The Ideological Context of Changing Juvenile Justice

Preston Elrod
University of North Carolina, Charlotte

Daryl Kelley
University of Nebraska, Kearney

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PRESTON ELROD

Department of Criminal Justice
University of North Carolina at Charlotte

DARYL KELLEY

Department of Sociology
University of Nebraska at Kearney

The ideological nature of juvenile justice policy is analyzed, including the domain assumptions of the predominant juvenile justice ideologies which presently inform juvenile justice policy development. Further, it is argued that the failure of present juvenile justice policies to effectively respond to the juvenile "crime problem" may lead to the opportunity to develop a more critically informed juvenile justice policy, one which is better able to meet the needs of clients and respond more effectively to juvenile crime. Finally, some of the essential elements of a critical juvenile justice ideology and practice capable of more realistically and humanely responding to juvenile crime are outlined.

Introduction

To those who have followed recent trends in juvenile justice, it seems trite to say that a heated conflict has fired the creative passions of both academicians and practitioners regarding the efficacy of the juvenile justice system. This conflict is found not only in journals, books and conferences concerned with juvenile justice but within the popular media and within the institutions, both national and local, which shape juvenile justice policy. By the mid–1980s juvenile justice entered what some have called a "watershed in terms of reform" where the liberal policies of the 1960s and 1970s were being successfully challenged by more conservative responses to delinquency (Krisberg, Schwartz, Litsky, and Austin, 1986). By the early 1990s the success of this

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more conservative response to delinquency was apparent as increasingly more youth were being formally processed by juvenile justice agencies (Maguire, Pastore, and Flanagan, 1993: 456) and subjected to more punitive responses such as incarceration (Krisberg, DeComo, and Herrera, 1991).

From a policy standpoint it should be recognized that the conservative response to the liberal policies of the 1960s and 1970s is predicated on more than new scientific evidence. The conservative reaction to liberal policies and the liberal response is to a large degree an ideological conflict (Krisberg et al., 1986) supported by eloquent rhetoric and empirical research; some of dubious scientific merit.

Although the influence of ideology on juvenile justice policy has been noted by a number of scholars (Fagan, 1990; Krisberg et al., 1986), with few exceptions, little attention has been given to an examination of the substantive content of these ideologies (see Krisberg et al., 1986; Miller, 1973). According to Miller (1973: 142) ideology is "a set of general or abstract beliefs or assumptions about the correct or proper state of things, particularly with respect to the moral order and political arrangements, which serve to shape one's positions on specific issues." Here, juvenile justice ideology refers to a general set of assumptions about why youth engage in delinquency and what the appropriate response to delinquency should be (cf., Bynum, Greene and Cullen, 1986; Dunaway and Cullen, 1991; Miller, 1973).

This research analyzes the role of ideology in policy development and the domain assumptions of the predominate juvenile justice ideologies which inform juvenile justice practice. In addition, we posit that the failure of the predominate juvenile justice ideologies to successfully respond to juvenile crime presents an opportunity for the development of a more critical juvenile justice policy. Finally, we outline an alternative critical juvenile justice ideology which calls for changes in juvenile justice policy capable of producing more realistic and humane responses to youth.

The Role of Ideology in Juvenile Justice Policy Development

The sociology of science serves as a heuristic model in understanding the role of ideology in juvenile justice policy

development. Many social scientists recognize that while facts and values can be logically separated, as Weber noted, in practice there is a relationship between the values of scientists and their research (Giddens, 1971). Indeed, the ideological nature of social research has been noted by scholars who contend that the adoption of a particular paradigmatic view of social life is a product of more than empirical evidence (Kuhn, 1970), or is, in part, a reflection of the social perspective and emotional attachments of the scientist (see Gouldner, 1970; Michalowski, 1977).

Within the realm of juvenile justice both policy-makers and other employees have their own beliefs about the causes of juvenile crime and appropriate responses to the "juvenile crime problem." These ideological beliefs allow policy-makers to develop and defend policies which are consonant with their own views of what is appropriate. Further, the ideological perspectives of policy-makers provide a mechanism by which they selectively evaluate the worth of social science research on crime (see Cullen and Gilbert, 1982). Just as social scientists find certain paradigms more compatible with their own social perspective (Michalowski, 1977), policy- makers find certain paradigms and research results to be more compatible with their social perspective.

