

THE Critical Criminologist

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Criticism in Criminology: The Forgotten Concept

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In its day, the new criminology soared to prominence on promises of social emancipation and justice. Echoing elements of 1970s radical social thought, this perspective declared its intention to revolutionize administrative criminology, the sociology of deviance and the social institutions licensed by such discourses (Taylor, Walton and Young, 1973; 1975). The new criminologists identified themselves with the plight of the oppressed, and formulated a theory designed to revolutionize unequal capitalist structures (Taylor, Walton and Young, 1974: 448). As such, the discourse's founding mandate included an attempt to establish a critical approach that would redefine the bedrock of 'correctional' criminology (e.g., legal definitions of 'crime', consensual definitions of 'deviance', individual-centered aetiologies, etc.).

Implicit in this approach was a bid to reconsider the very auspices upon which critical thinking directed at 'crime' or 'deviance' might be predicated. However, amidst a momentous call to 'praxis', reflexive analyses into the bases of criticism *sui generis* seemed to distract from more urgent revolutionary pursuits. In the process, the auspices of critique escaped serious analytical consideration, and remained hidden in the shadows of dominant debates seeking to define 'radical' ('Marxist', 'socialist' or 'critical') criminology. In short, these debates focused on delineating particular definitions of 'criminology' at the expense of attempts to clarify the bases of 'critical traditions'. Criticism became the forgotten, but assumed, concept against which the threads of critical debate were silhouetted. This analytical amnesia permitted, even nurtured, a circling of discursive wagons around different camps which claim to bear the critical mantle around one or other 'radical' definition of 'crime' (and/or *criminology*).

However, such defensive postures defy the openness, the quest for alteration, that is so central to critical thinking. They may even obscure the potential value of openly fragmented debate that does not depend upon disciplinary unity (Ericson and Carriere, 1994). In any case, by tying critical criminology constitutively to notions of 'crime', or even 'criminology', protagonists have not adequately studied what is arguably the distinguishing feature of the discourse; namely criticism. In other words, it is not so much the quest for a 'radical' definition or cause of 'crime' that distinguishes critical criminological projects; rather, it is an allegiance to forms of critical inquiry that

is crucial. In my view, critics in the criminological arena have neither focused sufficient attention on their *critical* roots, nor grasped the problematic place of those roots within contemporary epistemological horizons (Hofman, 1996). The former oversight has permitted a grave silence to pervade the discourse's departure points. The latter does little to help critics decode the precariousness of their critical footings under conditions where modern forms of critical practice are in retreat (e.g., Bauman, 1992; Lyotard, 1984).

Analysts will not likely understand the retreating place of modern critical thinking in similar, or even commensurate, ways. It might be taken to be the product of: wider alterations to modern epistemological configurations (Pavlich, 1995; B. Smart, 1992; Bauman, 1992); concessions made by the old 'left' in altered political environments (B. Smart, 1993); or, even an emerging truth regime's extreme intolerance of critical thinking (Pavlich, 1996; Lyotard, 1984). Regardless, in the technical, crime-solving ethos that dominates criminology today, criticism directed at foundational assumptions is increasingly disqualified. Fundamental questions like 'should prisons be abolished?', or 'in whose interests is it to claim that crime 'really' does exist?', no longer loom as prominent moments in criminological debate. Their flight to the margins of such discourse coincides precisely with the rising dominance of 'relevant' quests for 'real' solutions, or 'cost effective' responses, to 'crime'.

Through such developments critical thinking has been abandoned to the debased realms of unusable esoteric, idealistic equivocation, and so on (Roberts, 1996; Lippens, 1995). In turn, this has limited critical criminology's capacity to deflect challenges directed at its very being (van Swaaningen and Taylor, 1994; C. Smart, 1992; De Haan, 1987). If critical discourse is again facing a 'crisis', it is neither so because of its failure to come up with a sufficiently credible ('radical') definition of 'crime', 'criminology', or even 'aetiology'. Rather, it has to do with a failure to confront the ailing plight of critical practices under contemporary (postmodern? late modern?) epistemological conditions. As long as this plight remains unexamined, the legitimacy of fundamental critical thought in criminal justice discourses remains in jeopardy. If critical thinking articulated to discourses on 'crime' and 'deviance' [or even a concept of 'censure' – Sumner, 1990; Roberts, 1996] is to make inroads into the virtual hegemony of technically-focused discourses, then its protagonists must re-evaluate the auspices and aspirations of their critical genres, taking account of the altered knowledge-creating environments before them.

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From the Editors...

As you might have heard, a new team of editors has taken over the reins of *The Critical Criminologist*. They include Gregg Barak, Stuart Henry and Paul Leighton (at Eastern Michigan University) and Charisse Coston (at the University of North Carolina-Charlotte). We will build on the current strengths of the newsletter and hope that our editorship can achieve the following:

- regular production of three issues a year designed to appear before the ASC, ACJS and Law and Society conferences (4 if we have sufficient articles to justify it);
- an emphasis on ideas and commentary essays;
- announcements, news and information about events and member activities;
- an international dimension (notice the present issue has contributions from critical criminologists in England, Israel, New Zealand and Sweden);
- articles by students as well as more established contributors;
- a "Conversations" section featuring debate/discussion on policy issues

While we are all making editorial input to each issue, the main editorship will rotate between each of us. Other tasks are also split with Paul doing the page setting (he once worked on a student newspaper!), Stuart doing printing (which he once did for a London housing coop) and Charisse encouraging international contributions.

The present issue is somewhat of a hybrid as it comprises several articles left over from the editorship of Mike and Mona, plus some new ones that came in to us. Gregg will be editing the next issue fresh, so if you have items send them to him at the address below. Short announcements can be sent by e-mail to SOC_Leighton@online.emich.edu

If you are going to send us material for inclusion make sure it is on hard copy and disk, no longer than 2,500 words (to offer room for many voices) and that you specify the software/word

processing being used. We ask that references be in the (Author Date: Page) format with minimal use of endnotes. Conversations or less formal non-referenced articles are also acceptable, but we expect that they will still represent polished final manuscripts that have been subjected to spell check and proofreading. Contact:

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The Critical Criminology Homepage is maintained by Jim Thomas. It contains more information about the division along with links to a wide variety of data, current statistics, legal resources, political writings, teaching and mentoring information, and the Division's parent organization — The American Society of Criminology.
<http://sun.soci.niu.edu/~critcrim/>

*The editorial collective would like to thank Jennifer Hatten for her work in putting this issue together

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Division News

ASC Conference: Critical Criminology Events

PLEASE NOTE: This information is accurate as far as we know, but please double check with sources at the conference.

Sessions

THURSDAY, NOV. 20

Having the Lorax for Dinner: Ecology, Crime and Critical Imagination. 8:00 AM [Check program for room (Panel 151)]

Political States and the Pursuit of Slaughter: A Critical Examination of War Crimes and Genocide (Co-sponsored with Division on International Criminology). 9:30 AM [Check program for room (Panel 178)]

Criminology Against Culture: Critical Ethnographies of Crime and Justice. 11:00 AM [Check program for room (Panel 204)]

FRIDAY, NOV. 21

Political Economy of Crime and Culture. 1:30 PM [Check program for room (panel 317)]

*The Division thanks Meda Chesney-Lind for her work as our liaison to the ASC Program Committee.

Meetings and Gatherings

Critical Criminology Book Party. Thursday, Nov. 20, 3:00-5:00 PM, Marina (?) Rm I, East Tower

Steering Committee Meeting, Open to all Members, Thursday, Nov. 20, 8:00, Marina (?) Rm.

Division Social Thursday, Nov. 20 9:00 PM - to???? Marina Rm. Bring Musical instruments (spoons included)

General Business Meeting. Friday, Nov. 21, 3:15 PM, Marina Rm.

Critical Criminology Room (?)

The Division seems to have use of the Marina room, at least for most of Thursday and perhaps longer. We can try to use this room to escape the crush of the meeting, or just to talk with friends and colleagues in a kinder, gentler setting.

Election of New Officers

The Division on Critical Criminology has elected a full slate of new officers. The new division Chair is Gregg Barak. Gregg received three votes less than front-runner Bill Chambliss, however, because he had already served as president of the ASC Bill felt it would be best if one of the "newer people" served as chair of the division. As the closest runner-up, Gregg has agreed to step forward and take over the responsibility of chairing the Division.

Melissa Hickman Barlow has been elected as Vice Chair and Charisse Coston is the Division's new Secretary-Treasurer. The new Steering Committee members are Nanette Davis, Katherine Beckett, and Barbara Perry.

Last year at the business meeting the Division membership agreed to establish a Publications committee consisting of four elected members and representatives from the editorial collectives. The members of the new Publications Committee are Bonnie Berry, Ray Michalowski, Martin Schwartz and Jim Thomas.

The new officers will be formally installed in their positions at the Division Business Meeting. Many thanks to Miriam DeLone and the members of the nominations committee for arranging a full slate of candidates and to



A copy of this information can also be found at the Critical Criminology Homepage —

<http://sun.soci.niu.edu/~critcrim/>

A copy of the full program for the conference can be found at the American Society of Criminology homepage —

<http://www.bsos.umd.edu/asc/>

REMINDER: The Sheraton San Diego Hotel has an East and West Tower. The room confirmation should note which tower, but if not call and find out as this information is important to tell the driver of the airport-to-hotel shuttle. The toll free number for Sheraton is 1-800-325-3535 or the San Diego Sheraton can be reached directly at 619-291-2900.

The climate in San Diego is mild, with warm days and cool nights.

Evaluating Important Things: A Cautionary Tale for Young Criminologists

Mark Israel

Balliol College, Oxford

Disclaimer: Cautionary tales are not always true, but sometimes like Stan Cohen's "The Last Seminar," they contain enough truth for others to learn something from them. This story is not about me, nor is it about any of my current colleagues. Indeed, as those with a desire to keep their careers intact might say, all characters are entirely fictitious and any resemblance to anyone living or dead is entirely accidental....

Introduction: Once upon a time, in a land far away lived a...well, he was not exactly a king, more the head of the executive arm of a constitutional monarchy. He presided over a land where there were not many people, but most of them were generally quite happy much of the time. However, the most important thing about this country was that it was BIG. The people loved their big, wide land. The country was so big that in different parts of the country small groups of people made their own laws. They were proud that they could do that. This story is about one part of that country, the local chief law maker, and his friends.

This country was not the most important nor was it the wealthiest, but the people thought that it was just right. They liked the wide streets of the capital, its parks, the good food, and its mild climate. In fact, they liked almost everything about it, except when very occasionally, some of their own children or cars would go missing, and sometimes things would be written on their walls at night. The population blamed the bad people, but the chief law maker said that everyone should work hard and give him some money so that he could find a way to stop such awful things from happening. And so, the people worked very hard, and they gave him lots of money, and he took the money and he used it to create a crime prevention program.

He was very pleased with what he had made, and lots of people were appointed to help prevent crime. There were people to count crime; there were people to talk to people about crime; there were even people to talk to the people who talked to people about crime. One thing was strange, though. The people who had the nicest offices were not the people who talked to people about crime, not even the people who talked to the people who talked to people about crime. No, these rooms were reserved for the people who administered the people who talked to the people who talked to people about crime. These people never went out, they never actually talked to people about crime, but they were very busy administering and doing things that were very important.

One day, the chief lawmaker, who was still very proud of his crime prevention program, asked other people to come and look at his program and tell him how beautiful it was. He hoped that they would tell everyone else how beautiful it was too. He chose one young researcher who was very excited at the prospect of evaluating this beautiful program.

When the young researcher came to the city where the local law maker lived, he asked to see all the things that the program had done. It was all very exciting to him. He was shown the brand new offices; he was shown the big filing cabinets; he was shown the nice row of shiny new telephones; and, he was shown all the people who administered the people who to the people who talked to the people about crime, and did other important things.

The researcher was confused. He watched these people day after day, but he never saw them talking to people about crime. He never saw them talking to the people who talked to people about crime. He just saw them talking, administering and doing other important things.

So, he wrote to the chief lawmaker and said that he was sure that these people must be doing very important things, and that they were clearly very busy. However, he also noted that he was not sure that this was a very good crime prevention program.

The chief lawmaker was very upset. He was very angry. He appeared on the local television and radio stations and gave interviews to the local newspapers. He said: "I am very angry." He thought all the money that the people had worked very hard for had been wasted. Of course, he knew it had not been wasted on the brand new offices and the big filing cabinets and the nice row of shiny new telephones. No, he thought, it had been wasted on the young researcher.

He had asked the young researcher to tell him how beautiful the crime prevention program was, and the young researcher had not done so. The chief lawmaker said that this was a "breach of contract" -- because he was very wise and knew lots of important words -- and he refused to pay the young researcher. He also refused to let the young researcher tell anyone else about the program in case he forgot to say how beautiful it was. The young researcher was not allowed to appear on local television or radio stations, and he was told that under no circumstances would he be able to give an interview to the local newspaper.

And, from that day to this, the young researcher has a rather large hole in his curriculum vitae, while the chief lawmaker decides whether the young researcher will ever be allowed to say anything about the program to anyone else ever again. There is now a new chief lawmaker, but the brand new offices are still there; so, too, are the big filing cabinets and the nice row of shiny new telephones. Sadly, some of the children and cars may still go missing, and if you look very, very carefully, you can sometimes still see things being written on the walls at night...but, after all, you cannot expect miracles from a crime prevention program.

