the 0.05 level.

Figure 6, graphing the logged murder rate and the logged murder rate predicted by the model, shows that the model captures the major ups and downs of the observed murder rate quite well. The fit is, in fact, remarkably good for such a crude model. Especially noteworthy is the accuracy with which the model pinpoints the turning points in the homicide rates.

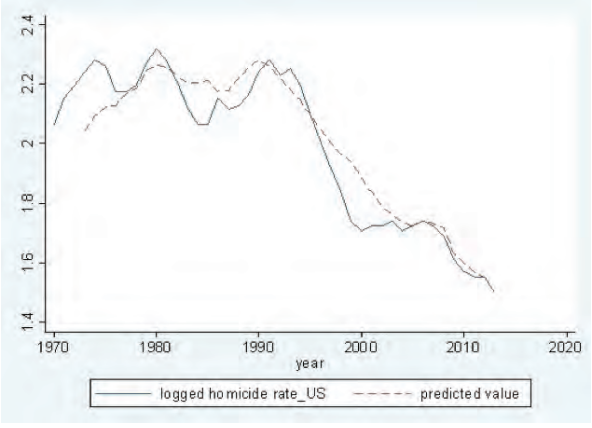

Figure 6. Observed and predicted log homicide rates, United States

Eyes on New York City

In *TCTBS*, Zimring (2012) argues that something happened in New York after 1990 that did not happen in other parts of the United States. By comparing trends in the seven classical index crimes, Zimring shows that rates for these crimes declined much more in New York City than they did in other large U.S. cities.

Figure 7 illustrates this kind of evidence. It shows the annual homicide rates for New York City and for the rest of the country for the years 1985–2014.[8] In 1985, New York had a homicide rate of 19.3 per 100,000, several times higher than the national rate (excluding New York City) of 7.82. New York's rate rose rapidly, reaching 30.7 in 1990, several times higher than the national rate of 8.78. At that point, the New York rate dropped precipitously, reaching a mind-boggling 3.90 in 2014, a little less than the national rate, excluding New York, of 4.49. As a result of these unequal changes, New York City's share of the national homicide total fell from 9.58 percent in 1990 to just 2.34 percent in 2014.

Having established New York's criminological uniqueness to his satisfaction, Zimring proceeds to consider possible causes of its superdecline. After eliminating a number of plausible candidates, Zimring argues that innovative policing methods contributed substantially to the New York decline. In the third and final part of the book, Zimring draws broader conclusions about crime patterns and criminological theory.

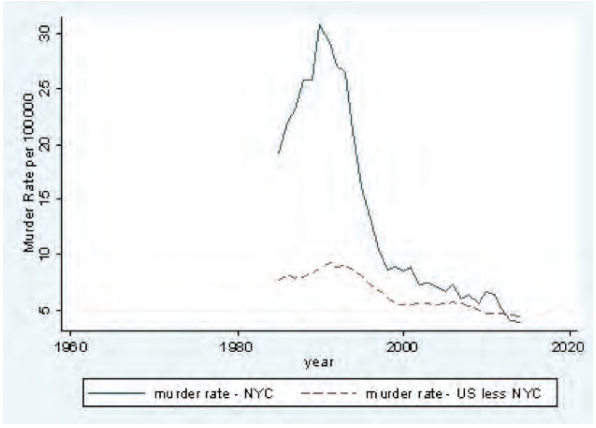

Figure 7. Homicide trends in New York City and the United States, 1985–2014

Assessing Zimring's Arguments: Was There a Distinct New York Crime Drop?

Watching Zimring's powerful mind at work developing an argument step by step will provide pleasure to many readers. It did for me. I was impressed that on numerous occasions Zimring points to limitations in the data that make it difficult or impossible to obtain definitive answers. He identifies topics on which more research would be useful.

Space limitations preclude a full summary and critique of all that Zimring has to say on the drop, so I will take up just a few issues regarding his methods and conclusions.

