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An Obligation to Make a Difference in the Real World? Thoughts on the Proper Role of Criminologists and Critical Criminologists in the 21st Century

Matthew B. Robinson

Appalachian State University

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I summarize and react to papers published in <u>Western Criminology Review</u>, by Elliott Currie and Richard Hil. In a series of papers that began with Currie's verbal address to the Western Society of Criminology, he and Richard Hil attempted to lay out the proper role of academic criminologists, especially those who consider themselves "critical criminologists." In this article, I summarize the main points of each author and provide commentary on each written piece. I conclude by clarifying what I feel should be the proper role of criminologists generally, with special emphasis on the issue of "critical criminology" and its duty to bring about change to the current state of the discipline.

KEYWORDS: criminology; critical criminology; criminal justice education; role of criminologist

With the 21st Century imminent, criminologist Elliott Currie prepared a speech to be delivered to the annual meeting of the Western Society of Criminology. His speech, which reads a lot like a state of the discipline address (for both criminology and criminal justice), was published in the Western Criminology Review, (WCR) volume 2, number 1. Unfortunately for those of us in criminology, criminal justice, sociology, and related disciplines, the speech was a very pessimistic, albeit realistic, assessment.

In the next edition of *WCR* (volume 2, number 2), a rejoinder by criminologist Richard Hil to Currie's piece was published. Hil provided a summary of Currie's paper and then pointed out what he thought were numerous limitations to Currie's argument. Currie thankfully responded to Hil's paper and ended up suggesting the two were mostly in agreement. Finally, in volume 3, number 2 of *WCR*, Hil wrote a paper that provides a timely challenge to academic criminologists, especially those that consider themselves to be "critical criminologists."

In this paper, I summarize the main points of Currie and Hil in their exchanges and offer commentary on their papers. My overall goal is to clarify what I feel should be the proper role of all criminologists, but especially of those who consider themselves to be "critical criminologists."

ELLIOT CURRIE'S "REFLECTIONS ON CRIME AND CRIMINOLOGY AT THE MILLENNIUM"

When Elliott Currie was preparing his speech to be delivered to the annual meeting of the Western Society of Criminology, he could not help but feel pessimistic about the state of crime and criminal justice in the United States. In his address, Currie says:

The truth is that I find myself very troubled about the state of crime and justice in America. And I'm troubled both as a citizen and as a criminologist. As a citizen, I'm troubled by the drift of our crime control policy and by the shoulder-shrugging inattention to the massive injustices we have tolerated or precipitated in the name of fighting crime. As a criminologists – as a professional – I'm troubled by the drift of our public discourse about these issues – a discourse that seems to me to be increasingly removed from most of what [we criminologists] actually *know* about crime (Currie, 1999: 1, emphasis in original).

Currie reports that he is deeply concerned about what he considers to be costly mistakes in American criminal justice policy and criminal justice system activity. The mistakes, which Currie broadly identifies later in his speech, are hidden by declines in street crime that he maintains are mostly not attributable to our systems of police, courts, and corrections but rather to extra-criminal justice processes.

The New Triumphalism

Nevertheless, politicians at all levels of government have been quick to claim responsibility for declines in street crime, which is part of what Currie calls "the new triumphalism" when it comes to American criminal justice. His analysis suggests that politicians in the United States have simultaneously exaggerated our successes when it comes to reducing crime (because American levels of lethal violence are still astronomically high) and have misinterpreted the meaning of crime declines (because they have been attributed to criminal justice policies rather than social factors beyond the reach of our criminal justice policies). This new triumphalism is part of what Currie identifies as a "broader triumphalism – even smugness – about the 'American Model' generally" (p. 2).

Currie asserts that false lessons emerge as a result of the new triumphalism that has invaded the political arena and our institutions of mass media. These lessons are: 1) we finally are doing crime control right here in the United States; 2) it is possible to control crime after all; and 3) it is not necessary to address so-called root causes of crime in order to reduce it. These lessons now are espoused by both major political parties, so that it is nearly impossible to differentiate Republicans and Democrats when it comes to the crime control policies each promotes: policies which amount to more of the same – more police, more prisons, tougher sentences, an increased use of the death penalty, and so forth (Robinson 2002).

The claimed crime reduction successes of major political figures allows us to ignore issues that Currie thinks are critical but about which there is "no significant national-level political debate" (p. 3). These include: 1) huge correctional populations, 2) overrepresentation of minorities in our justice systems, 3) abuses of our justice systems against its clients, 4) a return to the death penalty despite the opposite trend among our allied countries, and 5) an increased willingness to use police and prisons to solve problems rather than other social institutions. There is actually a great deal of debate about these issues currently, yet the debates are being muted by major media and the corporations that own them (Robinson 2002).

In describing triumphalism, Currie states:

As a social scientist, I have to say I'm appalled, frankly, by the intellectual shallowness and shoddiness of many of the arguments that underlie the triumphalist consensus; as a citizen of what I'd like to think of as a democratic nation, I'm chilled by its values, or lack thereof; as a member of the community – and a parent – I'm frightened by the heedlessness it displays about the future (p. 3).

The things Currie seems to want are for Americans to rise up against the new triumphalism and to recognize that there are deep problems in the country that need to be addressed. Currie's analysis is limited to the conservative crime control agenda because it is the only

one that was in effect as the 20^{th} Century came to a close.

