Criminologists and the Welfare State

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SUMMARY

- Criminology and social policy are concerned with different problems, but they share a common focus on policy and multi-disciplinary outlook
- Experimental criminology, crime science, critical criminology and left realist criminology imply a different role for criminologists in relation to the state
- Policymaking about crime reflects political, social, and cultural influences

The study of criminology and social policy has to do with the difference social policy can make in dealing with crime. Exploring the links between these two areas is about understanding social problems related to crime, about visions of a better response, and about strategies for making them happen. This book reviews criminological theories, research, and discussion about social policy.

The next two chapters review criminological theories suggesting a link between social policy and crime, and critique popular images of poor people. The following five chapters describe the findings of criminological research applied to social policy areas – housing, health, unemployment, family, and education – and document the social welfare impact of policing and prisons. The final two chapters take up questions of political strategy and broader vision: we will examine the criminalisation of social policy and the pursuit of social justice. Before we begin, we need to do some ground-clearing.

This chapter examines the relationship between knowledge and policymaking. It is divided into three parts, each of which takes up a question: What do we mean by the terms criminology and social policy? Should criminologists seek to integrate themselves in the policymaking process? To what extent does criminological research actually influence policymaking about crime? The first part explores the ways in which the concerns of criminology and social policy overlap, and where they differ, with a look at the history of these disciplines and the views of two key founders. The second part deals with four conceptions of the role of criminology in a welfare state: experimental criminology, crime science, critical criminology, and left realist criminology. The final part outlines influences on crime policy other than criminological knowledge.

Criminology and Social Policy

Ordinarily, criminology and social policy are thought of as separate disciplines. But during the past decade or so, a combined course of study has become available at British universities. This raises the question of what these two disciplines are about: how they are alike, where they differ.

Two Disciplines

Criminology and social policy share a common focus of concern and strategy of inquiry. Both disciplines concern themselves with 'action' rather than 'thought' (Halsey, 2004: 13). In sociology, the classical project has sought to build up a store of scientific knowledge of social activity. Sociologists make theory-guided conjectures about why things are as they are and test them against sociological data. Alternatively, the action disciplines concentrate on the relationship between ideas and activities; they translate theories of society into programmes for solving specific social problems. If sociology aspires to grasp the social world as it is, separate from idealised conceptions of how it ought to be, criminology and social policy seek to bridge universal ideals and society's more mundane concerns.

But of course, criminology and social policy concern themselves with a different set of problems. Criminology deals with the:

1 extent and distribution of criminal conduct in society; the
2 history, structure and operation of the criminal justice system; and the
3 social, political, and economic influences on changing definitions of criminality and criminal justice practices.

Or, to put it in a sentence: 'Criminology, in its broadest sense, consists of our organised ways of thinking and talking about crime, criminals, and crime control' (Garland and Sparks, 2000: 192). 'Crime policy' refers to the governmental response to crime. This includes the administration of criminal justice (police, criminal courts, and prisons) as well as broader programmes for crime reduction such as national strategies for crime prevention.

Social policy concerns the:

1 role of the state in distribution of resources and opportunities between rich and poor, workers and dependents, old and young; the
2 apportionment of responsibilities for this distribution to government and other social institutions – market, voluntary/charity sector, family and individual; and
3 an understanding of the social and economic consequences of different arrangements (Halsey, 2004: 10).

In a word – T.H. Marshall's – the objective of social policy is 'welfare' (quoted in Hill, 1988: 2).

The term 'social policy' also refers to the policies themselves, that is, an arena of public policy concerning social welfare. (And when this term appears in the chapters to follow, it almost always has this meaning.) Policy areas typically referred to as comprising social policy include social security,[1] unemployment insurance, housing, health, education and family. While these areas do not cover the widest range of social policy, they are consistent with the vision of the welfare state supplied by William Beveridge in 1942. The Beveridge Report called for an attack on the 'five giant evils' of want, disease, ignorance, squalor, and idleness. During the 1940s, legislation laid the foundations of the post-war welfare state: Education Act (1944), Family Allowance Act (1945), Housing Act (1946), National Insurance Act (1946), National Assistance Act (1948), National Health Service Act (1948), and the Housing Act (1949). Beveridge did not refer to the personal social services, but this area has since been incorporated into the welfare state.