I begin by asking a basic question: is Zimring right in maintaining that New York's crime drop was in important ways different from the declines seen in other cities? Zimring (2007) observes that in the decade of the 1990s, crime declined in many places, not just in New York City. Was there something truly unique about New York? A comparison with other large and medium-sized U.S. cities shows that Boston, San Diego, San Jose, Charlotte, Dallas, Fort Worth, Austin, Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, Denver, Washington, D.C., Jacksonville, Houston, and Seattle all experienced drops of comparable magnitude (Fagan et al. 1998, Friedman et al. 2017, Harcourt 2002, James 2018). Seeing New York as being positioned toward one end of a continuum rather than as an outlier might have suggested new research strategies with the potential for new insights (e.g., an analysis of panel data for U.S. cities). That said, even if New York's crime decline was not totally without parallel, its drop was greater and lasted longer than that of most large U.S. cities, making it worth our attention—provided that the drop was what it was claimed to be, that is, real. All criminologists learn when they first start to study the field that officially generated crime data are untrustworthy. Victims do not always report crimes to the police, and the police do not always record them in the same way. This understanding generates uncertainty as to whether trends in the crime counts or rates published by police departments truly reflect trends in real underlying crime rates or instead represent trends in the ways victims report, and the police record, crime. Zimring and Sharkey both face up to this challenge by demonstrating that the New York drop was real. While the drop was in progress, *The Village Voice* newspaper published allegations that the New York Police Department (NYPD) was "cooking the books," fraudulently lowering crime rates by not counting or downgrading them (Eterno & Silverman 2012, 4, 165–66, 169–70, 175;

Rayman 2010, 2011, 2012). It appears this did occur in some precincts, but nevertheless, the drop did happen, and it was huge.

This conclusion would induce most quantitative criminologists to build a multivariate model for crime rates and estimate it on a representative sample of cities. That approach would allow the researcher to find out how well the model predicts each city's crime rates. Zimring does not attempt this. Instead, having concluded that none of the other supposed causes of the crime drop adequately explain it, Zimring infers, by elimination, that it could only have been the police. Obviously, this is shaky reasoning. It rests on the premise that all alternative explanations have been considered and ruled out, but that is unlikely.[9]

Zimring could have provided a more convincing basis for his conclusion by developing measures of policing (such as size of force, number of stops or arrests, or adoption of COMPSTAT) and showing that they explain differences among cities. He did not. That said, Zimring's conclusion is not implausible. He points out that the NYPD hired many more officers than other big cities, and its introduction of COMPSTAT should have improved the quality of policing.[10] Nevertheless, the plausible is not always true. Some research suggests that the role of the police in reducing crime in New York was limited (Greenberg 2014, Rosenfeld & Fornango 2017, Rosenfeld et al. 2005). Several considerations suggest that the introduction of new technology was not as important as some have argued, as New York City crime rates were already dropping before 1994 when COMPSTAT was adopted. They continued to do so after 1994, at about the same rate (Greenberg 2014, Levitt 2004). Moreover, if crime was falling because computer management of information was giving the police more and more timely useful information about crime patterns, one would expect clearance rates to have been increasing in the 1990s, and yet homicide clearance rates remained stable during the 25 years following 1990.

Sharkey's Analysis

Sharkey's (2018) main focus in *Uneasy Peace* is not the explanation of the crime drop but its consequences—the revitalization of social life and local economies in previously dangerous neighborhoods. However, he offers some provocative thoughts on the causes of the drop, working within the routine activity theoretical framework (Cohen & Felson 1979). In that perspective, crime rates depend not only on motivated offenders but also on the presence or absence of capable guardians.

Most previous explanations of the crime drop deal with supposedly exogenous causes conceived as motivators of crime. For example, abortion law reform and removal of lead from the environment can be treated as exogenous because they came about for reasons unrelated to the crime rate. The theoretical claim is that these developments decreased the overall amount of criminal motivation in society. While acknowledging the possibility that there might be some limited validity to the abortion theory, it is the endogenous causes that ignite Sharkey's interest. They arose, or grew, he thinks, in response to the rising crime rates of the 1960s. He focuses his discussion on three in particular—the police, the prison, and popular mobilization in the community.

