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JAMES Q. WILSON (1931-)

Post-World War II academic criminology was widely perceived to be a predominantly liberal enterprise. Most theories of crime and delinquency are sociological in origin and focus on specific social conditions – anomie, bad friends, bad neighbourhoods, bad labels, poverty, family strife – that push, it is believed, otherwise innocent people into trouble. Almost always, criminology focuses on environmental concerns and the ways these supra-individual factors mold purportedly powerless individuals. It is the environment and social conditions that cause crime – rarely individuals themselves.

Emerging at the height of this progressive consensus in criminology in the 1960s, James Q. Wilson's scholarship stands in stark contrast to this belief system and is a major reason why he is such a controversial figure in the intellectual history of criminology. Consider Lawrence Cohen's review of Wilson (and Herrnstein's) *Crime and Human Nature*:

This book replaces the liberal biases of much contemporary criminology with the conservative ideology that has come to be associated with the authors. ... American sociologists tend to take a proprietary interest in criminology and to think of the leading theories about crime as 'sociological' ... [it] may startle numerous sociologists, and those who suffer from high blood pressure should be cautious in reading it.

(1987: 202)

James Q. Wilson is not a sociologist; he does not skirt using the individual as a unit of analysis to explain a phenomenon like crime; and he does not shy away from the uglier realities about human nature, morality and immorality, vice, crime, and violence. Additionally, Wilson is interested and has been heavily involved in public policies to prevent

and reduce crime (for instance, he served on a number of national commissions including The White House Task Force on Crime in 1966, the National Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse Prevention in 1972-73, Attorney General's Task Force on Violent Crime in 1981, and the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board from 1985 to 1991, and was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President George W. Bush in 2003). This entry explores how his career in criminology has been paradoxical in that Wilson has been tremendously influential while also being maligned for his conservatism.

James Q. Wilson was born in Denver, Colorado in 1931 and was educated at the University of Redlands (AB, 1952) and the University of Chicago (PhD, 1959). For over thirty years, Wilson was a professor at Harvard University (later at UCLA and his current home at Pepperdine University). Wilson's early research focused on the interplay between cities, their bureaucratic and political structure, and policing. From 1963 to 1966, Wilson was the Director of the Joint Center for Urban Studies of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University. In 1966, Wilson was the Chair of the White House Task Force on Crime and was an early commentator on the growing political role that crime and its control would play in the United States. His definitive early work is *Varieties of Police Behavior* (1968), a detailed examination of politics, community structure, and policing in Upstate New York, suburban Illinois, and the urban center of Oakland, California. In this work, Wilson developed the classic typology of police patrolman styles: 1) the watchman style and its emphasis on maintaining order; 2) the legalistic style and its emphasis on the full enforcement stance of the letter of the law; and 3) the service style with its focus on community empowerment, help and social assistance to residents.

These and several other findings from *Varieties of Police Behavior* flew in the face of the prevailing belief that the police and the public were irreconcilable enemies. It stressed that the majority of police time is spent either gathering information, maintaining order, or providing mundane services – not enforcing the law; that due to organisational constraints, the police actually under-enforce the law; and that officer discretion is multifaceted and influenced by the nature of the criminal situation, whether the police or a citizen invoked police action, organisational structure and politics.

Wilson also noted significant differences in criminal conduct that varied by age, race and social class. He also wrote honestly about the occasional brutality of police work and the plain and obvious anti-social behaviours of some criminal offenders. According to Wilson (1968: 36), the police see people when they are 'dirty, angry, rowdy,

obscene, dazed, savage, or bloodied ... they are not in these circumstances "equal," they are *different*. ... "Decent people" and "bums" are not equal.' In this work, Wilson also takes direct aim at the sociological worldview that pervaded the increasingly critical assessments of the police during the late 1960s. He suggested that those who did not believe the correlates of crime (or that crime was disproportionately committed by males, youths, nonwhites and the poor) were delusional or 'still suffering from a romantic or Marxist illusion that the proletariat was untouched by original sin or else they were raised in a glass jar' (ibid: 41).

Throughout his career, Wilson published in periodicals outside of refereed journal articles and reached a wider audience. He has written on a range of topics including drug abuse, culture and crime, capital punishment, marriage, religion, and the role of ideology in criminology among others. Many of these essays would culminate in arguably his most influential work, *Thinking About Crime* in 1975. Frustrated with what appeared to Wilson to be politically motivated, academic nonsense, the treatise sought to utilise a 'clear and sober understanding of the nature of man' to study crime sensibly. Wilson believed some criminologists were 'demagogues who would either deny what were among the plainest of facts of everyday experience or claim that crime could best be prevented by reconstituting the Supreme Court' (1975: 4). By ignoring or refusing to acknowledge the true nature of crime, Wilson argued, such academics were turning criminology into a misguided enterprise.

Thinking About Crime offered five overarching critiques of mainstream criminology (see DeLisi 2003). First, Wilson argued that the view that 'society' induces individuals to commit crime is erroneous, as is the policy impulse to address the root causes of crime. Wilson buttressed this argument by noting the contemporaneous explosion of crime with the proliferation of domestic spending associated with The Great Society. Social spending toward a redistribution of resources, he argued, is costly, unfair, and will do little to reduce crime. Instead, Wilson suggested that the individual unit of analysis is the appropriate one and would lead to more effective criminal justice policy.

