

PUBLIC CRIMINOLOGIES

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ABSTRACT

Public sociology aspires to bring sociology home to the individuals, communities, and institutions that are its focus of study. In particular, it seeks to narrow the yawning gap between public perceptions and the best available scientific evidence on issues of public concern. Yet nowhere is the gap between perceptions and evidence greater than in the study of crime. We here outline the prospects for a public *criminology*, considering what the public sociology debates mean for the sociological study of crime, law, and deviance. We present historical data on media discussion of criminology and sociology and outline the distinctive features of criminology -- interdisciplinarity, a subject matter that incites moral panics, and a practitioner base actively engaged in scholarship -- that push the boundaries of public sociology.

PUBLIC CRIMINOLOGIES

The concept of “public sociology” has energized and illuminated conversations about what it means to be a sociologist, to do sociological work, and the meaning of that work to larger publics. Public sociology aspires to bring sociology home to the individuals, communities, and institutions that are the focus of its study. In particular, it seeks to narrow the yawning gap between public perceptions and the best available scientific evidence on issues of public concern. From residents of dangerous neighborhoods to policy makers concerned about the increased costs of incarceration, our publics clamor for high quality information about the world around them. Yet nowhere is the gap between perceptions and evidence greater than in the study of crime and punishment.

We here consider what the public sociology debates mean for the sociological study of crime, law, and deviance as we outline the prospects for a public criminology. Criminology and criminal justice have increasingly escaped sociology’s intellectual jurisdiction (Abbott, 1988), becoming disciplines in their own right (Savelsberg et al., 2004). A criminology bereft of sociological abstraction is worrisome to sociological criminologists concerned with developing theory (Laub and Sampson, 1991:1435; but see Laub, 2005). We share this concern, but recognize that the move to disciplinary specialization also implies a shift in the publics to whom criminologists are speaking. This shift offers the opportunity for public criminologists to cultivate new audiences and to find innovative ways to bring empirically sound research and messages to those new publics.

The impulse to establish a public criminology

A sense of justice consciousness often brings sociologists to the study of crime, law, and deviance. For some, this consciousness derives from personal experiences with crime and punishment (Irwin, 1970) or from engaging fictional accounts (Inderbitzin, 2003). Experience as a client or practitioner in the justice system may spark a sense of outrage or a resolve to bring better data and theory to bear on its operation. In criminology as in sociology, however, graduate school is often “organized to winnow away at the moral commitments” that inspired the interest in the first place (Burawoy, 2005a: 14). The spark may fade in time, as the questions asked, the methods used to answer them, and the style in which they are presented become increasingly divorced from the justice concerns that brought us to graduate study.

A public criminology could nurture such justice concerns while at the same time contributing to critical, professional, and policy criminology. We envision at least four crucial tasks: (1) reconsidering rulemaking, which has deep roots in critical criminology; (2) evaluating social interventions, which derives from policy criminology; (3) assembling social facts and situating crime in disciplinary knowledge, which most clearly maps onto professional criminology; and, (4) evaluating and reframing cultural images of the criminal, which is perhaps the clearest example of public criminology. Criminologists often read the papers or hear the news with a world-weary resignation that other citizens and policymakers fail to grasp important points about, say, the age-crime curve or the costs of incarceration. A public criminology attacks such concerns head-on, aiming to both inform the debate and to shift its terms.

This paper is in four parts. We begin with a discussion of the move toward “public sociologies” and critiques of the concept and its implementation. Next we consider the contours or shape of public criminologies. We then outline a brief history of criminological work that

employs similar conceptions. These like-minded efforts lead us to a discussion of ongoing efforts in public criminology today. Finally, we conclude by addressing the question of meaning for public criminologists inside and outside of the classroom.

The Public Sociology Debates

Public sociology defined

The 2004 Annual Meetings of the American Sociological Association were organized around the theme of public sociology. While scholars such as John Irwin, Herbert Gans, and Elliot Currie had been concerned with the ideas of public sociology for some time, the annual meetings in 2004 brought the concept and the debate to the forefront of the community of sociologists. For Michael Burawoy, the Association's president that year, public sociology engages "publics beyond the academy in dialogue about matters of political and moral concern" (2004: 5). Moreover, it "seeks to bring sociology to publics beyond the academy, promoting dialogue about issues that affect the fate of society, placing the values to which we adhere under a microscope" (Burawoy et al., 2004: 104). For Herbert Gans (1989), another former American Sociological Association president, a public sociologist is a "public intellectual" who applies sociological ideas and findings to broadly defined social issues about which sociology has something to say. A public sociologist thus serves as a bridge between academics and the rest of the society.