Many observers of juvenile courts have probably witnessed this selectivity among policy-makers. For example, while working in a juvenile court, one of the authors was informed that a thorough evaluation of the court's detention unit was going to be undertaken. This announcement was precipitated by a series of events over several years which included detention staff abuse of residents, resident escapes, internal conflict between detention unit residents and staff, staff conflicts, and detention director resignations. After reviewing a list of potential evaluators, however, it was decided that some (e.g., NCCD) would not be acceptable because they were felt to be "too liberal." Court policy-makers argued that certain organizations would likely produce findings which would call into question detention unit or other court policies.

Such events draw into sharp contrast the different norms and values which are believed to characterize the scientific and academic worlds, and demarcates the point that the scientific analogy breaks down when explaining the policy development

process. Unlike the academy where many social scientists attempt to maintain a degree of objectivity, the goal of the policy-maker is often to be as subjective as possible. The world of the juvenile court administrator is often constrained by the internal polity of the court organization (e.g., judges and other individuals or groups in a position to influence court policy), its external polity (e.g., county council, politically powerful individuals or coalitions outside the court), the external economy (e.g., those conditions which determine the resources allocated to the court), and the internal economy of the court (e.g., the ways that organizational tasks are accomplished, some of which are mandated by law or administrative orders) (see Hasenfeld and Cheung, 1985). Information which questions the efficacy of ideologically driven policies can place judges, who are frequently elected, and local political leaders in a poor light. In addition, information which is critical of court policies can have a deleterious effect on funding, support for court operations and on the careers of policy-makers.

Also, many of those entrusted with the development of policy at the local level have little or no formal education in criminology or criminal justice. In such an environment, policy-makers may rely much less on sound research to act as a guide to policy development than the vagaries of their own ideological perspectives, their experience, and the more immediate political, social and economic environment within which they work. Some support for this argument has been reported by Hasenfeld and Cheung (1985) who found that juvenile court judges' ideological commitment to punishment was negatively related to court emphasis on due process and availability of court services.

Unlike the academy, the politically charged world of the policy-maker contains no normative requirement that the policy-maker be objective. Indeed, from the perspective of many policy-makers, good research and appropriate policy decisions are those which are congruent with the policy-maker's ideological position (see Cullen and Gilbert, 1982). In the policy world, a critical variable which influences policy development is the ideological orientation of the policy-maker and the immediate political and economic context within which they operate.

In regards to basic philosophical assumptions, scientists are apt to follow a single paradigm because paradigmatic shifts require accepting a different vision of reality. In contrast, within the policy sphere it is possible to find those who express a mixture of conservative, liberal, and at times critical beliefs, to find persons who vacillate between apparently opposing beliefs, or those who change their ideological perspective over time. It is even possible to find those with apparently opposing ideologies supporting the same policies at times, albeit for different reasons. For example, conservatives can support restitution programs because of their emphasis on victim needs and because such programs hold offenders and families accountable for the monetary costs related to their actions. Liberals can support these programs because of some belief in their rehabilitative effects.

Miller (1973: 142) posits that there is an ideological conflict between those on the left and those on the right which results from a clash of differing world views and represents the "permanent hidden agenda of criminal justice." We contend that at present there are two predominate juvenile justice ideologies, a conservative ideology and a liberal ideology, which form this hidden agenda and influence juvenile justice policy development. Consequently, the following sections examine the policy outcomes of these ideologies and their potential for informing workable juvenile justice policy.

The Conservative Juvenile Justice Ideology

The conservative juvenile justice ideology views society as stable and well-integrated since it rests upon the consensus of its members. Under these conditions, the law reflects a general agreement among people concerning what is harmful and tends to serve all people equally (see Michalowski, 1977, for a review of different criminological perspectives). Furthermore, the individual and the responsibilities of individuals are core ingredients of the conservative perspective. According to conservatives the individual has both the capacity and the obligation to choose between right and wrong (Carrington, 1983). Crime is voluntary; committed by a unique subgroup who have gone beyond collectively defined limits.

A key institution in the conservative ideology is the family which is responsible for teaching youth appropriate values. It is within the family that the fundamental values of taking personal responsibility for one's actions and its consequences, individual freedom, hard work, loyalty (especially to one's country), deference to authority and self-discipline are learned. Consequently, family life, and the protection of family life from external threats such as crime, are of crucial importance (see Miller, 1973).

