What is the New School of Convict Criminology?

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Available at: https://works.bepress.com/jeffreyianross/59/
of the (Un)Reality of Richard Quinney’s Criminology” (with Alan Mobley and Harol K. Pepinsky), in Crime and Delinquency (2002), and The Fellas: Rocky Roads toward Addiction, Prisonization, and Reintegration (forthcoming with Wadsworth).

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Upon release from prison, he obtained employment at a Chicago-area university as a civil service employee. While there he completed a bachelor's degree and his first master's degree. He began teaching criminal justice courses in 1974 and continued to work on a second master's degree. He obtained his Ph.D. in 1989. Trombauer was elected president of the Illinois Academy of Criminology in 1974, cochaired the 1975 meeting of American Society of Criminology, and is a former president of the Northwestern Criminal Justice Association. He has been a consultant to the Illinois Department of Corrections; Federal Bureaus of Prisons; U.S. Departments of Justice, Education, and Labor; Chicago Public Schools; and the Chicago Police Department. His published work includes 27 journal articles and three coauthored books. His seminal work on school crime, Chicago Safe Schools Study, won him the Wexler Award for Criminal Justice Research of the Illinois Academy of Criminology and the Silver Medallion Award of the Central States Education Association. He is the father of five children and grandfather of six and presently lives in Oak Park, Illinois.

From Jeffrey Ian Ross and Stephen C. Richards (Eds) Convict Criminology
Belmont, CA, Wadsworth, 2003

INTRODUCTION

What Is the New School of Convict Criminology?

JEFFREY IAN ROSS AND STEPHEN C. RICHARDS

“That’s the reality, and to hell with what the class-room bred, degree toting, grant-hustling ‘experts’ say from their well-funded, air-conditioned offices far removed from the grubby realities of the prisoners’ lives.”

JUDEAO AND WIKIENC, 1993: 59

The correctional system in the United States, and most other countries, is unquestionably flawed. Efforts to reform jails, prisons, and other correctional facilities have largely failed and the number of individuals incarcerated is at its highest historic level. There is also something wrong when criminal justice research is dominated by government funding, conducted by academics or consultants who have had minimal contact with the criminal justice system, or by former employees of the law enforcement establishment (correctional, probation, parole, or former police officers). These individuals appear content to conduct research from the safety and comfort of their offices, often in an effort to simply increase the revenue of their firms, improve their status inside their companies, enhance their chances of tenure and promotion, or improve the working conditions in correctional institutions. Much of this "managerial research" routinely disregards the harm perpetrated by criminal justice processing on individuals arrested, charged, and convicted of crimes (Clear, 1994; Cullen, 1995).

If legislators, practitioners, researchers, and scholars are serious about addressing the corrections crisis (e.g., Clear, 1994; Welch, 1996, 1999; Austin

We wish to thank Bruce A. Arrigo, James Aronin, Susan Dearing, Preston Elrod, Marianne-Fischer Gorka, John Irwin, Richard S. Jones, Greg Newbold, Charles S. Lortie, David J. Murphy, Barbara Owen, Chuck Terry, and William S. Tregear for their contributions to this discussion. An earlier and brief version of this chapter appeared as Stephen C. Richards and Jeffrey Ian Ross (2001), "The New School of Convict Criminology," Social Justice, 38:1: 177–190.
et al., 2001; Austin and Irwin, 2001; J. Ross and Richards, 2002; Richards, 2003), we need to be more honest and creative with respect to the research we conduct and the policies we advocate, implement, and evaluate. In an effort to promote this objective, the present chapter introduces what we are calling “convict criminology” and reviews the theoretical and historical grounding, current initiatives, and dominant themes of this emerging school of social thought and movement.

THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL GROUNDING

In order to appreciate the context of convict criminology, we need to understand its background. Six interrelated movements, factors, and methodologies led to the birth of convict criminology: theoretical developments in criminology, writings in victimology and constitutive criminology, the failure of prisons, the prisoners’ rights movement, the authenticity of insider perspectives, and the centrality of ethnography.

THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN CRIMINOLOGY

The history of criminological theory consists of a series of reform movements (Veld and Bernard, 1996). As early as the 1920s, biologically based arguments of criminal causation were being replaced by environmental, socioeconomic, and behavioral explanations. Even in the field of radical and critical criminology there have been a series of divisions (J. Ross, 1998b; Lynch, 1996). Since the 1970s, critical criminology has splintered into complementary perspectives including feminism (e.g., Chesney-Lind, 1991; Faith, 1993; Daly, 1994; Owen, 1998), postmodernism (e.g., Arrigo, 1998a, 1998b; 109–127; Ferrell, 1998), left realism (e.g., Young and Matthews, 1992), peacemaking (e.g., Pepinsky and Quinney, 1991; Quinney, 1998), and cultural criminology (e.g., Ferrell and Sanders, 1995a; Ferrell, 1996). This multiplicity of perspectives suggests that radical and critical criminology has broadened its intellectual scope. And, although these diverse discourses and “metanarratives...open up some new conceptual and political space” (Ferrell, 1998: 64), they too often remain the intellectual products of the well meaning yet privileged, with only minimal reference and relevance to the victims of the criminal justice machine.

VICTIMOLOGY AND CONSTITUTIVE CRIMINOLOGY

In the 1960s and 1970s, criminologists realized that victims’ voices were almost totally ignored as casualties of criminal justice processing. This initiated a subtle paradigm shift resulting in a fledgling social movement and subdiscipline in criminology called “victimology” (Karmen, 2001). In appreciation of victims’ voices, a new branch of criminology began to develop. Constitutive criminology advocates “replacement discourses”; researchers need to listen to the messages of the oppressed who are seeking expression (Henry and Milovanovic, 1996: 6; Milovanovic, 1996; Richards and Jones, 1997; Richards, 1998). These are “directed toward the dual process of deconstructing prevailing structures of meaning and displacing them with new conceptions, distinctions, words, and phrases, which convey alternative meanings” (Henry and Milovanovic, 1996: 204). This method helps to give “voice to personal everyday experiences...of...marginalized groups” (Renzetti, 1997: 133). Perhaps in the new millennium criminologists and other social scientists might also realize that convict voices, in many instances, have been forgotten, marginalized, or simply ignored (Gaucer, 1998: 2–16).

THE FAILURE OF PRISONS

Many prominent criminologists have discussed the failure of prisons to correct criminal behavior. The differential effects of incarceration are well known. According to Sutherland, Cressey, and Luckenbill (1992: 524), “Some prisoners apparently become ‘reformed’ or ‘rehabilitated,’ while others become ‘confirmed’ or ‘hardened’ criminals. For still others, prison life has no discernible effect on subsequent criminality or noncriminality.” Johnson (1996: xi) suggested that “prisoners serve hard time, as they are meant to, but typically learn little of value during their stint behind bars. They adapt to prison in immature and often destructive ways. As a result, they leave prison no better, and sometimes considerably worse, than when they went in.” Similarly, Reiman (1995: 2) argued that the correctional system was designed to “maintain and encourage the existence of a stable and visible ‘class’ of criminals.”

Needless to say, we should not assume all prisoners are criminals, or that committing crime has anything to do with going to prison the first time, and even less the second or third. Considering the dramatic growth in prison populations (Austin and Irwin, 2001: 1–16; Richards, 1998: 125–126), the numbers of “innocent” victims will also continue to grow. The first failure of correctional institutions is that they hold hundreds of thousands of prisoners who, although they were convicted of a crime, are not violent felons and pose little if any threat to the community. The second is that they hold people too long; as Austin and Irwin (2001: 143–146) demonstrated, it is about time, not just “hard time” (Johnson, 1996), but “long time” and “repeated time” in prison. The third tragedy of prisons is “they don’t do more to rehabilitate those confined in them” (Rideau, 1994: 80). Instead, prison systems function as vast depositories for drug offenders, minorities, and petty offenders (J. G. Miller, 1996: 10–47; Austin and Irwin, 2001: 17–62). One cursory look at the gun towers, walls, and razor wire is evidence that prisons were built to warehouse and punish and not to rehabilitate.
PRISONERS’ RIGHTS MOVEMENT