In his work, Currie lays out a plan to overcome what he sees as America's criminal justice failures and the triumphalism that interferes with our ability to correct these failures. He suggests that it is primarily us – what he calls professional criminologists – who are mostly responsible for turning failure into success.

Home Truths About Crime and Criminal Justice

In his paper, Currie offers what he calls "home truths" – things that people ought to know about crime and criminal justice. Home truth number one is that levels of violence in the United States are still unacceptably high; in fact, they are likely the highest in the world. He calls America "an anomaly – an outlier – among the advanced industrial countries" (p. 5). Currie argues that there really is little to celebrate (as would be called for in our triumphalist state) given our extraordinarily high levels of violent street crime.

Home truth number two, according to Currie, is that politicians and the media have misinterpreted and misrepresented trends of violent street crime in this country. He writes:

In the media discussion of recent trends, you often see them presented as if they represented a sudden fall from a plateau – which appears quite spectacular, and also rather mysterious – when the reality is that they represent a falling off from an extraordinary peak, which is both less wonderful and less mysterious (p. 5).

Currie's home truth number three is that the United States has hidden its crime problem, mainly because it does not count prison inmates as part of "the crime problem." He says: "Since the public is most interested in getting criminals off the street and safely away from view, the public discourse about crime rarely counts the people behind bars as part of our crime problem. Instead, they are usually counted as part of the solution, if they are counted at all" (p. 5). Currie is troubled that:

we measure our crime rate without factoring in the reality that we've simply *shifted* some of the total 'pool' of criminals in our society from one place to another. We haven't stopped producing them. We've just moved them" (p. 6, emphasis in original). So, we do not have an accurate count of *criminality*. Currie likens this to an attempt to collect measures of illnesses in society while ignoring all the sick people in the nation's hospitals; it is not an accurate measure of illness in society: "In a reasonable culture we would not say we had won the war against disease

just because we've moved a lot of sick people from their homes to hospital wards. And in a reasonable culture we would not say we've won the war against crime just because we've moved a lot of criminals from the community into prison cells (p. 7).

Pitfalls of Economic Success

Currie also claims that our economic success which was much greater at the time he delivered his speech (Currie mentions how states were in the midst of great budget surpluses, most if not all of which have now evaporated.) - leads to crimes in other countries that we do not think about in our isolated corner of the world. In Mexico, for example, Currie claims that violent crime is rising because of criminogenic conditions created or exacerbated by the lower prices we pay for the products they manufacture - conditions such as family poverty and family disruption, joblessness, migration, and growing illicit occupations such as the drug trade. In his speech, Currie hints at his frustration about America's unwillingness to financially invest in the things we know to be effective to stop street crime, despite the fact that the economy was very strong and that states had large surpluses in their budgets. Currie is prophetic when he notes that this will not last forever (only a few short years later, the economy is suffering and states are facing massive shortfalls and budget deficits).

Nonsensical criminal justice policies

Currie is highly critical of the current state of criminal justice in America. For example, he states:

As everyone here knows, two things in particular, in some combination, have often been given the bulk of the credit for our recent declines in violent crime. One is tough sentencing laws which have dramatically boosted incarceration rates; the other is tough policing, especially the so-called 'zero tolerance' approach most famously, or notoriously, adopted in New York City (p. 9).

Currie concludes that any claim that these things work to reduce violent street crime "flies in the face of the evidence – or maybe more precisely – flies in the face of the lack of evidence."

Currie is very hard on those who claim that "zero tolerance" policing is effective. He states:

To put it in the most technical methodological language I can, I'd say this argument is B.S. It's B.S. because nobody has in fact shown that nasty policing is responsible for declining rates of violent crime in our cities – even less, that you *have* to have

nasty police to have declines in crime (p. 10, emphasis in original).

Currie is honest in acknowledging that prisons will reduce some street crime. He says:

If you boost your state prison population a lot, you will probably get some moderate effects on some 'high rate' crimes, notably burglary and perhaps one violent crime, robbery — but astonishingly small effects on most other serious crimes of violence, including homicide, serious assault, and forcible rape. Yet it's homicide that has fallen the fastest among violent offenses in the last few years. Can our sixfold increase in the prison population explain some of the decline in our homicide? Probably. Can it explain most of it? No (p. 9).

Consistent with Currie's argument, Blumstein and Wallman (2000) identify the factors that supposedly account for reductions in street crime over the past decade. In their book, <u>The Crime Drop in America</u>, they write:

The number of very tenable explanations for the crime drop, none of which inherently excludes any of the others, leads to the conclusion that there is no single explanation but that a variety of factors, some independent and some interacting in a mutually supportive way, have been important (p. 2).

The factors analyzed in the book include economic improvement, an aging population, the stabilization of the illicit drug trade, reductions in gun crimes, and prison. The authors conclude that:

no single factor can be invoked as *the* cause of the crime decline of the 1990s. Rather, the explanation appears to lie with a number of factors, perhaps none of which alone would have been sufficient and some of which might not have been of noticeable efficacy without reinforcement from others (p. 11).

It should be pointed out that the author who wrote the chapter on prisons (Spelman, 2000) concludes that "the prison buildup was responsible for about one-fourth of the crime drop. Other factors are responsible for the vast majority of the drop" (p. 123). He adds, "Most of responsibility for the crime drop rests with improvements in the economy, changes in the age structure, or other social factors" (p. 125).

