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## **Towards a Global Criminology?**

**Richard Jones**

Lecturer in Criminology

University of Edinburgh, School of Law

[richard.jones@ed.ac.uk](mailto:richard.jones@ed.ac.uk)



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## **Abstract**

The aim of this article is to consider the current constitution, and likely future prospects, of the field of criminology, and to examine in particular how it might be becoming more global in nature. The term 'criminology' will be used broadly, referring to the academic field as a whole, and hence including the study of the causes of crime, responses to crime including criminal justice, as well as to the field's many sub-disciplines. The article begins by considering international and comparative criminology, before reviewing previous work that has raised the prospect of a 'global criminology.' The focus then shifts to consideration of the question, 'what is criminology?', prompted in particular by the various essays in Bosworth and Hoyle (eds) (2011). It is argued that this question usefully draws attention to certain problems currently facing Anglo-American criminology, and contends moreover that these issues are related in certain respects to issues that will face criminology as it globalises. Drawing from work by Wenger (1999) and others, a novel way of conceptualising the field of criminology is proposed, namely as a group of 'communities of practice.' The article shows how not only does this approach help model some of the challenges facing Anglo-American criminology both domestically and globally, but that it also suggests some practical measures that could be undertaken to help overcome these problems.

## **Keywords**

Criminology, Globalization, Theoretical Criminology, Research, Academic Community

## 1. Introduction

The aim of this article is to consider the current constitution, and likely future prospects, of the field of criminology, and to examine in particular how it might be becoming more global in nature.<sup>1</sup> The term ‘criminology’ will be used broadly, referring to the academic field as a whole, and hence including the study of the causes of crime, responses to crime including criminal justice, as well as to the field’s many sub-disciplines. The article begins by considering international and comparative criminology, before reviewing previous work that has raised the prospect of a ‘global criminology’. The focus then shifts to consideration of the seemingly more parochial question, ‘what is criminology?’ It is argued that this question usefully draws attention to certain problems currently facing Anglo-American criminology, and contends moreover that these issues are related in certain respects to issues that will face criminology as it globalises. Drawing from work by Wenger (1999) and others, a novel way of conceptualising the field of criminology is proposed, namely as a group of ‘communities of practice’. The article shows how not only does this approach help model some of the challenges facing Anglo-American criminology both domestically and globally, but that it also suggests some practical measures that could be undertaken to help overcome these problems.

## 2. International, comparative and global criminology

Comparative criminology of some form or another has existed for some time (see for example the international dimension to the work of Lombroso, 1911). In relation to crime causation, criminologists have been interested in comparing crime rates in different countries and trying to account for the differences: why does Japan apparently have a much lower crime rate than Germany, for example? Similarly, in the field of policing, criminologists have asked whether differing systems of community policing between the United States and (again) Japan are significant, and whether these might be factors in explaining different crime rates and perceptions of

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on a paper entitled ‘Towards a Global Criminology’ presented at the ‘Legal Exchange and Cooperation between Korea and the EU’ conference (SKKU BK21 Global Science and Technology Law Program), SungKyunKwan University, Seoul, South Korea, in June 2011. I am extremely grateful to the staff and students at SKKU Law School for the invitation to speak at the conference, for their warm hospitality, and for their helpful comments and suggestions. This article also draws from material prepared for ‘Some remarks about What is Criminology?’, a paper given at a seminar to mark the launch of Bosworth and Hoyle (eds) (2011), *What is Criminology?* (Oxford University Press) presented at the All Souls Criminology Seminar Series, Oxford, in February 2011. Again, I am most grateful for the invitation to speak and for the feedback received.

police legitimacy (Bayley, 1992; though see also Hamai and Ellis, 2006). Comparative criminal justice has studied different principles informing criminal justice systems (for example as between adversarial, inquisitorial, and restorative systems); and different imprisonment rates between countries: for example, why does Scotland imprison 152 people per 100,000 of its population, France only 96, and Norway just 69? Why does Singapore imprison 267 per 100,000 people, South Korea just 93, and Japan only 63? (Walmsley, 2009). Such research thus involves the study of comparative data, and the explanations proposed to account for similarities and differences would seem to require internationally applicable theories. In an attempt to explain international variations in imprisonment rates, for instance, Cavadino and Dignan (2006) have proposed a model in which countries are said to belong to one of four social and political ‘types’ that are more or less penal in approach. Along the same lines, though advancing a more detailed analysis, Lacey (2008: 56-57) seeks to move beyond what she sees as a mere ‘typology’ to a more ‘explanatory model’ arguing that wider social and economic forces are mediated by each country’s particular institutions (including welfare provision and constitutional frameworks).

Within criminology recently there has also been growing interest in how processes of globalisation might change the nature of crime (Franko Aas, 2007). Additionally, criminological research today includes the study of phenomena that while not *necessarily* international are nonetheless often so, such as illicit criminal networks (Morselli, 2009) or cybercrime (Wall, 2007). Further topics with a strong international dimension include international terrorism and its policing (see Deflem, 2010); people smuggling, including for the sex trade; sex ‘tourism’ (travelling to foreign countries to use prostitutes); money laundering (Gilmore, 2004); weapons smuggling; international organised crime; drugs smuggling; illicit smuggling of antiquities (Mackenzie, 2011); cash smuggling; high-value vehicle theft and smuggling; and international ecological harms such as may be caused by pollution (White, 2009). In relation to policing, there has been study of ‘transnational policing’ (in other words, ‘cross-border’ policing) (Sheptycki, 2000). Moving from crime-types to comparative criminal justice, it has been argued in recent years that international similarities in responses to crime can be discerned across various countries, leading to the academic focus on mechanisms of ‘policy transfer’ from one country to another (Jones and Newburn, 2007), on the international spread of ‘penal populism’ (Roberts

et al. 2003; Pratt, 2007), on a 'culture of control' (Garland, 2001), and on the policy transfer of repressive 'neoliberal' penal and welfare strategies (Wacquant, 2009). It could be argued, though, that while these are 'international', 'transnational' (Sheptycki and Wardak, 2005), or even in some cases more or less 'global' developments, criminology itself is not yet a properly global enterprise.

