**Critical Criminology in the Corporate University:**

**Results from a Survey in England, Wales and the North of Ireland**

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If you have flicked through the pages of ‘Criminology’ in the past ten years, then I’m sure you are aware of the monstrosity that mainstream ‘high impact’ journals have become – to me they are almost unreadable. (Respondent 11)

This paper\(^1\) draws upon research undertaken between March 14\(^{th}\) - May 12\(^{th}\) 2014 with critical criminologists currently working in Universities in England, Wales and the North of Ireland. Overall 24 academics from 20 different universities participated in the study\(^2\). The ‘Critical Criminology Questionnaire’,\(^3\) from which both the quantitative and qualitative data is derived, is now available on the European Group for the Study of Deviance and Social Control [European Group] website\(^4\) and will form part of a wider survey of critical criminology in the corporate university. We would welcome contributions to this survey from members of the European Group from all around the world. But before we consider the findings of the current survey let us start by reminding ourselves of some of the core values of the European Group. These values include:

- facilitating emancipatory knowledge that can be used to challenge power relations.
- promoting craftsmanship, intellectual autonomy and integrity;
- fostering mutual support, cooperation and sisterly and brotherly warmth;
- nurturing comradeship, collegiality and solidarity with sufferers and the oppressed;
- emphasising political commitments, direct engagement in struggle and compassion for fellow human beings in need.\(^5\)

The following discussion explores how, despite the contemporary challenges to university life under neo-liberal capitalism and other hierarchies of power, the values and principles of the European Group continue to have relevance for critical pedagogy\(^6\) and critical analysis\(^7\) today.

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\(^1\) Thanks to all those who attended my session on ‘critical criminology programmes in the UK: expanding the criminological imagination?’ at the University of Padova, 19\(^{th}\) May 2014 and for the helpful and supportive comments on this paper. Thanks also to Francesca Vianello for inviting me to talk on this issue.

\(^2\) See further details in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

\(^3\) See Appendix 3. Many thanks to Alana Barton, Emma Bell, Victoria Canning and Joe Sim for very helpful comments on earlier drafts of the survey questionnaire.

\(^4\) [www.europeangroup.org](http://www.europeangroup.org)


\(^6\) Critical pedagogy is an educational philosophy which privileges reflective, independent and critical thinking. Teaching is conceived as a political intervention facilitating self-actualisation, personal development and life-long learning. Key is the emergence of an emancipatory ‘critical consciousness’ empowering individuals and challenging social inequalities through the transformation of ‘common sense’ into ‘good sense’. Drawing upon the student’s experiences and / or conceptions of the world, old assumptions are problematised and new ways of interpreting the world formulated. Critical pedagogy connects theory, policy and praxis. The teacher is an ‘organic’ or ‘transformative’ intellectual – a conduit for change.

1. The appeal of critical criminology

Evidence from the survey findings suggest that the acknowledgement of social divisions and structural inequalities and the ‘holding of power to account’ (Respondent 7) continue to be privileged in both critical criminological teaching and research.

We try to approach criminology from a varied and critical perspective, placing issues such as gender, race, diversity and class at centre stage [alongside] those criminological theories which adequately consider these issues and challenge inequality and bias. (Respondent 2)

The content of the programme has been designed around the key concerns of critical criminology - challenging legalistic definitions of ‘crime’, problematizing the limitations of ‘crime’ as a focus of analysis, focusing on notions of ‘harm’, structural inequalities, the politics of crime control and governance, and focusing on crimes of the powerful. (Respondent 8)

With one or two exceptions we as a team seek to deconstruct the common-sense views of crime and to refocus students on other social harms. We seek to explore issues of state crime and human rights abuses and compare these with the caricatured and amplified harms which Criminal Justice concentrates upon. Thus we steer away from the CJS [Criminal Justice System], representing it as a failed ‘system’, and wish to address the social policy approaches to dealing with complex social problems and injustices. (Respondent 19)

We have a culture that is sympathetic to providing education that questions the taken for granted, which asks students to look at ‘what lies beneath’ and generally learn the art of critique. (Respondent 1)

GRAPH 1

Do you think students are specifically attracted to critical, as opposed to positivist, criminology courses?

The graph indicates 9 out of the 21 academics who answered this question thought students are not specifically attracted to critical criminology, with 7 respondents highlighting students do not know the difference between critical criminology or positivist courses.

There is also evidence from the surveys that students, especially post-graduate and research students continue to be strongly attracted to critical criminology programmes. Though many respondents indicated that some students were unable to differentiate between critical and

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8 With thanks to Lucy Wood for her help with Nvivo. For Further Graphs see Appendix 4
positivistic programmes, and that others would prefer the certainty of ‘scientific’ analysis, a good number noted that critical criminology continues to have strong appeal.

The responses of applicants to presentations on Open Days and Visit Days indicate they are generally interested in areas like inequalities, social construction of crime, crimes of the powerful etc. However, the impact of TV programmes is still felt – students still have a strange fascination with the ‘serial killer’ and still talk about wanting to ‘get into the mind of the criminal’ and so on. (Respondent 8)

Honestly, I think some students have absolutely no idea about either one until they get to University. But, then, I firmly believe that if they are exposed to both [positivism and critical analysis] they will more often choose the critical courses because they’re more interesting and thought provoking. I recently gave a guest lecture in a (unnamed) positivist department, where students mostly only get quantitative training and very little theoretical or critical engagement. They voraciously consumed the critical perspectives I offered, as if they were starving. So, I think, actually that what critical perspectives offer is more in line with what students imagine their University experience will be like (i.e. challenging and controversial and maybe a little infuriating, but endlessly interesting). (Respondent 1)

I believe students do engage with critical criminology courses as is evidenced by our student recruitment and the growing recruitment of Masters and PhD students here. (Respondent 2)

I think students are attracted to both approaches although quickly realise that positivist approaches are often exclusionary and esoteric whilst critical approaches are inclusive and empowering, hopefully. (Respondent 4)

It depends how they’re sold … It isn’t hard to “sell” if done properly and compared to the failure of traditional Criminal Justice and positivistic approaches which so evidently have failed and only manage and contain the conflicts endemic to advanced capitalist societies. (Respondent 19)

What the following summary of the findings of the survey explores therefore is how contemporary University policies and practices in the UK have impacted upon critical criminology teaching and research and how critical criminologists, individually and collectively, can best exploit or negate such developments for the furtherance of their key values, principles and political commitments.