As an academic discipline, criminology is linked with the Lombrosian project and the governmental project (Garland, 2002). The Lombrosian project refers to Cesare Lombroso's effort in the late nineteenth century to explain the difference between criminals and non-criminals. While he failed in his specific programme, he did manage to popularise criminology as the scientific study of criminal behaviour. The governmental project, developed several decades later, began with efforts to generate a practical knowledge for more efficient management of police and prisons. But in Britain, historically speaking, criminology did not extend from Lombroso. The first university lectures in criminology were given in Birmingham in the 1920s by prison medical officers to postgraduate students in medicine (Garland, 1988: 135). Criminology did not really become institutionalised in Britain until the years after the Second World War. Hermann Mannheim, a legal scholar and refugee from Hitler's Germany, offered the first sustained introduction to criminology in his lectures in the Department of Sociology during the 1930s. Mannheim became a Reader in Criminology at the LSE in 1946, the first senior post in the subject established at a British university (Hood, 2004: 481).

Social policy began with 'the social question' which had to do with explaining why poverty persisted in a time of advancing prosperity (Halsey, 2004: 9). Britain's industrial economy had made a quality of life possible for people at the end of the nineteenth century that could scarcely have been imagined in 1800. Yet it had also left many trapped in demoralising poverty, particularly in the cities. Beginning before the First World War, social investigators carried out social surveys with the aim of formulating an appropriate response from government. Social policy, or social administration as it was known originally, began at this time under the guise of training social workers. The universities of Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester, and Leicester developed courses for social workers and probation officers before the Second World War. But like criminology, social policy did not become organised as a university discipline until later on. Richard Titmuss secured his position as Chair in Social Administration at the

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[1]Now renamed 'work and pensions'.

LSE in 1950, the first academic post in social policy. His work as a historian of the Cabinet Office, culminating in his *Problems of Social Policy* (1950), led to his wide recognition as an expert in social policy (Halsey, 2004: 196–8).

Radzinowicz on Criminology and Social Policy

To explore the relationship between criminology and social policy further, it is worthwhile to compare the outlook of two founders. Leon Radzinowicz in criminology and Richard Titmuss in social policy have had great influence on their respective disciplines. Radzinowicz was born in Lodz, Poland, in 1906; he studied law in Paris, Geneva, and Rome. In 1936, he emigrated to England where he became Assistant Director of Research in Criminal Science at Cambridge, and in 1959, Wolfson Professor of Criminology. That same year, he became founding director of the Institute of Criminology at Cambridge, a position he held until his retirement in 1973.

The problem of crime, Radzinowicz taught, was intractable. Any attempt to isolate *the* cause of criminal behaviour was a wasted effort. He remained sceptical of abstract over-arching theories he considered pretentious as well as esoteric. Sociological approaches advocating a single explanatory structure amounted to 'unilateral approaches' leading to conceptual cul-de-sacs. 'The most that can be done is to throw light upon the combination of factors or circumstances associated with crime' (Radzinowicz, 1988: 95). Radzinowicz pursued a multi-disciplinary criminology, a vision expressed in the founding of the Institute of Criminology. The Cambridge Institute received the support of Lord Butler, who had become Home Secretary in 1957. He promoted the need for teams of sociologists, statisticians, psychiatrists, and legal specialists to carry out systematic investigations into criminal behaviour with a focus on intervention and prevention.

Radzinowicz believed in the use of empirical findings in social science as a means of bringing about humanitarian reform of criminal justice administration. He viewed criminology as a discipline that could provide a 'rational improvement' in the government's response to crime and criminals (Hood, 2002: 154). Reform of archaic practices in the punishment of criminals could only come about, he taught, by systematic research contributing to a long-term plan. Reforms should not follow swings in political expediency or popular emotion following particularly disturbing crimes. Radzinowicz was committed to British liberalism, perhaps because of his status as a European émigré. He endorsed the Howard League for Penal Reform: 'Being British,' Radzinowicz said, 'it was down to earth, practical, observant, critical and yet ready to accept reasonable compromises' (quoted in Cottee, 2005: 220). Yet the connection between scientific evidence in criminology and criminal policy should not be adhered to too closely, Radzinowicz insisted. He appreciated the influence of politics, in the form of an advancing welfare state 'with its emphasis on the protective and supportive functions of society as a whole', which he believed had a beneficial influence on criminal policy (Radzinowicz, 1964: 12).