At several points in history, well-meaning individuals and organizations (e.g., American Civil Liberties Union, American Friends Service Committee, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, International Conference on Penal Abolition, etc.) have advocated improvements in prison conditions through both conventional and unconventional political participation. As a result of the prisoners’ rights movement, “correctional institutions have been forced to rely less on coercive mechanisms to control inmates and to resort to bureaucratic measures instead. Today, prison officials must formally respond to grievances and lawsuits by producing their own reports concerning the alleged violations” (Welch, 1996: 370). “Inmates themselves also are affected by the prisoners’ rights movement; they have become acutely aware of their constitutional rights and other legal safeguards. This movement has promoted a higher level of political and legal consciousness among prisoners” (Welch, 1996: 370).

INSIDE PERSPECTIVE

The existing literature that provides an “inside perspective” on crime and convicts can be divided into six groups. First are edited anthologies by prison reform activists (e.g., Rosenblatt, 1996; Burton-Rose, with Peas and Wright, 1998). Embedded in these works are chapters or short pieces written by political activists, lawyers, journalists, and prisoners. The second collection of writings are journalists’ accounts of life inside prison (e.g., Mitford, 1973; Wicker, 1975; Earley, 1993; Bergner, 1998; C. Parenti, 1999; Corover, 2000; Hallinan, 2001; Abramsky, 2002). Third, prison journalism (J. Morris, 1998), written by convicts, appears in prison newspapers, like the Angeline, or in narrowly focused academic journals (e.g., The Journal of Prisoners on Prison). The fourth group includes edited collections of authentic convict writing (e.g., Martin, with Sussman, 1995; Franklin, 1998; R. Johnson and Toch, 1999; Leder, 1999; Chevigny, 2000). The fifth group includes sole-authored books or edited works by academics that may employ observation and/or interviews of criminal offenders or convicts (e.g., E. Miller, 1986; Fleisher, 1989; Churchill and Vanderwall, 1992; R. Johnson, 1996; Cromwell, 1996; Walsen, 1997; May, 2000). The last and most prominent category is composed of monographs written by convicts about life in prison (e.g., Genet, 1949a, 1949b; Chesser, 1954, 1955, 1957; Cleaver, 1968; G. Jackson, 1970, 1972; Abbott, 1981; Rideau and Wikberg, 1992; Abu-Jamal, 1995; Hassine, 1996; Pelletier, 1999).

The first four groups of writers, be they convicts, activists, journalists, or academic editors, write “stories” or investigative reports, rarely connecting their discussion to the debates found in the scholarly literature. The fifth collection of authors are academics, who, though they support their research with excerpts from prisoner interviews, and may themselves at one time have been employed inside prisons, are still writing from a privileged perspective as compared to the lived experience of convicts. The final group of authors write authentically and compelling accounts of prison life, but generally do not ground their discussion in academic research (Gaucher, 1999). Missing or underutilized are research accounts by academics who themselves have served prison time.