Burawoy (2005a) offered a two-by-two table to distinguish public sociologies from other sociological work, reproduced here as Figure 1. In contrast to public sociology, professional

sociology and critical sociology are primarily written for academic audiences of professors and graduate students. In contrast to policy sociology, public sociology is “reflexive” rather than instrumental. That is, it is explicitly engaged in dialogue with publics rather than conducting research on behalf of policy actors. Burawoy notes that a sociologist may move from one cell to the next over the course of her career. In one typical trajectory, “a graduate student enters sociology infused with moral commitment, then suspends that commitment until tenure whereupon he might dabble in policy work and end his career with a public splash” (Burawoy, 2004: 8).

[Figure 1 about here.]

Attacks and defenses

Burawoy’s public sociology has motivated symposia in major journals such as *Social Forces* (2004) and *The British Journal of Sociology* (2005b) and inspired attacks with the immodest goal of “saving sociology” from the forces of public sociology (Deflem, 2005). These critiques generally concern the out-left political agenda of many public sociologists (Nielsen, 2004; Moody, 2005); a perceived retreat from scientific standards and methods; and the perception that public sociology is ineffectual as organized and practiced (Brady, 2004). For all of these reasons, critics fear that public sociology has the potential to undermine the legitimacy of professional sociology (Tittle, 2004; Moody, 2005). These critical voices do not advocate a retreat from public activities, but rather suggest that sociologists simultaneously wear two hats -- one as citizens in participatory democracies, and the other as professional sociologists.

With regard to political agenda, Burawoy counters that “the ‘pure science’ position that research must be completely insulated from politics is untenable, since antipolitics is no less political than public engagement” (Burawoy, 2004: 3). In addressing concerns about scientific standards and methods, public sociologists counter that they propose rigorous rather than sloppy research and that they provide a valuable service when they try to “explain phenomena that news stories can only describe” (Gans, 2002). Yet public sociologists are *not* simply popularizers. As Gans (1989) conceptualized the term, they are “empirical researchers, analysts, or theorists like the rest of us” (p. 7), but distinctive for their breadth of interests and strong communication skills. As for efficacy, sociology has long been well-positioned to identify social facts that can serve as a call to action for others. Public sociology can aid in uncovering and publicizing harm or inequity, without necessarily redressing it. In lamenting the dearth of sociological research on global inequality, HIV/AIDS, and other humanitarian emergencies, Craig Calhoun (2005) notes that a “publicly valuable sociology” must take public significance into account in choosing problems to study.

Public sociology cuts across the research, teaching, and service roles of academic life. To provide only the barest outline, it means developing research questions in dialogue with affected communities, as opposed to, say, “filling potholes” in the professional literature or answering questions defined solely by others (Becker, 2003). For teaching, students play a key role as the “first public” (Burawoy, 2004:6; 2005c) and strategies such as implementing service learning projects help to bring public sociology out of the classroom and into the community (Aminzade, 2004). In service, public sociologists offer testimony as expert witnesses, conduct research with local and national community organizations, and disseminate their work in the media. For its proponents, publicly engaged work is thus quite consistent with the traditional activities of

academic life.

Prospects for a public criminology

Burawoy argues that U.S. sociology “began as public sociology, was professionalized, and only then engendered critical and policy sociologies. Today we might be turning back to public sociology” (Burawoy et al., 2004: 106). Is such a progression also true for criminology? Are scholars returning to criminology’s foundations by again emphasizing the importance of public or civic criminology?

Paul Wiles’ has argued that criminology in the United Kingdom has “lost the knack of engaging in public debate,” though such generalizations would likely hold for the United States as well. Wiles suggests that without reasoned debate “the press is always likely to slide into simplistic stereotypes and ignore what evidence we do possess” (Wiles, 2002: 248). As such, it becomes the responsibility of public criminologists to translate their findings and their science into terms that the public and the press can easily interpret and understand. In the United States, Elliott Currie has long called for criminologists to shift their attention to the sort of tasks that Burawoy sets forth as public sociology:

If there’s one task that we as professional criminologists should set for ourselves in the new millenium, 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 every forum that’s available to us...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 (Currie, 1999: 15).

The distinctiveness of public criminology

Because crime engenders specific fears rather than vague concerns, many publics think about crime and criminology differently than they do about other social phenomena. Classic studies in the sociology of deviance offer conceptual tools that help us make sense of the gap between social science evidence on crime and public concerns. First, crime often sparks "moral panics" or periods of intense public fear in which concern about a condition dramatically outstrips its capacity to harm society (Cohen, 1972). Examples of such panics abound, but concern over predatory sex offenders, the proliferation of drugs such as methamphetamine, and the possibility of satanic day care centers (Bennett et al., 1996; Glassner, 1999) offer some recent examples.