Radzinowicz (1988: 95) took the position that 'the frontiers between social policy and criminal policy should not be confused or blurred'. Social welfare schemes, he explained, should be pursued as a matter of 'natural justice, of ethics, of economic and of political expediency' but not as a matter of crime reduction because 'social welfare schemes may not necessarily lead to a general reduction in crime'. He denied that social welfare represented the ultimate solution to delinquency and he worried about politicians turning crime into a political problem and exaggerating their power in response. Radzinowicz had seen how the positivism that had excited him as a student of Enrico Ferri had become distorted and abused by fascist regimes in the 1930s. The response to crime should remain tempered by the rule of law. He advocated the formation of a Ministry of Social Welfare so that some of the 'secondary responsibilities' of the Home Office could be hived off, allowing it to fall back on 'its fundamental and primary responsibility for law and order' (Radzinowicz, 1964: 24).

Titmuss on Social Policy and Crime

Richard Titmuss advocated a similar understanding of social policy but disagreed with Radzinowicz about social policy and crime. Remarkably, he was entirely self-taught. After the death of his father, a farmer, he found work with an insurance firm in London, and, using contacts with the Eugenics Society, landed a post with the Cabinet Office as official historian of wartime social policy. From his post in social policy at the LSE, he exercised a major influence on the subsequent development of the discipline during the 1950s and 1960s.

Titmuss laid the foundation for the discipline of social policy with his conceptualisation of 'social accounting', an analytical strategy for measuring the total amount of welfare benefits extended by government (Kincaid, 1984). Defenders and critics of social welfare alike erred in conceptualising social welfare in terms of direct services to the poor, unemployed, ill, and so on. Workers received substantial benefits via occupational schemes providing pensions, sick pay, and housing allowances that would otherwise appear as company profits and be subject to taxation. Substantial cash benefits provided via the tax system to the advantage of the better-off should also be regarded as welfare benefit. As an academic discipline, social policy represents 'a search for explanations of how and why state power affects the allocation of every type of financial, welfare and environmental resource' (Kincaid, 1984: 117–18).

And for Titmuss, this search was multi-disciplinary. Titmuss utilised the work of historians, sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, economists, and medical doctors to address the roles and functions of social services. One cannot find in Titmuss a consistent theoretical or political position (Kincaid, 1984: 114). He did, however, reject economic imperialism, the application of economic analysis to non-market behaviour, and made strategic use of economic arguments to refute the work of the economists at London's

Institute of Economic Affairs. Titmuss avoided committing himself to any disciplinary perspective, but instead built up a repertoire of concepts that would enable him to tackle specific problems (Fontaine, 2002: 404–6).

Titmuss was a Social Democrat who regarded capitalism not only as economically wasteful but threatening social integration in driving out altruism (Welshman, 2004: 226). *Problems of Social Policy* established two principles. First, it was necessary to help all citizens, regardless of income and social class. The exclusion of the middle classes from social benefits encouraged contempt for recipients. Second, social policy should not attempt to means-test recipients; social benefits should be extended on a universalist rather than a contingent basis (Kincaid, 1984: 116–17). The 'Titmuss paradigm' expressed optimism about human nature, belief in universal services, and opposition to means testing (Welshman, 2004: 232). Essentially, Titmuss believed in the virtue of centralised state bureaucracies and the public ethos of working in them. He regarded the administration of social services as a benevolent activity.

Titmuss did not formulate a theory of crime. What he says on the subject must be pieced together from comments on the work of criminologists. Generally, he regarded crime as 'a social ill' or a 'social problem' that should be understood in relation to social activity and not individual pathology. Successive generations of social and economic upheavals stranded a portion of citizens in deprived areas of the city, a portion that turned to crime, Titmuss suggested, as the only available means of social mobility (Titmuss, 1954). Crime is a social problem originating within market inequalities, and because social policy seeks to iron out inequalities within the market, it makes sense to rely on social policy as a means of responding to crime. Titmuss, who read Mannheim's study of delinquency in inter-war England in 1939, agreed with Mannheim about 'faulty parenting' as *a* causal factor. But he insisted that 'overcrowding and bad housing conditions produce social misfits, frustration, petty delinquencies, and so on' (quoted in Welshman, 2004: 229). It follows that improvements in housing, by means of universal housing policy, would serve as a delinquency reduction measure.

