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The Word *Criminology*: A Philology and a Definition

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ABSTRACT AND ARTICLE INFORMATION

This essay looks into the past of criminology as a way to think about its future. I take a philological approach to the word *criminology*, looking at the etymology and history of that word, to argue for a new definition of the field: Criminology is the systematic study of crime, criminals, criminal law, criminal justice, and criminalization. I expand and explain this definition with respect to some common and (I argue) misguided dictates of criminology as it is traditionally understood. Specifically, I argue that criminology is usually *but not necessarily* academic and scientific, which means that criminology can be public and/or humanistic. I arrive at these thoughts by presenting some early English instances of the word *criminology* which predate the attempt to theorize a field of criminology in Italy and France in the 1880s, and I offer some new readings of those Italian and French texts. These philological analyses then come into conversation with some twentieth-century attempts to define the field and some twenty-first-century innovations in an effort to generate a definition of criminology that is responsive to the diversity of criminology in both its original formation and its ongoing transformations. Thus, the virtue of this new understanding of criminology is its inclusiveness: It normalizes unorthodox criminological research, which opens up new possibilities for jobs and funding in the name of criminology, which holds the promise of new perspectives on crime, new theories of criminology, and new policies for prevention and treatment.

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Recent collections such as *What is Criminology?* (Bosworth & Hoyle, 2011) and *What is Criminology About?* (Crewe & Lippens, 2015) suggest a renewed interest in defining the basis and scope of this field given the infinite activities carried out in its name. These collections bring together some of the world's leading criminologists to generate a kaleidoscopic image of the field as it currently stands, but I want to hazard a new statement of what criminology is by going in the opposite direction and discussing the origin and history of the term *criminology*.¹ In other words, this is not a criminological study but a

philological study of the word *criminology* and a philosophical study of the very idea of criminology. My aims are not polemical. I am not attempting to say what criminology *should* be. My aims are analytical. I'm attempting to articulate what criminology *is* and, from the perspective of philology, the best way to do so is to look at where the word came from, to survey what it has been said to be, to consider what its practitioners have done in its name, and then to produce a definition that is abstract enough to be accurate yet specific enough to be meaningful. Thus, I want to ask, what were the

discourses out of which the word *criminology* emerged in the nineteenth century? What was the context and meaning of the early usage of the term? What points were writers trying to make when they first coined this term? And how has the term been defined and redefined since its popularization in the twentieth century?

But, it is also necessary to ask, who says our current definition of the field must be accountable to the earliest hiccups of the word? Absolutely no one, but my suggestion is that the early uses of the word *criminology* to signify wildly different activities in wildly different contexts creates the basis for the more inclusive and more accurate definition of a field that has become wildly diffuse in recent years. With the rise of “critical criminology” in the 1970s (Taylor, Walton, & Young, 1974) and a swelling number of more recent innovations – including “radical criminology” (Platt, 1974), “newsmaking criminology” (Barak, 1988), “peacemaking criminology” (Pepinsky & Quinney, 1991) “cultural criminology” (Ferrell & Sanders, 1995), “convict criminology” (Richards & Ross, 2001), “popular criminology” (Rafter, 2007), “visual criminology” (Francis, 2009), “public criminology” (Loader & Sparks, 2010), and “narrative criminology” (Presser & Sandberg, 2015) – criminologists have spent much of the past 40 years discovering new ways to do criminology, new people to do it, and new goals it can aim to achieve, effectively challenging the mainstream twentieth-century tradition of thinking that criminology must be academic and scientific.

With this recent reformation, criminology can now be understood as the systematic study of crime, criminals, criminal law, criminal justice, and criminalization. While I expand and explain this definition in my conclusion to this essay, I want to note upfront that the keyword here is “systematic.” Criminology is “systematic” as opposed to “unsystematic,” meaning that it involves interpretation with a method and affiliation with an organization, but it is also “systematic” as opposed to “academic” and “scientific.” The methods of criminology are often *though not necessarily* academic and scientific, which means that (a) criminology usually comes in the form of scholarship, but it can also come in the form of essay and art; (b) criminology may be scientific (drawing upon fields such as biology, psychology, and sociology) and/or humanistic (taking cues from philosophy and history as well as legal, cultural, and literary studies); and (c) criminology can be either analytical or ethical—that is, either pure research concerned with an accurate understanding of crime or applied research involved in the treatment of criminals and the prevention of crime. From this

perspective, criminology is not a narrow, limited discipline of academic research but an umbrella term for a general field of inquiry, one that includes within its scope many different sorts. If so, then the above definition is potentially controversial because of what it leaves out—gone are the insistences that criminology is “scientific,” “academic,” “sociological,” and “modern”—and the virtue of this new definition is its inclusiveness. It acknowledges new and unorthodox research in criminology, which opens up new and unorthodox possibilities for funding and employment in the name of criminology, which holds the promise of new theories of crime and new policies for prevention and treatment.

“The Very Word *Criminology*”: The Need for a Philology of Criminology

A philological approach to the word *criminology* is required because the different and sometimes conflicting understandings of this field are reflected in and are inextricable from the different and sometimes conflicting accounts of the origin of the word. In criminological scholarship, wild conjecture seems to follow whenever someone writes the phrase “the very word ‘criminology.’” Rock (1994) claimed that “the very word ‘criminology’ seems to have been first used in the 1850s and come into more general usage in the 1890s when the subject began to be taught in the universities of western Europe, at Marburg, Bordeaux, Lyons, Naples, Vienna and Pavia” (p. xvii). Lippens (2009), however, put the date 20 years later: “The very word ‘criminology’ surfaced during the 1870s” (p. 2). While contradictory, these claims both have some basis in reality. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), the authoritative source on the English language, the first recorded instance of the word *criminologist* came in 1857 (“Criminologist,” 2014), and the first instance of the word *criminology* in 1872 (“Criminology,” 2014). Yet Beirne (1993), who has written our most authoritative account of the term, insisted that “there is no recorded instance of the term *criminology* ever having been used before the final quarter of the nineteenth century” (p. 233).

This uncertainty about when the word *criminology* first appeared is closely bound up with an uncertainty about who invented it. O’Brian and Yar (2008, p.127) credited Cesare Lombroso with creating the word, while Reiner (2012, p. 32) wrote that it was not Lombroso himself but his followers, and Pond (1999) said that the first recorded use of this word did not come from either Lombroso or his followers: “The very word ‘criminology’ was not coined until 1879 when it was first used by the French anthropologist, Topinard” (p. 8). Yet Bennett (1988) put the first

instance of the word *criminology* six years later: “The word ‘criminology’ made its first appearance in 1885” (p. 7). Using this date, Beth (1941) explained that “the Italian scientist Garofalo ... coined the word ‘criminology’ in his work *Criminologia* (first edition 1885)” (p. 67). For his part, the eminent criminologist Leon Radzinowicz (2002), founding director of the Institute of Criminology at the University of Cambridge, considered both Garofalo and Topinard in a gripping yet ultimately inconclusive account of his and his friends’ attempt to trace the origin of the word:

Who was the first person to use the term? Baron Raffaele Garofalo—next to Ferri the most prominent expositor of the Scuola Positiva—selected *Criminologia* for the title of his book, which first appeared in 1885.... Yet William Bonger, the Dutch criminologist, stated that the first scholar to use the term ‘criminology’ was the Frenchman P. Topinard, who was not a criminologist but an anthropologist. However, Bonger failed to provide a reference. I turned to Thorsten Sellin in the hope that with his vast historical knowledge of criminological thought he might be able to confirm that Topinard was the first. I went carefully through Topinard’s published works, and the only paper I could find in which he used the term criminology is the one which he presented to a congress in 1889, four years after the appearance of Garofalo’s book. At this point, I decided that it was rather fastidious to attempt to track down this terminological query. (p. 440–441)

Here Radzinowicz associated Garofalo with a biological (as opposed to sociological) approach to criminology, and Knepper (2001) agreed that “it was the criminologists working from the perspective of biological positivism who invented the word ‘criminology,’” stating that “the term [was] introduced at a criminal anthropology conference in 1889” (p. 64). Like Pond and Radzinowicz, Muncie (2000) credited the word “criminology” to Topinard, but not in 1879 (Pond’s year) or 1889 (Radzinowicz and Knepper’s year): “In 1890 Topinard, writing in

the *Athenaum*, expressed his dislike for the term ‘criminological anthropology’ to describe the then fledgling science of crime and criminality. He reluctantly suggested using the term ‘criminology’ instead, ‘until a better term can be found’” (p. 227). The *Athenaum* article that Muncie referred to, however, was not written by Topinard. It was an anonymous review of Havelock Ellis’s 1890 book, *The Criminal*, and so Jones (2013) wrote that “it was [Ellis] who, in promoting the ideas of Lombroso, introduced the word ‘criminology’ into the English language” (pp. 2–3). Rafter (2011) also credited Ellis for the English word “criminology,” extending the point to the Americas: “Britons became familiar with the term when Havelock Ellis published *The Criminal* (1890), his compendium of criminal anthropology.... Americans learned of it when Arthur MacDonald published *Criminology* [in 1893]” (p. 147).