The conservative juvenile justice ideology is theoretically championed by the work of Wilson and Herrnstein (1985) who propose that the causes of crime can be found in individual bio-logical and genetic differences and harmful early childhood ex-periences which result from ineffective parenting and individual inadequacy. It is also supported by a number of research stud-ies which indicate that many interventions for juvenile offenders are of limited effectiveness (Bailey, 1966; Lab and Whitehead, 1988; Lipton, Martinson, and Wilks, 1975; Martinson, 1974) and by the concomitant pronouncements of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) under the Reagan administration (see Regnery, 1985; 1986).

According to the conservative perspective, the primary obli-gation of the juvenile justice system is the protection of society from youthful offenders. In carrying out this obligation, con-servatives call for the curtailment of the rights of the accused in favor of the rights of the accuser, the enhancement of law enforcement's ability to make arrests which are likely to result in convictions, and increasing penalties for those convicted of crimes (for a review see Bortner, 1988).

At the policy level the conservative juvenile justice ideology calls for a number of changes in system goals and procedures; particularly those directed at the violent and chronic offender (Carrington, 1983). In their efforts to respond to the chronic offender, conservatives call for the criminalization of juvenile codes and procedures through the adoption of a more adversar-ial model of juvenile justice designed to increase the likelihood of conviction and punishment. Consequently, the conservative ideology recommends strengthening the position and effective-

ness of prosecuting attorneys within the juvenile court (see Rubin, 1980), developing mandatory sentencing guidelines, opening access to juvenile court records and procedures, and developing mechanisms to identify potentially violent or chronic offenders.

The corrections policy focus of the conservative juvenile justice ideology is directed toward deterrence through custodial care. It is based upon the belief that the juvenile justice system can be fine-tuned to control offenders through the application of classical deterrence theory, mandatory sentencing guidelines, and selective incapacitation strategies aimed at the violent and chronic offender. Moreover, since it is believed that rehabilitation and treatment have not worked, correctional programming is intended to be custodial, highly regimented, and punitive. Also, because correctional failures are blamed on liberal policies which lead to ineffective governmental responses, it is felt that correctional goals can be more effectively carried out in many instances by the private sector.

The Liberal Juvenile Justice Ideology

The liberal juvenile justice ideology takes a more complex view of social organization. Rather than viewing society as consensually organized, the liberal perspective is based on a pluralistic model. According to this model, society is composed of a number of social groups which at times have differing values and interests. While there is likely to be considerable disagreement in a pluralist society over substantive issues, a general consensus about the nature and operation of law and justice are said to exist. Consequently, the legal system under the pluralist perspective is seen as basically value-neutral (Michalowski 1977).

Fundamental to the liberal juvenile justice ideology is the belief that individuals are shaped to a large degree by the social conditions in which they live. According to the liberal ideology, the present organization of American society is imperfect which impedes its ability to meet the needs of many citizens (Bayer, 1981). However, liberals believe that improvements in problematic social arrangements can be mediated given enlightened liberal leadership.

The liberal juvenile justice ideology holds that governmental authority to apprehend and prosecute offenders must be carefully circumscribed so as not to deny any citizen, including juveniles, basic rights (cf., Bayer, 1981). Therefore, liberals seek to guarantee offenders rights at all stages of the juvenile justice process including post-conviction. Not only are these rights intended to protect the individual from excessive police powers but from the labeling and stigmatization that may result from system involvement. Primarily supported by mainstream criminological theory, the liberal juvenile justice ideology calls for research intended to enhance the smooth functioning of the system and to develop more effective juvenile treatment programs.

Liberals advocate for a range of services to youth in need including the criminal offender. At the juvenile justice system level, the juvenile court is conceptualized as a social service agency intended to act in the best interests of a range of youth (status offenders, neglected and abused youth) including criminal offenders. In addition, liberals believe that juvenile justice agencies have an obligation to protect community safety (Platt, 1977). Consequently, the liberal ideology sees the court as a multi-service agency or a multi-service brokering agency capable of meeting the needs of many youth in conjunction with other private and public agencies. The pursuit of the best interests of a range of youth requires a range of programs from diversion to day treatment to meet varying youth needs. The general approach of the juvenile court supported by liberal ideology is a mixture of social work and legal guidance which attempts to minimize the adversarial nature of the legal process.

The correctional focus supported by the liberal juvenile justice ideology is treatment and rehabilitation (Bayer, 1981). It is designed to provide re-educative services and is based primarily upon psychological, psychiatric and social work models focusing on individual and group treatment in both community-based and institutional settings.