Social Science and the State

The relationship between criminologists and politicians has never been easy. Some criminologists seek to integrate themselves in the policymaking process; others insist criminologists should criticise policies from a safe distance. Four different roles can be identified in relation to policymaking which differ according to beliefs about government and science.

Experimental Criminology

Experimental criminology sees the university-based research centre as a primary site for the production of criminological knowledge. Specialists in different fields work as a team to solve problems of interest to government

authorities (who fund such research). This model came to prominence in the decade or so after the Second World War when national governments and international organisations solicited the advice of university researchers. Academics with expertise in criminology enjoyed wide-ranging influence (Walters, 2001). The Cambridge Institute of Criminology appeared in the 1950s, along with institutes of criminology at the University of California at Berkeley (1950), Melbourne University (1951), University of Oslo (1954), and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (1959).

This tradition in criminology insists on science as the best, or at least the most reliable, route to planning sound policy. Experimental criminologists emulate the method of laboratory experiment used in chemistry and biology, in the belief that the more closely this procedure can be replicated, the more valid the results. In social affairs, experiments are conducted by means of randomised controls, meaning adherence to a methodology that divides research subjects into intervention and control groups and then measures the difference. Random assignment of subjects (and sufficiently large numbers of people in each group) makes it possible to disentangle the influences of other factors on the outcome of interest (Farrington, 2003).

Experimental criminology pursues a working relationship between criminologists and policymakers defined by a clear division of labour. Criminologists supply facts, policymakers make choices about values and priorities. From this point of view, researchers ought to remain indifferent to the content of policies. It is not the criminologist's job to advocate for particular policies but only to advise policymakers about which of their programmes work. 'What [criminology] cannot do is to decide what the *aims* of penal policy should be ... [but] given certain aims, criminologists can try and discover by research the best means of accomplishing them' (Hood, 2002: 162). Experimental criminology is associated with 'evidence-based policy', meaning that those crime-reduction programmes supported by research evidence should become policy, and those without such support should not. Evidence-based policy establishes the ideal of an 'ideology-free zone' consistent with a commitment to promote policy on the basis of social-scientific knowledge.

The most recent expression seeks to apply the model of medical science to the problem of crime. The Campbell Collaboration is an international group of social scientists promoting an evidence-based approach to policymaking in social welfare, education, and crime and justice. The Campbell Collaboration take their name from the American psychologist Donald Campbell, but their inspiration from British physician-epidemiologist Archie Cochrane. Cochrane insisted on the use of findings from randomised controls for making health care decisions. He taught that 'limited resources should be used to provide forms of health care that have been shown to be effective by properly controlled research' (quoted in Orleans, 1995: 634). His efforts led to the creation of Cochrane Centres worldwide for the maintenance and distribution of registers of randomised control research. The Campbell Collaboration, known to insiders as 'C2', aims to bring this approach to crime policy. Their network

seeks to identify those policies with the greatest research support through 'systematic review' of evaluation findings (Farrington and Petrosino, 2001). The Jerry Lee Centre of Criminology at the University of Pennsylvania serves as an institutional home for the Campbell Collaboration Crime and Justice Group and the Academy of Experimental Criminology.

Experimental criminologists worry about the gap between what criminologists know and what policymakers do. Despite the success of criminology as an accredited discipline in the past few decades, fewer of its practitioners enjoy the status of government advisors. Wiles (2002) sees a connection between these two developments. The expansion of criminology has allowed criminologists to write for each other rather than engage the public. At the same time, criminologists have in striving to be external critics made the discipline into largely a private matter. Criminology, he argues, cannot merely be 'subversive of government interests' but must work with government to achieve the 'good society'; criminology should be practical in this sense, otherwise there is no point to it.

Crime Science

'Crime science', as the name implies, sees criminologists in possession of specialised knowledge of use for thwarting criminals. But there are important differences between the conceptualisation of science in this instance and that of the experimental criminology school. Crime science eschews purity as a model of scientific practice for research that is pragmatic and mundane; the focus is on *how* crime is committed and less on *why* it is committed (Clarke, 2004).