Currie does an excellent job of carefully disaggregating trends in street crime, showing, for example, that the largest drops in violent street crime are

for homicide. He suggests that homicide rates are resistant to incapacitation. Thus, the massive correctional build-ups in the United States cannot be credited to the declines in homicide.

The Proper Role of the Criminologist

Currie concludes his address by attempting to develop the proper role of the criminologist. He says that criminologists have two critical jobs:

The first is to push, and push relentlessly, to insure that this nation makes those preventive social investments that can reduce violent crime in enduring and humane ways, rather than just suppressing it, hiding it, or denying it. The second – related, of course – is to push equally hard and equally relentlessly to end the systemic abuses in our institutions of criminal justice and, beyond that, to foster a new kind of revolution in those institutions – so that their job number one is understood to be the dedicated effort to rebuild the lives and enhance the productive capacities of the people who have to go through them (p. 13).

Just a little closer to the end of his speech, Currie clarifies his view of the proper role of the criminologist:

If there's one task that we as professional criminologists should set for ourselves in the new millennium, it's to fight to insure that stupid and brutal policies that we know don't work are – at the very least – challenged at every turn and in every forum that's available to us (p. 15).

Currie is arguing for a unified academic discipline to be heard more loudly in order to bring about change. Unfortunately, Currie does not tell us what we need to do to get united – he provides no specific plan nor does he mention any ideas. He does, however, with nearly his last words, finally hit the nail on the head by saying:

To some extent, this will mean redefining what the criminologist's *job* is. We will need, I think, to shift some emphasis away from the accumulation of research findings to better dissemination of what we already know, and to more skillful promotion of sensible policies based on that knowledge – policies both in and out of the criminal justice system, including policies to directly attack social exclusion and inequality (p. 15).

Is this realistic? How can this occur in any academic discipline, when every academic discipline is bound by the rules of academic generally – rules such as: "publish 229

or perish"; "get grants or else"; "be objective"; and so on? Currie provides no guidance in this area. Luckily, Richard Hil addresses some of these issues in his papers.

RICHARD HIL'S "TOWARD A MORE PROGRESSIVE CRIMINOLOGY?" A REJOINDER TO ELLIOTT CURRIE, AND CURRIE'S RESPONSE

Criminologist Richard Hil responds to the paper reviewed above with an excellent summary of Elliott Currie's argument. In his rejoinder, Hil seeks to assess Currie's argument by utilizing Stan Cohen's (1998) concept of the three "voracious Gods." These Gods are: 1) the continuation of the intellectual endeavor, 2) the pursuit of social justice, and 3) the provision of shortterm humanitarian help. According to Hil's interpretation of Cohen's work, these Gods "should constitute the essential framework for a more 'progressive' discipline – 'progressive' in the sense that it opposes repressive and brutalizing approaches to law and order and sees crime control as a constituent element in the wider scheme of things" (p. 3). In essence, these are the three things that a criminologist should do, these are the areas in which a criminologist should have his or her work judged, and these are the things we should value as a discipline.

The Continuation of the Intellectual Endeavor

According to Hil, the first of the voracious Gods, the continuation of the intellectual endeavor, means engaging in meaningful thinking and research that "questions, debunks, and takes issue with accepted ideas and political conventions in respect of crime control and law enforcement" (p. 4). Hil suggests this is not necessarily possible (or is at least very difficult) given some of what he refers to as "drawbacks in contemporary criminology" (p. 4). Hil asserts that the following facts act as barriers to the continuation of the intellectual endeavor: 1) criminology multidisciplinary, eclectic discipline; 2) criminology tends to ignore "real harms" or acts other than street crimes; 3) criminology still cannot answer its basic questions; 4) criminology still cannot account for how much crime there really is; and 5) academic criminologists have too many demands on them.

With regard to the first barrier, Hil writes "despite its continued focus on eradicating crime, criminology lacks any coherent or unified center" (p. 4). This is consistent with Gregg Barak's (1998) identification of the following schools of thought in criminology: positivist criminology, classical criminology, neoclassical criminology, functionalist criminology, conflict criminology, critical criminology, radical criminology, realist criminology, cultural criminology, feminist

criminology, peacemaking criminology, biosocial criminology, anarchistic criminology, deconstructionist criminology, and postmodernist criminology. Criminologists in these schools of thought probably see more eye to eye than they would think, they probably agree on many points, and it is possible to find some middle ground and establish some key truths (Robinson, 2004).

Hil suggests:

By ignoring the many constraints acting upon and shaping the discipline Currie is in danger of seeing criminology as some sort of homogenous, free-floating operation which could have some influence upon public debate if only it tried harder (p. 6).

To this, Currie responds:

Richard suggests that I, and some others, tend to 'homogenize' criminology, don't understand the depth of the rifts within the discipline and believe that we could accomplish much more in the public arena if we 'only tried harder.' Well, that's partly right ... But that doesn't mean that those of us with a strong point of view shouldn't try to push the discipline, and its various institutions, to do a better job of shaping public policy in the ways we think are the right ones. I DO believe we could make more of a difference if we tried harder. And I think it matters (p. 1, caps in original).