Second, such fears are stoked by moral entrepreneurs (Becker, 1963) with vested interests in manipulating public opinion (Beckett, 1997). The print and broadcast media serve as a transmission belt for such entrepreneurs, as well as a powerful independent force that shapes public sentiment. As a consequence, people often have stronger opinions on crime and justice than on much of the subject matter of sociology, economics, and political science (Beckett and Sasson, 2003). While they may be concerned about unemployment, sexism, or other social problems, these issues generally do not routinely incite the ardently contested moral panics that

are routine in matters of crime and deviance.

Third, in spite of its nascent status as a discipline, criminology continues to be distinguished by its interdisciplinarity. Developmental psychologists (e.g., Terrie Moffitt) operations researchers (e.g., Alfred Blumstein) economists (e.g., Philip Cook) and sociologists (e.g., Robert Sampson) all contribute professional knowledge to the field of criminology. This interdisciplinarity is both a strength and a weakness: while a wide range of perspectives are represented in the field, criminologists may sometimes be at odds as they do not necessarily share a core theoretical tradition or a common conceptual language (Hagan and McCarthy, 2000; Savelsberg et al., 2004).

Finally, criminology is unusual for its close connection to practitioner-based fields. Whereas sociology parted ways with social work almost a century ago (Finckenauer, 2005), academic criminology retains a strong practitioner base. Participants at the annual meetings of the American Society of Criminology routinely include judges, police officers, and representatives from state and federal departments of corrections. These practitioners may provide “reality checks” that combat the scholarly insulation characteristic of sociology (Gans, 1989). Moreover, it is not unusual for such practitioners -- many with Ph.D.s in criminology and criminal justice -- to closely collaborate with academics in research and data collection. In fact, a number of respected criminologists including Jerome Miller, Barry Krisberg, and Jeffrey Butts, left positions in academia and practice for think tanks focused on researching and improving justice policy. This close connection to criminal justice makes some variants of public criminology more palatable for professional criminologists than public sociology may be for professional sociologists. Policy work, in particular, is professionally recognized in criminology and rewarded as relevant and appropriate.

[Figure 2 about here.]

Professional criminology

Figure 2 offers an annotated variant of Burawoy's two-by-two table for criminology. The task of professional criminology is to assemble an evidentiary base and situate crime in disciplinary knowledge. Just as professional sociology, professional criminology derives its legitimacy from its application of putatively scientific methods. Similarly, self-referentiality is its greatest pathology. Lacking a strong disciplinary core, however, professional criminology sometimes appears to have a "collective amnesia" about past developments or breakthroughs in related disciplines (Laub and Sampson, 1991: 1345). Professional criminology appears to be developing a better collective *memory* in recent years, building on strong theoretical traditions and the available empirical evidence in ways that move the discipline forward.

One ideal-typical example of professional criminology might be Daniel Nagin's development of mixture models for describing criminal careers (Nagin, 2005). These methods have inspired a burgeoning literature (see, e.g., Piquero, 2005), but their impact is overwhelmingly occurring *within* quantitative criminology or developing in a "separate but equal" fashion that runs parallel to latent mixture models in the social sciences more generally.

Policy criminology

Policy criminology involves applying criminological theories and methods to efforts to

prevent or control crime and delinquency. Like policy sociology, this entails evaluating social interventions and making evidence-based recommendations to funding agencies. For policy criminology to be most useful, “it needs to be accurate, not just used” (Sherman, 2005: 118); for this reason, Lawrence Sherman (2005) argues that social science is at its practical best when it is experimental with visibly demonstrable benefits (p. 118).

Burawoy identifies “servility” as the chief pathology of policy sociology and this is likely the case with policy criminology as well. For example, academic researchers seeking funding from the National Institute of Justice must generally study the phenomena identified as important by the agency during the particular funding cycle. Perhaps the most ambitious examples of policy criminology concern the large-scale mobilization by Sherman and colleagues to catalog “what works” (Sherman et al., 1998) as well as the ongoing efforts of the Campbell Collaboration (Farrington and Welsh, 2001) to evaluate experimental evidence on crime and punishment.

