

June 1984

Critical Criminology, Traditional Crime, and Public Policy

Ronald C. Kramer
Western Michigan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw>



Part of the Criminology Commons, Public Policy Commons, and the Social Work Commons

Recommended Citation

Kramer, Ronald C. (1984) "Critical Criminology, Traditional Crime, and Public Policy," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 11: Iss. 2, Article 2.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15453/0191-5096.1650>

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol11/iss2/2>

This Article is brought to you by the Western Michigan University School of Social Work. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.

CRITICAL CRIMINOLOGY, TRADITIONAL CRIME,
AND PUBLIC POLICY

RONALD C. KRAMER
Western Michigan University

ABSTRACT

Critical criminologists have often ignored the serious problem of traditional or common street crime. As a result, crime prevention policy has been forfeited to the political right or to those who advocate ineffective liberal reforms. This paper argues that critical criminology can make a contribution to the formulation of public policy concerning traditional crime. Recent theoretical developments within the critical perspective on crime, as well as a variety of supporting data, are reviewed and specific policy recommendations to reduce traditional crime are offered. These progressive recommendations constitute an important alternative to the individualistic approaches (liberal or conservative) which now dominate crime prevention policy.

Until very recently, most critical criminologists, and the political left in general, have not paid sufficient attention to the problem of traditional crime. There

are a variety of reasons for this neglect as Greenberg (1981) has pointed out. What concerns me here are not the reasons, but the consequences. The most important consequence of this neglect has been the forfeiture of crime prevention policy to conservative forces. To many progressive criminologists this is an unacceptable situation. Traditional street crime is a serious social problem in our society. By whatever measure, there appears to be more of this crime than most of us are willing to tolerate.

A related reason for progressives to be concerned about traditional crime concerns the victims of these offenses. LEAA victimization surveys have found that the highest incidence of violent and property crime is "among the poor and unemployed, specifically, the superexploited sectors of the working class" (Platt, 1978). Thus, the most likely victims of traditional crime are those the political left sees as its primary constituency; the working class, the poor, and minorities. Even if the members of the working class are not victimized directly by street crime, the fear of such crime erodes the quality of life undermining collective solidarity in working class neighborhoods. As Gross (1982) has recently suggested, the left must take seriously popular anxiety about crime and link these anxieties to progressive political positions.

A number of recent works by critical criminologists (Platt, 1978; 1982; Taylor, 1981; 1982; Gross, 1982; Browning, 1982; Bute, 1982; Currie, 1982; Michalowski, 1982) indicate a new willingness to face up to the question of what "causes" traditional criminal acts, and the issue of how best to control or prevent these acts. This development is especially important

given the repeated failures of crime control policy based on individualistic perspectives which attempt to either repress individual offenders of "cure" them.

This paper reviews recent theoretical developments within the critical criminology perspective, along with some supporting empirical evidence, and then suggests specific policy recommendations to reduce traditional crime. Thus, the paper is an attempt to contribute to the ongoing policy debate concerning crime prevention by suggesting some progressive alternatives to current practices.

CAPITALISM, CLASS STRUCTURE, AND TRADITIONAL CRIME

The critical criminology perspective is rooted in Marxist social theory. One of the strengths of Marxist theory is its insistence that any social phenomenon must be examined within the context of a historically emergent social totality. Crime, therefore, must be analyzed in the context of its relationship to the structure of society as a whole. Mainstream criminological theory in general does not do this. Instead, mainstream theories focus on the attributes of individuals or the immediate social settings of these individuals. As David Greenberg (1981:17) points out concerning these theories:

The society itself rarely appears. The possibility that its organization - its way of producing and distributing material goods, and of organizing its political and legal institutions, for example - might have major implications for the amount and kinds of crime present in a society, as well

as for the character of its crime control apparatus, is not even considered.

Critical criminology, as a general theoretical principle, asserts that crime is based in class conflict and the structured inequalities of class society. The class divisions and their associated forms of inequality under advanced capitalism, therefore, generate the problem of traditional crime. The critical perspective, however, must not fall into the trap of merely asserting that there is a relationship between the social formation of capitalism, especially its political and economic structure, and traditional crime without specifying what the linkages are between the larger social order and criminal behavior.

This section of the paper reviews theory and research on the concrete ways the political economy of advanced capitalism generates crime. Four specific topics are examined: 1) the surplus population which is produced under the conditions of late capitalism; 2) structured unemployment; 3) income inequality and relative deprivation; and 4) capitalism and the destruction of cooperative social relationships.

The Surplus Population

From the critical criminology perspective, "An understanding of crime in our society begins with the recognition that the crucial phenomenon to be considered is not crime, per se, but the historical development and operation of capitalist society" (Quinney, 1980:39). An understanding of the emergence and reproduction of class divisions and their associated

forms of inequality are especially important in this regard. To explain traditional crime, in particular, we first need to see how the historical development of capitalism creates a surplus population or economic underclass which commits crime partially as a response to problems of survival and the brutalization of social life.

Marxist social theory provides a starting point for an analysis of the historical development of the political economy of capitalism. Marxism breaks with philosophical idealism and insists that a proper understanding of human action must begin with the existing material conditions and social relationships of people. Marxist theory, thus, starts with an analysis of the forces and social relations of production and moves on to examine the dialectical relationship between the mode of production and the other cultural and social structures of a society. Marxism analyzes society as a social formation, an articulated totality of economy, state, ideology, and so on.

Immanent change is a fundamental characteristic of social formations due to the contradictions which exist within them. These contradictions are both necessary for, and yet destructive of, these formations. The existence of classes and class struggle is the fundamental contradiction of capitalist society. According to Marx, class is not an attribute of an individual or group; it is a social relationship. Classes are constituted by the social relations of production. Under capitalism these class relations are inherently exploitative and unstable. The existence of classes implies class struggle and class struggle implies change. As Quinney (1980:45) notes, "All past history that

involves the development of capitalism is the history of class struggle."