The second barrier Hil identifies to the continuation of intellectual endeavor is that criminology is still "wedded to some very traditional concerns; namely a focus on the crimes of the urban poor and 'solutions' to a narrowly conceived 'crime problem'" (p. 4). Hil thinks that as long as we disproportionately focus on street crime, we will not be able to bring about social change, because it requires a fair assessment of the acts that are most likely to harm us.

Here, Hil takes issue that Currie's essay focuses only on violent street crime (as if it really poses the greatest threat to the well-being of Americans). He writes:

Currie's own preoccupation with violent crime as virtually synonymous with the crime problem is itself reflective of the often narrow ways in which criminologists think about such matters. Indeed, what 'violence' means is itself a matter for debate especially when we consider the indirect violence to families and neighborhoods brought about by deleterious government policies (p. 6).

Currie, as he asserts in his brief response to Hil, knows 230

that acts of corporate and white-collar criminals cause far more damage than typical street crimes. Currie responds:

I teach about white collar crime in my courses on crime and criminal justice year in, year out, and couldn't imagine doing otherwise. The fact that this definitional issue doesn't appear in everything I say or write about crime hardly means that I think 'crime' equals violent street offenses by poor folks. The piece that Richard is responding to was an attempt to jump into the middle of some current debates about street crime, so that's what it talks about (p. 1).

Currie's focus is on violent street crime, because that is where our society's focus is and has been for some time. In essence, Currie is taking issue with the claims that our systems of criminal justice have reduced (or even can reduce) violent street crime.

In response to Hill, Currie does add:

Frankly, I think we should worry less about the definitional issue at this stage, and concentrate more on doing that good work and seeing it pushed onto the social and political agenda" (p. 1). Additionally, Currie reminds Hil that when some criminologists in the 1960s and 1970s decided to wash their hands of typical street crimes by simply claiming it was justified on the grounds that corporate crime is more dangerous than violent crime, this "helped position us on the fringes of the debate about street crime itself (p. 1).

With regard to the third and fourth barriers to the continuation of intellectual endeavor, Hil writes:

It is not revealing of the discipline that as we approach the new millennium that some of its exponents are (yet again) calling for more attention to the fundamental definitional questions associated with concepts like crime and criminality and for a more wide ranging theoretical approach to such matters? (p. 5).

Hil thinks that we cannot bring about real world change when we cannot agree about basic definitional issues.

The fifth and final barrier to the continuation of intellectual endeavor is probably the most significant. Hil states that "criminologists find themselves having to meet various demands that work against their role of critical engagement" (p. 6). These demands include teaching, engaging in scholarship, and providing service. Hil also discusses the effects of being tied to

grantsmanship: "Careers based on the accumulation of large grants – often for undertaking 'safe' evaluation issues has often resulted in the blunting of the 'critical edge'. Empiricists talk of how performance indicators, quality assurance, cost effectiveness and evaluative outcomes have placed severe strain on open and lively intellectual debate within the discipline" (p. 6). Hil tries to place these demands and constraints on criminologists in what he calls "a context governed increasingly by economic liberal philosophy and new managerialist practices," but he does not define these terms.

The Pursuit of Social Justice

With regard to the second of the voracious Gods, the pursuit of social justice, Hil asserts that change is necessary in society to come closer to achieving justice. Yet, "no-one appears to be clear about how such changes are to be achieved" (p. 8), including Currie in his address given to the Western Society of Criminology. The vague and the rarer specific complaints that we levy against criminology and the larger American society - what Hil calls "ideological chants" - do not help us actually bring about social change. Our ideological chants are not, Hil points out, "operational manifestoes" which tell people how to go about changing things (p. 8). An example that immediately comes to mind is found in the last chapter of Jeffrey Reiman's (1998) The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison. In it Reiman calls for the redistribution of wealth in society, but he does not give any details at all about how this is to be achieved. Hil challenges so-called "progressive" criminologists who want to see more social justice by asserting that they "should begin to tell each other (and the rest of us) how to go about 'structural' or 'institutional' change" (p. 8).

The Provision of Short-Term Humanitarian Help

Hil makes his first suggestion here for how criminologists might go about bringing about the changes they desire, including those suggested by Currie. Hil relates it to Cohen's third voracious God, the provision of short-term humanitarian help. Hil suggests that criminologists align themselves with "other professionals and social groups to achieve the possibility of institutional change" (p. 9). Hil thinks we should not try to reinvent the wheel, so to speak, by figuring out how to work toward social change. Rather, we should join those groups already working toward this change and lend our expertise and energies to them.

The Proper Role of the Criminologist

Hil does suggest some possible ways that criminologists can assert themselves into the policy mix now, including supporting social movements and 231

establishing alliances with neighborhoods and communities. Hil advocates focusing on "processes of governance" (p. 11), although he does not define what he means by this. He asserts that a focus on processes of governance will allow us to do three things:

first, to examine crime and crime control as operational and discursive articulations central to the regulation of certain populations; second, to view criminology itself as part and parcel of processes of power/knowledge directed toward the management of problematic behaviors; and third, [to allow] us to take a step backward and gaze at crime control through the lens of history" (p. 11).

If I understand Hil, he seems to be suggesting that our criminal justice systems are not only aimed at controlling certain behaviors but also are aimed at oppressing certain segments of the population.

