



EDITORIAL

Current Criminology: A Global Home for Theory, Reproducible Evidence, and Humane Science

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With this inaugural issue, we launch *Current Criminology* as a scholarly home for ideas that travel: across countries and cultures, across methodological traditions, across disciplinary borders, and across the perennial divide between explaining harm and reducing it. Crime and social control have never been merely local phenomena, but today the forces that shape security are increasingly global (Carrington et al., 2018; Liu, 2009). Digital infrastructures generate new opportunities for victimization and new architectures of surveillance (Patchin & Hinduja, 2012; Ray et al., 2024). Global supply chains obscure accountability for corporate and environmental harms (Kwon et al., 2024; Liu, 2024). Migration, demographic change, and political polarization transform the social ecology of neighborhoods and the legitimacy of institutions (Ackerman & Murray, 2004; Carrington et al., 2018). Climate shocks and pandemics strain systems of care and control in ways that reveal longstanding inequities (Zhang et al., 2023). Yet criminological knowledge too often remains segmented, locally bounded, and selectively amplified (Carrington et al., 2018; Liu, 2017). Whole regions are underrepresented.

Whole kinds of evidence are undervalued. Whole kinds of questions are treated as “not interesting enough” because they do not arrive wrapped in fashionable labels or dramatic novelty (Asli, 2024). And whole communities, including those who bear the heaviest burdens of violence, criminalization, and institutional neglect, are too rarely centered in the intellectual agenda that claims to understand them (Asli, 2024; Carrington et al., 2019; Liu & Miyazawa, 2018).

Current Criminology is our response to that gap. It is positioned as a global platform dedicated to publishing peer-reviewed, cutting-edge research across all major areas of criminology. But the phrase “cutting-edge” can be misunderstood. We do not mean trend-chasing, or the endless race to claim that something has never been studied before. We mean research that genuinely advances understanding, explanation, measurement, inference, and humane response to crime, harm, and justice (Bersani & Doherty, 2018; Markowitz et al., 2001). We mean work that is current in the deeper sense: attuned to the moving currents of social change, method, theory, and practice, and committed to keeping the evidentiary foundations of criminology strong

enough to bear the moral weight of the decisions made in its name ([Berk, 2021](#); [Liu et al., 2001](#); [Lynch, 2018](#)).

The motivation for founding this journal is, above all, moral and scientific at the same time. It is moral because criminology is never merely descriptive ([R. Berk, 2008](#); [Liu, 2008](#); [Maruna, 2010](#)). Even when scholars avoid explicit prescriptions, criminological findings and frameworks routinely shape policing strategies, sentencing regimes, correctional policies, child welfare interventions, mental health responses, school discipline, surveillance infrastructures, and immigration enforcement ([Berk et al., 2021](#); [Berk et al., 2016](#); [Cunningham et al., 2024](#); [Lambert & Jiang, 2006](#); [Lu et al., 2013](#); [Wang et al., 2024](#)). They shape how the public imagines who is dangerous, who is vulnerable, and who is redeemable ([Berk, 2019](#); [Berk et al., 2021](#); [Berk et al., 2023](#)). They shape how states allocate coercion and care. That means weak methods, non-replicable results, and unexamined theoretical assumptions are not merely academic imperfections. They can translate into real-world harm, especially for communities already exposed to poverty, marginalization, racialization, gendered violence, and political exclusion. It is scientific because the field's credibility depends on its ability to distinguish robust signals from noise, causal effects from correlations, and plausible mechanisms from storytelling ([Benjamin et al., 2018](#); [Richard Berk, 2008](#); [Berk, 1987](#); [Wooditch et al., 2020](#)). If criminology is to be worthy of the authority it is granted in public discourse, it must commit to standards of evidence that are not lower than those expected in neighboring sciences, and it must cultivate a culture that rewards careful accumulation of knowledge rather than performative novelty.