This class struggle is carried on, of course, between workers and owners, proletarians and capitalists. But class divisions are also more complex. In Capital, Marx, (1867) introduced the terms "relative redundant population" and "industrial reserve army" in his analysis of the effect of the growth of capital on the working class. As Greenberg (1981:62) notes:

Marx argued that capitalists respond to the possibility of rising wages by introducing machinery that displaces workers. The ratio of constant capital (machinery, raw materials) to variable capital (wages) thus tends to rise. Workers who lose their jobs in this process, or who are never hired in the first place, constitute the relative redundant, surplus population. Marx goes on to argue that the existence of this population further depresses wages, since employed workers can be replaced by members of the "industrial reserve army" if they demand excessive wages.

Capitalism, therefore, systematically generates a "surplus population", an "unemployed sector of the working class either dependent on fluctuations in the economy or made obsolete by new technology" (Quinney, 1980:55). This surplus population or economic underclass lives under social, economic, and political conditions which can be described as devastating (Time Magazine, 1977, Auletta, 1982). It is here in the marginalized, demoralized, and super exploited sector of the working class that traditional crime often takes root and flourishes.

It has long been noted by criminologists that there is a strong relationship between social class and criminality (as measured in official statistics). Despite the attempt of some American criminologists to prove that this relationship is a myth (Tittle, Villemez, and Smith, 1978), the bulk of the evidence continues to show that lower class people do commit traditional crime at a much higher rate than other classes. As Braithwaite (1981:38) points out, "... it has been demonstrated, with a degree of consistency which is unusual in social science, that lower class people, and people living in lower class areas, have higher official crime rates than other groups."

Critical criminologists argue that predatory crimes, such as burglary, robbery, drug dealing, and hustling, are often pursued by the members of the surplus population out of the need to survive. As Platt (1978:30) notes, "For this population the economic conditions of life are unusually desperate and degrading. The high level of property crime and petty hustlers cannot be separated from the problems of survival."

The surplus population is also heavily involved in intra-class acts of interpersonal violence, as well as increasingly cross-class acts of violence. Rape, assault, child and wife beating, and homicide result from the brutalization and demoralization of life conditions for the surplus population. As Quinney (1980:61) observes, these "...conventional criminal acts ... are pursued by those who are already brutalized by the conditions of capitalism."

While the life conditions of the surplus population under advanced capitalism are undoubtedly related to criminal behavior, there are other, more specific, factors to be considered if we are to deepen our understanding of the relationship between social order and traditional crime.

Structural Unemployment

One of the most significant of the adverse conditions facing the surplus population is a deep rooted and pervasive level of structural unemployment. Structural unemployment, of course, also increasingly effects millions in the skilled working class and service oriented middle class as well. High levels of unemployment have a very strong relationship to a variety of social problems, including, of course, traditional street crime. As Michalowski (1983:16) notes, "One of the most enduring pieces of data about street crime is that they are overwhelmingly committed by the unemployed and underemployed."

The evidence linking traditional crime to unemployment is impressive. In a series of brilliant studies, M. Harvey Brenner (1975, 1976) has shown that between 1920-1940 and 1947-1973, in the United States, Canada, England, Wales, and Scotland, there has been a significant direct relationship between unemployment and a wide variety of measures of criminal activity.

Brenner's research is not limited to an examination of the relationship between unemployment and crime. He has also demonstrated, in a study of New York mental patients over a period of 127 years, that the only significant factor accounting for

the rise and fall in admissions to mental hospitals is employment (Brenner, 1973). In addition, he has shown that such diverse phenomena as cardiovascular disease, suicide, and child abuse are correlated most highly with unemployment rates. Brenner, however, makes the strongest claims regarding the existence of significant causal impacts of the economy on traditional crime. In a report to the Joint Economic Committee of the U.S. Congress, Brenner (1975) argued that a 1.4% rise in unemployment during 1970 was "directly responsible" for 7,660 state prison admissions and 1,740 homicides. Later in the same study, he concludes that a 1% increase in unemployment sustained over six years would be associated with approximately 3,340 admissions to state prisons.

Other recent studies corroborate Brenner's findings. for example, the U.S. Bureau of Prisons has reported a correlation of .77 between their inmate population and the unemployment rate for 15 months earlier over a 20 year period. The Bureau's report (1975) argues that unemployment can be shown to be an effective predictor (if not cause) of the crime rate. Phillips, Votey, and Maxwell (1972:503) have demonstrated through the methods of econometrics that a "...labor force/not-in-the-labor force formulation has greater explanatory power than the not working formulation, demonstrating the importance of participation rates relative to unemployment rates in explaining crime rates." This is because unemployment rates underestimate the actual number of people out of work. Thus, labor force participation may be a crucial element in "... explaining crime because participation rates capture long-term trends as opposed to cyclical, short-run fluctuations that are more likely to be reflected by unemployment rates"

ployment and traditional crime can also be linked to the notion of a structurally generated "surplus population" by way of "segmented labor market theories." Conventional economics uses a "human capital" theory to explain labor market success and crime (labor market failure). This model, of course, hypothesizes that potential offenders behave like rational economic actors. That is, they choose between legal and illegal options after weighing the costs and benefits of each. This model also argues that labor market success is related to individual differences in productivity. Productive workers, of course, are rewarded with jobs and high wages. Workers become more productive by acquiring a stock of human capital (education, training skills, work experience). In this profoundly individualistic view, workers who fail to "invest" their time acquiring human capital will be forced to settle for low wage jobs or unemployment. Crime, then, is a rational economic decision which can be deterred by increasing the costs (punishment) to the individual.

Segmented labor market theories, on the other hand, argue that the source of structural unemployment and chronic poverty lies in the heavy constraints exerted on individuals by structural economic conditions. As Doeringer and Piore (1975:72) point out, "...the problem of unemployment is rooted less in individual behavior (the failure to acquire human capital) than in the character of institutions and the social patterns that derive from them." Segmented labor market theories see capitalist economies as divided into two distinct markets. The primary market offers jobs with high wages, good working conditions, stability, security, and opportunity for advancement. The secondary

(Thompson, Sviridoff, and McElroy, 1981:52).