CENTRALITY OF ETHNOGRAPHY

Convict criminology is also the logical result of criminologists (e.g., Newbold, 1982/1985; Fleisher, 1989; Ferrell, 1993; Richards, 1995a; Ferrell and Hammond, 1998) using ethnographic methods in order to better understand their subject matter. Clearly, the use of ethnographic methods is not new in the field of penology or corrections (e.g., Sutherland, 1937; Sykes and Messinger, 1960; J. Jacobs, 1977; Peak, 1985; Lombardo, 1989; Farkas, 1992). For example, during the 1930s Clemmer (1940/1958), while employed as a sociologist on the prison mental health staff of Menard Penitentiary (Illinois), collected extensive information on the convict social system. More recently, Fleisher (1989) spent a year working as a "mainline" federal correctional officer (a guard assigned to cell blocks and housing units) as a means to compile observation and interview about data both "cons" and "hacks." Exconvict academics have also carried out a number of significant ethnographic studies. Irwin, who served prison time in California, drew upon his experience as a convict to interview prisoners and analyze jail admissions and subtle processes in prison in a series of articles and monographs (Irwin and Cressey, 1962; Irwin, 1970, 1980, 1985a; Austin and Irwin, 2001). McCleary (1979/1992), who did both state and federal time, wrote his classic "sociology of parole" through participant observation of parole officers at work and on the street. Terry (1997), a former California and Oregon state convict, wrote about how prisoners used humor to mitigate the managerial domination of penitentiary authorities. Newbold (1982/1985, 1989, 2000), having served prison time in New Zealand, used both qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze crime and corrections in his country. Richards and Jones (1997), both former prisoners, used "inside experience" to inform their observation and interviews of Iowa convicts upon their transfer to community work release centers. Finally, Richards, Terry, and Murphy (2002) wrote about the relationship between male prisoners and female correctional officers. Each of these studies has benefited from the inside experience of the investigators.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Having outlined the factors contributing to the formation of the new school of convict criminology, we can consider the initiatives that our collective effort has taken to date. We begin by describing the new school of convict criminology, and then discuss (1) the collaborative nature of our project, (2) inclusion criteria, (3) the convict authors are, (4) the preeminence of John Irwin, (5) the little-recognized fact that criminologists also commit crimes, (6) the
field's objectives, (7) the school's issue-oriented nature, and, finally (8) the specific questions addressed by the authors in this book.

DEFINING THE NEW SCHOOL OF CONVICT CRIMINOLOGY

The emerging field of convict criminology consists primarily of essays and empirical research conducted and written by exconvicts or convicts, on their way to completing or already in possession of a Ph.D., or by enlightened academics who critique existing literature, policies, and practices, thus contributing to a new perspective on criminology, criminal justice, corrections, and community corrections. This is a "new criminology" (I. Taylor, Walton, and Young, 1973) led by exconvicts who are now academic faculty. These men and women, who have worn both prison uniforms and academic regalia, served years behind prison walls, and now, as academics, are the primary architects of the movement. The convict scholars are able to do what most previous writers could not: merge their past with their present and provide a provocative approach to the academic study of criminology, criminal justice, and corrections. These authors, as a collective, are the future of a realistic paradigm that promises to challenge the conventional research findings of the past.

The exconvict professors have endured years of lockup in penitentiaries and correctional institutions, lived in crowded, noisy, violent cell blocks, and emerged to complete graduate degrees and become professors of sociology, criminology, criminal justice, and related disciplines. They have an intimate knowledge of "penal harm" (Clear, 1994), which they carry in their heads and hearts, and in some cases wear as scars and tattoos upon their skin. They are like Steinbeck's character Tom Joad in The Grapes of Wrath (portrayed by Henry Fonda in the movie); they are people with something to say, with an anger that will not betray them. They do not write merely for vitae lines, promotions, or tenure. They write so that one day the ghosts will sleep.

Together, exconvict graduate students and professors are now working together to build their expertise in both subject and methodology. The editors of this book assembled the current cohort through an elaborate network of contacts, numerous phone calls, e-mails, and fixes. We now number over a dozen exconvict professors of sociology, criminology, and criminal justice from Anglo-American democracies. To this we add a growing cohort of exconvict graduate students that are joining us as they complete their dissertations, as well as established criminologists without criminal records who are well known for their critical orientation toward managerial criminology, criminal justice, and corrections.