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The Globalization of Heartland Terror: Reflections on the Oklahoma City Bombing

Mathieu Deflem

Kenyon College

The bombing in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995 raises a number of human-rights concerns on international dimensions of police and crime. The most striking response immediately following the bombing, clearer even than the loud and angry cries to bring the perpetrators to justice, was the utter outrage that such a ferocious act had taken place in America. The recognition was so devastating that to bridge the severe clash between expectation and reality, the guilty were readily presumed to come from abroad. Terrorism in America did not make sense if it had not originated from outside America's borders. During the first public address on the bombing, President Clinton stated that convicting the perpetrators was "not a question of anybody's

The enduring concentration on the foreign element in the terrorism debate is one of the most striking results of the Oklahoma City bombing

country of origin,...not a question of anybody's religion." This disclaimer, of course, only made sense in view of a suspicion towards Middle-Eastern Muslims. The day of the bombing, the FBI immediately sent an interpreter in Arabic to Oklahoma City.

Arab-American organizations felt an urgent need to condemn the bombing, which betrayed how much they too were pondering the possibility of foreign involvement, or at least combating the perceptions they felt others might harbor. And, the fact that Muslim organizations denounced the act of terror, raised money for the victims, and provided care to survivors, did not halt the arrest of at least four Middle-Eastern men and several instances of abuse against Muslim Americans. A few hours after news of the bombing hit the airwaves, Suhair Al Mosawi, a Muslim refugee from Iraq, had someone throw a rock through a window of her home in Oklahoma City. Frightened by the event, Mrs. Al Mosawi, who was 7 months pregnant, gave birth to a stillborn boy. His name has not been listed among the victims of the bombing.

Racism and the prevailing conception of terrorism as a foreign phenomenon went hand in hand with an all too human inclination to attribute all that is evil to forces far away, beyond one's familiar surroundings. The initial blaming of Muslim

fundamentalists revealed how important it is to place the blame for any wrongdoing outside one's society. But, the suspects charged with the bombing are fellow Americans. Terrorism, at first tightly intertwined with an evil taking place only abroad, or at least originating from afar, was now undifferentiated and domestic.

Response in the Aftermath of the Bombing

The reawakening of the Omnibus Counterterrorism Act provided the forum for legislative and police responses to thwart terrorism. Debate on the Bill, reintroduced and reamended, flared in the aftermath of a bombing whose suspects are American citizens. But the proposed measures affect mostly foreigners suspected of terrorism. Recent Senate hearings heavily discussed the tagging of explosive materials and handgun restrictions, but provisions to ease deportation of aliens have slipped through the maze of Congressional debate.

The enduring concentration on the foreign element in the terrorism debate is one of the most striking results of the Oklahoma City bombing. Reminders that terrorism is first and foremost a threat from abroad have remained manifold. Statements were made that dealing with dangerous domestic cults and violent individuals is trickier, apparently because it poses civil-liberties concerns. The control of foreign suspects, it seems, does not.

None of these issues should distract from the gruesome terror that hit Oklahoma City. But tragedy is a poor guide for legislation. Still, legislation will be passed that allows the government to deport suspected aliens without giving them information on the case against them. The President will have the right to brand certain groups as "terrorists." Supporters of those groups, as well as citizens of nations the President deems sponsors of terrorism, can be deported or prevented from entering the country.

The critical issue is not just that the early accusations of foreign involvement have been proven wrong. Rather, one should wonder what would have happened if foreign terrorists had been involved. Would the need for protection from terrorists threats then have interfered with a continued commitment to preserve liberty and justice? Would it then have proven true that, as J. Edgar Hoover once remarked, justice is merely incidental to law and order?

Or will it happen now?

The U.S. Senate has surely opened the way. The ironic but real conclusion may well be that precisely because of the domestic nature of the Oklahoma City bombing, calls for boosting international law enforcement and the policing of foreigners, possibly beyond the boundaries set by human rights, have never fared better. Criminologists are allowed to stand by, back out, or cave in. Perhaps they can do better.

(Continued from page 1) **PAVLICH**

These prefatory remarks signal the trajectory of my early musings on a research project which aims to trace, and analyse the forgotten concept of criticism in 'crime-related' discourses. Its ambition is to formulate critical genres that can wrest legitimacy by clearing suitable discursive spaces in current epistemological horizons. The research plan is to examine the modern auspices of critical genres in criminology, and identify how these have been appropriated in four contexts (Britain, the United States, Canada and Australia). The continued relevance of these auspices will then be appraised by considering the plight of criticism in current epistemological configurations. The purpose here would be to develop critical genres that carve out a space for vital criticism by challenging current epistemological horizons. Such genres may then be directed at dominant governmental rationales and censoring practices, and perhaps reinvigorate critical practices around crime-related discourses. If successful, I hope to stake a critical claim at the very heart of political rationales associated with 'crime', and recover the exuberance that once positioned the 'new criminology' as a discursive force not to be ignored.

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Calls for Papers

In connection with the 12th International Congress of Criminology in Seoul, Republic of Korea, August 24-29, 1998, I have a book contract to do an anthology, *Crime and Crime Control: A Global View*. Also, in conjunction with the Division of International Criminology (ASC) I am organizing a comparative or cross-national "workshop" for one of the Congress's programmatic themes—Historical and Comparative Perspectives on Crime and Justice-- consisting of 9-12 papers (nations). If you are interested in presenting a paper on a particular nation-state's crime and crime control, or if you cannot attend, but are interested in writing one of the twelve chapters for the related volume, then please contact Gregg Barak for more information: (313) 487-3184; <Soc_Barak@Online.Emich.Edu>; or write the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminology, Eastern Michigan University, 713J Pray-Harrod, Ypsilanti, MI 48197, USA.

Theoretical Criminology is an exciting new quarterly journal launched in February 1997 to provide an interdisciplinary and international forum for the advancement of the theoretical aspects of criminology. The journal is edited by Colin Sumner (University of East London) and Piers Beirne (University of Southern Maine). If you would like information on how to contribute to future issues or how to subscribe contact Jane Makoff jane.makoff@sagepub.co.uk at Sage Publications, 6 Bonhill St, London, EC2A4PU ENGLAND. Tel: 44 (0)171 374 0645. Fax: +44 (0)171 374 8741.

Broken Windows: Prevention Strategy or Cracked Policy?

A discussion and debate among Ingrid Sahlin (University of Lund), Marty Schwartz (Ohio University), Stuart Henry (Eastern Michigan University), Steve Russell (University of Texas San Antonio), Peter Manning (Michigan State University) and Hal Pepinsky (Indiana University). This article is an edited version of an e-mail exchange occurring through the Critical Criminology Listserv. [Additional information about the listserv is available in the article by Jim Thomas and Isabelle Sabau, *Critical Criminology Meets the Net* in this newsletter. Further information is also available through the Internet from the Critical Criminology Homepage (see page 2 for the address).]

Ingrid Sahlin: I live in Sweden, and I work part-time at the University of Lund (dept. of Sociology) and part-time as a researcher in the National Council for Crime Prevention. Currently, the New York Police strategy (described in *Fixing Broken Windows* by Kelling and Coles) is strongly promoted in Sweden; journalists and officials in the Justice Department who return from study visits are quite enthusiastic. Is everybody in the US equally happy about it? I am skeptical: this strategy seems very authoritarian, negligent of human rights and even brutal, and some of its vocabulary scares me. Could somebody give me references to papers (preferably published), including critical

evaluations or serious comments on the implications of this strategy? I also would like to know if there is a debate going on, and what the arguments against the strategy are.

Marty Schwartz: I think Ingrid's questions bring out the weaknesses of North American critical criminology. The idea of a broken windows strategy is, to my way of thinking, fundamentally correct, at least in some aspects. Where people are proud of their neighborhoods, where absentee landlords are under intense pressure to make repairs (such as broken windows), where the city is under intense pressure to remove abandoned automobiles, etc., there is a good chance that the neighborhood will not degenerate further.

The problem is that this idea was seized upon by right wing elements, and, as Ingrid correctly points out, put into the service of authoritarian elements to support their efforts. Meanwhile, the left had no strategy, no plan, no alternative. When grandma comes crying that the kids threw rocks through her front windows, what do we have to offer? That this

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Tougher Prisons? An Interview with Michael Welch

The following transcript is an edited version of a September 1994 interview on National Public Radio, Newark. The Host, Steve Inskip interviews Michael Welch of Rutgers University. Carrissa Griffing transcribed this interview.

Host: "The move to make prisons meaner is gaining all across the country and it has hit this area. Several New Jersey law makers have now signed on to a plan to impose tough new restrictions on New Jersey prison inmates, taking away amenities like weight rooms and T.V. sets. They are being joined by some law enforcement officials, anticrime activists and crime victims like Ryan St. Michael, a Bergen county resident who says his sister was killed in a robbery 20 years ago."

Ryan St. Michael: "...prisoners, a lot of prisoners, don't feel like prison is a bad place to be, and that was always the first point of punishment: to create an environment that people don't want to come back to....What we are doing is proposing a prison system for New Jersey which will be a no-amenities prison. A prison with no gym, no weight-room, no law library, no air conditioning, and no phone privileges. Just a day filled with menial work, teaching a work ethic to the violent and repeat offenders in this state."

Host: "Politicians have made similar proposals -- to go back to the days of hard labor. But most proposals have not been taken

seriously until the last few years. Recently, states like Washington, Wisconsin and Georgia have sharply cutback on the amenities in their prisons. Some have even begun forcing convicts to wear old fashioned striped uniforms.

"Dr. Michael Welch is an Associate Professor in the Administration of Justice Program at Rutgers University. He has also worked in prisons and taught college courses to inmates, the very kind of rehabilitation programs which anticrime advocates, like Ryan St. Michael, want to eliminate. Welch says New Jersey Law makers would be mistaken if they think that prisons are pleasant; he also says that proposals for tougher prisons don't address the root causes of crime."

Welch: "Prisons and jails, in general, are not nice places to be. I worked for the Federal Bureau of Prisons a number of years ago. I was a researcher in a minimum security unit in Fort Worth Texas where offenders like Roger Clinton [the President's brother] were sentenced for drug dealing. Although it was a 'nice' place -- a minimum security unit with little violence -- being in prison is not nice. Inmates there would trade places with you in a New York minute. That is part of the philosophy of punishment in our society -- to limit their liberty and take their freedom away, at least temporarily."

Host: "There are a couple of images of prisons in this country which maybe are not really all that contradictory. And, the one is

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wouldn't happen under a socialist government? That she shouldn't call the police, because they would only trample on the kids' rights?

It is interesting that in England, Canada, Australia, and in other countries, the left realism of Jock Young and others has been carefully engaged (and occasionally attacked) for trying to speak directly to the concerns of crime victims. In the U.S., aside from the writings of a few here and there (Ray Michalowski, Tony Platt, etc.), there has not been much interest in developing useful crime control strategies that can be brought to town hall meetings and offered to voters. I know that I am overstating the case, and leaving out many people, but I think that I am right in broad outline form.

Stuart Henry: Where is the theory in broken windows strategy? What analysis informs us why windows are broken? When I get papers from students that are all policy and no analysis they don't get very good grades. What theory of causality is broken windows strategy based on? If we run around cleaning up toxic pollution, will corporations stop polluting? If we clean up all the contaminated, redated, Clorox-soaked perished fish products sold to consumers as the genuine fresh fish, will supermarket chains stop selling it? How does broken windows, or left realism for that matter, analyze the cause of some people's use of power to abuse others. And when it does, what has cleaning up the neighborhood and serving granny's media-hyped fear of local street crime got to do with it? Broken windows strategy is broken theory; like left realism in general it is action devoid of analysis. To paraphrase a famous Wendy's ad, we can see the beef, but where's the corporate power behind the Dave Thomas persona. Or to invert Marty's own illustrative Texas analogy, left realism seems to me to be "all cattle and no hat"!

Marty Schwartz: It seems to me that if I were trying to feed a lot of people, having all cattle and no hat isn't the worst place to be. What if we have a strategy that works, but we don't yet know exactly why? We ate aspirin, and stopped minor aches and pains, for more than 80 years before pharmacologists figured out why aspirin stopped headaches. No theory, but the policy worked. You ask rhetorical questions. What if, in fact, we cleaned up pollution and industries DID stop polluting?

I am hardly an enemy of theory. I have published heavily in theory, and have written heavily theoretical books. But, I also work in victim services. It is real hard to sit in the General Hospital emergency room Saturday night and to tell grandma that her stab wounds are the product of media-hyped fears. Street crime is real, and it mostly affects the most oppressed and impoverished urban and rural people. Even to the people whose fears are mostly media-induced (and this includes much of the population), telling them that we don't have good theory may be correct. But, it isn't very satisfying to them.

I have some theoretical questions of my own. Why is it that there are hundreds of right wing "solutions" to crime on the table, many of which are being taken seriously, but there are almost no left wing solutions being taken seriously? Why is it that even out here where I live in liberal Democrat college town time warp Athens, Ohio, the former social worker, liberal Democrat

prosecutor has decided that he can curry votes by setting up a secret police attack force modeled on the Gestapo? This black hooded secret task force has been wildly successful at convincing judges to let them break into houses and tear them apart searching for drugs. Some day they might even gather enough evidence for a felony arrest. But, people think that is a fair price to pay for dealing with "hard drugs" like marijuana. My point is that people to the left of Janet Reno have no presence in this country, no plan of action, no organization, to statements to make to the press, no alternatives, etc.