Crime science developed out of situational crime prevention which had been pioneered during the 1970s by researchers within the Home Office. Ronald Clarke, who directed the Research and Planning Unit, promoted simple, practical ways of reducing opportunity for criminal activity. Situational interventions make use of practical wisdom concerning the time, place, and circumstances of crime to circumvent would-be criminals. These interventions tend to be directed at specific occurrences of crime; involve management, design or manipulation of the immediate environment in a systematic and permanent way; and increase the effort and risks of crime and reduce the rewards of crime as perceived by a wide range of potential lawbreakers (Clarke and Mayhew, 1980: 1). Home Office researchers took this message to other parts of the world, with Clarke and others finding their way to American universities. Recently, a number of those formerly associated with the Home Office have re-organised around the Jill Dando Centre for Crime Science at University College London.

The difference between science, as understood in experimental criminology and that practised by the proponents of situational crime prevention, might be referred to as the difference between pure and industrial research. Some scientists work in university laboratories on projects without an application that is immediate or obvious as in the classic case of theoretical physics. The proponents of crime science are more like scientists who work for companies,

the purpose of which is to come up with innovations of immediate use in industry. The advocates of crime science give the impression that they are not interested in theory-driven research dealing with crime prevention (Weisburd, 2002: 207). This understanding leads to opportunity-reduction projects, the most successful of which are often the least difficult to take up and maintain (Nicholson, 1995). In fact, there is no requirement that principles of crime science be advanced by government policy; crime science can (and has) been delivered on a micro-scale by shopkeepers, manufacturers, householders, and organisations with limited budgets.

Situational crime prevention has been equated with the Conservative political agenda of Thatcher's Home Office. Critics charge that crime science is short-sighted, ignoring the social and economic origins of criminal behaviour. Situational crime prevention not only offers a superficial and irrelevant response; it makes matters worse by diverting government resources away from addressing social inequality at the centre of the crime problem (Koch, 1998: 72). As Clarke (2000: 108–9) has acknowledged, there is a 'superficial fit' between situational crime prevention and conservative values, such as reducing the size of government and promoting individual responsibility. But he defends crime science as an alternative to 'dispositional' theories of crime prevention. He challenges the idea that no real improvements can be made in reducing crime without wide-scale and massive investment in schemes to tackle the 'root causes'.

Essentially, Clarke's argument extends to the British context an argument James Q. Wilson made in reference to anti-crime programmes carried out in the USA during the Kennedy–Johnson era (Clarke, 2004). Wilson, a political scientist, contended that criminologists insisting on attention to root causes had confused 'causal analysis' with 'policy analysis'. Causal analysis, of the sort favoured by sociologists, seeks to identify and understand the social processes behind human activities. Operating within this intellectual framework makes it difficult to develop feasible responses. 'If anything, it directs attention away from factors that government can control' and 'move[s] beyond the reach of social policy altogether' (Wilson, 1974: 47). Policy analysis, Wilson says, takes stock of the instruments at the government's disposal (such as measures to redistribute money, stimulate job creation, regulate alcohol, build detention facilities) and explores their impact on the level of crime. Such measures will not alter the root causes but may be able to make measurable differences in crime rates.

Critical Criminology

The 'critical tradition' in criminology[2] denies the possibility of an ideology-free zone from which to produce objective evidence for policymaking.

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[2]Reference to the 'critical tradition' is meant to signify a stance toward policymaking implied by critical social theory; 'critical criminology' includes schools of thought ranging from socialism to postmodernism.

Criminologists, particularly those who work for government or carry out government-funded research, contribute to the larger politics of crime control. The critical stance rejects the ideal of a team of specialists working at a research institute in favour of the lone intellectual who remains sceptical and detached. The primary tool of the critical criminologist is not scientific procedure or data analysis, but rhetorical virtuosity, sophisticated rhetoric aimed at revealing the falsity behind political promises. Critical theorists champion the role of the outside provocateur who challenges claims to the 'truth' about crime and then questions the authority on which claims to such truth are made.

The critical perspective asserts that criminologists should question, challenge, and provoke from a location outside government. Or, as Christie (1981: 110) put it, criminology needs to be 'institutionally and intellectually protected against the embracement by authorities'. Criminologists employed in government research centres limit themselves to problems of interest to the state. This approach pursues a criminology incapable of addressing structural problems and renders the findings politically harmless. Christie encouraged criminologists to think of themselves as 'poets' rather then 'technicians'; poetic criminologists do not offer technical advice for use in running the state, but pose alternative questions within a broad cultural imagination. An iconic representative of this stance would be Antonio Gramsci, the founder of Italian communism, who was imprisoned in 1928 when fascist police smashed the underground organisation. He continued to oppose fascism while in prison through his writings, writings that have become increasingly important to generations of criminologists (and Italians) since the war.

