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## Public criminologies

### *Diverse perspectives on academia and policy*

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### Introduction

The origins of this Special Issue can be located in a ‘Modernizing Criminal Justice’ conference that we both attended in London in June 2002. The high-profile event was co-sponsored by John Jay College of Criminal Justice, New York, the Metropolitan Police and the FBI. Broadcasting crews were on hand to digest the plenary speeches of senior representatives of the British government, the judiciary and law enforcement agencies. It was also a highly corporate event, promoting the commercial products of global security and IT companies specializing in criminal justice ‘problem solving’. The opening session of the conference featured a slow motion replay of the 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers with a voice-over informing the audience that the course of criminal justice had changed forever. This ‘post 9/11’ global war on crime and terrorism theme echoed throughout the plenary speeches and keynote sessions. What was striking was the relegation of the scheduled criminology workshops to the margins of the conference.<sup>1</sup> This set off a discussion between us, during a coffee break, about why academic criminological knowledge was extraneous to the interests of the policy audiences brought together by this conference. And, of course, this quickly moved to discussion of whether criminologists should have a central place in such a forum.

But while this is how our interest in criminology and public policy was initially sparked, we later found ourselves trying to pinpoint, more systematically, the different positions criminologists have taken on questions of their relevance and status within larger public policy debates.<sup>2</sup> Our purposes in this introduction, and in the Special Issue that follows, are twofold. One aim

is to outline a range of views that have been offered by academic criminologists on the discipline's public status and its relationship to public policy formation and intellectual practice. A second goal is to argue the need for a diversity of 'public criminologies' wherein explicit value is placed on moving policies in more progressive directions. Our own point of view is that much more could be done than at present, particularly since there would seem to be broad criminological consensus about many policy issues facing us including punitive policies around the globe as well as the detrimental consequences of a range of harms and risks.

In proceeding, then, we start with a short survey of several influential views that have appeared in print about criminology's public status or lack thereof; although to some extent interweaving the two, we move from perspectives expressed in Britain to positions that appeared in the US context. We characterize one set of explanations as sociological and another as data related. Next, we provide a brief description of the articles that appear in this Special Issue and how we think they contribute to the question at hand. Finally, we return to the question of public criminologies writ large.

### Meeting at the crossroads of public criminology

David Garland and Richard Sparks (2000) have taken a predominantly sociological approach to analysing the question of academic criminology's relationship to public policy and public debates. They were themselves stimulated to confront the challenges facing late modern criminology by reading Margaret Zahn's (1999) ASC Presidential Address in which she reflected on the future of criminology as an academic discipline from the perspective of a public policy actor and as a contributor to the building of 'just communities'. It is worth noting that Zahn's and Garland and Sparks' deliberations pre-dated Michael Burawoy's clarion call for a 'public sociology' that contributes to 'a triple dialogue—a dialogue among sociologists, between sociologists and publics and most importantly within publics themselves' (2005b: 71). For Burawoy, the responsibilities and reach of 'public sociology' distinguished it, in the academic division of labour (and knowledge claims), from 'professional', 'policy' and 'critical' sociologies (see Burawoy, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, see also Gans, 2002). This initiated a wide-ranging and committed debate in various sociological forums and publications (see, for example, *American Journal of Sociology* (2005), *British Journal of Sociology* (2005), *Critical Sociology* (2005), *Social Forces* (2004), *Social Problems* (2004)).

Garland and Sparks' historical reference point is the immediate post-war period when British criminology was 'an integral part' of policy making and practice and also influenced public deliberations. An elite of academics, policy makers, senior practitioners and opinion formers synthesized criminological scholarship and policy to promote enlightened practices. It also helped that this institutional epistemology was in tune with the broader

governmental rationalities of the post-war social democratic welfare state, and that policy making was insulated from the realm of electoral politics and public opinion (see also Reiner, 1988; Loader and Sparks, 2004).<sup>3</sup>

Over the last several decades, though, Sparks and Garland posit that contemporary Anglo-American criminology came to be marked by a blatant contradiction. On the one hand, it is in vigorous health having established itself as a distinctive professional field in sections of the academy. University degree programmes, faculty posts and specialist research centres involving criminology have increased in number and kind. The membership of professional associations has also grown; national and international conferences are well attended; and there are numerous specialist journals and books published by prestigious academic presses. With such rapid expansion it could be assumed that criminologists would play a central role in policy development and public debate.

On the other hand, with the advancement of neo-liberalism and neo-classicism, Garland and Sparks cautioned criminologists against making overly confident assumptions about the future. For what had gradually happened was a noticeable decline in public understanding of and engagement with academic criminological knowledge. With notable exceptions, criminologists have had 'limited success in shaping the public discussion of "its" uses and its faltering influence on public policy and decision-making' (Garland and Sparks, 2000: 190; see also Zimring, 1996, Murphy and Stenning, 1999).