Anyway, Stuart, why do you presume that "broken windows" is devoid of theory and is only practice? Does theory have to include major propositions by theoreticians? Your own book shows that there are many dozens of theories about the causality of crime. Can we have lower order theory like "people with pride in their neighborhood are more likely to protect it." Or, "where people are convinced that the police are their friends, and not an army of occupation, they are more likely to help in crime prevention efforts." Or, "where police are forced to know the variety of people in a neighborhood, and to take seriously their concerns and needs, they are more likely to be appreciated by the

The problem is that this idea was seized upon by right wing elements and put into the service of authoritarian elements ... Meanwhile, the left had no strategy, no plan, no

residents." I have had some experience with community oriented policing since the early 1970s, and I think that there is much to be said for these positions. Of course, 95% of the Clinton Administration money is being thrown down ratholes, or being put to the service of opposing goals, but THAT is the policy problem.

Steve Russell: Why is it so easy to disregard granny's media-hyped fear of crime with a sneer for granny's lack of vision beyond that statistically insignificant mugging down the block or the media's addiction to advertizing and the sensational stories that attract it?

Granny's illusion, if that's what it is, is going to drive more public policy than all the refereed articles in the library. She may only be a human interest hook to the rewrite man, but she is that because we care about her, we as a society. And that caring is healthy.

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Only in a (more or less) democracy do you have to build policy around how people feel, as opposed to how things really are according to the numbers. People who are good at that are successful politicians. Yes, too many of them would rather follow a path they know is wrong than try to change directions. Leading is doing politics the hard way.

But (getting to the point) we who see the war on crime as a war on ourselves focus correctly on what makes a kid a mugger to the extent that we let granny fend for herself. And find comfort where she can. The foreseeable policy result is the hunt for a bigger stick.

Ingrid Sahlin: Thank you for your comments on the broken windows strategy. I recognize your general positions in my own reactions to what I have read about it.

Like Stuart Henry I find that the strategy of broken windows lacks an explicit theory. However, I think that as a practice, and in the accounts of it, theories are implied -- and in a twisted way created. One old theory that is embedded in the metaphors and practice of broken windows is the idea of contagion. Crime is pictured as a disease, and petty criminals and untidy people as disease carriers. By analogy it is in the interest of the public not only to control these people but to incapacitate them or exclude them. In connection with demands for tougher police actions against drug abusers and drunkards, you sometimes hear today that these people are not only dangerous for the community but actually have less human value.

The theory of urban decay is classic: a downward spiral of lack of housing maintenance and community services, high resident turnover, concentration of poor and maybe deviant population groups within the neighborhood. But the novelty with the broken windows "theory", as I read it, is that this theory is translated to crime by way of analogy. The deterioration theory has had its obvious policy implication, in Sweden at least, e.g. in the obligation of estate-owners to look after their buildings, including fixing broken windows. In addition we had specific housing subsidies to enable estate-owners to keep their houses at a high standard. Traditionally, it had nothing to do with police activities, and in Sweden the physical environment is regulated by local authorities.

The new element with the broken windows strategy -in my preliminary view -is that urban deterioration theory is combined with a disease metaphor and then applied to human beings as a collectivity and furthermore, to specific human beings ("disease carriers"). The result is more of a human degeneration theory. The implication of a strategy targeting those who behave disorderly in order to prevent serious crimes is double 1) petty crimes, or just legal but disorderly behavior, are looked upon as the cause of serious, violent crimes; 2) people with disorderly behavior are seen as potential serious criminals.

Accordingly, disorderly behavior is defined as a crime through legislation and through the reaction it meets, even if it is not yet illegal. Such a strategy probably increases the anger towards the poor, homeless and so on. It follows that the police strategy and its implied theory may do more than reflect the inhabitants' view on crime: it may exaggerate and distort it and translate the fear of crime to anger toward low-status inhabitants, strangers, and other

easily recognized categories.

In my view then, there is a risk that the broken windows strategy tacitly imposes new values on the residents of the neighborhood. On the other hand, if the police are completely responsive to the values of the "respectable inhabitants" of the neighborhood, other risks are entailed. The police may, in order to be popular among the "decent residents," neglect the rights of "unwanted" groups in general.

As I recall it, the broken windows strategy actually started with a local officer telling a landlord to fix broken windows; but my impression from recent texts is that there are no demands on the local house-owners or businesspeople. Rather, these people have a strong influence over the definition of the problem (such as begging outside shops) but no special obligation to be part of the solution.

Have I misunderstood this new paradigm?

A final comment on alternative crime prevention strategies. Maybe it is also a new thing that the police turn to crime prevention, but there have certainly been crime prevention strategies implemented before. For instance, Sweden used to have a lot of local youth clubs, leisure activities for children and youth and so on. The broken windows and the police as the center of crime prevention are expected to substitute for these traditional services, which are closed down due to budget cuts.

Peter Manning: In March (1997), I lectured to a large conference of senior police officers and British Home Office personnel at the Fielding Centre at Manchester University on this perspective. I have the draft of the talk which was very critical on philosophical, historic, empirical and logical grounds. The first point to recall is that this approach has been discredited by the courts in America repeatedly and the second is that people in the NYPD lied, cooked the books, and distorted their crime data (this from research done on the NYPD by Chief Inspector Caroline Nichol of Thames Valley Constabulary). The third is that Broken Windows is not a serious intellectual book; it is a self-promoting, anti-intellectual polemic. There are no data, none, to demonstrate that zero tolerance works. The only numeric data, for example, presented in this book are official NYPD crime data for two categories of crime and transit police data. Summary data are reported from Skogan's work. He did not study cities with zero tolerance policies. Finally, there is no evidence in this book about how the policies, practices, activities, and arrests, for example, affect the change in the reported crime rate. There is no logical specification of relationships.

One should also be aware that this approach appeals to the basic police wish, belief and hope that they control crime and can, with proper efforts, do so. They can shape it in many ways by short term strategies, and certainly manipulate official data. Recall that no evidence from victim surveys in New York has been presented. The arguments of the book are based on "readings" and quasi-legal interpretations, not empirical data.

Marty Schwartz: Since I have instigated some of this debate, I just wanted to say that as it happens, I tend to agree with most of what the erudite Peter Manning has to say on the topic. My problem is that most of the original premise of broken windows

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was allowed to degenerate into Zero Tolerance, and then to become permission for the right wing to implement policies that they wanted. Meanwhile, we on the left have few positive alternatives.

Hal Pepinsky: For my part, I am critical of having to depend on someone's program, let alone on winning a ballot, in order to feel and be safer with others. I also have long been critical of focusing on public images of the criminogenesis we produce. I happen to believe that our subjective and objective safety depend far more heavily on what happens behind closed doors. I have

People in the NYPD lied, cooked the books, and distorted their crime data ... Broken Windows is not a serious intellectual book; it is a self-promoting, anti-intellectual polemic

found myself supposing that the danger we express as fear of street crime is a sort of flashback to violence we have suffered earlier in our lives rather than later, by those in whose care and power we are entrusted more than from strangers, by adults more than by youth --by trusted adults against children most of all.

Lately, I have come to appreciate how far apart our lives are from one another in the regions in which our sense of danger is aroused, and in which we can aspire to find safe company, abusive company, or isolation. In cases even where I believe a threat of violence by those who have murdered others remains real, I see people climb to safety from such circumstances one friend's worth of validation and safe company at a time. The most practical way I can think of for us to feel safer and less bent on shaming, hurting or disabling those we blame for our victimization is to accept that none of us knows what needs to be done next about any threat of violence until the ones who have to live with our intervention take the lead and make the first move.

I do believe that we criminologists, like other human beings in this highly nomadicized world we share, are just beginning to confront the boundaries of our ignorance about what really hurts and frightens us, and how far removed it is from the "crime" and "risks" we know in our data sets. The good news is that we are pioneers at reaching to more profound experiences of personal violence we share, and as by getting out of battering relations and into safe company, learning to protect ourselves at levels which heretofore have been socially, publicly, academically invisible.

I could well imagine that granny's fear of falling, breaking her hip, and having no one notice for a few days while she slowly

loses consciousness on her bathroom floor, is greater than that of the mugger. I also imagine that if granny imagines that talking about fear of muggers will give her some of what she most craves for safety's sake – company --she'll project her fears and anger for having been abandoned by her "lovely" children in that direction.

Paul Leighton: I was not part of the original listserv conversation but wanted to carry on the conversational thread because of an interest I have in policy from living in Washington, DC, for many years. Almost no policy is based on theory; at best, theory - whether crude or sophisticated - is invoked after the fact to justify something that Congress thought politically wise. Even someone as mainstream as Joan Petersilia gets cut off by the government when further work on the data lead her to conclusions that run counter to incarceration policy. (This story is in Todd Clear's *Harm in Penology*.)

The idea/theory behind Broken windows is consistent with how people behave with other property, such as relaxing after the new car has the first dent. In fact, the major criticism I have with it is that it is fundamentally about protecting property and perversely suggests that safety for people follows from the hyper-vigilant defense of property. Perhaps if it were an adjunct to reinvesting in and revitalizing inner-cities, the policy would be acceptable; but it does become authoritarian when employed to keep 'scary people' out of certain neighborhoods.

Further, zero tolerance is objectionable because it sounds non-discriminatory and allows everyone using this term to forget about race. Meanwhile, policies and decisions continue that are profoundly racist in effect (and sometimes, though not always, in intent).

What we need to appreciate is that whether or not the left has an alternative, most people do not see anything wrong with what's in place. Broken indows doesn't work and the imprisonment binge is a huge waste of money, but there's very little call for changing the course. So, the left is reduced to the position of simply trying to convince people that there are (huge) problems with what's going on. That this limited and rather obvious point meets with such resistance suggests that a range of criminal justice attitudes - beyond just the death penalty - are not susceptible to rational argumentation. They are about self-concept, self-identity and are related to very basic layers of personal ideology. In this respect, Hal is probably right that what happens inside homes can easily be translated into criminal justice attitudes, as does the widespread insecurity from corporate downsizing.

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of a real hell hole -- if you are not a hardened criminal, you would never want to go and, in fact, you often hear of prisons that are almost riotous -- that are out of control -- where you hear about guards misbehaving and so forth. At the same time, it is often suggested that that very environment is not so hostile to someone who is a hardened criminal; that it is actually rather pleasant -- and if you add weight rooms, and decent prison food, and a place to stay, and a library, and television, and phone privileges and so forth, it is sometimes suggested by the folks who want to take these amenities away, that prison isn't such a bad place to be if you are a hardened criminal."

Welch: "In response, let me point to a recent study by Irwin and Austin who found that approximately 20 percent of offenders in the prison system are indeed violent offenders. However, 80 percent of the inmate populations are non-violent -- consisting of inmates convicted of less serious offenses. I suspect that most people -- across the political spectrum -- believe that violent offenders ought to be incarcerated. And, that prisons shouldn't

Inmates are not going to commit future crimes simply because they lifted weights in prison. They will be more likely to commit future crimes if they are unemployed, if they have an ongoing problem with substance abuse, if they have family problems, or

coddle violent offenders. But, for the most part, the incarceration trend shows that the courts are increasingly sentencing a greater number of non-violent drug offenders to prison. According to the Sentencing Project, by next year, 73 percent of incoming inmates in the federal prison system will be non-violent drug offenders."

Host: "You are suggesting that this issue has less to do with how offenders are treated in prison, and even less to do with the current crime trend?"

Welch: "Certainly. Generally, violent crime has remained relatively constant since the 1960s. Now there is a little bit of fluctuation, also there is more attention to youthful offenders nowadays. But, overall violent crime has remained relatively stable, especially when you attend to population growth."

Host: "Dr. Welch, give me a sense here if there is any reason that your average American can understand, why a criminal, whether a hardened criminal or merely someone who is a non-violent offender, really should have a library, for example, or a weight

room, or anything like that. How do these things get there to begin with? What is the justification?"

Welch: "Ok. But first, let's identify the origin of the debate. The debate is being fueled by politicians who want to exploit the views, the attitudes and the prejudices of mainstream Americans in order to secure their elected posts. Yet, politicians underestimate the complexity of the opinions that mainstream Americans hold about punishment. Most citizens want punishment, but they also want inmates to be able to read, they want them to be rehabilitated, especially in the area of substance abuse. We need to acknowledge the intersection of punishment with rehabilitation. In fact, a lot of these 'get tough' proposals are merely symbolic. A recent article in the *New York Times* [September 17, 1994] pointed out that in Louisiana, for instance, the assembly has passed legislation that bans martial arts programs for inmates. They have also banned air conditioners for inmates. It is interesting that they would include banning martial arts and air conditioners as part of their legislation when in fact there have never been any martial arts programs for prisoners, and for the most part, inmates do not have air conditioners."

Host: "So, we are banning things they don't have anyway?"

Welch: "Absolutely. Yet, it is also crucial to acknowledge that prison staff have the task of managing inmates -- often this involves a simple understanding of rewards and penalties. Michael Quinlan, former Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, aptly states that: 'if inmates aren't kept busy when you take away all of those activities, they will find something to do with their time, and it probably won't be in the best interest of the staff trying to monitor their activity' [*New York Times*, September 17, 1994]. Indeed, programs are *needed* in prison to, among other things, serve as important management tools."

Host: "You can understand, though, why some people may feel frustrated that we have this person who has committed a crime against society, and we have actually managed to catch him and get him through the legal system, and go to all the expense of that, and go to all the expense of actually putting him in prison. And are you saying that we still have to appease the guy; we still have to give him something he wants to do in order to keep him from becoming violent and causing more damage?"