So when did the word *criminology* become a word: the 1850s, the 1870s, 1872, 1879, 1885, 1889, 1890, 1893? Where was it invented: England, Italy, France, the United States? And who should be credited with coining the term: Lombroso, Topinard, Garofalo, Ellis, MacDonald, someone else, no one at all?

In an effort to answer these questions, and to correct several of the above misconceptions, Table 1 presents all known instances of the word criminology from 1850–1890. I also want to note that, just as there is no consensus on the origin of the word *criminology*, there is no consensus on the nature of the discipline signified by that word, as Rafter herself discussed in her article “Criminal Anthropology in the United States” (1992). In her essay, Rafter showed that the debates which occurred during the formation of criminology as a coherent discipline in the United States—*Is it an autonomous field? What is its methodological orientation? Is it about knowledge production or crime control?*—continue to inform our discussions of what criminology is and what it does, an idea argued earlier by Jeffery (1959). In the analysis of the original European discourse that follows, I explore and expand upon this idea, taking as my point of departure the notion that the multiple and sometimes conflicting definitions of the word *criminology* symbolize, follow from, and lead to comparably conflicting understandings of the field of criminology.

Table 1: The Word *Criminology*, 1850-1890

Date	Word	Language	Country	Author	Text
March 21, 1857	“criminologist”	English	England	John Ormsby	“Felons and Felon-Worship”
1860	“criminology”	English	England	Joseph Ewart	<i>The Sanitary Condition and Discipline of Indian Jails</i>
April 3, 1872	“criminology”	English	United States	H.T.	“France”
1881	“criminology”	English	United States	Andover Theological Seminary	<i>Catalogue of the Officers and Students</i>
1884	“criminologia”	Italian	Italy	S.P.G. Mazzaresse	Quoted in <i>Annali di Statistica</i> [Annals of Statistics] (Nov.-Dec., 1885).
1885	“criminologia”	Italian	Italy	Raffaele Garofalo	<i>Criminologia: Studio Sul Delitto, Sulle Sue Cause e Sui Mezzi di Repressione</i> [Criminology: The Study of Crime, its Causes, and the Means of Repression]
December 5, 1885	“criminologia”	Italian	Italy	L. Majno	“La Scuola Positive di Diritto Penale” [The Positive School of Criminal Law]
1886	“criminologia”	Italian	Italy	Emanuele Carnevale	<i>Della Pena nella Scuola Classica e nella Criminologia Positiva</i> [On Punishment in the Classical School and in Positive Criminology]
1886	“criminologia”	Italian	Italy	Guilio Fioretti	<i>Su la Legittima Difesa, Studio di Criminologia</i> [On Self-Defense, a Study of Criminology]
1887	“criminalogie”	French	France	Paul Topinard	“L’Anthropologie Criminelle” [The Criminal Anthropology]
1888	“criminologie”	French	France	Gabriel Tarde	“La Criminologie” [The Criminology]
June 18-20, 1889	“criminology”	English	United States	Committee on Prison Reform	“Prison Reform”
August 1889 (published 1890)	“criminologie”	French	France	Paul Topinard	“Criminologie et Anthropologie” [Criminology and Anthropology]
August 1889 (published 1890)	“crimnologie”	French	France	Romeo Taverni and Valentin Magnan	“De l’Enfance des Criminels dans ses Rapports avec la Predisposition Naturelle au Crime” [A Criminal’s Childhood in Relation to their Natural Predisposition to Crime]
January 1890	“criminology”	English	United States	Arthur MacDonald	“Criminological”
1890	“criminology”	English	England	Havelock Ellis	<i>The Criminal</i>
August 30, 1890	“criminology”	English	England	Anonymous	“Criminal Literature”
September 6, 1890	“criminology”	English	England	Anonymous	Review of Havelock Ellis’s <i>The Criminal</i> in <i>Athenæum</i>

The First Uses of the Word *Criminology* in Nineteenth-Century English Literature²

According to the *OED*, the first recorded instance of the word *criminology* came in an article titled “France” (signed only with the author’s initials, “H.T.”) in the *Boston Daily Advertiser* on April 3, 1872, which drew attention to the newness of the word by putting the neologism in quotation marks: “The law school affords ... lectures ... on what the French call ‘criminology,’ or the science of penal legislation” (“Criminology,” 2014). Here criminology is associated with France and Europe more generally and, with this quote coming from a Boston paper, it would seem that the United States (not England) was the earliest home to criminology in the English language. In this advertisement, criminology is described as a science and is associated with an academic institution, specifically the law school at the College of France, and it is said to be the study of criminal law. As such, this quotation epitomizes our conventional image of early criminology as continental, academic, and scientific (see Becker & Wetzell, 2006; Gibson, 2002; Horn, 2003; Pick, 1993; Wetzell, 2000), but this image can be qualified by looking at some English instances of the word *criminology* that predate the *OED*’s first recorded use. As I demonstrate in this section, the first uses of the word *criminology* came in English, not Italian or French, and those early instances referred to loosely essayistic popular literature, not rigorously scientific academic research.

As noted, the first instance of the word *criminology* was predated by the first instance of the word *criminologist*, which came in an anonymously written book review entitled “Felons and Felon-Worship” published in 1857 in *The Saturday Review*, a London weekly newspaper. Beirne (1993) identified the author of this review as “almost certainly John Ormsby” (p. 236), an English travel writer and translator, an attribution I follow here. Ormsby’s review attended to the growing number of mid-nineteenth-century English writers who found crime fascinating and devoted themselves to representations of and reflections on criminals. The first sentence of Ormsby’s review suggested that this new trend of “felon worship” was an outgrowth of “what, for want of a better title, we may call the Newgate Press” (p. 270). He was referring to a literary fad in England that began with the immensely popular posters and pamphlets sold at fairs and public executions in London in the late eighteenth century, sheets that were dubbed *The Newgate Calendar*. Taking its name from London’s Newgate Prison, where criminals were held for trial and (often) execution, *The Newgate Calendar* was comprised of

heavily moralistic and highly formulaic criminal biographies written initially by jailers and later by lawyers who recounted the lives, crimes, confessions, repentances, and executions of the criminals in the prison (see Worthington, 2005). Enticing readers with the sordid details of the criminal life, these stories also admonished readers through their representation of crime’s inevitable punishment and the criminal’s inevitable regret. The tales were first collected and published in book-form as *The Newgate Calendar* in 1773 and were then revised and reissued in many editions into the nineteenth century, spawning an early nineteenth-century genre of crime fiction called “the Newgate novel” (see Hollingsworth, 1963), including examples such as Charles Dickens’s *Oliver Twist* (1837-1839).

Ormsby’s review addressed three samplings of “the Newgate Press” from 1857. The first was titled *Scenes from the Lives of Robson and Redpath* (1857), written by an author who went only by his initials, J.B. This book followed the Newgate tradition, narrating and analyzing the misdeeds and punishments of two criminals, William James Robson (a playwright and criminal) and Leopold Redpath (a criminal and philanthropist), for the purpose of deterring readers from a life of crime. In fact, the very first sentence of J.B.’s preface to *Scenes* articulated the criminological theory of deterrence fairly clearly: “Punishments were instituted and are preserved by society for their *detering* effect upon the community, rather than from a display of vengeance towards the criminal who violates its laws.” Famously, Cesare Beccaria (1764/1995) argued this theory of deterrence in his treatise *On Crimes and Punishments*, which many criminologists cite as the first text in “the classical school” of criminology (e.g., Cullen & Agnew, 2013). In this regard, J.B. would belong to Beccaria’s classical school, the major difference being that J.B. was actually called a “criminologist” by one of his contemporaries, as discussed below, while Beccaria was not.

The second text covered in Ormsby’s review was the *Lamentation of Leopold Redpath* (1857), an anonymous poem about one of the criminals discussed by J.B., but this time written from the perspective of the criminal, who fancied himself a Robin Hood, robbing the rich to feed the poor. This poem was overtly sympathetic, turning a criminal into a tragic hero, as evident in this excerpt which Ormsby quoted:

Alas! I am convicted, there a no one to
blame
I suppose you all know Leopold Redpath is
my name;

I have one consolation, perhaps I've more,
All the days of my life I ne'er injured the
poor. (p. 271)

Ventriloquizing the criminal, sympathetically imagining his moral and mental progress, the *Lamentation* is arguably an anticipation of the “convict criminology” of Richards and Ross (2001) or the “narrative criminology” of Presser and Sandberg (2015). Moreover, this text, and the Newgate tradition more generally, could contain the germ of an “artistic criminology,” one which uses the media of imaginative expression—from poems, plays, and novels to paintings, photographs, films, and other performance arts—to study crime and criminals, and also one which mobilizes criminological theories to unpack the artistic creations of writers ranging from Homer and Shakespeare to Dickens and Spike Lee—all criminologists of a sort who, like the author of the *Lamentation*, chose to present their theoretical reflections on crime and criminals through artistic as opposed to scholarly writing, producing what Rafter (2007) has called “popular criminology.” In short, if *Scenes from the Lives of Robson and Redpath* pointed backward to Beccaria and the criminology of the eighteenth century, the *Lamentation of Leopold Redpath* pointed forward to some of today’s emergent criminologies.