The history of juvenile justice policy development suggests that a reliance on either liberal or conservative policies are unlikely to produce fundamental change in the "delinquency problem" since such policies do not address the social relations of capitalism which shape social conditions, social insti-

tutions and social policy (Krisberg and Austin, 1978; Liazos, 1974; Schwendinger and Schwendinger, 1979). However, as we approach the mid–1990s, the liberal and, particularly, the conservative policies which have played such an important role in the development of juvenile justice policy throughout the 1980s appear vulnerable. After some 15 years of conservative policies, a shift in juvenile justice policy can be expected in some jurisdictions as policy-makers wrestle with the failure of conservative policies to significantly reduce delinquency. Indeed, rather than solving the "juvenile crime problem" conservative policies are faced with the task of explaining what appears to be an increase in the rate of violent juvenile crime beginning in the late 1980s (Osgood, O'Malley, Bachman, and Johnston, 1989; Empey and Stafford, 1991), the type of crime conservative policies were specifically designed to address. Moreover, proponents of conservative policies must rectify the increasing costs associated with increased formal processing and punishment in light of their calls for fiscal restraint. It is this context which provides the opportunity for a more critically oriented juvenile justice policy.

The Critical Juvenile Justice Ideology

   Although there is considerable diversity in concerns and methods among those who identify themselves as being critical social scientists, there are domain assumptions which are widely shared by this group. Fay (1987) argues that a critical social science should include an ideological critique of the dominant perspective and an educative practice which will result in the empowerment of the oppressed. From a critical perspective this will change individuals who are then posed for collective action which would ultimately result in social transformation. The essential puzzle for critical social scientists is how to politically educate citizens whereby they can recognize and act upon their individual and collective interests. Within juvenile justice this requires actions which empower the clients (families, youth, victims and local community members) of juvenile justice to influence juvenile justice policy-making as well as actions which increase citizen participation in the local and wider political arenas.

The structural-historical context of juvenile justice which has been largely ignored by both conservatives and liberals serves as a starting point for the development of strategies which might be used in the development of a more critically informed juvenile justice policy. Critical social scientists examine both those institutions which comprise the youth control apparatus within a structural-historical framework (Platt, 1977) and the fundamental material conditions of capitalism which shape social relations, social institutions and social policy (see Liazos, 1974; Schwendinger and Schwendinger, 1979).

In examining the juvenile court the major focus of critical scholars has been a critique of the present system. Particular attention has been devoted to the analysis of race, class, and gender biases which permeate juvenile justice. Further, critical scholars have questioned both liberal and conservative policies which downplay prevention and emphasize formal processing, coercive treatment and punishment as solutions to delinquency (see Krisberg and Austin, 1993; Schwendinger and Schwendinger, 1979). Critical researchers do not deny the present need for correctional facilities, but de-emphasize the role of the state as a social control agent. As noted in the final section, the unmet challenge of the critical ideology is to address what needs to be done to achieve justice both within the juvenile justice process and the community, a process which relies much more on grass-roots political empowerment than state bureauracies.

The correctional focus of the critical paradigm cannot be spelled out since the juvenile justice system is to be transformed by democratic action which is a process, rather than a static state. However, the process can be outlined. Although a critical ideology begins with an understanding of the structural-historical context which shapes people's lives, the correctional focus needs to begin in the local community and focuses on reintegration rather than exclusion. Through a constructive dialogue which includes all of the voices of the community policies and programs can be enacted which reflect community needs.

With a few exceptions (e.g., Currie, 1985; Krisberg and Austin, 1978; Krisberg and Austin, 1993), exemplars of a critical approach to juvenile justice have been absent from past

policy dialogues. For the most part, critical works have relied on historical or documentary methods in the examination of juvenile justice, rather than applied research conducted on behalf of policy-makers. This is not surprising since as political outsiders, the ideas of critical social scientists are often labeled impractical, a label which serves as a criteria for exclusion from the policy dialogue. In order for a critical voice to be part of the on-going policy dialogue, changes within the academic discipline, within juvenile justice, and changes in the relationship between juvenile justice officials and critical researchers must be achieved. However, these changes can only be achieved through the active engagement of the critical researcher in the community. In the final section we outline the elements of a critical juvenile justice practice which can inform the policy-development process.

Pursuing a Critical Voice in Juvenile Justice Policy Development

Sociologists and social scientists from a variety of paradigmatic positions have argued that a crisis presently exists which will result in the creation of a new epistemology in social science (Nielsen, 1990; Harding, 1987; Elden and Chisholm, 1993; Stoecker and Bonacich, 1992). In the pursuit of social change, action, participatory, and feminist researchers have raised several methodological and epistemological issues which need to be fully addressed in implementing a critical protocol. Collectively this research has created a context of opportunity for implementing a critical approach. Essential to a critical approach is social action which holds the potential of social change by people who are transformed by the research process. It is beyond the scope of this paper to fully develop or compare and contrast the diverse methodologies which may be synthesized into a critical and liberative epistemology. The dialogue is ongoing and many of the issues will be resolved when maturity of practice is reached. However, listed below are some elements of a critical approach to juvenile justice.