Before looking at Sharkey's exposition in detail, two general remarks are in order. First, too often, critics of the criminal justice system cavalierly dismiss the possibility that the police and prisons prevent crime out of hand. Zimring and Sharkey deserve credit for separating the normative question from the empirical question. The police were brutal, Sharkey insists, but they did the job. Too many people may have been put in prison for too long, but mass incarceration took criminals off the streets and cut crime.

Second, in our toy time series example, exogenous variables explain 92 percent of the variance in logged homicide rates. That does not leave much room for additional contributions.

In making his case for the three endogenous variables, Sharkey actually presents no new research on the police. Instead, he summarizes half a dozen studies of various kinds demonstrating that the police can and do reduce crime. If they could do so locally for a short period of time (as the research often shows[11]), Sharkey suggests, it is at least plausible that they also do so on a more macro basis, over a longer stretch of time—plausible, perhaps, but far from certain. Moreover, even if the police did help to reduce street crime, is there anything they could have done to curb intimate partner violence,[12] which mostly occurs indoors? If the answer is no, the role of the police in preventing other kinds of violence might be questioned.[13]

When it comes to prisons, Sharkey takes the same approach. Citing, but not even summarizing (much less critically evaluating), several studies that found prisons reduce crime, Sharkey quips that no honest person could deny that prison growth contributed to the crime drop. As to the magnitude of the contribution, Sharkey has nothing to say. He does not mention that several researchers, including Thomas Marvell and Carlisle Moody as well as Bert Useem and his collaborators, have found that the elasticities for the effect of prison population growth on crime, though negative, were

miniscule (Western 2006, 179–85). Nor does he tell us that researchers have also found evidence of diminishing marginal returns to imprisonment and that incarceration beyond a certain point disorganizes communities, thereby increasing crime rates (Clear 2007).

Furthermore, studies of prison population growth typically look for short-term benefits, whereas the long-run effects increasing crime go ignored (DeFina & Hannon 2010). Failure to mention any of this leaves readers with a very misleading impression of what the research literature has to say about an important public policy issue.

In a particularly disturbing short passage, Sharkey (143) expresses reluctance to call for the release of large numbers of prisoners. With society ill equipped to absorb them, a massive release could destabilize a community. This stance is morally problematic because it entails inflicting high costs on those who have already been treated unjustly to benefit others. This openly flouts the retributive norm of proportionality between the seriousness of the offense and the severity of the penalty.

In most locations, Sharkey's concern has little relevance because decarceration is proceeding so slowly. One exception is New York, where a 30 percent drop in prison populations since 1999 has not led to a new crime wave; on the contrary, violent crime rates fell. Court orders led to a drop of 20 percent in California's prison population in the same years.[14] There, too, researchers could detect no adverse effect on violent crime rates (Lofstrom & Raphael 2016).

The third source of guardians, Sharkey suggests, is informal associations of private individuals acting locally, mobilizing community resources to discourage crime. Business improvement districts and neighborhood patrols would be examples. This is good, old-fashioned Chicago school sociology. In a highly technical journal article, Sharkey et al. (2017) show that the formation of private associations reduces local crime rates in the short run. What their methodology prevents them from doing, however, is assessing their contribution to the long-term drop. The problem is their use of fixed effects for time. With these in the model, coefficient estimates represent contributions above or below a common trend line, not their contribution to the trend. This leaves the trend itself unexplained.

Possibly, Sharkey's consideration of endogenous crime prevention processes could profitably be expanded to include additional mechanisms, such as residents of high crime neighborhoods abandoning predatory crime and drug dealing based on their perceptions that these activities are damaging to

the community and also to the perpetrators (Curtis 1998). In the language of routine activity theory, the action here is along the "motivated offender" dimension, rather than the "capable guardian" dimension. Control theory dogma tends to ignore the latter, but theoretical considerations and empirical evidence tell us that both are potentially relevant (Greenberg 2015).[15]