Late modernity has produced new crime problems that have had significant implications for 'the intellectual dispositions, strategic aims and political constraints that criminology inevitably entails' (Garland and Sparks, 2000: 189). Specifically, the collective experience of having to adjust to the threat posed by living in an environment disordered by crime and delinquency has generated high levels of crime consciousness and a punitive public mood. The categorizations that a generation of post-war criminologists took for granted have been sidelined by (a) the politicization of crime fears (b) victim-oriented criminal justice policy shifts and (c) the extension of private sector involvement in crime control and the delivery of criminal justice services.

Criminologists have had to confront the embarrassing fact that in a society saturated with 'crime talk', they have utmost difficulty in communicating with politicians, policy makers, professionals and the public. Criminological reasoning is now mediated and contested by a range of vociferous interest groups, activists and a multitude of institutional actors and public opinions. And criminologists are alienated from late modern political culture because crime, policing and punishment are defining electoral issues. Garland and Sparks also cautioned that in the academy, criminology's traditional analytical categorizations are being challenged through actuarial perspectives and other academic disciplines that are addressing the problem of crime through the frameworks of regulation, governance, risk and security (see also O'Malley, 1996; Braithwaite, 2000).

They concluded by laying out the strategic choices confronting academic criminology. It could turn inwards, with practitioners insisting that their key role is to produce the research findings that will generate evidence-led recommendations for policy makers. The problem with this is that criminologists

will continue to respond to the government's crime control priorities rather than articulating a broader criminological agenda and they would have little to no control over how their data will be used. There are, therefore, serious political limits to the 'expert role' of policy criminologists. For Garland and Sparks the cultural centrality of crime was 'an opportunity for criminology to embrace a more critical, more public, more wide-ranging role' (2000: 201). Criminologists cannot sidestep their responsibility as citizens to participate in the broader public conversation. To do so, they would have to sharpen their reflexive understanding of 'the way that crime is experienced, represented and regulated' (2000: 202) and the broader shifts in political culture.

Their sense that dominant criminological concepts were out of step with political developments meant the discipline had to replenish itself intellectually. It could do so by engaging with the cross-cutting explanatory frameworks of contemporary social theorists such as Giddens, Bauman, Rose and others who are asking new questions and making 'connections between apparently unconnected phenomena in ways that allow substantive research to grasp more perspicuously the peculiarities of its current environment' (Garland and Sparks, 2000: 203; see also Nelken, 1996). Although underdeveloped, Garland and Sparks did touch on the differences between the tasks of professional, policy-oriented criminology and critical criminologies and their preferred 'public criminology'.

But, in contrast to the range of discussion which met Michael Burawoy's call for a public sociology, there has been little sustained discussion within criminology of the issues raised by Garland and Sparks.<sup>4</sup> And this silence in itself may reflect broader ambivalence about whether 'criminology' should be regarded as a free-standing academic discipline. Jock Young (2003, 2004) was one of the few criminologists who did respond from the viewpoint of critical criminology. Young also took a sociological approach to understanding criminology's relationship to public policy, albeit stressing quite different developments. He cautioned against intellectual histories that constructed a radiant moment of criminological influence. For him, the emergence in the 1970s of a radical criminology committed to a full social theory of deviance was a necessary response to the limitations of the post-war correctionalist ethos propagated by an intellectual-administrative elite. And, of course, Young's broader intention was to re-align the analysis of crime and social control with post-positivist sociology (see Cohen, 1996). The result has been the creation of an international network of critical scholarship that not only redefined the field of study but insinuated many of its key ideas into public consciousness (see Carrington and Hogg, 2002).

Late modern criminology, for Young, is fragmented and characterized by a multitude of new voices as a result of the collapse of boundaries over who is authorized to speak about crime and on what terms. And this democratization has impacted on the institutional knowledge base of policy making, politics and public opinion in unpredictable ways. In the 1980s, right realist and administrative criminologists did manage to construct a lucrative policy base by

working within the groove of an increasingly punitive criminal justice system. Carefully cultivated relationships with the newsmedia, public commentators and political networks allowed them to redefine the terms of the debate about criminal justice policy and social policy. Young insists that even in the most hostile of political and ideological circumstances, critical criminology has continued to act as a counter-voice to free market and neo-conservative anti-crime ideologies.

Other critical criminologists are more pessimistic. Hil and Robertson (2003), Walters (2003) and Hillyard et al. (2004), for example, locate what they view as the corrupted state of criminological scholarship with the strengthening of market forces in higher education and administrative criminology's orientation towards the research needs of the criminal justice system (see also Chan, 2000). The construction of a market in crime control research and practice has strip-mined the discipline's broader intellectual integrity and academic prestige. It is peopled with 'entrepreneurs' and 'consultants' who are willing to sell their 'expertise' and provide 'off-the-shelf' evaluation packages to law enforcement and criminal justice agencies on a national and international basis.<sup>5</sup> Political clientalism in the commissioning process across a range of managerialized policy sites also means that critical criminologists have difficulty in accessing funding 'to conduct rigorous, challenging and socially relevant research that will alleviate rather than exacerbate problems caused by conventional crime, while simultaneously confronting the social harms generated by the powerful' (Hillyard et al., 2004: 385). From this perspective, de-politicized definitions of 'policy expertise', 'relevance' and 'application' are geared towards funding the building of better mousetraps while neutralizing the possibility of critical investigation of the state's surveillance, criminalization and punishment capacities and highly sensitive 'crime sites'.

