Perspectives in Criminology

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ABSTRACT: In order to further prove its relevance and impact on other fields, criminology needs to follow some trends and, at the same time, create chapters that respond to the needs of society. In other words, the science of criminology has an interdisciplinary and dynamic character, developing with society. However, there is currently no consensus on its future. Instead, discussions are taking place about the direction it may take, whether it is about how the subject should be taught in universities or which areas of criminology should gain importance in the coming years. This article will therefore provide a brief analysis of the future of criminology, seen through the prism of possible scenarios and future areas within criminology.

KEYWORDS: criminology, interdisciplinary science, green criminology, cyber criminology, feminist criminology, mobility criminology

Future scenarios of criminology

According to one view in the literature, the future scenarios of criminology are based on two uncertainties: interdisciplinarity and the public role of criminology. Regarding the uncertainty of how disciplines evolve in scientific research, there are two scenarios: either disciplines continue to develop independently of each other, or they gain in importance and impact, and, as scientific research, they cluster around questions and themes.

In the first scenario, criminology could become one of the most successful disciplines of the 21st century. This could lead to criminology and other scientific disciplines growing in size and scientific strength to such an extent that they acquire their own profile as a discipline, with their own renowned researchers and journals. But it could lead to limited interaction with other disciplines.

"Research and researchers from different disciplines pass each other like ships in the night" (Wilson 2010, 546-547). Thus, the main concern of criminology would be to maintain cohesion within it and preserve the big picture, at the expense of interaction with other disciplines. At the same time, however, the professionalization and specialization of criminology would lead internally to the creation of various sub-disciplines and schools, which would end up clashing rather than collaborating (Bruinsma 2016, 659-676).

The second scenario explores the evolution of criminology, but not necessarily within a field of its own, leading to the idea of criminologists being compared to 'kings without a kingdom', as Thorsten Sellin puts it (Beken 2019, 386-394).

Thus, questions related to crime are not exclusively studied by criminologists, but also by psychologists, geographers, statisticians, physicians, or economists who can provide answers to such questions.

Instead, this would bring a high degree of interdisciplinarity, which is in line with developments in European science policy and its funding, i.e. the European Union's Horizon Europe Framework Programme 2021-2027 (European Commission 2021), which had in one of its discussion points the idea of including the societies in question in either one or two research groups.

Thus, "if both were included separately, there would be more opportunities and a clearly defined scope" (Beken 2019, 386-394), but if everything were to be brought together in one cluster, then social scientists would have to work closely with STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) scientists in interdisciplinary consortia.

However, in such an organization there is a risk that some disciplines may lose their importance, depending on their relevance to the question at hand; thus, criminology may even disappear as a separate scientific discipline. A second uncertainty relates to the relationship of criminological research to the world outside science, namely its social impact over time, i.e., its influence on policies implemented at all levels.

Previously, criminology has been described as a 'successful failure' (Wilson 2010, 546-547) to reflect some of the uncertainty and ambiguity surrounding developments in the discipline. On the one hand, it is clear that the discipline is in a state of development. On the other hand, however, this development does not seem to be followed by an increase in criminology's visibility and impact in social and political terms. While there are certainly major differences between countries and continents, its role has not been sufficiently explored.

Two extremes can be observed in this case: in the first extreme, criminology becomes a science and retreats into its own discourse, communicating insufficiently with the outside world about its results, as in many cases where criminology is critical of social and political developments but does not translate this criticism into participation in the public forum.

The other extreme is where criminology focuses on the questions that matter most to society at any given time. Thus, the discipline mainly offers knowledge and techniques from its discipline but is completely absorbed by its social role.

Thus, combining the two uncertainties with the two poles, four scenarios can be identified for criminology's prospects, namely:
- criminal science,
- criminal policy,
- the Da Vinci scenario,
- theoretical criminology.

Criminal science describes the situation where a large part of interdisciplinarity is coupled with a pronounced public role.

Criminal policy presents a scenario where interdisciplinarity is not very present, but the public role of criminology is important.

The Da Vinci scenario prefigures a future with a high degree of disciplinarity, but a limited public role.

Theoretical criminology describes a situation where criminology has a limited public role and interdisciplinarity is also limited.