How can the empirical relationship between joblessness and crime be explained. First and Foremost, critical criminologists point out that unemployment enhances the attractiveness of crime as a source of income. As Michalowski (1983:16) notes, unemployment "...depresses wages to the level that some prefer crime over seeking out low-paying jobs, while increasing the temptation to commit crime for those who are unemployed or able to find only sporadic or part-time work." Second, Michalowski (1983:17) argues that unemployment:

...tends to isolate individuals from full integration into the society, thus weakening the social bond between the individual and the society. Thus, even where individuals are not in desperate economic situation, their marginalization provides fertile ground for the growth of criminal incentives.

In addition, Michalowski notes that the expectations of unemployment among youth who have not yet sought jobs can produce the same sense of marginalization. Finally, Michalowski (1983:17) points out:

"...the loss of self-worth associated with being without work is often a basis for a generalized anger which can find its expression in crime and violence, when it is not turned inward through such things as depression, addiction, mental illness, and alcoholism."

At the theoretical level, these findings on the relationship between unem-

sector has jobs which are decidedly less attractive. According to Piore (1977:94) "They tend to involve low wages, poor working conditions, considerable variability in employment, harsh and arbitrary discipline, and little opportunity to advance. The poor are confined to the secondary labor market."

It is the existence of dual or segmented labor markets under advanced capitalism that generates the surplus population. The structural unemployment and under-employment of the secondary labor market breeds the social conditions conducive to traditional crime described by Michalowski. Under such a view, crime prevention policies should not be directed toward individuals (increasing the costs of illegal behavior), but instead toward the economic and political structure which generates illegal behavior. As Thompson, Sviridoff, and McElroy (1981:19) point out:

The disagreement between conventional economics and the SLM theories is not so much over whether individual labor market participants, especially the poor, are acting "rationally" in committing crime, but over whether it is necessary to account for an array of structural, institutional, organizational features of the economy in order to arrive at a satisfactory explanation of economic behavior.

Structured Inequality and Relative Deprivation

Thus far, it has been argued that traditional crime is rooted in the political economy of advanced capitalist society. The class structure and segmented labor market of capitalist society system-

atically generates a surplus population which is faced with structured unemployment and chronic poverty and turns to crime as either a means for survival or as a response to the brutalized social conditions of life it experiences. While this theoretical statement constitutes a strong explanation for traditional crime, it remains incomplete. To this statement we must now add the concepts of structured income inequality and relative deprivation.

There is a growing body of empirical evidence which shows a high correlation between income inequality and official rates of crime. What is especially interesting to note about this research is that it reveals a direct relationship between income inequality and rates of violent crime, as well as rates of property crime. For example, Messner (1980), in a cross-national study, demonstrates a significant effect of income inequality on societal murder rates. As he puts it (1980:193), "The data, in short, indicate that high murder rates tend to accompany high levels of inequality in the distribution of income." Furthermore, when Messner entered a measure of the overall affluence or poverty of the population into the regression equation, the effects of the inequality variable did not disappear. In an earlier, less sophisticated cross-national study, McDonald (1976) also found a positive association between income inequality and the murder rate.

Research on income distribution and crime rates within the United States supports the proposition that income inequality is a significant determinant of serious criminality. Danziger and Wheeler (1975:113) used an econometric model to test the hypothesis that "...shifts toward a greater degree of inequality in the

distribution of income and increases in the absolute level of income when the distribution is constant, are both accompanied by more crime." They analyzed the United States for the period 1949-1970 and found that "...fluctuations in crime rates are generated by changes in the level and distribution of income in the manner predicted by the theory" (1975:113). Loftin and Hill (1974) present evidence to show that economic inequality is the most important predictor of homicide rates when American states are compared. Both Eberts and Schwirian (1968) and Braithwaite (1979) demonstrate that United States Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSAs) with a high level of income inequality have high crime rates. In a more recent study, Blau and Blau (1982:121) present data on the 125 largest American SMSAs which show that "...income inequality in a metropolis substantially raises its rate of criminal violence." They conclude (1982:126) "High rates of criminal violence are apparently the price of racial and economic inequalities.

These studies add an important dimension to our understanding of the relationship between economic conditions and crime. It is the distribution of income which appears to be the primary variable which explains this relationship. Poverty, per se, does not explain traditional crime. It is the degree of inequality which is the important factor here, not the size of the poverty population. The crimes of the poor, therefore, may be less a matter of survival than of relative deprivation. As Braithwaite (1979:216-217) notes this is a finding of some theoretical significance:

The finding that the size of the gap between the average income earner and poor families is correlated with

crime, but not the number who are poor, is of considerable theoretical importance. It may be that, when there are only a small number of poor families in a city, these families feel a far more acute sense of missing out on the benefits of the Great Society than do poor families who are in cities where they are surrounded by many other families in exactly the same plight. Policies that reduce the number of poor people should certainly reduce the propensity to crime of those people lifted out of poverty, but do they at the same time create even greater despair, frustration, and criminality amongst those who remain poor?

The importance of the concept of relative deprivation in explanations of the relationship between economic factors and crime was recognized as far back as the time of Quetelet and Guerry (Messner, 1980). Marxian criminologists have made use of the concept too. Bonger (1916:91) pointed out that, "it is not the total amount of wealth, but the manner of its distribution that bears most importantly upon criminality." In summary of Bonger's work, Austin Turk (1969:11) commented: "The potency of economic want as a factor in crime causation is mainly determined by whether or not poverty is experienced as relative deprivation, in a social context (capitalism) wherein people are taught to equate economic advantage with intrinsic superiority and disadvantage with inferiority."