Critical criminology

Critical criminology considers foundational questions about the meaning of crime and justice for an academic audience. For example, critical criminologists problematize the definition of crime as violation of the criminal code, reconceptualizing it as social harm (see, e.g., Quinney, 1977). As with critical sociology, critical criminology is animated by a moral vision. It examines the foundations of research programs and makes criminology aware of its own biases. Some variants of critical criminology, however, are not relegated to academic audiences. Convict criminology, for example, is critical criminology written by and for incarcerated and formerly

incarcerated persons. Among prisoners, the critical press has long been viewed as more trustworthy and authoritative about crime than mainstream media or scholarship. While Burawoy identifies dogmatism as the chief pathology of critical sociology, this is less likely to be the case in criminology, where there are many schools of “left realist,” “new criminology,” and structural and instrumental Marxist variants. Yet none of these have garnered widespread favor within criminology. The following statement by Hayward and Young (2004) on the work of cultural criminology illustrates the point:

Whether we can achieve our goal of derailing contemporary criminology from the abstractions of administrative rationalization and statistical complexity remains to be seen. In the meantime, however, we will continue our work at the margins; for it is here, in these forgotten spaces that the story of crime so often unfolds (p. 271).

In reconceptualizing notions of crime and justice, critical criminologists consciously distance themselves from mainstream criminology, which may engender insularity and a lively but limited internal debate.

Public criminology

Public criminology helps evaluate and reframe cultural images of crime, criminals, and justice. It moves beyond “administrative criminology” (Presdee, 2004) by attempting to give context and meaning to sociological facts. The journal *Criminology and Public Policy* now straddles the line between public criminology and policy criminology, publishing accessible cutting-edge research and inviting reaction essays from prominent scholars. Its founding editor, Todd Clear, actively solicits broader dissemination of the journal’s findings and Clear himself

ranks among the most highly regarded public criminologists. To the extent that public criminology is practiced today, its primary pathology is the lack of diversity among the voices represented as experts on crime. Feminist scholars and scholars of color, for example, are rarely consulted on general crime trends but are instead relegated to discussions of women and crime or racial minorities and crime. In contrast to sociology, the media often consult practitioners – chiefs of police, corrections officials, district attorneys – as the “*real* experts” on crime.

One potential pathology of public criminology involves the critique that “public criminologists” become “airport criminologists” -- so distracted flying around the country as consultants and “experts” that they lose sight of the empirical scientific research base that legitimizes their work.¹ A related pathology is the potential for bias and political partisanship that critics of public sociology often raise. As Paul Wiles points out, however, “values affect how we go about the business of acquiring knowledge, but that does not mean that our knowledge claims can not be examined against a social world whose externality to us gives an empirical force” (2002: 246).

History of public criminology

Public criminology today can build upon an important legacy of engaged scholarship. Clifford Shaw is perhaps the best exemplar of such work, as can be seen in his attempts to help better the circumstances of both individuals and communities (Shaw, 1966). As he formulated

¹ Although he did not use or approve the term himself, Robert Sampson invoked “airport criminologist” during a presentation at the annual meetings of the American Sociological Association in Chicago, 2002.

social disorganization theory and mapped patterns of ethnic succession in Chicago neighborhoods in the 1920s, Shaw met with communities hard hit by crime and delinquency to learn from residents and to share his findings (for accounts, see Lundman, 2001: 108; Krisberg, 2005). As an important and long-lived institutional response, he founded the Chicago Area Project in an attempt to empower neighborhoods and to help ameliorate the conditions that gave rise to high rates of delinquency (Schlossman and Sedlak, 1983).

An impressive range of public criminology was practiced throughout the 1960s and 1970s. In the early 1960s, Lloyd Ohlin and other American criminologists were actively engaged in the Great Society project as advisors to John F. Kennedy and others (Short, 1975). Implementing and popularizing large-scale anti-delinquency projects such as Mobilization for Youth, Ohlin was both public and policy criminologist (Krisberg, 2005). At the same time, Edwin Schur, Thomas Szasz, Edwin Lemert, and others writing from a labeling perspective adopted an unconventional sentimentality toward those marked as deviants in society. Howard Becker titled his Society for the Study of Social Problems presidential address “whose side are we on?” to suggest that investigations are likely to lead them to positions that oppose institutions such as the institutions of criminal justice (Becker, 1967). During the 1970s, conservative political scientist James Q. Wilson chided policy pronouncements by left-leaning sociologists. In *Thinking About Crime* (1975) he offered instead a deterrence-focused neo-conservative vision of public criminology later adopted by his student John DiIulio (DiIulio, 1995).

From the left, Elliott Currie has written numerous well-received works on crime for a lay audience, including *Confronting Crime* (1985) and *Crime and Punishment in America* (1998). Finally, renegade practitioners such as Jerome Miller, who famously closed all Massachusetts reformatories while serving as a corrections commissioner in that state (Miller, 1998), have

become widely read experts on crime. Similarly, some chiefs of police, such as Tony Bouza in Minneapolis, have become outspoken critics of the justice system. These scholars and practitioners perform an important service when they offer alternative visions and concrete examples that challenge current thinking in crime, justice, and punishment. Their highly visible examples of public criminology may, in turn, provide the impetus for others to battle the “power of inertia” (Becker, 1995).

