

The Jack-Roller and the Life History Method: Notes on the Chicago School's Clifford Shaw and Howard Becker's Humanistic Narrative of Young Male and Female Delinquents in Different Ages

YOUNG
30(3) 213–229, 2022
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DOI: 10.1177/11033088211046168
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Abstract

Clifford Shaw's (1930) *The Jack-Roller* is a landmark study of naturalism, ethnography and crime. It is the 'own story' of Stanley—a young delinquent in Chicago. Shaw's series of ethnographic studies on delinquency sought to humanize deviance in opposition to pathological understandings of delinquency. The article looks on the representation of crimes committed and punishment received by young male and female delinquents. Shaw's argument focuses on structural inequalities and poverty as the cause of deviance; as a result, female delinquency was not explained by sexual promiscuity, although he failed to recognize young women's vulnerabilities. The second edition of *The Jack-Roller* introduced by Howard Becker (1966, Introduction. *The Jack-Roller: A delinquent boy's own story*, pp. v–xviii) redefined Shaw's study within the symbolic interactionist tradition. From the 1950s, Shaw and Becker disagreed over the writing of the deviant's 'own story,' the control of the narrative and the authorial voice. The article adds to the literature on narrative, female deviance and youth delinquency.

Keywords

Deviance, ethnography, Chicago School, female delinquency, crime

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Introduction: Setting Out the Issues

It is over 90 years since the publication of Shaw's (1930) *The Jack-Roller*, the landmark study of naturalism, ethnography and the sociological understanding of crime. Clifford Shaw's *The Jack-Roller* has been described by Weidman (1999, p. 117) as the most famous delinquent in sociology and criminology. Its ideal young deviant 'Stanley' has been constructed into a moral image for reform. The term 'Jack-Roller' was used in late 19th- and early 20th-century America to mean a man who violently attacks and steals from someone who is drunk—'roll' meaning to steal from and 'Jack' meaning drunk. *The Jack-Roller* is the life story of Stanley, a young delinquent in Chicago who Clifford Shaw met as a teenager. The book describes Stanley's childhood problems after his mother died, the violence he experienced from his new stepmother and his drunken father, plus his induction into stealing and robbery in the local community and brutal repression at correctional institutions. The book ends with Stanley moving away from his criminal life, living in a new neighbourhood with a job and married.

First, in this article, I will focus on Shaw's struggle to humanize deviance as an integral part of the Chicago School ambition to explain delinquency beyond being a symptom of psychological inadequacy (Bulmer, 1984). Second, there will be an assessment of Shaw's life history method and the context of *The Jack-Roller's* reception and theorization in the 1920s–1930s American criminology. Third, I will explore Shaw's different understandings of the male case studies (Stanley, Sidney, and the Martin Brothers), which will be followed by a selective assessment of crimes committed, punishment received and the brutality of the institutional response in each of the major studies by Shaw (1929, 1930, 1931, 1938). It will be suggested that Shaw began to lessen his vivid description of violence experienced by the perpetrators and the institutional aggression of officials. Fourth, there will be an assessment of Shaw's approach to young female delinquents through the case studies of Girl 6 and Sadie where I argue that Shaw adopted a different approach to the study of female delinquents. The final section will explore some of the differences and similarities between Clifford Shaw's and Howard Becker's *approach* in relation to contemporary understandings of narrative and subjectivity when exploring the life history method with young people.

Context of Shaw's *The Jack-Roller* Within the Chicago School

From 1915 onwards, at the Chicago School of Sociology, under the direction of Robert Park and Ernest Burgess, a series of sociological studies emerged using ethnographic methods like the biographical 'life history'. These included Thomas and Znaniecki (1918), *The Polish Peasant*; Johnson's (1922), *The Negro in Chicago*; Anderson's (1923) *The Hobo*; Thrasher's (1927) *The Gang*; Shaw's (1930) *The Jack-Roller* and Cressey's (1932) *The Taxi Dance Hall*. These texts were groundbreaking studies in experimental qualitative research methods. Before this work at the Chicago School, the dominant understanding saw youth delinquency as moral depravity. This was expressed in works supported by psychological, biological

and etiological accounts, for example, Ferri (1897) and Lombroso (1911). Such approaches conflated mental problems, physical abnormalities and so-called inappropriate behaviour related to alcohol consumption and sexual conduct, with little attention to social and cultural factors, which may influence behaviour (Downes et al. 2016, p. 271).

The contemporary sociological importance of the early Chicago School studies, including Shaw's, is twofold. First, from a methodological perspective, this marks the beginning of urban biographical studies on young adult deviants, where the focus was on young people's culture, actions and experiences from their perspective and in their words. These urban ethnographic approaches were previously untried, so they were pioneering what we now call reflexive and biographical approaches towards the study of young people. Second, influenced by ideas from Durkheim and Simmel, focusing on social issues and not individual conditions, they understood crime as related to poverty, discrimination and inequalities. They sought an explanation for crime in the make-up of urban communities, where delinquency was understood in terms of normality, not pathology (Blackman, 2014).