The dramatic expansion in arrests, convictions, and the rate of incarceration guarantees that the number of professors with profound and traumatic firsthand experience with the criminal justice system will continue to increase. In addition, some of the most important members of our growing group are prominent critical criminologists who, though not excons, have contributed to both the content and context of our new school. This growing pool of talent, with its remarkable insight and resources, is the foundation of our effort.

COLLABORATIVE NATURE

This school is a collaborative effort of enthusiastic participants. Over the last few years, most of these convict criminologists have met, socialized together, and participated in a number of panels and roundtables (e.g., "Convicts Critique Criminology" and "Convict Criminology") at the American Society of Criminology (ASC, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000) and the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (ACJS, 2000, 2001) annual conferences. This provided us with a means to get to know one another, become familiar with our published work and current projects, and discuss future initiatives.

One of our first group decisions was concerned with the proper direction and title of the project that eventually yielded the present book. Two choices emerged: "Convicts Critique Criminology," with all the authors having served time, or the preferred choice, "Convict Criminology," a perspective that emerges not only from prisoners' experience but also from efforts to control state criminality (e.g., Barak, 1991; J. Ross, 1995/2000, 2000b), the radical/critical literature (e.g., Taylor, Walton, and Young, 1973; J. Ross, 1998b), and the input of enlightened academics. Thus, we agreed, a person does not have to be a convict to write convict criminology. Nevertheless, the majority of contributors are exconvicts.

INCLUSION CRITERIA

Those writing in the convict criminology tradition are at various points in their academic careers. Some of them are established scholars, whereas others are just completing their graduate studies. Many of them are accomplished researchers and writers; some are just beginning. Convict experience and a terminal degree were not the only criteria for inclusion. As we know, there are plenty of folks who are part of our club (the Ph.D. one) who are poor researchers and/or do not write well. Conversely, there are lots of individuals who have not gotten past their B.A. who can write circles around the best of us. Additionally, only including persons with Ph.D.'s would be elitist, something that we would not tolerate given our personal and political dispositions.

WHO ARE THE CONVICT AUTHORS?

In terms of academic experience, the convict authors fall into three distinct cohorts. The first are the more eminent members, full and associate professors, some with distinguished research records. A second group of assistant professors is
just beginning to contribute to the field. The third are the graduate student ex-convicts.

Regardless of academic status, the exconvicts belong to two distinct groups with different personal dispositions toward our collective project, with considerable overlap. The first group supported the “new school” with little or any hesitation. Some of these members are known exconv academics (e.g., Robert Gaucher, John Irwin, Richard Jones, Charles Lanier, Greg Newbold, Stephen Richards, Chuck Terry, Edward Tromanhauser). The second group are exconv professors and graduate students who share our perspective and provide those of us who are “out” with encouragement, but who for a number of personal and professional reasons have elected to remain anonymous, “in” the closet, where only their trusted friends know of their past. Some of their personal reasons include their reluctance to revisit a painful time in life, and a wish to put the past behind them. Professionally, a number of convict professors expressed concerns that by appearing in this book they might be denied fair access to government research grants. A few of the graduate students were concerned about “coming out” while still in graduate school, before they have tested the job market. All the contributors respect these decisions.

The excons undoubtedly provide convict criminology with unique and original experiential resources, but some of the most important contributors may yet prove to be scholars, who though having never served prison time, may have or will, at some time in the future, be arrested, charged, and or convicted of crimes. This situation may lead them to be reasonably empathetic. Some of the early nonconvict recruits to the new school, as either supporters or contributors, include William Archambault, Bruce Arrigo, James Austin, Michael Brooks, Preston Eilrod, Jeff Ferrell, Marianne Fisher-Giorlando, Barbara Owen, Jeffrey Ian Ross, Randy Shelden, Jim Thomas, Bill Tregua, and Michael Welch. The inclusion of non-excons in the new school’s original cohort provides the means to extend the influence of this emerging perspective, while also supporting existing critical criminology perspectives.