2. The Challenge: Neo-Liberalism and the Corporate University

Contributors to the survey demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the neo-liberal / corporate university and how it may pose a significant threat to the ‘critical criminology imaginary’ (Respondent 22).

A Neo-liberal university is characterised by internal cost-centred markets, which - externally facing - is desperate for funding of almost any kind, seeking new [national and international] markets relentlessly, with highly commodified relationships between staff, students, administrators. (Respondent 6)
The neo-liberal university is run for a different purpose than that of education – it runs as a market-driven enterprise – it sees other universities as competitors whereas we see them as colleagues … The neo-liberal university tries to maximise income by bringing in as many [national and international] students as possible – the students know that they are income-generators and feel a very different connection to the university as a result. (Respondent 7)

The neo-liberal University is a corporation wherein knowledge is a cash commodity which we’re encouraged to sell to students and prostitute our research to the highest bidders. (Respondent 19)

Neo-liberalism turns universities into super markets, where students ‘buy’ degrees. (Respondent 3)

It is a hierarchical, macho, managerial style based on a business model of organisation where the free market dominates individual and strategic decision making. … It is the model of science, engineering and technology imposed on humanities and social science and it is not only pedagogically philistine but lacks any sense of democratic accountability ... (Respondent 14)

It relates to trends towards corporatisation in the University, increasing emphasis on auditing and ‘measuring performance’ (of staff) and of seeing students as consumers, high tuition charges for students, pressure to enter into research relationships with industry, and an increasingly insecure, part-time workforce. (Respondent 1)

I see it as part of a system that reproduces and does little to contest the current situation of ‘worker insecurity’. Students come to university knowing jobs are limited and they know they have to be competitive. Part of being competitive is keeping quiet not asking for higher wages, not asking for better conditions, not striking and so on. The University is now taking on this corporate business model and producing and reproducing these structures. (Respondent 21)

The logic of “academic capitalism” (Slaughter and Rhoades 2004) commodifies knowledge and transforms universities and educational praxis into spaces and modes of service-delivery. Power relations have shifted from professionals to management (Beckmann and Cooper 2004) and in this context managerial “information” and strategic-competitive rationalities come to supersede critical and reflexive forms of understanding ... This shift is threatening existentially important possibilities of socio-political and cultural participation, innovation and vision that could and should be fostered in educational spaces. (Respondent 12)
GRAPH 2
What do you understand by the term Neo-liberal University?

The diagram above highlights 48% of the respondents answered this question understanding the term to be around the subject of the corporatisation of universities.

The impact of neo-liberalism on daily working practices appears to be felt far and wide by critical criminologists and the survey highlighted a number of significant concerns, including:

i) **Schools, departments and management**
   - Isolation of critical criminologists in some schools / departments
   - Marginalisation of critical analysis as a ‘sub-discipline’ taught in a tokenistic way
   - Critique by school management for delivering ‘Marxist propaganda’
   - The appointment of non-critical staff in a given department / school to dilute critical criminology curriculum
   - Top down hierarchical management styles and centralisation of power
   - Micro management
   - Anti-democratic and authoritarian tendencies in university management

GRAPH 3
What do you consider to be some of the main obstacles/difficulties confronting teachers of critical criminology today in the UK?

This graph highlights universities increasing their neo liberalist policies was coded 11 times throughout all 20 questionnaires and also indicates academics are under pressure to teach mainstream, administrative material to students, this was coded 9 times.
ii) **Courses and workload pressure**
- Combined curriculum with, for example [forensic] psychology or policing studies, and ‘pick n’ mix’ degrees
- Greater emphasis on vocational courses
- Cost saving activities, including large class sizes and library budget cuts
- Increases in student contact time at expense of research time
- Increases in teaching and marking loads
- Increased links (both teaching and research) with the priorities of institutions of the criminal law and government security agendas

**GRAPH 4**

*In what ways, if at all, do you think that the ‘academic profession’ is being ‘de-professionalised’?*

This graph highlights the most popular answer to this question by the respondents was *learning has become a commercial product* (coded 12 times) and *there has been an increase in administrative work* (coded 7 times).

iii) **Activism, research and academic profession**
- Less time for critical reflection and undertaking independent and unfunded study
- Lack of recognition for activism and activities which enhance student learning / reflect priorities of critical pedagogy
- Pressure to publish in limited number of journals with high impact status
- Difficulties in generating funding for controversial topics / increased pressure to ‘follow the money’
- Limitations of professional discretion and autonomy
- Further moves towards de-professionalisation / ‘degradation’ (Braverman) through, for example, workload pressures, zero hour contracts and the overuse of part-time and less qualified staff

iv) **Wider educational policy**
- A schooling system which infantalises, spoon feeds and teaches people only to pass tests
- An emphasis on passing qualifications requiring only superficial rather than deep learning
- Government policies promoting competition between colleagues and universities
• Government priority / increasing focus on STEM subjects
• University League tables emphasising performance and productivity

Alongside the above, issues were also raised in the survey around the following related areas:

The decoupling of research from teaching is a form of McDonaldisation of the workplace. Teachers become, in effect, glorified disseminators of textbook knowledge – which is not to demean good pedagogy – while a small elite of researchers, research in elite institutions. As a result, the baseline for entering the classroom is much lower – they needn’t have lived experience of the field, they just need to be able to convincingly relay textbook knowledge. And without the added plus of being a leading expert, academic workers can be pushed into longer hours and more mundane tasks. Yet what gives student the most satisfaction is when they have someone on the cutting edge of their field, with lived experience of its empirical and theoretical fault lines, giving classes. It turns an abstract experience into a concrete one. (Respondent 10)

What is insidious is the whole emphasis now on risk and ethics, now that is something which is having an impact on critical criminological work in a whole series of ways not least because university managers do not understand the theory, methodology and method that underpins critical criminological work and the fact that we are often researching institutions which are institutionally racist, sexist, violent, mendacious or whatever. The new university emphasis on ethics fails to see this never mind address it, a problem with criminology more generally as well. (Respondent 14)