To avoid leaving a misleading impression of Sharkey's views of police, I want to emphasize that his contention that abusive, brutal policing helped to reduce crime is not an endorsement of it. Indeed, an entire chapter of *Uneasy Peace* is called "The End of the Warrior Cop." However, I believe that this chapter title is not quite appropriate, in that most police officers do not see themselves as warriors or act like them (Klein 2018). What Sharkey seems to have in mind, though, is an end to rough, zero-tolerance, pro-active, tough-guy, confrontational styles of policing, and their replacement by algorithmic hot-spot policing conducted in a more civil manner. However, is the older mode of policing actually dead, or at least dying? Some enlightened high-ranking police executives leave that impression. They talk a good game when speaking at press conferences and academic meetings. In some departments real change is underway. In New York, misdemeanor policing has changed radically in recent years. That said, how many police departments have made major changes in their protocols for stops, searches, arrests, and the use of violence? Are civilians not still being shot or roughed up by police? According to the database maintained by *The Washington Post*, between 2015 and 2019, just under a 1,000 people a year were killed by police, with no trend evident.[16] In a number of cities, police rank and file have reacted to criticism and proposals to reduce police violence with resentment and resistance.

Where changes have been made, how long will they last? Haven't past police reforms usually been short lived (Sekhon 2019)? Might the new order come with new problems, or is this question too cynical? The answers are not yet clear, but it seems likely that Sharkey underestimates the tenacity of the old order.

Where Are We Going?

With proactive, aggressive police no longer serving as guardians of public safety, who will? Sharkey sees community organizations drawing on private and public resources stepping in to provide services to community residents in a new war against violence. Sharkey's descriptions of nascent programs that work in this way help to make the case that this is not idle dreaming.

Still, the political obstacles to the adoption and successful implementation of anything like that seem daunting.

The title of this final chapter includes the phrase "war on violence." It is an unfortunate choice of words. If we are to move away from police brutality, surely, we should stop talking about what the order keepers in society do as "war." War is not the only—and not necessarily the best—model for preventing civilian violence.

Conclusion

Did Zimring and/or Sharkey solve the mystery? No, the mystery remains. Readers looking for quick fixes that will reduce crime even more will not find them, but readers who engage their work with a skeptical mindset will gain much from the effort.

NOTES

1. In mathematics and physics, cyclic behavior is regular, like a sine wave. Annual U.S. crime rates are not cyclical in that sense.

2. Except where otherwise indicated, U.S. crime rates are taken from the Uniform Crime Reports section of the FBI's website, www.fbi.gov. Economic indicators for the United States are from the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, www.bls.gov. All Canadian statistics are from Statistics Canada, www.statcan.gc.ca/eng.

3. However, the same conclusion was reached when the homicide data were extended to cover the years 1900–2008. Here the power is greater.

4. Zimring draws on published literature to bound the contribution prison population growth made to crime reduction as lying between 10 and 27 percent, but his discussion makes clear that little confidence can be placed in the estimates. Importantly, he points out that Canada's crime rates fell at the same time as those in the United States, without a comparable expansion in its prison population.

5. Recall that a unit root process cannot display regression to the mean.

6. Curiously, Zimring says just the opposite.

7. These variables are expected to be exogenous to the crime rate. I take divorce to be a measure of social disorganization and teenage pregnancy to be a measure of impulsivity and low self-control.

8. I generated the numbers used in the graph using the FBI's online tool at https://ucrdatatool.gov.

9. In a recent survey, Maria Tcherni-Buzzeo (2019) identifies 24 possible causes, some more plausible than others. Most are not addressed by Zimring. For an earlier, more modest effort along these lines, see Levitt (2004).

10. COMPSTAT was rolled out in the mid-1990s (Regoeczi et al. 2008, Williams 2017).

11. As it turns out, some of the police studies have technical flaws, making their conclusions untrustworthy (Kovandzic et al. 2016, McCrary 2002).

12. Intimate partner homicide rates fell between 1976 and 2000, more for male victims than for females (Fridel & Fox 2019).

13. I owe this point to Steve Schulhofer.

14. I computed these numbers using the online Bureau of Justice Statistics corrections calculator, found at www.bjs.gov.

15. I see a political tilt to the neglect of motivational elements in criminological theorizing. Motivation in theories of crime causation often originates in inequality, with redistribution as a remedy. As commonly deployed, then, routine activity theory rejects redistribution as a crime prevention strategy.

16. See www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/national/police-shootings-2018/?utm_term=.50f aa2198f3c (last accessed June 27, 2019).

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