

The Emerald International Handbook of Activist Criminology

EMERALD STUDIES IN ACTIVIST CRIMINOLOGY

Series Editors: Vicky Canning (University of Bristol), Greg Martin (University of Sydney) and Steve Tombs (The Open University)

Emerald Studies in Activist Criminology is a platform working to identify and address the harms of criminalisation and expansive social controls. It draws together academics, activists, progressive policy-makers, and practitioners to encourage cutting-edge engagement on topics to effect positive social change.

The historical relationships between criminology and activism are contentious. Since criminology in its administrative forms can facilitate increases in state and cultural controls, and was formed within this nexus of social order, the discipline is often complicit in acting on behalf of states and state corporate collaborators. Critical criminology and zemiology, by contrast, have nurtured conditions under which power and hierarchy can be more fully addressed from radical perspectives, specifically in challenging state-centric focuses on crimes of the powerless. It is from these positions that *Emerald Studies in Activist Criminology* encourages engagement with those working against the negative impacts of crime controls on the lives of intersectionally disadvantaged groups in society.

Emerald Studies in Activist Criminology seeks to examine the history of both recent and more established justice campaigns and interventions. It extends across a range of pre-existing sub-fields of criminology that engage in questions of effecting progressive change through activism, such as feminist criminology, juvenile justice, migrant rights, corporate and state crime, green/environmental criminology, sentencing and wrongful conviction, prisons, corrections and abolitionism, and justice for victim/survivors of harm and crime. Campaigns and movements – defensive and progressive – around these issues define what we mean by ‘activist’, while we view ‘criminology’ in its broadest, interdisciplinary and social science-inflected version.

Emerald Studies in Activist Criminology

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United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India – Malaysia – China

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The editors and contributors are to be congratulated for providing an urgent and much needed critical response to the global politics of harm and the local practices of violence that swirl around, in and through our collective psyches and our interdependent humanity. This Handbook is an indispensable criminological resource for activists, academics, policy professionals and students of justice.

—**Bruce A. Arrigo, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, USA**

This groundbreaking book sets the tone for the criminological debate, making it clear that science can no longer be understood in isolation from social change. Crime, punishment and social control shape the lives of the most vulnerable sections of society, and their voices demand to be included in any transformative project that genuinely seeks to overturn existing injustices. The book raises this demand from a decolonial and intersectional perspective that includes Indigenous, abolitionist, transfeminist and Southern perspectives that make clear that Western-centred solutions are neither epistemically nor empirically sufficient to promote real transformation.

—**Valeria Vegh Weis, Researcher, Konstanz University, Germany**

This Handbook constitutes a fundamental milestone and essential reading for all those in the criminological field who, beyond traditional views, claim a style of knowledge production politically committed to the current struggles for transformation and social justice.

—**Máximo Sozzo, National University of Litoral, Argentina**

The Emerald International Handbook of Activist Criminology is a timely collection of cutting-edge contributions by established and emerging activist researchers and advocates. These are bold and creative interventions from a range of diverse perspectives, all unified with the common objective of resisting the epistemic violence of a discipline traditionally tethered to state and increasingly corporate research agendas that continue to be implicated in and directly reproduce social injustice, violence and harm. Together, they compose a bold and comprehensive response to a frequently asked question: should criminology be abolished? This book is an important, instructional and heartening manual for the growing number of radically oriented and activist researchers struggling on the margins of the discipline to build meaningful community, solidarity and intervention that result in genuine structural change and the dismantling of injustice and social harm.

—**Bree Carlton, University of Melbourne, Australia**

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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Foreword

By Onwubiko Agozino
Virginia Tech

Abstract

This Foreword looks at the book, *The Emerald International Handbook of Activist Criminology*, and sees the formulation of innovative theories, their application, and the contributions of critical scholar-activism in transforming society in pursuit of a decolonised world with a counter-colonial future. The Foreword appreciates the radical critiques of mainstream criminology by critical activist thinkers who contribute to an understanding of the relationship between colonial experience and criminology. The Foreword considers the relevance of Africana, abolitionist, Indigenous knowledge systems to activist criminology. The Foreword prescribes the ‘committed objectivity’ approach to race–class–gender criminology investigations to come to terms with imperialistic and neo-colonialist criminologists who are even more activists in service to the state. The Foreword concludes that *The Emerald International Handbook of Activist Criminology* should be required reading for all criminologists.