To highlight the importance of the media in defining the cultural image of the criminal (Hayward and Young, 2004) and to provide some sort of historical context for public criminology in relation to public sociology, we gathered some data on media discussion of criminology, criminologists, sociology, and sociologists. Figure 3 shows the number of times that the *New York Times* has mentioned the terms “sociologist” and “criminologist” from 1851 to 2005. The first thing to note from the chart is that neither term appeared with regularity until the 1890s. Second, sociologists have made far more appearances than have criminologists for the past hundred years. The scale of the y-axis differs dramatically for the two groups.

[Figure 3 about here.]

The term criminologist was used most often in 1936 during the period of high incarceration during the great depression. The use of “sociologist” peaked much later, in the late-1960s period in which American values were being questioned on issues of civil rights, women’s rights, and the Vietnam War. Gans wrote in 1989 that “the news media pay more attention to us than before,” although there were only 163 mentions in 2005 – the same number of mentions as in 1962. The trend for criminology is erratic in more recent years, peaking during the intense

debates surrounding the Clinton crime bill in 1995. We also plotted the mentions of “professor of criminology” and “professor of sociology,” shown in Figure 4 below. The former search term is surely a low estimate of public statements by criminologists, since many criminologists are identified as professors of criminal justice or sociology. Nevertheless, it is again important to note the dramatic differences in the scale of the data series. The sociology peak of 105 mentions occurred in 1989, while the criminology peak of 16 mentions occurred 3 years later.

[Figure 4 about here.]

Public criminology today

From this long history of public criminology, several new strains have emerged. On the research side, we can look to examples such as Africana criminal justice (Ward and Marable, 2003), the Soros Open Society Institute’s “new leadership program” for formerly incarcerated persons, the Sentencing Project’s numerous reports and initiatives, and many other national and local initiatives. One research goal for public criminology is to build an evidentiary base on problems that hold public interest. A related goal, however, is to uncover and build interest in problems that have escaped public attention, such as the conditions of prisons or high-crime neighborhoods. Finally, a third goal is to seriously engage the broader impacts of such problems as well as any proposed solutions, including their scientific, moral, and practical implications.

Good public criminologists are in a unique position to add valuable information to the national conversation on crime and punishment and to help situate deviance in social life more generally. As others have noted, it is “a well-known fact that having convincing research

evidence and having it influence policy and practice are two very different matters” (Welsh and Farrington, 2005: 350). In fact, Sherman (2005) argues that the greatest disappointment across centuries of experimental criminology is that “most justice remains unencumbered by empirical evidence on its effects” (2005: 119). By bringing high-quality evidence to bear on questions that inspire community fear, public criminologists may play a key role in promoting sound policy and averting moral panics based on extreme but rare cases. Such work requires a matching of interests and preparation with the addition of good timing, because as Tonry (2006) has suggested: “the receptivity of policy makers to new knowledge depends mightily on the existence of ‘windows of opportunity’ through which knowledge can pass to receptive recipients” (Tonry, 2006: 54). We also recognize that making such connections may be difficult as public criminologists are increasingly likely to fill a particular niche rather than possess the ability to speak more broadly as public intellectuals. While the field of criminology has grown tremendously, scholars’ expertise has generally narrowed. As Wiles (2002) suggests, while there is today a larger criminological research community than existed in the past, such specialization has made it “more difficult to engage in policy debates unless they are on a narrow and particular point” (Wiles, 2002: 247-248).

For this reason, the two-by-two table presented in Table 1 is a poor reflection of the actual activities of criminologists (see Ericson, 2005, for a similar argument about public sociology). Figure 5 represents public criminology, policy criminology, professional criminology, and critical criminology as an interconnected Venn diagram. Some criminologists find themselves with a hand or a foot in all four cells, whereas others would self-identify as pure professional criminologists or policy criminologists. In particular, the line between policy

criminology and public criminology seems particularly permeable.

[Figure 5 about here.]

Yet public criminology is as much about teaching as it is about research. On the teaching side, while criminology has held a place in higher education for nearly a century (Finckenauer, 2005), the mission and content of criminology coursework has changed as these courses have departed sociology departments for criminology and criminal justice programs (Best, 2004). As Stephen Pfohl has observed with regard to public sociology, the

most common site of public engagement is in the classroom. The general college or university classroom where sociologists typically encounter a public composed of students steeped in the common sense of the dominant culture...The point here is not to provide students with a supposedly 'politically correct' viewpoint, but to encourage the discernment and thoughtfulness necessary for democracy itself (Burawoy et al., 2004: 113-114).