RICHARD HIL'S "FACING CHANGE: NEW DIRECTIONS FOR CRITICAL CRIMINOLOGY IN THE EARLY NEW MILLENNIUM?"

The final paper to be reviewed here is another by Hil, who apparently had many more ideas for bringing about change than he expressed in his response to Currie. This paper is mostly about problems with critical criminology and ideas to overcome them. It is relevant for the general discipline of criminology as well, because in it Hil develops the role of the critical criminologist.

Problems with Critical Criminology

Hil characterizes critical criminologists' tendency to be self-reflexive as "narcissistic contemplation" (p. 1). He asserts that this tendency likely emanates from its struggle to prove relevance to the larger discipline of criminology. Rather than engaging in what he calls "yet another round of fruitless 'reactive reflexivity'," Hill suggests that "a way forward for critical criminology might be to reconsider its role in relation to the discipline as a whole and to ally itself even more closely with progressive social movements" (p. 1).

As with his first paper, Hil illustrates the splits in academic criminology, but this time he shows that critical criminology itself is also splintered. The result is that "critical criminology is far too preoccupied with staking out a position in the academy rather than looking to those progressive social movements that actively pursue social justice and human rights" (p. 2). Hil suggests that criminologists lag behind other disciplines in terms of making an impact on the real world, notably social work.

The Proper Role of the Critical Criminologist

Toward the end of his essay, Hil begins to flush out his view of the proper role of the critical criminologist. Hil briefly revisits Cohen's three voracious Gods and says that "integration of these demands is improbable on a day-to-day level and probably unnecessary, given that criminologists tend to devote themselves variously to research, policy and practice. Ultimately, however, the demands remain the benchmarks by which a progressive critical criminology is judged, and this means taking into account the extent to which all the gods have (or have This means that not) been placated" (p. 10). criminologists, at least critical criminologists, must assure that they 1) continue on with intellectual endeavors, 2) pursue social justice, and 3) assist with short-term humanitarian help.

Hil summarizes criminology's involvement with social movements and asserts that the role of critical criminology has been to "highlight the problems faced by certain groups and to integrate related issues and concerns into new theoretical formulations and insights on crime control" (p. 11). Toward the end of his essay, Hil aptly summarizes the day-to-day barriers that stand in the way of criminologists appeasing the three voracious gods. He writes:

Criminologists, like other academics, find themselves confronted with a greater range of occupational demands (increased teaching loads, more performance reviews, evaluations and assessments of various sorts) and career expectations (successful grant applications and consultancies). The net effect has been to increase the pressure on academics to become more intensely self-interested and to meet the demands of an increasingly market-driven sector.

Hil challenges critical criminologists to,

where possible, seek to ensure that its commitment to social change is articulated not simply through the products of the academy but also in and through active and *publicly identifiable* engagement with progressive movements (emphasis in original).

He continues:

It is not enough that we simply undertake elegant critiques, or propose new ways of thinking about crime control. These views and perspectives need to be articulated and disseminated in and through the social movements of which they should be an integral part (p. 12).

In other words, critical criminologists need to do more than just not be part of the problem.

A BRIEF REACTION TO CURRIE AND HIL

The essays by Currie and Hil are well written and eloquently stated. Any criminologist who needs to feel inspired should read them. Yet, they are not without problems. The main problem with Currie's analysis is that it is not specific enough. Granted, since Currie's paper is a reprint of a speech, it was limited to a certain number of words (or minutes) but there are certain things that should always be stated when speaking about America's criminal justice failures.

For example, although I think Currie is right about the misrepresentation of declines in violent street crime, he fails to mention why trends in violent street crime are misinterpreted and misrepresented by politicians and the media. This seems like a critical error on Currie's part. Do politicians and the media misrepresent the truth knowingly? Is it intentional? Or is it just because they don't know any better?

David Krajicek (1998), in his book, Scooped! Media Miss Real Story on Crime While Chasing Sex, Sleaze, and Celebrities, suggests that part of why the media get crime stories wrong is because they do not know the difference between the UCR (Uniform Crime Reports) and a victimization report, meaning they have not been trained as criminologists to understand what these data are and how they are inherently unreliable as a measure of crime trends. It is probably safe to assume that most politicians who talk about crime and determine criminal justice policy really do not know or understand the differences between the UCR and the NCVS (National Crime Victimization Survey) - or even that both sources of data are available - so that if asked, few if any politicians would be able to tell which is a more valid measure of crime trends.

Currie is also probably correct in his conclusions about what does not work in policing, but he fails to ever tell us what in policing is effective at reducing crime. The evidence at this point appears unequivocal. For example, in a major crime prevention report prepared for Congress, Sherman et al. (1997) list the elements of policing that have been proven effective at preventing crime. They include: extra police patrols reduce crime in known hot spots; monitoring by specialized police units reduces crimes committed by repeat offenders on the streets; incarceration of high risk offenders keeps them from committing crime on the streets; and on-scene arrests reduce subsequent domestic assaults. Those that do not work, according to the authors, include: neighborhood watch programs organized with police; arrests of juveniles for minor offenses; arrests of unemployed suspects for domestic

assault; increased arrests or raids on drug market locations; storefront police offices in high crime locations; and police newsletters with local crime information. Finally, those that appear promising, defined by the authors as "programs for which the level of certainty is too low to make firm conclusions, but for which based on the limited evidence there is some reason to expect some successful reduction in crime," include: proactive drunk driving arrests with breath testing may reduce accident deaths; community policing with meetings to set priorities may reduce perceptions of crime; police showing greater respect to arrested offenders may reduce repeat offending; polite field interrogations of suspicious persons may reduce street crime; making arrest warrants to domestic violence suspects who leave the scene before police arrive may reduce domestic violence; higher number of police officers in cities may reduce crime; and gang monitoring by community workers and probation and police officers may reduce gang violence. Note that friendly or cordial policing appears to be effective at reducing recidivism risks for some serious crimes.

