

# Career View

Issue No 30 • December 2004

## Criminology

Crime is a hugely complex social phenomenon. This has given rise to an equally complex collection of popular opinion, specialised knowledge and factual information as to its causes, effects and prevention. In this context, Criminology has evolved as a multi-disciplinary field of study that examines how crime is defined, why people commit crimes, and how society responds. It probes the culture of crime and the workings of the criminal justice system including the police, courts, prisons and rehabilitation services. It researches how criminal behaviour relates to, for example, drug use, educational attainment, ethnicity, family relationships and mental health. It studies the characteristics of offenders and their victims. It seeks to understand how criminal behaviour gratifies the needs of its perpetrators. It asks who goes to prison and what happens to them there. It questions the nature of punishment - is it to provide justice, to deter or prevent crime, or to reform criminals? It questions the relationship between crime and the media. Does the way crime is reported and represented influence criminal behaviour?

Crime is also an international concern that changes with the times. Organised criminal enterprises can command a workforce and financial turnover that rivals multinational corporations. Digital technology supports our global financial services industry but also opens up opportunities for fraud and misappropriation that, only a few years ago, would have been incomprehensible. The proportion of Internet traffic that relates to criminal activity can only be conservatively estimated, but even that gives law-abiding citizens the jitters. Criminology also investigates the shifting patterns that emerge when the focus is pulled back to show the big picture.

The study of Criminology is intellectually challenging and involves digging deeply into social realities which can show human nature at its worst. However it provides the kind of informed understanding and conceptual scaffolding which is necessary for those who

want to work constructively towards making the world a better place. It is also ideal for those who simply have a fierce curiosity about everything.

### *How do you study Criminology?*

In New Zealand, Criminology can only be studied as a major subject for a Bachelor of Arts degree (BA) at the Institute of Criminology, Victoria University, in Wellington. Postgraduate qualifications in Criminology; a BA Honours degree, Master of Arts and PhD, are also available.

Criminology specialisation begins at the 200-level. This is because Criminology requires knowledge from other, related disciplines, which is developed and synthesised during the first year of university study.

Criminology complements other humanities and social

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*Your comments and suggestions always welcomed.*

science subjects, particularly anthropology, psychology, sociology, women's studies, social policy, media studies, political science, and law. Students typically plan their first year of study from a selection of these subjects, then move into the structure of a Criminology major.

For those wanting to work in policy, advisory or consultancy roles, it can be advisable to plan for postgraduate qualifications. Criminology is a research-based field and the research component of postgraduate degrees, including research methodology and statistical analysis, is necessary to properly understand past and current research protocols and assess the validity of their findings.

It is important to understand that Criminology and Forensic Science are separate career areas and the training and everyday work is therefore quite different. Criminologists do not, for example, collect and analyse evidence from crime scenes.

### **Where do Criminology graduates work?**

Job opportunities are, to a large extent, a function of organisational structures. For Criminology graduates, opportunities lean towards organisations which are linked to the criminal justice system. This system is a network of interdependent organisations which, despite the requirement for correction facilities, maintains an underlying emphasis on the prevention of crime rather than its punishment.

**The Ministry of Justice** has a relatively self-contained policy division which provides a structured career path from graduate entry *policy analyst* roles through to *senior policy adviser* positions. Graduate intakes are likely to increase over the next few years. The Crime Prevention Unit contributes support and funding to Local Governments and community based service providers such as SAFE, Neighbourhood Support and Iwi groups. Sexual violence and

youth offending are issues of concern. Graduate entry is possible for *community adviser* and *policy adviser* roles and the research-oriented *support officer* role. It is possible that work experience for Criminology students may be available in the near future. Within the Courts system *administrative* and *case management* roles are possibilities.

**The Department of Corrections** contains a policy development area and recruits at the graduate level for *policy analyst* roles. In addition, the Community Probation Service and the Prison Service have *operational advisers* who, for example, assess the implications of legislative change on operational functions. Operational advisers are also recruited at the graduate level. Similarly, a Criminology degree is an excellent background for *probation officers*. There is no particular emphasis on post-graduate qualifications for any of these roles, but since the Department operates on a psychological model, a combination of Criminology and Psychology is highly desirable. Registered psychologists with Criminology are ideal for Psychologist positions.