I think that the managerial priorities that are coupled with the neo-liberal university manage to both prioritise and value the concept of ‘realism’. The neo-liberal university has arguably brought with it an institutionalised acceptance and indeed demand for research based on ‘real world’ or ‘policy relevant’ issues. (Respondent 22)

I think the main obstacles confronting researchers working in universities is lack of time and a REF driven research agenda, and particularly the emphasis on ‘impact’. These problems are compounded for critical researchers. A lot of critical, campaigning research is long-term (takeScratchon’s Hillsborough work for example, or the work of Tombs and Whyte around corporate crime) and is underpinned by far more important priorities and principles than ‘impact statements’ and REF scores. The REF is a divisive project and it does not enhance the quality of research or teaching. It may improve the number of publications individuals produce but the setting up of restrictive ‘research themes’ which ‘force’ staff into researching areas that fit with particular groups or ‘units of assessment’ negates against creative, critical work. The focus on numbers of outputs and the hierarchy of outputs also has the effect of potentially stifling critical criminological research. (Respondent 8)

For me the keenest pressure point is student marking, this seems rigged to an anodyne prescription; for instance our rubrics for marking cover 0-100, logically this would

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9 STEM subjects includes subjects in the fields of Mathematics, Engineering, Chemistry, Physics, Computer and Information Technology Science and so on and so forth

10 REF – Research Excellence Framework – which is the model used to evaluate academic research and give scores from 1 – 4 (with 4 being the highest).
follow quartiles categorising achievement hinged at a mid-point, but no. In fact anything but. So what we have is 'exceptional' (90+), 'outstanding'(80+), 'excellent' (70+), 'very good'(60+), 'good'(50+), 'adequate'(40+) and 'poor' (>30+). There is no below 30, feedback must be positive and focussed on how to improve. This is fine but there is pressure not to fail students, and not to give low end marks, furthermore the teaching staff have [been given] targets for how many students get particular grades (1st, 2:1 etc.), an obvious conflict of interest. (Respondent 18)

One respondent poetically summed up his position by claiming that neo-liberalism was “turning academics into fund raisers, namely shopkeepers. Wasn’t Napoleon right when he said that England is a country of shopkeepers?” (Respondent 3).

Three further issues central to the contemporary ‘corporate university’ were highlighted in the questionnaire: these were ‘employability’; the construction of students as ‘consumers’; and ‘grant capture’. A number of respondents highlighted concerns with the ‘employability’ agenda, especially its implications in terms of criminal ‘justice’ training and its detrimental impact on deep learning.

Focus on ‘employability’ in a manner that devalues critical thinking and instead focuses on writing CVs and lots of talks from people in uniforms. (Respondent 5)

Employability is at the heart of the problem. Criminology will soon be criminal justice studies … The university is now a place to train students’ for future employment, rather than a place of education. (Respondent 23)

Criminology, unfortunately, appears to be a training school for the police/probation – this I believe, is an inherent problem with criminology, further evidencing, as critics have argued, that criminology in its existence legitimises the state’s CJS. (Respondent 17)

‘Employability’, which is nothing but a blatant intrusion of employer demands on the substantive educational processes, directly affects theoretical work and the familiarisation of students with the process of working with more abstract concepts. By nature, critical criminology depends on a theoretical critique of existing social structures and also on different modes of thinking about society. If this element is being marginalised or sacrificed in the name of labour market desirable skills and employability, then critical criminology will also be marginalised. (Respondent 11)

This emphasis on employability almost removes the academic soul from of the discipline of criminology. (Respondent 22)

Do not even start….this is killing off any imagination, it forces people far too early to make life-changing choices and often only serves as a ‘get a job’ service instead of really finding out people’s potential. (Respondent 12)

In addition, a number of colleagues raised concerns about the potential damage to working practices through the adoption of the language of consumerism.

In a climate in which the student has been encouraged to see themselves more and more as customers, and their degree classifications as ‘the product’, those courses perceived as more difficult or theoretically challenging may be viewed with trepidation and be less likely to be preferred. (Respondent 16)
The ‘customer revolution’ of higher education places a huge amount of responsibility upon university lecturers. ‘The customer is always right’. (Respondent 22)

The pressure to ‘give them what they want’ is increasing rapidly and includes the expectation to provide massive amounts of ‘support’ and ‘guidance’ (which, in many cases, borders on ‘doing it for them’) … I have read that student complaints have risen in the last couple of years and whilst I obviously believe students have the right to take issue if they feel they are getting a raw deal and/or if they feel they have been treated unfairly, the idea that they are now ‘paying for a degree’ seems to be greatly exacerbating the problem of unreasonable or unfair complaints. (Respondent 8)

Most students do still respect the learner-teacher relationship just as they always have done - just an occasional few seem to believe our primary purpose is to provide a service of guaranteed grade delivery. But, I’ve certainly had to evolve far more rigorous boundaries and work harder to manage expectations on levels of support. (Respondent 16)

Some students will talk in these neoliberal terms but they are few and far between. The impact has been in how managers persistently use this discourse or something very similar i.e. the ‘student experience’ to justify illogical, poorly conceived and indeed damaging policies. That is where the real problem lies. The interesting thing is that no matter how many times managers are told that the student experience is not homogenous and that many students want small class sizes, good teaching and serious engagement, managers still persist in reifying the ‘customer/experience’ model which is simplistic and out of touch. (Respondent 14)

Alas, intellectual labour cannot deliver the instant gratification that burgers, shoes, mobile phones and other gadgets can. (Respondent 11)

A third theme that was explored in depth in the survey was whether the current focus on income generation has curtailed or enhanced space for independent critical criminological research. A number of respondents were concerned about the possible negative implications of this trend.

