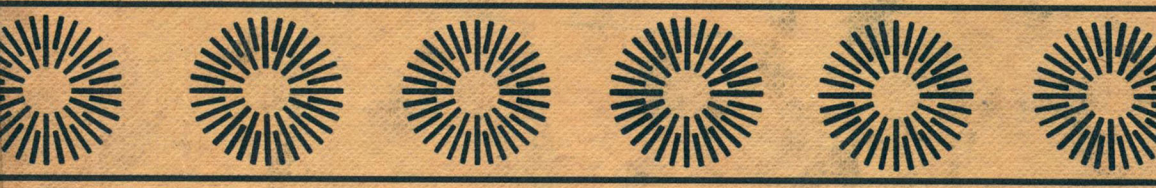
Reducing Delinquency

A Strategic Planning Approach

Gregory P. Falkin



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To Deb and Patience

Foreword

One of the more overworked clichés in criminal justice is the claim that the criminal justice system is a "nonsystem." That characterization is intended to suggest that the different parts of the criminal justice system–the loose aggregation of agencies society charges with dealing with crime, suspects, defendants, and offenders–are not only poorly coordinated, but that they often work at cross purposes. Indeed, that conflict is intended, since the different parts of that system are supposed to serve as checks on each other, especially in their decisions regarding those individuals who are the clients of the system. Thus, with respect to individual decisions, the criminal justice system is an intentional "nonsystem," in the sense that our democratic society does not want a single "system manager" who would be able in an unchecked way to direct the large array of government power and resources against those accused of criminal acts.

This intentional internal fragmentation with regard to individual decisions need not be translated into comparable fragmentation in the policy decisions made by and about the various parts of the system. Because the decisions made at any stage of the system can affect the nature and magnitude of the problems and workloads imposed on the others, it is clearly necessary that those influences be taken into account when policy changes are being considered and when resources are allocated.

Furthermore, each part of the system contributes to the combined objectives of controlling crime and doing so with justice, due process, and regard for individual rights. Resources allocated to one part of the system may conserve more resources in another part, while advancing these objectives. It is thus most important to consider such system-wide planning at the managerial level, and certainly at the strategic level.

The President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, in its 1967 report, made an urgent plea for such planning for the criminal justice system. That planning was supposed to be grounded in solid theory, based on valid data, and was to consider the system-wide implication of policy choices made about any element of the criminal justice system. That plea was translated into a legislative mandate with the passage by Congress of the Omnibus Safe Streets and Crime Control Act of 1968, which created the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration and called for the creation of criminal justice planning agencies in each state. To provide some resources for those planning agencies to implement their plans, each was given federal LEAA funds in the order of 5 percent of their states' expenditures on the criminal justice system–not many dollars in absolute terms but a reasonable increment with which to be effective if they could.

The creation of that LEAA program initiated an era of naïve optimism

regarding the prospects of rational planning for the criminal justice system. Now, over ten years later, most observers have concluded that most of the planning efforts have been notoriously weak and ineffectual, and the allocation of the LEAA funds has been characterized much more by a highly political and often arbitrary process, with very little contribution from system-wide planning or from the rational analysis initially envisioned.

A major reason for this failure is the inadequacy of the knowledge base on which to develop rational planning, and of the tools available for planners to carry out their assigned tasks. I have been involved in trying to provide such tools, first with Richard Larson with a batch-process model of a total criminal justice system, and subsequently with Jacob Belkin and William Glass in translating those concepts into an interactive model adapted to meet the needs of the nontechnician. Those models, JUSSIM I (which depicts the downstream flow in the criminal justice system) and JUSSIM II (which deals with the feedback of recidivists), have been widely distributed, but one could not validly claim that they have been widely used. The reasons for this are complicated, but they include the difficulties in generating data for even these simplified models, suspicion of the validity of the theoretical underpinnings and the consequent calculations in the models, antipathy by nontechnical users toward calculations with which they are not totally familiar, and a reluctance among many decision makers to become too rational about issues that are so inherently political as those involved in decisions about crime and punishment.