In conclusion, practical advice to improve the role of criminology and help it achieve its goals is
- Representation of the subject at universities (Dölling 2016, 243-247), either as a compulsory or elective subject,
- theoretical-critical reflection on the fight against crime on all its sides, so that it should deal with both basic principles research and practical research (Kerner 2013, 184-201).

How can we overcome cultural and linguistic differences between different schools of criminology?

As mentioned above, collaboration in criminology is debated from multiple perspectives. Thus, a key question to ask is "How can we build a strong community of researchers that can withstand the challenges posed by current and potential divisions?" (Huey and Pare 2010, 237-241)

Criminology, by definition, can be characterized as a truly interdisciplinary science (Jeffery 1978, 149-169), as well as an "umbrella discipline" (Huey and Pare 2010, 237-241) that encompasses a wide range of academic and practical pursuits that focus on issues of lawmaking, lawbreaking, and social reactions to both (Sutherland 1924).

However, this diversity of issues covered has led to separate perspectives on how criminologists should relate to the science of criminology and what should constitute an appropriate way of working.

These practices have resulted in the science of criminology often being "affected by its own disciplinary struggles, internal divisions, competing alliances, and the familiar irritations of departmental and personal politics" (Menziers and Chunn 1999, 285-297).

In Canada, the last few decades have brought significant growth in criminology, especially in terms of its popularity among students (Huey 2010). This has brought together the country's criminologists, who, following conferences, have decided that it is imperative for them and society to address the issues that divide them rather than those that unite them in their work (Huey and Pare 2010, 237-241). This relates as much to differences in ideology as it does to differences in language or method of approaching the subject.

Branches of criminology

In addition to the general directions that criminology can take, however, there are views in the literature that envisage the development of new branches of the discipline.

These are either developing in response to societal needs and trends (equality, online safety, etc.) or in response to research in other branches of science, such as global change. We will now present the most important branches debated in the doctrine.

1. Green criminology

Relevant to our approach is Jean-Jacques Rousseau's idea that, "You forget that the fruits belong to all and that the earth belongs to none." Before addressing this theme, we need to define the areas that are relevant to environmental issues, i.e., everything that concerns "the environment, animal rights and the symbiosis between human societies and ecological systems" (South 1998, 211-233).

The term "green criminology" was introduced into the literature by Michael J. Lynch in 1990. The field is based on the idea of a "risk society" (South 1998, 211-233).

"The fragmentation of institutional responses to crime and criminology's participation in this fragmentation are in turn related to broader social trends. In particular, discourses of risk - coming from many directions, but especially from the institution of insurance and from efforts to regulate the environment - impose alternative models of controlling crime and other social misconduct".

It is now arguable that we live in a 'risk society' in which the demand for knowledge useful in defining, assessing, managing, and distributing risk is reconfiguring the social order (Ericson and Carriere 1994, 89-109).

It may be pointed out that humanity's most serious crime at present is being committed against itself and future generations (Cohen 1993, 97-115). This argument is consistent with some authors who appeal to criminology to rectify the lack of attention paid to human rights issues and atrocities committed against individuals and groups.

"Thus, the Earth and its resources are wasted and overexploited through processes in which people are commodities in chains of production, and distribution and profit are put before sense and sensibility. In such processes, multiple and numerous crimes, violations, misdeeds, and irregularities are committed against the environment but remain largely unchecked" (South 1998, 211-233).

Examples of the branches of green criminology might include: environmental victimology, corporate crime and its impacts on the environment, health and safety in the workplace, organized crime and corruption in the toxic waste disposal market, law enforcement and military impacts on the environment and populations, damage to terrestrial and aquatic wildlife and damage to their habitats. Most of these are highly interdisciplinary.

A relevant example is the Love Canal disaster of 1978-1980. The area is to be found near Niagara Falls and suffered severely from the dumping of hazardous toxic waste. The case was a well-publicized one, due to the fact that in the 1940s, Love Canal was simply an abandoned navigation canal and for years a company called Hooker Chemical disposed of thousands of drums of toxic chemicals directly into the canal (Szasz 1994).

In 1952 the canal was capped, but later a school was built on that land. In the 1970s, heavy rains revealed a toxic substance on the surface, which in some places was 250 or even 5000 times higher than the medically acceptable limit. So it was questioned whether it was illegal at that time in the US to destroy the environment without regard for future generations. However, it should be noted that "the science of criminology and related disciplines have together documented a wide range of examples of environmental damage by unregulated power, by corporate misconduct, by organized crime, by government authorities, and by government inattention" (South 1998, 211-233).