I feel the steady focus of funding into certain areas of positivistic chronological research is damaging for critical criminology. (Respondent 2)

Projects likely to be funded are often (although not always) policy driven or evaluative projects which lack real criticality. (Respondent 8)

It has curtailed the space for serious theoretical work, regardless of the vantage point. Some of the most important scholarly work takes place over several years in the study, immersing oneself in complex ideas, and trying to develop new connections and combinations. But of course this does not bring in income and thus is demeaned. But when income generation is forced through using targets, and high pressure managerial tactics, it blunts all scholarship, regardless of its focus. (Respondent 10)

More important is relationships with commissioners, upsetting this apple cart threatens future bidding success, this is as sure as night follows day. One cannot be
too critical of one's paymasters, be it in the policy evaluation field, or other research areas. This makes a lot of governmental research of rather limited value, I know this as I produce some of it - personally I wouldn't trust most of it, or at least read it very sceptically. (Respondent 18)

I am aware of pressure on researchers who have received funding from state organisations such as the police (e.g. through an ESRC CASE PhD studentship11) who have felt pressure from universities to 'sanitise' their research findings in order to make it more acceptable to partners and thus avoid threatening future funding collaborations. (Respondent 20)

The emphasis on income generation coincides with the dominant position of a criminological discipline fixed on ‘problem solving’ as opposed to Nils Christie’s ‘problem raising’ approach to criminology. The discipline of criminology, within an income led era, has become embedded within the very structures that it ought to be critiquing … This embedded criminology operates more as a ‘civil service criminology’ which simply carries out particular functions for particular means. (Respondent 22)

So does this all mean that the future of critical criminology is under significant threat? For some, but by no means all, of the respondents the problems we face today were considered insurmountable.

Criminology may be taught by police officers and prison governors in the near future. (Respondent 3)

I think the ‘sociology of deviancy’ type criminology is reaching the end of its life and there will be a gradual move towards crime science and other more applied variations (e.g. policing degrees) (Respondent 5)

Metaphorically speaking, [in ten years’ time critical criminology will be] probably stacking shelves in Tesco whilst mumbling something about structural inequality, hegemony and social harm. (Respondent 21)

Significantly though, as ‘Respondent 14’ noted, “the problem is that I am not sure if [all the difficulties discussed above] are unique to critical criminologists”. Further there were also many voices of optimism and hope about the future of critical criminological teaching, networks and research in the UK.

I personally think that critical criminology will grow in strength in the next 10 years. A number of centres are being set up across the country and there is corporation between some of the academics involved. Our course will continue to grow and with the intake of PhD students will be able to influence developments in the future. (Respondent 2)

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11 Economic and Social Research Council. For further details see: http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/postgraduates/prospective-students/
Realistically, I think it will probably be slightly stronger than it is right now and holding its own. I don’t imagine it ‘taking over the world’, but I think it will be continuing to fight a good fight. (Respondent 1)

I hope we will have educated a new generation of critical scholars – given the critical discourses coming from students over the last few years there is space for optimism. (Respondent 7)

I think we will resist – it is the one subject I have hope and faith in, so I see us carrying on, but with significant struggle. (Respondent 13)

The European Group is in a more healthy state as far as I can see than the European Society of Criminology which has its yearly meeting and that’s about it. I couldn’t contemplate being involved in that kind of organisation/conference, I would rather watch paint dry, criminological or otherwise. (Respondent 14)

**GRAPH 5**
Do you think that the focus on income generation has curtailed or enhanced space for independent critical criminological research?

As highlighted above 20 out of the 21 respondents who answered this question suggested income generation has curtailed space for independent critical criminological research. Below indicated the different reasons for this.

**GRAPH 6**

It is to these voices of hope and the possibilities of resistance and contestation against some the most problematic tendencies of the corporate university that this summary now turns.
3. **The critical criminological imaginary: There is an alternative**

I think academics have a real tendency to moan a lot (myself included). In fact, the job is still a very good one in terms of pay and autonomy. Conditions of service are another story. So there is a process of degradation going on as described brilliantly by Braverman but I think it is still really important to keep this in context so while a relativistic perspective can only take one so far, nonetheless academics are not standing in food banks or working in factories with terrible death rates. This is not to underestimate the pains of academia that sometimes occur, which is central to a capitalist division of labour, but I am a bit sceptical of academics who cry that their professionalism is being undermined when their everyday practices leave a lot to be desired both professionally and personally. (Respondent 14)

Findings from the survey indicate that there are a number of ways forward immediately available to us individually and collectively.

i) **Acknowledging our strengths**

It should be recognised that despite the unwelcome changes brought about through the corporatisation of the university, much of the critical criminology curriculum has remained unchanged. Critical criminology in the UK is still in a considerable position of strength in terms of numbers of full time academics, postgraduate students and the content of criminological programmes. Some schools/departments in universities are in stronger positions than others, but at this time we are definitely not witnessing the terminal decline of critical criminology.

In terms of what we teach, there is virtually no interference; we are left to get on with what we want to do. It is interesting as we might have thought that, given the neoliberal propensity to dominate and subjugate, as well as successive government changes to the education system, that the curriculum in HE [Higher Education] would have been affected. So far that has not happened although there are signs: for example, the endless demand that students learn and indeed pursue work-based programmes is a possible sign of things to come. (Respondent 14)

The university is mostly concerned with numbers of students rather than the educational content of their degrees. I think the latter matters very little to some senior managers and, in a perverse way, this has benefited us as they don’t really care if the degree content is critical or not. (Respondent 8)

In some respects I think critical pedagogy can be preserved within this context, provided those who are writing the modules and programmes remain committed to a critical edge. Sometimes the demands of the ‘bean counters’ and those who are interested in ‘marketing’ within Universities can be pacified with careful language and branding. On the other hand, I think certain disciplines/fields (like criminology) can marshal strong arguments for why a critical pedagogy is essential at this particular historical moment and within this ‘neo-liberal’ context. (Respondent 1)
GRAPH 7

Have you encountered institutional opposition to implementing a critical criminological teaching curriculum?

This graph highlights out of the 22 respondents who answered this question 20 of them have never come up against opposition when implementing critical criminology into the curriculum.

ii) Recognising continuities and drawing upon past successes

We also need to very carefully consider just how different the problems in the ‘corporate university’ today are different from the past. We need a sophisticated analysis of the socio-economic, political and policy dimensions shaping universities in our historical conjuncture, but we should be equally aware of continuities as well as discontinuities.

Well, look … I would say that things do not get harder nor easier necessarily – depending on what the comparison point is, new problems arise – while some are enduring (and others diminish). (Respondent 6)

Apart from the emphasis on work-based learning, and the micro management of our working lives, I don’t think it is that different except we had more time in the past, especially during the summer period. The vanishing act around time has had a crucial impact. It is important not to idealise the past, critical criminologists are also agents in their own destiny, more so than many occupational groups, so I think it is really important not to valorise the problems we are experiencing at present. (Respondent 14)

Indeed, conditions may be different, but even in our troubled times this should not lead to overly pessimistic analysis. There are undoubtedly some signs pointing towards guarded optimism for the future.