It should be noted that although the sample is too small to draw significant conclusions, the majority of excons are educated in sociology and criminology, with a smaller number in criminal justice, and a few more in social work, public administration, and education. This may indicate the relative acceptance and level of support provided excons as students in different disciplines, or how graduate programs may be struggling to recruit new students. Of course, there may be other excons academics whom we have failed to count in disciplines unrelated to criminology or criminal justice, for example chemistry or math, who would have little professional interest in our projects. Finally, three departments should be recognized for producing a handful of exconvict professors over the years and having a few more in the pipeline: the Department of Sociology at the University of California, Berkeley (Irwin); the Department of Criminology, Law and Society at the University of California, Irvine (Mobley, Terry); the Department of Sociology at Iowa State University (Jones, Murphy, Richards); and the School of Criminal Justice of the State University of New York at Albany (Lanier, LeBel, Lockwood).

The outlines of the new school of convict criminology’s mission and purpose emerged as writers shared the experiences they have had with prison and academia. This represents an effort to revitalize the criminological literature with research validated by personal experience. Together, these academic authors critique existing theory and present new research from a convict or insider perspective. In short, they “tell it like it is.” In doing so, they hope to convey the message that “it’s about time” (Austin and Irwin, 2001)—time served, time lost, and time that taught us the lessons we share. In demarcating the field of study for this new approach to criminology, the contributors recognize that they are not the first to criticize the prison and correctional practices. They pay their respects to those who have raised critical questions about prisons and suggested realistic humane reforms. The problem is that, as Clear wrote in the foreword to McCleary’s (1978/1992: ix) Dangerous Men, “Why does it seem that all good efforts to build reform systems seem inevitably to disadvantage the offender?” The answer is that, despite the best of intentions, reform systems were never intended to help convicts. The real problem is that the reformers rarely even bothered to ask the convicts what reforms they desired. The new school of convict criminology corrects this oversight because its scholars are primarily educated “con-sultants” (Mitford, 1973: 15).

THE PREEMINENCE OF JOHN IRWIN

The most prominent exconvict criminologist is John Irwin. His work and professional conduct over the years have inspired the group. In 1997, in San Diego, we had our first panel (organized by Chuck Terry) at an ASC annual meeting. That evening, over dinner, Irwin, along with James Austin, Stephen Richards, and Chuck Terry, discussed the potential of convict criminology. Irwin (Irwin and Cressey, 1962; Irwin, 1970, 1980, 1985a; Austin and Irwin, 2001) recalled how he had always wanted to assemble a group of exconv scholars to write criminology from a convict perspective. However, over the last forty years, there have only been a few excons holding academic positions. Ironically, the drug war, and the concomitant dramatic increase in prison populations in the last two decades, added to our numbers and provided the opportunity to assemble this group.

Irwin has mentored and supported the group from the beginning. We have held informal meetings at ASC and ACJS conferences, with Irwin generously spending time getting to know each member of the group. He would ask each of us about our criminal past, academic status, and future plans. Irwin’s counsel has been for us to honestly declare who we are, to articulate what we experienced and observed, and to do ethnography that tells the truth (Ferrell and Hamm, 1998; J. M. Miller and Tewksbury, 2000).
CRIMINOLOGISTS COMMIT CRIME TOO

In the past five years, some criminologists have reaffirmed the idea that the commission of crime is widespread, and that what separates most individuals from becoming "criminals" is the fact that the latter have been detected and processed by the criminal justice system whereas the former have never been caught (Gabor, 1995). Moreover, Robinson and Zzito's (1999) recent study indicates that academic criminologists have engaged in a variety of "criminal, deviant, and unethical behaviors," with varying levels of commitment based on their age and type of behavior. These findings demonstrate that many people in our profession have a more intimate relationship with deviance and crime than they would care to admit, or that they would want the public to know. The fact is there may be a fine line between who is a criminal and who is not. Many criminologists may be more than just curious or fascinated by crime. They may even reflect on, or remember, their occasional, be it past or present, flirtations with criminal violation.