Welch: "We also have to recognize the final destination of these inmates. They will return to our communities, and they are not going to commit future crimes simply because they lifted weights in prison. They will be more likely to commit future crimes if they are unemployed, if they have an ongoing problem with substance abuse -- illegal drugs or alcohol -- if they have family problems, or psychological problems. If these problems aren't addressed, certainly we are setting them up for failure."

Critical Criminology Meets the Net: "Carrying the Revolution to Cyberspace"

Jim Thomas and Isabelle Sabau

Northern Illinois University

Che Guevara, in a perhaps apocryphal exchange with a reporter, was asked why he advocated revolution in countries that seemed the least receptive to his ideas. He responded: "Always bring the revolution to where it ain't."

Che likely said it with more eloquence, but his point remains: Praxis follows need rather than expedience. The lesson for critical criminologists is that we should be alert for new opportunities for pursuing our enterprise, rather than stagnate in comfortable (and often ineffective) attempts at transformative action. One new venue to use for pursuing social change is in a place called "Cyberspace."

Evolving computer technology has dramatically facilitated information flow and increased interaction among diverse populations across wide geographical areas. One consequence of the expanding influence of computer-mediated communication and education has been political organizing and outreach, generating visibility of politically-oriented groups and issues and assisting in recruiting new members. Groups such as the "skin heads," the Religious Right, and other conservative right wing groups have demonstrated considerable success in using Internet resources as a political action strategy. Ironically, despite a few laudable exceptions, the progressive left has not kept pace with the right's advances in using Net technology as a form of political praxis. It is time to reverse this trend.

WHAT IS THE "NET?"

As most of us already know, the Internet (or "Net") refers to the interconnected network computer systems (such as our university systems or commercial services such as American Online or The Well) that allow people to communicate using personal computers (PCs), modems, and telephone lines. The term CYBERSPACE, overused as it has become, remains a useful metaphor to describe something that happens when we sit at our computer keyboard and magically etch our ASCII for others to see. We feel as if we leave our etchings somewhere, and that "somewhere," Cyberspace, is simply a conceptually metaphoric way of identifying the experience of electronic communication.

HOW CAN WE USE THE NET?

There are several ways to use the Internet for political organizing, including (but not limited to) the following:

HOME PAGES: Homepages are electronic archives in which information (text or graphics files) may be stored for public access by others. Critical instructors can set up homepages with assignments, critiques, class projects, and other information that connects students with other classes as a way of networking with other critical scholars. Students, in turn, can access these pages

or, better, publish their own critical homepages with course-relevant information. Homepage activity and publishing not only provide a strategy to generate interaction, but also help assure that students are keeping up with course work. Instructors can place their lecture notes on a homepage, and students can generate questions for discussions. Homepages are useful repositories for news, facts and figures, and other information that would otherwise be difficult to collect and spread.

DISCUSSION GROUPS: Often called "listserves" (or "listservs"), discussion groups are electronic E-mail message systems by which communicants share ideas, discuss material, and pursue shared interests. Electronic discussion groups can be far more effective than classroom discussions, because people who are not likely to speak in a classroom are often surprisingly loquacious in the electronic arena. Electronic discussion groups give a voice to people or groups who may feel silenced in face-to-face settings. Equally important, topics that might be avoided because of their sensitive nature or volatile potential are more likely to be discussed in ASCII than in face-to-face. Discussion groups also allow direct communication between students and faculty who might feel intellectually or ideologically isolated.

WORLD WIDE WEB (WWW): The advent of the Web has provided an unprecedented means of acquiring information on virtually any topic. Pulling together data from the U.S. Department of Justice sources, tracking Congressional legislation, retrieving federal or state court decisions, monitoring "hate groups," or tracking down esoteric information has been made much easier by Web technology.

E-MAIL: Electronic mail does not replace face-to-face interaction, but when direct physical contact is difficult or impossible, as often occurs between isolated or marginal populations, E-mail provides a useful means of contact. Students can ask questions, mail papers or assignments, and engage in private chats with classmates. Instructors can provide more individualized attention and faster responses. Activists can communicate with a wider range of people and keep participants up to date on the latest news.

ASYNCHRONOUS INTERACTIVE CONFERENCING: Asynchronous conferencing refers to software on computer systems that allow users to visit and leave messages that other users may visit later to read and respond. Unlike E-mail or discussion groups, in which a message is distributed to many people (like a memo inserted in people's mailboxes), this form of conferencing stores the message and allows later readers to follow the thread and participate as a chat around the cracker barrel. The messages are preserved and participants can drift in and out, revise their ideas, and keep track of the threads as others participated. This is especially useful for theoretical or other discussions that are more amenable to longer, more reflective responses than is customary in listserv or E-mail discussions. Papers or articles may be placed up for discussion, and because the comments (or "posts") of participants remain, others may read

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and interact in the discussion.

SYNCHRONOUS (real time) INTERACTIVE CONFERENCING (IC): IC is an electronic "bulletin board" where participants can engage in sustained discussions of topics of their, or the instructors', choosing. Unlike synchronous conferencing, IC is "real time" in that a number of people can have online meetings. Like a coffee house, it allows participants to initiate, engage in, or depart from topics of their preference. IC also allows for "guest speakers" and other participants to join in the discussion, and the real-time format facilitates small meetings and discussions.

REAL-TIME PC-BASED AUDIO-VISUAL CONFERENCING: With this exciting emerging technology people at their PCs with inexpensive software and a PC video camera can connect with others to see and hear them speak while discussing ideas. This technology would, for example, allow for weekly conferences, study groups, interaction amongst students across diverse geographical regions, and allow more personal contact lacking on other forms of computer-mediated communication.

These are but a few of the Net-based resources that Critical Criminologists might use to integrate students into the Division, create a higher public profile by offering information and other resources, share information with each other more easily, and generally create stronger bonds between one another.

bring the revolution to where it ain't

HOW IS THE DIVISION CURRENTLY CONNECTED?

Currently, the Critical Criminology Division emphasizes two Net resources. The first is the listserv/discussion group and the second is the homepage.

CRIT-L: The discussion group, Crit-L, has 82 subscribers and to date has been used primarily for Division announcements and occasional news blurbs. Although discussions of theoretical and other issues have been relatively infrequent, the opportunity for Division members to initiate discussions or ask questions of other Division members provides a useful resource for those wishing to use it. [See the 'Broken Windows' conversation in this newsletter for an example; the end of this article has information on how to subscribe.] The potential uses are still in their infancy, and as more Division members become involved, the uses will expand.

CRITCRIM HOMEPAGE: The Division's homepage has received three awards in the past two years for its content. The page features links to government and academic criminal justice resources, and a variety of topical areas include prisons, police, law, and capital punishment. The page also includes links to teaching homepages and to the American Criminological Society's Mentoring page, where students can identify and communicate with criminologists with whom they share interests.

To date, the homepage has given the Division significant visibility, especially for non-criminologists, students, and media. Utilization of the page varies with the school year, with the heaviest access occurring during the terms and decreasing over long holidays and the summer. In a typical month in 1997, the Division's homepage received 42,000 visitors (about one a minute). The monthly "hits" (or file accesses) approached 400,000 in September and October, and the usage is steadily increasing.

The Division's "Death Penalty" section typically receives about 500 visitors a day (or one every three minutes). The most-hit paper, Mike Radelet's analysis of capital punishment as deterrence, was downloaded over 15,000 times in 1996. Through September, 1997, the paper has already equalled the 1996 "hits," a rate of about once every 27 minutes. [The address for the Homepage and the death penalty information is at the end of this article.]

The special Spring, 1997, issue of the Division's **CRITICAL CRIMINOLOGIST** newsletter addressing the past, present, and future of critical criminology, has been accessed about 115 times monthly between May-September, 1997, and the individual articles have averaged about 15 "hits" each month. Few libraries carry the Newsletter, which makes permanent online availability a vital resource. Even the most prestigious journals would be hard-pressed to have readers access them from a library three times a day and read any given article once every other day. As a consequence, the Division can promote both itself and the scholarship of its members by aggressively pursuing an online presence for the Newsletter. Further, creating direct interactive

mail links between the readers and journal authors enhances communication between progressive criminologists and the public.

NET PRAXIS

There are several ways by which the Division could aggressively pursue Net praxis. All of the following are currently being explored, but none can be successful without a concerted effort by Division members.

VIRTUAL CLASSROOMS offer a promising mechanism to unite critical instructors, familiarize students with the Division's scholars and activities, and integrate teaching, scholarship, and praxis. A "virtual classroom" refers to the electronic interaction of two or more groups of students and instructors. This interaction can include discussion groups comprised of classes across the country, interactive homepages or conferencing systems where instructors can post papers or other material for discussion, create "Internet treasure hunts," in which students can track down answers to questions, or organize "guest lectures," in which instructors can "speak" to other classes using realtime conferencing software.

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HOME PAGES provide an invaluable resource for showcasing Division members' scholarship or creating a media resource by putting members in contact with reporters who periodically seek expertise for their stories. Homepages could also be used to link members to one another, establish pedagogical resources by creating teaching pages, or create archives of papers and data. The more ambitious homepage publishers are also developing audio-visual strategies that can be downloaded by students and others to illustrate theoretical concepts or supplement course material. The potential to illustrate "police brutality," "corporate terrorism," or "racial injustice" becomes a bit easier when instructors or researchers can create audio-visual examples and publish them on homepages as a resource for others.

PC-BASED AUDIO-VISUAL SYNCHRONOUS (REAL TIME) INTERACTION: Using soundcards, inexpensive video cameras, and PCs, it is currently feasible for groups of people across the country to see and hear one another in a TV-like setting, to collaborate in real-time editing of papers, or to collectively share sights and sounds while surfing across the Web. This allows for mini-conferences addressing substantive issues, permits more intense networking with colleagues and students, and facilitates routine interactive "guest lectures" with scholars who would not otherwise visit a campus or classroom.

WHAT NEXT?

This brief essay has been intended partly to summarize what the Division is currently doing to generate a Net presence and partly as a pep talk to stimulate interest in Net activity. But, it is also intended as an alarm for critical criminologists: The world is changing, technology is creating that change, and unless we adapt to the new forms of communication and understand the

CONFERENCES

Structural Change & Crime: Caribbean and International Dimensions is an International Criminology Conference to be held 29-31 July 1998 at the Hilton International, Barbados, W.I. The conference is sponsored by the University of the West Indies Crime and Criminal Justice Research Centre in collaboration with the University of Toronto Centre of Criminology. Themes include conceptual and methodological issues in the study of crime in the Caribbean; regional and international trends in Caribbean crime; profiles of offenders in the Caribbean; mainstream metropolitan theorizing about crime and justice for Caribbean societies; law enforcement in the Caribbean; community crime prevention; private policing; courts and adjudication; punishment and treatment; emerging themes in critical criminology for the Caribbean. Panel ideas and paper outlines are due by 30 October 1997 and abstracts are due 30 December 1997. Contact Farley Brathwaite, Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, P.O. Box 64, Barbados. Tel (246) 417-4265/6/7. Fax (246)417-1327.

Job Hunting on the Web

The American Sociological Association's Employment Bulletin is \$10 for members, \$30 for non-members — but it's available FREE on the Web. Go figure. Listings are updated the 1st of each month and can be accessed through:

<http://www.asanet.org>

The American Society of Criminology Homepage also has job listings in the form of a link to the criminal justice section of the *Journal of Higher Education*. This material can be accessed through:

<http://www.bsos.umd.edu/asc>

Most universities have Web sites that can be an excellent way to start researching potential employers.

implications for social praxis, we will become indistinguishable from those of whom we were so contemptuous two decades ago. In recent years, the Division seems to have lost its focus, its energy, and its sense of purpose. It has lost members, and without change, we risk becoming irrelevant. One way to re-establish our vitality, viability, and presence is to exploit the potential of the Net for organizing, communication, and pedagogy. The first few steps are not difficult: First, subscribe to the CRIT-L discussion group. Second, participate in Net activities planned for the future, and that will be announced both in the Newsletter and in the discussion group. Finally, remember Che's precept: "Take the revolution to where it ain't."

Division members can subscribe to the CRIT-L discussion group by sending the following message:
sub crit-l firstname lastname
("firstname lastname" are the subscriber's names)
to this address: listproc@sun.soci.niu.edu

The Critical Criminology homepage can be visited at:
<http://www.soci.niu.edu/~critcrim>

Death Penalty information can be found at:
<http://www.soci.niu.edu/~critcrim/dp/dp.html>

Jim Thomas can be contacted at jthomas@sun.soci.niu.edu

Elite Motives, Intolerance Pushers & Rage Junkies

Bonnie Berry

Social Problems Research Group

It seems that there is more rage and less tolerance in the United States lately. We see intense rage leveled at, for example, crime and criminals; we see less tolerance for diversity. Actually, there may or may not have been a change in the number of rage-filled people or in the level of rage experienced by people, but rage certainly has a greater voice in the last several decades.

The Emotions of Rage and Intolerance The emotion of rage is like hatred but it is bigger, more colorful, and more intense. Rage is usually thought of as personal. Rage can also be social, as when a number of people focus their rage on a social event (like Waco), a social phenomenon (like affirmative action), or a social category of people (like the poor, immigrants, and prisoners). Although not everyone would agree, one might think that rage is irrational. I think that rage is misguided and irrational, something beyond psychic and perhaps behavioral control. But David C. Anderson (1995), for one, believes that rage is a reasonable although pointless response to specific social problems, such as crime.