Young also noted the influence that feminist criminologists have had in placing the needs of victims of violence on the criminal justice agenda. He was correct to note that feminist criminologists, as well as criminologists who called attention to issues of racial discrimination in and outside the academy, had been influencing policy debates in the same decades that Garland and Sparks characterized as ones of declining criminological relevance. Both in Britain and in the USA, social movements of the 1960s and 1970s related to feminism and racial justice had and continue to affect criminology, and vice versa, as policy makers have been compelled to recognize and to try to deal more sensitively with issues like domestic violence, sexual harassment and hate crimes (and, in general, to recognize the role of gendered, racial and class-related biases in criminal justice practices). From the work of Pat Carlen and Betsy Stanko (among others) in Britain to that of Meda Chesney-Lind, Kim Cook, Kathy Daly, and Natalie Sokoloff (among others) in the USA, it was obvious that feminist criminologists were immersed in efforts to change policy—because they brought public attention to these issues. Nor would cultural consciousness about racial profiling and the persistence of racist policing around the globe have emerged without a combination of social movement and criminologists'

attention to these problems. Yet as detailed in *Theoretical Criminology's* recent Special Issue on feminist restorative justice (2005), many feminist criminologists in the UK and Australia, as well as in the USA, are now concerned about so much influence in the areas of domestic violence and rape having been exerted that strange alliances between feminists and the conservative neoliberal state were forged. As Kristin Bumiller (2007) argues in a forthcoming book summarizing this position, feminist scholars, however well intentioned, were sometimes unaware of the racially biased and punitive outcomes to which their interventions on behalf of women might produce. Here, then, is a feminist position that expresses concern not so much about whether criminologists have exerted influence but how, and with what effect. Other feminists, like Susan Caringella (2007), express even another concern: according to Caringella, even apparent 'progress in policy areas like rape reform have been stymied by the strength of conservative backlash in the US and elsewhere. This is also a stark reminder that there is no easy relationship between policy recommendations, formulation, implementation and outcomes.

Like Garland and Sparks, Young also expressed concern about the state of the discipline. For him manifest failures of the contemporary criminological imagination were associated with a discernible turning away from sociology (see also Savelsberg and Sampson, 2002) and a noticeable lack of interest in new developments in philosophy, political science and cultural studies. Consequently, mainstream criminological discourse is not capable of describing, never mind altering social circumstances.

What is needed is a theoretical position which can enter into the real world of existential joy, fear, false certainty and doubt, which can seek to understand the sub-cultural projects of people in a world riven with inequalities of wealth and uncertainties of identity. What we need is an ethnographic method which can deal with reflexivity, contradiction, tentativeness, change opinion, posturing, concealment, which is sensitive to the way people write and rewrite their personal narratives. It will not be solved by fake scientificity but by a critical ethnography honed to the potential of human creativity and meaning.

(Young, 2004: 29)

In both the UK and USA, professional and policy-oriented criminologists, involved in their own debate about the state of the discipline, insist that its lack of relevance and practical impact relates to the unaddressed structural weaknesses of the evidence base.<sup>6</sup> Here, then, is quite a different 'dismal science' position. Tending to presume agreed on definitions of what constitutes reliable and usable social science data, these criminologists argue that the discipline has not offered expert users convincing research findings—and that therein lies a main cause of marginalization and lack of public expert status.

For example, Paul Wiles (2002) writing as someone who had made the move in the UK from academic criminologist to senior Home Office civil servant, argues that for criminology to contribute to public policy it must produce expert knowledge that is useful to policy makers. The defining

characteristics and motivations of contemporary British criminology mean that it does not possess the evidence-based knowledge on offences, offenders, victims and their interconnections that would allow it to guide policy making. The methodological preferences and ideological biases in British criminology help to explain the poor state of public knowledge on key policy issues. The rapid university-based growth of the discipline has resulted in the privatization of criminological labour. In order to establish their academic credentials and professional careers, criminologists are: specializing in narrow, irrelevant research areas and addressing their work to a primary audience of their peers and students. Defensive disciplinary boundaries are being built and practitioners are obsessed with separatist disputes. They are sheltered from 'the wider blasts of criticism on which all good social science depends' and are unable 'to express their ideas in everyday language and summarize complex evidence in straightforward points' (Wiles, 2002: 248; see also Wiles, 2004).