Keywords: Africana; Abolitionism; reparative; classroom; decolonisation; Indigenous

Introduction

From the perspective of colonised Indigenous peoples, women and the poor worldwide, activist criminology has always been a paradigm in the field, though it was marginalised by control-freak conventional criminology (Agozino, 2010). It is welcome to see efforts by eminent colleagues to excavate and or renew the history of the ideas and practices that constitute the scholar-activist paradigm in criminology. It is a huge honour for me to be invited to write a Foreword for a book like this. Without spoiling the contents for those yet to read the book, I will offer an introduction to activism in criminology, show the similarities with scholar-activism in Africana Studies, highlight activist contributions from scholars outside criminology, and conclude with the practical implications of activist

scholarship as a necessity in a conservative field like criminology dominated by right-wing activists.

The Emerald International Handbook of Activist Criminology (henceforth, *Activist Criminology*) has chapters by eminent scholars specifying the Activist Criminology Methods, ‘artivism’ or collaborations between artists and scholar-activists, the role of cultural criminology in activism, defense of human rights by violence scholars in Brazil, the criminalisation of civil rights activism in Nigeria, and the deadly consequences of the militarisation of borders. Other chapters focus on the use of sports intervention among the youth in Italy, the history of the British Prisoners Strike of 1972, and one on why some critical criminologists resolve the contradiction between working as an agent paid by the state and critiquing the state at the same time, by quitting their day job as Frantz Fanon did in colonised Algeria, to have more time for activism and to preserve their ‘integrity’.

Earlier abolitionist struggles against slavery, the movement for universal suffrage, the decolonisation movement, revolutionary struggles for social justice, the civil rights revolution, the anti-apartheid movement, the right to reproductive health care, the recognition of marriage equality, the Black Lives Matter, Bring Back Our Girls, the legalisation of marijuana, and the #EndSARS movements by people of African descent, Indigenous peoples, women and the poor, and their allies worldwide, represent centuries of successful track-records in activist criminology that all criminologists should be required to study to deepen their knowledge of the politics of deviance and social control. Abolitionism has won far too many struggles to be ignored by criminology which still obsesses with the penal turn (Garland, 1990). Even when the harms done are not always recognised as crimes under the imperialist reason of conventional criminology (Agozino, 2003), Zemiologists insist that they should be addressed by criminologists for the possibility of harm reduction and for a more humane world (Canning & Tombs, 2021).

Activism Relevant to Criminology

Angela Davis (1981, 2003, 2005) theorised that prisons are obsolete and called for a more humane world to be imagined and struggled for by intellectual activists in alliance with progressive forces around the world. Given that militarised policing and the prison industrial complex never existed in Africa and in most Indigenous communities until they were imposed as part of the race–class–gender discriminatory repressive fetishes of European conquest and domination, the example of how people of African descent and Indigenous peoples resisted these institutions can be seen as paradigmatic for activist criminology (Agozino, 2020; Blagg & Anthony, 2019; Cunneen & Tauri, 2016). Scholar-activism is the preferred paradigm in Africana Studies (Agozino, 2016; Asante, 2007; Christian, 2007; Ker-shaw, 2007) and criminologists can learn from the suitability of this paradigm for the study of all systems of oppression and to change the world for the better.

Activist criminology encourages scholars to take up the challenge of Angela Davis and imagine a more humane world without prisons, without the police, without racism, without sexism, without imperialism, without poverty, without homophobia, and without genocide and ecocide. These ideologies were recent

impositions by the capitalismocene ruling classes and they can be abolished along with racist-imperialist patriarchy for the benefit of humanity. Unfortunately, sociologists and criminologists who are fond of citing *The Sociological Imagination* by C. W. Mills (2000) tend to find it difficult to imagine an end to racism, sexism, and imperialism. This is, perhaps, because Mills himself ignored racism and sexism while focusing only on poverty in his imaginary sociology of white men with the emphasis on what he called the *Power Elites*, who apparently determined every social change while the poor are supposedly always manipulated and exploited, but not a word about the civil rights revolution raging while he was writing about the sociological imagination of elite white men.