Much of the literature on relative deprivation and crime suggests that this formulation can best be used to explain property crime. And indeed, there is a considerable amount of empirical evidence

to support this proposition (Chester, 1976). However, many of the studies reviewed above demonstrate that there is a strong relationship between income inequality, relative deprivation, and rates of violent crime too. As Blau and Blau (1982:122) point out "...the relative deprivation produced by much inequality rather than the absolute deprivation produced by much poverty provides the most fertile soil for criminal violence." The social process inferred by Blau and Blau is that inequality creates alienation, despair, and pent-up aggression which is often expressed in acts of criminal violence. As they note (1982:119):

Ascriptive socioeconomic inequalities undermine the social integration of a community by creating multiple parallel social differences which widen the separations between ethnic groups and between social classes, and it creates a situation characterized by much social disorganization and prevalent latent animosities. Pronounced ethnic inequality in resources implies that there are great riches within view, but not within reach of many people destined to live in poverty. There is much resentment, frustration, hopelessness, and alienation.

From the critical perspective, these structured inequalities which result in perceptions of relative deprivation are rooted in the political economy of capitalist society. Thus, only radical social structural change can reduce the level of inequality and hence reduce the level of crime. Before this suggestion and other crime prevention policies which flow from a Marxist analysis of crime can be discussed, however, it is important to

examine one final dimension of the perspective's approach to crime causation.

The Destruction of Cooperative Social Relationships and Community

The structural level forces we have been examining must be the starting point for any analysis of crime, as the critical perspective rightly insists. There are, however, other levels of analysis that must also be considered. Paul Friday (1981:191) argues that theories of crime tend to focus on one of three possible levels: The structural level, the system level, and the individual level. Structural level theories, such as Marxism, attempt to explain crime as a product of forces external to the individual and beyond his or her control. Political economy, structural unemployment, and income inequality are examples of structural level forces. System level theories explain crime as a function of social institutions such as the family, peer groups, community organizations, and schools. As Friday (1981:191) points out: "Each of the system forces are directly related to structural conditions, but the individual has some interaction with a unit of each system, and has some impact on that unit in turn." The final level is the individual level, which consists of theories which focus on the conditions surrounding the act itself.

An adequate theory of crime, and one that will have the greatest policy implications, is one which succeeds in integrating these levels, demonstrating the linkages between them. As Friday (1981:192) notes "Explanations which have been restricted to only one level of analysis have limited utility." The Marxist explanation of crime, therefore, cannot remain forever on

the structural level. The theory must explain how larger political and economic structures impact on systems level institutions and on individuals. While the structural forces discussed above are the centerpiece of a Marxist theory of crime, we need to understand how these forces are mediated through other social institutions and the processes by which these forces differentially shape the conditions surrounding the individual act. For as Friday (1981:194) points out:

The individual act cannot be explained directly by the urban industrial structural conditions. These conditions, none-the-less, contribute indirectly to it by differentially affecting the institutions responsible for developing commitments to conformity: the family, school community groups, and work. Forces affecting the criminal act at the institutional level reflect the fact that all societies have norms and expectations which are learned through socialization in the family, in school, and through voluntary and neighborhood groups in the community.

Critical criminologists, in general, have been slow to address this issue. They are content to remain at the level of the political and economic structure since the social formation as a whole is so often ignored in criminological theory. A few critical criminologists, however, have started to explore the relationships between the larger structures of society and its "soft" institutions, and the implications of these relationships for criminality. For example, Elliott Currie (1982) has noted the relationship between economic conditions, family life, and developmental disturbances. One parent (usually female)

families, according to Currie (1982:22) "...produce a disproportionate amount of aggression and violence in children not because they have one parent or because that parent is a woman, but because they typically lack enough outside resources, human and material, to insure an adequate developmental environment." The developmental disturbances that result in crime, according to Currie, are not attributable to the absence of the father, but to the stresses and lack of support systems that alter family functioning. "The same developmental damage" argues Currie (1982:22) "is equally likely to take place in two parent families plagued by severe internal conflict or abuse."

The family, in other words, is being buffeted and often ripped apart by larger structural conditions such as unemployment, inequality, and alienation. And the impact of such forces is not confined to the family, but affects peer relationships, schools, and community organizations, as well. Under monopoly capitalism, cooperative social relationships within these social institutions are destroyed. As Tony Platt (1978:31) points out:

Monopoly capitalism emiserates increasingly larger portions of the working class and proletarianizes the lower strata of the petty bourgeoisie, degrades workers' skills and competency in the quest for higher productivity, and organizes family and community life on the basis of its most effective exploitability. It consequently makes antagonism rather than reciprocity the norm of social relationships.

Under the political economy of advanced capitalism, Platt (1978:31) goes on to

argue, "...family and peer relationships become even more brutal and attenuated." All individual, family, and social needs become subordinated to the market and reshaped to serve the needs of capital. Capitalist development results in the atomization of social life and human cooperative relationships are increasingly replaced by impersonal market transactions (Braverman, 1974). These conditions exert enormous pressures and strains on the family in particular, and they are profoundly hostile to all feelings of community in general. Delinquency, violence, and other forms of social pathology are the direct result of the material foundations of cooperative social relations in capitalist society. As Michalowski (1983:14) notes:

The frustration, alienation, and sense of competitiveness generated by socially-structured inequality most often turns the less powerful against one another, either in emulation of the predatory, exploitive, and apparently rewarding practices of the more powerful, or in simple expression of impotent fury with their lives. Humans do not generally attack the person or property of those with whom they feel a sense of community. Inequality, however, tends to destroy community, thus making almost anyone fair game to exploit for personal ends ... This propensity is fueled by both ideological and material forces which tend to weaken or even prevent the emergence of any real sense of solidarity with the working class.

Another dimension to this analysis is added by T. R. Young (1978). He argues that the loss of social standing or social significance of individuals under capital-

ism is the key to understanding traditional crime (1978:11):

It is not the poverty of the surplus population which is the interesting dynamic in crime - poor people in Japan and China don't commit crime. The important variable is the loss of social standing (social honor, social significance, social status, Stande or social relationships) which is the central dynamic. One does not rape, rob, or assault those who have social standing in the eyes of the aggressor.