Although this article is primarily concerned with Shaw's *The Jack-Roller*, I will refer to Shaw's other studies. Clifford Shaw's four key texts are *Delinquency Areas* (1929), *The Jack-Roller* (1930), *The Natural History of a Delinquent Career* (1931) and *Brothers in Crime* (1938). In the preface to *Brothers in Crime* (Shaw, 1938, p. ix), he describes his work in terms of a 'series', employing the method of 'own story', to reveal the life history of the individual within the community. Clifford Shaw also worked closely with McKay (1942), but Shaw's earliest journal article was published in 1927, entitled 'Case Study Method', where he first spoke about the idea of the delinquent's own story. In the preface to *Delinquency Areas*, Shaw (1929, p. ix) explains that he had been collecting material for the study of young delinquents from before 1921.

Heidensohn (1989, p. 110) considers that the value of Shaw's approach not only lies in its emphasis on ethnography but also its focus on the causes of youth crime within the 'everyday' and the 'commonplace'. Admittedly, because of his probation background, the correctional stance remains apparent in Shaw's work, but his theoretical approach was defined in terms of authentic experience through the delinquent's own voice. Little has been written on Shaw's work with young female delinquents. Chesney-Lind (1989, p/ 12) argues that Shaw's 'biographical work only traced male experiences with the law'. A key aim of the article is to introduce the idea that Shaw had a different approach to delinquent young women.

In 1966, a new edition of Shaw's *The Jack-Roller* was published with an introduction by Howard Becker. The choice of Becker was contentious because he disagreed with Shaw during the 1950s about publishing *The Fantastic Lodge: the autobiography of a girl drug addict* (Hughes, 1961). Clifford Shaw was a central figure within the original Chicago School led by Park and Burgess during the 1920s, while Howard Becker is seen as a leading contributor to what is described as the 'Second Chicago School' from the late 1950s onwards.

While *The Jack-Roller* constitutes a landmark study, Morris (1957) identifies a much longer birthing period for *The Jack-Roller*, through the development of ecology as a theory and the life-history method, in particular, the work of Harriet Martineau and Guerry de Champneuf in the 1800s, and especially Henry Mayhew's

1850s' studies on labour in London, and also Charles Booth's 1890s' case study research work (Featherstone, 1974; Hughes, 1963/1969). One of the key advantages of the biographical method in sociology is that it enables the reader to 'live the life' with the person as events and experiences unfold. The method and resultant text open a personal world for the reader. At the same time, Stanley (1993, p. 49) cautions, in terms of life writing 'a description is always in fact a gloss which, effectively, provides a theoretical account'. To contextualize Shaw's struggle to humanize deviance in sociology, the next section offers a short biographical focus on Shaw and his influences alongside his link with social work, which highlights the concern with 'egalitarian respect' found in both disciplines (Shaw, 2009, p. 1241).

Clifford and Hetta Shaw, Social Work and the Delinquency Studies

Shaw's own biography is detailed by Snodgrass (1976), Bennett (1981), Gelsthorpe (2007) and Salerno (2017). Snodgrass (1976) describes Shaw's upbringing as the fifth of 10 children on a farm in Luray, Indiana, in the rural Midwest. His father was a storekeeper, and Shaw had a 'teenager run-in' with the blacksmith who turned him upside down and shook him to reveal the hidden bolts he had swiped. But then, the blacksmith helped him repair his metal wagon. Shaw learnt from experience that biography and community were understood to be supportive for people. The twin influences of a rigorous farming life and familiar conservative Christian values prompted Shaw to study at Adrian College in Michigan, a private liberal arts establishment. However, he turned from this religious background and trained as a pharmacist's mate at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland, and joined the navy submarine corps in 1917. At the end of the First World War, in 1918, searching for his true calling, Shaw was back at Adrian College to complete his degree and then enrolled on a graduate programme in sociology at the University of Chicago.

In Chicago, Shaw moved into a settlement called 'The House of Happiness' on South Grattan Avenue, which ran several youth programmes. In this Polish neighbourhood, Shaw worked part-time as a parole officer. This change of career was unsurprising in some senses because Shaw's future partner, Hetta, was a social worker in Chicago and Boston. According to Snodgrass (1976, pp. 2–3), Shaw first met Stanley in 1921 as a graduate student at the University of Chicago and as a resident resettlement worker. During the early period from 1921 to 1923, Shaw worked part-time as a Chicago Parole Officer for the Illinois State Training School for Boys at St. Charles. This is where the natural history of *The Jack-Roller* began when Shaw met Stanley, real name Michael Majer, who was also known to William Healy, the Director of the Juvenile Psychopathic Institute.

In 1914, The Psychopathic Institute was taken over by Cook County, and then, in 1917, it was run by the State of Illinois. From 1924 to 1926, Shaw was a probation officer at the Cook County Juvenile Court. In 1926, on the recommendation of Professor Ernest Burgess at the University of Chicago, a new sociological research section was created, and the organization was renamed the Institute of Juvenile Research (IJR) with Clifford Shaw as its Director. Snodgrass (1982, pp. 31–33), who did follow-up work with Stanley, reveals that Stanley thought that Clifford

and Hetta 'were my real parents' and notes that Stanley wrote a condolence note for Hetta Shaw at the time of Shaw's death, saying he knew Clifford 'as a friend'. In a letter written by Stanley in 1975, Snodgrass (2015, p. 6) reveals that Shaw remained an important figure to him decades after his death.