I think we may be at a moment when critical research is poised to get more attention. The current government’s blatant disinterest in ‘evidence’ and their explicit emphasis on ideology and a particular political agenda means that criminological knowledges – of any description – are not particularly powerful at the moment, unless they fit exactly with government thinking (and not much research does). It seems that this is a good moment for critical researchers to engage more forcefully in what are now unambiguously political arguments about crime and criminal justice. (Respondent 1)

I think there is space for optimism, given the popularity of criminology. (Respondent 15)
I think actually we are in a stronger position [than in the past] because a) critical criminology has withstood the test of time - it is still here and it’s growing; b) administrative approaches REALLY haven’t worked; and c) we are in a political moment when there is a potential opportunity to argue more forcefully against the ‘mainstream’. (Respondent 1)

Critical criminology must also continue its tradition of critiquing domination and oppression (including those that pertain to the university) and promoting the goals of liberation, emancipation and human freedom. We must adopt a holistic approach drawing upon critical theory to help us understand our own lived working realities.

iii) We can make a difference: exploiting contradictions and subverting the logic of the corporate university

It is possible to challenge the logic and practices of the corporate university. Whilst we must acknowledge that we are working with considerable constraints we can still devise strategies within our own workplaces that can re-articulate policies to reflect the interests of critical analysis. There remain countervailing tendencies and opportunities for the greater enhancement and development of critical analysis. As Respondent 14 notes, within universities there remains contingencies, ‘contradictions and opportunities for contestation’.

Increasing pressure and homogenisation leads to cracks. Calls for social justice increase. Academics can still carve out spaces and the classroom is a privileged arena. (Respondent 4)

I don’t see new openings per se, but what I do see is critical researchers becoming more savvy. Taking on board Gramsci’s advice and treating spaces within the university as contradictory, even spaces that were designed to side-line our work. Impact is one example, it was brought in to in effect give solace to policy-friendly, corporate-friendly research. But a lot of critical colleagues are learning how to evidence critical research that is producing far more meaningful change than a bit of policy advice. So all dimensions of our workplace are subvertable. (Respondent 10)

Crucial is recognising that history is not closed off: it is one of the most important things that Stuart Hall emphasized, it is full of possibilities, so it is easy to become melancholic and pessimistic but the academic workplace like everywhere else has its own problems around legitimacy, like the state more generally. So challenging, contesting and being involved at all sorts of levels was and remains the key to struggle. (Respondent 14)

A number of strategies were suggested that could help challenge neo-liberal policies. ‘Respondent 1’, gives an example of arguments deployed to resist market pressures and management demands for combining curriculums.

There is some pressure, of course (like everywhere), to cost cut. This priority has been recently manifesting in a certain amount of pressure on us to offer combined curriculum with forensic psychology (which the market research shows is a popular
student choice combined with criminology). This is being resisted by the criminology team because taking an ‘individual pathology’ approach to studying problems of crime and justice is in diametric contradiction to our approaches. Moreover, we are arguing that combining these areas lacks coherence from a student perspective and, in actual fact, we think making such combinations would negatively affect student retention. So far, we have been successful in making these arguments, despite the pressure. (Respondent 1)

The emphasis on employability can also be used as a means to strengthen the critical criminology curriculum.

We have tried to delimit the harms of employability, we are pragmatic enough to understand our students will need and want to work and thus we have designed our programme to equip students for a wide range of employment opportunities. My favourite example is how many start our courses wanting to join the police compared to so few who finish the course still wanting to. They refocus their career aspirations into much more social and critical employment activities. (Respondent 19)

We have, so far, been able to focus on skills that we feel are defensible, such as: constructing and representing robust arguments, presentation skills, critical thinking skills, effective time management, collaborating/cooperating with others. We have argued that the fields of crime and criminal justice are so changeable that we need to equip students, first and foremost, with independent thinking and learning skills, rather than the ‘nuts and bolts’ of a (broken) and ever changing system. (Respondent 1)

Arguably, for students who want to work within the fields of social or criminal justice etc., critical thinking and a deep understanding of power relations and structural inequalities are essential and, I would imagine, things like creative thinking, empathy, teamwork and the ability to be independent would be desirable qualities for employers. (Respondent 8)

Some of our most successful candidates are students who have really embraced critical criminology; they have proven to be the left-field thinkers and the devotees of social justice, participating in volunteer projects. As a result they find jobs in research and NGOs after university. This probably is not given its dues by the professional development unit. (Respondent 10)

The time it [employability] takes up for a start and its encroachment across all of the different years of the degree, I don’t like that dimension to it. Like everything else though it is contradictory as a lot of students want to go into what might be termed social democratic jobs: probation, youth work, social work, rape crisis centres etc. So working for a couple of hours a week in these kinds of organisations can be terrific for them. I am not really convinced that the universities are pushing people into being clones of the state, e.g. police officers: it is more complex as the universities, given they are so free market orientated, would not bother if all of our students became social workers, so long as the universities can point to healthy employment statistics. So as I say it is really complex and contradictory I think. (Respondent 14)
‘Employability’ can be a genuine opportunity for building greater links with radical community activists, pressure groups and NGOs and work experience with such organisations involved can help facilitate emancipatory objectives.

Further, there are opportunities for critical researchers to gain research grants and develop research profiles within the corporate university.

The focus on income generation can have positive effects, it depends how it is handled. When it is used to encourage fieldwork, rather than meet targets, it is a fantastic tool. Indeed, critical criminologists have demonstrated critical scholarship can win big research council grants, and as a result forge new spaces for critical inquiry and early career researchers. (Respondent 10)

Some alternative funders (e.g. Leverhume12 are particularly interested in funding ‘alternative’ types of projects (Respondent 1)

I think that grants in terms of being bought out would make life easier. There is no doubt about that given the everyday demands of the job and the intense micromanagement that is intrinsic to everyday academic life. On the other hand, it is still possible to do critical work, without the benefit of a huge grant. It is certainly possible to do critical interventionist work without any grant, just show up at the organisation or place where you want to help out. In that sense I think sometimes critical criminology has lost its way and uses the emphasis on grants as an excuse (although maybe that’s too strong a word) to almost imply that without grants interventions are not possible. I don’t believe that. … Interestingly enough some of the most influential books in criminology as a discipline overall have been written by critical criminologists e.g. Hall et al, Foucault, Brownmiller, Smart, yet received little by way of grants to write them, so there is a very interesting contradiction lying at the heart of what constitutes scholarship and research, and the impact of both. Also what differentiates critical criminology clearly is that those who see themselves as critical criminologists are still very clear that they will not take grants to make the state function better. There is still some clear red water there between ‘us’ and ‘them’. (Respondent 14)

There are also other university policies that may provide new space for critical engagement.

