

**KEY IDEAS IN
CRIMINOLOGY
SERIES**

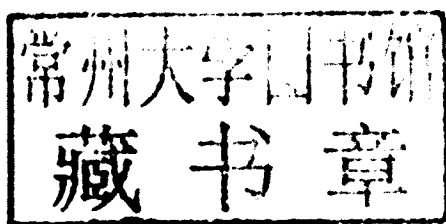
CONTEMPORARY CRITICAL CRIMINOLOGY

WALTER S. DeKESEREDY



CONTEMPORARY CRITICAL CRIMINOLOGY

Walter S. DeKeseredy



 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2011
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
270 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2011 Walter S. DeKeseredy

Typeset in Sabon by Wearset Ltd, Boldon, Tyne and Wear
Printed and bound in Great Britain by TJ International Ltd, Padstow, Cornwall

The right of Walter S. DeKeseredy to be identified as
author of this work has been asserted by him in
accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright,
Design and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted
or reproduced or utilized in any form or by any electronic,
mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter
invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any
information storage or retrieval system, without permission
in writing from the publishers.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

DeKeseredy, Walter S., 1959–
Contemporary critical criminology/by Walter S.
DeKeseredy.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

1. Critical criminology. 2. Criminology. I. Title.

HV6019.D45 2010

364–dc22

2010004664

ISBN13: 978-0-415-55667-5 (hbk)

ISBN13: 978-0-415-55666-8 (pbk)

ISBN13: 978-0-203-86923-9 (ebk)

PREFACE

In June of 1986, I would have never dreamed of writing this book. I was a second-year Ph.D. student with a keen interest in critical criminology, and I presented a paper titled "Marxist Criminology in Canada: Toward Linking Theory with Practice" at the Canadian Sociology and Anthropology conference in Winnipeg, Canada. I did not have a sophisticated understanding of critical criminology and thus did not expect my paper to be well received. However, things went worse than I anticipated. The discussant on my panel was a pioneer in the field and he sharply criticized my work in front of an audience of seasoned scholars for nearly 30 minutes. My self-esteem was shattered and I thought my career was over. I also vowed never to engage with critical criminology again. As is often said, "Never say never."

My supervisory committee helped me move forward and continue working on my dissertation. So, eager to keep up with new developments in my area of research, I attended the American Society of Criminology conference in Atlanta in November 1986 and went to sessions featuring prominent critical criminologists such as Meda Chesney-Lind, Kathleen Daly, Susan Caringella, Dorie Klein, Betsy Stanko, Russell and Rebecca Dobash, and Claire Renzetti. I was deeply moved by their passion, research, and critiques of mainstream research, theories, and policies. Their voices also started to rekindle my interest in critical criminology and they offered me alternative ways of understanding the social world.

Although these and other progressive scholars' presentations were in and of themselves important to me, what also brought me back to critical criminology was a long conversation I had with Kathleen Daly, Meda Chesney-Lind, Dorie Klein, and Betsy Stanko in a bar located in the conference hotel. They

inspired me to pursue my inner desire to engage in feminist inquiry and other ways of thinking critically about crime. I would not be doing what I am doing today without their kindness, collegiality, and compassion. My dear friend and colleague Martin Schwartz also played a key role in returning me to critical criminology. I met Marty in 1987 and we have worked very closely together ever since.

There are actually quite a few good books on critical criminology, which is one of the key reasons I was somewhat reluctant to write this one. However, Routledge editor Gerhard Boomgaarden enthusiastically encouraged me to contribute a book on the topic to the *Key Ideas in Criminology* series edited by Tim Newburn. I am grateful for their support and hope that my project adds to the rapidly growing international body of critical criminological scholarship. Indeed, as I learned from working on this book, keeping up with the extant literature in the field constitutes a major ongoing challenge.

Contemporary Critical Criminology has several main objectives, one of which is to review my colleagues' recent empirical, theoretical, and political contributions. Another goal is to show that, contrary to what many conservative scholars claim, critical criminologists are heavily involved in theory construction and theory testing, and use a variety of research methods to gather qualitative and quantitative data. Critical criminologists also don't simply call for radical social, political, and economic change. Although this is one of their central goals, progressive scholars and activists also propose numerous short-term ways of chipping away at broader social forces that influence crime and buttress unjust laws and methods of social control. Hence, recent examples of such initiatives are discussed.