**New Zealand Police.** The Office of the Police Commissioner maintains a Policy and Planning unit. Opportunities for Criminology graduates exist within a small Policy team, perhaps one graduate *policy analyst* vacancy a year, but more particularly for *crime analyst* positions. There are about 400 crime analysts around the country and Criminology graduates, particularly those with a practical focus such as is developed through Environmental Criminology, are very desirable applicants when vacancies occur. Within the Intelligence Group there are *strategic analyst* and *tactical/operational analyst* roles. Graduates are valued for their writing and analytical skills. An interest in Asia and the Pacific Rim countries is good as there is a strong off shore focus. Police officers complete a Criminology paper as part of their basic training. More advanced study in the subject could enhance career prospects for sworn officers.

**New Zealand Customs** is interested in Criminology graduates at all levels of the organisation, from service delivery roles such as *customs officer* through to *policy advisers, intelligence analysts* and *investigators*. Customs work includes criminology from an international perspective and requires the ability to think strategically around the local/international dimension. Recruitment to the organisation is buoyant and likely to remain so. Interested applicants are advised to visit the website.

**The Ministry of Social Development** includes the Centre for Social Research and Evaluation which carries out a range of evaluation, forecasting and modelling research functions. Criminology is a relevant degree for *research* and *policy analyst* roles. Postgraduate study, usually a Masters degree is required.

**Local Authorities**, such as the Auckland and Wellington City Councils, are complex organisations with a role in crime prevention through such mechanisms as environmental design and urban strategic planning. Partnership links between local authorities, community service providers and the Ministry of Justice Crime Prevention Unit create positions such as *community safety co-ordinator* and various *administrative* and *project management* roles.

**Educational Institutions.** Criminology as such is taught only at Victoria University. At present, staff with an academic background in the social sciences teach and conduct academic research through the Institute of Criminology, while the Crime and Justice Research Centre employs full-time contract researchers. There are therefore job opportunities for *teaching* and *research* within this structure. In other educational institutions which teach the social sciences, Criminology could add a desirable area of specialisation, probably in combination with another degree or subject area. Where the institution has a strong research focus, evidence of research and publication would typically be required.

**Criminology plus...** There are a range of professional roles which require separate training but which can complement a Criminology degree. These include; lawyer, journalist, social worker, psychologist, counsellor, architect, urban designer, security specialist and detective. Operational and management roles in organisations which have regulatory or statutory responsibilities, such as ACC, can also be compatible with a Criminology degree.

### Skills

Skills are the 'can do' edge of your degree. They represent open ground where you can show employers the value of your degree in a way that is meaningful to them. Criminology graduates can stand out because they have developed, among other things, higher order thinking skills and a certain mental discipline. These are very transferable in that they can be applied to any situation which calls for abstract reasoning and intellectual rigour. Such skills include:

**Analytical thinking:** the ability to break information down, identify the underlying structure and pull together summaries or conclusions from the essential points. Criminology graduates study various research data and theories which are complex and often counter-intuitive, and out of which they are expected to pull clarity and lucid analysis. Those in jobs where information is the basic currency, such as policy analyst, research assistant or lawyer, constantly call upon this skill in order to function effectively.

**Critical judgement:** represents the ability to evaluate situations and information and pick out what is logical and relevant to the context in which it occurs. Although popular culture is riddled with crime 'facts', Criminology graduates are trained out of these myths and generalisations, and learn to select and collate data which are both valid and reliable for the purpose. Any job which relies on accurately evaluating or monitoring people, events or information, such as police officer, journalist, psychologist or customs officer, demands critical judgement.

**Problem solving:** Criminology graduates will have regularly grappled with issues which defy a simple solution. They are therefore likely to identify and confront problems with confidence and be able to formulate a strategy for resolution. Abstract problem-solving may be an important feature of a job role such as policy analyst, but it is a skill most employers value, even when focussed on practical day-to-day situations.

**The ability to make connections:** refers to the mixing and matching of ideas drawn from a range of conceptual structures. The richness and diversity of the criminological literature, together with its theoretical constructs, give Criminology graduates a full data bank of ideas to juggle with. In a work environment the ability to make connections underpins many functions and roles, but particularly those involving management, where skills such as strategic planning are important. Of special value is the ability to combine ideas which are not usually connected. Employers are keen on those who can come up with innovative proposals, particularly in 'stuck' situations.