'Global criminology' could potentially have a number of different meanings. It could refer to the study in particular of global crime or criminal justice; to criminological concepts or theories that are (said to be) globally applicable; to bodies of criminological knowledge that are globally comprehensive; to criminological networks, research activities, or patterns of involvement that are somehow global; or even to an academic discipline that purports to be global in scope (even if as a field it is heterogeneous in its beliefs, approaches, focuses, and research methods).

There have been various previous attempts at sketching out what a properly 'global criminology' might look like or involve. One earlier attempt at inaugurating such a field can be found in the work of Hippchen, who in 1977 proposed the pursuit of what he termed 'world criminology', to study in particular crimes of an international kind (see Smandych and Larsen, in Larsen and Smandych, 2008: 2-4). During the 1970s and 1980s, comparative criminology developed as an approach, with Clinard and Abbott (1973), for example, seeking to apply 'scientific' criminology internationally to explain variations in crime rates, among other phenomena. On the other hand, however, and in a way that parallels the earlier critiques of scientific criminology offered by critical and social constructionist criminology (see Becker, 1963; Taylor, Walton and Young, 1973), 'post-colonial criminology' challenges this practice, with Agozino (2004), for example, arguing that, '[i]t is no longer credible for the imperialist countries who have the greatest crime problems and who perpetrate the greatest crimes to continue to posture as the standard-bearers of criminology from which the Third World should learn' (2004: 355; cited in Larsen and Smandych, 2008: 7).

In an article entitled 'Comparing cultures, comparing crime: Challenges, prospects and problems for a global criminology', Susanne Karstedt predicts that 'Globalization will intensify contacts – and perhaps conflicts – between cultures more than ever in

the history of humankind' (2001: 285 [Abstract]). Karstedt argues that the concept of 'culture' is a key starting point for the international study in criminology—culture being 'a concept that stresses difference', yet which recognises this as an 'ordered' difference of patterned and 'recurrent' activities, practices and meanings (2001: 289). She suggests that (existing or new) 'general theories of crime' could be 'transported' and 'tested' in different cultures of different countries (2001: 291). (A 'general theory' of crime is a theory that purports to explain 'all' kinds of crime, and presumably, all crime in all countries.) Crucially, though, she argues that this should not simply be the 'testing' of a given theory against data from different countries. This is because different theories 'incorporate' a notion of 'culture' to different extents and in different ways. Karstedt illustrates this point with reference to three criminological theories, and cleverly points out that routine activities theory (see Felson and Boba, 2010), for example, makes certain cultural assumptions—such as that people have a certain motivation to offend—that may not equally hold true across different cultures. Moreover, she argues, the whole routine activities theory (as with any other theory) is to some extent an abstract model incorporating assumptions about particular cultural practices, even if it does not necessarily clearly articulate them. She implies that as a result, one could posit 'cultural variability' across countries as a 'starting point' for cross-cultural research, and use this not only to test but also to develop and refine criminological theories (2001: 295). Of course, the pattern of *theory development* → *theory testing* → *theory development*..., and so on, is a normal part of scientific and social scientific method. A novel feature Karstedt adds in here is to suggest that criminological theories will likely need additional development (to add in extra dimensions relating to their otherwise implicit assumptions regarding culture) before they can properly be tested cross-culturally. This seems a highly important theoretical point, and one that could potentially be of significant benefit in developing criminological theory not only globally but also locally.

The possibility of a 'global criminology' has also caught the eye of critical, radical and Marxist criminologists. Friedrichs (2007), for example, building upon his earlier critical criminological studies of white-collar crime (including the study of related forms of crime such as crimes committed by governments or government employees), argues that economic globalisation processes require criminology to recognise and study emerging international occurrences of 'governmental crime' 'finance crime',

‘state-corporate crime’, and ‘crimes of globalisation’ (the latter being ‘the demonstrable harm that results from the policies and practices of the international financial and trade institutions’) (2007: 9-11). Indeed, one could speculate that recognition of globalisation might prompt criminology to further study topics and areas that historically it has somewhat neglected, and which ‘tend to be mentioned as criminological blind spots, such as the global criminal economy, corporate crime, state crime, corruption, environmental crime, as well as the so-called ‘secret renditions’ and the use of torture in the war on terror, cyber crime and genocide, to name just a few’ (Franko Aas, 2007b: 297).

If processes of globalisation continue into the future, we should expect these to have an effect on crime, on how crime should be understood (Franko Aas, 2007), as well as on policy-transfer and other patterns of inter-connectedness between various national criminal justice and crime control agencies. Moreover, it has been argued that processes relating to globalisation may begin to shape criminal justice responses to crime. Pakes (2004: 176-177) drawing from Fairchild and Damner (2001) agrees, suggesting that, ‘Common enemies, such as cyber-crime and terrorism, constitute a factor that binds criminal justice systems’, and that additional ‘mechanisms of [policy] convergence’ internationally include ‘simultaneous development’ prompted by shared domestic experiences (for example, in trying to combat terrorist threats or online banking fraud), and international regulation (prompted for example by international treaties and regional directives). The 1990s saw the formation of International Criminal Tribunals in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda, and proposals for the International Criminal Court (and which effectively came into being in 2002). In many fields relating to criminal law, policing and criminal justice, there have been attempts in recent years at moving (even if gently and slowly) toward regional and international policy harmonisation, or at least towards enhanced regional and international co-operation.