The editors of *Activist Criminology* introduce the book by calling for criminologists to shun the pretense of value-neutrality and boldly push for a

politically engaged research aiming to remedy not only the absence of meaningful state intervention in crime and harm but also expose the role of corporations and the state itself in prosecuting and perpetuating crime and harm.

This approach is widespread across the world because of the interconnected challenges and crises that imperialism created and sustains. But criminologists tend to wrongly see the imperialist state and powerful corporations as the police officers and judges of the world, when they are active participants in harm causation, calling for activist intellectuals to hold such abuses of powers accountable. Criminological knowledge is vulnerable to abuse unless criminologists go beyond explaining the facts of crime and punishment to also oppose the absolute abuse of absolute power. Surely, criminologists should not abandon the task of mobilising, organising, and speaking truth to power exclusively to investigative journalists, creative writers, musicians, and historians?

I completely endorse the warning of contributors to *Activist Criminology* that researchers should be wary of the seductions of value-free mythologies that do not exist in reality contrary to the misapplications of Max Weber to suggest neutrality as the criterion for objectivity when Weber (1949, p. 42) explicitly rejected by observing that topics chosen and writing priorities are always the ones the authors find to be ‘value-relevant’ given that social scientists have vested interests in the societies they study. I am pleased to note that the authors cite my view on this (Agozino, 2020) to remind activist intellectuals that the discoveries we make in our research cannot be dismissed as Left Idealism by Left Realism given that racism–sexism–imperialism exist as articulated systems of power that beg for further decolonisation through scholar-activism. In other words, intellectual activism has shown that existing systems of injustice have been successfully challenged and sometimes ended by scholars, communities, and activists working together as Frantz Fanon (1963), Nelson Mandela (1994), Chinua Achebe (2012), and Herbert Ekwe-Ekwe (2019) exemplified, but mainly from outside the field of criminology. The book, *Activist Criminology*, demonstrates that there is a rich tradition of activism for social justice within the field of criminology and I concur without any need to rehash the evidence the authors marshalled.

Committed Objectivity

The fact that activists are committed against injustice does not mean that they are biased, and the fact that conventional researchers are committed to maintaining the status quo does not mean that they lack commitment either. I call this approach ‘committed objectivity’ to encourage all intellectuals to be open about what their commitments are and what their objectivity refers to so that the society can hold all intellectuals accountable. To me, objectivity does not mean the absence of positionality but the exploration of positions taken without obfuscation, obscuring, or distorting opposition (Agozino, 2003; 2018).

As Assata Zerai (2002) demonstrated outside criminology, intellectual activism can be practiced in the classroom by designing the class policy to be inclusive with respect for diversity and equity, for example. For many different reasons, students tend to request for extensions to assignment deadlines. To be fair to those who submitted on time and to mentor all on the values of the prompt meeting of deadlines, some instructors impose penalties for late submissions. Activist criminology indirectly invites us to reconsider the practice of punishment in our classes and consider abolishing deadlines which can be replaced with lifelines to the mutual satisfaction of both instructors and students. Penal Abolitionism should be extended to the classroom though many school districts still allow corporal punishment in the USA and Africa (Agu & Ibe, 2020). Even banks give up to seven days of grace before interests are charged on late payments; but students need to learn that there are firm deadlines for the submission of applications and conference proposals, the semester does come to an end eventually and the game clock stops. Perhaps those who meet the deadline can be given the choice to resubmit. Since corporal punishment has been abolished in most schools and the powerful corporations and abusive state powers are rarely punished for the harms they cause, criminologists should be activists for reparative justice, especially in the classroom and also beyond the boundaries of the classroom, to embrace the demand for ‘reparative justice’ by people of African descent for the harms of hundreds of years of enslavement and colonisation to be addressed through reparative rather than through punitive justice (Agozino, 2001a and 2021b).

Scholar-activism can also be incorporated into course designs by requiring students to volunteer with relevant organisations and report back what they learned beyond the boundaries of the classroom. Students may opt to help organisations that advocate on behalf of prisoners to raise funds by organising a hunger-strike simulation 24-hour fasting with water and donating the money saved on food to such organisations; while learning what it might feel like to go on hunger-strike in prison, and also understanding their own bodies better.