Through Shaw's normalizing approach to delinquency, it is possible to identify three social work influences on Shaw's approach. The first is his wife Hetta's formal training and sensitivity as a practising social worker. Second, as Gelsthorpe (2007, p. 529) notes, Hetta showed real 'kindness' as a social worker and partner to Shaw. Third, in *The Jack-Roller*, Shaw (1929, pp. 6–7) quotes from Thomas (1923) *The Unadjusted Girl*, and also Thomas' study on female delinquency is influenced by social work theorists, including Sophonisba Breckenridge, Edith Abbot and Jessica Taft (Sands 2014, p. 725). It is possible to identify other welfare links to *The Jack-Roller* through the references to Burgess' (1923, 1929, 1930) social work studies, and according to Shaw (2009, p. 1244), 'Shaw's language is often cast in terms of welfare interventions' as practised by Jane Addams at Hull House who professionalized social work and influenced the Chicago sociologists (Deegan, 2005, p. 25).

In summary, Shaw experienced a religious upbringing with strong community support. His training in the parole service and his marriage to Hetta consolidated his knowledge of social work practice, and this influenced his approach to the study of young male and female delinquents at the Chicago School.

How *The Jack-Roller* Was Received and Theorized: Sympathy Versus Correction

The focus will now turn to the publication of *The Jack-Roller* in 1930 and its republication in 1966 with a new introduction by Howard Becker. This resulted in Shaw's study being associated with the original 1920s–1930s so-called Chicago School of Sociology led by Park and Burgess and also with what Fines (1995) terms the 1960s Second Chicago School.

The Chicago School in general, and Shaw, in particular, were seeking to break away from pathology, to dislodge the dominance of Lombroso's biological ideas and the innate, to develop new social explanations of collective youth deviance (Smart, 1976, p. 37). The Chicago School research on sociological explanations of crime directly opposed Lombroso's 'born criminal' and others who turned to solutions in eugenics (Rafter, 1998). Sutherland (1924, p. 621) argues against Laughlin's (1922) advocacy of eugenic sterilization:

One policy of prevention that is being urged very strenuously at present is the sterilisation of certain types of criminals, on the hypothesis that criminality is inherited. It is believed that by preventing the reproduction of these types, crimes will be reduced in subsequent generations, even if not in the present. But, as has been shown previously, criminality as such, cannot be inherited.

The Jack-Roller's life-history method can evoke sympathy, but it emerged into a context and time of harsh correction preoccupied with eugenics and sterilization.

The formal reception of *The Jack-Roller* begins with fellow Chicago sociologist Zorbaugh (1929) whose work *The Gold Coast and the Slum* was a highly successful

book for the Chicago School (Faris, 1967, p. 83). In Zorbaugh's (1930, p. 179) review of *Delinquency Areas* (1929) and *The Jack-Roller* (1930), the first sentence is about Lombroso's biological theory that 'criminals are born' (Rafter, 1998). Specifically, Zorbaugh (1930, p. 179) states that 'The majority of criminologists seem still to lean towards a constitutional explanation of the delinquent, to seek the etiology of his delinquency in physiological factors'. In contrast, Bruce's (1930, pp. 463–465) review focuses on young Stanley's 'broken home', 'drunken orgies', 'truancy' petty stealing, burglary and how Stanley's story shows he is both 'pathetic' and 'a victim'. Bruce says that 'the filthy vermin-infested so-called House of Correction of Chicago ... failed to bring forth penitence and that these so-called reformatories failed to reform'. In contrast, Young's (1930, pp. 474–475) review suggests that the book has a voyeuristic flourish, stating: 'For some it may afford an evening's entertainment'. The reviews broadly support Shaw's innovative research method and his new approach to understanding delinquency to be caused by poverty, discrimination and poor-quality housing within communities.

Morris (1957, p. 65) reminds us: 'Although the theories of Lombroso achieved a truly remarkable degree of acceptance among those actively concerned in the study of crime, they were not immune from criticism'. Writing after the publication of *The Jack-Roller*, Lindesmith and Levin (1937, p. 654) sought to dismantle what they called the Lombrosian myth in criminology, which for them had been subject to 'extravagant eulogies'. Lindesmith and Levin call upon the early work of Guerry and Mayhew, focused as it is on understanding the locality and the need for reform rather than punishment. They rejected Lombroso's 'militant biological determinism' and wrote: 'what Lombroso did was to reverse the method of explanation' (Lombroso, 1911, p. 661), so that crime was understood to be caused by the physical nature of the criminal, in contrast to Shaw's focus on the life-history method linked to participant observation, whereby ethnographic interviews allow the young person to engage and show agency. Given the resilience of Lombroso's theory within criminology even at the time of the Chicago School's challenge, it is not surprising that Bruce (1930, p. 466) concludes his review of *The Jack-Roller* with the comment 'these problems will never be met as long as we think the solution of crime lies in the lash and in the gallows'. This returns us to the influence of Lombroso's biological determinism to understand crime.