Currie also fails to point out that "zero tolerance" policing actually violates the Law Enforcement Code of Conduct passed by the International Association of Chiefs of Police, which says in part: "The fundamental duties of a police officer include serving the community, safeguarding lives and property, protecting the innocent, keeping the peace and ensuring the rights of all to liberty, equality and justice" (cited in Robinson, 2002). This code requires that police behave in a courteous and fair manner, that they treat all citizens in a respectable and decent manner, and that they never use unnecessary force. As Robinson (2002: 206) explains:

Zero tolerance policing runs counter to community policing and logical crime prevention efforts. To whatever degree street sweeps are viewed by citizens as brutal, suspect, militaristic, or the biased efforts of 'outsiders,' citizens will be discouraged from taking active roles in community building activities and crime prevention initiatives in conjunction with the police. Perhaps this is why the communities that most need neighborhood watch programs are least likely to be populated by residents who take active roles in them.

Zero tolerance policing will fail because its practice destroys several important requisites for successful community policing: namely police accountability, openness to the public, and community cooperation (Cox and Wade 1998: 106).

Currie also is not specific when he attempts to lay out the types of crime prevention strategies that we 233 ought to be using in the United States. I think it is a mistake that Currie criticizes our current policies without offering specific alternatives. In the book Justice Blind? (2002), Robinson discusses fifty recommendations to overcome the problems in our nations justice systems; including those aimed at changing government and citizen participation in it, reforming the law, reforming media coverage of crime and criminal justice, reforming the police, reforming the courts, and reforming corrections. Currie does mention several of Bryan Vila's nurturant strategies (1994); including family support programs aimed at eliminating child abuse and neglect, Multisystemic Therapy, vocational and educational programs for those incarcerated in our nation's jails and prisons, elimination of child poverty, better child care, flexible work time, and increased wages for honest work.

Finally, the one thing that stands out to me as disappointing in Currie's essay is the one thing that most inspires this paper. Currie ignores that it is largely because we are in the academic world that we are not taken seriously in the real world and that the nature of our academic discipline in particular accounts for why we have little effect on real world criminal justice policy. Currie never does discuss the barriers faced by criminologists who work in academia that stand in the way of bringing about change in our nation's criminal justice systems. These barriers must be acknowledged and understood in order to be overcome.

We see, in the essays by Hil, that he fails to recognize that a so-called center in criminology is possible. Recall that Hil expresses doubt that criminologists could ever agree about anything. believe that there are likely things that many if not most branches of thought in criminology could agree upon. For example, I would speculate that, despite the wide array of personal opinions on philosophical issues pertaining to the death penalty in America, that with a solid understanding of the reality of its administration, virtually every criminologist would vote to not actually utilize capital punishment as an official criminal justice policy of our various governments. I would also speculate that most criminologists would consider that the war on drugs is bad policy, not only because it does not seem to reduce drug use or abuse, but also because it is actually causing so much harm (Robinson 2002). I also believe that most criminologists would not support the use of incarceration for relatively minor crimes, such as small-scale drug offenses and many property offenses. There are probably many such statements that a majority of criminologists would agree with, but we will not know for sure until we make an effort to determine what they might be.

One thing most criminologists seem to agree about is

that the harms caused by "serious" street crimes are dwarfed by those caused by corporate and white-collar crimes. Street criminals steal hundreds or thousands of dollars and are potentially punished by tens of years in prison; white-collar criminals steal hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars and are potentially punished by less than ten years in prison (if that). Street criminals kill one or two people at a time and potentially serve life in prison or are sentenced to death: corporations kill hundreds of people at a time and face no criminal punishments. Rectifying this outrageous situation ought to be a challenge of contemporary criminologists. As Currie might ask, if we will not take on this challenge, who will? We are perhaps the only ones who even know these truths, so how can we expect anyone else to do it in the absence of such knowledge?

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? A PROPOSAL FOR THE ROLE OF CRIMINOLOGISTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY AND A PLAN TO GET THERE

As this analysis of the papers by Elliott Currie and Richard Hil has shown, our key problem in criminology is still relevance, or more specifically, a lack of relevance to real world criminal justice policy (Petersilia 1991; 1993). This is not only true for "critical criminologists" but is increasingly true of all criminologists. In my estimation, we have little impact on the real world of policy-making. In this section of the paper, I hope to briefly flush out what I think ought to be the role we as criminologists should pursue in this century, and I lay out a rough plan for how we can get there.