Intolerance is an unwillingness, a fed-upness, a refusal to accept and a strong need to exclude. Targets of exclusion are not uncommonly the socially disenfranchised, who are excluded from an opportunity to gain a piece of the pie. Unfortunately, remnants of the American Dream and the Spirit of Capitalism still determine the majority's beliefs that they should be able to make it if they only work hard enough. This was never true for some people (women, racial and ethnic minorities, immigrants, the differently abled) and now it is untrue for many white men. With the help of the intolerance pushers, we are distracted from our real problems like corporate greed.

If blame were placed more squarely on the problem, we would see that corporate greed, not affirmative action, has prompted the loss of jobs for U.S. laborers while it has simultaneously promoted the exploitation of off-shore workers in Asia and South America as well as U.S. prisoners. Irrationality is a good thing from the point of view of those who want to deflect attention from the true source of social problems. For instance, if the public can be convinced that the trouble with this country is that African Americans don't want to work, do want to commit crime, and ought to be incarcerated for lengthy periods, then the public will focus on crime instead of lean and mean employment policies.

Intolerance is a catalyst for rage. Rage is an emotional overreaction to intolerance; the words "backlash" and "violence" come to mind. People who are into rage and intolerance today seem willing to preach violence, listen to and agree with violence, and either engage in it themselves or support the conduct of violence as committed by others. With intolerance, as expressed in informal conversations, political speeches, and media messages, we find that:

- The target is clear, not unexpected, but inappropriate (such as the poor).
- Social "movements," like backlash against racial, gender, and other minorities, are addressed as rational responses to unemployment, crime, and other social problems.
- Intolerance messages are simplistic.
- Intolerance messages outnumber and are of greater emotional intensity and emotional appeal than the more rational and accurate messages.

Much of the media message since about 1980, at the onset of economically destructive governmental administrations and (some would argue) at the behest of right-wing politicians, has been angry and intolerant. For example, immediately after the Oklahoma City bombing, the *New York Times*, *The Progressive*, and even *Time Magazine* wrote about the relationship between the media, conservative politicians (particularly Newt Gingrich), and the "militia nation" (Applebome 1995; Weiner 1995; Tierney 1995; Stout 1995; Johnson 1995; Berlet and Lyons 1995; Ross 1995; Vest 1995; Ivins 1995; Kramer 1995). Mainstream politics and the privately-owned media express intolerance for social diversity, multiculturalism, environmentalism, and related issues of fairness, liberalism, and progressivism. Hence I am calling right-wing political figures and the privately-owned, profit-oriented, sensation-seeking media "intolerance pushers."

"Rage junkies" are the segment of the public who are angry and whose rage flourishes with the media messages espousing rage, intolerance, hate, cynicism.

U.S. society, probably like all societies, has always had rage junkies. These are people who may be angry for personally- and socially-defined failures. While rage to some degree is a constant,

With the help of the intolerance pushers, we are distracted from our real problems like corporate greed

there may be a recent enlargement in the proportion of rage-filled people in the U.S., corresponding with the diminished capacity for workers to merely "get by." There are not enough jobs. People who had middle class jobs have become homeless. Imprisonment has increased, with economic and familial consequences. People have lost farms, health care, and pride.

Angry people blame the traditional scapegoats: racial and ethnic minorities, women, legal and illegal immigrants, and the convicted. According to Alternative Radio (a form of public radio), the folks who listen to Rush Limbaugh are primarily white males, aged 18-34, who are working full time but making little

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money, and who have no high school education or only a high school education. They do not blame the true source of their woes, but rather a target that is customary and manageable.

Thus, the state of California passes legislation against giving health care to migrant Mexicans. We see reversals of affirmative action policies for education and employment. We see the three-strikes-you're-out law, a law which mandates that people convicted of three crimes (not necessarily violent crimes) will be imprisoned for life. We see longer prison sentences for crack users (poor African American males) than for cocaine users (upper middle class white people). These messages speak to anger, unfairness, and irrationality.

Rage and the Media The U.S. media influence the definition of reality for most U.S. citizens. Though ultimately, the source of social rage and intolerance is the top stratum controlling the bulk of the nation's financial resources, the media have picked up the scent of rage, from politicians, sometimes directly representing corporations, and have served as channel for this rage.

People in the U.S. watch a lot of TV, not public TV, including "true crime" stories that give a horribly distorted view of crime and our vulnerability to crime (Cavender and Bond-Maupin 1993). We know from Douglas (1997) and Stossel (1997) that heavy viewers of TV, particularly viewers of news and crime shows, are not only unreasonably fearful but advocate the death penalty, lengthy prison sentences, and increased prison construction. This desire for harsher responses to crime is especially pronounced when the offenders are non-white (see Kurtz 1997 on distortions in TV presentation of race and crime).

Rage has its rewards. Sensation sells. Outrageousness sells. Ratings skyrocket and newspapers sell when crime is in the news. The news does not have to be factual; indeed, it's better if it is not. Witness the Pulitzer Prize being awarded to a newspaper that spread outrageous falsehoods about the Willie Horton case (Anderson 1995). We see G. Gordon Liddy, who instructed his radio listeners to shoot federal agents in the groin, receive a prize from his fellow broadcasters.

In sum, many privately-owned radio talk shows and TV programs sensationalize and simplify social problems. These sources of information have greater reach and impact than the more rational public media. With the prevalence of inaccurate and conservative messages, there appears to be a massive shift to the far right even among the formerly mainstream. The "mainstream" has become difficult to distinguish from the extremists.

Politics and Media: Close-Up Willie Horton, made notorious in the 1988 U.S. presidential campaign, had committed robbery and rape while on a prison furlough. As the readers are aware, in the past decade or so, political contenders battle over who is the toughest on crime. Michael Dukakis lost the election largely because (a) he was governor of the state where Horton was a prisoner and temporarily released and (b) he refused to say that all prison furloughs are a bad idea. The issue was leniency versus toughness on crime and the U.S. media had a field day.

Crime is always a hot topic during elections, but is of intense interest to the public and the media at all times. Reacting to

political needs, media spreads the word that crime is increasing by leaps and bounds and that the public should be very fearful of crime. In fact, crime, including violent crime, has declined in the past few years. Gory stories about crime heighten the fear of crime and the perceived need for protection. In the Bush campaign's demonization of Willie Horton and therefore Michael Dukakis, the media aided by dredging up Horton's previous criminal career. In 1974, Horton was convicted of killing a gas station attendant. A newspaper printed an erroneous, but particularly gruesome sexual tidbit about Horton's behavior during the commission of this crime. This detail was repeated often and published elsewhere (for instance the *Readers Digest*). Eighteen years later, in 1992, Rush Limbaugh told this same false story, as true, to his radio show listeners.

Besides downright lies, there are also not-so-subtle innuendoes, for example, the assumption that O.J. Simpson is guilty, as seen in the televised prosecution, media speculation, and media predictions about a guilty verdict. People were shocked and angry when the October 1995 acquittal did not match what had become media "reality." Besides media sensationalism, racist backlash may explain the anger over the O.J. verdict. Not only do some of the U.S. populace believe that most crime is committed by African Americans and that most African Americans are criminals, there has been a strong backlash against equalizing practices and policies, such as affirmative action. The acquittal was said, by those who felt that O.J. was guilty, to be a result of reverse discrimination. Because O.J. is African American and some of the jury members are African American, the jury voted to acquit as a way of "protecting their own." Interestingly, when whites are found innocent by a jury of their white peers, they are assumed to be actually innocent.

Moreover, as criminologists, we know that there are no advantages to being non-white in the criminal justice process. African American men and women are more likely to be arrested, convicted, and receive harsh sentences than white men and women. African American men are more likely to receive the death penalty than white men accused of the same acts.

The Wages of Rage: Effects of media messages about rage and intolerance are socially destructive.

- Rage and intolerance stifle debate and prevent discourse.
- Rage and intolerance incite very harsh, extreme behavior such as the Oklahoma City bombing.
- Elections are won when politicians out-rage each other, for example, about who can be the toughest on crime.
- Changes in policy influenced by moral crusades and panics are very costly, distract from *real* social problems, and are ineffective (as illustrated by the three-strikes law and mandatory minimum sentences for certain offenses). The U.S. has experienced greatly expanded prison construction, an increase in taxes spent on crime control, but no reduction in crime. Currently, one out of every 200 people in the U.S. population are in state and federal prisons and we execute more than any nation. Social scientists have discovered that harsh responses to crime have the effect of increasing crime.

The public does not seem to know this. I am puzzled why people do not want to know "the facts" given how much they complain

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about taxes and given how much of their tax dollars go to ineffective crime control efforts.

The public has been trained to want simple explanations and plenty of emotion. They do not want to hear that people, notably the socially disadvantaged, view life chances differently than they do. Al Blumstein (1995) says that middle class people believe that all people (including impoverished ghetto dwellers with an entirely different set of past experiences and future expectations) think the same way that they (the middle class) do. Hence, everybody should be deterred by the prospect of going to prison. Everybody should be even more deterred from committing crime by the prospect of life imprisonment.

In short, false and emotionally-charged media and political messages do not make matters better for society. It is now well-documented, for instance, that the mandatory minimum sentence,

I am puzzled why people do not want to know "the facts" given how much they complain about taxes and given how much of their tax dollars go to ineffective crime control efforts

especially as it is exercised against nondangerous drug offenders, is not only very costly but forces the release of dangerous offenders (rapists, murderers, robbers) from prison.

Rage, in the form of retribution, is not even therapeutic. Murder victims' families do not feel better or even satisfied when the condemned are executed (Verhovek 1997). One of the strongest conclusions from an analysis of "expressive justice" is that people do not feel better when they vent rage and intolerance, although they expected that they would (Anderson 1995). One might think that when people see "justice done," when policies change to get rid of health care for immigrants, reduce job opportunities for minorities, and offenders are put away for life, the rageful and intolerant would experience a sense of relief. I see no evidence that they do.

As the Smashing Pumpkins say, "Despite all my rage, I am still just a rat in a cage."

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The Azimuth of Our Youth

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Although it is true that no two humans know the exact same things, often they do share a great deal of common knowledge. To a large extent this common knowledge, or collective memory, allows people to communicate, to work and live together. The importance of this information is beyond question. This shared information should be the foundation of our public discourse. Only a small fraction of what we read and hear about multiculturalism gains a secure place in our culturally literate memory shelves. Understanding the history of multicultural diversity is essential to understanding ourselves, as well as others. This statement is no longer a matter of debate, yet it remains neglected. The task of understanding the history of multicultural diversity is like reading a map; it improves immensely once the light is turned on and we know where we are, so we can contemplate where we may want to go, individually and as a society.

The acid test of any educational ideal is its usefulness. Cultural literacy is a necessary, but not sufficient, attainment of an educated person, because it is ongoing and sometimes distorted in day-to-day living. Cultural literacy is considered superficial, while true education is considered deep. My analysis and learning, through various lectures, reading, and critical contemplation suggests the paradox that broad superficial knowledge is the best route to a true understanding of multiculturalism. Broad knowledge enables us to read and hear effectively; it is the best guarantee that we will continue to read, learn, and grow deepening our understanding. True literacy always opens doors not just to knowledge and economic success but also to a closer understanding of the many cultures of our America. Nevertheless, there is a certain irony connected to the female Statute of Liberty that exemplifies our *America* and the immigration process. Especially when it oddly coincides with the initiation of arbitrary legal restrictions, from our good old boys' criminal justice system, and the tolerance of prejudice and/or economic discrimination that greatly interferes with an immigrant's pursuit of the *American Dream*. The many experiences of earlier immigrants have become a searing part of our nation's collective historical memory that time cannot eradicate or rectify. Immigration to America has been allowed to continue and sometimes it is in a sad and deplorable attempt to obliterate prior mistakes. It has become a decadent process that eventually all cultures within America, regardless of gender or ethnicity, will come to regret just from the economic hardships incurred for starters. For the many cultures now within America, the *American Dream* is not automatically or easily attainable. America has developed into a bureaucratic and pecuniary machine that spits.

Multicultural literacy is difficult to achieve in a land that concocts dreams and heroes, and attempts to destroy, hide or rewrite the truth. In the middle of the Nevada desert, most

military survival training involves knowing what is around you, in order to figure out where you are. The process of using a compass to shoot two unknown azimuths to find coordinates that you could plot and cross to find your place on a map is a simple technique to employ, *if* you have landmarks. In our society where are the landmarks?

Our society has a degenerative process that somehow has succeeded in rewriting or revamping America's history. Through this process, our educational media turns flesh-and-bone individuals into whatever they may want them to be. The real person or event is never really portrayed; just the enigma surrounding the person or event. The *whole truth and nothing but the truth* is not told; only parts of a tale or story that seem to be self-serving and/or based on the perception of what seems to serve purpose for the typical prototype of our society's ideals. Ironically, the truth *per se*, in historical accounts changes, depending on the purpose, time, situation or circumstance at hand. The criminal justice system is overburdened with juvenile delinquency and we wonder why. Some of our multicultural youths develop and/or harbor feelings of inadequacy and seem to be lacking in self esteem or direction because the enigma presented to them as fact is not attainable. When analyzed by Jung, all the heroes of myth and history turn out to have many similar patterns of thought and action. We like to believe in our heroes, despite the harm that sometimes surrounds that belief. We all seem to enjoy the mystique of a hero.

Consider Columbus, who is one of only two people the United States honors by name in a national holiday. Columbus, who is presented in American grade schools to all youths as their first great hero. Columbus, who invented slavery almost as soon as he got off the boat, and practiced violent barbaric methods with such zeal for the purpose of personal success and gain. The Great Navigator, this *selfless* man, who was canonized by *his* discovery of America. . . as we simply ignore or remain ignorant of the savage exploitation of the twenty or more million multicultural natives. *Discovery?*

I wonder how many people cringed in 1989, when President Bush invoked Columbus as a role model for this nation citing: "Christopher Columbus not only opened the door to a New

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The process of using a compass to shoot two unknown azimuths to find coordinates that you could plot and cross to find your place on a map is a simple technique to employ, *if* you have landmarks. In our society where are the landmarks?