In research, activist criminology is found in methodologies that allow scholars to advocate and participate in movements designed to achieve a more humane world. Even at the risk of losing ‘credibility’, a few scholars have defied the moral panic and openly advocated for the legalisation of marijuana for medical uses and recreation without being criminalised (Agozino, 2003, 2018). This is slowly becoming the law of the land around the world just as the abolition of the death penalty is associated by some with reducing the brutalisation of the conscience

of society by the murderous punitive state that spares the rich and kills the poor, especially the poor people of colour (Greenberg & Agozino, 2013; King, 1978). Stan Cohen (1988) rejected such made-for-export criminology and called for more activist scholarship especially in the face of a system of oppression like apartheid that he witnessed and loathed as a child. The struggle to make the world a better place continues and criminologists have a role to play in this raging global struggle.

Activist criminologists may be relatively few but there is indeed a lot of criminological activism that criminologists should pay attention to out there. Musicians have produced lyrics that sound like criminological texts and Stephen Pfohl (1994) cited such lyrics at the top of his chapters in *Images of Deviance and Social Control* in a way similar to the prefacing of chapters in *The Souls of Black Folk* by Du Bois (1903). The work of Paul Robeson, Fela Kuti, Nina Simone, Bob Marley, Peter Tosh, Miriam Makeba, Mighty Sparrow, Victor Jara, Stevie Wonder, Tupac Shakur, Alpha Blondy, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Mzwakhe Mbuli, Hugh Masekela, Sonny Okosun, Thomas Mapfumo, Bob Dylan, Mutabaruka, and countless others, should be required listening for all criminologists especially the activist criminologists who should not be shy to cite such work among their sources (Hall & Jefferson, 1989).

Activist criminology is also noticeable in the field of policy formulation by challenging repressive policies but also by formulating policies that the people themselves could implement. By running free medical clinics and providing free breakfast for children in poor communities, the Black Panther Party innovated the school meal program (Brown, 1992). They also indirectly taught the people the importance of being armed with breakfast to help reduce the violence in the community since a hungry person tends to be an angry person. Criminology is yet to recognise these kinds of activism as contributions to the field itself, contrary to the advocacy of Belknap (2015) or the demand by Feagin, Vera, and Ducey (2015) that we should go beyond Public Sociology and aim for *Liberation Sociology* and by extension, liberation criminology (Agozino, 2020; Agozino & Ducey, 2020). There is no reason why all the recommendations from researchers should be directed at the state and powerful corporations when citizen intellectuals and community organisers have proven that we can help to deepen democracy by also making recommendations beyond the state forces (Agozino, 2003, 2018).

Conclusion

Students ask and are entitled to know what the job potentials of interest in activist criminology would look like. This is required in the UK and elsewhere under the guise of ‘employability’, aiming to embed skills and abilities sought by ‘employers’ and to ensure that students are exposed to all the potential jobs relevant to their education. This raises the question, given the perpetual crises of the economy and precarious job conditions, would students not be disadvantaged in the job market if they subscribe to activist criminology? This question can be answered by inviting students to say if they know many unemployed activist criminologists, an oxymoron. All the chapters in *Activist Criminology* are written

by colleagues whose jobs are relatively secure, including a still very young Emeritus Professor, among the editors.

The question of the *Uses of Literacy* (Hoggart, 1957) and *Learning to Labour* (Willis, 1981) or why working-class kids get working-class jobs, and everyone lets them, are old questions that remain relevant. Jude the Obscure, stonemason of Thomas Hardy and Macbeth-Raeburn (2014), who only dreamt the ‘unrealistic’ dream of university education, can now afford to gain admission to universities and graduate at huge costs in terms of scary loans for fees and all of that, but without an attractive job prospect. The pressure is to apply university courses more than the theoretical one, even though theoretical contributions tend to be more influential in every field of study than applied job training. However, conventional criminologists are also activists but in service to the dominant interests of racist, imperialist, and patriarchy. It is not only activist criminologists that practice activism. There are right-wing activists and left-wing activists in every discipline.

