

A Tribute to Jock Young 1942-2013

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Jock Young, one of the world's preeminent criminologists, has died at the age of 71. More than any other criminologist of his generation he shaped the nature and direction of the discipline and has been at the forefront of almost every major development in the sociology of crime and deviance over the past four decades. Revered and respected for his scholarly activities, he will also be remembered for his charisma, humour and famously warm and relaxed manner that inspired all those who knew and worked with him.

Jock was the leading light of an intellectual movement inspired by the radical political currents of the 1960s that questioned conventional ways of thinking about crime and its control. Despite subsequent shifts of perspective, this radical sensibility remained undimmed throughout the entirety of his long and immensely distinguished career. He was instinctively sceptical of organised coercive power and consistently took the side of those affected by it. In later work he was a fierce critic of short-sighted 'get tough' policies and a vigorous opponent of defeatist claims that 'nothing works'. He was also critical of the tendency among criminologists to transform the fascinating and vibrant subject of crime and justice into an abstract and lifeless academic enterprise. Instead, he urged sociologists and criminologists to appreciate the richness and diversity of social life.

William Young was born in Vogrie Nr. Gorebridge in Midlothian, Scotland. At five his family moved to Aldershot. His grammar school education in the Hampshire military town was a formative experience, not least because it furnished him with a nickname that stuck: Jock. The school enforced mandatory attendance in a uniformed Cadet Force. The regimentation and hours of 'square bashing' did not sit well with Jock, who, along with a motley group of conscientious objectors, rebelled and formed an anti-Fascist/pro-CND group to oppose the school's enforced military ethos. It was the first salvo in a career characterized by dogged resistance to unquestioned authority, arbitrary elite power and unthinking conformity. Despite, or perhaps because of, this rebellious streak, Jock was an outstanding student. He particularly excelled in science and had secured a place at University College London to read biochemistry. But a chance encounter with the radical criminologist Steve Box convinced him to change track and switch to sociology instead.

In 1962 he enrolled at The London School of Economics, where he would go on to complete his formal academic training. At the LSE he became inspired by new developments in American sociology such as symbolic interactionism and labeling theory. While this work greatly influenced Jock, just as significant was the countercultural revolution taking place outside the University seminar room. These were heady times: R D Laing was promulgating his anti-psychiatry message in public readings at the Roundhouse and the Rolling Stones were hard at work shocking the post-war British establishment. It was this countercultural sensibility that inspired Jock to co-found the first National Deviancy Conference (NDC) in 1968. Avowedly anti-institutional and highly critical of orthodox criminology, the NDC instigated a decade-long series of interdisciplinary conferences based around emerging research in new 'the sociology of deviance'. It was at the first NDC that Young presented his first conference paper, 'The role of Police as amplifiers of deviance'. Like the NDC itself, the paper was a reflection of changes underway in British society in the 1960s. It was also the foundation for his first major work, *The Drugtakers*, a ground-breaking 1971 study of bohemian counterculture in 1960s Notting Hill. This text, together with *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, authored by his great friend and fellow LSE student, Stan Cohen, trail blazed the concept of 'moral panic', one of the few criminological concepts to be adopted for general use beyond academia. Equally influential was his next work, the 1973 critically-acclaimed co-authored book with Paul Walton and Ian Taylor, *The New Criminology*, which revolutionized criminology by infusing it with an unapologetically critical agenda.

Jock was one of a number of radical LSE graduates who decamped to Middlesex Polytechnic (as it then was) in the late 1960s and early 1970s. During this period the social science department there was a hotbed of radical and socialist thought where many of the staff could be heard punching out articles on manual typewriters for journals like *New Left Review* and *Socialist Worker*. Soon after arriving, Jock established a single honours degree and set up one of the first Masters programmes in criminology in the country. In the 1980s he headed

The Centre for Criminology, which rapidly developed a reputation as a leading criminology unit. It was during this period that Jock laid the foundations for a more engaged 'realist' criminology that argued for critical criminologists to take crime more seriously. He argued that 'law and order' was indeed a socialist issue, insisting that the victims of crime are predominantly the poor and the marginalised. His work in this period also had strong policy and educational dimensions. In the 1980s he conducted research into crime victimisation in several London Boroughs, and acted in a formal advisory capacity to London's Metropolitan Police Authority. Working closely with members of the Labour Party during the Thatcher years he encouraged a rethink of their approach to crime and policing. However, Jock was disappointed with the way in which New Labour dealt with the crime issue after it came to power in 1997, pointing out that Tony Blair's stated commitment to 'get tough on crime and the causes of crime' tended in practice to concentrate disproportionately on the first half of the equation. Throughout his long tenure at Middlesex, Jock was offered professorships at several more 'prestigious' Universities, but turned them down. Unlike most career-minded academics he always maintained an endearing humility and was indifferent to the trappings of status. He also enjoyed London, particularly his beloved 'Stokey' (Stoke Newington). He remained at Middlesex for thirty-five years before moving first to New York City, where he took up a position at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in 2002, and later back to the UK, where he held a position at the University of Kent, playing an active role there in developing cultural criminology. In 2009 he returned once again to New York, this time as Distinguished Professor of Criminal Justice and Sociology at the City University of New York's Graduate Center. His years in America inspired further intellectual development, culminating in the publication of the final two volumes of a trilogy of monographs – *The Exclusive Society*, *The Vertigo of Late Modernity* and *The Criminological Imagination* - that documented the cultural shifts associated with late modernity.

Jock Young's writings have been translated into 11 languages in 15 countries, and he has been honoured on numerous occasions. In 2008 he was awarded the American Society of Criminology's Sellin-Glueck Prize for Outstanding International Contributions to Criminology, and in 2009 received a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Critical Criminology Division of the same society. Most recently, in 2012 he was the recipient of the British Society of Criminology's Outstanding Achievement Award.

His death will leave an immense void in a discipline which owes so much to his singular vision and path-breaking originality. All those who knew and loved him will feel that the world has suddenly and tragically become less full of humour, colour, and meaning.

He is survived by his wife Jayne, his sons Jesse, Joseph and Fin, his step-daughter Anny, and brother Graham.

Note: An abridged version was printed in the Guardian as follows:

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