

# Critical Criminology: Past, Present, and Future

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## **Abstract**

*Through the years, criminologists have studied crime and devised approaches to dealing with issues associated in an effort to further justice and equality. The desire for crime control is growing along with the fear of crime in the contemporary neoliberal and conservative environment. Some academics contend that critical criminology, which has a non-state-centric approach, is essential to truly achieving justice and equality, whereas administrative criminologists develop policies within the legal framework.*

*The purpose of this essay is to assess critical criminology's past, present, and future. The history of critical criminology is discussed in the first part, along with its goals and objectives. In order to clearly demonstrate the risk of injustice when mainstream criminology restricts itself to the legal framework of crime and loses its independence when working with government agencies, the second and third sections explore two cases, the war on terror and COVID-19. Critical criminology, in contrast to conventional criminology, focuses on social damage, highlighting a wider variety of issues and victimisation. Critical criminology also provides a counter-voice to those in authority. Finally, this study explores the difficulties facing critical criminology and considers how it could advance going forward to pursue its aims of genuine equality and justice.*

## **Introduction**

Criminologists through ages have conducted their research in the area of crime and developed strategies to address crime-related problems in order to pursue justice and equality. In the current neoliberal and conservative climate, the fear of crime and the demand for crime control are rising. While administrative criminologists formulate policies within the legal framework, some scholars suggest that critical criminology, which adopts a non-state-centric perspective, is crucial to fundamentally achieve justice and equality. It is more important in modern society where the state power concerning crime control is rising (Young 2013, 271).

This article aims to evaluate the past, present, and future of critical criminology. The first section introduces the development of critical criminology, and explores its role and values. The second and third section examine two examples - the war on terror and COVID-19 - to clearly illustrate the risk of injustice when mainstream criminology confines itself to the legal framework of crime, and loses its independence while collaborating with government agencies. In contrast to mainstream criminology,

critical criminology deals with social harm, identifying a broader range of problems and victimisation. Moreover, critical criminology offers a counter-voice towards those in power (authorities). Society requires someone to stand by the underprivileged side, especially when the state's power is rising. Lastly, this article delves into the challenges of critical criminology and discusses how it could develop in the future to strive for its goal - real equality and justice.

## **Critical Criminology**

### **The Development of Critical Criminology**

In the nineteenth century, positivist criminologists started to introduce scientific methods in the research of criminal behaviour, with an effort to figure out the causes of crime and how to deal with them (Beirne and Messerschmidt 2014). In the decades following the Second World War, penal-welfare policies were the mainstream approach towards crime in Western countries. However, since the 1960s, the collective experience of fear and anger of crime has impacted the general public and created a 'crime complex' (Garland 2000). The shift of people's attitude toward crime derived from complicated mechanisms, including the prevalence of populism, the increase of victimisation, the influence of media, and the transformation of the middle-class lifestyle. From then on, penal policies have become more punitive, with lesser concerns on the rehabilitation of offenders and more on punishment with the aid of prisons.

While punitive strategies seemed to work and successfully increased the incarceration rate, some scholars began to question the relation between crime and race, with official statistics indicating that the state disproportionately targeted minorities (Muhammad 2019). Inspired by Marxism, these scholars emphasised class-based disparities and were devoted to revealing and correcting inequalities caused by problematic crime policies (Sokoloff and Burgess-Proctor 2011). Rejecting the official definition of crime, Taylor, Walton and Young (1973) published 'The New Criminology' to explore a social theory of deviance. Then, this new field was termed 'critical criminology' two years later (Taylor, Walton, and Young 1975).

In the next few decades, critical criminology has since seen significant growth (Walton and Young 1998, vii). In this field, denying the ontological reality of crime became an influential perspective. Critical criminologists believe that the state and the privileged construct criminal offences to maintain the unfair social structure. The criminal justice system marginalises the underprivileged and 'produces criminals' to achieve social control (Jock Young 2013, 254-255). Studies in the field highly concern social and political inequalities among races, genders, and classes. In addition, 'states violence and crime committed by the powerful elites' are important research areas (McLaughlin 2011, 53). For critical criminologists, the key to crime problems is promoting social justice and solving the problematic social structure.

Thus, they reject mainstream crime measures, such as 'zero-tolerance policing', 'three-strikes sentencing', and 'private prisons' (Walter S DeKeseredy 2011, 7), which accelerates inequality. However, this position has drawn some criticisms, that will be analysed further down below.