But is it prudent to call these works of “criminology”? Ormsby thought so. Having considered “a philosopher” and “a poet” (p. 271), he then turned to the author of a third book, titled *Dark Deeds*, and dubbed him a “criminologist” in the first recorded instance of that term:

In the author of *Dark Deeds* we have a criminologist of a third sort. J B. had proved that theatricals, casinos, literature, peas out of season, presentations at Court, and extravagance generally, whether in notions or expenditure, all lead to felony. The poet had shown that benevolence and dishonesty may co-exist in the same individual. The purpose of the writer now before us is “to show the short-lived success of crime by examples carefully selected from the career of those who have planned, and sinned, and suffered.” (p. 271)

Before turning to *Dark Deeds*, I want to note that Ormsby’s phrasing here (“a criminologist of a third sort”) is fascinating because it conceives of all three writers – one a philosopher, one a poet, and one an essayist—as “criminologist[s].” Moreover, Ormsby allowed for different “sorts” of criminologists. This is

the quality of criminology—diverse, not only in content and method, but indeed in medium, allowing for different manifestations in different forms of expression ranging from expository prose to imaginative poetry—that I am striving to capture in my definition of the field. Indeed, that diversity in content, method, and medium is precisely what we see in something like the Art/Crime Archive (www.artcrimearchive.org) and in the concerns of “cultural criminology” (Ferrell & Sanders, 1995), which treats art and film as both an object of study and as criminological commentary itself.³

While published anonymously, *Dark Deeds* (1857) announced in its subtitle that it was written By the Author of ‘*The Gaol Chaplain*,’ a Cambridge-educated clergyman named Erskine Neale. In the introduction to *Dark Deeds*—which was lifted wholesale from Neale’s earlier book *Scenes Where the Tempter has Triumphed* (1849)—the author looked at crime and asked what “father[s] the offense” (p. iii). With his interest in the “*fans et origo malorum*” (p. iv), “the source and origin of evil,” Neale was, like many modern criminologists, interested in *criminogenesis*, or crime causation. He presented two causes of crime—“impunity” (p. iii) and “vice ... represented in the ascendant” (p. iv)—the first a psychological theory of criminology concerned with the mental transactions that result in criminal actions, the second a sociological theory addressing the relationship between literature and crime. For the latter point, Neale argued that literary representations of unpunished villainy both embolden the criminal and misrepresent the world because crime is always punished by the “Invisible Avenger,” namely God (p. v). We can (and many of us would) debate Neale’s conclusion that “that there is no such thing as successful villainy” (p. v), but what is beyond debate is that—like the other entries in the Newgate tradition—his argument was systematic, rigorous, organized, and methodical. The method was not scientific, and the data were not quantitative. Instead, *Dark Deeds* consisted of a series of vignettes or character portraits of criminals that Neale encountered, interviewed, and studied. The 18 chapters of *Dark Deeds* range from five to 20 pages of absolutely gripping narrative and deep (if often theologically dogmatic) analysis, including titles such as “Perverted Talent—Mathieson the Engraver,” “The Female Assassin—Miss Ann Broadrick,” and “The Gaming House an Ante-Room to the Gallows—Henry Weston.” Reading these chapters feels exactly like reading, say, the “cultural criminology” of Jeff Ferrell (1997), whose approach to fieldwork, theorized as “criminological *verstehen*,” attempts to unravel the lived meanings of crime and justice by attending to the subjective experiences and emotions

of an embedded researcher. Likewise, Neale's *Dark Deeds* consisted of "fieldwork" conducted by an analyst immersed in the object of his study and using a formal system or method of interrogation, one that allowed him to gather, evaluate, and display information with a relatively high degree of consistency and rigor.

The three books covered in Ormsby's "Felon and Felon-Worship" represent a coherent body of literature for a burgeoning field, a field pointing back to the Newgate tradition, a field I would call "criminology." This field began with literary and ethical accounts of crime and criminals written by the public and the practitioners of criminal justice—jailers and lawyers, not scholars, certainly not scientists. If so, then the Newgate tradition has a significant and previously overlooked role in the disciplinary history of criminology. Although criminology, both the word and the discipline, is usually thought to have originated in Italy in the 1880s, there were instances of the word *criminology*, and I would argue a field of criminology, in England well before that time. To understand the Newgate tradition as "criminology" is to suggest that, in its inception—as in our current moment—criminology could and does take the shape of humanistic, essayistic writing done by criminal justice professionals. Moreover, the moralistic tone and purpose of the Newgate tradition reveals that criminology began as "applied research" concerned with the prevention of crime, not "pure research" addressed solely to the understanding of crime. Some criminologists may want to preserve the moniker of *criminology* for pure, scientific research conducted by academics, but the first instance of the word *criminology* gestures toward a branch of the field that is humanistic, popular, and practical, something that might be called "public criminology" following Loader and Sparks (2010). These very old and very new instances of "public criminology" suggest that criminology, then and now, need not be nervously restricted to academic and scientific writing.

Given this broad and inclusive understanding of criminology, it becomes necessary to ask what makes something *not* criminology. In all its "sorts," the criminologist can be distinguished from the amateur, as Ormsby did when he concluded that there are "three great classes of felon-worshippers" (p. 272). First, there are those who perversely love deviance and wickedness. Second, there are those who only obsess over criminals because everyone else is doing so. But then Ormsby turned to a third class of "felon worshippers" who anticipate what we now tend to think of as criminologists:

Thirdly, we have those of the George Selwyn stamp, for whom a criminal has a sort of unhallowed fascination. They take a deep interest in all he says and does, or has said and done – they have an unquenchable thirst for information as to whether his health holds up, what he had for breakfast the last morning, whether he takes kindly to the crank, the colour of his hair and eyes, his height, his habits, his disposition. They are not to be confounded with the first class; for they would not rescind one jot or tittle of his sentence, or ameliorate his condition for any consideration. The more you punish him, the better pleased they are – only you must let them know all the particulars. (p. 272)

In these three classes of "felon worshippers," we might distinguish *criminophiles*—those who love, celebrate, and sentimentalize criminals—from *criminologists* such as George Selwyn – those who study criminals with an "unhallowed fascination."⁴ The criminologist is no less enthusiastic and obsessive than the criminophile, but the criminologist is interested in interpretation, not celebration. From this perspective, it is an unsentimental interest, an attempt at elucidation, and an attention to particularity that distinguishes the criminologist who studies crime from the amateur who is simply fascinated by it.

Three years after "Felon and Felon-Worship," the word *criminology* appeared again in a book by Joseph Ewart, M.D. entitled *The Sanitary Condition and Discipline of Indian Jails* (1860). While Ewart's book is notable as an early, unrecorded instance of the word *criminology*, it is also remarkable for its articulations of actual criminological theories. In one passage, Ewart used what we would now call a "social learning theory" of criminology to describe prison as a school for scoundrels, as "a course of infamous training, under the ascendant reign of some irreclaimable villain, who occupies the professorship of criminology in this collegiate institution for the reciprocal and universal dissemination of the blackest vice and crime" (pp. 288–289). I do not want to take this instance too seriously because clearly Ewart used the word *criminology* ironically—meaning, as he did, that criminology is the study of how to do crime—but it is still noteworthy that in 1860 a British physician writing about India used the word *criminology* 12 years before the *OED*'s first recorded usage. Moreover, it is interesting to consider the fact that, in this early instance, criminology was something that was done by the criminal himself, suggesting another early example of "convict criminology" (Richards & Ross, 2001).

As Neale's *Dark Deeds*, J.B.'s *Scenes*, the anonymous *Lamentation*, and Ewart's *Indian Jails* demonstrate, theories that now occupy a central place in our current conversations about criminology were present long before the scientific study of crime and criminals became fashionable. If these texts included the word *criminology*, and recognizable theories of criminology, then what prevents us from calling them properly criminological? Is it simply the absence of science and statistics? That threshold will not suffice, for the field of *criminology* was first theorized in contrast to the science and statistics of *criminal anthropology*, as I discuss in the next section.

In this section, I have addressed a couple of early English instances of the word *criminology* which, to be sure, were sporadic. They were not as clear and deliberate as the explicit attempts to define the field of criminology that began later in the nineteenth century in Italy and France. But the earliest usage of the word *criminology* in the context of the Newgate tradition and other popular nineteenth-century English writings on crime and prisons opens up for us the possibility that humanistic, essayistic, and even artistic statements on crime can be considered criminology, then and now. From this perspective, both ancient and modern essays, poems, plays, films, and so forth can rightly be called criminological, as can scholarship coming from the humanities, as long as such works are sufficiently systematic, a position that stakes its ground against the narcissistic claim that the only statements on crime worthy of validation as criminology are those using the scientific method and coming from within the hallowed walls of the university.