Bennett (1981) and Gelsthorpe's (2007) research work reveals the tensions, struggles and limitations of Clifford Shaw's humanity as a social reformer. They highlight Shaw's professional life as innovative and honest. Gelsthorpe (2007, p. 531) gives a more personal narrative on Shaw. She identifies Shaw as a born fighter whose ambition was to advance communities out of poverty. Snodgrass (1982) who follows up the *Jack-Roller at Seventy*, by interviewing Stanley, labelled Shaw 'a folk idealist waging an imaginary war with urban reality' (Snodgrass, 1976, p. 13) and argues that he 'unwittingly contributed to the decline of community and the rise of delinquency' (Snodgrass, 1976, p. 17). In contrast, Bennett (1981, p. 172) argues that Snodgrass (1982) constructs Shaw as a 'villain' and 'faults Shaw for calling himself the author of the life history book'. Snodgrass (1982) sought to redress this issue by putting Stanley as a joint author on *The Jack-Roller at Seventy*. The manuscript was rejected by the University of Chicago Press, but it was later published by a commercial publisher. Snodgrass' intention of promising royalties to Michael Majer (*The Jack-Roller*) failed.

Salerno (2007, p. 150) argues that sociologists like Norman Denzin and Gerald Suttles have questioned whether *The Jack-Roller* is a biographical text or a co-constructed text, thus querying if it was Shaw rather than Stanley who wrote the text. Sutherland (1932, p. 136) states that the 'question that arises regarding the contents of the autobiography is the extent to which it is determined by the investigator'. For Sutherland (1932, p. 135), it is an issue of data reliability in relation to the material presented and whether it can be tested, although he is confident that Shaw has accumulated 'a large number of other autobiographies written by offenders living in approximately the same situation. This the author has done'. The issue of whose story is *The Jack-Roller* is unanswerable: Stanley, Clifford Shaw, Jon Snodgrass or Howard Becker. Salerno (2017, p. 37) suggests that in *The Jack-Roller* we have a 'fairy tale narrative structure', which suggests that 'Stanley finds in Shaw a hero, a rescue figure ... an idealization.' For Denzin (1995, pp. 120–121), *The Jack-Roller* 'turned Stanley into a sociological version of a screen hero ... and the researcher into a hero-as-savior who makes sense of the subject's life'. The text of Stanley has the impression of being a sympathetic account, whereas Denzin (1995, p. 123) is discomfited by Shaw's 'theorist-as-moralist' position. Snodgrass (1976, p. 4) notes that Howard Becker's new introduction 'did not question the official story' and 'he did not interview or pursue *The Jack-Roller's* subsequent life-course'.

The Chicago School's approach of the life-history method was personalized research. In this respect, the approach of the Chicago School sociologists differed from others. Like Thrasher (1928), Clifford Shaw took his delinquent home, as did Becker in *The Fantastic Lodge: the autobiography of a girl drug addict* (Hughes, 1961). In my own PhD (Blackman, 1990) research, participants came to my house, listened to music, chatted and laughed together. The biographical 'own story' approach is crafted through the 'intellectual life' experience of fieldwork and in the writing process by the author (Mills, 1959). Thus, in *The Jack-Roller*, we have a 'live' sociological text of youth deviance, a co-constructed text and also a contested one. For contemporary youth studies, Shaw's account is relevant in the context of understanding how narrative and subjectivity are constructed and theorized between the researcher and the participant.

Male Delinquents: Introducing the Crimes and Punishment of Stanley, Sidney and the Martin Brothers

This section will look inside Shaw's key studies on male delinquents to understand their crimes, alongside the punishment and brutality they received. A key criticism directed at Shaw and the production of his life-history case studies is that he selectively chooses the data to support his theory of disorganization and culture conflict. He is also accused of narrative and authorial control, cleaning up his data, because uncorrected data might prevent access to future research funding (Denzin, 1995, p. 120; Salerno, 2007, p. 158). For example, Snodgrass (1976, p. 16) reveals in an undated document, from the Chicago Areas Project, that Shaw understood 'how hampered the projects were by their funding and business ties'. Thus, it may be possible to argue that Shaw was later reluctant to criticize forms of social inequality

at a political level, but in the first two studies, he fully describes the sheer institutional brutality experienced by the young delinquent in the reform or prison system.

In *The Jack-Roller* (Stanley, 1930), we see the life of young Stanley as described by both Shaw and Stanley himself through interplay. Stanley constantly runs away from home because his father was 'drunk every pay-day' (Stanley, 1930, p. 24), and his violent stepmother 'took a stick and I got the beating of my life' (Stanley, 1930, p. 55). 'I knew fear' (Stanley, 1930, p. 49). Stanley stole from 'box-cars and stores' for his stepmother (Stanley, 1930, p. 53), 'older step-brother and another older boy' (Stanley, 1930, p. 25). He 'slept in alleys and begged food and oft-times ate from garbage cans' (Stanley, 1930, p. 75). He 'coaxed homosexual' men 'to do the act' then robbed and beat them, and attacked drunks, 'I struck him a heavy blow on the head' (Stanley, 1930, p. 138). Stanley met many of what he calls 'floaters', at bars, 'on street corners', (Stanley, 1930, p. 142) at 'hash houses' (Stanley, p. 1930: 75) and at 'dope rings' (Stanley, 1930, p. 162), or places where they came to 'spend money on prostitutes' (Stanley, 1930, p. 25). He states: 'I had already learned that a boy on the road was a constant victim of sex perverts' (Stanley, 1930, p. 89). Stanley describes his 'sex perversions in the form of masturbation and sodomy' (Stanley, 1930, p. 69) and in dormitories of institutions 'I knew little boys who had sex relations with four or five older boys every night'. He says, 'some boys caught venereal disease' (Stanley, 1930, p. 69). These were an 'easy victim for hustlers' (Stanley, 1930, p. 140).