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World, but also set an example for us all by showing what monumental feats can be accomplished through perseverance and faith?" Oh yes, his feats were monumental. The worshipful biographical vignettes of Columbus serve to indoctrinate all children and adults of our society into a mindless endorsement of him and his remarkable deeds, minus the dirty exploitation and the heartless acts against people from another culture. Columbus epitomizes the myth of heroism; he receives recognition for everything but the acts of destruction.

And then there is Martin Luther King, Jr., the second individual the United States honors by name in a national holiday, (that ironically, few recognize). King, who is presented in grade school to all cultures in passing and known most for partial accounts of his "I Have a Dream" speech. The negative comments about the government of Alabama and Mississippi in King's "I Have a Dream" speech are curiously censored out, as well as the reprehensible basis for the comments. King, who stood for the principles of civil rights, humanity, and equality for all, while historians chronicled the rise of racism that existed at all levels of our society and is now, veiled. The media has been manipulated in an attempt to destroy King's image by releasing dissenting information about his life, whose sole source was the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) documentation and tapes. No account tells of J. Edgar Hoover, a white supremacist who controlled the FBI and attempted to destroy Martin Luther King, Jr., by claiming he was "the most notorious liar in the country." No account in history discloses the *closets* of J. Edgar Hoover. Martin Luther King, Jr., who was honored by the Nobel Peace Prize, is not noted as the first major leader who dared to speak against the war in Vietnam before it became *politically* correct, like Robert Kennedy.

Martin Luther King, Jr. is truly *not* recognized. The irony that exists in the contrast between these two honored individuals the United States chose is fascinating and pathetic. How can we achieve multicultural literacy, with less youths feeling inadequate and viably decrease the juvenile delinquency rate, when formulated propaganda and imagined heroes survive as history in the books they *have to* read?

Where are the landmarks of our society when our educational media turns flesh-and-bone individuals into pious, perfect creatures without conflicts, pain, credibility, or human interest at a whim? No textbook tells of the dissent of Muhammad Ali, who was then the heavyweight boxing champion of the world, when he refused induction into the military for which his title was stripped from him. No one is informed that he said, "No Viet Cong ever called me nigger." It is yet to be proclaimed that this man's actions were ethical. This man was dragged through our legal system and suffered undeserved humiliation for his standing. And what about the ideological meaning history has ascribed to Thanksgiving? What *is* the reality of the Pilgrims that society glorifies in print? Do we dare tell?

The truth of issues in every era could only help our youths grow into more thoughtful and understanding human beings. Perhaps it would enable a greater tolerance toward others, rather than the present ethnocentric behavior we witness today in society. We are taught history repeats itself, and the formula to

ensure a change, we are told, is in learning it. The very reason we profess to teach history seems to be imperiously undermined by those of us who have the power to do so.

We know we all make mistakes in our lives; we stumble and fail. We all deal with feelings of inadequacy and/or lack direction at one point or another. Everyone has faults and *no one person* is perfect in every way, no matter what culture you, or they, originate from. The ability to understand and accept the faults and differences in others hones the ability to understand and accept faults and differences of your own. Reinforcing any myth that creates status is pedantic sabotage of our multicultural youths and their eventual well-being in this world. Does society realize that understanding historical cultural diversity is essential to understanding ourselves, as well as others? This is especially true in America where eventually everyone, regardless of your native culture, grows accustomed to the flux of media sensationalism. . . Andy Warhol's fifteen minutes.' America, where selective fact and fiction augment the blur of reality and draws no line for whatever makes good copy. Our America and its many cultures of people; "Oh say, can you see?"

The conditioned concept of reality in society on this present course will not allow us to accept the multicultural diversity and achieve harmony within ourselves, much less others. Some fear the truth, so the landmarks on our map are hidden. As a society, we can not attain an informed understanding of cultural diversity or a true understanding of ourselves because we are lacking in the necessary broad superficial knowledge. The significance of this information is beyond question for the survival and well-being of our multicultural society in America. Clearly, we must strive toward an understanding of ourselves so we can understand others at the very least, for the sake of our youth. I wonder *if* an informed understanding might become a reality. I wonder *if* we can allow the recognition of real truths in an aspiration to create a needed acceptance for the faults of others and ourselves.

The reality is *no one person* has reached perfection in every sense of the word, regardless of their race and the continuous exposure to historical Anglo-Saxon accounts. The optimistic view is that most of us just try to 'do the right thing.' It is possible just trying and telling the truth of historical accounts could make the difference individually and as a society. Given the opportunity, when our youth are out there alone looking to shoot their compass toward two unknown azimuths for eventual coordinates, they may actually see those landmarks that can be intersected. They may be able to find themselves, know who they are, and where they are going on the map in this world and realize: by God, *I really am okay*. They just might find their mark in this America without the dream and in spite of the spit precipitated from the attempts of mechanical control of bureaucracies and the economically advantaged who destroy, hide or rewrite the truth to suit their own needs.

* Robbin would like to thank her Professor, Mark Lanier, for his helpful editorial advice.

Will Work for Food...

While critical criminologists have several available venues for keeping current with new writing about criminology, there are fewer sources for staying current with other critical writings. Especially important is an understanding of academia and the changes that affect people's ability to teach from radical or deeply critical perspectives.

Cary Nelson is the author of two recent and notable books. The first is *Manifesto of a Tenured Radical* (New York University Press, 1997). Of this work, Andrew Ross writes: "Armed with a keen conscience and a fearless wit, Cary Nelson exposes the moral bankruptcy that underpins the current crisis of academic labor. From underpaid cafeteria workers and unemployed Ph.D.s to overindulged professors and CEO-wannabe university presidents, Nelson's groves of academe are littered with inequality and injustice."

The second book is an edited collection of essays entitled *Will Work for Food: Academic Labor in Crisis* (University of Minnesota Press, 1997). Unfortunately, we did not have a review at publication but maybe the information here will stimulate some follow-up.

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RESEARCH DEFINITIONS

The following phrases, frequently found in technical writings are adapted from 'A glossary for research reports', by C. D. Graham, Jr., which appeared in *Metal Progress*, Vol. 71, No. 5, 1957. Graham had evidently read too many scientific papers by the time he composed this clever compilation.

PHRASE	DEFINITION
"it has long been known..."	<i>I haven't bothered to look up the original reference</i>
"Of great theoretical and practical importance..."	<i>Interesting to me.</i>
"While it has not been possible to provide definite answers to these questions..."	<i>The experiment didn't work out, but I wanted to publish anyway.</i>
"Three of the samples were chosen for detailed study."	<i>The results on the others didn't make sense and were ignored.</i>
"Typical results are shown"	<i>The best results are shown.</i>

"The most reliable data are those Jones..."

Jones was a student of mine.

Agreement with the predicted curve is

"...excellent"	<i>Fair.</i>
"...good."	<i>Poor.</i>
"...satisfactory"	<i>Doubtful.</i>
"...fair."	<i>Imaginary.</i>

"It is believed that..."

I think...

"It is generally believed that..."

A couple of other guys think so too.

"It might be argued that..."

I have such a good answer for this objection that I shall now raise it.

"...much additional work will be required for a complete understanding of..."

I didn't understand it.

"Thanks to Joe Glotz for assistance with the experiment, and to John Doe for valuable discussions."

Glotz did the work and Doe explained what it meant to me.

THE REVENGE OF THE NULL HYPOTHESIS: EVALUATING CRIME CONTROL POLICIES

Stanley Cohen

London School of Economics

In November 1994, I was invited to participate in a Plenary Session "Challenges of Crime and Social Control," at the American Society of Criminology Meeting in Miami. I was expected to talk "theory." And my first inclination was to remain on my familiar territory of theoretical issues in the field of punishment and social control. I started making a list of such issues: developments in post-Foucault theorizing; the debate about net-widening; the contributions of feminism; Garland's thesis about the relationship between punishment and social structure; the claim that a "new penology" has emerged, with distinctive forms of post-modern penalties and modes of governance, etc.,.

These are all interesting and important subjects (besides being my bread and butter work). But it seemed too easy to accept this script. This only perpetuates the ghettoization of "theory" into a separate universe of discussion. The problem is why this discourse so seldom overlaps with the bread and butter of mainstream criminology. Why can we easily go along our separate routes, meeting only at ritual occasions like annual meetings? I decided to make my life harder and not to internalize the theory label. Instead, I started looking more closely at recent policy-oriented research on punishment and social control. What were the folks in Research City up to? What's happening in Empirical Ville? What's news in Time Series Analysis County?

As I visit these places, I will take, alongside my theoretical baggage, some ideas from a quite different project that I've been working on for the past two years. ⁽¹⁾ This comes from the human rights field, an even longer way from criminology. This is an empirical study of how organizations like Amnesty International communicate their information and appeals about human rights violations. These messages attempt to overcome barriers of denial ("it isn't happening"), apathy ("why should I care?") and powerlessness ("what can be done?"). This means thinking about the sociology of denial: what do we do with knowledge that we find too uncomfortable to acknowledge - whether about homelessness in our own cities or the distant atrocities of Rwanda and Bosnia?

To make my task manageable, my focus will be on the enterprise of evaluation. My question (to self-plagiarize the title of something else I wrote on this subject) will be: "If nothing works, what is our work?"⁽²⁾ My reading of the evaluative literature is that the "nothing works" slogan remains a dominant theme. What are the theoretical responses to evaluative strategies which keep leading in this direction?

I start with two examples of recent attempts to evaluate and formulate control strategies for two particular forms of criminal and socially problematic behavior. First, there is Laurence Sherman's recent research on *Policing Domestic Violence*, or rather, a comment on the study in a review by Joan McCord.

Second, there is H. Laurence Ross's book on *Drunken Driving*.

Here is an extract from Joan McCord's comment on Sherman's analysis of research in six cities that randomly allocated arrests with other responses to domestic violence:

"As compared with the various alternatives (e.g. warning, counseling, mediation, protection order), those arrested were less likely to commit subsequent domestic violence in three cities, and those arrested were more likely to have done so in three cities. After the fact, Sherman tries to figure out the conditions under which arrest deters violence. Yet the distribution of results could equally be interpreted as showing that arrests and recidivism for domestic violence are randomly related. If among three pennies flipped, three landed heads up and three tails up, a reasonable conclusion would be that the distribution was random. Post hoc examination could easily find some description identifying the three with head up that distinguish them from the others. The descriptions would not, however, be evidence that non-random forces had influenced the outcome."⁽³⁾

To either the consumer of criminological research (such as the average politician or voter) or the bemused "theorist" this conclusion is a little opaque. Does it mean that arresting offenders who commit domestic violence is a good idea or a bad idea? In the utilitarian sense of "good" and "bad," (effectiveness, what works) the answer seems to be: we can't tell, we don't know. The policy works in three cities; it doesn't work in another three. But does this also mean that "we'll never know" or (more radically) that "it doesn't matter whether we know or will ever know?"

Let me sort out four standard lines of response to this perplexing conclusion:

(1) **Methodological** This asserts that the null hypothesis is an artifact of the research methodology in question. *This* study could not discriminate - but in the future, with more sophisticated methods, we'll know the truth. As a stranger from Planet Theory, I am not qualified to assess this response. Intuitively, it seems to me unlikely that any innovations in statistical techniques will produce clearer findings as long as the same evaluative logic is employed.⁽⁴⁾

(2) **Policy** To the extent that any policy prescription follows from McCord's type of conclusion, it might go something like this: Everything appears to work as well (or badly) as everything else because results are determined by random factors beyond our control. So we can do more or less what we like - or what can afford or think to be politically expedient. This response is obviously unhelpful: it gives no criteria for making choices nor indicates what level of randomness society can tolerate in the allocation of scarce resources.

(3) **Causal** By "causal," I mean the theoretically more interesting response of trying to discover *why* variants of the randomness or "nothing works" results keep turning up. This

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response assumes that a measure of randomness is inevitable, in the sense that forms of punishment and social control are not determined (and never will be) by what works. Their driving force lies elsewhere: In dominant theoretical paradigms, organizational and bureaucratic interests, ideological forces, demands of the political economy, spirals of disciplinary knowledge and power, symbolic political responses to populist pressures ...or whatever.⁽⁵⁾

This direction remains interesting because theorists have not yet resolved the simplest explanatory question of all: how do changes in penal and social control strategies take place?. Does the massive current rise in imprisonment, for example, derive from liberal fixed sentencing reforms gone wrong or is this a response to punitive political currents quite independent of "Just Deserts" thinking?

The theoretical task here - whether looking at micro-policy (such as intervention in domestic violence or determinate sentencing reform) or macro-historical changes in the whole system - is to be much clearer about the relationship between on the one hand ideas (theory, ideology, intentions, ideology), that is "knowledge" and, on the other, policy (practice, implementation), that is, "power." There has been an unfortunate tendency for the cruder idealistic models of this connection (scientific knowledge leads to appropriate policy) to give way to an equally crude post-modernist epistemological relativism in which not only don't we know what is happening, but we never can because our ways of knowing are irredeemably tainted by the exercise of power.