First, we need to confront the methodological challenges issued by the action-oriented alternatives which will reshape

nearly all aspects of the research process. Traditionally, social scientists attempt to remain as detached as possible in order to maintain objectivity. However, educative practice and participatory research requires that the aloof and absent principal investigator be replaced by a researcher who is engaged in more personal and open relations with the researched (Reinharz, 1992; Stanley and Wise, 1990).

The intrusion into the lives of the researched should have an impact on the research. Thus, researchers committed to social change have argued that the research process should be reflexive (Reinharz, 1992; Nielsen, 1990). Researchers need to be open to the experiences of the researched which will likely result in the researcher gaining a new perspective of the phenomenon being studied (Mies, 1983). Likewise, action researchers have argued that a complex reality is met in the field. Consequently, it is imperative that critical researchers continue to rely on an array of methodologies and analysis techniques in assessing the effectiveness of juvenile justice as opposed to relying on a strictly quantitative approach to program evaluation. Preconceived closed questions can create a very powerful but illusory social reality. Historical and other qualitative methods can capture the history and trends in juvenile justice and the stories of clients and court personnel can deepen our understanding of how the system facilitates or hinders the amelioration of social problems. Because ideology drives the policies implemented to treat or punish offenders, the meeting of abstract goals often replaces innovative problem solving intended to address the needs of humans within their tragic social setting and a strict quantitative assessment often obscures the qualitative relations between officials and clients. By focusing on quantitative outcomes, justice agency effects on clients, staff, parents, victims and others in the community are often ignored. The use of qualitative methods can produce a richer source of information which both describes the reality of system participants and makes their lives more comprehensible. Through critical reflections and sharing of experience, obstacles encountered by juvenile justice workers are more likely to be transformed from permanent frustrations to surmountable goals.

Second, the unit of analysis is the relationship between the political economy, delinquency and the institutions of youth

social control. In addition, it is important that we continue to examine the relationship between the material conditions fostered by American capitalism and present political arrangements which effectively disenfranchise large segments of the population; making clear their effects on both youth and adults. A reapplication of Spitzer's (1975) distinction between "social junk" and "social dynamite" may be timely in the wake of the LA riots and the radical restructuring of the labor markets which has occurred and which guarantees the marginalization of large segments of the population and threatens the economic well-being of others. By ignoring material conditions reflected in chronic unemployment and underemployment, poor health care, inadequate schools, and their effects on families, communities and delinquency, and by ignoring the political irrelevance of large segments of the population, present responses to delinquency represent an ineffective and non-threatening response to capitalist social arrangements and institutions which has helped further demarcate street crime as the "real crime problem" (see Reiman and Headlee, 1981).

Though juvenile justice must be understood within a structural-historical context, intervention into juvenile justice occurs at the local level. As contended by action researchers there is a need to think globally, but act locally (Stoecker and Bonacich, 1992). In fact, a major contribution to the community is to help others place their lives into a wider context.

Third, we must establish the roles we play as researchers and carefully construct the relationships we develop in the community where the research is conducted. Social action which will ameliorate juvenile crime will occur in a set of complex relationships within the local community. The roles will be explicitly political and likely to be personal. Action researchers must consciously construct their relations with staff and administrators within juvenile justice agencies; with youths, families and support institutions within the community; and within the discipline.

In the past, the primary relationship has been between those who fund research, often a third party or top level administrators, and the researcher. The kinds of research suggested above will require a rethinking of the social relations which should exist between researcher and researched and between those who

fund research and both groups. Ultimately, the dialogue be-
tween mainstream and critical researchers should be intended
to legitimate new methodological possibilities capable of as-
sisting the change process (Mies, 1983; Stoecker and Bonacich,
1992). The researcher may need to take on many roles (e.g.,
educator, collaborator, advocate, adjudicator, organizer) which
will require different skills and different relations with various
populations. Also, the political nature of policy development
requires that those interested in changing juvenile justice be
amenable to compromise when circumstances so dictate. Cur-
rie's (1985) *Confronting Crime* provides an excellent exemplar of
policy recommendations which may be seen as alternatives to
the predominate responses to juvenile crime yet are attractive
to liberals. Moreover, local efforts to improve the quality of life
for all deserve active support because such policies can improve
the lives of both youth and adults. However, we maintain that
a more effective response to delinquency and a more humane
juvenile justice system ultimately rests on fundamental change
which attempts to push social change and juvenile justice be-
yond the limits envisioned by most policy-makers.