Critical criminology aims to address crime problems radically and comprehensively. Instead of adopting the legal definition of crime, some critical criminologists adopt a broader concept - a 'social harm' or 'zemiological' perspective (Hillyard and Tombs 2007). This perspective suggests that the definition of crime includes social harms, injuries, public wrongs, and the violation of human rights (Schwendinger and Schwendinger 1970). Although 'harm' may also lack ontological reality (Hillyard et al. 2004, 20), the perspective has successfully broadened the field of criminology. Nowadays, topics about state crimes, environment, animals, and soon have attracted more and more attention. For example, in critical green criminology, some scholars may dig into the harm to the ecosystem and research environmental crime to advocate to governments to take action to reduce the pollution to the earth.

### **Defining Critical Criminology**

There is no single definition of critical criminology, it varies between sub-fields (Walter S DeKeseredy and Dragiewicz 2018). This article does not advocate any specific scholar's definition. Instead, it tries to adopt a wider perspective that highlights critical criminology's values. As Currie illustrated, 'what links [critical criminologists'] diverse perspectives is a willingness to apply a critical lens not only to the work of their more conventional counterparts in the discipline but their own as well' (Carrington and Hogg 2002, vii). In other words, the definition of critical criminology in this article refers to a broader group of critical and constructionist approaches. It is a perspective that stands against administrative criminology, positivism, correctionalism, and against the official definition and statistics of crime (Jock Young 2013, 253).

### **The Value of Critical Criminology**

The unique value of critical criminology is the reason it is a significant addition to the field of criminology. This section emphasises three qualities of critical criminology which the mainstream (or orthodox) criminology lacks: comprehensiveness, independence, and the position for the underprivileged.

#### ***Comprehensiveness***

Firstly, the denial of the ontology of crime enables critical criminology to deal with crime comprehensively. In contrast, accepting the state-centric definition of crime, orthodox criminology almost exclusively focuses on working-class crime (Chambliss,

Michalowski, and Kramer 2013, 5). This position may derive from natural science. As Chambliss et al. indicated:

One important prescription resulting from the application of the epistemology of natural science to social inquiry is that to be "scientific", social inquiry must be devoid of moral judgments. This became a potent barrier to criminological inquiry into state crime. The laws made by government are not the consequence of natural forces. They are, at their historical root, statements of the moral preferences of some versus those of others (Chambliss, Michalowski, and Kramer 2013, 4).

Influenced by the epistemological tools of natural science, administrative criminologists admit a neutral fact as crime enacted by the state. Nevertheless, 'an epistemology of social science that requires moral detachment from the subject matter being studied is an illusion' (Chambliss, Michalowski, and Kramer 2013, 4). Even a state has its own moral standpoints and serves its interests. As a result, administrative criminology may disproportionately focus on offenders of specific classes, and particularly on conventional crimes. On the other hand, it is often excessively lenient with offenders of other classes (Reiman and Leighton 2020). Intentionally or by default, it recognises and even supports the inequality, oppression and domination in an existing social structure (Weis 2017). In addition, mainstream criminology may fail to deal with multifaceted social problems if it confines itself to 'narrowly framed dimensions of crime and criminal justice' (Friedrichs and Vegh Weis 2021).

As for critical criminologists, they '[challenge] the apparent ontology of crime, revealing crime as a social product of political choice and human interaction, not an immutable fact' (Chambliss, Michalowski, and Kramer 2013, 5). Thus, their position allows them to scrutinise the inequality from a 'big picture' perspective. This perspective helps them identify biased legislations which are seemingly phrased in a language of formal equality. Their work focuses on indicating oppressive policies implemented in the name of the rule of order and the state. Moreover, they delve into issues of social harm, which can sometimes be more serious than legal crimes.

### ***Independence***

Independence is an essential quality for any academic field. In recent years, criminology has gained more and more resources from governments due to the need to address the increasing crime issues. It is beneficial not only because researchers gain funding and access to shaping policy, but also because it helps the development of the discipline (Ericson 2003). However, as the most influential sponsor, the state is able to dictate the direction of research. Criminology, therefore, runs the risk of turning into a 'wholly-owned subsidiary' of the government (Garland 2011, 308), which ultimately leads to the loss of academic independence.

On the other hand, critical criminology denies crimes' ontology and their legal definitions. This view point often keeps the field away from the interests of the authority and thus helps avoid the danger of academic freedom. The research area of critical criminologists is often far beyond what criminal justice systems see as crimes. On the contrary, administrative criminologists often gain support from the state and dedicate themselves to improving the efficiency of penal policies (Walter S. DeKeseredy and Schwartz 1996). To some extent, they are risking their research as power-knowledge serving a Foucauldian disciplinary state (Foucault 2020).