Since most criminologists are conservative activists, being a progressive activist criminologist may carve a niche in academia for some enough to be in demand, often with initiative from students and colleagues to bring in more critical contributions. This was the way students successfully demanded the creation of Black Studies programs in elite institutions in the United States with the support of community allies (Asante, 2007). However, activist criminology is not about job training. Graduates tend to change jobs every so often and what the universities can provide are generalisable skills like critical thinking and theoretical rigour. No matter what work scholars and activists do, this book suggests that the question of how the work could contribute to the making of a more humane world should be a prerequisite. This is especially so in a field like criminology that contributes to the education of future law enforcement officers who could use their discretion and awareness of activist criminology to refuse discriminatory enforcement of the law. Others could become journalists or creative writers specialising in crime stories. It is ‘weird’, as Stephen Pfohl put in in his wonderful foreword to Agozino, 2003) when criminologists start questioning activism against injustice when they should join in the activism against injustice. *Activist Criminology* should be a required text and course in criminology for the benefit of all students. It should not be optional, in keeping with the Baker clause.

Above all, activism against injustice is not full of threats, woes, and troubles for scholars and intellectuals who choose this path. It is often fulfilling work that is done with the feeling of the ‘thrilling’ tale of Moses walking down to old Pharaoh and telling him to let my people go, as Martin Luther King Jr. (1986) observed in his Nobel Peace Prize lecture and as the first man on the moon, Louis Armstrong, Paul Robeson, Sweet Honey From the Rock, among many others, baritone with big smiles. Any glance at photographs and videos of protest marches will show lots of gumboot dancing, singing, smiling, posing, despite the ever-present threat and experience of violence from the authorities or opposing right-wing activists. Yes, critical scholars do get picked on and sometimes are jailed, maimed, or killed but some conservative scholars also face cliques that turn against them and whenever European masses were mobilised to fight for unjust causes, millions of

them paid with their lives, especially during the two imperialist tribal world wars over which imperialist power would have more colonies in Africa (Du Bois, et al, 1951; Luxemburg, 2016).

The activist attitude to the job is to understand that most criminologists, including activist criminologists, are privileged members of the petit bourgeoisie. We are not the oppressed illiterate peasants of Paulo Freire (2007) who dreamt of becoming landlords to get a chance to oppress other peasants. Most criminologists enjoy the work of contributing, no matter how modest, towards ideas and activism that advance freedom and humanity. Such progressive achievements would be a thing of joy to anyone who is not a mean sado-masochist with the knowledge and power to do otherwise.

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Editors' Introduction

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Chapter 1

Why ‘Activist Criminology’, Why Now?

Victoria Canning, Greg Martin and Steve Tombs

Abstract

This chapter provides a context for *The Emerald International Handbook of Activist Criminology*. It offers an overview of the small, yet burgeoning literature dedicated to ‘criminology activism’, which includes engagement with public criminology and various brands of critical criminology, as well as zemiology or the study of social harm beyond narrow state-centric definitions of crime. Among other things, the chapter considers the role academics might play in addressing social and criminal injustice, and the new opportunities afforded to both academics and activists – including citizen journalists and media professionals – by digital technologies and social media when intervening in campaigns for justice and formal criminal legal processes. To answer the question, why now, the chapter argues we are currently in the midst of an unprecedented period of upheaval requiring action from activists and academics alike, including criminologists engaged in social scientific research operating beyond the delusions of objectivity and value-neutrality, that is, politically engaged research aiming to remedy not only the absence of meaningful state intervention in crime and harm but also expose the role of corporations and the state itself in prosecuting and perpetuating crime and harm.

Keywords: Activism; protest; public criminology; social justice; social media; zemiology

Introduction

Every generation appears to have good reason to present itself as most in need of radical social transformation. Activist struggles are embedded in multiple and

international histories: from slavery abolition to suffrage, from ‘save the whales’ of the 1980s to ‘save the planet’ of the now, activism has been a central aspect of challenging dominant power structures in the struggles towards social justice and rights-based developments. We are now, however, in an era of unprecedented social change. The age of the Anthropocene has shifted how we can seriously imagine our collective futures, not only on national scales but also in the context of planetary survival. Simultaneously, exacerbations in wars and conflicts, as well as increased numbers of, and pressing needs for the very survival of, climate refugees, has been accompanied by the militarisation of borders, reducing the rights of refugees, and calling for nuanced forms of civil resistance.

Although interventions and campaigning have long been present across the social sciences, including the discipline of criminology, in recent years criminal justice activism has taken new directions and arguably gathered momentum, especially with the advent of digital technologies and social media. These have made it easier than ever for ordinary citizens and professional journalists alike to comment on perceived injustices and potentially intervene in formal criminal justice processes. Controversy often surrounds such interventions, as citizen journalists and media professionals are not ostensibly subject to the same strictures of process and procedure (e.g. in respect of evidence gathering) as police, lawyers, and judicial officers. Nevertheless, some campaigns and interventions have successfully uncovered injustices and wrongs prosecuted by states, their officials, and their corporate allies. As with other interventions, these do not necessarily involve novel issues and concerns. However, they do sometimes come to light as a consequence of the increasing ease of exposing injustices in the digital age.