**Research and Information skills:** Criminology is a research-focussed subject and its graduates will have demonstrated competence in understanding research methodologies, statistical analyses, and accessing computer-based information systems. Postgraduate study which has involved some original research will extend these skills further. A huge amount of the world's information is conceptualised in research projects, captured in databases, and coded in statistical formats. Graduates who can work effectively with these systems will always have access to new knowledge and be competitive for the new jobs.

**Non-judgemental people skills:** Criminology graduates are likely to appreciate that both good and bad behaviour emerges from a heady mix of motivation, opportunity, conditioning, and personality. Such understanding tends towards

tolerance for others' idiosyncrasies, which goes down well in all work situations, and is vital where a capacity for empathy is required, such as probation officer, psychologist and other client-centred roles.

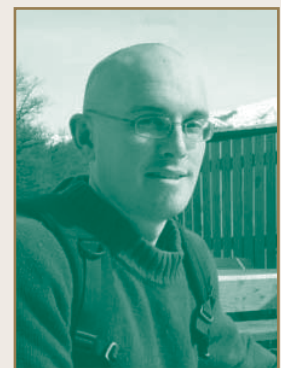
**Communication skills:** These are absolutely vital to employers. Criminology graduates have worked through contentious and complex ideas, both verbally and in writing, and have been trained to express their thinking with clarity and precision. Communication skills combine speaking, listening, writing and understanding, and underpin almost any job you can think of.

## Graduate Profiles

### John Fyvie

*Youth Unit Education Tutor*

*Rimutaka Prison Youth Unit*



How did I come to study Criminology?  
Why am I working at Rimutaka Prison?

If I said these are a result of lifelong goals you would peg me for a liar. When I began my academic career I had my goals set on an LLB. Weak results in my first year meant that I had to reconsider my options and whilst spending my second year attempting to improve my marks to gain entry to second year Law I looked for a range of random subjects that would fill my time. I found several including, Criminology. My marks increased and so did my dilemma. I became engrossed in the topics that my new major offered but I was also accepted to join the ranks of second year Law students. So being one who hedges his bets I gave them both a crack. Crim won.

Now the second question. The one about prison. That stems from the focus in the early 90's in the development in prison management and the emphasis on reducing reoffending through

reintegrative programmes. Yes I am an idealist. The other attraction was the real life experience of aspects of deviance and subcultures that I had been so authoritatively writing about from the safe confines of Victoria University Department of Criminology.

That experience only increased my need to know more so in 2001 I was granted a scholarship by the Department of Corrections to complete my postgrad study.

Since my return to Rimutaka Prison I have been working in the Youth Unit as an education tutor. The strong link between youth offending and lack of formal education made my choice to accept the role an easy one. I now work with young offenders to achieve employable qualifications. The role is both challenging and satisfying. Each year I see inmates/students achieve academic results along with less tangible improvements such as self-esteem and improved behaviour.

To any potential Crim candidates I would suggest that the application of the discipline is as broad as the definition of crime prevention. If I can be of any use please feel free to contact me.

### **Kelly Hudson**

*Customs Officer –  
Client Service*

*New Zealand Customs  
Service*

My decision to study Criminology was based on a book I read by FBI Profiler John Douglas, which sparked my interest in the study of Human Behaviour, and particularly Criminology. I started University with the intention to do a BA majoring in both Psychology and Criminology – Psychology as my career choice, and Criminology as my “interest papers”. However, that plan quickly changed. I found myself choosing more and more Criminology papers and less and less



Psychology papers, until I gave up on Psychology all together and focused on Criminology.

I found Criminology really challenging, and thoroughly enjoyed the range of papers that were available to me. I found (most of) the lectures, tutorials and reading material fascinating, and the assignments were challenging but just as interesting.

The assignments and research involved in studying Criminology developed and strengthened my analytical and communication skills, and taught me how to develop and present an argument or idea. These skills are valuable in the work place, as well as in life in general.

I found it quite hard to get a job in the first few months of job hunting, as I was over-qualified for lots of jobs, but under-experienced for all the rest. Eventually I landed my current job, working as a Customs Officer in the Client Service department of the New Zealand Customs Service – and before you ask, no I don't work at the airport, or with little beagles (which incidentally are MAF dogs). I work in the Goods side of Customs, helping to protect the borders from prohibited goods – drugs, weapons and objectionable material, to name a few.

