Editor's Introduction to Volume 28

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At the 75th Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology (ASC), held this past November in San Francisco, I had the pleasure and privilege of participating in one of ASC's professional development sessions, entitled "Students Meet Scholars: Meet the Editors," organized by Dr. Kaitlyn J. Selman, a rising star in critical criminology and one of the more creative thinkers in the areas of critical carceral studies and youth justice. The session included the current or incoming editors of three of several of the top journals in criminology. Early in the session, Dr. Selman asked each of the editors the following question: "What are you looking for in terms of submissions?" I volunteered to go first. I wish I had not.

In response to Dr. Selman's question, I paraphrased my introduction to Volume 27, Issue 1, of this journal (Brisman 2019) and offered (something along the lines of) the following response:

Critical criminology is a theoretical perspective that challenges legalistic definitions of crime, attempting to expose how law and punishment can produce, reproduce and perpetuate systems of social inequality. Committed to a "critique of domination," critical criminology seeks to confront homophobia, neocolonialism, racism, sexism, working class oppression and xenophobia. As such, *Critical Criminology: An International Journal* is interested in receiving submissions in furtherance of these goals—especially from researchers, scholars and students from outside the United States, Europe and the Global North. Thus, prospective authors should feel emboldened to send me work that exposes, examines and analyzes *any* form of social harm—or "analogous social injury," to quote the great Raymond J. Michalowski (1985).

My response elicited some bland expressions, so I added:

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In addition to articles on “law but awful” acts and omissions, to invoke Passas (2005), I would be keen on reading submissions from more mainstream criminologists/more mainstream criminological orientations that interrogate critical criminological approaches. For I would very like to broaden our readership and promote dialogue and discussion across theoretical divides.

So why do I regret responding first to Dr. Selman’s query? It is not that I disagree with anything that I said in November 2019. In fact, I might have added a comment that just as “crime” for critical criminologists does not necessarily mean (just) those acts or omissions proscribed by law, “high Crimes and Misdemeanors” under Article II, Section 4, of the US Constitution refers to severe violations of the public trust, not literal crimes. In other words, as the Editorial Board of *The New York Times* (2019) later explained, “[a] president can commit a technical crime that doesn’t violate the public trust (say, jaywalking), and he can commit an impeachable offense that is found nowhere in the federal criminal code (like abuse of power).”

The reason that I would have exercised restraint in my eagerness to respond to Dr. Selman’s question is that my answer was followed by one of the editors of a more mainstream (read: prominent) criminological journal, who replied, “We are interested in publishing the best articles in criminology”—and then, after pausing, added “the best criminological articles”—as if the first statement was not clear. That was it. No further elucidation or explanation.

Had I followed this particular editor, rather than preceded him, I might have reminded the audience of this famous scene in the science fiction action–comedy film, *Men in Black* (1997):

James Edwards (a former NYPD detective, played by Will Smith): “Maybe you already answered this, but, why exactly are we here?”

Zed (head of Men in Black, the secret agency that protects Earth from extraterrestrial threats, played by the late Rip Torn) [noticing a recruit raising his hand]: “Son?”

Second Lieutenant Jake Jenson (played by Sergio Calderón): “Second Lieutenant, Jake Jenson. West Point. Graduate with honors. We’re here because you are looking for the best of the best of the best, sir!”

Edwards: [laughs]

Zed [throwing Edwards a contemptable glance]: “What’s so funny, Edwards?”

Edwards: “Boy, Captain America over here? ‘Best of the best of the best, sir!’ ‘With honors.’ Yeah, he’s just really excited and he has no clue why we’re here.”

In other words, I might have said to this editor—and to the audience—that he is *presuming* our subject material. He is assuming fixed methods and theory and quadrants that define our discipline. And not only is that wrong and incorrect as a matter of course, but it is *boring*. Moreover, if we fail to push the boundaries of our discipline, we are sentencing ourselves to confinement within them.

The articles in the four issues of Volume 28 are intended to probe and push the boundaries of criminological thinking. Indeed, one of our later issues is devoted to the very subject of borders and border control. We begin, however, with Issue 1, a special issue, guest edited by Randy K. Lippert and Claire Hamilton, entitled “Governing through Human Rights and Critical Criminology.” Lippert and Hamilton make the case for examining human rights as a means of governance, rather than as (only) a resource of resistance.

The articles they have selected provide cutting-edge analysis of human rights in relation to criminalization and securitization and thus further *Critical Criminology: An International Journal's* goal of encouraging alternative perspectives and challenging existing (and dominant) paradigms. Through an in-depth examination of the exercise of human rights as enshrined in national instruments and international conventions, regimes and treaties, this issue sets the tone for a volume meant to explore the breadth and depth of critical criminology, to blaze news trails, and to create new frontiers.

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