Both in terms of crime and criminal justice, it has been argued that globalisation makes ‘traditional’ comparative criminology less straightforward, because it is less clear today that countries can be considered as independent, free-standing entities reflecting only their own traditions. Franko Aas (2007b: 286), for example, writes that, ‘one can no longer study, for example, Italy simply by looking at what happens



inside its territory, but rather one needs to acknowledge the effects that distant conflicts and developments have on national crime and security concerns, and vice versa’.

What we thus seem currently to be witnessing within criminology is a process of diversification and specialisation, but one with an increasingly outward-facing stance, with an appreciation of the growing importance of international and global forces and issues. However, while part of criminology’s response has been to seize the opportunities for new areas and modes of study, and to absorb these into its various existing branches of activity, in other ways the attempt to grapple with globalisation presents fundamental challenges to the criminological project, including at a deep conceptual level. I will argue in the next section that criminology’s growing awareness of international developments and of its own parochialism, are among the key drivers behind its current internal self-critique. I will then turn to an examination of how globalisation is affecting criminology externally, before suggesting a way both to model the nature of these challenges and offer possible strategies criminology could adopt in order to overcome the same.

### **3. What is Criminology?**

Separately, and aside from debates surrounding comparative, transnational or global criminology, there has recently been discussion within criminology as to what the nature of its academic discipline is today, to where the field might be heading, and what, if anything should be done about this. In their excellent edited collection addressing these and other questions, Bosworth and Hoyle (2011) bring together various leading criminologists, mostly from the United States and the United Kingdom, reflecting on different aspects of the criminological enterprise. I will argue in this section that questions recently raised in relation to the question ‘what is criminology?’ can help us understand the challenges posed but also the practical solutions required for the development of criminology in the global era.

The first way in which questions about the nature of criminology are related to questions regarding globalisation processes is in terms of what criminology (and criminologists) should be doing and how it and they should be spending their time; and more specifically, to what extent, and in what ways, should topics relating to

global crime or globalisation more generally be the focus of criminological research. If the contents of Bosworth and Hoyle's collection is anything to go by, the sentiment of numerous contributors seems to be that the field is ripe for further international, transnational and global enquiry. For example, chapters include: 'The Global Financial Crisis: Neo-Liberalism, Social Democracy, and Criminology' (Brown), 'Postcolonial Perspectives for Criminology' (Cuneen), 'Criminology, Accountability and International Justice' (Schabas), 'Transnational Criminology and the Globalization of Harm Production' (Bowling), 'The Missing Link: Criminological Perspectives on Transnational Justice and International Crimes' (Parmentier), 'Why Compare Criminal Justice?' (Nelken), and 'Visions of Global Control: Cosmopolitan Aspirations in a World of Friction' (Franko Aas). It is not possible to do justice here to the many and varied issues raised and discussed in these chapters, but even from the chapter titles alone it is possible to see the extent and range of ways in which an international and indeed global perspective is of central concern to several leading criminologists. No doubt the chapter topics are to some degree an artefact of the book editors' selection; yet at the same time, they might well reflect a wider awareness within criminology that globalisation continues apace, that criminology must develop its research objects, theories and methods accordingly, and that the field will need to adapt quickly to the changing world, possibly with far-reaching consequences for its practice. Despite their many differences, the distinguished authors of these and a number of other chapters seem to share the conviction that criminology, as it is presently typically conducted in the English-speaking world and in continental Europe, is failing to study a series of important topics that appear central to its endeavour but which appear almost systematically overlooked. One way to understand this is in terms of Anglo-American criminology becoming aware of the need to adapt and develop in the face of wider global developments.

The second way in which discussion as to 'what is criminology' relates to questions of globalisation can be found in a series of debates, which are, on first glance, entirely to do with English-speaking criminology alone, but which arguably mount a still wider-reaching critique with even greater implications for the field of criminology, both in the English speaking world, and, as I will argue, also for criminology globally. There are a few chapters again from Bosworth and Hoyle's book I want to mention in this respect.

In his chapter entitled 'Criminology's Place in the Academic Field', the distinguished criminologist David Garland acknowledges the rapid ascent of criminology as an academic discipline over the past few decades, yet speculates that, 'much of criminology's intellectual and institutional strength stems from its integration with, and its rootedness in, a number of other, more foundational disciplines and that the shifts in criminology's place in the academic field threaten to undermine these sources of strength and status' (Garland, 2011: 299). He envisages a successful criminology as one 'that is intellectually and institutionally integrated in the wider university', and one that 'links the world of policy with the world of scholarship' (2011: 300). Garland diagnoses certain problems facing contemporary criminology: it is influential in universities because of the money and students it brings in, but is academically 'uneven and sometimes weak'; students are less well-qualified than before, or as compared to other 'more basic disciplines'; vocational courses raise certain issues; criminology has become more autonomous from other departments, which in many ways hinders its intellectual development; and has been slow to develop new theory in response to certain major crime and punishment issues confronting society today (2011: 300-302).