Critical efforts to become involved in the policy process re-
quires that the critical social scientist be actively involved in
the education of the clients and employees of juvenile justice
as well as the community (cf., Fay, 1987). Within the commu-
nity it is important that critical researchers and activists make
efforts to present local political leaders, members of the press,
and community leaders with a sound alternative to present lib-
eral and conservative responses to juvenile crime. Within the
juvenile justice system there are administrators, caseworkers,
caretakers, support staff, and juveniles who could benefit from
a critical educative practice. For example, rather than focus-
ing on the imposition of new procedures on juvenile justice
professionals, critical juvenile justice policy would work to in-
volve practitioners in the creation of procedures designed to
solve problems encountered in everyday practice and which
protect the rights and safety of youth processed by the agencies
of youth social control. In addition, parents, family members,
and other community members such as local political leaders,
should play a role in the development of local juvenile justice

policies. Such involvement is crucial in order to demystify the operation of juvenile justice and to empower agency clients and consumers.

Fourth, we must remind ourselves that critical analysis takes place within an ideological and bureaucratic organizational context which requires both political savvy and research expertise. Such an obvious observation should not be taken for granted by critical researchers who desire to play a role in policy formation. Bureaucratic institutions are resistant to fundamental change. Instead of focusing their energies on client needs, the bureaucratic actor tends to focus on satisfying organizational requirements (Merton, 1961). Under such circumstances the correct processing of cases replaces a concern with helping clients (youth, parents or community members) meet their needs. Such a climate deters innovation. Consequently, the critical social scientist must continually strive to develop linkages between the organization and client constituencies in efforts to better meet client, as opposed to bureaucratic, needs. The mission of criminal justice research needs to be delineated in connection to the ideological context at the individual and collective level. Above, we recommended changes that can be adopted by the individual researcher. However, legitimation comes from the community. This requires the community of critical researchers to engage in an ongoing dialogue not only with one another but with local constituencies. We suggest that this could be facilitated by the development of more policy oriented research including that which focuses on strategies for implementing change at both the national and local levels.

Also, it is imperative that critical researchers attempt to produce research which can serve as guides for action. The critical researcher should remember that the theoretical and research backgrounds of policy-makers may be limited. Thus, critical researchers need to minimize jargon and present viable options when offering policy recommendations to local administrators. In addition, the critical researcher can play an important educative role within juvenile justice by critiquing policy recommendations based on short-sighted liberal and conservative juvenile justice ideologies.

Fifth, a critical juvenile justice policy mandates that race, gender, and class be taken as problematic. In recent years, white feminist scholars have attempted to create a community comprised of diverse voices. Outsiders have recorded many of the limitations of the mainstream feminist coalition, and Collins (1990) demonstrates the importance and the challenge of creating a body of knowledge that represents all voices. A critical juvenile justice policy needs to reflect the voices and realities of all.

Sixth, there is a need for meta-analysis and outlets for the dissemination of critically oriented action research. As action researchers have justifiably complained there are limited outlets for publication of their research efforts. There is a need to publish and disseminate action research, so that case studies can be compared and contrasted to lay the groundwork for a general theory of critical juvenile justice practice.

Conclusions

Since its inception juvenile justice has been characterized by conflict and periodic retrenchments (see Reiman and Headlee, 1981). Change has not come easily and certainly the 1990s will continue to be a time of continuing conflict as those with differing ideologies lobby for a juvenile justice system that more closely conforms to their ideal. Unfortunately, based on the prevailing modes of conceptualizing the appropriate response to delinquency among policy-makers, there is little reason to expect that the ways policy-makers have chosen to respond to the "delinquency problem" will be effective or humane. Indeed, we argue that the prevailing juvenile justice ideologies can be expected to produce only minimally effective or harmful social policies. However, there is some hope that the failure of the predominate juvenile justice ideologies will provide an opportunity for a more critically informed vision to influence policy development. This critical ideology will be as concerned with social justice as juvenile justice and will be capable of the political activism needed to respond in a more realistic fashion to the material conditions of delinquency while protecting those who become the clients of the system.

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