From a criminological lens, technological advances have also reformulated and restructured how we experience the world, opening not only opportunities for more forms of harms and crimes to be enacted, but innovative acts of resistance to develop in response. Campaigns such as #BlackLivesMatter, #MeToo and #BringBackOurGirls, all in the wake of the Arab Spring and Occupy movements influenced both positive engagement with a complex form of globalised activism, while exposing the stark inequalities which pervade society generally, and resistance movements specifically.

When we came to develop this Handbook, we did so recognising the strengths and limitations of both terms, *activist* and *criminology*. ‘Activism’ is not a term that is either monolithically understood, or even necessarily welcomed. During the course of developing the Emerald book series on activist criminology, we received mixed responses from colleagues across many fields to this signifier. For some, activism had no place in academia, a space some strives for ‘objectivity’. For others, terms such as solidarity or resistance were preferable, even if they have disparate and regionally specific meanings themselves. Indeed, even the term ‘activism’ or ‘activist’ is increasingly – and we would argue deliberately – being pejoratively categorised as unreasonable or naïvely radical. We often see this portrayal in response to environmental activists, as with the contemporary ‘Stop Oil Now’ interventions in Europe, and the demonisation of ‘activist lawyers’ who have been challenging the legal status of various offshoring endeavours, including the Rwanda Deal (to send people seeking asylum to camps in Rwanda for

offshore processing) in the UK and Denmark, or the treatment of refugees on Nauru or Manus Island with the complicity of the Australian government (see [Martin, 2019b](#)). Indeed, activists are increasingly targeted by both states and corporations, with laws against protest tightening in many regions just as the need for protest and activism increases. In a Weberian way, states are indeed enacting ever more stringent controls when their power is slipping or directly challenged ([Tilly, 1985](#)).

Further, the choice of situating this Handbook within 'criminology' is similarly contentious – and, we add, potentially problematic ([Canning & Tombs, 2021](#)). As with the use of activism, we as editors did not (indeed, still do not!) agree this is exclusively the best discipline within which the issues raised in this collection are dealt with. For Victoria in particular, criminology brings its own limitations by reproducing state-centric notions of crime and centralising law and legality in its framing. This disconnect stems back to longer-running debates around social harm and zemiology, which arguably facilitates a more holistic approach to problems people face from the cradle to the grave ([Hillyard & Tombs, 2004](#)) without limiting to criminocentric agendas ([Canning & Tombs, 2021](#)).

Yet, in many ways, and as Greg and Steve particularly contended as we developed this edited collection, there is indeed much to be gained from developing this Handbook from a critical criminological approach. Most notable is that it allows us to think critically about the disjuncture between harms caused by criminalisation and criminal justice at a time when activism is increasingly being met by the iron fist of the law. Relatedly, it allows us to further document the patterned presences and absences of law and enforcement in relation to the harms perpetrated or facilitated by the powerful – and in so doing contribute to the challenge to the claims around the rule of law and due process upon which the whole legal edifice of bourgeois capitalism is based. Meanwhile, restrictive laws and practices proliferate, challenging activism and resistance in newly punitive ways, and for that, there requires a criminological scope, whatever our disciplinary preference (see also [Vegh Weis, 2021](#)).

Accordingly, *The Emerald International Handbook of Activist Criminology* seeks to examine the history of both recent and more established justice campaigns and interventions. Containing contributions from Africa, Australasia, Europe, and North and South America it addresses a range of pre-existing sub-fields of criminology that engage in questions of effecting change through activism, such as feminist criminology, juvenile justice, migrant rights, corporate and state crime, indigenous rights, green/environmental criminology, sentencing and wrongful conviction, prisons, corrections and abolitionism, and justice for victim/survivors of harm and crime. Other contributions explore the contemporary terrain around new and emergent issues and forms of activism, such as those involving digital technologies and social media (which often provide new means of addressing old issues), and offer cutting-edge conceptualisation of methods, critical ethics studies, and activist engagement. To begin, we pick up on some of the themes in the small but growing literature focused specifically on 'activist criminology' or 'criminology activism', interest in which was sparked by Joanne Belknap's Presidential Address to the American Society of Criminology in 2014.