Garland argues that criminology, while having 'certain 'disciplinary' attributes... is not a discipline in the full scientific sense'; it is eclectic, lacks a clear 'scientific object' of research, and draws on other disciplines (such as law, sociology, political sciences) for its academic and intellectual foundations (2011: 302-3). Criminology, at its best, has always been 'an integrative enterprise of translation and exchange; a dialogic enterprise that undertakes the work of criminological enquiry in on-going conversation with the diverse academic disciplines that bear upon its subject-matter; a bridging subject connecting the practical world of crime control with the academic disciplines of social science and law' (2011: 304). In order to remain excellent, Garland argues, criminology must draw further on its underlying 'fundamental disciplines', and criminologists should be 'trained in one or other of the basic disciplines prior to specializing in crime and punishment' (2011: 310). It must also be wary of topic specialisation; whilst there are many benefits to specialisation, such fragmentation risks having a 'negative effect on the communication and exchange of ideas' (2011: 312). He argues that while its topic focus aids 'concreteness and

specificity’, it is theory that can organise, helping researchers ‘engage with larger questions’ (2011: 312-313).

The point of rehearsing Garland’s argument here is that I believe it correctly raises a series of important points that criminology will need to address in coming years. Whereas in his article he probably has the expansion of criminology within US and European academia in mind, it seems entirely plausible to extend his argument to global expansion, in which case his analysis suggests certain possible problems ahead. Specifically, he identifies that at its very heart, as it were, criminology has some constitutive tensions. These tensions will not be resolved simply by adding in more areas of specialisation, expanding to cover previously under-researched areas, or conducting more comparative research as such—as useful and important as each of these developments would likely prove. Instead, we can see that he makes three important claims. Firstly, criminology must be based in expertise in scholarship in its foundational subjects such as law, political science or sociology. Secondly, one of criminology’s particular strengths lies in its ability to converse with academic as well as policy/practitioner actors across fields, and to engage in informed dialogue and the exchange of ideas. Thirdly, rather than merely focus on particular topics defined by their subject matter (for example, ‘cybercrime’ or ‘policing’) it needs also to emphasise theoretical depth, since it ‘has no distinct theoretical object’ of its own, ‘address[ing] a pre-given object (crimes and criminals) which it derives from a non-scientific social practice—namely, the criminalization processes of the criminal justice state’ (2011: 303). There are three things, then, that may make for the best criminological work, including of a comparative or ‘global’ kind: draw from top scholarship and scholars, especially from the most foundational academic fields; to move across and between fields, whether these be local institutional, disciplinary, sectoral (e.g. academic v. governmental), or national boundaries; and seek conceptual, and not merely topical, integrity.

We find in the same book other perceptive and important interventions. Zedner, for instance, argues that criminology pays far too little attention to the criminal law. This is a straightforward diagnosis, yet of potentially great significance, because it draws attention to the same sort of question as was raised by Garland, namely, when criminology speaks of ‘offending’, about what it is talking if not the acquired legal

definition? Yet whereas Garland's argument is that criminological research is best grounded in legal, sociological, political scientific, or other fundamental study, Zedner, on the other hand, maintains that it makes no sense not to discuss the criminal law at all, and indeed that one loses much of great potential academic and intellectual benefit if the criminal law is left unaddressed.

Lastly, Loader and Sparks (2011b) argue that there is a case for a kind of 'public criminologist', reprising their earlier and more detailed exploration of the potential for more public interaction and engagement on the part of criminology (Loader and Sparks, 2011a). The authors propose in particular an endeavour they characterise as that of the 'democratic under-labourer', a role or activity that criminologists might undertake that is grounded in and engaged with local political concerns (as much as those of the global), and which involves trying to find ways in which criminology 'can be put to work in the service of a better politics of crime and regulation'. To this end, the criminologist acts 'as a 'diplomat'—a figure who shuttles between camps in the service of productive co-existence' (2011b: 32). But this is no mere messenger figure, and indeed in their own book they 'elaborate on what it means to practice the craft of criminology as a democratic under-labourer' (2011a: 117). As such, and importantly, they thus recognise the difficulties in straightforward communication between and across groups, while also recognising the benefits that such cross-boundary work, however challenging, may bring. They argue that democratic under-labouring involves three key elements. It 'is committed, first and foremost, to the generation of knowledge'. Secondly, it has an 'institutional-critical...dimension', attempting to model interactions between institutions (such as criminology, criminal justice organisations, government and the media, for example), in part in an attempt to 'explain how criminological claims are likely to fare when translated into the 'communication formats' (Ericson 2005) of other social organizations and thereby shed light on the obstacles that stand in the way of a more informed politics of crime'. Lastly, it 'has a clear normative dimension', seeking to 'clarify' public debate but also advocating 'using one's knowledge as a basis from which to persuade citizens that things can be done otherwise' (Loader and Sparks, 2011a: 125-127).

#### **4. Criminology is itself becoming globalised in late modernity**

It was shown above how various forms of international or global crime and responses to crime have become the subject of criminological research recently, and how certain criminologists have explored how comparative criminology might develop into a more fully 'global criminology'. However, recent years have witnessed a certain, quiet 'internationalisation' of criminology in general. The number of academic criminology journals has grown dramatically over the past two decades, with many identifying themselves explicitly as 'international' journals (*Theoretical Criminology* journal being just one such example), while others have a regional yet still international focus (for example, the *European Journal of Criminology*, and the *Asian Journal of Criminology*). Academic publication databases and search engines have become larger, more powerful, and easier to use in recent years, and SSRN and Google Scholar, for example, have probably contributed significantly to the dissemination of academic research internationally. International conferences (the largest perhaps being the American Society of Criminology Annual Meeting) attract criminologists from around the world (even if probably the majority of delegates are from North America). Some languages seem to have assumed the role of *lingua franca*, facilitating international communication or at least the obtaining of information. These are not entirely accidental outcomes. In recent years various technological systems have enabled and supported new forms of human activities and social relationships. More specifically, we can see that technological developments that have facilitated international communications and rapid, affordable travel have had particular impact. Today, the Internet, computers and communications technologies have facilitated the dissemination, search, and retrieval of information from around the world, including of crime and criminal justice data, policies, and policy proposals, as well as of information on domestic legal systems, case law and legislation.