### ***The Position for the Underprivileged***

Finally, the value of critical criminology lies in how it provides a voice for those that are not often able to speak out. In the trend of neoliberalism and conservatism, the gap between the rich and poor becomes wider in this capitalist society. In recent years, the implication of major global events, such as terrorism and COVID-19, has led to the empowerment of governments. This may be necessary for the state to respond to urgent and tremendous challenges. However, as Lord Acton warned: "power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." While administrative criminologists work under the framework of the current legal system, the world needs someone to defend the rights and entitlements of the underprivileged and resist corruption. Thus, critical criminology is exceptionally valuable because 'it is the counter-voice to neoliberalism and conservatism' - the voice for the silent (Jock Young 2013, 259). In summary, these three qualities indicate the importance of critical criminology. In the following sections, this article introduces two topics of contemporary relevance to support this viewpoint.

## **War on Terror and Critical Criminology**

### **Terrorism and Counter-terrorism**

Since the September 11 attacks in 2001 in the US, terrorism has become a hot topic in Western countries. From then on, terrorist groups, such as Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), have dominated the news. The precise definition of terrorism remains contested, with more than two hundred versions (Jackson 2008). Overall, the different versions agree on three elements: political violence, communicative violence, and asymmetry of power (Innes and Levi 2017, 5). Namely, terrorist incidents are often launched by a relatively powerless group with a political intent to convey an intimidating message.

In response to the dire threat, strong counter-terrorism measures have been adopted worldwide. In the UK, legislation allowing indefinite detention called the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 (ATCSA) was introduced weeks after the September 11 attacks (though overturned by courts later) (Ahmed 2020, 71). Another example is section 58 of the Terrorism Act 2000, which is 'absurdly broad'

(Cornford 2017) by criminalising a person who 'collects or makes a record of information of a kind likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism.' In this offence, the possession of an article 'likely' to be used for terrorist activities is forbidden. The defendant has to provide reasonable excuses to the court to avoid criminal sanction.<sup>1</sup> In the US, Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001 empowered the government to conduct electronic surveillance Online to combat terrorism (Kerr 2002). More and more measures were taken to prevent terrorist attacks in the following years (Innes and Levi 2017, 11), with considerable resources allocated in the field.

### **War on Terror from the perspective of Critical Criminology**

The strategies adopted for counter-terrorism purposes can offer a unique insight into the differences between administrative and critical criminology. To address the problem, administrative criminologists may work as policy advisors to improve the counter-terrorism measures in government agencies. However, "administrative criminology" accounts have tended towards "abstracted empiricism", and have not highlighted enough the ways that state institutions have dictated the boundaries between categorisations' (Innes and Levi 2017, 3). On the other hand, critical criminologists explore the nature of terrorism and counter-terrorism under the legal definitions and examine whether the application of these counter-terrorism measures disproportionately targets the minorities. In the following paragraphs, the article adopts an analytical framework from a sub-field of critical criminology - constitutive criminology<sup>2</sup> - because the framework is clear enough to help understand the deconstruction of the war on terror (Ahmed 2020; Henry and Milovanovic 1991).

The framework explores events in relation to: 'discourse—legislation—policing—society—individual' (Ahmed 2014, 359). Thus, the starting point is the discourse used in the war on terror. '[O]nly when the word "war" fell from the lips of the president—"a war has been declared on America"—did the terrorist attack become political terrorism and then global terrorism' (Beck 2006, 139). As counter-terrorism is termed as a war, terrorists are viewed as enemies rather than criminals, military actions, namely killing, are justified, and the state naturally requires more power. Through the use of language, a dichotomy of the world between justice and evil is constructed, with Islam seen as a global threat and a mutual enemy (Ahmed 2014,

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<sup>1</sup>Theoretically, the burden of proof is on the prosecutor. However, this offence criminalises a person who is suspicious and requires him to provide reasons to excuse himself, which violates the general principles of criminal law.

<sup>2</sup> Constitutive criminology provides a non-state centric approach to critical perspectives. At the same time, it combines concepts from social construction, left realism, socialist feminism, post-structuralism, and social and critical legal theory (Henry and Milovanovic, 1991:294).

360). The process is precisely how Cohen (1972, 9) described the occurrence of moral panic.<sup>3</sup> The targeted people, mostly innocent, are labelled with serious stigma.