The Development of Activist Criminology and Criminological Activism

In her 2014 speech, subsequently published as a journal article, [Belknap \(2015, p. 5\)](#) defines *activist criminology* as ‘one of criminologists engaging in social and/or legal justice at the individual, organisational, and/or policy levels, which goes beyond typical research, teaching, and service’. The mention of legal justice *and* social justice is significant insofar as ‘social justice is key to legal justice’ ([Belknap, 2015, p. 5](#)). That is to say, and as many criminologists are at pains to continually emphasise, access to basic needs like decent housing, health care, and education impacts directly on criminal legal outcomes.

A key theme of the speech is [Belknap’s \(2015, p. 4\)](#) concern to show how scholars might use their academic privilege to engage in activist research, teaching, and service, which are areas of paid and unpaid work that ‘often interconnect very symbiotically’. However, she says that as criminology (like other academic disciplines) has been dominated by middle-class white men, diversified representation of scholars, especially in terms of race and gender, is needed to ‘provide a lens that more accurately reflects what we study’ ([Belknap, 2015, p. 5](#)). Implicit in this call is for the inclusion of scholars with life experiences of the criminal legal system, including so-called convict criminologists who have been imprisoned, as well as an attendant critique of scientific ‘objectivity’. Indeed, perspectives placing at their centre the emotions of lived experiences are not regarded as biased but as both *valid* and *valuable* – as [David Goyes \(2016, p. 13\)](#) puts it in his contribution to the special issue of *Critical Criminology* that was inspired by Belknap’s call for more criminological activism – and ‘whose central purpose is to link the question of academic activism to its everyday, communal, worldwide, and/or environmental struggles for justice’ ([Arrigo, 2016, p. 469](#)).

In his contribution to that special edition, [Goyes \(2016, p. 505\)](#) notes not only the impossibility of neutrality upon which Western practices of science have been predicated – on which more below – but also that the ‘[p]ursuit of the ideal of a pure and objective science has resulted in many atrocities to humans, non-humans and ecosystems’. Instead, [Goyes \(2016, p. 514\)](#) uses examples from Latin America to propose a ‘green criminology activism’ drawing on epistemologies of the South and Southern Theories, which privilege the voices of those most affected by environmental harms, including rural people and indigenous communities whose perceptions of victimisation ‘are taken as valid knowledge’. To [Goyes \(2016, p. 514\)](#), such an approach requires we do not limit our analysis narrowly to what is officially defined by the state as ‘crime’ but develop a ‘harm perspective’, which includes serious situations that often deprive people of their potential and create cultures of silence restricting possibilities for contesting green harms. Ultimately, the knowledge produced by green activist criminology that is provided by insights from epistemologies of the Global South aims to achieve ‘cognitive justice’ – grounded in emotions and values but able to produce valid and valuable ways of knowing.

At this point, we should note the resonance that Goyes’ arguments have with [Eyerman and Jamison’s \(1991\)](#) general theory of the ‘cognitive praxis’ of social

movements, which they see as focused fundamentally on knowledge-producing activities, spreading knowledge interests, or diffusing consciousness (see also A. Sargin, this volume). Goyes' stress on the fallacy of neutrality also resonates with Max Weber's (1949) and later Canning and Tombs (2021) view that all social scientific research is 'value-relevant' insofar as sociologists are inevitably guided by their values or will make value judgements when choosing topics to research for their 'ethical interest'. The place of emotions in collective action – including when emotions are suppressed in favour of rational-scientific arguments as in the case of some animal rights activists (McAllister Groves, 2001) – also forms part of the social movements literature on 'passionate politics', which has been heavily influenced by James Jasper's (1997, p. 106) idea that 'moral shocks' generate 'such a sense of outrage in a person that she becomes inclined towards political action'.