The First Uses of the Word *Criminology* in Late Nineteenth-Century Italian and French Literature

For the sake of clarity, and to correct some common misconceptions, I'll start this section by saying that (a) someone named Mazzaresse (not Raffaele Garofalo, certainly not Cesare Lombroso) was the first person to use the term *criminology* in Italian, (b) Gabriel Tarde (not Paul Topinard) was the first to use it in French, and (c) a group of New England clergymen (not the American Arthur MacDonald or the British Havelock Ellis) was the first to use it in English to refer to a specific and coherent discipline, although there were some earlier, erratic instances of the word in English, as discussed in the last section. In contrast to and independent of its earlier usage in English, the word *criminology* was first used in Italian and French as part of an effort to

theorize and name a specific academic pursuit, although it was not always the same pursuit that people had in mind when they said the word *criminology*. In Italy and France, the word was used to refer to both the established field of criminal anthropology and an emerging field that was positioned as an alternative to criminal anthropology, a field more sociological in method and more political in aim. Thus, from a philological perspective, we can ask, did *criminal anthropology* die out as a practice and get replaced by a different, better practice called *criminology*? Or was the practice of *criminal anthropology* simply renamed *criminology*? Is *criminal anthropology* a kind of *criminology*, or are *criminal anthropology* and *criminology* different, even opposed approaches to the question of crime?⁵

Criminal Anthropology and Criminology in Italy

According to *Google Books's* Ngram Viewer (see Figures 1 and 2), the term *criminal anthropology* came into usage first in Italy in the late 1870s and then in France in the early 1880s, in both cases predating the term *criminology*, and *criminal anthropology* remained the more popular term well into the twentieth century. In Italy, Cesare Lombroso described his approach to criminals as "anthropological" as early as the first edition of his landmark book, *Criminal Man* (1876/2006, p. 92). The tenets of Lombrosian criminal anthropology are well known: crime is a natural phenomenon; there are "born criminals" whose predisposition to crime can be ascertained from their physical "anomalies"; thus, scholars should study the criminal, not the crime (see Horn, 2003). After publishing *Criminal Man*, Lombroso regularly used the term *criminal anthropology* to describe his intellectual project: He founded a journal called *Archives of Psychiatry, Criminal Anthropology, and Legal Medicine* in 1880, for example, and he convened the first *International Congress of Criminal Anthropology* in 1885. But, up to this point in his career, he never referred to himself as a *criminologist* or to his work as *criminology*.

Our most authoritative resource, *The Grand Dictionary of the Italian Language*, cites Raffaele Garofalo's book titled *Criminology* (1885) as the first instance of the word in Italian ("Criminologia," 1961-2008), but there was at least one earlier instance. A journal article published in 1885 by the Commission on Judicial Statistics and Notaries quoted from a book published in 1884 by one S. P. G. Mazzaresse, who wrote, "Now the social criminology could reaffirm the great influence that physical and moral elements have on human nature while also taking into consideration constitution and character"

(as cited in p. 231). In this quotation, it is unclear who the criminologists are. When he said the word *criminology*, was Mazzaresse referring to the works of criminal anthropologists like Lombroso and claiming that they consider both the natural and the social influences on crime? Or, was Mazzaresse referring to a new field that saw crime as both a natural and a social phenomenon, unlike Lombroso and the other criminal anthropologists, who only saw crime as a natural phenomenon? Because I have been unable to track down the reference, it is difficult to tell. From this quotation alone, we cannot know if Mazzaresse thought of criminal anthropology as criminology, but we can be sure that Mazzaresse thought of criminology as a discipline treating crime as both a natural and a social phenomenon. In this regard, criminology has always been an interdisciplinary field. It was never not sociological, and the introduction of sociology to biological considerations is what makes thought on crime “criminology.”

After the first recorded Italian usage by Mazzaresse, the word *criminology* appeared in the title but not the text of three Italian books: Raffaele Garofalo’s *Criminology: A Study on Crime, its Causes, and the Means of Repression* (1885); Emanuele Carnevale’s *On Punishment in the Classical School and in Positive Criminology* (1886); and Giulio Fioretti’s *On Self Defense, a Study of Criminology* (1886). Of these three books, Garofalo’s was by far the most influential. He was one of the fathers of criminal anthropology, along with Lombroso and Fiori, whom Garofalo dubbed “the naturalists,” but like Mazzaresse, Garofalo conceived of criminology as both a natural and a social science, as he stated in the opening of his book *Criminology*:

The criminal has been recently studied by the naturalists, some of whom note his anatomical and psychological aspects; he has been presented as a type, as a variety of the *genus homo*. But these studies are sterile when applied to legislation. Not all of the great number of criminals according to the law answers the description of the naturalists’ criminal man, which has thrown doubt upon the practical value of such studies. And yet this does not stem from an error of method. The naturalists, while speaking of the criminal, have omitted to tell us what they meant by ‘crime.’ They have left this task to the jurists, whom they believed to be responsible, without attempting to say whether or not criminality from the legal standpoint is coterminous with criminality from the sociological point of view. It is this lack of definition which has

hitherto rendered the naturalists’ study of crime a thing apart and caused it to be regarded as a matter of purely scientific interest with which the science of criminal law has nothing to do. (pp. 3–4)

If criminology was clearly a social science for Garofalo, it was also an applied science, not the pure science of “the naturalists.” That is, *criminology* was not Garofalo’s term for what the criminal anthropologists had been doing. Instead, he said that the scientific methods of the naturalists needed to be applied to legislation, and this application of academic thought to public policy was what he thought of as “criminology.” For the criminal anthropologists, the central disciplinary distinction was between the earlier, “classical school” and their own, more modern, “positive school”; the key distinction for Garofalo, however, was between “the legal viewpoint” and “the sociological viewpoint.” That is, where Mazzaresse presented criminology as an interdisciplinary combining the methods and concerns of biology and sociology, Garofalo added legal studies to the mix. He did not take exception to the scientific methods of “the naturalists.” Instead, he lamented the fact that the criminal anthropologists had not been sufficiently deliberate in their definition of crime; they simply assumed that lawmakers had arrived at the correct definition. Taking a step back, we can see that, while the “critical criminology” of the 1970s positioned itself against the legalism of mainstream twentieth-century criminology (see Taylor et al., 1974), the example of Garofalo shows that criminology has always had the capacity to be critical of legal definitions of crime. And, if Garofalo was critical of the criminal anthropologists in the academic sphere for not defining *crime*, he was also skeptical of the politicians and lawyers in the public sphere who actually were defining *crime*. That is, Garofalo was suspicious of both “the naturalists” and “the jurists,” creating a space for “criminologists” to consider what a criminal is (a biological concern) by considering what crime is (a sociological concern). In sum, he thought criminology should be sociological, not just biological; practical, not just theoretical; public, not just academic; political, not just scientific; and critical, not just legalistic. From this perspective, Lombroso was not a criminologist.

As noted, Garofalo, Carnevale, and Fioretti all used the word *criminology* in their titles, but not in their texts, nor did they use the term *criminologist*. In their texts, they did use the term *criminalist*, but this appellation was not reserved strictly for Lombroso and Ferri. For example, while Fioretti (1886) referred to “the positive criminalist [*il criminalista positivo*]” (p. 92), Carnevale (1886) used the term to discuss

“the classical criminalists [*i criminalisti classici*]” (p. 16). Looking at Garofalo, Carnevale, and Fioretti we must question whether the term *criminology* used in their titles is what is done by the “criminalists” discussed in their texts. Is a “criminalist” the same as a “criminologist”? Is a “criminalist” a certain kind of

“criminologist”? Or is a “criminalist” specifically *not* a “criminologist”? This terminological instability was a hallmark of the discourse about crime in Italy in the 1880s, an inconsistency that followed the discourse to France.

Figure 1: A Google Ngram⁶ of the Frequency of the Words *Criminal Anthropology* and *Criminology* in Italian from 1875-1975