Garland has convincingly shown how the history of criminology's development must be understood in relation to its institutional bases. Criminology is, he writes, 'a product of the convergence of certain ideas and interests, in a particular institutional context' (2002: 9). The 'discipline continues to be structured', he argues, 'by the sometimes competing, sometimes converging claims of [its] two programmes', namely the attempt 'to develop an etiological, explanatory science, based on the premise that criminals can somehow be scientifically differentiated from non-

criminals’, and the attempt ‘to enhance the efficient and equitable administration of justice’ (2002: 8). Criminology has, however, managed to achieve a certain disciplinary unity and identity:

Modern criminology, like any other academic specialism, consists of a body of accredited and systematically transmitted forms of knowledge, approved procedures and techniques of investigation, and a cluster of questions which make up the subject’s recognized research agendas. These intellectual materials and activities are loosely organized by means of a ‘discipline’—the standard form of academic organization. [...] [Its] disciplinary functions are carried out, more or less effectively, by means of a variety of institutions—professional journals and associations, institutes and university departments, professional appointments, processes of peer review, letters of recommendation, training courses, textbooks, conferences, funding agencies, and so on—that make up the material infrastructure of the enterprise (2002: 14-15).

Garland argues that while the subject today is composed of a wide range of approaches, methods and sub-disciplines, it retains a coherence in large part because of ‘the exertions of its discipline-forming institutions’ (2002: 15), along with the fact that its ‘disparate’ activities are founded on one or both of its above two basic programmes. Despite this, because criminology is linked to social problems and governmental responses to the same, the subject has ‘a certain instability’ (2002: 17). In the remainder of this section, I will argue that in the face of global transformations, including in relation to higher education more generally, the (constitutionally somewhat reactive and unstable) discipline of criminology is beginning to experience a new environment, one likely to present it both with challenges and opportunities in its near future.

A vision of late modernity as an era characterised by fears, threats, uncertainties and instabilities is now familiar within criminology (see for example Bauman, 2007; Young, 1999; 2007; Garland, 2000a; 2000b; 2001). However, a rather different characterisation of late modernity is also possible. In the field of social theory, the term ‘late modernity’ seems to have come to prominence with Giddens’ (1990; 1991) neo-Weberian account of processes of rationalisation. In Giddens’ account, ‘late modernity’ is presented as an era in which the form of social organisation is not inherently more fearful as such, but simply features different kinds of risks than were experienced in the past. In addressing contemporary risks, late modern society is more reliant on technology and institutions to facilitate and stabilise social activity. Bottoms (1995) was one of the first criminologists to draw from Giddens’ model to help explain transformations in crime control and criminal justice practices and, with

Wiles, may have been one of the first in criminology to use Giddens' phrase 'late modernity' (Bottoms and Wiles, 1996). Giddens' model is detailed, and his account of abstract systems is itself highly abstract. Certain elements of his model are however helpful in analysing the relation between criminology and processes of globalisation. For example, Giddens usefully identifies the way in which information and communications technologies facilitate sustained social relations over time and across geographical space. The focus of his account is very much on systems, yet the point of his account is on how they support social relationships and can be used to coordinate human activity beyond the face-to-face relationships characteristic of the trust systems and ways of dealing with activities in earlier history. In this way, we can see that the systems he describes are some of the fundamental ones driving processes of globalisation.

In a similar sociological or social theoretical vein, in their book *Global Sociology*, Cohen and Kennedy (2007: 43-57) identify six features of globalisation: 'changing concepts of space and time', 'increasing cultural interactions and flows', 'the commonality of problems', 'interconnections and interdependencies', 'transnational actors and organizations', and the 'synchronization of all dimensions' (i.e. the reinforcing simultaneity of globalisation processes). A more critical perspective might view globalisation as an aspect of advanced capitalism (see also Harvey, 1989); or of imperialism, colonialism or Americanization, and as something to be resisted (see also Ritzer, 2010). Beerkens (2004: 12) suggests a sociological typology of four globalisation 'perspectives', or rather processes, namely: geographical ('increasing interconnectedness'), authority ('deterritorialisation'), cultural ('convergence or divergence'), and institutional ('cosmopolitanisation'). Castells' (2009) work might be thought of as the social geographical study of the uneven development of these same processes that Giddens describes in social theoretical terms, showing how communications, trade and travel are patterned in very distinctive and uneven forms, and with various global 'networks' discernible.