Current Criminology therefore has an intentionally expansive aim and scope. We welcome submissions from across the full landscape of criminology and criminal justice, broadly conceived. This includes, among many other domains, research on criminal behavior and offending across the life course ([Moffitt, 2017](#)); developmental and life-course criminology ([Farrington, 2003](#)); desistance and persistence ([Giordano et al., 2002](#)); victimization and victimology ([Lauritsen et al., 1991](#)); fear of crime and perceived safety ([Gray et al., 2011](#)); social disorganization and neighborhood processes ([Sampson et al., 1997](#)); routine activity and opportunity theories ([Cohen & Felson, 1979](#)); situational and environmental criminology ([Clarke, 1995](#)); crime pattern theory; place-based prevention; policing, investigations ([Weisburd, 2015](#)), use of force, legitimacy, procedural justice, and police accountability ([Mazerolle et al., 2013](#)); courts, prosecution, defense, adjudication, and case processing ([Western, 2002](#)); sentencing, punishment, and the sociology of penality ([Liu et al., 2025](#)); incarceration, prisons and jails, community supervision, reentry, and collateral consequences ([Harding et al., 2022](#)); rehabilitation and treatment ([Liu & Palermo, 2009](#)); restorative justice and community-based approaches ([Thilagaraj & Liu, 2017](#)); juvenile justice and youth systems ([Lening Zhang & Jianhong Liu, 2007](#)); gender, sexuality, and crime ([Lu et al., 2006](#)); family violence and intimate partner violence ([Xue et al., 2018](#)); sexual violence ([Lin et al., 2016](#)); child maltreatment ([Mei et al., 2022](#)); homicide and serious violence ([Li et al., 2022](#)); gangs and group processes ([Li & Liu, 2017](#)); organized crime ([Li et al., 2015](#)); white-collar crime ([Simpson, 2019](#)), corporate crime ([Lynch et al., 2004](#)), and financial harm ([Li et al., 2025](#)); cybercrime ([Subrananian et al., 2016](#)), online deviance, digital victimization, and platform governance

([Bossler & Holt, 2010](#)); illicit markets and drug policy ([Zhang et al., 2011](#)); human trafficking and modern slavery ([Huang et al., 2012](#)); terrorism, political violence, and extremism ([Subrananian et al., 2016](#)); transnational and comparative criminology ([Liu, 2007](#)); immigration and border enforcement ([Ousey & Kubrin, 2009](#)); state crime, crimes of the powerful, and human rights violations ([Chamblis, 1989](#)); genocide and mass atrocity ([Hagan & Rymond-Richmond, 2008](#)); green criminology and environmental harm ([Sharif & Uddin, 2023](#)); public corruption ([He & Peng, 2022](#); [Zimring & Johnson, 2005](#)); campus and school safety ([Gammell et al., 2022](#)); workplace violence ([Zhang et al., 2000](#)); mental health and the criminal legal system ([Teplin, 1990](#)); forensic and investigative practices ([Dror, 2018](#)); and the many forms of “harm” that may not always be captured by penal codes but are central to the ethical mission of criminological inquiry ([Hillyard & Tombs, 2007](#); [Zhang, 2025](#)). We also welcome methodological and meta-scientific contributions that strengthen the foundations of criminological research, including measurement work, validation studies, data infrastructure research, and critical examinations of how knowledge is produced, disseminated, and used ([Berk, 1991](#); [Freedman, 1991](#); [Han et al., 2023](#); [Jiang et al., 2021](#); [Makel et al., 2012](#); [McNeeley & Warner, 2015](#); [Pridemore et al., 2018](#); [Zhao et al., 2022](#); [Zhao et al., 2025](#); [Zhao et al., 2013](#); [Zhao et al., 2010](#)).