In his book *Reducing Delinquency: A Strategic Planning Approach,* Gregory Falkin follows in this tradition. He attempts to illuminate the various aspects of the issues that must be addressed in pursuing a strategic approach to planning. He properly identifies the kinds of objectives which the criminal justice system pursues, and relates these to the limited approaches available to the criminal justice system, as well as preventive approaches outside the system. These various categorizations are useful, partly because the different disciplines and professions involved with the criminal justice system can use the same construct to mean very different notions. For example, major debate centers around "recidivism rate": the police argue that the "recidivism rate" is over 75 percent, while corrections officials disagree vigorously, and insist that the "recidivism rate" is under one-third. It is entirely possible, of course, that both could be right, because police focus on a *re-arrest* recidivism rate, whereas corrections officials focus on a *re-institutionalization* recidivism rate, causing an arrest not to result in an imprisonment. The entire field of criminal justice needs much more precise definitions of its basic concepts to avoid such silly disagreements, and Falkin's chapters 2 and 3 move in that direction.

Because the criminal justice system has no individuals or agencies charged with overall managerial responsibility, most of the individuals who function within the system become victims of organizational myopia. Most such functionaries know intimately the operation of their own agency or system component, but they know very little about the operation or behavior of the others on which

their decisions may have an impact. The kind of descriptive material included in chapter 4 provides a valuable resource for those concerned with improvement of the operation of the total system. The state criminal justice planning agencies (the SPA's) created under the Safe Streets and Crime Control Act are charged with providing such descriptive information, and a few states have done this extremely effectively.

Ultimately, the key to the development of a capability to perform strategic planning will require valid causal models with good estimates of the parameters in those models. There have been a number of attempts to develop such models, and Falkin's model, summarized in chapter 5, formulated in appendix A, and with parameters estimated in appendix B, is an ambitious attempt in that tradition. Inevitably, such models tend to become complex and elaborate because so many variables affect the behavior of the criminal justice system. Any formulation of such a model requires a choice between a highly simplified model which is reasonably "transparent" (in that the nature of the relationships are clear but highly over-simplified) and much more complex models where the relationships are described in much more elaborate detail (with inevitably limited knowledge of all the relationships that go into such a model), and where the cause and consequences of a change become much more difficult to discern.

In formulating his model, Falkin has brought in a large number of the factors that should be included in such an overall formulation. Thus, his overall model illustrates the ways in which the alternative choices must eventually be addressed. Unfortunately, however, our causal knowledge of the behavior of the criminal justice system, of the constraints on that system, and of the exogenous socioeconomic factors contributing to or inhibiting crime, are known only poorly–we may know theoretically the proper sign of an association, but we are virtually totally ignorant in terms of valid quantitative relationships about the magnitude of the effects. One can estimate those relationships statistically, but the magnitudes of the *causal* coefficients are still largely unknown. Thus, as Falkin properly points out, his model and analyses provide a *structure* within which a wide variety of policy issues can and should be addressed, but the specific forms of the relationships must be regarded at this point as only illustrative. As such, they represent an important agenda for future research into those relationships. For policy makers, they represent the way to think about these strategic planning questions, but they are not yet available for explicitly weighing the tradeoffs involved in virtually all choices within the criminal justice system. In this regard, Falkin has made an important contribution to the development of strategic planning capability. Hopefully, a succession of more narrowly focused research results will accumulate to fill in the matrix, thereby strengthening the overall framework that is needed for rational decisions about crime, the criminal justice system, and social programs in general.

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Preface

If crime in this nation is to be reduced, a strategic crime control plan must be designed. The title of this book reflects the two aspects of strategic criminal justice planning discussed throughout. In the broad sense, the book is concerned with developing a framework for designing strategic plans. The framework was refined in an application to reducing juvenile delinquency in the California juvenile justice system. The book was written for an audience concerned with both the methodology behind strategic planning and its use in criminal justice. This dual topic evolved by combining two areas of research: policy science methodology and strategic criminal justice planning.