Within the area of educational studies and research, there has already been considerable discussion of the likely impact of internationalisation and globalisation, possibly driven in part to the economic importance that overseas students' fees play in the finances of many universities, but also through recognition of the importance of



globalisation processes for higher education in general. (On the various roles universities are asked to play to today, see Altbach, 2008. Universities may be called upon to prepare people for future international careers, for example, and indeed be set numerous policy goals (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010).) Kenway and Bullen (2008) have noted the transformative potential of the globalisation of information and of its creative consumption by young people via the Internet—something which might help disseminate academic learning but also challenge universities’ traditional curricula and teaching and learning mechanisms. Bourn (2011) maintains that globalisation ‘necessitate[s] a transformed curriculum’, ‘new approaches to teaching and learning, openness to new ideas, well [sic] as changes in what we teach’, and argues that universities should adopt a politically progressive ‘global perspectives framework’ to inform their international dealings. Trahar and Hyland (2011) argue that the presence at many universities of large numbers of academic staff and students from overseas creates a potentially transformative cultural phenomenon that they term ‘Internationalisation at Home’, in which ‘[r]ecognising that learning, teaching and assessment are constructed and mediated by cultural norms and academic traditions may be seen as the first state in the process of critiquing the dominant philosophies and practices that underpin higher education curricula in the UK’ (2011: 626; 627). Drawing from and developing his typology of globalisation’s dimensions (above), Beerkens usefully summarises four main ways in which globalisation ‘manifests itself’ in higher education, namely: ‘increasing connectedness between universities’, ‘the changing relationship between the university and the state’, twin but diverging tendencies both toward ‘diversity’ and toward ‘standardisation’, and the changing ‘identity of universities in a globalised world’ (2004: 222-3).

While in some respects globalisation may be a very manageable and even exciting process for higher educational institutions, in other respects there may be practical difficulties. Maringe’s (2009: 553) study suggested that while in some cases universities were keen to develop formal exchange programmes with other institutions, they were less good at culturally integrating their visitors in practice; and that in other cases institutional focus on global programmes left local staff and students feeling neglected. In relation to higher educational global consortia formation in general, Beerkens’ case studies revealed ‘no straightforward recipe for success’. Nevertheless, he identifies six ‘critical’ criteria for successful consortia: the

consortium had to be ‘complementary’ (fitting participant universities’ ideologies, and also mutually beneficial); ‘coping mechanisms’ (actually, incentivising staff to participate in consortia); ‘compatibility’ (similar institutions were found to work better together); problem-solving mechanisms; ‘relationship management’; and a certain willingness to take risks in order to seize opportunities (2004: 226-7).

More specifically within the field of criminology, some stumbling blocks in front of a more global criminology may include language barriers, differing national political stances regarding certain types of crime, criminal legal differences, and internationally uneven disciplinary focuses because the gravitational centre of disciplinary power may continue to lie for some time in the United States and certain other countries. Moreover, if Garland (above) is correct, there may be not just potential obstacles but possibly actually dangers in criminological global expansion. At the same time, Garland’s, Zedner’s, and Loader and Sparks’s analyses suggest that far from being well-integrated into the political and policy-formation areas, as well as into cognate and its foundational academic disciplines, English-speaking criminology is already experiencing challenges in accomplishing productive interaction, suggesting that a yet wider expansion globally might not so easily be realised. While Loader and Sparks advocate a certain ‘shuttling’ to try to facilitate bridging within and outwith criminology, and model different types of criminological role, there remains the question as to how this shuttling might be accomplished in practice and what kinds of obstacles criminologists might need to be overcome.

### **5. Cultivating criminological ‘communities of practice’?**

There is however a particular sociological analysis that has previously been developed in other contexts, but which might prove useful, both in suggesting a way of addressing the various problems identified above by the criminological experts reflecting on what (domestic or local) criminology is and should become, but also in informing how one might go about establishing greater and better international academic contacts with a view to moving gradually towards a more globalised academic discipline. This analysis, proposed by the sociologist Etienne Wenger and colleagues, explores what Wenger (1999) terms ‘communities of practice’. This notion is not yet well known within criminology, though pioneering research has demonstrated its utility in relation to knowledge transfer/exchange between academics

and the police, in the field of community policing (Henry, 2011; Henry and Mackenzie, forthcoming). Originally devised as a way of explaining the results of ethnographic research revealing how apprentice workers actually learned their trades and professions, the notion maintains that work skills are most effectively acquired by a practice of ‘learning as doing’ (rather than by studying theory, for example), through social participation in ‘communities of practice’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991). It is a particularly useful model here because, as will be shown below, it recognises and accounts for institutional and disciplinary fragmentation, and thus models not only disciplinary separations and localised practices, but also suggests how one might do ‘boundary work’ to try to connect a particular group with other groups elsewhere. As such, it proves useful in modelling both the criminological ‘Balkanisation’ alluded to above, both locally and globally, as well as suggesting practical ways of addressing this.

Wenger maintains that even within large organisations, workers tend to work in smallish groups with others who share certain communal understandings of the ‘shared enterprise’ in which that group is involved (1999: 45). This group typically has worked out ways to get things done in practice, ‘supports a communal memory’, and ‘helps newcomers join the community by participating in its practice’ (1999: 46). His model is extensive and far-reaching, and here I will simply summarise a few key relevant elements, before suggesting some implications of the model for academic disciplines (such as criminology) seeking local improvements or having greater global aspirations.

Wenger argues that if we examine ‘the concept of practice and ... the kind of social communities that practice defines’ it is possible to identify five different aspects of practice, namely ‘practice as meaning’ (how the practice and consequences of work, including academic work, is understood by its participants), ‘practice as [shared] community’, ‘practice [...] as a learning process’, ‘practice as boundary’, and ‘practice as locality’ (1999: 49-50). The way Wenger understands work practices, then, is as relatively segregated and localised activities, which one can nevertheless begin to learn—something best achieved, he argues, through direct involved participation with others from this group. The three factors worth focusing on in particular here are those of learning, boundary and locality. Wenger argues that

*'communities of practice can be thought of as shared histories of learning'* (1999: 86, emphasis in original). Ways of 'doing things' are learned and forgotten as practices are developed and then replaced. There are two ways to '[attempt] to shape the future' with a view to innovating, he argues: seeking to 'cultivate...specific relationships with specific people', or to 'produce or promote specific artifacts to focus future negotiation of meaning in specific ways' (1999: 91). (By 'artifact', Wenger seems to be referring to an anthropological recognition of how within organisations reified things such as documents, databases or mission-statements can be said to 'exist', and may even take on a symbolic, even animating, quality (see also 1999: 57-62).)