The punishment for Stanley included: 'muscle grinders, squats, benders, standing in the corner, whipping, confinement in the "cage", chewing soap, being deprived of food and sleep, strenuous labour' (Stanley, 1930, p. 63), being 'kicked, cuffed', 'polishing the floor for hours while you are resting the weight of the body on the tips of the toes' (Stanley, 1930, p. 68). In prison, Stanley states 'I was like a dog kept in a cage and tormented by a vicious master', (Stanley, 1930, p. 110). In prison, he 'fell into a slumber, only to be awakened by vermin crawling all over my face and body' (Stanley, 1930, p. 151). We can see that young Stanley does signal feelings: 'My heart was heavy' (Stanley, 1930, p. 136). 'My life was always uncertain. I never knew what was going to happen to me' (Stanley, 1930, p. 136). Stanley says: 'I couldn't stop crying'. (Stanley, 1930, p. 146). 'I was down, and out and past redemption and prayer wouldn't reach my sinful soul' (Stanley, 1930, p. 146). Stanley regrets: 'Everybody looked down on me and distrusted me and I grew disgusted with life' (Stanley, 1930, p. 119).

In Shaw's (1931) *The Natural History of the Delinquent Career*, the focus is on the youthful Sidney 'labelled a moron' for committing a rape alongside other stories of gang rape (Shaw, 1931, pp. 235–236). Compared to Stanley, Sidney was more closely connected to gun crime and murder, but like Stanley, he met the criminal justice system at the age of 7 years. Sidney offers an account of homosexual rape, violence and brutality inside prison, where prisoners were subject to the 'water cure':

I was taken to solitary confinement and all the guards gathered round my cell to see the fun. They talked and laughed like children on a picnic and some stood on chairs and boxes in order to look over the heads of the ones in front. I was stripped of all my clothes... The force of the hose was sufficient to knock me down and it gave the guards much pleasure to see me knocked all round in a locked cell (Shaw, 1931, p. 202).

Both young Stanley and Sidney encounter authoritarian forms of control, which aimed to cause maximum distress for them physically and mentally. The officials who have responsibility for these juvenile delinquents display little mercy or respect and enjoy seeing the delinquent suffer at their hands through being shamed and laughed at. The asocial nature of the delinquent's own stories is demonstrated through their uncaring attitude towards their victims. Primarily in relation to Stanley and Sidney, we see malicious violence and rape of men and women with little reflection by the perpetrator of the damage experienced by others, or themselves. The 'boy's own' narrative offers a world short on human sensitivity, leaving victims and offenders with no salvation or support. The brutality of the delinquent's crime and their harsh treatment are an integral match with the dominant discriminatory biological determinist theories of the day (Taylor, 1971).

In *Brothers in Crime* (Shaw, 1938), the pattern of criminality followed by the five brothers—John, Edward, James, Michael and Carl—is similar to that of the life histories of Stanley and Sidney. All case studies show early contact with police and correctional institutions from the ages of 3–8 years old. The types of criminal activities take a standard format, developing from begging to burglary, and from truancy and shoplifting, to robbery with a gun and stealing cars. There is some degree of parallel with both Stanley and Sidney in relation to the treatment that they received at institutions. But, in general, John, Edward, James, Michael and Carl only speak of occasional punishment, in generic terms and certainly not in the language of hatred and estrangement experienced by Stanley and Sidney. These are the identifiable differences between the early and later life histories.

Assessing the significance of the five Martin brothers' life histories, there is less focus on their experience of punishment inside penal institutions. As a result, there is little to compare with both Stanley and Sidney who described the forms of torture and abuse they suffered and in many ways expected. This noticeable difference between the stories of Stanley and Sidney compared with the life histories of the five Martin brothers could be interpreted in two different ways. First, it is possible that Shaw largely edited out the penal abuse the Martin brothers experienced at the hands of institutional officials, or second, due to the changing times after Prohibition, the late 1930s penal institutions were different (Bennett, 1981). Shaw's two case studies of Stanley and Sidney are evocative of the urban chaos and 'immorality' of the 1930s when the failure of Prohibition was in full swing for victims, perpetrators and those involved in reform. The last study—*Brothers in Crime*—occurs after the Volstead Act (1919–1933) and focuses on youth delinquency at a more general level of being a social problem without evoking the personal excess, depravity and malicious behaviour. Thus, it is possible to identify a change in Shaw's use of the life-history method because there is less detailed description of violence and brutality.

Young Female 'Delinquents': Shaw's Emphasis on Structural Inequalities Rather Than Pathology

Shaw's approach to the study of young delinquent females has received little attention. At all times, Shaw sees delinquency as a social problem, and female delinquency is therefore a social product. Unlike Lombroso, Shaw did not see social

pathology as located in the female anatomy. In *Delinquency Areas*, (Shaw, 1929) there is a focus on 2,869 female delinquents during the period from 1917 to 1923, between the ages of 10 and 18, with the majority being delinquent girls aged 15–16. In contrast to the crimes committed by males, Shaw (1929, p. 138) details female crime according to the classification of ‘immorality’ 44.4% and ‘incorrigibility’ 40.5%, leaving all other crimes as ‘negligible’. Shaw (1929, p. 138) maintains there is a large measure of ‘differences in the type of offenses committed by boys and girls’. Young women most often entered court accused of sexual misconduct. Salerno (2017, p. 83) argues that the girl in the court stands there because their virtue is in peril: ‘This is not true for boys whose virtues were never in peril (since they were viewed as having no virtue to be lost)’.