OBJECTIVES OF CONVICT CRIMINOLOGY

Convict criminology challenges managerial criminology, criminal justice, and corrections. Research and publication by this group (e.g., Richards and Jones, 1997; Terry, 1997; Richards, 1998; Richards and Avey, 2000; Newbold, 2000; Austin and Irwin, 2001; Richards, Terry, and Murphy, 2002; Ross and Richards, 2002) should be viewed as a dramatic attempt to critique, update, and improve the critical literature in the field. We have two goals. First, to transform the way research on prisons is conducted. Second, to insist that our professional associations (e.g., ASC, ACJS) begin to articulate policy reforms that will make the criminal justice system humane.

ISSUE-BASED NATURE OF CONVICT CRIMINOLOGY

Convict criminology is issue based and not necessarily structured by the traditional disciplinary divisions assumed by criminology, criminal justice, or corrections. These subjects describe the etiology of crime, stages of the criminal justice system, and correctional control as separate entities. Unfortunately, this approach has too often resulted in piecemeal research and analysis conducted by armchair technicians and theorists with precious little practical understanding of crime, criminals, and corrections (Austin, this volume).

Most academic criminologists fail to penetrate and comprehend the lived experience of defendants and prisoners, or are simply misinformed. In comparison, convict criminology is research carried out by our "felonious friends," who have both personal and abstract knowledge of the criminal justice machinery. Our work is held together by a number of themes, including, but not limited to, understanding the convict experience, forming convict identity, issues of survival in the convict world, transforming academic criminology/criminal justice, and proposing realistic policy alternatives.
his own self-discovery and the way he found new reference groups as a cushion against social alienation. Then, Richards shares his incarceration experiences and takes the reader on a journey through the federal prison system. His chapter introduces a new convict typology and emphasizes the active resistance of prisoners to long-term incarceration. Newbold discusses his time served in a New Zealand penitentiary, and how it contrasts with what we know about U.S. prisoners. Laniere addresses the very painful subject of convict fathers. Jones looks at the problems of managing the disclosure of having a prison record, especially in light of his own experience as a graduate student and professor. Last, Mobley describes his personal dilemma of being an exconvict while entering a private prison to conduct research. In short, the convict criminologist contributors emphasize how their life experience transformed their self-concept and identity.

In Part III, Owen starts off the examination of special populations with her discussion of how women do time. Her study illustrates the need for ethnographic studies of females in prison. Murphy reviews how he and other prisoners with serious health concerns, despite inadequate medical services, managed to survive and maintain their dignity in federal medical prisons. Arrigo shares stories about how he, as a mental health caseworker, visited homeless people, many of whom had prison records, as they struggled to survive after being shifted from one institutional environment to another (transcarceration). He also documents how he tried to help his clients cope with the personal damage they had sustained and interpret that experience. Archambault educates us about human diversity and the experience of Native Americans in prison. Tregear relates his experience in teaching in a variety of correctional settings, outlining how he and a number of other college instructors, although starting their jobs out of economic necessity, were transformed by the experience and became advocates for higher education programs in prisons. Elrod and Brooks discuss how they learned by observing and interviewing in jail that children were being socialized to become future adult prisoners. They recommend that children and adolescents be immediately removed from adult jails.

The tone of the discussion may be somewhat more dramatic than what is expected in an academic text. All the contributors in this book are profoundly disappointed with much of what passes for respectable scholarship in this field. Unfortunately, the discipline is rarely grounded in reality and continues to be dominated by researchers who serve political masters rather than the needs of prisoners. The contributions in this book, we hope, will serve as a wake-up call to criminologists, policymakers, and the public.

CONCLUSION: DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT OF CRITICAL CRIMINOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

As the field of criminology matures, it will continue to incorporate new voices, challenge established hypotheses and theories, and develop new ones. Critical criminology, in particular, continues to contribute innovative theoretical develop-ments. It is our hope that the new school of convict criminology will encourage critical criminologists to "ground" their theory in ethnographic accounts. This, we hope, will inform specific policy recommendations.