The notion of 'boundary' is also important, marking the outer limit of a community of practice, yet one across which 'communities of practice develop ways of maintaining connections with the rest of the world' (1999: 103). Connections may take place via existing, reified channels. New 'encounters' across communities can take place in the form of 'boundary encounters—such as meetings, conversations and visits', by one-on-one meetings, though sustained immersion in another community, or through visits by delegations; these may be single events, but 'can also be longer-lived and thus become part of a practice' (1999: 112-113). Indeed, an actor or community may seek 'to make new connections across communities'—which, Wenger argues, requires an activity he terms 'brokering' (1999: 109), and which 'involves processes of translation, coordination, and alignment between perspectives' (1999: 109). Wenger suggests that 'what brokers press into service to connect practices is their experience of multimembership and the possibilities for negotiation inherent in participation' (1999: 109). Phrased in this way, the activity is reminiscent of the 'shuttling' solution proposed by Loader and Sparks (2011).

Wenger and colleagues consider communities of practice to possess 'a unique combination of three fundamental elements: a *domain* of knowledge, which defines a set of issues; a *community* of people who care about this domain; and the shared *practice* that they are developing to be effective in their domain' (Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002: 27, emphasis in original). The domain content may change over time; communities may span large geographical distances; and practice includes acquired academic and practical learning, best practices and standards, and common approaches to problem solving (2002: 29-39). Whereas in the earlier work

outlined above, communities of practice were presented as empirical realities, in this later work it is suggested that managers and others can ‘cultivate’ them by certain means: ‘Even though communities are voluntary and organic, good community design can invite, even evoke, aliveness’ (2002: 50). ‘From our experience’, they claim, ‘we have derived seven principles’ of cultivation: ‘Design for evolution’, ‘Open a dialogue between inside and outside perspectives’, ‘Invite different levels of participation’, ‘Develop both public and private community spaces’, ‘Focus on value’, ‘Combine familiarity and excitement’, and ‘Create a rhythm for the community’ (2002: 51). As such, their list has something of the flavour of the popular management books of the time. Despite this, perhaps because the underlying theory as to how organisations work in practice appears reasonably developed and culturally perceptive, their ‘design principles’ should not immediately be dismissed. Moreover, not only might these principles suggest valid ways of promoting communities, building relationships, and developing emergent fields; and not only may they be of use to managers but to those directly involved, too; but they may also help identify, negatively as it were, what may be hindering such development through its absence.

For Wenger, the emergence of the global does nothing to ‘[diminish]’ ‘[t]he relevance of communities of practice’ since all practice always has some form of ‘locality of engagement’. Communities of practice may expand in scope, yet ‘one kind of complexity replaces another, one kind of limitation is overcome at the cost of introducing another. We travel to the four corners of the world but we hardly know our neighbours’ (1999: 32). In other words, there is always a limit to what one can deal with even (or particularly) when trying to cover wider ground (either figuratively or literally). It is important to recognise nonetheless that the limitation he describes is one of professional disciplinary *activity*, not one of a given discipline’s theoretical *concepts*. Moreover, he may not be entirely correct even about the former; in the Internet age, there seems ample evidence that Internet-based services enable scaling or leverage on a vast scale, and Wenger and colleagues’ recent (2009) work on *Digital Habitats* explicitly recognises how communities of practice might be nurtured using online tools. Despite this caveat, in summary we can see that Wenger’s work provides a way of conceiving of the ways in which professional disciplinary activities, including in academia, involve learning within smallish groups, and where connections with other such like groups internationally may be as easy to accomplish

as with more local non-like groups, since in fact less ‘translation’ work needs to be done at the boundaries (the boundaries being professional/conceptual, not geographically bounded *per se*). As such, his work offers some reflections on the problem of spanning, bridging and liaising between groups, and is a model that is as relevant to global as it is to local activities.

It should be noted that there is an oddity to the communities of practice model, namely its dual positive/normative (is/ought) claims. Communities of practice are said naturally to happen (to some extent); but they are also mostly presented as a good thing and something to be ‘cultivated’. This lends the approach a certain uncritical, even evangelising quality. While Wenger et al. (2002: Ch 7) have in fact acknowledged some potential ‘downsides’ to communities of practice, including institutional rigidity, clique formation, and ‘imperialism’, there remains within their model a strong normative claim that despite these potential problems communities of practice are desirable and should be nurtured. But is this necessarily always the case? Because their model assumes learning to be a ‘good’ in itself, moral and ethical questions about the ends being sought are not closely examined. We might consider it morally objectionable, for example, for the police to seek to learn how to engage with and influence the political system or the media, and especially so if their aim is to cover up their wrongdoings or to pursue corrupt practices. Communities of practice themselves are not self-evidently good; for example, one can imagine a community of corrupt police officers or indeed academics. Criminology faces, and individual criminologists face, moral choices. It is not clear that learning how to influence policy formation, for example, is a good in itself; rather, the good would seem to inhere in the political and ethical defensibility of the policies so formed. Similarly, it is not clear that either globalisation or domestic political influence are intrinsically desirable or defensible. A stronger argument might be, as Loader and Sparks contend, that greater connectedness is a good if it facilitates the democratic process, aside from the immediate political outcomes thus decided. These are all questions that criminology and criminologists must decide. What is useful about Wenger’s model, however, is that if criminologists decide they *do* want to engage with other groups, it offers an outline as to the nature of the problem faced as well as possible solutions.