Stated simply, the role of the criminologist in the United States should be to help determine appropriate (and inappropriate) criminal justice policy. This should be achieved through four primary means: 1) teaching, 2) research, 3) professional service, and 4) community service. These are the same things we are supposed to be doing now, with one significant difference – each of these activities should be aimed at our major goal – determining appropriate (and inappropriate) criminal justice policy:

- Teaching, of course, refers to that we do in the classroom. This is extremely valuable because we have the ability to excite young people about the issues about which we are excited. Most importantly, our goal should be to help students learn what works and what does not work to reduce crime and to do justice.
- 2) Research refers to the work we do mostly out of the classroom, collecting and analyzing data about

crime and criminal justice problems. This is perhaps our most important duty, because this is how we discover what we should do with and to our systems of criminal justice in the United States. Our teaching and our research need to address the most harmful acts in society, including acts by corporations and the wealthy. Some would say that this should be our first goal, to see that "crime" is a label that our legislatures apply to the behaviors that cause the most harm.

- 3) Professional service refers to serving not only, our universities, departments, agencies, etc., but also our professional organizations, journals, and so forth. This activity is needed to keep the place running, so to speak, and to assure that we will have meaningful professional exchanges with colleagues.
- 4) Community service refers to social activist and volunteer work that makes a difference in our local neighborhoods and cities. We should, at the very least, see to it that our cities, counties, and home states are making efforts to put into practice what we have shown to be effective and not engaging in policies that we know to be ineffective.

Note how similar these four duties I have outlined are to Stan Cohen's three "voracious Gods" that were discussed by Richard Hil (the continuation of the intellectual endeavor, the pursuit of social justice, and the provision of short-term humanitarian help). Relative emphasis of one role over another will largely be determined by the institution where one works – e.g., at one institution there may be greater emphasis placed on teaching while at another there may be more emphasis placed on research. The significant point, I would argue, is that it is never enough to teach, do research, or to do service without attempting to involve oneself in the real world of criminal justice policy.

Criminologists can change our state of criminal justice in America by doing research that illustrates its degree of effectiveness or ineffectiveness, by teaching students in the classroom, by teaching community members out of the classroom, by informing citizens through the media, and by testifying and speaking about what we think we know to legislatures, police agencies, courts, and correctional facilities. But beyond this, criminologists must begin to work in the real world now by partnering up with organizations that are already involved in the process of bringing about change and assuring the arrival of social justice.

The truth is that very little of this has been happening in criminology and related disciplines (Petersilia 1991; 1993). For example, Currie, in his

response to Hil's first essay, utilizes the passing of California's three strikes law to show how inept we have been in having our voices heard. He writes:

I doubt that there can be more than five professional criminologists in the state of California who ever imagined that three strikes was a good idea. But where was the organized criminological opposition to the measure? In my view, every professional organization, state and national, should have been loudly and visibly making their skepticism and alarm an inescapable feature of the public debate (p. 2).

Criminologists have sat on the sidelines as these, and other laws like these, have been passed. The results of such laws include increased racial disparities in our systems of criminal justice, an inefficient use of resources being devoted to relatively harmless offenders, and other unintended outcomes (Welsh and Harris, 1999).

The American Society of Criminology (ASC) has a National Policy Committee that has published two papers, one on the death penalty and the other on imprisonment. These are available on-line (ASC, 2001). Why have the recommendations of these papers not been pushed into the legislative arena? And why have more of these policy-type papers not been completed and made available to the public - for example, telling policy-makers what works, what doesn't, and so forth, in every area of criminal justice? The ASC does have a relatively new journal, Criminology and Public Policy, whose primary goal is "to strengthen the role of research findings in the formulation of crime and justice policy by publishing empirically based, policy-focused articles." Yet, there is no indication that this journal is being read by policy-makers or that we are doing anything to assure (or even insist) that this be

The Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (ACJS) does not have such a committee, does not put forth such papers, nor publish such a journal. The distinction between criminology and criminal justice as academic disciplines is now mostly only in name, but ACJS seems behind ASC in its efforts to reach out to the policy world. If anything, ACJS has more members that are actually practitioners, meaning that its link to policy may be direct if only localized. For example, police employees may attend conferences and hear research that ultimately informs the policies of their own departments. This seems to be a very inefficient approach to bringing about needed social changes, however.

I honestly believe it is possible for us to achieve the 235

role I have introduced here. And my suggestion for individual criminologists who are interested in fulfilling this role in their own careers is to make as many connections as possible between the four areas I have laid out above. What I mean is that criminologists ought to connect their teaching, research, professional service, and community service as much as possible so that each serves the overriding goal of the criminologist.

It should be pointed out that criminologists will be unable to fill this role if some key things do not change first. As I see it, there are factors in larger society that stand in our way of achieving this goal. One that comes to mind is hard to label, but has been addressed in the McDonaldization literature (e.g., see Ritzer, 2001). McDonaldization is social process, part of globalization, that exists in institutions when they stress efficiency, calculability (more for less), predictability, and control. Because of this process, scholars argue, Americans want everything fast, easy, painless, and cheap. This pertains to food (Schlosser, 2000), weight loss (Walker, 2001), and many other institutions, including even criminal justice (Robinson, 2001). I am not sure how criminologists can even begin to tackle this part of our culture - Americans logically want reductions in crime now and do not want to have to spend a lot of money or to wait years to get it, even though sound investments and time will likely lead to successful crime prevention (Vila, 1994). We must be the ones to convince citizens that crime prevention requires patience.