In universities across the country, faculty members are serving as “transformative intellectuals” (Giroux, 1992), and striving to transmit theoretically driven models and knowledge based on empirical evidence to their students and to the larger public. As part of this effort, teaching and public criminology are coming together in innovative ways both inside and outside of the traditional classroom setting. Whole departments are embracing the challenge of incorporating community service learning into the curriculum (Aminzade, 2004) and are sending

their undergraduate students back to do volunteer work and conduct research in the community. In addition, academics are creating and vigorously supporting new programs that build the connections between universities, state agencies, and community programs. As one example, the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program is training faculty members across the country to take college students into prisons in intensive interaction-based courses shared with prison inmates, creating a transformative learning environment which offers both groups a vivid glimpse into alternative perspectives (Pompa, 2004).

Teaching as a form of public criminology offers particular relevance and urgency because our classes are comprised of future criminal justice practitioners who will soon be in the trenches as lawyers, police officers, parole and probation officers, and corrections and juvenile justice workers. In addition to encouraging students to think critically about larger issues of crime and justice, in many cases classes in criminology ignite the first sparks of students' interest in careers in criminal justice. Perhaps equally as important as educating these practitioners, classroom teaching may influence and inform students who go on to work in careers in institutions related to crime and justice, such as social work or education. Public criminologists who take teaching seriously hope their students enter their chosen professions, and indeed the larger responsibilities of citizenship, with a more accurate picture and understanding of crime, offenders, and the criminal justice system (Finckenauer, 2005).

While individual effort is imperative for the success of public criminology, as sociologists, we also recognize the importance of context. Faculty at large land grant universities may feel a special responsibility to take their teaching and service out into their state and local communities. Because part of the mission of state universities is "extension" into surrounding areas, there is likely to be justification and some reward for acts of public criminology in such

settings. Similarly, faculty who work at Jesuit institutions, such as William Gamson and Stephen Pfohl, may find that public sociology/public criminology “resonates with our university’s commitment to ethical reflection and social justice” (Burawoy et al., 2004: 114). In contrast, however, faculty at elite institutions and departments are often more focused on training the next generation of professional sociologists/criminologists. In such places, public criminology may be pushed to the periphery of career aspirations and responsibilities.

As Burawoy suggests about public sociology (2004, 2005a), it is likely that these contextual differences lead public criminology to be more widely practiced and more highly valued in large public universities where there is often a high teaching load (Burawoy, 2005a: 12). John Jay University, for example, is among the most highly ranked and important graduate and undergraduate criminal justice departments in the United States, yet faculty at John Jay often teach seven courses per year. More generally, given the “career concerns” of faculty members at state institutions, including teaching, service, and publishing in peer-reviewed journals, such faculty members are undoubtedly doing interesting, innovative work in public criminology, but may have difficulty finding the time to write and publicize their own actions and accomplishments.

Related to teaching and our outreach into the surrounding areas, the service function within public criminology involves dialogue with communities, and the electronic and print media. Unfortunately, without efforts at self-promotion, individual scholars’ work to speak to the media and add to the public conversation and debate on issues of crime and justice may go unnoticed. While email has made communication between academics and journalists easier than ever before and increased opportunities for public criminology, it can be difficult to account for the time and effort that goes into such interactions. In discussing her own experience with public

sociology and working with NASA following the space shuttle *Columbia* accident, Vaughan notes that a great deal of “invisible public sociology” and “invisible work” goes into being a public intellectual and helping to educate the media and the larger public (Burawoy et al., 2004).

We note that the discipline of sociology is taking steps to recognize this “invisible” work: the American Sociological Association’s newsletter *Footnotes* regularly publishes a section on sociologists “In the News,” touting media appearances and scholars’ expert quotes in newspaper and magazine articles. As yet, however, there is no place to recognize criminologists whose work and words appear in the media; neither the American Society of Criminology nor the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences has a forum to showcase such acts of public criminology. The first Stockholm Prize in Criminology, however, was awarded in 2006 to John Braithwaite and Friedrich Losel, in part because of their influence on policy and public criminology.