Our international orientation is not symbolic. It is constitutive. We seek research grounded in diverse legal traditions, cultural contexts, political economies, and social histories. We welcome comparative work across countries, regions, and cities, as well as research that takes seriously the specificity of a single context without treating it as peripheral. We do not believe that criminology should quietly default to a narrow set of countries as the implicit “general

case” while treating the rest of the world as “applications” or “exceptions.” We also recognize that “international criminology” is not only about adding more countries to a dataset. It is about enlarging the field’s theoretical imagination: learning from distinct experiences of state formation, colonial and postcolonial governance, conflict and reconstruction, informal economies, urbanization patterns, and community-based forms of order and justice that may not fit neatly into frameworks built elsewhere. Current Criminology aims to be a venue where scholarships from Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and the Pacific are not filtered through a deficit lens, but engaged as a source of conceptual innovation and empirical discovery. We have deep solidarity with the intellectual projects often described as Asian criminology and Global South criminology, not as separate subfields that must justify their existence, but as essential perspectives that can refresh and correct a discipline that has too often mistaken partial experience for universal truth ([Carrington et al., 2019](#); [Carrington et al., 2018](#); [Chin et al., 2023](#); [Liu, 2024](#); [Liu & Miyazawa, 2018](#); [Lösel, 2018](#)).

We welcome both empirical and theoretical research. We make this explicit because the field is living through a paradox: criminology is rich in data and methods, yet comparatively poor in the steady introduction of new theory, and sometimes hesitant to refine or challenge inherited theoretical frameworks ([Liu, 2024](#)). The reasons are structural as well as intellectual. Journal incentives often reward incremental empirical novelty over conceptual risk. Funding and publication norms can push scholars toward short time horizons and safe analytic templates. The result is not that theory has vanished, but that theoretical ambition is too often displaced by citation rituals, superficial “theory sections,” or post hoc narratives attached to analytic results.

We want to change that equilibrium. Current Criminology aims to be a sanctuary for theory, a place where theoretical papers are treated not as indulgences but as necessary infrastructure for scientific progress and humane policy. We welcome work that proposes new theoretical frameworks, synthesizes and reorganizes existing perspectives, clarifies mechanisms, formalizes concepts, resolves contradictions, or builds bridges between micro-level processes and macro-level structures. We also welcome theory that emerges from deep engagement with empirical realities, including qualitative and case-based research, and theory that incorporates insights from sociology, psychology, economics, political science, anthropology, public health, education, geography, computational science, and philosophy of science. In our view, theory is not a decorative preface to empirical work. It is the disciplined effort to explain why patterns exist, to identify mechanisms, and to specify what would count as evidence against our claims.

At the same time, we are unequivocal about the value of rigorous empirical research. We embrace the aspiration of a scientific criminology, understood not as technocracy, but as the commitment to methods that allow credible inference, transparent reasoning, and cumulative learning. We welcome quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research, and we resist the false hierarchy that treats one style as inherently superior. The standard is rigor: clear questions, appropriate designs, careful measurement, principled analysis, and honest interpretation. For quantitative work, this may include randomized experiments, natural experiments, quasi-experimental designs, difference-in-differences, regression discontinuity, instrumental variables, matching and weighting, panel models, multilevel models, causal mediation analysis, sensitivity analysis, Bayesian approaches, and other frameworks that make

assumptions explicit and examine their plausibility. It also includes computational social science methods such as machine learning, text-as-data, network analysis, spatial analysis, agent-based modeling, and simulation, when deployed with care, interpretability, and respect for causal identification. For qualitative work, rigor may include transparent case selection, systematic data collection, clear analytic procedures, triangulation, attention to reflexivity, thick description, and a serious approach to inference and generalization, whether analytic or theoretical. For mixed-methods work, rigor includes meaningful integration rather than superficial parallelism: designs where qualitative and quantitative components genuinely inform each other, sharpen mechanisms, and improve measurement and interpretation.