While a degree in Criminology isn't a prerequisite for this role, I believe studying at a tertiary level has helped me to quickly pick up the skills involved and will help me move to areas within Customs that are more related to my studies, such as Intelligence, Investigations and Policy.

I would definitely recommend Criminology as an interesting degree, and the advice that I would give to students contemplating what to study is: study something that really interests you, and that you feel passionate about. While a degree definitely helps you get a good job, most employers don't require a degree in a specific area, and doing something you really enjoy makes it a lot easier to cope with the assignments, late nights and lack of money while you are studying!!

## Steven Bennett

*Policy Advisor*

*Employment  
Relations Education,  
Department of  
Labour*



I originally decided to study criminology because I wanted to become a probation officer. I also thought that it would be an interesting and stimulating subject – which proved to be right. The variety in courses at the 300 level was great and I enjoyed going to lectures which were more like seminars as we could interact with the lecturer during class.

I also decided to do honours which was definitely the hardest year of study but also the most rewarding. I took two criminology and two psychology papers. I particularly enjoyed honours because of the opportunity to work alongside classmates more closely and being able to have one-on-one discussions with the lecturer. Honours also enabled me to think more critically and carry out a small research project. I would recommend to other students that they keep their choice of papers as wide as possible. While there may be some benefits in specialising, I found that there is much to be gained from studying different disciplines. It also helps you discover your subject passions.

After completing my degree I did some voluntary research work for a non-governmental organisation – this helped me to adapt my academic writing style. It also probably looked attractive to potential employers. I would definitely recommend doing voluntary work to other students.

While I was waiting for my probation officer job application to be processed I was offered a position as a policy support officer in the Department of Labour. I was in that position for

just over a year before being offered a policy advisor position in the same policy group. I love working in this role where I am constantly thinking and being challenged by many issues in employment relations – I am never bored! I particularly love working in a team and interacting with key stakeholders. While it isn't always easy to reach agreement, it is thought-provoking trying to think of ways to satisfy everyone's interests. It is also great to be in a job where I'm constantly learning and being paid for it!

I would recommend criminology to other students even though it may appear to be restrictive with regard to employment opportunities. I found that this isn't the case as the skills learnt such as analysis, communication, using a computer, report writing and research skills are more valuable than the area of expertise.

## Rebecca Turner

*Policy Adviser*

*Department of  
Corrections*



When I was younger I knew that I wanted to eventually work in a field that would enable me to help others less fortunate than myself. I was also aware that I

interacted well with people, and that I found human behaviour really intriguing. So when it became time to select a university degree I knew it had to involve these personal interests. Oh, and the final criteria was that the degree had to be offered anywhere but Auckland!

Criminology caught my attention because I had no idea what it involved. In fact, nobody else I talked to had any idea either! So the challenge was set to find out more. I moved to Wellington, and three short years later I found myself completing a Bachelor of Arts in criminology and psychology. It was now clear to me

that crime and criminal behaviour was a much more complex subject than I had first thought, and with a thirst for more I enrolled for an Honours degree. My infatuation with criminology really gathered momentum during that year, as I had the opportunity to delve in more depth into the mysteries of gendered crime, criminal psychology, crime prevention, and cross-cultural criminology.

During that same year, I became interested in the issue of violent young females, which I soon discovered had never really been researched in New Zealand before. In 2003, I embarked on a personal adventure to find out everything I could about this topic through a Master of Arts. Most people will tell you that postgraduate study at this level equates to one of the most challenging periods in their lives. I now know for sure that it is – academically, personally, and to some extent psychologically. But the experience is also hugely rewarding because you have the opportunity to research an issue in its entirety that you feel passionate about, become an ‘expert’ in that area, and complete the experience knowing that academically you overcame all obstacles and acquired a very desirable qualification.

Having completed my Masters I was employed as a policy adviser for the Department of Corrections. I enjoy the role as it allows me to continue to explore a variety of criminological issues, whilst developing effective policies that transform into practice. I have worked on a variety of projects including those relating to the development of the recently passed Corrections Act 2004, young offenders, female offenders, human rights issues, prison security, offender management, and family violence. The job has helped me realise that policy development is where the ‘major’ decisions are made and that policy frequently has the most impact on ensuring the fair and humane management of offenders, whilst contributing to their rehabilitation.