One thing I am proud of about the institution I work for is they support and encourage critical and reflective teaching and engagement with the wider community to enhance all the populations chances of access to higher education and to enable academics to make a real positive contribution to the community they service and the discipline in which they undertake research to influence policy… The emphasis the university places on widening participation, recognizing many of our graduates will work in professions that can support and enhance the experiences of some of the marginalized and excluded groups within society. Also the faculty prides itself on the engagement of its academics in research that relates to the issues in the local area and tries to influence policy. This is supported by managers in terms of supporting seminars, conferences and other activities, which give back to the community and the students they service. (Respondent 2)

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12 An independent body that makes funds available for education and research. See http://www.leverhulme.ac.uk/
Diversity policy indirectly supports the development of critical criminological programmes. (Respondent 4)

Critical criminologists must continue to emphasise what critical analysis brings to the table – how it can assist students, making the right arguments, pointing to the importance of education as an end in itself rather than a means to an end (employability) and the personal rewards of a good education. Alongside this, critical criminologists must continue to perform the role of the ‘transformative’ or ‘organic’ intellectual looking to change common sense into good sense in the classroom and via their research.

iv) **Fostering collegiality, mutual support, cooperation and solidarity**

What is essential is that we identify the problems we face collectively in our given historical conjuncture and share best practice and ways of challenging policies which hinder rather than enhance critical pedagogy and emancipatory politics.

If we are strategic, and collaborative, our socialist ethos and communitarian practice could be our ace card. We need to work together, across institutions and across nations. We have to use these collaborations to build the foundations for major research grants which can create spaces for critical inquiry, and to support top quality publications. In addition, we need to share wisdom – for example, critical colleagues who have built 4* impact case studies need to share their success, and explain how it can be done. In short, solidarity rather than competition is a wonderful glue, how can we be strategic and employ this solidarity to play the REF game. Not just so we can ‘win’ the REF game, but so critical researchers obtain the space to do emancipatory scholarship, and become highly rated individuals within their own institutions. (Respondent 10)

I think we should form alliances with others like us who want to keep on carrying out research on our terms – to work and publish together and develop a critical mass of academics who are resisting by making our own meaningful and fruitful connections. (Respondent 7)

Collaboration and cross-fertilisation of ideas is always the best way to enhance research and teaching in my opinion. (Respondent 2)

A number of respondents indicated that *European Group* provided such a sense of solidarity and support.

We share ideas, materials, experiences, we provide mutual support and at times it is a bit of a haven. Most of all I think we try to show through what we do and how we do it and indeed who we do it with that there are other ways of working and other kinds of work than that which dominates the discipline (Respondent 6)

To me the group and its members help me to recharge, to continue to believe in good people and a better world. (Respondent 12)

The annual conference is inspirational. The existence of the group, its communications and of course the conference provides intellectual support and a
sense of a community of critically like-minded scholars, which is invaluable. (Respondent 16)

GRAPH 8

In what ways do you think that the European Group for the Study of Deviance and Social Control can help us overcome current obstacles / support the critical criminological curriculum?

This graph highlights the European group for the study of deviance and social control is supported and held in a positive light has it has been coded 18 times as being seen to continue influence and strengthen critical scholarship.

We must resist individualisation and competition and continue to provide support to colleagues in ‘competitor universities’. This is a choice academics can still make. We decide how much of the neo-liberal logic we internalise. We must not lose our understanding of human agency and the importance of aspiring to critical values in our daily working lives.

Direct engagement with students is fundamental to the role of teacher / facilitator in higher education. Relations with students, and student engagement with the theoretical and political priorities of critical criminology, were also covered extensively in the survey. A number of respondents indicated how consumerism could be challenged ‘on the ground’.

[Consumerism] has made students a little more demanding and perhaps less forgiving. As they are paying for their education, they sometimes think that means they are ‘purchasing a product’. But, there are ways of helping students to think differently about this and setting out a different way of thinking about their role in the learning process early on can really help set the tone on a module and get them more involved in their own learning. My favourite way to do this is to tell them that they can’t just buy a gym membership and expect to get fit without going to the gym. They have to lift the weights and run on the treadmill. So, it is with their education. They have to read the books and work hard at completing their assignments, etc… (Respondent 1)

I sympathise greatly with students having to borrow tens of thousands of pounds to pay for their education and I oppose this strongly. I also understand that criminology students (and students of other social science or humanities subjects) might ask why they are paying exactly the same fees as students who study sport or drama or media (and who obviously have daily access to costly facilities). (Respondent 8)

To some making alliances with students and presenting a united front against the realities of neoliberal policies in universities today may seem naive. It is almost taken for granted for students to be dismissed as disengaged and conservative. But are students less radical than in
the past? And can students be reengaged? The survey findings indicate that things are perhaps not as clear cut as they first seem.

I am not sure [if students are less engaged]. It is hard to gauge. The ‘massification’ of HE means that we need to be careful about confusing absolute and relative numbers in any longitudinal comparisons. (Respondent 6)

Over the last 3 years students have appeared to be much more engaged with critical discourses I am glad to say – that is not surprising given the context in which they have grown up and the problems they are currently subjected to. (Respondent 7)

[Are students more or less engaged than the past]. Difficult question as some of the most profound challenges to what has been happening in the last few years have come from student protests, the fall-out and collateral damage from these protests has been shamefully ignored by academics, I think, including critical criminologists. On the other hand, my overall feeling from my classroom experience is that there is a distinct lack of engagement in class. On the other hand, it is easy to idealise the past, seminars 40 years ago were also dull and the lecturers were always complaining at the lack of reading so the idea that everybody was sitting around reading and digesting Marx, Engels and the New Left is glamorising a past that never really existed either. It is a bit like rock music, everybody idealises the 1960s but Engelbert Humperdinck had the three best-selling singles in 1967 and in 1968, the year of the barricades, the best-selling single was What a Wonderful World by Louis Armstrong followed by I Pretend by Des O’Connor, the seventh best single was Little Arrows by Leapy Lea and Hey Jude by the Beatles was only number 10. The point I am making is that memory, including criminological memory, has to be treated with some respect and indeed scepticism. (Respondent 14)

I think students remain committed to political issues, rather it is contemporary political culture that is alienating to students. (Respondent 15)

Strategies were also suggested that could enhance student engagement through critical pedagogy.