Strikingly, analogous arguments have appeared in the US context; one can discern the parameters of an emerging debate through intermittent exchanges of views about whether criminological research is 'relevant'. Among US policy-oriented criminologists, widespread agreement seems to exist that criminology has a credibility problem with its authority claims and 'irrelevant' research. Criminology's reputation, according to Austin, has been compromised because the majority of published studies 'are so deeply flawed that they are essentially useless' (2003: 558). Conceptual imprecision, methodological deficiencies and undisclosed bias have resulted in the dissemination of 'irresponsible and highly misleading conclusions'. This 'junk science' has damaged criminal justice policy and practice and communities and wasted scarce public resources. Criminology has also been impaired by over-dependence on a narrow range of funding sources that have used 'a small but highly influential circle of criminologists' to 'exert a disproportionate influence on what is funded and who gets funded' (2003: 569). He also strongly hints that criminological research findings have been manipulated by grant holders towards the needs of funding agencies and political agendas. For Charles Tittle, there is not a single criminological issue about which 'even a modestly demanding critic could be convinced' (2004: 1641). This is because 'research is limited, and our data are always incomplete, error prone, and accepted as supporting an argument if it simply shows something "better than chance"' (2004: 1641). This echoes some of Lawrence Sherman's (2005) concerns that much that passes for criminological research is either impressionist description or misleading in terms of its analysis and conclusions.

What might be done to remedy this state of affairs? One notable response has been to argue the case for further validation of criminology's expert status. Austin (2003) advocates the utilization of innovative research designs, the rigorous analysis of research data and conduct of replication studies, diversification of funding streams and enhanced regulation and oversight of professional practice and standards. For Cullen (2005), there is a need to develop a fine-grained understanding of when and why criminology has mattered to policy and practice.



Part of this professionalization process is resisting the temptation to over-sell the policy relevance of the discipline. Tittle, for example, warns criminologists:

are as likely to be wrong as right and in the process they can easily cause damage. Here we are not talking about innocuous outcomes but instead about matters of human life, safety and freedom. Being wrong can be very costly.

(2004: 1641)

The advocacy and bias that inevitably flows from and constructs public engagement endangers the 'precious little' public legitimacy that is currently accorded to social scientists. Criminologists do not have 'that body of reliable knowledge and the public pretense that we do actually undermines any hope of influencing society or of obtaining the support necessary for developing such a knowledge' (2004: 1641). The public:

know we have weak knowledge and in response they accord us little credibility. We, in turn, continually undermine the little respect we might otherwise have by trying to promote our ideas (a form of ideology) in the guise of superior knowledge. Most of the time we actually do not know as much as we pretend and even when there is a chance we might provide or compile useful information, people do not trust us.

(Tittle, 2004: 1642)

Professional criminologists should also accept the reality that 'most policy issues are moral questions that cannot be answered by theory or for that matter by research. ... Moreover the idea that scholarly knowledge and this knowledge alone should determine policy outcomes is naïve' (Laub, 2004: 18).

However, for others criminology, or *at least some sections of criminology*, should split off and develop into a technical science. Sherman (2005) argues for a technically sophisticated 'experimental criminology' that would provide 'unbiased empirical guidance' to inform key policy choices in crime and criminal justice. He acknowledges that even a methodologically sophisticated criminology would face an uphill battle influencing the contemporary policy environment. Usefulness 'does not guarantee that the information will be *used*' (Sherman, 2005: 130, emphasis in original). 'Experimental criminology' has the advantage that it relates directly to the world of practitioners, aiming to provide them with 'what works' choices and has the potential to excite the public imagination with thought-provoking 'discoveries' about criminal behaviour and crime prevention. There is the obvious implication that some domains of criminological inquiry are more amenable to experimental methods than others but this has yet to be specified.<sup>7</sup> Clarke (2004) moves this agenda one step further, arguing that criminology must become an applied science whose core task is to explain crime (rather than criminality) and how crime is committed (rather than why it is committed). It should also be dedicated to developing effective crime control strategies. To do so, it will have to disconnect itself from social theory and link up with

disciplines such as economics, biology, demography, geographical mapping, town planning and engineering. It will have to integrate with industry and commerce rather than the criminal justice system in order to comprehend how crime is being transformed by new technologies and globalization. This would, of course, make most of criminology's preferred perspectives and methodologies redundant. If criminologists do not become competent crime analysts and/or policy thinkers, they will be replaced by a new generation of 'crime scientists'.

This brief summary of some of the most stimulating statements raises a whole series of issues regarding the public credibility and relevance, academic prestige and indeed possible futures of the discipline.

### Overview of the Special Issue

The themed articles in this Special Issue address many of the points raised in the previous discussion. In a bracing opening discussion, Elliott Currie presents the case for a 'public criminology'. He notes how the discipline has been increasingly marginal to wider public discussions about crime and seemingly incapable of influencing criminal justice policies and legislative programmes. This is despite the fact that professional criminologists have produced a solid body of research directly applicable to decision making across a range of fundamental issues. What is truly remarkable is that in an era where evidence-led policy making is extolled, populist ideas are adopted that have no solid evidence to back them up and research findings have been misapplied. Some of this can be blamed on the extremely hostile neo-liberal political climate.