As Young (1978:11) goes on to note:

It is intrinsic to the nature of capitalism that social relationships and community be destroyed in a society. If one has nothing to exchange in a capitalistic society, one is not provided goods and services. Social standing depends upon funds - without cash or credit one is denied standing by virtue of the rule of capitalism: exchange for profit. Community is destroyed as well. In folk society, the surplus value of labor is used to provide community in the form of ceremonies, festivities, games, and other collective endeavor. In capitalism, the surplus value of labor is appropriated to the capitalist or to his/her agent for private use rather than communal use.

...With the loss of social relationship and community; with the individualism of the capitalist mode; with the use of every social good or service as commodity, the self-centered quest for material wealth we call crime proliferates.

As these writings suggest, Marxist or

critical criminologists are beginning to come to grips with the question of how structural forces impact on systems level institutions as part of a complex process of crime causation. The political and economic structures of capitalist society are viewed as undermining cooperative social relationships within the family, peer groups, and the community. These structural forces, thus, differentially affect the ability of these institutions to effectively socialize the young and develop role relationships conducive to non-criminal behavior. It is at this point that mainstream criminological theory might be able to be integrated into a Marxian theory of crime. And it is also at this point, that critical criminologists may be able to develop more specific crime control policies. It is to this issue of crime control policy that we now turn.

CRIME PREVENTION POLICY: A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

If the social structure is an important constraint on the behavior of individuals and institutions, then there are limits to the change that is possible to induce in individuals or institutions without changing the social structure. Vocational training for prisoners for instance, will not eradicate unemployment or do away with low wage industries. Even when individuals can be helped the larger problem remains. To deal with crime by "treating" individuals is like trying to empty the ocean with a bucket (Greenberg, 1981:18).

The arguments of this paper, thus far, can be briefly summarized. First of all, the question of "law and order", of the

prevention of traditional street crime, is both real and important. For too long, critical criminologists have not addressed themselves seriously to the problem of street crime, and the fears and anxieties it produces for people in their everyday lives. Furthermore, the victims of such crime are disproportionately members of the working classes in late capitalist societies. The victimization and demoralization of working class neighborhoods and popular anxieties about crime within society as a whole must be a major concern of critical criminology.

Second, this paper has argued that most traditional crime control policies and programs, based on individualistic perspectives on crime, are doomed to failure. Approaches to crime prevention which attempt to punish or treat individual actors cannot succeed, in the long run, in reducing criminal behavior. This is because criminal behavior is rooted in the fundamental structural features of a society, especially in the political and economic structure of late capitalist societies.

This point leads to a third element of the paper's argument. There is now developing a critical theory of traditional crime which advances considerably our understanding of this kind of crime. A rough outline of this theory was sketched out above and the empirical research lending support to it (not all of it by critical criminologists to be sure) was reviewed. The question that now needs to be addressed is what implications does such a theory have for crime prevention policy?

Although space limitations prevent an extended discussion, several crime prevention strategies that flow from the critical theory outlined above are presented. Two

distinct levels are addressed. First, a broad societal level which concerns major changes in the political and economic organization of late capitalist societies is discussed. Second, the question of specific policies within existing capitalistic structures is considered.

The Reconstruction of Socialist Policy

Progressive criminologists generally agree that any resolution to the contemporary problems of crime will necessitate some form of transition to some form of socialism. This view is based on the recognition that both working class varieties of common crime and the more organized and destructive forms of social injury committed by, or in service to, the powerful are grounded in the social conflicts and exploitative relations that characterize life in class society. (Mischalowski, 1983:13)

If traditional crime is indeed rooted in the structural features of capitalist society, one obvious solution to the crime problem would seem to be radical structural change. Many Marxist criminologists have argued that the overthrow of capitalism and its replacement by socialism will leave society crime free. Stripped of its utopian overtones, there is considerable merit to this idea. It can be argued convincingly that there would be far less crime in a more equal, more just, socialist society. As the British criminologist Ian Taylor (1982:xv-xvi) has put it:

So - although it will appear as a dogmatism - we can assert that the essential significance of a very high rate of interpersonal and property

violence in a society is that it expresses the lack of socialism in the personal and social relations of that society. And we can define the absent socialism here, quite conventionally, as a political and social formation which guarantees equality of life-chances and mutual regard between people, irrespective of race, age, and sex. It is the obverse, therefore, of the conditions that exist in an unreformed class society like Britain today.

From this perspective, therefore, the single best crime prevention strategy would be to replace capitalism with socialism. Aside from the fact that this is an exceedingly simplistic idea, there are problems with the notion that socialism will drastically reduce the level of crime in society. As Braithwaite (1979:243) has argued, "...the overthrow of capitalism is not a panacea for crime which knows no limitations. The overthrow of capitalism creates merely the potential for a more equal and less segregated society." Braithwaite goes on to point out that gross inequalities in wealth and power persist in the so-called socialist societies that do exist, and the available evidence suggests that the lower classes in these societies also have the highest rate of crime.

One obvious problem in this kind of discussion is the fact that there are many different conceptions of socialism and many different existing social formations that call themselves socialist. There does appear to be, however, two major traditions of modern socialism, both of which are seriously deficient, according to Alan Hunt (1982:16):

The "revolutionary" tradition looks to

a revolutionary upheaval which has not come and which seems more distant today than it was when the socialist movement was born. The "social democratic" tradition, after long and varied experiences of exercising governmental power in many European nations, has not produced any decisive social, political or economic change that reveals the possibility of a new socialist order. Indeed, in their different ways, both traditions have created political and state systems that are distant from the people and have not released democratic and popular participation in social, economic, and political life. The authoritarianism of the socialism of the East and the paternalism of the socialism of the West have both contributed to an undermining of the popular appeal of socialism.

If the creation of a socialist society is to be a primary way of reducing traditional crime (among many other social problems) then we will have to develop a new socialist tradition, one which will release democratic and popular participation in social, political and economic life. As Taylor (1982) has argued, we need to have a "reconstruction of socialist policy." The argument for socialism once again, has to be made. This time, however, socialists will have to develop a more specific blueprint for a democratic socialist society which offers a positive alternative conception of the Welfare State to replace the "tattered and discredited reality we still defend." (Deacon, 1981:46).