But one suggestion for unifying so many distinct branches of criminology is to adopt a green perspective. Furthermore, in order to better understand the field, environmental issues and crimes that concern the field, one can regard them as a way to control 'excesses'.

The nature of the environment as 'property' that gives rise to disputes, or as a provider of resources that are fought over, or as the site of a range of crimes, from corporate crime to juvenile vandalism, suggests that reconciliation and reintegrative shame may be other sources of ideas for green criminality.

Another contributing idea is the need for criminologists to continue to develop 'social environmental thinking' that recognizes the finite nature of the planet's resources and how they do or do not fit with global and socio-economic trends and that ultimately have a profound impact on the social sciences.

2. Cybercriminology (Ayres 2018, 182-197)

This concept is a new one, emerging with technological developments, mentioned as early as 2007 (Jaishankar 2007, 1-6). It is important to note that "cyber criminology" actually means an alternative criminology, which has a distinctive character, being generated (and not only facilitated) by cyber technologies.

"These new modes of criminological thinking are both demanded and generated by philosophical issues of culpability caused by cyber technology, as well as by new practical issues of criminal definition, deterrence, regulation, and enforcement" (Ayres 2018, 182-197). However, although the field has not been established, criminologists are seeking explanations for emerging cybercrime, which depends on a variety of causes and transforms the existing criminological canon. Thus, cyber criminology refers to "scientific studies on the realization, control and punishment of criminal behavior in a telematic context".

Before we can understand what cyber criminology means, we need to define the parameters on which it can be built:

The distinction of 'cyberspace' defies physical spatial boundaries, making geography irrelevant (Jaishankar 2010, 26-31) in the face of an experience of equidistance (Wall, 2007). The cyber environment is thus inherently different from the physical world. Moreover, cyberspace transposes or reproduces characteristics of the real world into the virtual environment (Yar 2005, 407-427).

The cyber environment is also a particular challenge for criminologists because "a significant part of the tradition of criminological perspectives is based, implicitly or explicitly, on ecological theories that have linked the occurrence of crime, its patterns and distribution, to the socio-spatial arrangement of specific places and made possible concepts such as mapping, identification of the criminogenic environment and prevention programs" (Yar 2013).

At the same time, just as the physical world has its own architecture that can influence human behavior, so does coding structure and condition behaviors and sets restrictions and permissions in cyberspace (Ayres 2018).

The distinctively temporal nature of cyberspace - communication in the virtual environment - takes place at the speed of light, which creates a sense of immediacy, different from the sequence of physical actions defined as past, present, and future in the physical world. So, a question that needs to be asked is "what is the interval, in the virtual environment, between the moment of action and the moment of result?".

The autonomy of participants (users in the virtual environment) experiences a new autonomy, being apparently free from the control of governments and corporations.

"In cyberspace, on the contrary, communication is inherently free from the compulsory intervention of the media, because it is communitarian, non-hierarchical and reciprocal" (Lévy, 2001). "In the context of criminal manifestations, the individual empowerment offered by the Internet generates greater control of criminal activity by those who act. This empowerment is due to the ability that technology possesses to be a force multiplier, allowing individuals with minimal resources to generate potentially large negative effects" (Wall 2007; Yar 2005, 407-427).

New identities and feelings of anonymity (virtual interactions) allow individuals to reinvent themselves, adopting new identities that may differ from their 'real life' identities. This poses the risk that, under the guise of anonymity, individuals display behaviors that, in social worlds other than the cyber world, would be constrained by distinct levels of control that would normally be seen as illicit or at least deviant.

New aspects of victimization are given by new ways of interacting and associating in cyberspace, characterized by immediacy and an apparent equidistance, can make users vulnerable to a variety of 'predators' who can approach them instantly, without encountering the barriers of the physical environment.

"This pervasive perception of actual or potential victimization is a feature of late modernity and has been described, on the one hand, as the late modern crime complex: a cultural formation characterized by a distinct set of attitudes, beliefs, and practices derived from the perception of high crime rates as a normal social fact that makes the avoidance of crime a guiding principle in everyday life" (Garland and Sparks 2000, 189-204). On the other hand, there are authors who believe that the possibility of victimization in the physical world is similar, as people are aware, in the traditional reality, that they are vulnerable to crime (Grabosky 2001, 243-249).