In Britain, critical criminology emerged from the National Deviancy Conference (NDC) convened in 1968 at the University of York. The NDC served as a meeting place for sociologists, radical social workers, members of the anti-psychiatry movement, and others disillusioned with leftist politics. They broke away from the 'positivist methods' of Cambridge criminology and refused to engage in the practice of criminology as an 'auxiliary discipline' of governance. NDC members pursued a new paradigm for criminology, and within five years produced nearly one hundred books on crime, deviance and social control. The most influential of these, *The New Criminology* by Ian Taylor, Paul Walton and Jock Young (1973), proposed a 'fully social' theory of deviance. On the final page, the authors agreed with Christie that criminologists should be 'problem-raisers' rather than 'problem-solvers'. Crime required not piecemeal policy change, but political revolution, or something very close to it.

'The task', Taylor, Walton, and Young (1973: 282) wrote, 'is to create a society in which the facts of human diversity, whether personal, organic or social, are not subject to the power to criminalise'. Originally, this had been envisioned as an 'emancipatory' project derived from a worker–student alliance opposed to capitalism and the capitalist state. It reflected the idealism and utopianism that swept across universities in the years after the student revolts of 1968 (Taylor, 1999: 181). Utopianism made critical criminologists vulnerable

to the charge that they were getting all dressed up with nowhere to go. Aside from 'grandiose calls for some sort of socialist reconstruction by largely unspecified means', wrote one critic, the new criminology offered 'nothing of policy or prescriptive value to contribute toward the more immediate and urgent debates about the nature of criminal justice in Britain' (Mungham, 1980: 29). It was all or nothing.

Yet, the new criminology spurred a re-direction of the criminological enterprise. The critical stance rejected criminology as the interrogation of working-class pathology and sought to relocate the usual suspects in criminological analysis from the underclass to the affluent. This has led to the study of white-collar and organised crime, leading to a broader understanding of social harm. Critical criminologists have studied such topics as workplace injury and illegal activities of multinational corporations (Tombs, 2005, for example). This approach turns social policy and crime on its head in the sense that the focus is on criminalisation of corporate practices and economic regulation rather than government assistance. The best response to injuries suffered by the poor is to prevent them from occurring in the first place.

Left Realist Criminology

Left realist criminology is the most closely aligned with social policy, defined in the first instance by commitment to particular political values. During the 1980s, Jock Young, John Lea, Ian Taylor, Roger Matthews and others proposed left realism as a response to the standoff between the crime policies associated with Thatcherism and the opposition to them expressed by critical criminologists. They encouraged their comrades to think through achievable goals in the area of crime reduction, and defend social welfare as a worthwhile policy response, rather than dream of a crime-free society.

Left realism has been described as the 'administrative criminology' of the left (Rock, 1988a: 197). Historically, it pioneered a new form of government patronage. As an alternative to the 'big science' model embodied in Cambridge criminology and Home Office sponsorship, left realists formed working relationships with progressive city councils, police monitoring units, and community safety committees. These organisations became the underwriters for victimisation surveys conducted in Islington, Broadwater Farm, Newham and elsewhere during the 1980s. This led to a realignment of academic criminology away from the ancient universities and toward the polytechnics. The Centre for Criminology, established at Middlesex Polytechnic (now University), became a major resource for left realist research and theory.

Clearly, the left realists believe that criminologists should integrate themselves in the policymaking process. They should be supplying knowledge, research findings, and theories leading government intervention toward specific ends. This involves a defence of the role of criminologists in the process leading

to crime policy, but also of the role of empirical research. The victimisation survey represents a 'democratic instrument' with the potential of providing a 'reasonably accurate appraisal of people's fears and their experience of victimisation' (Young, 1992: 49–50). Left realism asserts a specific set of reforms aimed at 'democratic accountability' of policing, minimal use of prison and community crime prevention. The proponents also hope to spark a larger debate about whether a criminal justice system separated from other social institutions is desirable (Lea 1987, 364). They have argued for multi-agency responses to the problem of crime, which is bound up in the larger context of social exclusion.