As the prison population continues to grow, so too will the number of individuals released back to the community. Many of these persons, as they reenter conventional society, will attend universities and study criminology, criminal justice, and corrections.


Then Bridges, who I thought had been deliberately avoiding me, walked up to the desk at the end of the class in which he had participated with his usual intense stare. "You don't know anything about it, do you? It's all a game to you." I asked him what he meant. "Prison," he said, "You think because you've spoken to a few convicts you understand it all. Well, you don't, you just don't." He was slowly shaking his head. The tone was polite but condescending. I'd heard that tone before. "How do you know?" I asked. "Because I've been inside, that's why. I don't want to talk about it now." He was already moving out of the room. He turned around at the door. "Didn't you know there were two of us in your class?"

As this process continues, some of these former prisoners will complete their graduate educations and become the future cohorts of the new school. We predict that over time, this new school of convict criminology will provide the public with a more realistic understanding of crime, criminal justice, and corrections that is based on experience and cutting-edge research.

NOTES

1. Throughout the text we have tried to be consistent in our use of the terms "convict" and "exconvict." Convict refers to a person in prison, whereas exconvict identifies an individual as once having served prison time and now residing in the free community. However, the public often assumes "once a convict always a convict" and discriminates against persons with prison records. Additionally, we have attempted to avoid the use of the terms "inmate" and "offender." Inmate generally refers to persons confined to an institution, such as a prison, hospital, or asylum. Thus, the term implies that prisoners are persons who are somehow physically or mentally impaired or suffering from some sort of sickness. Too often the term "inmate" is used by correctional workers to demean and dehumanize persons. From the convict's perspective, "inmate" is a managerial term that is used to insult prisoners. And, when convicts call another person an inmate, it is understood to be disrespectful. Inmates are understood to be prisoners that conform to institutional policy, follow the rules, obey orders, and betray the trust of other prisoners. They may be too familiar with or dependent on staff, or operate as snitches. We also avoid the term "offender," because a person may be convicted of a criminal offense but may not be an offender. The term also suggests that the person so identified is in some way offensive (as in "offensive odor"). We prefer the use of the term "prisoner" or "convict." Thus contributors consciously try to refer to men and women in prison as prisoners, convicts, or individuals. Alternatively, though somewhat unwieldy, would be to refer to "men or women convicted of a particular offense."

3. For a detailed discussion of the use of ethnographic methods to do prison research, see for example Peak (1985) and Farkas (1992).

4. It is instructive that with the exception of Irvin, Trumanhauser, and Lanier, all the exconvict contributors in this volume were convicted of drug-related offenses. This may lead critics to charge us with a subtle bias. Although this may be true, many of our academic colleagues—who we know have been convicted of misdemeanors or felonies—were not prepared to make public their convictions.

What’s Wrong with Corrections?

INTRODUCTION

From the early days of the muckraking of Jessica Mitford (1973), to the contemporary analysis by scholars (Clear, 1994; Johnson, 1996; Austin and Irwin, 2001), corrections has been studied for all its shortcomings and inhumanity. Part I of Convict Criminology extends this work in three chapters.

Jim Austin, in “The Use of Science to Justify the Imprisonment Binge” (Chapter 1), argues that criminology has played a significant role in providing the scientific basis for justifying the historic increases in prison and jail populations. Beginning in the 1970s, a small number of studies by a conservative group of criminologists and organizations, funded by different federal agencies, were done to determine the impact of incapacitating offenders who fit the profile of a career criminal. This chapter reviews the methodological weaknesses and mistaken analyses in these studies. This research has been used to justify legislation and policy designed to widen the use of incarceration through truth in sentencing, abolition of parole, and mandatory minimums. A more appropriate interpretation of the career criminal research, if taken at face value, is that most prisoners are not career criminals, pose little threat to public safety, and should not be sentenced to prison or should serve much shorter prison terms.