Another relevant aspect in this situation is the fact that virtual equidistance without physical proximity can be an incentive for deviant behavior in cyberspace. "Virtual fraud, in particular, attracts criminals because of the (mistaken) belief that it is a victimless crime and, consequently, that the financial loss is borne by the banks.

It is a neutralization strategy that also hides the reality that financial institutions transfer their losses to merchants, who then compensate them by transferring the cost of these operational risks to consumers" (Wall, 2007). The transnationality given to social enforcement and prosecution, traditionally linked to territorial jurisdictions, has become problematic with the emergence of cybercrime (Ayres 2018, 188). Additionally, effective law enforcement requires a sustained joint effort and costly cooperation between national legal systems.

A constant transformation - probably the biggest challenge in understanding and combating cybercrime - is that transformations in commonplace technologies are a continuous and dynamic process, leading to greater ease in committing cybercrime. In addition to the transnationality mentioned above, the transient and volatile nature of the content on the internet must also be taken into account.

Thus, a user can simultaneously be a server, a publisher or a consumer, thus creating a great deal of confusion as to the existing roles in the virtual community. Therefore, in order to justify the emergence of a new branch of criminology, it is necessary to investigate what exactly constitutes a crime among activities in the virtual environment.

Thus, three dynamic categories of cybercrime can be differentiated from the law or social rules:

- Cybercrimes are violations of legal norms by reference to legally prohibited uses of information technology in some states, but not of a legal norm universally recognized in jurisdictions around the world;

- Cyber violations or misconduct are violations of social norms (but not legal norms) through new uses of information technology that are considered socially unacceptable;

- Neo-cyber threats are the practice of a new harmful act, possible only through new cyber technology, but against which there are (as yet) no universal safeguards or local rules within which it can be classified (made sense of).

"In other words: while a cyber neo-crime does not constitute criminal conduct in some jurisdictions, a cyber neo-threat is treated more generally as a technical problem or novelty, and its significance tends to generate neither immediate social reprobation nor immediate understanding as a crime" (Ayres 2018, 189).

Other branches of criminological science

In addition to green criminology and cyber criminology, there are several other branches developing, which take into account changes in society, trying to bring the discipline as close as possible to current problems. Examples include the following:

1. Feminist criminology (Carrington 2018, 110-124)

In 1968, Frances Heidensohn described the study of gender, women, and deviance as "lonely and uncharted seas of human behavior" (Heidensohn 1968, 160-175), later saying in 2012 that they constitute "one of the most robust, resilient, and important features of modern criminology" (Heidensohn 2012, 123-134.).

In terms of the study of criminology, there are a few different approaches that have emerged more or less in chronological order:

- the first wave, which emerged in the 1970s, called for the introduction of the problem of women into the discipline of criminology.

- The next period is represented by French feminism, for the most part, which called for the categorical rejection of criminology as a male-dominated science.

- the third period is marked by postmodernism and postcolonialism, criticizing the universalization of women by feminist criminology. They argued that this theory was incapable of representing the diversity of women's experiences of crime, violence and criminal justice.

- Later, intersectionality exerted considerable influence on contemporary directions in feminist criminology. This approach does not necessarily privilege gender, conceiving of it only as one of several interconnected structures that position women differentially in relation to the operation of law and criminal justice, although it is an important one (Carrington 2018, 110-124).

2. The criminology of mobility (Pickering, Bosworth and Katja, 2018, 150-164)

This concerns the relationship between immigration and crime. In recent years, however, researchers argue for the need to change the way we understand society, as the boundaries of social reality have been altered and have even become unstable due to globalization and much higher mobility. Thus, the field of mobility criminology has developed for researchers interested in issues of citizenship, race, gender, ethnicity and immigration control (Aas and Bosworth (eds) 2013).

Consequently, the field is interested in processes of inclusion and exclusion at and within the borders of states that they rely on and expand their arsenals, usually reserved for the criminal justice system, in favor of law enforcement and the military, without their usual protections (Pickering, Bosworth and Franko 2018, 150).

Conclusions

In conclusion, it can be said that the science of criminology stands apart from the other criminal sciences and will be considered an outstanding science as long as it continues to be rigorous in methods, interdisciplinary in approach, and guided by a commitment to justice (Mitchel 2009, 7).

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