Left realism is, relatively speaking, the most comfortable with political advocacy. Criminologists should participate in social movements to bring about greater social justice; they should align themselves with populations – workers, women, immigrants, youth – seeking inclusion and recognition. More to the point, criminologists should regard criminology *as* political advocacy. Criminologists not only bring a set of skills as social scientists, but a commitment to aiding the disenfranchised, the marginalised, and the excluded. If criminologists are not quite the conscience of crime policy, they are at least a counterweight to the excesses of political expediency.

Tony Blair's New Labour government invoked the 'left realist school' as the justification for a number of initiatives (Giddens, 2000: 8). The left realists became disillusioned with the effort and have sought to distance their criminological ideas from Blair's crime policies. Young and Matthews (2003) criticise 'team Blair' for ignoring local criminological talent. Not one criminologist in Britain supports prison expansion, and only a few believe that policing strategies can have anything more than a marginal effect on crime reduction. 'Government policies fly directly in the face of research evidence, and would seem almost wilfully to ignore expert opinion'. What is particularly troubling is the fact that it is a Labour administration that ignores criminologists. One might have expected as much from the Conservatives, who would 'turn to the saloon bar rather than the research centre for its inspiration' (Young and Matthews, 2003: 36).

Policymaking in Context

Criminologists have paid some attention to the matter of how policies to address crime are actually made. This area of theorising, informed by insights from sociology, tends to emphasise sources of crime policy other than criminological knowledge.

Politics

'Most developments in penal policy over the last decade have emerged not through the influence of criminological ideas or from the applications of findings from research …' Hood (2002: 1) observes, 'but from ideological and political considerations fuelled by populist concerns and impulses'. Tonry and

Green (2003) refer to political influences as a set of 'filters' separating knowledge from policy. New policy ideas are filtered through prevailing crime policy paradigms and ideologies, as well as short-term political considerations. It is not uncommon, they suggest, for politicians to say in private that they support particular proposals but feel unable to take the risks politically.

Crime has become too important as a political theme for government to defer to university specialists. In the USA, the Republican Party introduced crime as a national issue during the angry politics of the 1960s. Richard Nixon countered Lyndon Johnson's 'war on poverty' with the need for a 'war on crime' and won the presidency for the Republicans. In the UK, Mrs Thatcher took the lead on crime and the Conservatives held office during the 1970s with a 'tough on crime' stance. Since then, members of the opposition parties have believed that it is impossible to win elections without appearing to be tough on crime, hence Tony Blair's (1993a: 27) often-repeated phrase that Labour 'should be tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime'. Conservatives and Labour have committed themselves to a bidding war in toughness, each wanting to appear to have a firmer grasp on issues of crime and safety (Downes and Morgan, 2002).

Haggerty (2004) argues that criminological expertise has been significantly devalued in the era of neo-liberalism. Whereas liberal governance relies on social welfare, neo-liberalism emphasises the individual as the agent of security, health, and happiness. Political power has detached itself from its previous need for academic legitimacy. Within crime policies, this has meant a movement away from governmental programmes, such as social crime prevention, to schemes that are more local and privatised. The proliferation of security technology has also led to multiple schemes for monitoring, detecting, capturing, processing, and detaining suspects. Whereas public safety was thought to be assured through provision of security by means of the welfare state, in the current era public safety is thought to rest on strategically placed CCTV cameras. Haggerty (2004) also observes, citing Jean-Paul Brodeur, that neo-liberalism has altered the definition of experts. Whereas experts were sought by government for envisioning and carrying out crime prevention schemes, experts are now sought for their advice on managing the symbols and images of safety. This 'new type of expert' specialises not in 'how things are' or 'how things are known' but on 'how things are perceived and mythologized for political ends' (Haggerty, 2004: 222).

The Social

In addition to the political climate at the level of national parties and philosophies of governance, policies operate in a broader social context. Translating any idea into policy subjects the idea to a political process the outcome of which is far from certain. Ideas can be hijacked by rival political parties and converted for use toward purposes remote from what was intended. But the larger issue here is that we simply do not know as much about how society

works as we would like. Society cannot be made and unmade at will, even by governments.