In relation specifically to criminology and criminological development, particular in terms of ‘boundary work’ and community ‘cultivation’, what might all of this involve or amount to in practical terms? Possible examples are diverse but could include industry work placements, academic exchange and visiting scholar programmes (including at different levels), conferences, workshops, work programmes, seminar series, secondments, or consultancy work. More subtly, it could also involve shared social activities, site or office visits, communal newsletters or email distribution lists, or attending relevant public events. Collaborative projects may be initiated and managed using ‘brokering’ skills such as translation, coordination and alignment (Wenger, 1999: 109). Criminologists might decide to learn new theories, data gathering or analysis techniques, languages, IT skills, writing techniques, presentation skills, or media skills. In terms of content, criminologists may find it advantageous to develop further (or new) knowledge in one or more foundational subject areas. Knowledge of domestic or international political systems, ideologies, party policies and political debates may be useful in some contexts. Development of organisational, interpretational and inter-subjective skills such as ‘people skills’, empathy, understanding institutional dynamics and politics, and management skills, may also be vital in many cases. If Wenger et al. (2002) are correct, this would all need to be done with their seven principles in mind—for example, setting up a regular seminar series with the aim of making it familiar and hence comfortable but also as a way of exposing the community to exciting new ideas. To these ends, *travel* (whether across the corridor or around the world) in order to be exposed to and hence begin to understand other communities, and *engagement* with external cognate individuals or groups, would appear particularly important. These various specific activities could be directed at general attempts to encourage vibrancy within criminology, but they could also be employed to try to overcome key problems facing the discipline, such as those identified in the context of ‘public criminology’. As Henry and Mackenzie (forthcoming) note, the ‘failure of academics to make research comprehensible to external audiences...is an example of boundaries between academic and non-academic [communities of practice] making communication difficult’. Boundary work, then, may help improve criminological comprehensibility. But we can go further and suggest that it may help guide not just how to make work comprehensible but also how to make it more valuable and relevant for different specific external

audiences. Indeed, boundary work may facilitate the learning of valuable new ideas and practices from elsewhere.

It could be argued that these are all activities that criminologists are doing or will likely do anyway; and that the foregoing 'communities of practice' framework is therefore either self-evident or redundant. However, the key insight from the communities of practice model is that it usefully identifies something of the strangeness of the learning experience, of the strong influence that organisations have on their members, the pragmatism of much occupational adaptation, and accounts for how work practices emerge, take hold, and can be encouraged. The model combines an ethnographic sensibility with an awareness of the centrality of structural and organizational arrangements, group adaptations, interactions, and working cultures. Moreover, it recognizes the benefits of working together on a problem, of being exposed to new ways of dealing with problems, of working out how to liaise or even influence others, and of boundary work - of being able to work within and hence help establish some degree of contact between more than one working group. What Wenger and colleagues claim, then, is that undertaking practical learning or boundary work may even better be accomplished when its nature is consciously understood by the participants.

## **6. Conclusion: Towards a Global Criminology?**

While there is nothing intrinsically desirable about globalisation processes, the current historical juncture may present criminology with significant disciplinary opportunities. Some of these may be political in nature; for others, such as Karstedt, these are intellectual opportunities, a carefully realised globalised criminology offering and indeed prompting an opportunity to rethink ossified theories and methods, enabling the further development of the discipline. However, it was also shown that not only have English-speaking criminologists identified various, fairly significant, problems facing the discipline, but that Garland has suggested that further disciplinary expansion will inevitably come at some cost. If this is correct, then however enticing it may be, a major push toward an expansionist global project may be a mistake. Yet more modest and focused 'global' activities could conceivably avoid such a trap—and indeed, if they were to follow Karstedt's guidance and Garland's imperatives for the highest scholarly work (including that this be grounded



in 'foundational' academic scholarship of one kind or another) could potentially produce ground-breaking research through analysis of previously unknown phenomena and by developing new conceptual frameworks and resources. Indeed, my argument has been that global and domestic criminology in some respects face similar challenges, namely in addressing disciplinary isolation and cultural difference. It is for this reason that Wenger and others' work is particularly useful here.

Once understood as a dynamic 'community of practice', itself comprised of numerous smaller 'communities of (criminological) practice', internationally a 'global criminology' could conceivably open up a new way of conducting criminology. A 'global criminology' might involve comparative or transnational criminology, but the term suggests something in addition—describing a *way* of conducting criminology. Global criminology may study crimes of a 'global' nature or relevance (for example, organised crime, cybercrime, people trafficking, or state crime) but it need not do so. Whereas Karstedt suggests how criminological theory might be tested and developed globally, we may also need to study the conditions under which the research she envisages could best even begin. My argument is that international criminological networks, relationships, and preliminary comparative knowledges, are all necessary prerequisites of such criminological development, and in many cases may need establishing and developing. One might then speak of the criminological networks, disciplinary dynamism and reflexivity, international cooperation, and shared quest for understanding, as somehow together comprising 'global criminology'. It remains to be seen, though, whether and to what extent expanded local or global activities are attractive to different criminologists around the globe. This may yet turn out to be the most significant factor in determining the rapidity with which a 'global criminology' emerges.

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