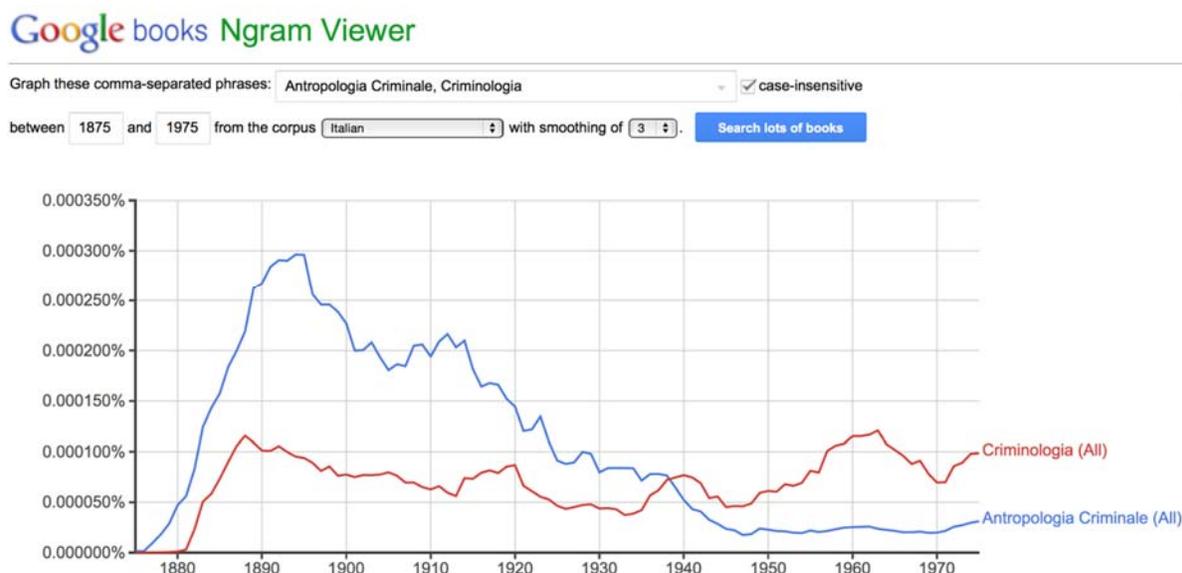
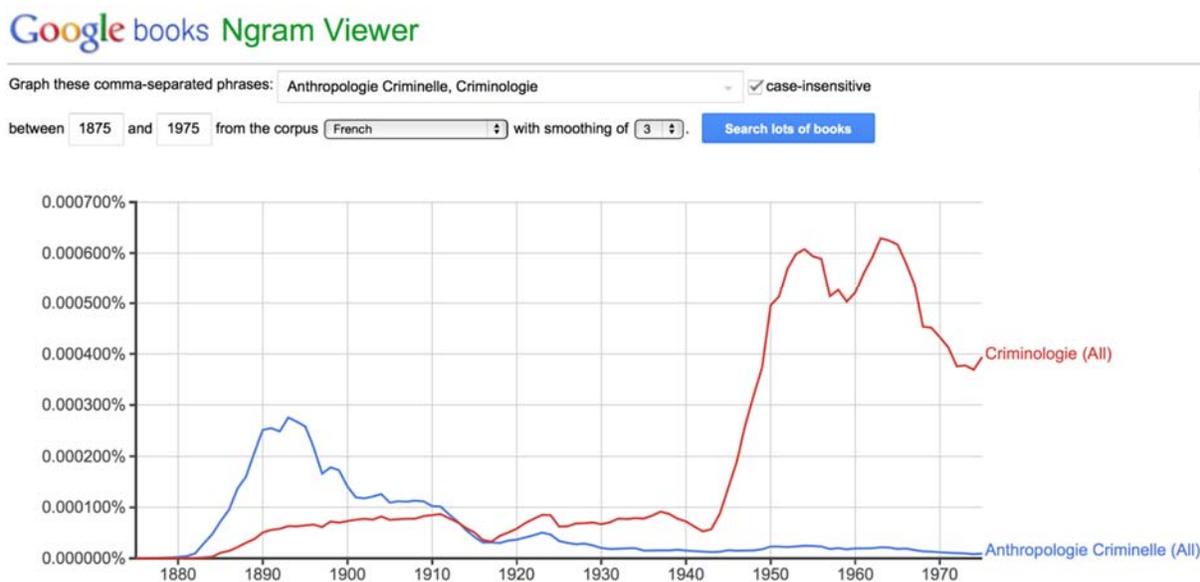


Figure 2: A Google Ngram of the Frequency of the Words *Criminal Anthropology* and *Criminology* in French from 1875-1975



Criminology and Criminology in France

If Garofalo was the first person to theorize the discipline of criminology, and he did so in Italian in 1885, the first person to theorize the word *criminology* as a term for the discipline was Paul Topinard, writing in French first in 1887 and again in 1890. First, in an 1887 article titled “Criminal Anthropology,” published in the *Review of Anthropology*, Topinard discussed Lombroso’s *Criminal Man* and suggested a different title: “Its title, *Criminal Man*, perfectly reflects its contents: it could just as well be entitled ‘*Criminology*’ except for the fact that practical applications, professional jurisprudence, the question of prevention and punishment, are not covered in the book” (p. 659). Note that Topinard’s term here was *criminology* with an *a*, not *criminology* with an *o*, suggesting (per the method of Lombardo and the criminal anthropologists) the biological study of criminals or criminality, not the sociological study of crime. But, as Topinard treated the term, *criminology* was not what Lombroso had been doing. Topinard said that Lombroso’s work could be called *criminology* except that, as Topinard saw it, Lombroso was theoretical, academic, and scientific while Topinard’s “criminologist” would be practical, public, and political. For Topinard, *criminology* is applied research, whereas Lombroso and the criminal anthropologists had been doing pure research. Furthermore, the criminal anthropologists studied the criminal as an animal, not crime as an event, but Topinard had serious reservations about both their methods and their theories, as he stated in the conclusion of his review:

To accept as true the concept of atavism—i.e., that certain individuals are predestined to commit crime or that they possess a physical and mental constitution which leads to crime—would be to undermine at its foundation the new branch of applied science which has been developed under the name of *criminology*. (p. 684)

The Lombrosan idea of the born criminal would undermine Topinard’s vision of “*criminology*” (again with an *a*) because *criminology* is an “applied science”: It attends to prevention and punishment, which are fool’s errands if crime is predetermined. In sum, like Garofalo’s *criminology*, Topinard’s *criminology* was conceived of as public, practical, and political, concerned with the prevention of crime and the punishment of criminals, not simply an academic understanding of the causes of crime arrived at through the scientific method, which had

been the narrow concern of criminal anthropology up to that point.

In the following year, Topinard’s countryman and colleague Gabriel Tarde (1888) wrote a blistering critique of Garofalo in a paper titled “The Criminology,” also published in the *Review of Anthropology*. That is, Tarde, not Topinard, was the first Frenchman to use the term *criminology* with all the right vowels, although he only used the term in his title and to name Garofalo’s book. In his article, Tarde did not reflect on the term *criminology* but, like Topinard, whom he cited, Tarde thought that “the expression *criminal anthropology* is not immune to serious criticism; *criminal psychology* would be clearer” (p. 522). If Tarde thought *criminal psychology* was a better pursuit than *criminal anthropology*, we might pause to ask which of these is actually *criminology*. Is *criminal psychology* a kind of *criminology*, while *criminal anthropology* is not? Or, are both criminologies, except that (from Tarde’s perspective) *criminal psychology* is good criminology, while *criminal anthropology* is bad? In any event, keeping in mind our main concern, which is the definition of *criminology*, we must remember to produce a definition that is responsive to the possibility that criminology is not necessarily a good thing. Indeed, back in Italy in 1885, Luigi Majno had already reported denigrations of the “scientific cult” of Lombroso, whose studies were said to “fly by alchemical calculations and metaphorical criminology” (p. 1162). We must remember that the word *criminology* can be a pejorative term, not the title of a noble science, but a denigration of a naïve scientism, as it has been in more recent studies such as Stanley Cohen’s *Against Criminology* (1988) or Carol Smart’s (1990) account of abandoning criminology.

In 1889, at the second *International Congress of Criminal Anthropology, Biology, and Sociology*, Topinard gave a paper titled “Criminology and Anthropology” in which he modified his earlier term *criminology* with an *a* to the term Tarde had used, *criminology* with an *o*. Imagining himself in conversation with a criminologist, Topinard argued that criminology is not anthropology because criminology is practical while anthropology is purely academic:

Nothing of what you are handling has to do with anthropology; the science that you have created and the growing number of criminals that has made it so urgent, must not bear this name, and the title of criminology is the only one that suits it. (p. 489)

For Topinard, criminology was a science but, he insisted, it was an applied science, not a pure science like anthropology. For Topinard, anthropology was theoretical but criminology was practical, as he concluded:

Criminology is a science of application and not a pure science like anthropology. Criminology does not concern itself with the human that is animal, but solely with the human as a social being. Criminology fits into forensic medicine as well as ordinary medicine, on one hand in sociology and in its applications on the other. Criminology has nothing to do with true anthropology. (p. 496)

For Topinard, criminology was *not* the study of the criminal as a biological life form, which is perhaps why he changed his earlier term *criminalology* with an *a*, which suggests the study of criminals, to *criminology* with an *o*. *Criminalology* with an *a* is a biological discipline concerned with the criminal as a natural phenomenon while *criminology* with an *o* is a sociological discipline attending to crime as a social phenomenon. For Topinard, there was no criminology without sociology—criminology was criminal anthropology plus sociology plus politics—yet he thought that criminology had amassed enough autonomy to be its own field:

While the title of criminology belongs to you in its entirety, you are independent. You contribute to your goals in all the sciences by taking what suits you. You are autonomous. Believe me, Messieurs, be proud of yourselves. Display your real flag. Surely, the legitimate title of your science is that which M. Garofalo gave it, that of *criminology*. (p. 496)

Criminal Anthropology as Criminology in Italy, France, Great Britain, and the United States

Although Garofalo and Topinard used the word *criminology* to distance themselves from the discipline of criminal anthropology, others at the time were using the word *criminology* as a synonym for the phrase *criminal anthropology*. This was especially true of the translation of criminal anthropology into English, which first surfaced in June of 1889 (remarkably, two months before the second *International Congress of Criminal Anthropology, Biology, and Sociology*) in a panel on prison reform at a conference for congressional churches in Boston, MA: “We shall treat this subject

in its relation to criminology more than its relation to penology. As Christians we can wisely join hands with the social scientist in studying the criminal more than his crime” (p. 36). The Anglicization of criminology was then more deliberately taken up by the American Arthur MacDonal in a review essay titled “Criminological” published in January of 1890 in *The American Journal of Psychology*.⁷ Macdonald used *criminology* and *criminal anthropology* interchangeably and registered the diversity of the emergent field by noting two main “parties”—“one emphasizes the pathological or atavistic causes; the other, the psychological and sociological”—and a whole host of “divisions” such as criminal anatomy, criminal jurisprudence, penology, prophylaxy (“methods of prevention”), and “the philosophy of criminology” (p. 115). Like MacDonald’s essay, an anonymous English review titled “Criminal Literature,” published in 1890 in *The Saturday Review*, did not distinguish between “what is variously called criminology or criminal anthropology” (p. 265). Also like Macdonald, this piece in *The Saturday Review* divided criminology into two broad parts, although the parts were not the same. The author of “Criminal Literature” saw “one [part] which is sensible, which is not particularly scientific, and which is as old as the hills [and] one which is brand-new, which is scientific *quand meme*, and which is chiefly nonsense” (p. 265). Macdonald had separated a biological school from a psychosociological school, but this anonymous English writer drew a distinction between a criminology that is scientific and one that is not. The English writer’s suggestion that this last kind of criminology, the non-scientific kind, is “as old as the hills” encourages us to think that, at least from this writer’s perspective, criminology is not necessarily scientific and not necessarily modern. As we work toward our definition, we must remember that criminology can be ancient or modern, humanistic or scientific, and, when scientific, biological or psychological or sociological. And it can also be, as this writer said, “nonsense.”