What would a "reconstructed socialist policy" look like? What elements would it contain? Again, space prohibits an extended

discussion, but we can examine some of the arguments Taylor (1981; 1982) has advanced in Law and Order: Arguments for Socialism and elsewhere. First of all, Taylor clearly rejects the anti-statism of a libertarian character which ran through much of the early literature of the radical criminologists (Hunt, 1982). He (1981:100) insists upon "...the recognition of a state form as a necessary element in the administration of complex industrial societies...". Thus, in the current period it is important to enter into the struggle over state policy in all areas. Secondly, Taylor argues the necessity of "social order" and thus of the necessity for some form of criminal justice apparatus. The issue, for him, is to create a "new" social order ("a social order for all", p. 123) and a democratization of the criminal justice process.

The key element in Taylor's socialist strategy is the thoroughgoing democratization of the entire social order. This aspect of social reconstruction must begin at the local level to fulfill immediate, pressing needs. Economic decision-making must be democratized. Production must be organized rationally to fulfill continuing and often unmet social needs for goods, services, and employment. This notion of economic democracy has recently taken hold over the left in the United States. The essence of economic democracy is to transfer economic decision-making from the few to the many; from private groups to public councils; from the corporate elite to workers, consumers, and local communities. Economic democracy, thus, requires, "the shift of investment control from corporate domination to the public; and the reconstruction of economic decision making through democratic worker - and worker/consumer - controlled production"

(Carnoy and Shearer, 1980:4).

The state itself, according to Taylor, will have to be democratized from within. This would include such things as the democratization of policing, of the staffing of correctional centers, and even of the judiciary. Over and over, Taylor stresses the importance of the state in the reconstruction of socialist policy. He is aware of the Dangers of reformism, but he underlines (1982:xviii) "...the importance of creating a set of demands for alternative and socialist arrangements in every area in which the state imposes itself on the citizens of our unequal class society."

The reconstruction of socialist policy as outlined by Taylor is an important source of ideas about what kind of socialist society might replace late capitalism and even welfare state capitalism. These ideas and others must now be worked over, developed, and linked to a viable political strategy if we are serious about creating a new social order in which there will be far less crime (and far fewer social pathologies in general) than we currently experience under the political economy of capitalism. As Taylor (1982:13) points out, however, this will take a lot of hard work to accomplish:

A vast amount of work needs to be done on the reconstruction of orthodox socialist policy. But the required features of any reconstructed social democracy are clear: the fragmented working class will only be mobilized when it sees an economic and social strategy which transparently (and therefore democratically) fulfills its immediate, pressing social needs. The socialism which does this must obviously be clearly distinguishable

from the authoritarian state form or "social deomocracy" of the earlier period, constructed in defense of an allegedly equal partnership of capital and labor. ...A popular desire for such a socialism may emerge out of the process of community dislocation, which is now in full flow in capitalist societies, but it will require socialists working in political parties and engaging openly and publicly in ideological struggles against the Right in order to sustain and advance it.

Specific Policies to Fight Crime

While the reconstruction of socialist policy in the west is critically important, it is only one level at which work must go on. If we are truly concerned about reducing the amount of traditional crime that plagues our societies and alleviating the victimization of working class neighborhoods, we must formulate and fight for specific policies that will operate right now, within the structure of the existing political economy. These policies will hopefully be, in Taylor's (1982) words, "prefigurative socialist programs," but the criterion by which we should judge them is whether or not they will reduce crime.

The specific recommendations to be presented here, are derived primarily from a recent article by American criminologist Elliot Currie (1982). He lists three key areas of intervention which recent evidence point to as likely to have the greatest effect on crime rates. These areas of intervention are the labor market, the family, and the network of community supports. Each will be discussed in turn.

The first and most important recommendation that can be made to reduce existing capitalist societies is to recommend the adoption of a full employment policy. As Currie (1982:21) notes concerning the situation in the United States, "It's hardly accidental that every advanced society with a lower level of violent crime than ours has also historically had a much more effective and humane employment policy providing better cushions against the disintegrative and degrading effects of 'market' forces." Attaining a full employment economy is not only a major step toward a less crime ridden society, it is, as Michael Harrington (1980:82) has pointed out, the "precondition" of any progressive solution to the problems which confront late capitalist society.

The central importance of a full employment policy in reducing crime appears to be well understood in the west. Yet there is little movement toward such a policy, especially in the United States and Great Britain. The main reason for this is the fact that governments in capitalist societies prefer to rely on the private sector to produce jobs. The private sector, however, as has been well demonstrated (See Harrington, 1980), cannot and will not move us in the direction of full employment. The only way a full employment economy can be reached is through the provision of public jobs and planned social investment. Even the Reagan administration in the U.S. began to get that message, and in early 1983, backed the passage of a public jobs bill (a rather inadequate jobs bill, but a jobs bill nonetheless). More such bills are necessary if we are at all serious about reducing crime.

Still, the provision of jobs alone is not the only issue to be considered from a

crime prevention standpoint. As Currie (1982:21) points out, "The economic context of crime is not just the rate of unemployment itself, but the more general conditions of the secondary labor market." He reviews a RAND study of California "repeaters" which illustrates the strengths of this connection. As Currie (1982:21) notes:

This [study] suggests that job quality and stability are the real issues. Simply forcing the urban unemployed into new variants of low-wage, menial labor as much current [Reagan] administration urban policy proposes, won't begin to come to grips with urban crime. Nor can we expect much help from a strategy of general economic expansion if it doesn't include well-targeted employment and training programs for the kinds of people typically left behind.

A strong jobs policy, therefore, one that deals with the issue of job quality and stability, must be our first order response to the crime problem (especially youth crime). The state must be pressured to pursue this course. Not only is it more effective to create jobs than to build prisons, but it is also less expensive. The left must stay the course on this issue and attempt to counter the resistance of the private sector to public jobs programs.

