Editor's Introduction to the Special Issue: “Crucial Critical Criminology”

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A relevant, spirited, and crucial critical criminology sees power, inequality, and oppression as fundamental elements of social structure, culture, and interaction. Stratification systems based on class, race, ethnicity, gender, age, geography, anthropocentrism, and sexual identities and orientations are obvious realms of critical criminological analysis, but so are inquiries into the crimes of powerful state and corporate organizations along with the material and ideological forces impacting the development and exercise of criminal justice, law, and social control. To these concerns we can add the importance of praxis to critical criminology, whether in the form of street protest, counter-hegemonic pedagogy, social media claims-making activities, or collaborating with non-academics in various social spaces toward social justice. A prophetic, healthy, and visionary critical criminology also takes interdisciplinary and international research and theory seriously—after all, much of the history of traditional criminological research and theory in criminology is simplistic, jingoistic, fails to see crime as mostly epiphenomenal, is riddled with bias and stereotypes, remains silent on major forms of oppression, and is out of touch with many of the realities of street and home-life as they relate to crime, harm, justice, and victimization.

My belief is that critical criminology has generally moved the larger field of criminology into far more interesting, exciting, and productive paths and away from the tired and staid theories and research findings that explain next to nothing about crime and deviance. That mainstream, “professional” criminology, like many of its academic brothers and sisters, has become a legitimized reification of its subject matter has never been lost on critical criminologists. The authors of the articles in this special issue are excellent examples scholars who have rejected the banality of traditional criminological concerns and forged new intellectual ground in the field: Dragan Milovanovic along with just a handful of others such as Bruce Arrigo have brought the ultra-critical perspective of postmodernism to criminology; Meda Chesney-Lind along with Merry Morash and Claire Renzetti are among the first scholars to bring feminism to life and enduring relevance in critical criminology; Hal Pepinsky and Richard Quinney brought a totally different vision

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of justice and human relations to criminology through the introduction of peacemaking criminology; Stephen Richards, who along with Jeffrey Ian Ross and John Irwin, have completely changed how we understand imprisonment and its effects through the convict criminology approach; Walter DeKeseredy and Marty Schwartz have brought the understanding of woman abuse through the lens of left realism to unparalleled levels of clarity and insight; Hillary Potter is part of a younger generation of scholars who take intersectionality and intellectual inclusiveness seriously, and by doing so, add much to our understanding of crime and oppression; Nigel South and Vincenzo Ruggiero along with Rob White and Mike Lynch have pioneered the area of critical green criminology, and in doing so have brought us closer to issues of sustainability, the ecological sciences, and the health of the planet; and Jeff Ferrell along with Keith Hayward, Mike Presdee, and now Jock Young have brought criminology the treasure of an exciting and stylish ethnographic understanding of crime and deviance in the form of cultural criminology. All of these perspectives—cultural, green, feminist, postmodern, left realist, convict, peacemaking, and intersectional have in my view transformed academic criminology from a tendency to produce reified and pseudo-scientific understandings of crime to a perspective of resistance, hope, social change, and inclusion. In fact, I continue to find that the most valuable form of criminology is critical criminology.

What follows is the first complete issue of *Critical Criminology: An International Journal* under my editorial command. It is my hope that this issue may in some way help reinvigorate the critical criminological spirit and remind us of the enduring importance of the perspective, as well as the role of journal as the source of creative, rich, and counter-hegemonic criminological analysis.