Second, Wilson accused the criminological majority (sociologists) of speaking out of ideology instead of empirical facts. Third, Wilson suggested that white-collar crime is simply not the equivalent of street crime, despite the claims of criminologists who are more concerned with the former. In addition to the more visceral victimisation that violence inflicts, white-collar crimes like corporate fraud do not shatter the social contract in the manner that conventional crimes like murder and rape do.

Fourth, Wilson has continually sought to remind sociologists about something that **Emile Durkheim**, the founder of sociology, adamantly believed: crime is a moral phenomenon. According to Wilson, 'to destigmatize crime would be to lift from it the weight of moral judgment and to make crime simply a particular occupation or avocation which society has chosen to reward less ... if there is no stigma attached to an activity, then society has no business making it a crime' (1975: 253).

Finally, Wilson simply declared that 'wicked people exist', a claim that still generates discussion. Surely it is common knowledge that from an early age certain individuals consistently demonstrate troubling, antisocial behaviour. The disturbing profile of the career criminal has become a staple of academic criminology and has clear support in empirical research (e.g. Moffitt 1993). Wilson does not argue that such criminals are the products of moral panics. Instead, he contends that wicked people need to be controlled in potentially grim ways including capital punishment. In this sense, his writing is pragmatic and seeks achievable if controversial solutions.

Nowhere did this pragmatism reach greater fruition than with his 'broken windows' theory with George Kelling in 1982. Broken windows suggested that neighbourhood physical disorder engenders an environment whereby nuisance offending and vice are tolerated. If broken windows are left unattended, a message is sent to community residents that criminal transgressions will also be tolerated. In many urban areas, disorder and neighbourhood deterioration were commonplace. Graffiti, overt prostitution, open-air drug sales, burnt-out buildings, vagrancy, and related behaviours were tolerated by police and ignored by a desensitised public. This did not have to be the case. Wilson and Kelling argue that tolerating nuisance and other low-level criminal behaviours facilitated more serious crime. Conversely, vigorous enforcement of all laws, not just for those proscribing serious offenses, could change a community's environment and subsequently reduce crime.

Proponents credit the application of broken windows theory with the remarkable reductions in crime in many of America's former crime capitols (Giacopassi and Forde 2000; Sampson and Raudenbush 2001). In New York City, police practised such relentless social control that they helped to change community norms. Zero-tolerance policies for social disorder, however minor it seemed, resulted in a dramatically safer, cleaner, and more humane city. In theory, the offenders that engaged in minor delinquent acts such as jumping subway turnstiles, loitering on street corners, and participating in the drug trade, were the same ones committing more serious acts such as robbery and assault.

Of course, it is important to note that other major cities worldwide also experienced crime declines without zero-tolerance policing suggesting that multiple factors were responsible (see Harcourt 2001).

In *Crime and Human Nature* (published in 1985 with Richard Herrnstein), Wilson reviewed research from an array of disciplines to answer the question, 'What biological, developmental, situational, and adaptive processes give rise to individual characteristics that predict crime?' *Crime and Human Nature* is a call for criminologists to quit denying that individual-level constitutional variables (temper, intelligence, impulsivity, self-discipline, character, etc.) are meaningful and to embrace them as powerful explanations for all behaviours. The consideration of *both* constitutional and environmental factors will help to develop believable rationales for why some persons choose to violate the social contract and why most persons behave lawfully. This nature and nurture approach is increasingly relevant today.

In recent years, Wilson has written on more general topics such as the moral bases of human behaviour, the aetiology of morality, American politics and government, and many others. He has not produced a major criminological work in recent years. He does not need to. On a variety of levels, James Q. Wilson's influence continues to endure. Although he is still primarily thought of as a conservative criminologist, the overt ideological concern about Wilson's work has faded. Decades later, criminology has come to terms with many of the issues first raised in *Thinking About Crime*. More pronounced is the impact of the multi-disciplinary perspective of *Crime and Human Nature*. In 1985, criminology was becoming theoretically boring and arguably mired in a structural sociological malaise (see also Bennett et al. 1996). Today, some of the most vibrant areas of study in criminology are the life-course and criminal careers, topical areas that incorporate genetics, psychiatry, psychology, paediatrics and cutting-edge genome-era technology. Although few criminologists today would endorse the idea that 'wicked people exist', it could be argued that everyone knows about them anyway (despite changes in nomenclature) (see e.g. DeLisi 2005). Indeed, 'career criminals' or 'life course persistent offenders' have become a central focus of theoretical, empirical and policy criminology. This change in the criminological landscape can be attributed at least partially to the contributions of James Q. Wilson.

Major works

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MATT DELISI

STUART HALL (1932–)

Born in Kingston, Jamaica, and educated at Merton College, Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar, Stuart Hall belongs to a generation of intellectuals of British colonial origin that shed a new, uncompromising light on the nature of 'Englishness' in post-war, post-colonial British society. While the likes of Paul Gilroy, Tariq Ali and others all exerted a tremendous influence on British sociology, Hall is arguably the most significant figure among this group. His contributions to critical thought in the social sciences, cultural studies and the humanities have been immense. As a cultural and political theorist of the British state, of black Britain and of the changing landscape of British identity