Moral panic and pseudo-disasters bring new legislations and policing, targeting the threat, which often restricts the freedoms and violates the right of due process (Stanley Cohen 1972). The state, the criminal justice system, the mass media, and the panicked citizens together create a vicious circle, with policies becoming harsher towards their enemy. Then, the boundary between police and military is eroded. The welfare state develops into the crimefare state, with the shift of focus from law and order to security politics (McCulloch 2004). All these changes affect the daily life of Muslim immigrants. They may face disproportionate investigations based on ethnic profiling and suffer from misuse of detention when deprived of the right to government-appointed counsel (Welch 2004, 5-9).

Terrorist attacks are indeed a severe problem that governments have to overcome. However, the critical perspective illustrates the dark side of counter-terrorism. In the name of national security, counter-terrorism measures may come with political and diplomatic or other purposes. The discourse of the war on terror may construct Islamophobia in society and deny the intrinsic diversity in Islamic culture. The construction of Islam's single identity as a threat is terribly unfair to the majority of the law-abiding group (Ahmed 2014, 366). In addition, the measures often require substantial expenditure but lack effectiveness (Welch 2004, 5-11). Lastly, what it leads to may not be the prevention of terrorist attacks but the suffering of innocent people, the waste of state resources, and the emotional rift between ethnic groups.

Above all, critical criminology offers a more comprehensive perspective to observe, analyse, and examine matters. In terms of the war on terror, critical research on counter-terrorism is of small quantity compared to studies delving into the explanation of terrorism itself (Innes and Levi 2017, 19). Nevertheless, as Gunning (2007, 392) indicated, 'terrorism and counter-terrorism measures kill and harm real people in real places'. Therefore, the critical perspective is crucial because it valuably reminds the authority and the general public that there are victims suffered from counter-terrorism measures.

## **COVID-19 and Critical Criminology**

### **COVID-19 and Administrative Criminology**

The world has changed drastically since the outbreak of the Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Scholars in various disciplines have conducted extensive research in response to the pandemic. In criminology and criminal justice, plenty of

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<sup>3</sup>Cohen (1972, 9) describes moral panic as 'a condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interest; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media and politicians.'

studies aim to guide the judicial and police systems to react quickly to the transformation (Piquero 2021; Rossner, Tait, and McCurdy 2021; Handika, Rahim, and Sudirdja 2020). For example, the implication of social distancing restrictions to different types of crimes, such as cybercrime (Horgan et al. 2021), domestic violence (Richards et al. 2021), gang-related crime (Jeffrey Brantingham, Tita, and Mohler 2021), firearm-related crime (Kim and Phillips 2021), etc., has caught the attention of researchers.

Indeed, these research topics are of great importance because it improves the efficiency of the criminal justice system and the maintenance of social stability. However, mainstream criminology often focuses on issues within the existing legal framework and fails to draw attention to the 'invisible crime' (Davies, Francis, and Wyatt 2014). Historically, it has unfairly emphasised crimes committed by the powerless (Reiman and Leighton 2020). Justice is incomplete (and sometimes even non-existent) without the voice of critical criminology.

### **COVID-19 from the Perspective of Critical Criminology**

Critical criminology recognises that crime occurs within the context of 'the larger political economy.' In modern capitalist society, this context includes the inequality between classes in the social, economic, and political aspects (Friedrichs and Vegh Weis 2021, 131-132). Therefore, critical criminology does not confine itself in the framework of crimes existing in the current legal system. In terms of COVID-19, it goes further to the social harm the pandemic caused. The disease is dangerous, and so are the repercussions it has on a social scale. For example, studies have shown that discrimination and racism targeting Asians have dramatically increased during the outbreak (He et al. 2020; Devakumar et al. 2020). 'The media-orchestrated panic' and ethnic hatred becomes a vehicle to shift the focus of the government's failure to prevent infection (Muzzatti 2005, 125).

From the perspective of critical criminology, broadening the scope of crime is an effective method to identify and deal with those problems (Friedrichs and Vegh Weis 2021, 131-133). Critical criminologists observe and indicate social harm caused no matter whether it is legally criminalised or not. For instance, banks that find a loophole in the government financial relief programs and gain undue profits may commit a 'corporate crime' or a 'state-corporate crime' (Michalowski and Kramer 2006; Kramer, Michalowski, and Kauzlarich 2002). Governments that fail to protect citizens' lives and health from the virus may carry out a 'state crime' (Rothe and Kauzlarich 2016). Besides, suppose the International Monetary Fund deliberately ignores the challenge of the pandemic and forces developing countries to pay their debt. In that case, it may be a form of global criminality as well (Rothe and Friedrichs 2014).