In addition, though, the discipline must also bear some responsibility for its self-imposed marginalization in public debates. Currie argues that criminologists may be failing in their broader civic duty to act as public knowledge workers because professional criminology, particularly as practised in US research universities, has encouraged narrow and internally oriented definitions of scholarship. These universities tend to reward technical research and high degrees of specialization. Thus, criminologists may be actively deterred by the university reward system from engaging in public debate and influencing wider audiences. And he cites examples of how criminologists are effectively punished by the academy for being too relevant. According to Currie, professional closure, exemplified by incomprehensible methodologies and impenetrable techno-language, is a primary reason why public debates on crime and criminal justice policy remain dominated by essentially counter-criminological perspectives. In the concluding section of his article, Currie details, more specifically, ways that criminology can develop a language to meet its wider responsibility to raise the standard of public debate about crime and criminal justice. And of course this does foreground the need for a discussion regarding the relationship between professional and moral values and ethics.

Gregg Barak has been a significant and consistent advocate of a criminology committed both to research and to active engagement with the newsmedia on issues of crime and criminal justice. Despite the transformation of criminological ideas into valuable media commodities, professional criminologists have not usually been key sources on whom journalists rely. On the contrary, most sections of the media draw disproportionately on the expert status and public authority of uniformed criminal justice professionals and criminal lawyers. This results in public perceptions of crime that are not founded in criminological analyses and research results. But, drawing on his own experience as a radio show host through the OJ Simpson criminal trial in the USA, Barak argues that criminologists' marginality within news-media discourse is not inevitable. Rather, a central task for criminologists is to convince journalists and reporters that we have important analyses and research findings to discuss. Barak realizes that the task is daunting in a volatile 24/7 media environment where the crime agenda is routinely set or re-set by the 'buzz thoughts' of 'shock jocks', conspiracy theorists, pundits and aggressive spin doctors representing government agencies. He goes on to explore how a proactive media presence will require criminologists to skill themselves in how the 'old' and 'new' media works and to recognize opportunities for intervening in a decisive manner in myriad public debates. One important implication of Barak's article is that the next generation of professional criminologists will need to be educated in the latest scholarship and technical practices of journalism and communication and new media studies. We also need to consider the risks associated with the mass mediatisation of criminological knowledge. For criminology's ability to intervene in decisive public debates and carve out new public spaces—the theme of this Special Issue—the media matter.

Another avenue open to reform-minded criminologists who wish to exercise a more direct influence on public policy is to move from the academy itself into policy-making positions. Indeed, as previously noted, the expansion of Anglo-American criminology has generated considerable movement back and forth between the academy, criminal justice agencies, government departments, think tanks and pressure groups. And this has in certain important respects produced a 'new model' criminologist. This also underscores the point that the academy is only one of many proliferating institutional sites generating and disseminating criminological knowledge. In an optimistic article, then, Betsy Stanko reflects on her professional journey first from US to UK academy and then from the academy to her current position as a senior policy advisor on strategy within Scotland Yard. She provides us with important insights into the possibilities and constraints associated with locating oneself in different institutional settings. And, picking up on another point raised in our earlier discussion, her journey illustrates how feminist criminologists have been deeply involved in combining campaigning work, critiquing professional practice, sustaining an academic support network and formulating a distinctive criminological perspective. The focus on violence against women has also provided ample opportunities for engagement with the newsmedia.

Criminologists, to accomplish change, must analyse how powerful criminal justice agencies ‘think’ and ‘work’ in processing information and formulating a response to professional deficiencies that need to be redressed. In the case of violence against women, the police eventually realized that they had no choice but to enact reforms to close the gap between rhetoric and reality. This created a window of opportunity. Criminologists must also be prepared for sustained hard policy work and often frustrating or conflictual engagement with the complicated power lines and sensitivities that constitute bureau-professional landscapes. Stanko acknowledges that the real-time knowledge needs of her police employers now come first and that she may be more distant from academic criminological debates. And she does suggest that this distance has led to negative judgements by fellow criminologists. However, the payback is that she is situated at the heart of where policy happens and has access to information and data not readily available to academic criminologists. No doubt, a different kind of professional knowledge, expertise and relevance is gained in the process of ‘translating’ feminist scholarship into the policy mentalities of an extremely powerful organizational culture.

Tim Newburn and Trevor Jones have been at the forefront of an emergent body of scholarship on the dissemination of Anglo-American criminal justice policy initiatives. In their article, they provide a case study analysis of how the extremely influential concept of ‘Zero Tolerance’ has travelled internationally across different public debates and policy sites. And they draw our attention to many intriguing issues in the materialization of significant policy breakthroughs. They reiterate that criminologists have had understandable difficulty in coming to terms with a radically altered policy environment. They also note how key US think tanks have played a pivotal role in popularizing (sometimes by providing ‘sound-bite’ descriptions) and globalizing particular crime control policy narratives. This partly explains the USA being seen as ‘catching the wave’ of policy innovation and emerging as the key destination for ‘policy tourists’ desperately looking for the latest ‘what works’ ideas.