At the same time, Shaw’s use of life histories applied to girls offers some different understandings on sexual behaviour (than when he focuses on males). For example, there is little description of the female delinquent’s deviant acts; furthermore, it is not clear what crimes the young women have committed other than what is broadly described as ‘sex delinquency’. Through the biographical method, females talk about their love ambitions, show agency and desire, but they also experience sexual contact as ‘disgusting and degrading’ (Shaw, 1929, p. 141). Case 6 Girl describes how: ‘I would flirt with all the cute fellows with keen cars. Then they would follow me home’. (Shaw, 1929, p. 140) ‘I just went boy crazy’. She continues:

I necked and petted ... I was just as fast as any other girl. Faster than some. All the seniors wanted dates with me, and I thought I was somebody. I had more boy chums than any other girl. Boys, Boys, Boys was all I thought about. Then I learned to smoke, and I inhaled too – I never got into any sex trouble at this stage. (Shaw, 1929, p. 141)

However, due to her inexperience, Case 6 Girl is brought into situations where she has little control, and her story appears to be an account of rape. She states: ‘Even then I did not submit to him. I fought and fought. These things I have tried to forget’ (Shaw, 1929, p. 141). Case 6 Girl is described as becoming involved with a taxi driver, presumably a man and, therefore, condemned as committing ‘sex delinquency.’ Little consideration is given to the possibility that the taxi driver, an older man, may have seduced, overpowered or intimidated this female ‘delinquent.’ However, at other times, she offers more details about her sexual activities where she states: ‘No one will believe me, so I keep it all to myself. I liked to get boys kinda hot’ (Shaw, 1929, p. 141). It is quite possible that Shaw’s approach towards female delinquency may have been influenced by his wife Hetta’s professional experiences since she, as a social worker, would have been aware of the sexual exploitation of vulnerable young women (Shaw, 2009, p. 1251).

On Case 6 Girl, Shaw (1929, p. 140) states ‘She was found to be a rather attractive girl with a pleasant disposition. Somewhat mature and sophisticated for her age, but with “normal interests”’. Shaw’s assessment presented here shows degrees of sensitivity, which is in marked contrast with Stanley Hall, first President of the American Psychological Association, who openly expressed eugenic views in his account of ‘The Budding Girl’ (Hall, 1909) and the ‘Flapper Americana Novissima’ (Hall, 1922). For Simon (2016, p. 7), ‘Hall brought to his depiction of adolescent girls a mixture of fear, scorn, and titillation ... he feared they could compete with men intellectually’. On the subject of young women, Hall (1909, p. 47) writes ‘she

is now the most intricate and baffling problem perhaps that science has ever yet attacked'. At the beginning of the 20th century, the dominant understanding of young female sexuality according to Campbell (1981, p. 60) was that: 'Girls are taught from an early age to suppress aggressive and anti-social behaviour and they are rewarded for obedience and plasticity'. For Bland (2013, p. 90), the young female 'delinquent' who deviates from the traditional female stereotype is seen through the lens of abnormality and as subject to control. Mackrell (2013, pp. 7–8) in her study on young flappers of the 1920s, states: 'In real life, a fourteen-year-old from Chicago tried to gas herself because other girls in her class rolled their stockings, had their hair bobbed and called themselves flappers, and she alone was refused permission by her parents'. The flapper in American culture was painted as unconventional, even abnormal, demonstrating how young women are subject to control as they reach for freedom of expression.

In Shaw's text, the female delinquent is located within a female youth culture of the time. Shaw describes that she found 'new freedoms, wanted to dance most of the time, dressed as a flapper and appeared so sensual' (Shaw, 1929, p. 140) (see Conor, 2002, pp. 48–49). From this comment, we can suggest that in Shaw's writing, he found some of those young female delinquents 'attractive' and, as a heterosexual male researcher, was aware of their sexuality (Blackman, 2007, 2016). Also, he is aware that there are differences in the way that the juvenile court deals with female deviance. Shaw (1929, p. 138) states:

The term 'immorality' is practically synonymous with 'sex' but does not include all sex offenses. Because of the court's reluctance to defame the character of a girl, an offense is frequently classified as 'incurable' even though there is little question as to the sexual nature of the delinquency.