Meaning and public criminology

There is a division of labor within any academic discipline, and public criminology is clearly not for every academic criminologist. Those with the skills and inclination to practice public criminology, however, require the space and support to do so. As but one example, academic departments can acknowledge public outreach as contributing to the service mission of the university. In reigniting some of the justice concerns that brought them to graduate study, public criminology can also enliven the research and teaching of scholars who may find “the majority of mainstream criminological scholarship today...boring” (Ferrell, 2004: 295) or who may be questioning what their work means and for whom are they doing it. By building an

evidentiary base on problems of public as well as scholarly concern, it is no doubt possible to be good social scientists while also working to increase public safety and reduce human suffering.

To communicate effectively with broader publics, however, requires drawing a responsible circle of expertise around oneself, adhering to what Weber called “an ethic of responsibility” (cited in Gitlin, 2003). Such responsibility entails holding ourselves and our colleagues accountable for statements made in the name of criminology. We should be vigilant in our efforts to share good information with our publics, acting to challenge false statements, question shoddy evidence, and debunk harmful myths and scare tactics.

We should also acknowledge the potential costs of practicing public criminology. Making one’s work and perspective visible in the media opens the possibilities for threatening hate mail or worse from those who do not share your views. It also identifies the public criminologist as an “expert” on the given topic, which can lead to additional—often compelling—requests for further information or help which may be well beyond one’s field of expertise. Such requests can deflate the energy and optimism of individual scholars, making them feel as though they are not doing enough to instigate change and work toward sound social policies. In addition, as Haggerty (2004) has noted: “the best-intentioned criminological policies could be co-opted and produce a host of unintended negative consequences” (p. 212). In spite of such challenges, true believers continue to promote public criminology, using their platforms to offer timely social facts and clear evaluation of research and policy innovations.

Whether public criminologists are successful in their efforts is unlikely to be immediately apparent. As Vaughan explains: “Measuring what is visible and therefore measurable, like policy implementation, does not take into account the invisible work of dialogic teaching that goes on in the groups we participate in as we try to make change. Like other kinds of teaching that

sociologists do, engaging in dialogue about issues of public concern can make change by altering the perspective of individuals or giving support to what they already think—but the full effects of such change are not always measurable or knowable” (Burawoy et al., 2004: 118).

The same can be said for public criminology. With teaching, our students’ realization of such a change of perspective may come years later, and most of the time, we will never know the impact our classes and teaching may have had. When our students go home and speak with their friends and families about information from our classes, however, they become ambassadors for and practitioners of public criminology themselves. They perform a particularly useful service when they debunk myths by adding competing voices and perspectives to the national conversation on crime and justice, using criminological evidence to deflate the moral panics encouraged by television news and entertainment shows. In terms of research, it is difficult to predict which research topics or projects are likely to make a splash in the public arena. Perhaps the best strategy is to simply do good work and to share it widely. When journalists seek an expert opinion, it is another opportunity to share research findings and their implications. Finally, when our publics ask for our opinions and perspectives, we should give them scientifically-informed evidence and answers without the jargon that makes so much of academic scholarship inaccessible to the majority of the population.

Public criminologies must be engaged with communities beyond practitioners and funders, reaching out as Clifford Shaw once did to neglected audiences and communities affected by crime. As Paul Wiles has remarked, “for criminology to be a public good, it must operate both within and outside government” (2002: 249). If public criminology is to become such a public good, it can build on the rich legacy of engaged scholarship begun by scholars such as Shaw and contemporary criminologists such as John Braithwaite and Todd Clear. Today,

public criminology might follow the path that Burawoy (2004) outlined for public sociology: recognition, legitimation, institutionalization, and, finally, defense and expansion.² As public criminology becomes more recognized, legitimated, and institutionalized, more scholars may choose to pursue public criminology. For others, however, there is little choice – the ideal and practice of public criminology is the impetus and motivating force behind every project we pursue.

² As a modest step toward institutionalization in this regard, this paper's authors have begun a weblog at www.publiccriminology.org.

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Figure 1. Michael Burawoy's (2005) Two-by-Two Table for Sociology

	Academic Audience	Extra-Academic Audience
Instrumental Knowledge	<i>Professional Sociology</i>	<i>Policy Sociology</i>
Reflexive Knowledge	<i>Critical Sociology</i>	<i>Public Sociology</i>