A case study of state-corporate crimes is provided by Friedrichs and Weis (2021). The healthcare industry in the United States and its potential to exploit the COVID-19 crisis had been discussed here. In the US, a country with predatory capitalism, the primary purpose of the pharmaceutical industry is to profit rather than to save lives (Case and Deaton 2020). When the pandemic started, Gilead Sciences, a pharmaceutical company with ties to the administration, found its drug Remdesivir could be used to treat COVID-19. It claimed 'orphan drug status' for Remdesivir to gain tax benefits and a more extended market exclusivity period. However, the status is designed to help sponsors recuperate the cost of drug development for rare diseases, which is not the case of COVID-19. The company finally withdrew its request under public pressure. If it had succeeded, the poor may have had no access to unaffordable medicine. In a case where the company colluded with the government and successfully made undeserved profits, they may have committed a state-corporate crime.

The implication of COVID-19 for critical criminologists is more than that. For instance, scholars of green criminology and critical animal studies may focus on zoonoses and advocate a detailed investigation of the disease's origin. They defend animal rights and call for abolishing wildlife trades and reclaiming wildlife habitats (Beirne 2021), which protects animals and prevents zoonoses. Issues they explore are often not yet regulated by the government. In summary, not only does critical criminology defend the rights of the marginalised groups, but it also helps think beyond the existing legal framework. It offers a broader perspective to counter major events and pursue genuine equality.

## **The Challenges and Future of Critical Criminology**

### ***Challenges***

So far, the article has introduced critical criminology and illustrated its values through two examples. Nonetheless, the discipline does not develop without difficulties. This section points out two main challenges it confronts: criticism and lacking research resources.

### ***Criticism***

Traditionally, orthodox critical criminology (or radical criminology) tends to insist that crime is a tool of ruling classes, especially under capitalism. Thus, it pays little attention to the phenomenon of crime. Instead, it cares more about fundamentally solving what they perceive to be the problem (the oppression of the state and capitalists) to achieve equality. Radical criminologists believe that addressing problems within the existing system is almost infeasible. An example was provided by Cohen (1985) in "Visions of Social Control". He criticises that community supervision, a policy formulated to reduce the incarcerated population, consequently increases people controlled by the criminal justice system.

However, this position comes in for criticism that radical criminology ignores real harm and victimisation caused by crimes. It 'romanticise[s] the delinquent as a working-class resister' and '[forgets] about the victim, who in many instances was a vulnerable and female member of the working classes or oppressed racial minorities' (Carrington and Hogg 2002, 7). Despite a lofty ideal, radical criminologists may fail to help real persons in practice.

In response to that criticism, some scholars chose a new route: Left Realism. Instead of ignoring crimes and victimisation, crimes were taken up in proportional seriousness and efforts were dedicated to improving victims' conditions. For Left Realism criminologists, 'the definition of crime is consensual' (Lea 2016, 63). As Young(1987) explained, deviance is a product of 'action and reaction.' If there is no regulation, there is no criminal. While Left Realism remains critical to legal definitions of crimes, to recognise victimisation, they must (at least partly) admit the existence and even justification of rules. From this perspective, both legal offences and rule-breaking deviance are real (Young 1987, 339).

In Left Realism criminology, crime is constructed not only by the state but also by the community (Lea 2016, 63). The effectiveness of police action depends on public support to a great extent (Jock Young 1987, 339), and public support is largely dependent on the real experience of victimisation. In other words, the social control mechanisms rely on the general public. From this viewpoint, Left Realist criminologists are faithful to the phenomenon which they study - the nature of crime (Jock Young 2002, 26; 1987, 337). They consider social survey as a 'democratic instrument' (Jock Young 1991, 174) and may work with the government to support victims.

Thus, Left Realism criminologists refute the criticism by saying that '[t]hose who would seek to marginalise critical criminology fail to comprehend its purchase on the grain of social reality' (Jock Young 2013, 271). They develop working-class victimology and believe in the possibility for social democratic welfare states to '[regulate] capitalism and [protect] the vulnerable from the predatory criminality associated with competitive individualism' (McLaughlin 2011, 50). In contrast, radical criminologists insist that the transformation from social democratic states to authoritarian anti-welfare ones is inevitable under capitalism.