Chapter 1 offers readers a brief history and definition of critical criminology. Of course, an unknown number of readers will disagree with my historical account. Still, as Raymond Michalowski states in his 1996 story of critical criminology: "This is all to the good. I increasingly suspect that we can best arrive at useful truth by telling and hearing multiple versions of the same story" (Michalowski, 1996, p. 9).

Chapter 2 demonstrates that critical criminology has gone through a number of significant theoretical changes since its

birth in the early 1970s. Special attention is paid to briefly reviewing and evaluating major new directions, such as cultural criminology, convict criminology, feminist theories, and recent variants of left realist thought. Undoubtedly, new perspectives will be offered by the time you finish reading this book.

Critical criminologists have done much empirical work over the past 40 years, and a key objective of Chapter 3 is to show that critical criminology is much more than a theoretical and/or political enterprise. Examples of recent research are presented, but the studies reviewed are not considered better than those not examined. Obviously, it is impossible to review all critical criminological empirical projects in one chapter or book.

What is to be done about crime, law, and social control? Chapter 4 shows that just because critical scholars call for major political, economic, social, and cultural transformations does not mean that they disregard short-term reforms. However, rather than repeat what has been said in previous critical texts, this chapter presents some new initiatives, such as using computer technology to protest government policies. It is necessary to create policies and practices that meet the unique needs of people in an ever-changing world, and the Internet is an effective means of facilitating social change.

Critical criminology is often criticized for being “gender-blind.” True, early works, such as Taylor, Walton, and Young’s (1973) *The New Criminology*, said nothing about women and the gendered nature of society; however, things have changed considerably since the publication of this seminal book. Thus, materials on women and gender are integrated into every chapter at relevant points. It isn’t only gender issues that are fully integrated; race, class, *and* gender are treated as equally important and are brought up whenever they are relevant. Nevertheless, the bulk of the material on these factors are recent contributions, which is why this book is titled *Contemporary Critical Criminology*.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is the product of a collective effort. Again, it would not have been written without Gerhard Boomgaarden's kind invitation and support. Gerhard deeply cares about his authors and I count myself lucky to have had the pleasure of working closely with him. Series editor Tim Newburn also played a key role in bringing this book to fruition and I greatly respect his scholarly rigor and many important contributions to a social scientific understanding of some of the world's most compelling social problems. Routledge editorial assistant Jennifer Dodd became involved in this project shortly before it was completed and her patience and encouragement will always be remembered.

Others also deserve special recognition. Joseph F. Donnermeyer, David O. Friedrichs, Christopher W. Mullins, Stephen L. Muzzatti, Dawn Rothe, Martin D. Schwartz, and Phillip Shon took time away from their very busy schedules to carefully read drafts of each chapter despite having many responsibilities (including writing their own books, articles, etc.). I am thankful for their friendship, and they are scholars in the true spirit of the word. Their comments made this book better than it otherwise would have been.

Over the years I have greatly benefited from the comments, criticisms, lessons, emotional support, and influences of these progressive friends and colleagues: Bernie Auchter, Karen Bachar, Gregg Barak, Raquel Kennedy Bergen, Helene Berman, Henry Brownstein, Susan Caringella, Meda Chesney-Lind, Taylor Churchill, Kimberly J. Cook, Francis T. Cullen, Elliott Currie, Kathleen Daly, Molly Dragiewicz, Desmond Ellis, Jeff Ferrell, Bonnie Fisher, Alberto Godenzi, Judith Grant, Ronald Hinch, David Kauzlarich, Dorie Klein, Julian Lo, Michael J. Lynch, Brian D. MacLean, James W. Messerschmidt, Raymond

J. Michalowski, Jody Miller, Susan L. Miller, Dragan Milovanovic, Louise Moyer, Patrik Olsson, Barbara Owen, Ruth Peterson, Mike Presdee, Lori Post, Claire M. Renzetti, Robin Robinson, Jeffrey Ian Ross, Aysan Sev'er, Susan Sharp, the late Michael D. Smith, Cris Sullivan, Betsy Stanko, Kenneth D. Tunnell, and Jock Young. Because many of these people disagree with one another, I assume full responsibility for the material presented in this book.

Contemporary Critical Criminology could not have been completed without the ongoing support of Pat and Andrea DeKeseredy and Eva Jantz. My "fur children" Captain, Drew, Mr. Higgins, Ola B. (named after feminist psychologist Ola Barnett), and Phoebe were also sources of much support. They constantly remind me that critical criminologists need to think about the roles played by cats and dogs in the day-to-day struggle to eliminate all forms of inequality.