The unforeseeable consequences of social action references a staple idea in sociology. Norbert Elias recognised that knowledge of the social structures or figurations in which they are bound up is always imperfect, incomplete and inaccurate. This is due to 'unintentional human interdependencies', which Elias said, 'lie at the root of every intentional human interaction' (quoted in Mennell, 1977: 100). He taught that unanticipated consequences are nearly universal in social life, essential to every theoretical model of social activity. Elias demonstrated that it is difficult, to explain individual action as a consequence of social structure, but more difficult, the other way around, to explain the social consequences of individual action. He offered the example of trying to predict the outcome of various games, from two-player to teams of increasingly larger size, as a way of showing the increasing complexity of human interaction.

The emerging study of how policies travel highlights the complexity of modelling social action. There is an increasing awareness that a significant portion of British policy ideas in the area of crime are not domestic but imported; examples can be found of 'transfer' or 'convergence' in the language and practice of crime policy. The USA is thought to be the largest exporter of policies. Analysts in the UK have noted a number of specific imports as well as a general similarity of themes (Tonry, 2004). At the same time, the mechanisms, directions, flow, and outcomes are much less understood than might be assumed. Policies change dramatically across political cultures, making it extremely unlikely that British crime control policy can be understood along the lines of what happens in the USA today will happen in the UK tomorrow (Sparks and Newburn, 2002).

Culture

Garland and Sparks (2000: 192) point out that criminology is not only located in the worlds of the university and government, but also in the 'world of culture – including mass mediated popular culture and political discourse'. The media in contemporary society cannot fabricate social problems out of nothing. But media coverage does help to define what people think about, which social activities are seen as problems, and the range of solutions to be considered.

Garland (2000) describes crime policy against a culture of insecurity. Politicians prior to the 1970s avoided crime as a political issue because they did not want to associate themselves with a problem that appeared unsolvable. But in the current era, high crime rates have come to be expected, part of a complex of fear, anger, and resentment. This change has come about as a result of media, primarily television coverage, of crime as a staple theme. Television, 'the central institution of modern life', presents its worrying stream of dramatic images suggesting the irrationality and unpredictability of criminal behaviour. This reinforces cultural sensibilities and beliefs about modern life as characterised by risk, unpredictability, and danger. And as people have come to believe that they can no longer trust

government to maintain essential well-being, crime policy has become more diffuse and more symbolic. Cavender (2004) embellishes Garland's account, expanding the understanding of the American media in shaping policy responses to crime. He points not only to television, but newspapers, magazines, and film; his analysis includes not only news coverage, but drama series, reality television, and feature films. During the past 30 years, the presentation of crime across various media formats has reinforced a curiously singular message: crime is a feature of modern life, for reasons that cannot be grasped, and government by itself cannot protect the public.

Cultural sensibilities establish the parameters of policy innovation. And, generally speaking, the shift Garland describes means that appeals to law and order will have greater cultural meaning than appeals to rehabilitation. Cullen and colleagues argue 'it is clear that being right about crime – developing solid knowledge through "good" criminology – is not enough to influence public policy' (Cullen et al., 1999: 195). Policies do not hinge on what can be demonstrated empirically but on whether they make sense to people. Implementing a sustainable policy agenda requires that its advocates 'tell a good story', consistent with cultural sensibilities, about why crime occurs and what should be done in response. They argue that the criminologists who advocate social policy as an approach to crime have simply not been as effective at storytelling as have the advocates of changes in crime policy.

Conclusion

The role of criminologists in a welfare state is complicated. Some argue criminologists should join their cousins in social policy in building and strengthening the welfare state. Others insist that criminologists should engage the role of outside provocateur; external critics who challenge the government to do something more or something else. These arguments reflect differing beliefs about the value of social-science knowledge and political strategies for bringing about social change.

Questions for Discussion

1. *Are students of criminology and social policy concerned with 'the social question'? Should they be?*

2. *Would Leon Radzinowicz agree with New Labour's response to crime? Would Richard Titmuss?*

3. *Who worries most about the gap between what criminologists know and what policymakers do: experimental criminologists, crime scientists, critical criminologists, or left realists?*

4. *What influence do the theories and research findings of criminologists actually have on policymaking about crime?*

Further Reading

Michael Hill (2003) *Understanding Social Policy* (7th edn). Oxford: Blackwell.

NACRO (1995) *Crime and Social Policy*. London: NACRO.

Mick Ryan (2003) *Penal Policy and Political Culture in England and Wales*. Winchester: Waterside Press.

Michael Tonry (2004) *Punishment and Politics: Evidence and Emulation in English Crime Control Policy*. Cullompton: Willan.