My time at Victoria University equipped me with

a number of useful skills including the ability to think critically, practically, and innovatively. My criminology qualifications have enabled me to significantly contribute to New Zealand’s criminal justice system. Criminology has firmly cemented my place in the workforce. After all, society will never be without crime!

## **Theresa van Lent**

*Course Administrator*

*New Zealand Law Society*



I studied Criminology as a major purely by accident. Right through High School I wanted to be a lawyer. I planned all my school subjects

around getting into Law and was one of the few in my year who seemed to know exactly what they wanted to do. When I applied I also had to choose non-law subjects to make up my Law degree. I wasn’t terribly sure what it was about but I figured Criminology would complement Law. But when I didn’t get into second year Law because I hadn’t taken enough Arts credits, I had little choice but to get interested in Criminology. And it was so much more interesting than I thought it would be! I loved my Criminology papers so much that when I finally did get into second year Law my heart was not in it. I had an ambition to “save the world” and I thought Criminology would definitely lead me towards a more “hands-on” career. Following a third year Criminology paper about Policing, I started to think if I joined the Police I would be able to help people better than if I was a lawyer. One of the police constables who spoke to our class told us about her community work, picking up kids whose parents didn’t pay much attention to them, giving them breakfast and/or lunch and taking them to school. Straight away I thought, “That’s what I want to do!” As a consequence I gave up my Law degree.

When I finished studying, the Continuing Legal Education department at the NZ Law Society (where I had been working as an office junior) offered me a full-time job. I accepted the job as a temporary step between graduating and joining the police force. As a Course Administrator I organise some of the Law Society's litigation courses, as well as assisting with conferences and seminars and maintaining our website. While my job is not what I expected to be doing when I graduated, I have learned many new skills and working full-time is helping me gain valuable "life experience" and I hope to join the police force by the end of 2005.

My advice to anyone thinking about studying Criminology is – do it. You'll learn so much about many different aspects of crime. While I didn't originally think it was possible, I learned that University was all about changing your mind about the direction you want to head in. The "accident" turned out to be one of the best things that ever happened to me.

### ***Criminology at Victoria***

Victoria is the only university in New Zealand to offer Criminology as a major for a degree. This is provided through the Institute of Criminology. Criminology can be taken as a major subject of a BA (Bachelor of Arts) degree or combined with other subjects such as Social Policy, Sociology, Psychology or Political Science. The study of Criminology at Victoria begins at 200 level.

Students seeking to advance to graduate levels can begin with a one-year Honours degree or proceed to Masters and PhD levels where a written thesis is required. A thesis is the product of original research, which may be undertaken full- or part-time. Examples of postgraduate research topics include: Youth Crime and its Prevention in New Zealand; A History of Women's Imprisonment in New Zealand; The Work of NZ Prison Officers; Corporate Crime in New Zealand; Safe Communities and Crime Prevention: the New Zealand experience and Juror's Safety, Health and Wellbeing.

Victoria also offers a Graduate Diploma of Arts for graduates. This can allow those without prior knowledge of criminology to undertake a tailored course of study that may include both undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Criminology with complementary courses in other disciplines.

The Crime and Justice Research Centre, the only research unit in the country that has the capacity to provide a broad range of research and consultancy services in the area of crime and justice, is an integral part of the Institute of Criminology.

### ***Special thanks to:***

The School of Social and Cultural Studies, in particular Assoc Professor Jenny Neale, Head of School; Kaye McKinlay, School Manager; Professors Philip Stenning, Programme Director, Criminology and John Pratt; graduates John Fyvie, Kelly Hudson, Steven Bennett, Rebecca Turner, Theresa van Lent and all those people who contributed to this publication.

**Career View** is published by Career Development and Employment  
 Victoria University of Wellington, Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui  
 PO Box 600, Wellington, Tel: 64-4-463 5390 or 64-4-463 5393, Fax: 64-4-463 5252  
[www.vuw.ac.nz/st\\_services/careers/](http://www.vuw.ac.nz/st_services/careers/)  
 December 2004  
 ISSN 1172-4315