We place special emphasis on reproducibility, not as a bureaucratic hurdle but as a cornerstone of trust. The credibility of criminology depends on whether independent researchers can understand, verify, and, where appropriate, reproduce published results ([Barnes et al., 2020](#); [Chin et al., 2023](#); [Lösel, 2018](#); [Pridemore et al., 2018](#)). We therefore welcome and value two forms of replication that have been under-incentivized in criminology. The first is technical replication: work that attempts to reproduce published findings using the same data and the same analytic procedures, verifying that reported results can be regenerated from the materials provided. This is basic scientific hygiene, and it is surprisingly rare across many disciplines. The second is enhanced replication: work that strengthens the evidentiary base of an existing claim by improving measurement, refining models, testing robustness, extending to new samples or settings, using alternative identification strategies, or applying superior computational or statistical approaches, while staying faithful to the core question. Enhanced

replications can reveal boundary conditions, clarify mechanisms, and sometimes correct overconfident conclusions. We view such contributions not as antagonistic acts, but as a vital public good. They increase transparency, reduce the risk that policy is built on fragile findings, and foster a culture where being wrong is not shameful but informative, because it is part of how disciplines learn.

Our orientation toward reproducibility is paired with a commitment to constructive openness. We encourage authors to share data, code, materials, and documentation when ethically and legally possible, and to describe clearly when constraints exist due to privacy, safety, confidentiality, or legal restrictions. Many criminological datasets involve sensitive information about victimization, offending, health, and state surveillance. Responsible transparency therefore requires judgment, not absolutism. But even when data cannot be shared, reproducibility can be supported through detailed analytic documentation, synthetic data where appropriate, code sharing, preregistered plans when feasible, clear reporting standards, and structured robustness checks. Current Criminology will treat such transparency as part of methodological rigor.

We also emphasize early discovery and a pluralistic vision of knowledge. In too many editorial ecosystems, “novelty” becomes a proxy for “value,” and journal gatekeeping becomes a system that filters out careful work simply because it is not flashy. This novelty bias has predictable consequences: selective publication of positive findings, underreporting of null results, exaggerated effect sizes, and a literature that looks more certain than it truly is. We reject the assumption that novelty should be a decisive criterion for publication. In principle, Current Criminology will not reject a manuscript because

it is “not novel enough.” Our primary evaluative question is whether the work is methodologically rigorous and whether the conclusions are credible given the evidence and the assumptions. We want a journal that treats careful tests, incremental advances, and well-designed replications as intellectually honorable. We want a journal where researchers can report findings that are surprising, expected, positive, null, or mixed, without having to distort the narrative to fit a marketing logic. This is not only a matter of fairness to authors. It is a matter of epistemic integrity for the field.

That philosophy also informs how we regard disagreement. Criminology is a discipline where reasonable scholars can look at the same phenomenon and produce distinct interpretations, driven by different theories, different levels of analysis, different moral premises, and different methodological choices. We do not treat this plurality as a weakness to be eliminated. We treat it as a resource to be managed with rigor. Current Criminology seeks to be a home for diverse perspectives, including those that challenge dominant assumptions, provided that arguments are carefully developed and evidence is treated responsibly. We believe every insight can have unique value, and that editorial work should not be to decide which insight is “important” in some final sense. The editor’s duty is to evaluate rigor, clarity, and credibility. The theoretical and practical value of an idea should be tested in the broader arena of scholarly and public engagement, where readers, subsequent studies, and real-world consequences ultimately decide what endures.

Because we value pluralism, we also welcome case studies. Case studies are sometimes dismissed as anecdotal or non-generalizable. That dismissal confuses weak inference with the case-study method itself. A carefully executed

case study can generate new hypotheses, reveal mechanisms, illuminate institutional processes, expose measurement blind spots, and surface ethical dilemmas that large-N designs may miss. In criminology, where institutions operate through discretion, culture, and informal routines, case-based work can be uniquely powerful. We therefore welcome single-case and comparative case studies, ethnographies, historical analyses, process tracing, and other intensive designs, especially when they are used to build or refine theory, to clarify causal mechanisms, or to translate lived realities into concepts that can travel.