Figure 3. *New York Times* Mentions of Criminology and Sociology, 1851-2005

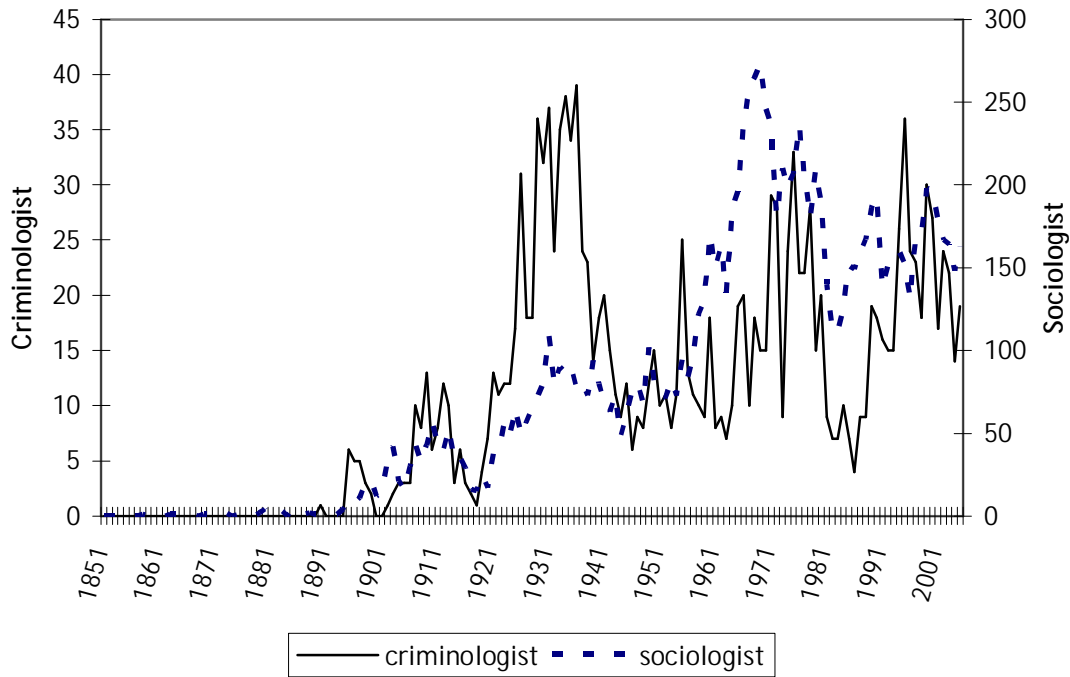


Figure 4. *New York Times* Mentions of Professor of Criminology and Sociology, 1893-2005

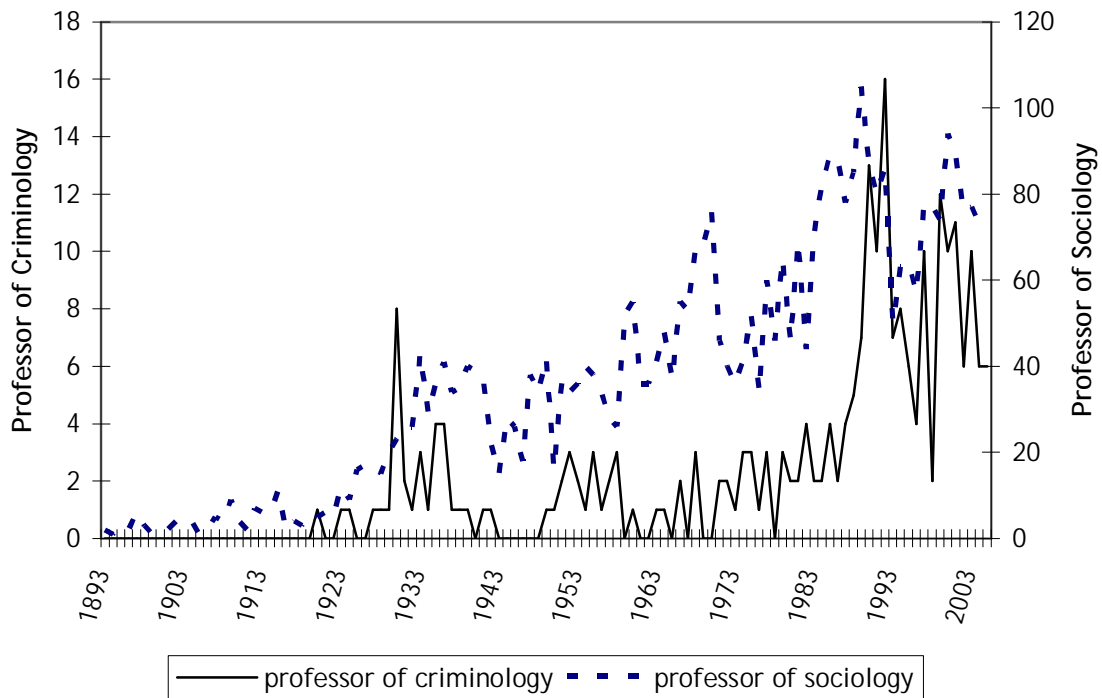


Figure 5. Crossover Criminologies