A second area of intervention to reduce crime, according to Currie is the family. Given the evidence of the fragmentation of families and the developmental disturbances that can occur within them due to the adverse impact of economic factors, it is important to develop comprehensive multi-service programs for high risk families. Currie (1982:22) quotes psychologist E. M.

Hetherington who has said, "it is critical to develop social policies and intervention procedures that will reduce stresses and develop new support systems for single parent families." Currie (1982:22) then comments that "changing the pinched and deeply stressful state of dependent poor families can have an impact on youth crime in fairly short order."

What kind of service programs for dependent poor families would help to reduce crime? Currie cites the Child and Family Resource Programs (CFPR) sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare as an exemplar. These programs provided the following kinds of services to poor families: crisis intervention, education against child abuse, family counseling, Head Start and tutoring programs, meals for children, and pre- and post-natal health counseling. All of these programs were designed to encourage parent involvement in policymaking. The results of these programs, overall, were excellent. Currie (1982:23) cites the conclusions of a U.S. Government Accounting Office evaluation of CFPR in summarizing the impact of family intervention programs on crime rates:

The GAO argued that these early childhood intervention programs would reduce delinquency mainly through improving early parent-child relations and school performance, and both possibilities fit well with what a growing body of research has to say about family and developmental influences on youth and adult crime. We don't know how much crime we could prevent by developing a better range of supports for early child development. We do know that there are very good reasons for expecting the effects to be substantial.

In addition to the family, a third area of intervention for crime reduction is the network of community supports. Although "community" has become a kind of predictable buzzword on both the left and right, and although just about everybody agrees that "community" is important in preventing crime, Currie (1982:23) argues that "...nearly everyone has a different conception of what community means and what might be done to create or restore it." He reviews the variety of community crime prevention programs initiated in the United States in the 1970s by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA). The results of these efforts, he argues, were ambiguous. He sees nothing wrong in principle with such programs as "Neighborhood Watch" or the organization of civilian anti-crime patrols, but he cautions that such programs are "...likely to have limited impact as long as the larger forces ripping apart the community's infrastructure are left intact."

What's most important in community crime prevention, according to Currie (1982:24), are "the broader forces that make for community stability and sustain local social networks." He argues (1984:24) that, "one of the most damaging flaws in liberal thinking about social policy has been its tendency to downplay the importance of social bonds and communal supports in preventing or mitigating social pathology." A number of radical criminologists, in addition to Currie, have recently echoed these sentiments and have begun exploring the issue of community crime prevention (Browning, 1982, Bute, 1982, Gross, 1982).

The most compelling approach to crime prevention on the community level,

according to Currie, is the idea of creating "mediating structures" to prevent various kinds of social pathologies. By "mediating structures" is meant intermediate institutions such as neighborhoods, kinship structures, and ethnic organizations, which lay between individuals and larger bureaucratic structures. One example cited by Currie is Philadelphia's House of Umoja, a community based residential program for black youth gang members. Reviewing the evidence on the crime-preventing role of "mediating structures", Currie (1982:24) concludes:

A large and growing body of research has demonstrated the importance of communal networks of support in mitigating the impact of social and economic stress, with very significant consequences not only for crime, but for physical and mental health as well.

A number of cross-national studies also suggest the significance of community networks of support in preventing crime. Currie (1984:24) points to Japan and Switzerland, and argues that the low crime rates in these two countries can be traced back to the fact that economic development in these nations appears to have taken place "within the bounds of pre-existing ties of kinship and local community." Currie (1982:25) concludes that, "One clear implication of this is that much could be gained, over the long term, through integrating community programs specifically designed for crime prevention with broader strategies of locally based economic development."

**CONCLUSION: THE STATE MUST SERVE AS A
POSITIVE FORCE FOR CRIME PREVENTION**

Critical criminologists argue that the causes of traditional crime are located in the political and economic structure of capitalist society. A reduction in crime, therefore, depends upon major political and economic changes. The crime prevention strategies recommended in this paper all require positive interventions by the state in the social and economic organization of society. In all Western nations, particularly in the United States and Great Britain, conservatives, both in and out of government, insist that "government" is powerless to do anything about the causes of crime; that the governments' only proper role is to punish offenders and maintain law and order. As Currie (1982:25) points out, however:

In fact, of course, the opposite is true. "Government" in the United States is already deeply implicated in policies that cause families and communities to disintegrate, and in deflecting policies that might help hold them together. "Government," indeed, can fairly be said to have followed a pro-crime policy for years. Government tax and subsidy policies supported the vast uprooting of population through a "modernization" of agriculture closely entwined with the disintegration of the social fabric of the cities. Government spurred the out-migration of industry and jobs that aggravated it further. Government regularly induces unemployment, community decline, and geographic uprooting in the service of the putative fight against inflation. Government helps subsidize the multinationals' cataclysmic reordering of social life in the "developing" world... Under the auspices of the right, "government"

will certainly do so even more, by aligning itself ever more closely with the most disintegrative forces of the private market.

In support of the interests of capital the state promotes policies that bear a large part of the responsibility for the high levels of crime and violence that plague many western nations. But the state is not simply a tool or instrument of capitalistic interests. The state in late capitalism is an autonomous power and an object of class struggle. Critical criminologists and the left in general must enter into the struggle over state policy. It is only through political action and pressure on a variety of fronts that we will be able to achieve significant reforms now and the eventual democratization of the social order as a whole in the future. Not only do we hope to achieve a more equal and just society in this process, but also a significant reduction in the level of traditional crime. While the punishment (even by incarceration) of individuals surely has a place in any future crime control strategy, as does the rehabilitation or treatment of troubled individuals, only the kind of structural changes proposed by critical criminologists will alleviate the victimization of our society by crime.

REFERENCES

- Auletta, Ken
1982 The Underclass. New York:
Vintage Books.
- Blau, Judith R. and Peter M.