In the five short years between Garofalo’s Italian usage of the term and the translation of the discourse to a wider Western audience, there emerged a proliferating number of orientations that criminology could take and still be considered criminology. Just consider the anonymous English review of Havelock Ellis’s *The Criminal* published in the *Athenæum* (1890) which described criminology as a “branch of the anthropological sciences,” but “share[d] Dr. Topinard’s dislike of the term ‘criminal anthropology,’ and may adopt the term ‘criminology’ till a better can be found” (p. 325). Even though Topinard specifically dissociated criminology from

anthropology because he thought criminology was practical but anthropology was not, this review cited Topinard in its claim that criminology is a discipline within the field of anthropology, even as it rejected the moniker “criminal anthropology.” What a mess!

As this reference to Topinard suggests, the uncertainty about which term to use, *criminal anthropology* or *criminology*, was prevalent even back in France. In one paper delivered at *The Second International Congress of Criminal Anthropology, Biology, and Sociology*, two Frenchmen Taverni and Magnan (1890) explicitly attached the word *criminology* to the battle cry of criminal anthropology: “To study the criminal rather than the crime is the true spirit of modern criminology” (p. 49). And even in the earliest Italian writings, Carnevale and Fioretti (both writing in 1886) clearly used the term *criminology* to refer to the positive school of criminal anthropology, yet it was not necessarily a ringing endorsement. Neither Carnevale nor Fioretti produced works of Lombrosian anthropology. Carnevale explicitly sought to merge the findings of the newer positive school with the thinking of the older classical school. Fioretti married the scientific scholarship of the positive school with the humanistic scholarship of history. Both Carnevale and Fioretti’s works read more like moral philosophy than criminal anthropology, which brings us back to the question that is the main concern of this essay: *What is criminology?*

What would a definition of the field of criminology look like if were made accountable to the wide variety of activities carried out in the name of criminology in its original formulation? From the first to use the term in Italian, Mazzaresse, we would take that criminology can approach crime as either a natural or a social phenomenon. From the first to use the term in a major way, Garofalo, we would say that criminology is practical and political. From the first to theorize the term explicitly, Topinard, we would add that criminology is autonomous in its interdisciplinarity. And from the other writers of the time—the Italians Majno, Carnevale, and Fioretti as well as the Frenchman Tarde, the American MacDonald, and the anonymous British reviewers—we would gather that criminology could also be another name for criminal anthropology, a name that could be used either as grandiloquence or as a pejorative. Thus, if we want a definition of the term *criminology* that is responsive to its earliest usages, we must provide one that allows for both the methods and theories of the criminal anthropologists and the critique and rejection of those very methods and theories.

“Criminology is...”: Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Definitions and Debates

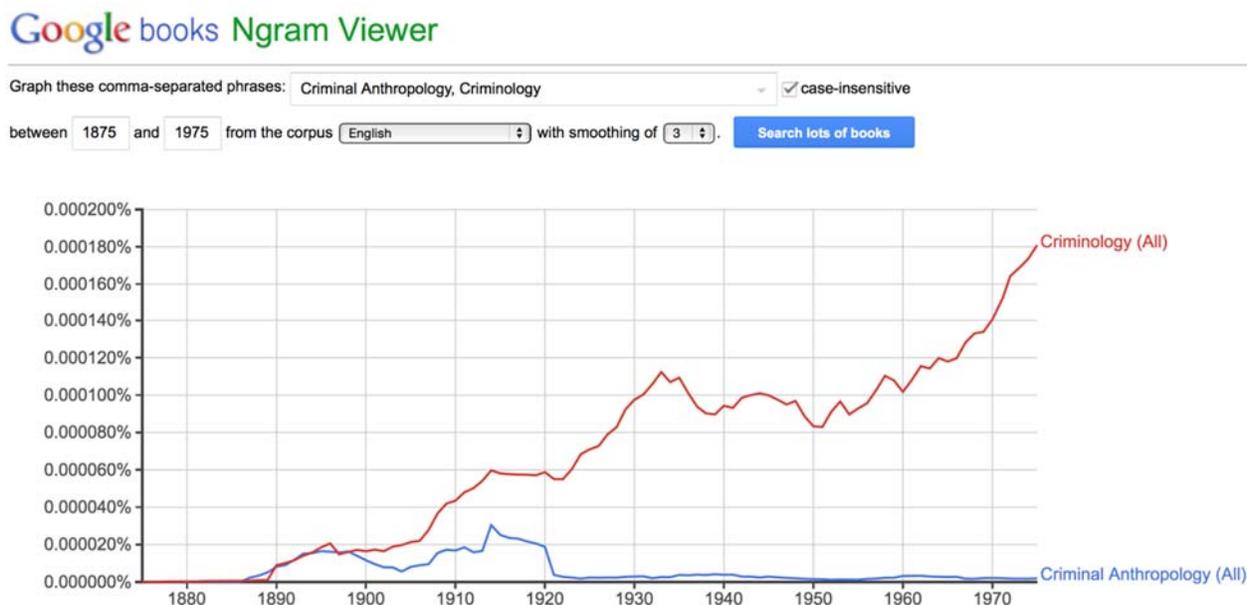
In the wake of the European debates about criminology and criminal anthropology, and their immigration to Great Britain and the United States, the English-speaking world took the lead in discussions of criminology. In the English language, 1890 was a watershed year after which the frequency of the word *criminology* steadily grew during the first half of the twentieth century, while interest in *criminal anthropology* effectively disappeared by 1925 (see Figure 3). This transaction did not occur in Italy and France until the 1940s (see Figures 1 and 2). But defining the word *criminology* in English has always been a treacherous endeavor.

Arguably, two early definitions by American sociologists (published within one year of each other) have been vying for the field for almost a century. The first came from Thorsten Sellin (1938), who insisted that criminology is scientific and is a pure science, not an applied science: “The term ‘criminology’ should be used to designate only the body of scientific knowledge and the deliberate pursuit of such knowledge. What the technical use of knowledge in the treatment and prevention of crime might be called, I leave to the imagination of the reader” (p. 3). The second definition came from Edwin Sutherland (1939), who made no mention of science but did extend the scope of criminology into studies of law and society: “Criminology is the body of knowledge regarding crime as a social phenomenon. It includes within its scope the processes of making laws, and of breaking laws, and of reacting toward the breaking of laws” (p 1). Three questions raised between these two definitions of *criminology* have informed many of the subsequent attempts to define the field:

1. Is criminology scientific?
2. Is criminology pure or applied research?
3. Is criminology the study of crime, narrowly defined, or the study of crime and quite a bit more (including ethics, law, justice, and society)?

Criminologists since Sellin and Sutherland have been split on these questions. Like Sellin, Elliott and Merrill (1941, as cited in Sharma, 1998) thought that criminology is scientific but, unlike Sellin, they sought to extend the scope of criminology from basic to applied research: “Criminology may be defined as the scientific study of crime and its treatment” (as cited in Sharma, 1998,

**Figure 3: A Google Ngram of the Frequency of the Words
Criminal Anthropology and *Criminology* in English from 1875-1975**



pp. 1–2). Like Sutherland, Taft (1956, as cited in Sharma, 1998) made no mention of science and characterized criminology as a broadly interdisciplinary field extending from academic to political concerns: “Criminology is the study which includes all the subject matter necessary to the understanding and prevention of crimes together with the punishment and treatment of delinquents and criminals” (as cited in Sharma, 1998, p. 2). Jones (1965) thought (like Sellin) that criminology is scientific but (like Sutherland) that it is a social science: “[Criminology is] the science that studies the social phenomenon of crime, its causes and the measures which society directs against it” (p. 1). Explicitly building off of Sellin’s definition, Wolfgang (1963) wrote that criminology is a science, and it is, in fact, a discipline in its own right, “autonomous,” as opposed to a broadly interdisciplinary enterprise:

The term ‘criminology’ should be used to designate a body of *scientific* knowledge about crime.... Criminology should be considered as an autonomous, separate discipline of knowledge because it has accumulated its own set of organized data and theoretical conceptualisms that use the scientific method, approach to

understanding, and attitude in research. (pp. 155–156)

Here, Wolfgang (again like Sellin) focused criminology on a narrow topic—“knowledge about crime”—yet Hoefnagels (1973) refused (like Sutherland) to mention science and extended (again like Sutherland) the bounds of the field far beyond the matter of crime causation, suggesting rather ambitiously that “criminology studies the formal and informal processes of criminalization and decriminalization, crime, criminals and those related thereto, the causes of crime and the official and unofficial responses to it” (p. 45). Most abstractly, perhaps least helpfully, Garland (1994) wrote that “criminology [is] a specific genre of discourse and inquiry about crime—a genre which has developed in the modern period and which can be distinguished from other ways of talking and thinking about criminal conduct” (p. 17).