[To overcome student disengagement] I think the best ways are through the pedagogic approach – good use of films, newspaper articles, controversial stories, narrative accounts – and getting them debating some of the issues. (Respondent 1)

I think our students have fewer opportunities to engage with contemporary political and socioeconomic issues because of the absence of any significant organisational levers locally. The student union is purely cosmetic in this respect, and local party and other activist organisations are disturbingly quiet. No matter how persistently we aim to bring these issues to the attention of students in the classroom, the wider environment is not really conducive to higher social and political awareness. (Respondent 11)

Like Leonard Cohen’s song, I “have grown old and bitter” so I bang my drum, challenge their apathy, but I understand their status and location. I aspire merely to make them less ill-liberal and more humane and empathetic but for many that is a radical challenge as they’re the generation who are most entrenched with the ideology
that there is no alternative. The poor bastards - what a world we’ve bequeathed them! (Respondent 19)

Critical criminologists must continue to emphasise the need for research informed teaching, deploy critical pedagogy and highlight the importance of making critical theory accessible and understandable in modules.

v) A voice that needs to be heard: disseminating emancipatory knowledge and challenging power

As highlighted above, critical analysis needs to continue to acknowledge current power relations and problems associated with the corporate university. The voice of the critical criminologist is important and needs to be heard. One way in which we can disseminate emancipatory knowledge is through engagement with the media.

It’s important for EG members to engage with the media in order to counter dominant narratives around crime and deviance. EG members should be encouraged to draft press releases to highlight critical findings (many universities are actually very good at offering assistance with this). (Respondent 20)

I suppose finding sympathetic journalists is one strategy. Another is joining The Conversation – which is a consortium of Universities which cover the news from an academic perspective. There are seldom stories covered by The Conversation on crime and justice issues and it would be great for critical voices to become the ones most frequently heard on these topics. (Respondent 1)

Start blogging for something like The Conversation http://theconversation.com/uk. You receive a wide audience and things do get picked up from there in the mainstream media. (Respondent 16)

There is space, but this has to be imaginative and not through the conventional channels (typically sound bites for the local press), but through engaging documentary film makers (for example). (Respondent 15)

Re strategies:
1. You need to have a newsworthy story, a hook, something that implicates a high profile figure, or exposes a sham within a government department … have never had a journalist pick up a story because it was rigorous and important research. But when it implicated a high profile figure, it was game on.

2. You need to develop rapport with journalists in your area, often it begins with the odd interview, and before you know it you are sharing leads. But at the end of the day we have to be the gold mine. The more gold you offer a journalist, and the more regularly you do it, the more collateral you build with them. But one has to be astute, 95% of journalists are wastes of time, you need to give the gold to those who are serious about their work and its important power-challenging function.

3. You need to tie everything together and give it in a gift wrapped box to journalists.
4. Documentary filmmakers are great value, many have the method of a critical social scientist. My most enjoyable relationships with the media come from this angle. (Respondent 10)

There is also the fact that that we *don’t* need to get involved with the media, there are times when it is better not to engage with them, e.g. what use is a 10 second sound bite on a TV programme, will that change hearts and minds? – I doubt it. I think actually that critical criminologists need to work out their strategy for the media which I don’t think they have. For a discipline that spends a lot of time critiquing the media, that critique seems to vanish a bit when it comes to media invites. Engagement should be approached with a seriously sceptical hat and head on, especially given that universities are desperate for any media appearances, which should make us extremely suspicious. (Respondent 14)

When dealing the media you can often find yourselves engaging in or using the language of the state. So while media engagement may be beneficial in getting a certain message across (e.g. campaign against certain development), in doing so one may be encouraged or indeed coerced into sacrificing or shedding some of his/her true critical opinion … In short, good for getting your message across – bad for the soul of the critical criminologist! (Respondent 22)

Some medium of getting ‘the message out’ is essential but we must not become mere technicians of the state and the powerful and must be aware of pitfalls.

**GRAPH 9**

*In what ways do you think there is space and opportunity for critical criminologists to engage with the media? What strategies concerning media engagement could be deployed that could be shared with other members of the European Group?*

![Graph showing media engagement strategies](image)

vi) **The European Group: promoting craftsmanship, confidence and support**

The *European Group* has a tradition of promoting craftsmanship and could perhaps provide a role in ensuring that standards in teaching and scholarship are maintained. A number of respondents highlighted strategies that could be adopted by the *European Group* to help sustain critical analysis in Universities in the UK.

- Mentoring of junior colleagues
- Research collaboration between junior and senior colleagues
- Treating students as learners and critical thinkers, not customers
- Brainstorming sessions and support groups on the best ways to gain funding and to develop ideas for research bids
• To be a professional body / society with accreditations to support isolated colleagues and perhaps a membership fee
• Development of a critical pedagogy working group
• European group publications (book series and journal)
• Work out our own alternative ‘benchmark’ for criminology programmes
• Steering group intervenes publicly and expresses a critical criminology voice in current policy debates
• Sharing information, struggles and points of contestation

How the European Group should engage with other criminologists was unclear in the Survey, with some suggesting it should have a less open and pluralistic approach, whilst others arguing that it should engage more readily with more mainstream criminologies.