A critical issue that needs to be considered in more depth is what happens when these ideas are ‘franchised’ into different national settings. One important outcome has been that indigenous criminological knowledge or criminal justice policies are parochialized. Hence there is the very real risk of local knowledge displacement or even replacement. This is more likely to happen if criminological traditions in a particular country are weak and political pressures to respond to public concerns about crime are strong. Then too, as Newburn and Jones point out, an allied issue is the sheer speed with which contradictory ideas about criminal justice have been circulating and connecting with each other in unexpected ways. Even if actual governance policies and practices do not lead to pragmatically verifiable results (like reductions in crime statistics), Newburn and Jones believe that concepts like ‘Zero Tolerance’ and ‘broken windows’ should not be viewed simply as fads or rhetorical flourishes. Rather these concepts are ‘real’ in their cultural

consequences, becoming part of popular consciousness and periodically migrating into other policy debates and politicians' stock phrases. This means that criminologists need to pay much more attention to analysing how particular crime control symbols—both progressive and reactionary—have the ability to resonate across different jurisdictions and to re-invent themselves globally.

Chris Stone's article also addresses some of the unpredictable outcomes in the 'doing' of policy work raised by Tim Newburn and Trevor Jones and Betsy Stanko. In the 1970s and 1980s, the campaign for stronger forms of police accountability in the USA and UK was primarily associated with the writings of critical police scholars; many of these scholars worked closely with community groups and campaigning journalists. At the time, this was such a politically contested issue that there seemed no possibility of significantly advancing core demands. This makes it all the more remarkable that, as Stone notes, robust multi-tiered reform programmes have now been introduced globally. He focuses on the example of Nigeria to indicate how meaningful police reform has taken root in the most unexpected of settings. Stone identifies what we might describe as a backroom process whereby original ideas, sometimes emanating from the work of academic criminologists, were picked up by and 'cleansed' of politics by mainstream police and public policy scholars and influential intermediary bodies such as the Vera Institute in New York. A series of high-profile scandals and the rise of new models of public sector management provided the context for chief police officers to be persuaded of the necessity and benefits of increased accountability and transparency. Like that of Stanko and Newburn and Jones, Stone's analysis reminds us that we need to take a much longer, transnational perspective when we are considering the balance sheet on the impact of progressive criminological ideas on particular policy sites (see also, Bayley, 2005, Marenin, 2005). This article also alerts us to the need to understand the process by which criminological ideas have voyaged from criminology to much broader and perhaps more politically influential global human rights, human security, 'good governance' and international assistance agendas.

Casting a wide theoretical net is also what characterizes Lucia Zedner and Katja Franko Aas' contributions to this Special Issue. According to Zedner, history tells us that any significant change in the crime environment has serious consequences for the discipline. To date, criminology has shown itself able to adapt to new circumstances. However, the discipline is now being challenged by a very different set of circumstances. In Zedner's view, the traditional post-crime orientation of criminal justice has been replaced by the pre-crime logics of security. She examines the evidence of the shift to what she defines as a 'security society'. Of course, criminologists have recently recognized that the logics, techniques and concerns of private security are permeating society and redefining or supplanting traditional criminal justice methodologies. However, we may not yet have come to terms with the implications of how the post-9/11 'war on terror' is being fought domestically. Here, criminology is now directly confronted with the discourses and policy

analysis of competitor disciplines both old (international political science) and emergent (counter-terrorism and national security studies). And going back to a point made by Currie, if criminology is to adapt to new circumstances, it must resist the inflexibilities associated with institutionalization and disciplinization. For Zedner, it must be reflexive, retaining an openness to new ideas and drawing upon the intellectual resources of other disciplines. In addition, it urgently needs to generate the research data on security developments and securitization processes that will allow it to develop a distinctive criminological perspective. Finally, Zedner posits that putting criminological theory to productive work in this context requires analysts to engage in normative analysis and be prepared to articulate a particular conception of human security and justice.

Katja Franko Aas picks up on the many challenges of 'doing' criminology in a globalized world characterized by transnational flows of risks, threats and insecurities and a variety of transnational and 'stateless' responses. She notes that although these concerns have finally registered on criminologists' research agendas, very little original empirical research has emerged. This has been left to human rights scholars working on refugees and migration, anthropologists and NGOs. In addition, virtually no effort has been expended on theorizing these developments (for example, criminologists have hesitated to engage with the paradoxes identified by globalization studies). Far more likely is that, as though nothing has changed, questionable criminological knowledge will be produced through the application of traditional perspectives. Equally damaging will be the assumption that the already under-developed categorizations and methodologies of comparative criminology have some 21st-century value. She analyses how multiple mobilities are undermining the taken-for-granted background assumptions about the 'nation state', 'society' and 'community'. The multi-locational arguments presented in this article raise concerns about exactly where western criminologists need to be conducting research if they are to understand some of the globalized crime problems in their own society: sub-Saharan Africa? South China coastal towns? The Caribbean islands? The frontier terrain between Pakistan and Afghanistan? Or the Mexico–USA border? If this is the case, what are the implications for what should count as 21st-century criminological professional competence and expertise?

