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## Foreword

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# SYMPOSIUM

## FOREWORD

MARVIN E. WOLFGANG

The most notable thing about the researches represented in this Symposium is the old adage of standing on the shoulders of the science that has preceded them. Robert Merton wrote cogently about that phenomenon years ago.

I have repeatedly written that the first birth cohort study in criminology was conducted by Nils Christie in Norway. His doctoral dissertation, untranslated but read by Thorsten Sellin and by me in part, was *Unge norske lovovertredere*.<sup>1</sup>

In 1964, Sellin and I proposed to the National Institute of Mental Health a birth cohort study of Philadelphia boys born in 1945 who lived in that city at least from ages ten to eighteen. The study, *Delinquency in a Birth Cohort*, was published in 1972.

Earlier, Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck had followed a group of males released from a Massachusetts reformatory for five, then ten, then fifteen years.<sup>2</sup> The McCords followed the Cambridge-Somerville boys into adulthood.<sup>3</sup> These were longitudinal but not birth cohort studies.

Not until the Philadelphia Study was there a birth cohort followed for its prevalence and incidence of delinquent acts, the probability of delinquency and the analysis of delinquency careers, age at onset, escalation, specialization, and stochastic analysis. Terence Thornberry, the principal investigator of the Rochester Youth Development Study in this Symposium, was a research associate in

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<sup>1</sup> Nils Christie's dissertation is entitled *Young Norwegian Offenders*. It was published in 1960 in Oslo, Norway by Universitetsforlaget; however, Christie's dissertation has not been translated or re-published in English.

<sup>2</sup> S. GLUECK & E. GLUECK, 500 CRIMINAL CAREERS (1930); S. GLUECK & E. GLUECK, LATER CRIMINAL CAREERS (1937); and S. GLUECK & E. GLUECK, CRIMINAL CAREERS IN RETROSPECT (1943).

<sup>3</sup> W. McCORD, J. McCORD & I. ZOLA, ORIGINS OF CRIME: A NEW EVALUATION OF THE CAMBRIDGE-SOMERVILLE YOUTH STUDY (1959).

the birth cohorts of the Philadelphia studies. He is a co-author of the follow-up of the 1945 birth cohort.<sup>4</sup>

The Rochester, Denver, and Pittsburgh prospective longitudinal studies build upon our Philadelphia cohort and the London studies of West and Farrington.<sup>5</sup> The former stand on the shoulders of the latter, as is traditional in science. There are always methodological issues that arise with any research. This is not the place to raise them. Other scholars will do so as these amazingly rich studies are published.

The most significant thing about these new longitudinal studies is the coordination among them. Interview schedules, self-reports of delinquency, development psychology, parental contacts, have been coordinated in a most unusual manner in the history of scientific research. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the three research sites deserve an enormous amount of credit for this collaborative enterprise. There are elements of similarity through all three sites. There are overlapping site replications. Yet there are special features in each site than can add dimensions of understanding about causal concerns that are different from Denver to Pittsburgh and Rochester. I can only applaud the diversity and similarity in each site.

The multi-cohort paradigm was what our staff at the Sellin Criminology Center at the University of Pennsylvania advocated before the MacArthur Foundation in 1983. It is gratifying to see that the suggestions we made are now being fulfilled, in part, by these studies.

Much more research needs to be done, and I hope the Department of Justice, the MacArthur Foundation and other private foundations will continue to support longitudinal studies from juvenile to adult years, from delinquency to crime.

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<sup>4</sup> M. WOLFGANG, R. FIGLIO & T. THORNBERRY, *FROM BOY TO MAN: FROM DELINQUENCY TO CRIME* (1987).

<sup>5</sup> D. WEST & D. FARRINGTON, *WHO BECOMES DELINQUENT?* (1973); and D. WEST & D. FARRINGTON, *THE DELINQUENT WAY OF LIFE* (1977).