- 1982 "The Cost of Inequality: Metropolitan Structure and Violent Crime". American Sociological Review, 47 (February): 114-128.
- Bonger, William
1916 Criminality and Economic Conditions. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Braithwaite, John
1979 Inequality, Crime, and Public Policy. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Braithwaite, John
1981 "The Myth of Social Class and Criminality Reconsidered". American Sociological Review, 46 (February): 36-57.
- Braverman, Harry
1974 Labor and Monopoly Capital. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Brenner, M. Harvey
1973 Mental Illness and the Economy. Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press.
- Brenner, M. Harvey
1975 "Estimating the Social Costs of National Economic Policy: Implications for Mental and Physical Health and Criminal Aggression." Prepared for the Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the U.S. Paper No. 5. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office (October).
- Brenner, M. Harvey
1976 "Effects of the Economy on Criminal Behavior and the Administration of Criminal Just-

ice in the United States, Canada, England and Wales, and Scotland." Prepared for the United Nations Social Defense Research Institute. Economic Crises and Crime. Publication No. 15. Rome: UNSDRI (May).

Browning, Frank
1982 "Nobody's Soft on Crime Anymore." Mother Jones, 7 (August): 24-31, 40-41.

Bute, Joseph
1982 "Crime and Community: Strategies for the Left." Crime and Social Justice, 18 (Winter): 34-36.

Carnoy, Martin and Derek Shearer
1980 Economic Democracy, White Plains, NY: M. E. Sharpe.

Chester, C. Ronald
1976 "Perceived Relative Deprivation as a Cause of Property Crime." Crime and Delinquency, 22 (January): 17-30.

Currie, Elliott
1982 "Fighting Crime." Working Papers. 9 (July/August): 16-25.

Danziger, Sheldon and David Wheeler
1975 "The Economics of Crime: Punishment or Income Redistribution." Review of Social Economy, 33 (October): 113-131.

Deacon, Bob
1981 "Social Administration, Social Policy and Socialism." Critical Social Policy, 1 (1) (Summer): 43-66.

- Doeringer, Peter B. and Michael J. Piore
1971 Internal Labor Markets and Man-
power Analysis. Lexington, Ma.:
D. C. Heath.
- Eberts, Paul, and Kent P. Schwirian
1968 "Metropolitan Crime Rates and
Relative Deprivation."
Criminologica, 5 (February): 43-
52.
- Friday, Paul C.
1981 "Theoretical Issues in the Study
of Deviance and Social Control."
Pp. 187-223 in Helmut Kury,
Perspektiven und Probleme
Kriminologischer Forschung.
Bonn: Carl Heymanns Verlag K.G.
- Friday, Paul C.
1982 "Delinquency Prevention and
Social Policy." Pp. 36-51 in A.
Morris and H. Giller (eds.),
Providing Criminal Justice for
Children. London: Edward
Arnold.
- Greenberg, David F. (ed.)
1981 Crime and Capitalism: Readings
in Marxist Criminology. Palo
Alto, Ca.: Mayfield Publishing
Co.
- Gross, Bertram
1982 "Some Anticrime Proposals for
Progressives." Crime and Social
Justice, 17 (Summer): 51-54.
- Harrington, Michael
1980 Decade of Decision: The Crisis
of the American System. New
York: Simon and Schuster.
- Hunt, Alan
1982 "Law, Order, and Socialism: A

Response to Ian Taylor." Crime and Social Justice, 18 (Winter): 16-22.

Loftin, Colin and Robert H. Hill
1974 "Regional Subculture and Homicide: An Examination of the Gastil-Hackney Thesis." American Sociological Review, 39 (October): 714-724.

Marx, Karl
1867 Capital, Vol. 1. Translated by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling. New York: International Publishers. Reprinted, 1967.

McDonald, Lynn
1976 The Sociology of Law and Order. Boulder, Co.: Westview Press.

Messner, Steven F.
1980 "Income Inequality and Murder Rates: Some Cross-National Findings." Comparative Social Research, 3: 185-198.

Michalowski, Raymond J.
1983 "Crime Control in the 1980s: A Progressive Agenda." Crime and Social Justice, 19 (Summer): 13-23.

Phillips, Llad, Harold L. Votey, Jr., and Darold Maxwell
1972 "Crime, Youth, and the Labor Market." Journal of Political Economy, 80 (May/June): 491-503.

Piore, Michael J.
1977 "The Dual Labor Market: Theory and Implications." In David Gordon (ed.), Problems in Political Economy: An Urban Perspec-

tive. Lexington, Ma.: D. C. Heath.

Platt, Tony

1978 "'Street' Crime: A View from the Left." Crime and Social Justice, 9 (Spring-Summer): 26-34.

Platt, Tony

1982 "Crime and Punishment in the United States: Immediate and Long-term Reforms from a Marxist Perspective." Crime and Social Justice, 18 (Winter): 38-45.

Quinney, Richard

1980 Class, State, and Crime. Second Edition. New York: Longman.

Sutherland, Edwin H. and Donald R. Cressey

1978 Criminology. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company.

Taylor, Ian

1981 Law and Order: Arguments for Socialism. London: The Macmillan Press.

Taylor, Ian

1982 "Against Crime and For Socialism." Crime and Social Justice, 18 (Winter): 4-15.

Thompson, James W., Michelle Sviridoff and Jerome E. Mcelroy

1981 Employment and Crime: A Review of Theories and Research. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice.

Time Magazine

1977 "The American Underclass." Time, August 29: 14-27.

Tittle, Charles R., Wayne J. villemmez, and
Douglas A. Smith

1978 "The Myth of Social Class and
Criminality: An Empirical
Assessment of the Empirical
Evidence." American Socio-
logical Review, 43 (October):
643-656.

Turk, Austin T

1969 "Introduction." Pp. 3-20 in the
abridged edition of Willem
Bonger, Criminality and Economic
Conditions. Bloomington, In.:
Indiana University Press.

Young, T. R.

1978 "Crime and Capitalism." Red
Feather, Co.: The Red Feather
Institute.