This book includes material adapted from Walter S. DeKeseredy, "Review of Elliott Currie's *The Road to Whatever: Middle-Class Culture and the Crisis of Adolescence*," *Critical Criminology* (2007); Walter S. DeKeseredy, "Canadian Crime Control in the New Millennium: The Influence of Neo-Conservative U.S. Policies and Practices," *Police Practice and Research: An International Journal* (2009a); Walter S. DeKeseredy, *Violence Against Women in Canada* (in press a); Walter S. DeKeseredy, Shahid Alvi, and Martin D. Schwartz, "Left Realism Revisited," in Walter S. DeKeseredy and Barbara Perry (Eds), *Advancing Critical Criminology* (2006); Walter S. DeKeseredy, Shahid Alvi, and Desmond Ellis, *Deviance and Crime: Theory, Research and Policy* (2005); Walter S. DeKeseredy and Patrik Olsson, "Adult Pornography, Male Peer Support, and Violence Against Women: The Contribution of the 'Dark Side' of the Internet," in M. Varga Martin and M.A. Garcia-Ruiz (Eds), *Technology for Facilitating Humanity and Combating Social Deviations: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (in press); Walter S. DeKeseredy and Barbara Perry, "Introduction to Part I," in Walter S. DeKeseredy and Barbara Perry (Eds), *Advancing Critical Criminology* (2006); Walter S. DeKeseredy and Martin D. Schwartz, "British and U.S. Left Realism: A Critical Comparison," *International Journal of Offender Therapy and*

Comparative Criminology (1991); Walter S. DeKeseredy and Martin D. Schwartz, *Contemporary Criminology* (1996); Walter S. DeKeseredy and Martin D. Schwartz, *Woman Abuse on Campus: Results from the Canadian National Survey* (1998); and Walter S. DeKeseredy and Martin D. Schwartz, "Friedman Economic Policies, Social Exclusion and Crime: Toward a Gendered Left Realist Subcultural Theory," *Crime, Law and Social Change* (in press).

CONTENTS

PREFACE	vii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	x
1 Critical criminology: definition and brief history	1
Definition of critical criminology	7
Critical criminology: a brief history	15
The current state of critical criminology	22
2 Contemporary critical criminological schools of thought	25
Feminism	27
Masculinities theories	33
Left realism	37
Peacemaking criminology	42
Postmodern criminology	47
Cultural criminology	51
Convict criminology	55
Summary	57
3 Contemporary critical criminological research	59
Interpersonal violence	61
Crimes of the powerful	67
Social control	72
The media	77
Summary	81

4 Confronting crime: critical criminological policies	83
Criminal justice reforms	87
Full and quality employment	89
Higher minimum wage	90
Social services and programs	91
Using new technologies	92
Boycotting harmful companies	94
Creating a culture of support	96
Summary	97
 NOTES	 98
REFERENCES	102
INDEX	129

1

CRITICAL CRIMINOLOGY

DEFINITION AND BRIEF HISTORY

[P]ossessive individualism is crumbling under its own weight of numbers. Despite building more and more prisons, despite incarcerating or seeking to control (by electronic or social engineering) human activity, the centre does not hold, mere anarchy holds sway. For at the heart of society there remains the “genetic” code of private property. It is inconceivable that criminology wedded to the “cure” rather than the causes of crime can in any way help permanently to resolve the crime problem. This would be the medical equivalent of accepting that an expanding tobacco industry and growing cancers are inevitable.

(Walton, 1998, p. 3)

In the current era, much, if not all, of the world was (and probably still is) experiencing numerous economic, social, and political crises. For example, 400,000 jobs were lost in Canada since the fall of 2008, and in September 2009 Diane Finley, federal Human Resources Minister, argued strongly against cutting the minimum work requirements to qualify for employment insurance (Whittington, 2009a).¹ The summer of 2009 was, to say the least, also depressing for many Canadian youths aged 18–24. Approximately one out of every four Canadians in this age group was unemployed; with a sizeable portion unable to pay university

or college tuition in the fall (Galt, 2009). Simultaneously, the youth unemployment rate in the United States hit a record high of 18.5 percent (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009).