The best reply to this post-modern orthodoxy lies in Foucault's sardonic comment about never having claimed that knowledge and power were the same. If they were, he would have wasted his entire intellectual life trying to explain the relationship between them. Far from blurring the distinction or saying that it is unimportant (as current administrative criminology has done by its anti-theoretical posturings) we have to be very clear about the distinction between *knowledge* (our cognitive categorization about the nature of a problem - like domestic violence) and *power* (the particular policy being advocated, criticized or evaluated - for example, arresting offenders).

(4) **Normative** Another quite different set of questions may be posed about the apparent ineffectiveness or randomness of the system. This suggests that the non-utilitarianism revealed by further confirmations of the null hypothesis is, in some sense, to be welcomed. We should, in fact, abandon the criterion of "what works." This, of course, is the basis of all non-utilitarian philosophies of punishment, most notably, variants of the just deserts model. Curiously - because this model in general and von Hirsch in particular are objects of his bitter criticism - abolitionist thinkers like Nils Christie, share the same anti-utilitarian thinking. In his powerful recent book, *Crime Control as Industry*, Christie argues that systems of crime control will expand indefinitely and without limit as long as they are only informed by the stated rationale of effectiveness.

This is a case, however, for normative limits (such as "reducing pain"). It does not make "what works?" an illegitimate question. So I would look for a fifth direction. This is not to abandon evaluation, but to think of a logic of evaluation which is

more sensitive to social problems such as crime than the language of "random" and "non-random" forces. I would argue that we need to make explicit our own criteria for claiming either success or failure - and explain clearly how such criteria are different from those used by others or produced by flipping pennies.

I cannot chart this alternative in detail. It seems to me very strange, however, that nothing in the theoretical upheavals in criminology over the last thirty years (whether from radicals, conservatives, or managerialists) has made any advance on the crude logic of the traditional evaluative strategy. Why indeed does the old experimental group/control group model keep producing further, yet more sophisticated variations on the "nothing works" theme? How do we explain the revenge of the null hypothesis - and our societies' insistent preference for

The causes of crime and punishment are too threatening to acknowledge, so we fall back into familiar academic strategies. But this is a tragedy - to be talked about in human terms rather than the phony operating criteria (which we know to be phony) of the very system that is the source

continuing with exactly the same policies that created the crime problem, despite repeated confirmation of this hypothesis?

To show that my plea for an alternative evaluative strategy is not merely rhetorical, let me refer to my second text, Laurence Ross's recent book, *Confronting Drunk Driving*.

Most of the text takes the conventional evaluative route: the subject of controlling and deterring drunk driving has been well researched, there are some reliable and strong data. The bottom line is that severity of punishment (mandatory and/or longer prison sentences) is generally ineffective, though perception of certainty is more likely to work. But Ross takes two further directions. I am not saying that either is new,⁽⁶⁾ nor making the absurd claim that other criminologists (including those I've quoted) have not thought of them. My point is rather that these are directions to pursue even further and more generally.

The first, is the clarity of his value position about evaluation. The words "value" and "evaluation" sound, after all, rather similar. This is not a technical discourse - random and non-random forces, null hypotheses and control groups - that leads in the mind-numbing direction of flipping coins. This is book

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about saving lives. Ross is not content with just reporting findings:

"As someone who views the world as a fundamentally tragic place, I was distressed to see purported humanitarians adding to the amount of pain and suffering experienced by humanity with the claimed but questionable justification of deterrent accomplishments."⁽⁷⁾

This means that every social control policy implemented or suggested (longer sentences, license revocation, lowering speed limit, raising minimum age for driving license etc.) must be judged by the evaluative and value criterion of saving lives. The questions of pain, suffering and saving lives are pretty obvious in the case of drunk driving. But they are surely just as obvious for most forms of serious crime (including, of course, domestic violence). The broader lesson I want to extrapolate here is the need to find humanistic criteria of evaluation (what constitutes success or failure) which are not necessarily or primarily those of the criminal justice system.

For me personally, the best source to find these is the universal discourse of human rights - whether in conceptualizing the right to be free from fear of crime, the rights of victims or the rights of offenders or the wider conditions for achieving social justice. "Evaluation" is not a technical juggling between sizes of samples, but a theoretical and moral juggling between these competing and often incompatible objectives. A good evaluation study does not invite flipping coins, but a review of political priorities.

The familiar facts about the American crime problem and the systemic inability of a limitlessly expanding control system to do anything about this problem cannot be "evaluated" by accepting the system's own pretence to be utilitarian. Indeed, as Garland points out, the system itself has abandoned most such pretences.⁽⁸⁾ The crisis of penal modernism lies precisely in this lowering of expectations. Even at the risk of undermining its own myth of sovereignty, the state no longer pretends that it has the knowledge or technology to solve the crime problem. Therefore the ideologies of risk management, devolution to the private sector, security as a purchasable commodity rather a guarantee by the state, citizen involvement, displacement of responsibility to the victim etc.

The familiar facts appear regularly in *Time* and *Newsweek* - the appallingly high rate of imprisonment; the \$25 billion a year spend on the prison system; the often-cited statistics about the 45% - 50% chances of black males aged 18-35 from certain areas to be somewhere in the correctional system etc. To characterize the system as now being "irrational" and "out of control" are not terms from radical rhetoric, but from sober mainstream criminologists.⁽⁹⁾

We know all this. But our professional discourse allows us to slip into a state of denial: we act as if we don't know. The causes of crime and punishment are too threatening to acknowledge, so we fall back into familiar academic strategies. But this is a tragedy - to be talked about in human terms, not in terms of the phony operating criteria (which we know to be phony) of the very system that is the source of the tragedy.

This leads me to a second direction suggested by Ross's book. He shows - and again, this is nothing new, just an application of sociological truisms - that the dominant paradigm for understanding drunk driving ("knowledge claims") is mistaken. The causes of drunk driving lie not in a few dangerous individuals, but are deeply rooted in American social institutions, dominantly in alcohol policy and transportation policy. Drunken driving is a predictable product of the conjunction between these two institutions: a near total commitment to the private transportation (meaning inadequate public transportation) and a positive encouragement of drinking as normative.

His hard headed "evaluation" of criminal justice measures leads not to statistical games but to a challenge to all coercive measures of control. Policies other than those based on criminal justice system *can* be effective in reducing deaths and injuries caused by drunk driving. He details two sets of counter measures: those based on transportation policy (subsidies, discouraging youthful driving etc.) and those based on alcohol policy (reducing consumption, reducing availability, increasing price and tax etc)

Some methods based on conventional deterrent strategy (random breath testing, increasing public perception of risks of being caught etc.) are effective, if costly. But the main policy routes are those that challenge dominant social institutions and vested interests, notably the automobile and alcohol industries.

It would be tendentious to go through the long tradition of sociological criminology which has argued the equivalent for virtually all forms of crime. The notion that social policies that confront racial discrimination, inequality, unemployment, educational waste, urban decay and family stress have somehow been tried and failed the test of random allocation by control group/experimental groups, seems to me one of the most bizarre forms of intellectual amnesia imaginable. Most forms of historical denial that I have been studying - like the Turkish denial of genocide of Armenians or the Holocaust denial movement - claim that what did happen, really didn't happen. But criminologists and social policy analysts claim that what did not happen - a serious attempt to ameliorate the corrosive damages of the free-market - really did happen.⁽¹⁰⁾

Despite childish cliched references to a few studies of *Project Head Start* or *War on Poverty* programs, not only has this type of intervention not been properly evaluated, but it never could be - because it never happened. This is a phantom history. No wonder the null hypothesis comes back to haunt the minor manipulations of a few selected variables which have little to do with the main determinants of these entrenched social problems. The spell was cast by James Q. Wilson's incantation: that because we cannot deal with root causes (cannot, that is, without changing political priorities), we should intervene only where intervention is possible. The result is an Orwellian rewriting of the history of the Sixties as failed social reform and the adoption of methodological strategies that deliberately bypass the awkward questions.¹¹ Mainstream empirical/policy discourse has simply colluded in the mass denial of what everyone knows to be true: that solving the crime problem on the terrain of the criminal justice system not only cannot "work," but perpetuates the problem. And by concentrating our evaluative energy on "what works?" we collude in the strategies of denial employed by

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political elites, vested interests and the public. The result is "democratic" or more accurately "populist" crime control: longer prison sentences, death penalty, bootcamps, three strikes and you're out ...or whatever.

The more obvious becomes the connections between "turbo-charged capitalism"⁽¹²⁾(the deliberate creation of an insecure, economically useless and segregated underclass), more punitiveness and more crime, so are criminologists more likely to ignore these connections - and repeat their disembodied evaluation studies. The more sophisticated the research, the more sweet will be the revenge of the null hypothesis. Take a current example. Using the most intricate methodology imaginable, Doris Layton Mackenzie and her colleagues compared recidivism rates among "boot camp completers" in eight separate states.⁽¹³⁾ The results ? Those who complete boot camps do not inevitably

Instead of wondering why we are not taken seriously for showing that the results of criminal justice interventions are as random as throwing coins, we should rather not be taken seriously for repeating - like the court jesters society thankfully licenses academics to be - truths about why the causes and control of crime have so little to do with the criminal justice

perform either better or worse than their comparison group counterparts. In some comparisons in some states, camp completers had fewer arrests; in some there were no differences. In other states, some comparisons showed that camp completers had more arrests than controls. The authors' comment on a Table entitled "Estimated Percentage Recidivating at End of Observation Period (12 or 24 Months) for Samples from Eight States from the Analysis Controlling for Sample Difference" seems to be literal rather ironical : "The most striking pattern in Table 6 is the absence of a clear pattern."⁽¹⁴⁾

I am not arguing that this sort of research should not be done. Popperian falsifiability must remain a criteria for any informed social policy choice. The problem is that policies are not subject to any true "evaluation"; there is no political sense of where they come from. Evaluation means drawing some lessons from the

insatiable demand for tougher punishments, such as boot camps, whatever their "effects." There is the lesson, for example, applied by Nils Christie to the entire crime control industry: that there are no limits to punishment if it does not adversely affect the majority. We will never stop the criminal justice system from expanding as long as we continue this misplaced populism.

But we want it both ways. To repeat the evaluative strategy which discovers that "nothing works" *and* to claim that what we suggested either didn't get implemented properly or that "they" don't listen to us. If we are to continue this litany of self pitying kitsch ("no one takes us seriously," "we don't get enough money for research") then we might as well get it right. Instead of wondering why we are not taken seriously for showing that the results of criminal justice interventions are as random as throwing coins, we should rather not be taken seriously for repeating - like the court jesters society thankfully licenses academics to be - the old truths about why the causes and control of crime have so little to do with the criminal justice system.

As John Braithwaite argues, the type of decontextualized positivism that criminology has settled for almost inevitably leads to a policy analysis of despair about the intractability of the crime problem.⁽¹⁵⁾ "Nothing Works" is not an empirically established fact, but an artifact of the particular structure and tradition of reasoning. This nihilism - intervention works in 3 cities, but does not in 3 others; these 1000 prisoners improve by 20% after treatment X, but no treatment also results in a 20% improvement - is predictable. Why should political leaders or the public pay much attention to these findings ?

What we need instead is the type of "integrated policy packages" that Braithwaite calls for. These packages are sensitive to history and context. They contain not just disembodied statistics, but some sense of overall social control interventions which are themselves long-term (not one arrest, not one drug program) and evaluated in a stream of historical time (not years, but decades). At the same time: "The long term reformer should not be discouraged by nihilistic positivists who summarize short term evaluation literature with the conclusion that most of these things make no difference most of the time."⁽¹⁶⁾

What Braithwaite means by "context," is the provision of rich, detailed descriptions of the social control strategies - using history, ethnography, cross-societal comparisons and using theory. (As he says, the *more* general the theory is - that is, at first sight, the more useless it is - the more it should merit attention by policy makers and evaluators). Standard short-term quantitative evaluations are not at all redundant - but they should be placed into this context.

Braithwaite distinguishes between three circles of criminologists. The first, tiny, group generates general causal theories; the second, much larger, group tests the models developed by the first - and endlessly, repetitively, discover them to be mostly not true; the third group, critical theorists, without offering much in the way of an alternative - endlessly and repetitively criticize the first two for bothering with their whole enterprise.

I am labeled as belonging to this third group - and I guess that I have a vested interest in perpetuating this division of labor. But far from dismissing the evaluative enterprise as unimportant, I want to offer an alternative which restores its importance, which

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allows for what Braithwaite calls "a more productive culture of evaluation." Evaluation is too important to be left to professional evaluators.

In conclusion, the term "realism" needs some decoding. The supposed hard headed pragmatism (effects, results, cost-benefit analysis, performance indicators, rational choice) that is supposed to inform the new penology is little more than what C. Wright Mills called fifty year ago, "crackpot realism."

Now looks to me the time to go back to some crackpot theory and crackpot idealism.

Theory: to understand how criminology has come to deny its own knowledge and to explain why this knowledge has *not* (as the radical intellectual avant-garde would have us believe) become implicated in the exercise of power, but become so utterly disembodied from the political power that is driving crime control systems literally out of control.

Idealism: to restore the humane values that allow us to determine what would count as "success" or "failure" without accepting the evaluative criteria generated by criminal justice bureaucrats or research funding institutions.

FOOTNOTES

1. Now published as *Denial and Acknowledgement: The Impact of Information about Human Rights Violations* (Center for Human Rights, Hebrew University: 1995).

2. "Postscript: If Nothing Works, What is Our Work ?" *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 27 (1994), 104-07.

3. Joan McCord, Review of Lawrence W. Sherman *Policing Domestic Violence: Experiments and Dilemmas* (Free Press, 1992), in *The Criminologist*, 18 (September/October 1993), p. 15.

