Theorising and Exploring the Thatcherite Legacy for the Criminal Justice System

Stephen Farrall
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Our Approach: Drawing on Historical Institutionalism

- Concerned with illuminating how institutions and institutional settings mediate the ways in which processes unfold over time.
- Institutions do not simply ‘channel’ policies; they help to define policy concerns, create the ‘objects’ of policy and shape the nature of the interests in policies which actors may have.
- So ... Politics does not simply create policies; policies also create politics.
- Attempts to understand how political and policy processes relationships play out over time coupled with an appreciation that prior events, procedures and processes will have consequences for subsequent events.
- There are both fast- and slow-moving causal processes and outcomes.
In which ways might increases in crime be a legacy of ‘Thatcherite’ policies?

- Economic change
- Changes in social security provision
- Changes in the housing market
- Changes in education policies
Economic Changes

- Economic restructuring overseen by Thatcher governments.
- Consequently, levels of unemployment and inequality rose through the 1980s.
The Economy, Social Security and Crime in Post-War Britain

Jennings et al (2012) find:

1: unemployment rate associated with property crime,
2: this *strengthened* during this period,
3: (economic inequality just outside significance),
4: increases in welfare spending is associated with declines in the property crime rate.
Housing Policy

- Created residualisation of council housing; redistributed social location of domestic crimes.
- Working Paper available for comment (email s.farrall@sheffield.ac.uk).
What happened to crime (etc)?

- Rise in crime (Fig 1). This was generally rising before 1979, but the rate of increase picked up after early 1980s and again in early 1990s.
- Fear of crime rises (tracks crime rates).
- People want to see an increase in spending on the police/prisons (with decrease of spending on social security, Fig 2).
Figure 1: Property Crime Per Capita (Home Office Recorded Statistics and BCS)
Fig 2: Priorities for extra spending (social security vs. police) BSAS 1983-2009
What have Govts done?

- They devote more time to crime in policy agenda (Fig 3).
- Little sustained interest in crime until 60s (2%).
- After 1979 GE rises to 8%.
- Big jump again in 1996 (15%).
- Thereafter runs at or near to 20%.
Figure 3: Proportion of attention to law and crime in Queen’s Speech (from policyagendas.org)
Modelling Govt focus on crime

• Farrall and Jennings (2012) report statistically significant relationships for:
  1: national crime rate on Govt attention on crime in Queen’s Speeches, and,
  2: effects of public opinion on Govt. attention on crime in Queen’s Speeches.

• So the Govt responds to crime rates and expressions of public concern about crime.
Consistent with Cascades of Policy Radicalism (Hay and Farrall, 2014)

- Thatcherite radicalism cascaded through sectors of social and economic policy.
- Initial focus on the economy and electorally popular policies (housing).
- Social Security reformed mid-1980s.
- From 1987 education, NHS, local Govts.
- Focus on crime a ‘spillover’ from other areas.
Outline of current work

ESRC grant with Colin Hay, Emily Gray and Will Jennings:

- Analyses of BCS, BSAS, GHS, BES + national level data. Data sets to be made available autumn 2015.
- Training workshop (Manchester 20\textsuperscript{th} May 2015) FULL
- 40min documentary film made (Doc Fest 2015)
  - [http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/law/research/projects/crimetrajectories](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/law/research/projects/crimetrajectories)
- Email newsletter (s.farrall@sheffield.ac.uk)
- Twittering: @Thatcher_legacy
Rest of Today’s Session

- Will will do ... [TS]
- Maria will explore the degree to which we have identified ‘Thatcher’s Children’ in relation to various social/political attitudes. [APC]
- Emily will do the same for crime-related matters. [APC]
Further Reading