Continuing to be a strong organising influence and place of support for critical scholarship and helping scholars to be uncompromising about insisting on critical curriculum. (Respondent 1)

The Group needs to organised along tighter lines, and perhaps sacrifice some of the pluralism in favour of actively fostering the intellectual lines that are more closely associated with the critical/radical tradition. (Respondent 11)

I think the EG may also seek to ‘cross the divide’ with other ‘less critical’ criminologists. As someone educated at a critical criminological department and now working at a far less critical school – I think it would be worthwhile for the EG to try and reach out to ‘realist’ criminologists. (Respondent 22)

GRAPH 10

Where do you think that the teaching of critical criminology in Universities in the UK will be in ten years?

This graph highlights out of the 18 respondents it is almost spilt between those who have a positive outlook for the future of critical criminology and those who have a negative outlook.

4. Facing the future with the philosophy of hope

What remains crucial is that we fully acknowledge the problems of our historical conjuncture but that we go forward collectively with a sense of confidence and hope.
Despite the extent of negative feeling within academia at present, we cannot forget the amount of brilliant critical work that is being carried out in the UK and abroad and the real impact that this work can have (the Hillsborough campaign being an obvious example). I also think critical criminology has managed to get a good foothold in British universities and whilst I think there will be real pressure to ‘mainstream’ or ‘go forensic’ in the forthcoming years, there are some really good new criminologists coming through and that is where the future of the discipline lies. So perhaps the future lies in good quality post-grad provision to ensure the next generation get a chance. (Respondent 8)

I think the main thing is not to get overwhelmed with the idea that the state has unrelenting power that is simply running a neoliberal truck over us, things are bad, especially for the poor and the powerless but there are still some real spaces to engage in contestation. There is a real crisis of legitimacy with the police at the minute and critical criminology has played a part in that. So long as we think we can make an inch of difference then I think we are doing our job. When links are made with outside groups and organisations, old and new, then that is fulfilling the ideal that has always been there as the beating heart of critical criminology. (Respondent 14)

There remain spaces for contestation and the realisation of our hopes. We must continue to engage in the battle for hearts and minds in the academy and beyond its walls. Let us provide scholarly and nuanced accounts of the problems we face today and let us work together to find ways to address them as best we can. Critical analysis remains intellectually powerful: understanding its implications can change people’s lives and influence government policies. Critical criminological writings in the past have predicted, with somewhat disturbing accuracy at times, many of the problems we face in the here and now. Critical scholarship will continue to be acknowledged and have impact ‘in the real world’ and we should face the future not with trepidation, but with confidence that our arguments are strong and that collectively we can start to challenge problematic policies and practices of the corporate university.

Appendix 1

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* Indicates that at this institution there were 2 respondents

20 of 124 Universities in the UK

Appendix 2

24 questionnaires returned between 14th March – 12th May 2014
Appendix 3
CRITICAL CRIMINOLOGY PROGRAMMES IN BRITISH UNIVERSITIES
Open Questionnaire March 2014

REF:

Length of time you worked as a full time member of staff in the University sector:

- Less than one year
- 1 - 5 years
- 6 - 10 years
- 10 - 15 years
- 15 – 20 years
- 20 years or over

Current position:
- Part time / Sessional
- Research Student
- Lecturer
- Senior Lecturer
- Principal Lecturer
- Reader
- Professor

PART A: The Critical Criminology Programme

1. Would you characterise the criminology programme you teach at your University as a ‘critical criminology programme’? Why?
2. What do you understand by the term Neo-liberal University? In what ways may this enhance or encroach upon critical pedagogy?
3. Have you encountered institutional opposition to implementing a critical criminological teaching curriculum?
4. Can you give any examples of recent policies at your university that have enhanced the development of critical criminology programmes at your institution?
5. In what ways do you think that current university managerial priorities are impacting upon the critical criminology curriculum?
6. In what ways do you think that the current university emphasis on employability is impacting upon the critical criminology curriculum?
Part B: Teaching Critical Criminology

7. What do you consider to be some of the main obstacles/ difficulties confronting teachers of critical criminology today in the UK?

8. In what way, if at all, do you think that broader educational policies (in schools and colleges) are impacting upon the teaching of critical criminology at Universities?

9. How do you think that the idea that students are ‘customers’ has impacted upon your experience as a university lecturer?

10. Do you think that students have become more or less engaged with contemporary political and socio-economic issues? If you think the latter is true, can you think of any strategies that could be deployed to overcome student disengagement?

11. Do you think students are specifically attracted to critical, as opposed to positivist, criminology courses?

12. In what ways, if at all, do you think that the ‘academic profession’ is being ‘de-professionalised’?

Part C: Doing Critical Research

13. Do you think that the focus on income generation has curtailed or enhanced space for independent critical criminological research?

14. What do you consider to be some of the main obstacles / difficulties confronting researchers in critical criminology today in the UK? Can you think of any strategies that could be shared with others members of the European Group to overcome them?

15. In what ways do you think there is space and opportunity for critical criminologists to engage with the media? What strategies concerning media engagement could be deployed that could be shared with other members of the European Group?

16. Have you personally encountered difficulties with having critical criminological research funded or published?

Part D: Moving Forward

17. Do you think that the problems and possibilities shaping the critical criminological curriculum today are significantly different to those of the past?

18. In what ways do you see new openings, sites of contestation and resistance in the academic workplace?
19. Where do you think that the teaching of critical criminology in Universities in the UK will be in ten years?

20. In what ways do you think that the European Group for the Study of Deviance and Social Control can help us overcome current obstacles / support the critical criminological curriculum?

21. Are there any other points or issues you think should be raised regarding the current role and future prospects for critical criminology programmes in the UK?
Appendix 4

Do you think that students have become more or less engaged with contemporary political and socio-economic issues? If you think the latter is true, can you think of any strategies that could be deployed to overcome student disengagement?

The graph highlights 18 out of the 18 respondents all agree students have become less engaged with contemporary political and socio-economic issues. Below are the suggestions to why students are less engaged, 48% of respondents suggested it is because students are no longer concerned with current political and social issues.
How do you think that the idea that students are customers has impacted upon your experience as a university lecturer?

The graph indicates the most popular answer to this question was students have become increasingly demanding upon lecturers, the lectures and seminars and the module material that is being taught.

Do you think that the problems and possibilities shaping the critical criminological curriculum today are significantly different to those of the past?

Below is a tree map highlighting the reasons for why the respondents agree, disagree or don’t know if the problems critical criminology today are significantly different to those of the past.
In what ways do you see new openings, sites of contestation and resistance in the academic workplace?