There are even slightly different inflections in the definition of the word *criminology* among the three largest and most knowledgeable entities on the subject, the American Society of Criminology (ASC), the European Society of Criminology (ESC), and the British Society of Criminology (BSC). Both the ASC (2006) and the ESC (2003) define criminology as “scholarly, scientific, and professional knowledge,” but where the ASC specifies that its members pursue

“knowledge concerning the measurement, etiology, consequences, prevention, control and treatment of crime and delinquency” (para. 1), the ESC’s definition of *criminology* more clearly emphasizes institutional matters of law and justice, “including the measurement and detection of crime, legislation and the practice of criminal law, and law enforcement, judicial, and correctional systems” (sec.1.c). For its part, the BSC (2011) characterizes criminology not as an academic pursuit, but rather as a public service, stating that its objective is “to advance public education about crime, criminal behaviour and the criminal justice systems” (sec. 3.1).

Sometimes these competing definitions simply register different emphases; sometimes they point to fundamental disagreements about what criminology is. Is it a discipline in its own right (“autonomous,” as Wolfgang said), or is it an interdisciplinary field? Is it a specifically modern discourse (as Garland said), or are there pre-modern criminologies? Is it only academic, or can it be public? Is it necessarily scientific? If so, what does it mean to be scientific? And if it is a science, is it a “pure science,” narrowly concerned with understanding crime, or an “applied science” also concerned with the prevention of crime and the treatment of criminals? If, however, criminology is not scientific, then what is it instead? And is it only the study of crime, or is it, more broadly, the study of crime and criminal justice? Or is it, even more broadly, the study of crime, criminal justice, and anything under the sun that relates to crime and justice (including ethics, law, politics, culture, and so forth)? Is it better to have a narrow and limiting definition of the word *criminology* or a broad and inviting definition?

The difficulties of questions such as these, and the different responses different criminologists have given to them, have led some to suggest that the best definition of *criminology* is no definition at all. For example, in their introduction to *The SAGE Dictionary of Criminology*, McLaughlin and Muncie (2005) considered the contested and contradictory perspectives in criminology and concluded, “There is, therefore, no one definition of ‘criminology’ to be found in this dictionary but a multitude of noisy, argumentative criminological perspectives” (p. xiii). Another recent collection entitled *What is Criminology?* (Bosworth & Hoyle, 2011) offered not one but 34 answers to this question in its 34 chapters. Actually, the collection offered no answer at all, insofar as it split the question of the book’s title, *What is Criminology?*, into six sub-questions: “What is criminology for?” “What is the impact of criminology?” “How should criminology be done?” “What are the key issues and debates in criminology today?” “What challenges does the discipline of

criminology currently face?” and “How has criminology as a discipline changed over the last few decades?” (pp. 4–7). These are all fascinating questions (as, indeed, each of the 34 chapters in this ground-breaking collection are invaluable reflections on criminology by some of the world’s most renowned criminologists), but they are questions that, in their increased specificity, deflect attention away from the difficult, abstract question of the book. So, indeed, *what is criminology?*

A standard definition of the word *criminology* is valuable insofar as it can help professional bodies determine who is qualified to conduct research under this banner, and therefore who should get jobs and funding. Indeed, there is a relationship, and sometimes a tension, between one’s definition of criminology and one’s sense of who should be considered a criminologist. On the one hand, the criminologist who believes that any- and everyone who has something to contribute to our understanding of crime, criminals, and criminal justice should be offered jobs and funding to conduct research tacitly accepts a broad definition of what criminology is. On the other hand, the criminologist who believes that the success of criminology relies upon a narrow definition of the field tacitly endorses the idea that jobs and funding should be offered only to those who conduct their research on the right topics and in the right ways, whatever they may be. Thus, we must know what criminology is in order to know a criminologist when we see one. So, yet once more, *what is criminology?*

The Etymology of *Criminology*

As we look toward the formulation of a new definition, the etymology of the word *criminology* can throw some light on the rather broad scope of this field in terms of both the issues it addresses and the methods it uses to address those issues.

The Etymology of *-logy*

First, with respect to those methods, the suffix *-logy* indicates a systematic, though not necessarily scientific, study of something. From the Greek word λόγος, “word, speech, reason, discourse, account,” the suffix *-logy* signifies the study of what is indicated by the root word. It sounds simple enough, and from this perspective *criminology* would be defined as “the study of crime” or “the study of criminals.” But the connotations of *-logy* complicate matters. The *-logy* suffix often suggests a specifically scientific study, as in words such as *biology* (the scientific study of living organisms), *geology* (the scientific study of the structure of the earth), and

meteorology (the scientific study of the atmosphere). What does it mean for a study to be “scientific”? The word *science* comes from the Latin word *scire*, “to know,” and science is, etymologically speaking, simply “knowledge,” but scientific knowledge is not just any knowledge, as explained in the *Oxford English Dictionary*:

In modern use, [the word *science* is] often treated as synonymous with ‘Natural and Physical Science,’ and thus restricted to those branches of study that relate to the phenomena of the material universe and their laws.... This is now the dominant sense in ordinary use. (“Science,” 2014, 5b)

The natural and physical sciences have strictly delimited content, namely material objects, and a strictly defined method, the so-called scientific method of observation, hypothesis, experiment, and analysis. Some criminologists, among them the early positivists, have argued for an understanding of criminology as this kind of science, in which case the definition of *criminology* would read something like “the scientific study of the physical bodies of criminals.”

Historically and etymologically, this definition is unacceptable because criminological studies based in biology always have and always will spill over into psychological and sociological concerns—consider the recent advent of “biosocial criminology” (see Walsh, 2002). Indeed, *psychology* and *sociology* are *-logy* words that refer to fields which employ the scientific method on mental and social transactions, not material objects. That is, the *-logy* suffix can and often does signify a study that uses the scientific method to address something that is not physically found in the material world, something that is an event, not an object, something like crime.

Many criminologists group criminology in this class of *-logy* words, taking it to mean “the scientific study of crime as a social phenomenon,” but we should also exercise some caution here for two reasons. First, there are plenty of *-logy* words that are not scientific, such as *theology* (the systematic study of God) and *etymology* (the systematic study of the origins of words, the activity in which I engage in this essay). There is no meaningful sense in which theology and etymology are scientific enterprises as we now use the term *science* (indeed, theology is often seen as uniquely unscientific). Second, the word *science* is simply too overwrought with multiple meanings—pulled, as it is, between a description of content (material objects) and a description of method (controlled experimentation)—to be useful for a definition of criminology. In

other words, the answer to the question, “Is criminology a science?” is and always will be, “It depends on what you mean by ‘science.’” If by *science* you mean “the study of the structure and behavior of the physical and natural world through observation and experiment,” then, no, criminology is not a science. If, however, by *science* you mean “a connected body of observed facts and/or demonstrated truths which are systematically discovered, classified, and colligated using trustworthy methods and brought under general laws,” then, yes, criminology is a science.

In order to prevent this ambiguity from even arising, I have chosen to avoid the word *science* in my definition of the word *criminology*. I have opted, instead, for the word *systematic*. Thus, my first conclusion, based on the etymology of *-logy*, is that *criminology* should be defined as “a systematic study” as opposed to “a scientific study.” What does it mean for a discipline to be “systematic” as opposed to “scientific”? As Georges Gurwitsch discussed in *Sociology of Law* (1942), something is systematic when it is organized, written, and formal (and unsystematic when it is unorganized, unwritten, and spontaneous). For an enterprise to be “systematic” is for it to employ a deliberate and rigorous method of interpretation and argumentation that can be systematized and replicated by others. This systematic method of interpretation need not be the scientific method, but it may well be, and it often is in the case of criminology. But not all criminology is scientific: all “scientific” studies are “systematic,” but not all “systematic” studies are “scientific.” To say that *criminology* should be understood as “systematic study” is to say that it should be seen as methodical study, whether artistic, essayistic, scientific, or otherwise academic, be it empirical or theoretical.

The Etymology of *crimen*

If the etymology of the suffix *-logy* indicates the broad range of methods employed in criminology, the etymology of the root word *crimin-* can indicate a comparably wide scope of issues addressed by this field. Indeed, one of the greatest obstacles to any attempt to define the word *criminology* is that the definition of the word *crime* is not widely agreed upon, as discussed in studies by Henry and Lanier (2001), the Law Commission of Canada (2005), and Friedrichs (2013). These studies push back against the purely legal definition of crime as “the breaking of law”: What about great social harms that are not explicitly illegal? What about behavior that violates administrative regulations rather than criminal law (often called “white collar crime”)? Behind this line

of thought is the argument (which is hard to deny) that criminology can often explain social ills, harms, immoralities, deviance, wrongdoing, and other problems that do not involve violations of the criminal law. Thus, efforts have been made to get “beyond criminology” and to take up *zemiology*, the study of harm (see Hillyard, Pantazis, Tombs, & Gordon, 2004). If criminologists want to keep such studies under the banner of criminology, perhaps the field should be defined as “the systematic study of whatever crime is understood to be,” keeping in mind that the definition of *crime* changes from time to time, place to place, and person to person. I can only add that the etymology of *crime* also suggests that the field of criminology should address quite a bit more than simply the causes of crime.