In each case of female delinquency, Shaw saw the causal factor as 'the zone of deterioration' and the 'social disorganisation' of the location (Shaw, 1929, p. 142). He writes: 'the house was surrounded by heaped up refuse', and inside Sadie's house, he found 'four rooms dirty and dishevelled' (Shaw, 1929, p. 144). The interview with Sadie shows little sign of 'sex delinquency', at most we have a revelation of kissing. Shaw applied the coarse reformatory language of 'sex delinquency' throughout the chapter on the life history of Sadie and Case 6 Girl. Shaw is clearly struggling to differentiate female criminality from female sexuality because promiscuity or adultery is being defined as a crime in the courts when, in fact, it is 'normal' sexual behaviour within communities. At the same time, the young women also entered into abusive sexual situations. In the text, Shaw's stories of male delinquents' sexual torture of women are supported by Goody's (2000, p. 473) argument that women are subject to 'masculine hegemonic biographies' as an outcome of antisocial male behaviour. Here, we see Shaw struggle to explain the abuse experienced by both young women. Sadie and Case 6 Girl offer negative accounts of their sexual exploitation with the 'taxi driver' (Shaw, 1929, 140) and the 'cowboy' (Shaw, 1929, p. 141). Although examples of girls' 'sex delinquency' are not present in the text, it matters little, as Campbell (1981, p. 91) argues: 'female delinquency has been equated with sexual promiscuity'.

Unfortunately, there is little recognition of the vulnerability of these young women: 'I couldn't hold out for very long with a big strong cowboy' (Shaw, 1929,

p. 141). The women are accused of 'immorality' when, in reality, they are being abused by men. Case 6 Girl continues: 'I have tried to forget... They only believe me bad and think that I'm lying so what's the use of telling anybody' (Shaw, 1929, p. 141). Here, we see that men are not blamed for the sexual violence they perpetrate against these young women; it is women who are charged with their own oppression. But at the same time, while the central argument for Clifford Shaw is that causal factors impacting on the generation of female delinquency cannot be understood as pathological or biological, the influence at all times is social, cultural and spatial in terms of urban development (Lynch & Barrett, 2017).

It is possible to argue that the Chicago School work represents a trend change or an epistemological break within the study of deviance; through the work of Thomas, Park, Sutherland, Palmer, Thrasher and Burgess, there is a concern to challenge the distinction between 'normal and abnormal' behaviour and focus on the normal conditions of urban social life in communities with an emphasis on both culture and poverty in understanding female and male delinquency (Downes et al., 2016, p. 60). Furthermore, this is a key influence on Shaw's (1929, p. 1) 'Cultural approach to the study of delinquency', where he argued against biological inheritance and for the development of a sociological approach. His focus was on material ecology and inequalities of wealth in a particular location, but he failed to bring these young women's real encounters of sexual abuse beyond the method of just being their 'own story'. Theoretically, Shaw's studies focused on zonal concentric rings and maps detailing residence, bad housing, poor health and high truancy records. The social problem of juvenile delinquency for both females and males was defined as resulting from poverty and lack of resources in inner-city urban locations (Shaw, 1929, p. 160). While Shaw does not regress to the sexism and misogyny of Stanley Hall to explain female delinquency, it is defined by unequal access to the social and economic resources at a structural level within the community.

The Jack-Roller Twice: Howard Becker's New Introduction

In 1966, Howard Becker was invited to write the new introduction for *The Jack-Roller*. For Denzin (1995, p. 115), Becker's retelling establishes *The Jack-Roller* as 'one of symbolic interactionism's mythical texts'. The sociological issue is that *The Jack-Roller* came from the original Park and Burgess period of the Chicago School (1914–1940s) but is now 'reborn' according to Denzin as part of Fine's 'Second Chicago School' from the 1960s onwards. The sociological context of Shaw's original text and Becker's new introduction are very different. For Becker, sociological times had changed, deterministic approaches such as behaviourism and structural functionalism were on the wane and the new school of symbolic interactionism had been termed initially by Blumer (1969) in 1937, but according to Rock (1979, p. 15), it remained an 'understated sociology' until the sociology of deviance 'writing in the late 1950s and 1960s'. Unlike Shaw, Howard Becker was not faced with the legacy of Lombroso's positivist criminology. Similarly, the ascendancy of functionalism under Parsons and Merton was now in decline through the critique of C. W. Mill's sociological imagination and the success of symbolic interaction and the 'Second Chicago School of Sociology' with studies by Lindesmith, Becker, Goffman, Matza, Lofland and Lemert. With the new

epistemological approach in sociology of symbolic interaction, the value of Shaw's text moved from one sociological time and context to another (Rock, 1979; Merrill & West, 2009).

Two factors are important to interpret Howard Becker's new introduction to *The Jack-Roller*. First, what is missing from Becker's introduction is a focus on the author or curator of *The Jack-Roller*, Clifford Shaw. His absence within the text tells us something about the relationship between Clifford Shaw and Howard Becker. Becker focuses on the central figure—Stanley the delinquent, the life-history research technique, its position within the Chicago Sociology department and other key studies by Thomas, Sutherland, Wirth, Zorbaugh, Thrasher, Hughes, Park, Mead and David Riesman. Becker (1966, p. viii) talks in detail about Robert Park and the development of Chicago research, offering pieces of a mosaic, showing increased knowledge of the local communities (Blackman, 2010). Becker does not mention Shaw by name, except for one reference to Shaw and McKay's 1942 study on *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas*. In contrast, Burgess (1930, pp. 185–197), in his Discussion section of *The Jack-Roller*, mentions Shaw's name 12 times.