4. This also seems to be the view of more sophisticated insiders. Michael Malz, for example, doubts whether standard tests of significance can ever work on current evaluative data. Michael D. Malz, "Deviating from the Mean: The Declining Significance of Significance," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, Vol.31 (November 1994) pp.434-63

5. For an illuminating recent application of such models to understand the evolution of one policy, parole, see Jonathan Simon, *Poor Discipline: Parole and the Social Control of the Underclass, 1890-1990*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

6. For an earlier study of drunk driving that reaches almost identical conclusions, see James B. Jacobs, *Drunk Driving: An American Dilemma* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

7. H. Laurence Ross, *Confronting Drunk Driving: Social Policy for Saving Lives* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p.xiv.

8. David Garland, "The Limits of the Sovereign State: Strategies of Crime Control in Contemporary Society," *British Journal of Criminology*, forthcoming (1996)

9. Alfred Blumstein, "Stability of Punishment: What Happened and What Next ?" in T. Blomberg and S. Cohen (eds) *Punishment and Social Control* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1995)

10. In a related area, race and I.Q., Hernstein and Murray's *The Bell Curve* attempts to write off strategies of social intervention to reduce educational disadvantage as having "not worked."

¹¹ Note the biologist R.C. Lewontin's devastating review of the NHSLS study of sexual practices in the United States. This point is especially relevant: "It is a characteristic of the design of scientific research that exquisite attention is devoted to methodological problems that can be solved, while the pretense is made that the ones that cannot be solved are really nothing to worry about." R.C. Lewontin, "Sex, Lies and Social Science," *New York Review of Books*, XLII, April 20, 1995, p.25

12. Edward Luttwak, "Turbo-Charged Capitalism and its Consequences," *London Review of Books*, Vol.17, November 2, 1995.

13. Doris Layton Mackenzie et al "Boot Camp Prisons and Recidivism in Eight States," *Criminology*, 33 (August 1995), pp.327-357

14. *Ibid*, p. 247

15. John Braithwaite, "Beyond Positivism: Learning from Contextual Integrated Strategies," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 30 (November 1993), pp 383-99.

16. *Ibid*, p. 388



Slash & Frame

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What if criminologists not only wrote books and articles, but made movies? Better yet, what if they made movies about other movies?

The Set-Up

In the early summer of 1994, I had worked my way by airplane and small, stomach-churning boat to Carriacou, a tiny tropical island near Grenada in the southern Caribbean. Though steel drum music and local remixes of U.S. and Grenadian pop songs bounced around the interiors of the island's few mini-buses and cafes, and drifted in the night air, my situation on the island allowed me no direct access to newspapers, television, radio -- or at times, electricity. Washed over by astoundingly beautiful local waters and very good local beer, I found myself decidedly unconcerned with my disconnection from the usual lines of mediated communication. When I returned a week later to Grenada, though, and a 12 inch black and white television inside a guest house room not much bigger, I was immediately confronted with the consequences of my informational isolation on Carriacou. For Grenadian television is saturated with imported U.S. stations and programs, and in the week that I had been gone, these stations and programs had themselves come to be saturated with news of a strange and terrible event. Propped in front of my little screen, I began to catch the contours of the frenzy. Backtracking from reports on a series of incidents now as much as a week old -- and therefore already filtered through thousandsof mediated images and interpretations -- I was at first aware only of a car chase, and "run, O.J., run" chants, but then gradually of murder and murderous accusations. And soon enough, even a little black and white TV 4,000 miles from L.A. was more than enough to suck me into the full force of the mediated hurricane which was the Simpson case.

As I made my way back to Miami, and then on to my home in Denver, the experience was distinctly like getting to a movie a bit late, stumbling to one's seat as the opening scenes are playing, and then trying to pick up the flow of the film. From concourse TVs and airplane newspapers, I had a good general sense of the plot, but was forced to guess at early details which the media by now (no doubt rightly) simply presumed were widely known. Still, if a movie is well-scripted and well-acted, with sufficient plot and character development, it is easily possible to make up for a few missed details and appreciate the film as a whole. And indeed that was the case here. For the O.J. Simpson case was one hell of a well-made television movie.

The Fade In

With the Simpson case, we cross once and for all the postmodern divide, the final representational frontier, the borderlands that once separated criminal justice practices from

media dynamics. From the first the case existed not just as a "media event," as the media themselves described it, but as a media construction, a made-for-television slasher movie serialized day after day, week after week. That is, the internal and external dynamics of the case -- from rolling television chase coverage to television reports on the number of television reporters covering the case, from Marcia Clark's hairstyle(s) and Mark Fuhrman's expletives to the staged drama of Johnnie Cochran's outrage and Simpson's struggle with (his) gloves -- were orchestrated by and played out for the mass media. The various made-for-television Simpson movies and imitation dramas which have subsequently floated to the surface of popular culture are in this sense nothing more than redundant shadows --

With the Simpson case, we cross once and for all the postmodern divide, the final representational frontier, the borderlands that once separated criminal justice practices from media dynamics. From the first the case existed not just as a "media event," as the media themselves described it, but as a media construction, a made-for-television slasher movie serialized day after day, week

shadows of a case which never existed as anything but a made-for-television slasher movie anyway.¹

This, by the way, is only fair. If we believe in the principle of trial by one's peers, then a television movie trial was precisely what Simpson "deserved," for he himself has survived for many years now exclusively as a media construction. O. J. Simpson can today no more exist as a free-standing, unmediated individual than could the Simpson case exist as a criminal justice moment outside a latticework of mediated meaning. Long before the Simpson court/media case, Simpson lived as a private individual less than he starred in "The O. J. Simpson Story" -- a story rewritten with every Hertz commercial and broadcast booth appearance, and rewritten and recast once again in mediated images of courtroom glances, black gloves, and bloodsoaked dresses. Philip K. Dick (1968) once asked, "Do androids dream of electric sheep?" Here we might ask if O.J. Simpson, during his months in jail, dreamed of electric chairs, or on better nights of

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regaining the freedom of an endlessly refined and reconstructed media image.

The Tight Shot

More importantly for the rest of us -- for the paying customers, the steady viewers of this made-for-TV movie, whose gazes apprehended the film scene by scene as our conversations reproduced it moment by moment -- we might ask about the conventions of this and other slasher movies, and the effects of these conventions on our understandings of O.J. and ourselves. To begin this inquiry, we can recall one of the cinematic conventions -- indeed, cinematic cliches -- common to slasher and horror films, from Hitchcock's psychotic shower to Freddy Krueger's clawing hands. This is the tight shot. As tension mounts in a slasher film, with the slasher circling or stalking the victim-to-be, the camera likewise circles and stalks the intended

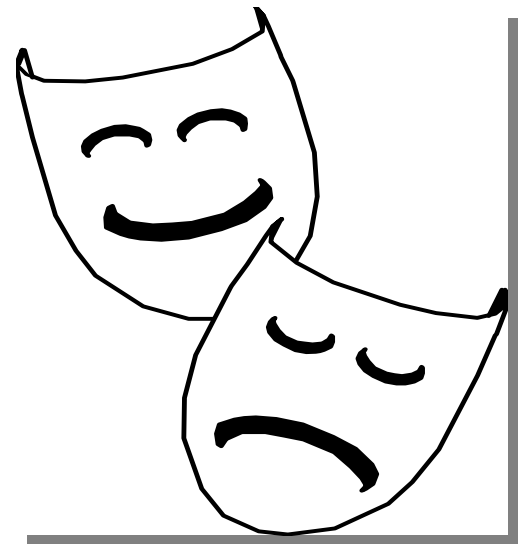
domestic violence were on occasion spun off from the case, little was said about gendered power arrangements which themselves regularly and predictably spin off domestic violence, sexual assault, and murder. Thus, even as viewers were shown in bloody detail the results of straight male violence against women and other men, the tight focus presented this violence not as a systemic (and largely state-sanctioned) social problem, but as a "personal" and episodic aberration (see Messerschmidt, 1993; Caulfield and Wonders, 1993; Barak, 1995). Similarly, coverage of the case revealed in scene after scene particular differentials of power twisted together in deformities of ethnicity and ethnic hatred, social class, and gender. Yet this same coverage did little to unravel and explain these intersections of power, instead leaving them knotted inside individual personas, inside Fuhrman's expletives and Simpson's stylish affluence. And throughout all this, coverage of the case revealed in such lurid detail a criminal justice system predicated on privilege, lubricated

Even as viewers were shown in bloody detail the results of straight male violence against women, the tight focus presented this violence not as a systemic (and largely state-sanctioned) social problem, but as a "personal" and episodic

victim. Framing the victim in tighter and tighter focus, the camera finally obscures our view of the impending menace. While we thus see the victim's anguished apprehension (or, in other cases, momentarily blissful ignorance) in fine detail, we are for a chilling moment left in the dark, so to speak, as to the nature and nearness of the threat. Such a convention of course builds both cinematic tension and a certain empathy with the victim, as we share in the victim's moment of claustrophobic uncertainty. It also embodies a neat cinematic trick: The tighter and clearer the camera's focus, the finer the detail, the less the viewer actually sees of what matters, and of what will ultimately matter even more to both viewer and victim.²

So it is with the slasher movie which was the Simpson case. In a classic example of what Neil Websdale and Alex Alvarez (1998) call "forensic journalism," the media focused tightly -- indeed, pornographically -- on the fine and often gruesome details of personal life, personal appearance, and personal violence. Viewers of the Simpson slasher movie saw (and discussed) subtle nuances of blood samples and DNA testing, sanguineous images of death struggles and torn flesh, and as much so the decadent details of Italian loafers, changing hairstyles and lifestyles, and pretty/vacant personalities.³ In direct proportion to their encyclopedic exposure to this forensic gristle and lifestyle minutia, though, they were shown next to nothing of the larger threats that circled and stalked the Simpson case, and the larger social order of which it is a part.

By bracketing the case within a tight framework of personality and personal violence, the media excluded from the frame of representation and analysis the sorts of systemic issues which in fact constituted the case. While cautious reports on



by cash, and protected by racist practices that many viewers apparently began to doubt the system's potential for impartial justice.⁴ Yet this very coverage carefully avoided analysis of such a system's historical evolution, contemporary economic and cultural underpinnings, and possible transformations. In its narrow focus on the personal, the Simpson slasher movie simply strung together one tight shot after another.

The Denouement

There remains, of course, one essential difference between the tight shot of the typical slasher movie and the tight media focus on personal dynamics in the Simpson slasher movie. The

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conventional slasher movie utilizes the tight focus as a device to build tension, to temporarily blind and distract the viewer, and thus as a moment of suspended perception to be resolved as the threat is finally revealed and even overcome. In the usual slasher movie, for good or bad, the knife eventually slices into the frame. In the Simpson case, we find no such denouement. The “not guilty” verdict of course wrote a surprise ending to the movie that continues to mask the slasher’s identity. But more importantly, even if a “guilty” verdict had revealed at least the mediated image and identity of the slasher, neither it nor any other verdict would have revealed the identity of the larger threats which this slasher and this case embody. In this movie, as in others yet to be televised, the important issues remain just outside the frame.

The Tag

As it turns out, I may as well have maintained my beer- and surf-soaked existence on Carriacou. For all the Simpson movie revealed about the real issues stalking the case and the country -- about gendered violence, expanding inequalities, and institutionalized injustice -- I would have known as much hungover on Carriacou as stone-cold straight in the U.S.A. But then, had I stayed on Carriacou, I would have missed the nightly episodes of “LAPD,” the slick new syndicated show designed to rehabilitate the image and elevate the ratings of a department stalked by the twin specters of Rodney King and Mark Fuhrman. I would have missed the reruns of “COPS” which precede “LAPD” each weeknight on my local station, and their unending videotape loop of dislocated domestic violence, cocaine packets, and patrol car sermonettes. I would have missed “True Stories of the Highway Patrol” and “Top Cops,” “America’s Most Wanted” and “American Justice,” “Law and Order” and “U. S. Customs: Classified.” I would have missed most of all the unending waves of mediated crime imagery and information which ensure, by their rhythmic frequency and their tight particularity, that more is less.

* An earlier version of this essay appeared in Gregg Barak (ed), *Representing O.J.: Murder, Criminal Justice, and Mass Culture*. Albany, N.Y.: Harrow & Heston, 1996.

The Credits

1. As a Fall 1995 *Arizona Republic* article (Muller and Wagner, 1995: A1) reported, in yet more media coverage of the media’s Simpson coverage:

Millions watched live coverage of the closing arguments in the O.J. Simpson trial last week on cable television. In the same time slot, much of the nation saw *Murder One*, a new ABC series crafted to mirror the Simpson trial and capitalize on its popularity. It finally happened. The nation’s O.J. watchers were caught between fact and fiction, between real-life drama and pure entertainment. And there wasn’t much difference.

2. For more on movie images of murder, see for example Epstein (1995); see also Jenkins (1994) for other images of murder manufactured for public consumption. 3. The Sex Pistols’ punk anthem “Pretty Vacant” (Rotten, Cook, Jones, and Matlock, 1978) presented, in a rather different context, the sort of blankly

attractive amorality which shaped the shared lives of O.J. and Nicole Brown Simpson, and the identities of sycophantic attachments like Kato Kalen as well.

4. In a Fall 1995 Gallup/CBS News poll, 67% of respondents expressed “less confidence...that the proper verdict is reached whether a defendant is rich or poor” in light of the Simpson trial (Muller and Wagner, 1995: A21).

More Credits

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