## Concluding comments

Overall, our purpose in this Special Issue is to stimulate ongoing debates about the relationship of Anglo-American criminology to changes in public policies. As we indicated in our initial discussion, we have not originated this discussion and we are aware that there are also many more perspectives that need to be aired in this vital debate. Interestingly, contemporary concerns have not only appeared in print, among sociologists and criminologists, but at the professional organizational levels of both fields. For example, the

American Society of Criminology has entertained debates about whether and when to take broad public stances while the ASC's large Division of Women and Crime now specifically honours feminist criminologists who have contributed to altering gender-related public policies in progressive directions. On the other side of the Atlantic, the British Society of Criminology has found itself drawn into research-related disputes between academic criminologists and the Home Office, the government 'gate-keeper' for funding policy-related research on criminal justice in England and Wales. It is also noticeable how the major annual Anglo-American criminology conferences employ titles for sessions that do signal an awareness of the need to address pressing public debates. It is unfortunate that, in many instances, the eye-catching conference title is as far as the wider engagement goes.

What we are arguing is that the present historical moment is one when public intervention and contributing to the actualization of concrete policy changes is especially crucial. At present, it seems closer to a responsibility than a luxury to value the public aspects of criminological labour and to call for a more precise understanding of what furthers (or impedes) criminologists' attempts to have practical effects. For as Michael Burawoy contends about sociology so, just as plainly, do daunting challenges face criminologists as global inequalities have become more rather than less severe, encompassing but not limited to stratifications based on class; as matters of crime and punishment are dealt with, in many jurisdictions, more punitively than ever; as globalized terrorism stymies attempts to eradicate its murderous intent while reactions to terrorism have generated wars and the prioritization of national security over human rights and civil liberties; and as the environment continues to be despoiled. More precisely, though, public criminologies in pursuit of what?

Returning full circle to Burawoy's ambitious exposition, it should be emphasized that as in sociology, so within criminology, there are, and will be, different ways that academics can 'do' public criminology and connect with multiple audiences. Similar distinctions to those Burawoy identified between varied types of sociological work, with dialectical relationships interconnecting them—public sociology, policy sociology, professional sociology and critical sociology—apply to criminological divisions of labour as well. This is illustrated by the array of articles, as just described, that comprise this volume of *Theoretical Criminology*. At the same time, though, the authors featured here point to problems specifically germane for criminologists. For example, Burawoy observes that public sociology involves the ability to bring academic knowledge to much broader audiences, as noted journalist Barbara Ehrenreich succeeded in doing through her accessible and best-selling book *Nickled and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America* (2001). While progressively oriented criminologists have also managed to reach wide audiences (take, for instance, Elliott Currie's influential 1986 treatise *Confronting Crime: An American Challenge*), Gregg Barak's piece, as noted in the previous summary, reflects on ongoing efforts and limitations at present in affecting not just policy makers but the mass-mediated, commercialized and sceptical 'public' sphere. Like Barak, we believe that not only hands-on experience but innovative thought,

research and training are needed as mass-media and popular culture become increasingly complex. Are there opportunities to be engaged with film and performance as well as radio, with blogging as well as with the circulation of television and print news? Evident, at a minimum, is that 'doing' public criminology is closely related to how sophisticated we can become in understanding and participating in a dynamically evolving range of 24/7 mass-media forums. This will not be easy because attempts to establish a public presence will take place against a backdrop of the thinning out of intellectual debate in the media and deepening public scepticism regarding 'expert knowledge'.

This Special Issue also exemplifies what Burawoy calls policy sociology (defined as 'in the service of a goal' and involving work with clients including governmental entities) applied here to policy criminology. In different contexts, both Betsy Stanko and Chris Stone describe having affected changes 'from within' to how policing operates nationally and internationally. Here too, though, as we have seen, dilemmas persist for professional criminologists interested in directly working with governmental entities, and who directly enter various bureau-professional policy-making settings. In the burgeoning free market of ideas identified by Newburn and Jones, why and how will policy makers and indeed the media be interested in listening to academics, particularly in situations where the agenda of the former and that of the latter are politically antithetical? As has been noted at various points in this introduction, one crucial issue facing criminologists is how to offer suggestions that are at once concrete and visionary enough to have a chance of resulting in actual policy effects. In *Downsizing Prisons: How to Reduce Crime and End Mass Incarceration* (2005), Michael Jacobson suggests drawing on practical concerns and electoral anxieties felt by policy makers across the political spectrum—for example, budgetary constraints and public opinion polls showing that Americans are now more concerned about healthcare and education than crime—to advocate progressive agendas like reducing states' leviathan-size prison systems. This approach with its emphasis on a sophisticated understanding of and ability to manipulate the pressure points of an unstable politico-policy penal environment may be worth investigating for whether, or not, it can be generalized to other policy contexts.