The North American unemployment situation is not likely to improve in the near future. As Canadian Parliamentary Budget Officer Kevin Page noted in July 2009, Canada could lose 1.2 million jobs in 2009 and 2010. He also predicted that the federal budget deficit over five years will reach C\$155.9 billion (Whittington, 2009b). With such high rates of unemployment comes chronic poverty, which in turn spawns more predatory violent street crimes, illegal drug use and dealing, and a myriad of other injurious symptoms of “turbo-charged capitalism” in poor communities (DeKeseredy, Alvi, Schwartz, and Tomaszewski, 2003; Luttwak, 1995).

As paid work in advanced capitalist countries and elsewhere rapidly disappears, we still witness many highly injurious effects of patriarchal gender relations. For instance, the World Health Organization conducted a multi-country study of the health effects of domestic violence. Over 24,000 women who resided in urban and rural parts of 10 countries were interviewed: the research team discovered that the percentage of women who were ever physically or sexually assaulted (or both) by an intimate partner ranged from 15 percent to 71 percent, with most research sites ranging between 29 percent and 62 percent (Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, and Watts, 2005).

Another major international study – the International Violence Against Women Survey (IVAWS) – conducted interviews with 23,000 women in 11 countries. The percentage of women who revealed at least one incident of physical or sexual violence by any man since the age of 16 ranged from 20 percent in Hong Kong to between 50 percent and 60 percent in Australia, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, Denmark, and Mozambique. In most countries examined, rates of victimization were above 35 percent (Johnson, Ollus, and Nevala, 2008). Consider, too, that in Australia, Canada, Israel, South Africa, and the United States, 40–70 percent of female homicide victims were murdered by their current or former partners (DeKeseredy, in press a; Krug, Dahlberg, and Mercy *et al.*, 2002). Another frightening fact is that 14

girls and women are killed each day in Mexico (Mujica and Ayala, 2008). Of course, male violence against female intimates takes many other shapes and forms, such as honor killings, dowry-related violence, and acid burning (Sev'er, 2008; Silvestri and Crowther-Dowey, 2008; Watts and Zimmerman, 2002). Annually, approximately 5,000 women and girls lose their lives to honor killings around the world (Proudfoot, 2009).

Racism, in its many shapes and forms, is also very much alive and well throughout the world despite major legislative changes and the ongoing efforts of human-rights groups and activists. In the United States, for example, 23 percent of Native Americans live below the poverty line, compared to 12 percent of the general population. To make matters worse, the poverty rate on US Native reservations is over 50 percent (Housing Assistance Council, 2002; Perry, 2009a). And, as Turpin-Petrosino (2009, p. 21) reminds us, in the United States, "[s]ome of the most notorious hate crimes ever committed have targeted blacks." Black US males are also incarcerated at a per capita rate six times higher than their white counterparts. Further, about 11 percent of black men aged 30–34 are incarcerated (Human Rights Watch, 2008).

What is to be done about unemployment, violence against women, racism, and a host of other problems that plague countries characterized by structured social inequality? Guided by the views of the late University of Chicago economist Milton Friedman (1962),² many people on the right, like former US President George W. Bush, contend that the solutions to the world's problems are found in the following trinity: the elimination of the public sector; total corporate liberation; and skeletal social spending (N. Klein, 2007). Ironically, many conservatives do not seem to have a problem spending taxpayers' money on building more prisons and incarcerating more people. For example, California is home to the largest prison system in the United States, and this state's corrections budget was \$2.1 billion annually at the end of the 1980s. In 2008–2009, California's corrections budget rose to \$10.1 billion (Legislative Analyst's Office, 2010).

Correction facilities now constitute a major industry in the United States and United Kingdom. There is a rapid growth in

private prisons and many stock analysts are encouraging their clients to invest in major companies operating facilities such as the GEO Group, formally known as Wackenhut Securities (Reiman and Leighton, 2010). Private companies claim to run prisons at 10–20 percent lower cost than US state governments, but Austin and Coventry's (2001) study – sponsored by the National Institute of Justice – found it was only 1 percent.

If there is a military–industrial complex that profits from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, there is also a “prison–industrial complex” that gains from crime at the taxpayers' expense (Schlosser, 1998). Thus, it is more than fair to assume that big business has a vested interest in ensuring that crime rates stay high and that the incarceration rate – like profits – constantly grows (Selman and Leighton, 2010). As Reiman and Leighton (2010) note:

[T]he rich get richer BECAUSE the poor get prison! Consider that in 2007, the top wage earner at CCA made \$2.8 million and his counterpart at the Geo Group made \$3.8 million, including stock options and all bonuses; the annual retainer for serving on the Board of Directors of either company is \$50,000 (plus several thousand dollars for each meeting that Board members attend), which is close to the median household income of the United States in 2007.