The first stage in this research was the development of a general policy science research framework that could be used to assess the impact of government programs on political goals. The framework sets forth a research design, a general procedure for policy science research. Developing the framework involved a study of several policy research methods, such as planning programming budgeting systems (PPBS) and cost-benefit analysis, and a separate, but equally important, study of the use of research in the policy-making process. The focus during this stage of the research was on structuring policy research around the needs of policymakers–and the realities of the political process. Out of this concern came a research framework for evaluating the impact of budgets, programs, and rule changes on political goals, or, more specifically, social indicators of policy goals.

As the policy research framework began to take shape, it became apparent that it could be useful only insofar as it could be applied empirically to specific policy concerns. Consequently, a search for a substantive policy area led to an investigation of the criminal justice system. The field of criminal justice planning offered an opportunity to develop a strategy to ameliorate one of our nation's most serious problems.

Developing the policy research framework and analyzing the criminal justice system were complementary areas of research, and each gained from the other. The overriding objective throughout this research was to use objective, scientific policy research methods to work toward a better understanding of the consequences of criminal justice policies. What follows, then, is the foundation on which to build criminal justice policy research and to design a strategic plan to reduce crime. The conclusion of this book is that proactive policies designed to prevent crime are more cost-effective and more just than reactive criminal justice policies.

The text is organized to combine the two areas of research into a unified topic. Chapter 1 sets the stage by discussing the need for strategic planning in the criminal justice system. Chapter 2 takes a systems view of criminal justice policy, discussing the key theoretical variables in the system. The relationships

among the variables are proposed in chapter 3. A policy-relevant synthesis of two "opportunity structure" theories of crime, labeled "relative opportunity," is presented, and several propositions to be analyzed later are spelled out. The decision-making process in the California juvenile justice system is then described in chapter 4. This verbal model of the adjudication and corrections processes is expressed as a mathematical model in appendixes A and B. In chapter 5, the effect of a number of criminal justice policies is analyzed by simulating the behavior of the California juvenile justice system on the computer. The book concludes with a summary of the major points and a discussion of strategic criminal justice planning.

Acknowledgments

Every author is indebted to those who provide assistance, support, intellectual stimulation, criticisms, and encouragement. I am particularly grateful to all who in one way or another helped me during the course of my research.

I would especially like to thank Alfred Blumstein for writing the foreword to this book. His work in the field was inspirational while I was writing the book, and he is uniquely qualified to comment on it.

While at Cornell University, my special committee members, Christopher Babb, Paul Eberts, and Alan Hahn, were most generous with criticism of my work. Since my first orientation week as a graduate student, Chris Babb inspired me by setting an example of intellectual abilities toward which I felt I should strive. Paul Eberts provided the direction by teaching his social science perspective for analyzing public policies. Without his research as a model and without his encouragement, I am certain this book would not have come to be.

Michael Walden, James Zelenski, and William Frisbee, all fellow graduate students, were gracious with their time and contributed significantly to this research effort by acting as a sounding board for ideas.

Since arriving at the U.S. Department of Justice, I have had an opportunity to apply the approach to strategic planning developed in this book to the field of corrections. I am particularly grateful to James F. Hoobler for providing me with this opportunity; as a result, I have been able to clarify a number of issues in this book. In collaborating with Robert J. Comiskey on designing a strategy for federal corrections, numerous discussions have also led to improvements in the book.

This project could not have been completed as efficiently as it was without the typing and editorial assistance of Lorraine Cafini. I am also indebted to Mary Ose for typing the original draft.

Finally, my greatest thanks are extended to my wife, Debbie, who braved more cold Ithaca winters than she preferred so that I could study and write this book.

Crime reflects the character of a people. This is the painful fact we do not want to face. Other premises are easier to accept, other causes easier to control. There is no simple reform for defective character . . . in America we have cultivated crime and hence have reaped a bountiful crop. Crime is the ultimate human degradation. A civilized people have no higher duty than to do everything within their power to seek its reduction. We can prevent nearly all of the crime now suffered in America—if we care. Our character is at stake.

—Ramsey Clark

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