Second, in conversation with me, Howard Becker suggested that he and Clifford Shaw had some disagreement relating to the IJR, the Chicago Area Project. Bennett (1981, p. 215) further notes that Shaw had issues with new academics within Chicago, first Saul Alinsky and second Howard Becker. Saul Alinsky was a community and political activist who worked with Shaw at the IJR, but according to Bennett (1981, p. 216), 'Alinsky became more publicly prominent than Shaw had ever wanted to be – even nationally known' therefore he had to go: 'he was fired'. Becker explained to me:

I had just gotten my Ph.D. and had no academic job. I was making my living playing the piano in bars. Then I heard that the Institute for Juvenile Research had gotten a big grant to study narcotics use among youth.

Howard Becker was hired in 1951 to do life-history interviews with young people who were drug users in Chicago. Becker (personal communication, 2019) continues:

I talked Sol Kobrin into hiring me at \$50 a week to interview marijuana users. I knew Marilyn Bishop (Janet) because she was the girlfriend of a drummer I worked with. And when I realized what a good storyteller she was, I persuaded them to pay her to do an oral history like the ones Shaw et al. was famous for. They agreed without enthusiasm, didn't think she was 'typical'.

Becker undertook a series of interviews with Janet who was to become a friend. He interviewed her at home with his wife in a similar manner to Shaw with Stanley and Shaw's wife Hetta. However, the life history of Janet for the study *The Fantastic Lodge* (Hughes, 1961) was not published until 10 years after the research. Becker (personal communication, 2019) stated:

Lindesmith had warned me, at the time I signed on to do my study out of the IJR, that Shaw didn't want any publications to come out of IJR that didn't have his name on them. That was the source of the difficulties with Shaw that led to Helen Hughes being the editor of the book

At the centre of the dispute between Shaw and Becker is the methodological construction of 'own story.' In the original *The Jack-Roller*, Clifford Shaw is the narrator but also recognized as the figurehead of the 'life-history' method. In contrast, Becker is fresh from his PhD success in 1951. For Long (1999, p. 150), textual differences can be seen, in that Shaw occupied a position of dominance within *The Jack-Roller*, whereas Becker in Janet's story of *The Fantastic Lodge* acts more as a 'peer'. *The Jack-Roller* is a key text, and Becker and Shaw's disagreement over *The Fantastic Lodge* remains highly important because it evokes Mills' (1959) manifesto and promise outlined in *The Sociological Imagination*, advocating the researcher's relationship to structure and biography as the 'intellectual life'. It is unclear to what extent both Shaw and Becker set different rules or limits on 'narratorial reflexivity.' While Stanley may have seen Shaw and Hetta as 'parents', Shaw undoubtedly constructed *The Jack-Roller* according to his theoretical priorities (Denzin, 1992, p. 41). In contrast, Becker's rhetorical narrative silence enabled young Janet to appear as the free-flowing author augmented by Helen McGill Hughes' inclusion of Janet's poetry at the back: thus, creativity and narrative are integral and reside within the author Janet, not the curator Becker.

It is possible to suggest that Becker applied the same rhetorical narrative silence to Clifford Shaw in his new introduction to *The Jack-Roller*. Shaw was rendered invisible in the text. Correspondingly, Bennett (1981, p. 222) and Long (1999, p. 97) detail how Shaw blocked publication of Janet's story on several occasions. She was denied the rights to her 'own story'. Janet died in 1959, and her book was not published until 1961. Thus, Salerno (2017, p. 90) argued that Shaw stands accused of betraying the 'life-history' method.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to highlight the importance of *The Jack-Roller* in 1930, 1966 and now relates to the construction of a sociological narrative structured around research friendship and the life-history method, which brought new sensitivity to research subjects and how they were voiced within the text (Blackman, 2010). The context of Shaw's study when it appeared was that of positivist criminology, and genetic sterilization programmes for criminals were seen as popular answers to deviance. The article has argued that Shaw writes about male and female delinquents differently in terms of language, narrative and analysis. Shaw's social work focus on young women delinquents was 'normalized' through female flapper youth culture, describing these young women as having 'normal interests' (Shaw, 1929, p. 140). He showed an awareness of their femininity and vulnerability but was unable to restore their humanity. In contrast, Shaw's account of young male delinquents rubbed up against the reality of adult institutional violence and complicity in torture against young men. A difference was identified between Shaw's early and latter 'life-history' stories, which were cleaned of institutional brutality experienced by young male delinquents.

Shaw and Becker belong to different periods of the Chicago School, but through *The Jack-Roller* (Shaw, 1930) and *The Fantastic Lodge* (Hughes, 1961), they crossed over and revealed the different approaches to the life-history method and how the narrative of the young person's 'own story' was constructed in different periods.

Each sociologist put a contrasting emphasis on authorial control and interpretative commentary, thereby demonstrating that the research participant's voice is differently crafted and selected. Both are searching and creating meaning through data and seek empathy, subjectivity and humanity through the lives of participants, but as Bennett (1981, p. 233) concludes: 'These life history publishing arrangements are never so innocent as they seem—not anymore'.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Debbie Cox, Ian Shaw, Roger Salerno and, especially, Howard Becker, for his many online comments and points of discussion during the past few years on the topics of Clifford Shaw, *The Jack-Roller*, *The Fantastic Lodge*, Janet and Alfred Lindesmith. I would also like to thank the reviewers of the article and the editor Maria Klingenberg.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

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