(p. 177; emphasis in original)

Not all conservatives view prisons or other elements of the criminal justice system as the primary cures for crime. One recent example is Canadian psychologist Donald Dutton (2006), who prefers “treating” wife-beaters to mandatory arrest policies. Like prisons, psychotherapy, counseling, psychosurgery, or any of a number of other techniques designed to help offenders identify and deal with their problems contribute little, if anything, to lowering crime rates. Such strategies suffer from what Elliott Currie (1985) calls the “fallacy of autonomy.” The idea of autonomy is that people act on their own, without the influence of others. The implication of theories that inform individual treatment is that peer groups and broader social forces have little impact on people's behaviors, attitudes, norms, and values (DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 1996). Those who break the law are seen as living in a

“world strangely devoid of social or economic consequences, even of history” (Currie, 1985, p. 215).

This is true of some offenders. However, most violent street crimes, especially those committed by youths, are committed in groups (Warr, 2002). This is why incarcerating or “treating” several gang members does nothing to lower the rate of violent crime in the United States (Currie, 2008a). You can lock people up or make them undergo therapy, but such measures do not eliminate the social, psychological, or interpersonal forces that influence people to harm others. For every gang member you take off the street, others will replace him or her.

If people’s peers motivate them to commit violent acts, the same can be said about broader structural forces. It is, for example, not surprising that the violent crime rate in the United States is higher than that of most other highly industrialized societies (Currie, 2008a; Van Dijk, 2008). It is well known that the United States is a nation characterized by gross economic inequality, poverty, high infant mortality rates, homelessness, and inadequate social support services (for example, unemployment insurance and health care) (Schwartz and DeKeseredy, 2008). High rates of violent acts are major symptoms of these problems (DeKeseredy *et al.*, 2003), and these crimes are committed mainly by groups of “underclass” people, sometimes referred to as “the truly disadvantaged” (Blau and Blau, 1982; Wilson, 1987). In fact, social and economic inequality – not personality or biological factors – are the most powerful predictors of most violent crimes (DeKeseredy, *in press a*).

Are there useful and meaningful alternatives to conventional wisdom about crime and its control? In other words, is there a progressive school of thought that sees crime as something other than a property of the individual and that views broader social, political, and economic change as the best solution to crimes in the streets, suites, and domestic/intimate settings? Anyone familiar with social scientific empirical, theoretical, and policy work would quickly point out that sociologists provide different ways of thinking about crime, deviance, and social control. Indeed, they do and some of them have had an important impact on public policy over the past 50 years. Consider

strain theorists Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin (1960). Their differential opportunity theory of delinquent subcultures was extremely important in the history of criminological and deviance theory, in that perhaps no other theory was responsible for generating so much government funding in the United States (DeKeseredy, Ellis, and Alvi, 2005). The logic was that if gang membership was a function of a lack of legitimate opportunity structures for youths, then the solution was to increase these opportunities. Under President Kennedy, and especially under President Johnson with his “War on Poverty” in the 1960s, a wide variety of programs were instituted to deal with educational deficiencies and job training. Unfortunately, under what Curran and Renzetti (2001) call the late President Reagan’s “War on the Poor” in the 1980s, those programs not earlier eliminated by President Nixon were killed off, and today, there is still considerable resistance in the United States to implementing policies guided by Cloward and Ohlin, and others with similar perspectives on social problems.

Most sociologists who study crime, though, are what some criminologists would refer to as “liberal progressives.” In other words, they: accept official definitions of crime (e.g., legal definitions); ignore concepts and theories offered by Marxist, feminist, critical race, and other “radical” scholars; call for fine-tuning state institutions’ responses to social problems (e.g., expand the role of the welfare state); pay little – if any – attention to the role of broader social forces, and primarily use quantitative methods to collect and analyze crime and criminal justice data (Ratner, 1985).

Metaphorically speaking, critical criminologists, on the other hand, throw bricks through establishment or mainstream criminology’s windows (Young, 1998). “[R]esolutely sociological in orientation” (Carrington and Hogg, 2008, p. 5), critical criminologists oppose official definitions of crime, official statistics (e.g., police arrest data), and positivism, but are for social justice, human rights, and the like (Stubbs, 2008). Positivism assumes that human behavior is determined and can be measured (Curran and Renzetti, 2001). Moreover, within the discipline of criminology, there is “an enduring commitment to measurement” (Hagan, 1985, p. 78).