Then, too, Burawoy's vision of critical sociology obviously applies to criminology. Indeed, and of course, the term 'critical criminology' is by 2007 familiar to an international network of criminologists of diverse orientations; a section of the ASC, a journal and a European conference circuit, adopted this appellation years before Burawoy's suggestion. Yet again, though, Burawoy's definition of critical sociology—as 'attempts to make professional sociology aware of its biases, silences, promoting new research programs built on alternative alternatives' (2005a: 10)—seems particularly well suited for describing the contents of several articles in this Special Issue. By Burawoy's criteria, Elliott Currie's argument that many university research departments devalue public vocation is indeed a 'critical criminological' one; likewise, Lucia Zedner's and Katja Franko Aas' articles, in different ways, critique the increasing datedness of the epistemological basis of



existing research agendas and point to the urgent need to ‘rattle the cage’ of criminological preconceptions and develop new interdisciplinary intellectual orientations.

Last but not least, then, let us posit that a final category—amounting to yet another mode through which criminologists, in diverse ways, may be able to influence public policy—should be added to Michael Burawoy’s classificatory schema and dialectical understanding, namely, *theoretical criminology*. For we wish to suggest that theory itself, with its use of interdisciplinary sources, probing of philosophical presumptions and foresight capacity, should not be left out of the picture. As the editors of *Theoretical Criminology*, our interpretation is necessarily multi-dimensional. Hardly do we feel that all inquiry ought to be judged by whether or not it is ‘practical’, ‘relevant’ and ‘applicable’. Quite the contrary: like Burawoy, we see the need to think less about policy issues and more about public matters. As we train the next generation of graduate students (our closest, knowable public) in crime and justice, theoretical inquiry and interdisciplinary analysis needs to be encouraged and supported rather than overlooked or taken for granted. Without strong institutional sites to produce theoretical and analytical knowledge work, criminological thinking will end up simply reacting to political events, governmental shifts, client–customer negotiations and/or changes in public opinion. We would not have the intellectual basis for making independent contributions worth listening to. This, indeed, was a major *raison d’être* behind this journal’s own coming into existence. And it is worth remembering that the political class in many national settings continue to be attracted to the power of intellectual ideas rather than yet another batch of policy proposals. The details of policy formulation and implementation are left to professional administrators and specialist advisors. Rigorous thinking is a prerequisite for ‘public criminology’.

The array of different criminologies we have just surveyed, borrowing on debates already being aired in sociology and across criminology’s interdisciplinary perspectives, could become so fragmented from one another that they work at cross-purposes. But our hope is that the opposite is also possible and can be envisioned: different ways of doing and thinking about public criminology may be able to come together, dialectically, as Burawoy put it. Public criminologies need to add up to more than the sum of their parts if we are to ensure both the intellectual vitality and public presence of our chosen field of study.

## Notes

1. Indeed, in one of these sessions, Nick Ross, the presenter of BBC’s *Crime Watch* programme and ‘crime science’ advocate, informed the audience that with one or two notable exceptions, criminologists had little to contribute to the development of more effective forms of crime control and criminal investigation.
2. Conversations with colleagues in non-Anglo-American contexts reveal that the specifics of ‘public criminologies’ debates in other national contexts are

- likely quite different. They do have their own pressing concerns. The journal would welcome articles that reflect on these national differences. We would also like to thank all of the contributors to this Special Issue and those who have supported raising the issue of public criminologies: Pat Carlen, Janet Chan, Kim Cook, David Garland, Ian Loader, Simon Hallsworth, Gordon Hughes, Michael Jacobson, Robert Reiner, Richard Sparks and Jock Young.
3. Perhaps the most significant example remains the successful post-war campaign to abolish the death penalty in Britain.
  4. Richard Sparks took a lead role in the 'Criminology and its Publics' conference at Edinburgh University, 1–3 September 2005. And Charles Tittle (2004), John Braithwaite (2005) and Richard Ericson (2005) did respond to Michael Burawoy.
  5. An allied concern for critical criminology is the increasing number of ex-law enforcement and criminal justice personnel who have been recruited to senior university positions precisely because of their close links with funding agencies and willingness to run commercial consultancy units and theory-lite training courses for 'partner' agencies and 'clients'. In certain universities this has morphed the professional distinction between administrative and academic criminologists and further marginalized criminologists committed to teaching critical discourses and researching zemiological concerns.
  6. This recurring concern is something that can be traced back at least to the debate triggered by Robert Martinson's (1972, 1974) 'nothing works' articles.
  7. See the deliberations of the *Campbell Crime and Justice Group* on the prospects for an 'experimental criminology'.

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