Our English word *crime* comes from the Latin word *crimen*, which refers more to the judicial process than the act of breaking a law. According to Lewis and Short (“Crimen,” 1879), our best scholarly dictionary of the Latin language, the word *crimen* could refer to a fault, offense, or act that broke a law, as in our modern sense of *crime*, but it could also refer to the act of accusing or charging someone of breaking a law. That is, in Latin, the word *crimen* could be used with reference to either the accused or the accuser. Furthermore, it could also refer to the judicial decision, verdict, or judgment that adjudicated an accusation. Indeed, etymologically speaking, criminology could be the study of what we call “crime,” what we call “accusation,” or what we call “adjudication.” To complicate matters even more, the Latin word *crimen* comes from the verb *cerno*, “to separate, to decide,” as in the modern English word *discern*, which could make criminology into a study of criminalization (deciding what should be illegal) and adjudication (deciding if a law has been broken) even more than a study of the actual criminal act and its causes. Here criminology is coming quite close to what we usually think of as “legal studies.”

The etymology of *crimen* leads us to a second conclusion: Criminology should not be understood simply as “the study of crime” or “the study of criminals.” It is better understood as “the study of crime, criminals, criminal law, criminal justice, and criminalization,” but, since a word should not be used to define itself, this definition is not enough. Instead, we have to specify, drawing upon the etymological richness of the word *crimen*, that criminology is the study of making laws, breaking laws, and enforcing laws, including the adjudication of allegedly broken laws, as well as wrongdoing that could or should be illegal and the public discourse about the creation, violation, enforcement, and adjudication of the law.

Conclusion: The Redefinition of Criminology

As I have sought to illustrate, the twentieth- and twenty-first-century debates over whether criminology is a pure science with a narrow focus or an interdisciplinary field with practical applications have their origin in a nineteenth-century competition between, on the one hand, public and humanistic writing on crime done by English jailers and lawyers and, on the other hand, the academic and scientific tradition associated with Italian positivism. The ongoing debates about whether criminology should be pure or interdisciplinary belong in the context of a bigger struggle over whether criminology can be done only by academic experts with a certain disciplinary training or by anyone with practical and passionate knowledge about crime. Rather than picking a side in this debate, I have argued that the very earliest instances of the word *criminology* and the very latest iterations of this field both call for a definition that can collect multiple time periods, topics, methods, and purposes under a single banner.

In an effort to capture the diversity of criminology in both its original formulation and its ongoing promiscuity, I have suggested that criminology can be defined as the systematic study of crime, criminals, criminal law, criminal justice, and criminalization—that is, the rigorous, organized, and methodical examination of making laws, breaking laws, and enforcing laws, including the adjudication of allegedly broken laws, as well as wrongdoing and injustices that could or should be made illegal and the public discourse about the creation, violation, enforcement, and adjudication of the law—whether such study is ancient or modern, whether artistic, essayistic, scientific, or otherwise academic, be it quantitative or qualitative, be it empirical or theoretical, be it “pure research” that is analytical and concerned with the causes of crime or “applied research” that is ethical and/or political and addressed to crime control or the treatment of offenders.

That’s a mouthful, but in this definition I have purposefully avoided several dictates commonly used to describe criminology, dictates such as “academic,” “scientific,” “sociological,” and “modern.” I have avoided “academic” because the early English history of the word *criminology*, as well as some recent examples such as “convict criminology,” “popular criminology,” and “visual criminology,” suggest that this pursuit can be conducted by prisoners, professionals such as jailers and lawyers, and even artists, in addition to academics. Criminology is usually, but not necessarily, academic. It can be either academic or public.

In my definition, I have avoided saying “scientific” because this word suggests a materialism

and experimental method that are not in keeping with all of the activities carried out in the name of criminology. In its academic forms, criminology is often, but not necessarily, scientific. It can be either scientific or humanistic. In fact, criminology is not only *interdisciplinary*, drawing upon the sciences and the humanities alike, but also *intermedial*, occurring most often in academic prose, but also in journalistic or even artistic forms. As such, departments of criminology and criminal justice have some basis for actively seeking to employ scholars whose degrees are in areas other than criminology and criminal justice. This already happens to some extent in programs such as the Department of Criminology, Law, and Society at the University of California, Irvine, but even those programs tend to hire scholars with traditional social science degrees who like to “go interdisciplinary.” What would happen if humanities scholars with degrees in fields such as history, philosophy, and literary studies were invited to conduct their research under the auspices of “criminology”? I can think of no better environment for vibrant criminological research than a department that employs, say, a biologist, a psychologist, a legal scholar, a sociologist, a historian, a philosopher, and a literary critic.⁸

I have avoided “sociological” because the early Italian and French history of the word *criminology* displays an inconsistency in its reference to both the field of criminal anthropology and the emergent, more sociological field positioned against it. In its scientific forms, criminology is usually, but not necessarily, a social science. It can be a social science or a natural science. Usually, criminology treats crime and justice as social phenomena, not philosophical or biological phenomena, meaning that, whatever else it does, criminology tends to come back to the notion that crime is contextual and must be considered as a component of culture, not nature. Such an enterprise is what people usually have in mind today when they say the word *criminology*, but I have sought to expand the boundaries of this field to acknowledge the totality of the activities that occur in the name of criminology, especially with respect to the fringe activities that are not common in the usual practice of criminology, activities that, in their unusualness, can generate new and productive ways of thinking about crime and justice.

I have avoided “modern” because the earliest criminologists conceived of the traditions they were writing in and against as criminology (bad criminology, but still criminology). Criminology, as I have defined it, is timeless. It is wrong to think of criminology as a specifically modern discourse. If so, then the next step in criminological teaching and textbooks may be to ask how ancient and early-

modern writings on crime and justice can more seriously be brought into the way we tell the story of criminology. Arguably, the entire history of criminology needs to be rewritten so as to present modern scientific criminology as one branch of the field—a very important branch, to be sure, but only one part of a much larger and much older area of inquiry.

In place of “scientific,” “academic,” “sociological,” and “modern,” I have defined criminology as “systematic.” Criminology involves the presence of a rigorous and deliberate method for gathering, evaluating, and displaying facts and ideas about crime – this in contrast to the amateur thought on crime that is rash, erratic, haphazard, reactionary, uninformed, and/or unsystematic. To be systematic is to be methodical. The methods of criminology need not be the scientific method, but there must exist some sort of systematic procedure of analysis in order for an activity to be properly criminological.

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Endnotes

- ¹ In this essay, when I say “the word criminology,” unless otherwise specified, I refer to this word in all its various cognates, such as *criminologist* and *criminological*, as well as its various languages, including English, Italian, French, and German. All translations in this essay are mine unless otherwise attributed.

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- ² Research for this section has corrected a cataloguing error that placed an instance of the word criminology in 1826. The world's largest library catalog, WorldCat, listed an 1826 book by two English lawyers, Andrew Knapp and William Baldwin, titled *The New Newgate Calendar, or Modern Criminology*, held at Acadia University in Canada. When I contacted the special collections librarian at Acadia, we realized that the phrase Modern Criminology was a cataloging error for the actual subtitle, *Modern Criminal Chronology*. Nevertheless, considering the connection between criminology and The Newgate Calendar proved beneficial for the ideas presented in this section.
- ³ Indeed, cultural criminology sees crime as a coproduction of culture—particularly popular culture—that includes art, theater, film, literature, news, etc. (see Ferrell, Hayward, Morrison, & Presdee, 2004; Ferrell, Hayward, & Young, 2008).
- ⁴ According to historian Stella Tillyard (1994), George Selwyn was a gay, necrophilic transvestite who was thrown out of Oxford for blasphemy, but served in the House of Commons for 44 years despite his morbid obsession with criminals and executions. Typical criminology stuff.
- ⁵ An overview of the wealth of scholarship on early European criminology can be found in the introduction to Rafter's *The Origins of Criminology* (2009).
- ⁶ Google's Ngram charts the relative frequency of words over time in a large sample of the books digitized in Google Books. See <http://books.google.com/ngrams>
- ⁷ I base the claim that the American Macdonald used the word "criminology" in English before the British Ellis on the fact that Macdonald's essay was published in January of 1890. I have not been able to identify the month that Havelock Ellis's *The Criminal* was published, but reviews of the book only start showing up in the late summer of 1890.
- ⁸ I do not mean to suggest that has not been tried before; it has, albeit with varying degrees of success. But such programs constitute the exceptions, and not the rule. Indeed, as Fradella (2013) pointed out in the preface to the inaugural issue of this journal, legal scholars (on one hand) and criminologists and criminal justices (on the other) not only miss far too many opportunities to collaborate well, but also often fail to recognize the value in each other's work. One can logically assume that if the transdisciplinary intersections between law and criminology pose problems for collaboration and cross-disciplinary hiring, such problems are likely to be magnified when criminologists examine the work of humanities scholars engaged in *criminology* as I have defined it in this essay.