This standpoint makes Left Realism counter not just administrative criminology but also orthodox critical criminology (Lea 2015, 166). Orthodox critical criminologists are pejoratively called 'left idealists' (Jock Young 1979). On the other hand, they suggest that the new route may associate with the privileged classes and lose its critical essence. Ultimately, the fundamentally critical voice may gradually step out of

the spotlight with more and more critical criminologists working within the system (Cohen 1998, 109).

Above all, critical criminology has developed various viewpoints and theories. Some even criticise each other, such as radical criminology and Left Realism criminology. However, instead of emphasising any subfield, this article suggests that diversity is a vital quality of a discipline. Thus, both radical and Left Realism criminology as well as other perspectives are of great importance to our society because they can provide valuable viewpoints for policy-makers.

### ***Lacking Research Resources***

The lack of resources is another challenge for the development of critical criminology. Crime is too practical of a problem that many institutions prioritise skill-training rather than theoretical research (Donnermeyer and DeKeseredy 2018). Despite the substantial expansion of the criminal justice system in recent years, most investments are for administrative criminological research to improve policies in the existing framework (W. DeKeseredy 1996). Universities may press faculty to seek grants from the government departments, which often resist reform and pursue rapid produced knowledge (W. DeKeseredy 2021, 7). Under this circumstance, the development of criminology will be imbalanced, for most of the resources are put in administrative criminology and the teaching of practical skills.

The contribution of administrative criminology is undeniable (Mayhew 2016). However, what it involves is more 'a reflexive journey into an official past' (Carlen 2016, 19). Its problem-oriented dimension may make the discipline vulnerable. Moreover, if the authority could dictate its research topics, it may risk becoming 'a wholly-owned subsidiary of the criminal justice state' (Garland 2011, 308). Thus, critical criminology deserves more resources to ensure wider topic choices and theory development, which helps maintain the momentum and independence of this academic field (Young 2013, 260).

### **Future**

The article has introduced the weight of critical criminology and the difficulties it faces. It must strive to extend its influence to create a better future for the world. Therefore, this section will discuss its place in the academic field and the responsibility it takes.

Critical criminology has mainly focused on traditional crimes such as street violence (Chambliss, Michalowski, and Kramer 2013, 6). Nevertheless, it should increase its scope and insight to become more dynamic, independent and influential. The topics in the field could extend across the borderline of criminology into other disciplines (Young 2013, xvii-xlviii), and include significant international events (Hudson and Walters 2009). In recent years, scholars have been concerned

about issues wider than the legal framework. This is more relevant when the mainstream (administrative criminology) fails to refuse the authority's control.

The role that critical criminology plays here is to provide a counter-voice to the power. The term 'critical' is not just used to show disapproval. As Young(2013, 271) stated: 'those in our own camp who would narrow their definition of the "critical" to the sectarian or the esoteric, fail to understand the central position of critique as a counterbalance to neoliberalism and its administrative discourses.' Thus, instead of confining their field as a separate subject, critical criminologists should draw upon a range of academic disciplines to overcome problems it encounters (Jock Young 2013, 253-254; Garland 2011, 300).

Lastly, 'the future of critical criminology...depends on being able to meaningfully transform the lives of marginalised individuals. (Arrigo 2001, 83)' To do so, criminologists may need to become what Loader and Sparks (2011) call 'democratic under-labourers' (Locke 1847). These labourers shoulder the responsibilities of problem identification, debate provocation, and challenging the public and the authority's opinions (Loader and Sparks 2011, 23). In contemporary neoliberal and conservative society, the critical perspective is massively needed (Young 2013, 259). Critical criminologists should play this role well and make the counter-voice loud enough to protect the underprivileged.

## **Conclusion**

Critical criminology derives from the inequality of society. Influenced by Marxism, it adopted a strictly radical perspective in the beginning. Since then, it has become diverse, with more and more scholars dedicated to the field. The research area has expanded from legal crime to social harm and human rights. The perspective has developed from radical tradition to left-realism. However, what remains unchanged is the insistence to fight for the powerless. Despite lacking resources and receiving criticism, its values have supported critical criminology to develop independently.

Under current trends of neoliberalism and conservatism, the state is holding greater power and getting tougher towards the underprivileged. Thus, the world needs a counter-voice strong enough to strive for equality. Critical criminology is that kind of voice, as shown in the examples of the war on terror and COVID-19. At this moment, perhaps all criminologists should ask themselves the classical question: Whose side are we on? (Becker 1966) If the answer is (and indeed it ought to be) the side of the socially and economically excluded (Walter S DeKeseredy 2011, 9), then the value of critical criminology should never be ignored (Young 1998).

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