The two institutions that must change in order for us to fulfill our proper role, over which we may have some control, include our disciplines and academia generally. Within our disciplines of criminology, criminal justice, and related fields of study, criminologists who are willing to accept the above role as their own, must address our major organizations, such as ASC, ACJS, and other national and regional organizations. It begins with a demonstration of a need for change - proof that our role must be to have effects on criminal justice policy through our teaching, research, professional service, and community service. We must simultaneously force our academic institutions to accept our new role, by convincing them that it is also in their best interests.

Once we have shown others that change is necessary, we can begin to carefully plan for that change. I have some ideas for policy outreach that have grown out of this paper. They include:

 Criminological organizations should compile a list of key truths about crime and criminal justice, things that our current state of knowledge suggests we know. This involves careful review of the evidence and publication of reports that indicate what works and what does not work.

- 2) Criminological organizations should compile a list of experts for media institutions, so that our voices are regularly heard in the mainstream media. ASC has such a list, but the goal should be to make sure the lists are actually used.
- 3) For the same reason, Criminologists should establish their own contacts with criminal justice agencies and legislatures immediately upon employment. This should be encouraged (and perhaps required) by the institutions where criminologists work.
- 4) Criminological organizations should release regular study updates to the media summarizing significant findings of major studies. This should be done after we are confident that the findings have been replicated enough times that we can assume they are valid.
- 5) Criminological organizations should prepare policy guides (e.g., Model Criminal Justice Policies) which state those types of policies that ought to be enacted and those that should not be based on the current state of knowledge. Immediately we should create a list of the policies that do not work, and we should work now to eradicate these policies.
- 6) Criminologists should regularly write columns in local papers to influence public opinion about what we think we know about crime and criminal justice. This should be encouraged by the institutions where criminologists work, and I think it would be a good idea if this became part of our evaluations for tenure and promotion.
- 7) Criminological organizations should prepare a "journal" for Congress and state legislatures that summarizes findings from studies that assess the effects of new laws, enacted programs, and so forth, so that when one state makes a mistake, others do not have to follow their lead. This can be similar to ASC's policy journal, but specialized by areas and presented as general policy guides.
- 8) Criminological organizations should consider lobbying Congress and state legislatures when key criminal justice policies are being debated. This will likely be controversial to some criminologists, based on its potential threat to

- objectivity; yet, given the realities of American politics, it is clearly necessary if we want to be heard.
- 9) Criminological organizations and criminologists should form partnerships with organizations already working in the real world to reform the law and criminal justice policies. Such noncriminological organizations should be identified now and organized by location, specialization, or area in which they work.
- 10) Most of all, those of us who believe the words in this essay should strive to see a change in what is valued in criminology. We must strive to see that what we have discovered as crime experts actually has some effect on the real world, following the approach of medical experts under the auspices of organizations such as the American Medical Association (AMA).

Within academia generally, individuals and groups of faculty must address their universities, colleges, and departments and demonstrate the significance of our jobs. Again, the issue is to provide evidence that there is a need for us to have more influence on real-world policy. Given the constraints on our time, the criteria by which we are currently evaluated as faculty ought to be reconsidered and/or changed in line with the proposed role identified in this paper. Thus, evaluative criteria would include: 1) effectiveness of teaching. 2) significance of research, 3) professional service, and 4) community service. The goal would thus be to connect these areas as effectively as possible in order to actually have an effect on real-world criminal justice policy. How to do this obviously needs to be worked out by those who have expertise in the area of faculty management. The time is now to address these issues.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have responded to papers published in Western Criminology Review by Elliott Currie and Richard Hil. My goal was to carefully analyze each author's main arguments in order to discover and suggest the proper role of academic criminologists, especially those who consider themselves "critical criminologists." I suggested that the role of the criminologist in the United States should be to help determine appropriate (and inappropriate) criminal justice policy through four primary means: 1) teaching, 2) research, 3) professional service, and 4) community The overriding goal of criminologists, service. especially those who consider themselves critical criminologists, should be to make a positive impact on criminal justice policy in the United States through the mechanisms laid out in this paper. I am not sure how feasible this proposed role is, and I eagerly await any response I may generate with this paper. But, I think many of us already agree that playing the game of academic criminology, although rewarding in many ways, is somehow empty and not as fulfilling as it could be if we were involved in devising and reforming criminal justice policy. Perhaps it is time for us to be inspired by and involved in something bigger. For example, what do we want to have accomplished in our careers at the time of our death? The answer to this question is what I believe should inspire us as a criminologists.

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Obligation to Make a Difference

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matthew Robinson is in the Departments of Political Science/Criminal Justice at Appalachian State University in North Carolina. His research focuses primarily on criminological theory, criminal victimization, crime prevention, and injustices of the criminal justice system. His most recent publications appear in <u>Critical Criminology: An International Journal</u>, <u>Crime Prevention and Community Safety: An International Journal</u>, and several encyclopedias. Robinson is also the author of <u>Justice Blind? Ideals and Realities of American Criminal Justice</u> (2002, Prentice-Hall) and Why Crime? An Integrated Systems Theory of Antisocial Behavior (2004, Prentice-Hall).

Contact Information

Matthew Robinson, Assistant Professor, Appalachian State University, Department of Political Science/Criminal Justice, Boone, NC, 28608; phone: 828.262.6560; FAX: 828.262.2947; e-mail: robinsnmb@appstate.edu.