Reference to awareness-raising following the line of Eyerman and Jamison is also made by Kramer (2016) in his contribution to the *Critical Criminology* special issue on academic activism when he talks of criminologists needing to speak in the 'prophetic voice' when drawing attention to harms perpetrated by states and corporations. Following Cohen (2001), Kramer argues that this is especially important given the propensity (and, we would add, ability) of states and corporations to deny the crimes they commit. Belknap (2016, p. 569) acknowledges her omission in not referring to 'public criminology' in her speech, though to Kramer what she is advocating for is essentially a form of public criminology akin to what Loader and Sparks (2011, pp. 33–34) call 'social movement theorist/activist' public criminology, which seeks to be autonomous of government agendas in joining with campaigns to end discrimination and promote social justice as well as help develop alternative visions of delivering justice.

This is not to suggest that these were the first contributions to activism that are relevant to criminology, far from it. For generations, feminists the world over have drawn attention to forms of social silencing which embed and accentuate unequal gendered power dynamics, and the harms these entail. In particular, second-wave feminists adopted and embellished consciousness-raising as a mechanism by which women could begin to vocalise and put words to abuses that otherwise have been so socially stigmatising, and so deeply impactful, that the alternative – silence – is often preferable (see D'Avolio, Pessoa Cavalcanti, & Dadusc, *in press*; Jones & Cook, 2008; see also D. R. Goyes, this volume on pedagogy and knowledge sharing). Sharing one's own truth and experience has been fundamental acts of resistance and a challenge to powerlessness. It is a strategy that can be also used to highlight the endemic nature of inequalities and social harms which some people face intersectionally, as we will see in Canning and Matthew's chapter in relation to refugee rights and the Right to Remain Asylum Navigation Board as a tool for knowledge sharing and mutual support (this volume). Similar strategies have facilitated increased recognition of the politics of prison abolitionism, in particular within Black and working-class communities most affected by high rates of imprisonment (see T. Anthony & V. Chartrand, this volume; Davis, Dent, Meiners, & Richie, 2022).

Important also is the need for activist criminology to recognise that these long-established and multifaceted methods continue to be relevant to contemporary

aspects of documenting and intervening in injustice internationally. At the time of writing, campaigns are being waged by women in Iran, after the death of 22-year-old Kurdish woman Mahsa Amini in the custody of state morality police, leading also to protests internationally. Activism is increasingly used in public space to draw attention to state and corporate targeting of climate and environmental activists. The interconnection between state injustices, harms and legal violations, and the campaigns to challenge them, become ever more imbued with criminological concerns as those who speak up are increasingly surveilled, targeted and indeed criminalised (see [Vegh Weis, 2021](#)).

Intersections in Public and Activist Criminologies

In this way, public criminology also echoes the aim of ‘public sociology’ ([Burawoy, 2005](#)), namely to engage with audiences and the public beyond academia. In relation to state crime, [Kramer \(2016\)](#) shows how public criminology might assume the form either of *traditional* public criminology or *organic* public criminology. Traditional public criminology involves academics engaging in critical questioning through publications and holding public events intended to address audiences outside academia as well as engagement with various kinds of media. By contrast, organic public criminology, like [Loader and Sparks \(2011\)](#) conception of social movement theorist/activist public criminology,

involves criminologists working directly with specific groups, organizations, social movements or state officials, engaging in a dialogue or a process of mutual education that may or may not lead to specific political actions or policies related to the prevention or control of state crime. ([Kramer, 2016](#), p. 521)

This conception of criminological activism involving work with counter-hegemonic groups of all shapes and sizes is similar to what has recently been referred to as ‘movement law’, which diverges from traditional ways of conceiving of law and social movements and movement lawyering since it is concerned to ‘create space within legal scholarship to think alongside social movements’ ([Akbar, Ashar, & Simonson, 2021](#), p. 826). In so doing, movement law has developed a distinctive ‘scholarly method’, which ‘approaches scholarly thinking and writing about law, justice, and social change as work done in solidarity with social movements, local organising, and other forms of collective struggle’ ([Akbar et al., 2021](#), p. 826).

Echoing [Eyerman and Jamison \(1991\)](#) arguments about the cognitive praxis of social movements, movement law seeks to disrupt existing ideas and develop new understandings in solidarity with those who have lived experience of inequality and of movement work and grassroots organising ([Akbar et al., 2021](#), pp. 868–869). However, while collaborating with social movements is key to movement law, like traditional public criminology, it does not shun academia, with legal scholarship regarded vital for propagating new ideas and telling new stories derived from inquiries ranging ‘from close, critical analysis of movement