Current Criminology is also explicitly interdisciplinary. Contemporary criminological problems increasingly sit at the intersection of criminology, criminal justice, public health, education, psychology, sociology, economics, geography, political science, and data science. Violence is a health outcome as well as a criminal legal issue. School discipline is an educational practice as well as a pipeline into legal systems. Substance use and addiction intersect with markets, mental health, treatment regimes, and enforcement. Cybercrime and online exploitation sit at the intersection of technology, governance, psychology, and global political economy. Climate-related displacement, urban heat, and environmental degradation can reshape patterns of conflict, victimization, and state response. If criminology is to remain relevant, it must not defend disciplinary borders for their own sake. It must build bridges, learn methods and theories that travel across domains, and collaborate with scholars who bring complementary expertise. We welcome interdisciplinary manuscripts that maintain criminological depth while drawing on adjacent fields, and we welcome work that translates insights from other disciplines into criminological questions without collapsing the

distinct ethical and institutional realities of crime and justice.

We are especially supportive of research that uses advanced artificial intelligence methods and modern causal inference tools, when employed responsibly. Data-driven approaches can identify new patterns, generate hypotheses, and test the robustness of classical findings across large and complex datasets ([Berk, 2021](#); [Liu & Li, 2024](#); [Liu et al., 2025](#); [Sun et al., 2024](#)). Machine learning can improve prediction, uncover heterogeneity, and support the analysis of text, images, and networks at scale. But we are clear that prediction is not explanation, and pattern discovery is not causality. The strongest work, in our view, integrates computational power with theoretical clarity and credible identification strategies ([Lipton, 2018](#)). We encourage submissions that use AI and computational methods to discover new regularities while also taking seriously interpretability, fairness, and ethical risk, particularly given the history of algorithmic harms in policing, sentencing, and surveillance ([Berk et al., 2021](#); [Liu & Li, 2024](#); [Rudin, 2019](#)). We also encourage causal inference approaches that sharpen the field's ability to distinguish what causes what, under what conditions, and through what mechanisms ([Lin et al., 2024](#); [Liu & Li, 2024](#); [Zhao et al., 2024](#)). Done well, these approaches can help criminology validate classic patterns and theories, revise them where they fail, and discover where effects differ across contexts and populations. We invite scholarship that is methodologically innovative, but always anchored in substantive understanding and ethical care.

In addition to original research, Current Criminology welcomes systematic reviews and meta-analyses. The field benefits when we periodically step back and ask: What do we

actually know? How strong is the evidence? Where are the gaps? Where are the contradictions, and are they real or artifacts of measurement, design, and publication bias? Systematic reviews, meta-analyses, scoping reviews, and evidence maps can discipline the field's collective memory, reduce redundancy, and guide future research toward questions that matter. They can also provide policymakers and practitioners with more reliable summaries than any single study can offer. We welcome reviews that are transparent in search strategy, inclusion criteria, coding decisions, and analytic choices, and we encourage reviewers to engage seriously with heterogeneity, study quality, and bias rather than chasing a single pooled estimate as if it were the last word.

Research equity is central to our mission. We commit to promoting fairness in what is studied, who is heard, and how scholarship is evaluated. We support voices from different countries and regions, including those from poorer and under-resourced settings where data infrastructure and funding may be constrained but where criminological questions are often urgent and deeply underrepresented in the global literature. We support scholars working in languages and academic ecosystems that have historically been treated as peripheral to "mainstream" criminology. We also support voices from minority and marginalized groups, and from communities that experience disproportionate surveillance, punishment, victimization, and exclusion. Such voices may bring sharper moral clarity, different theoretical intuitions, and a closer view of institutional realities that others only observe at a distance. We believe these perspectives can carry special intellectual and human brilliance, not because marginalization is romantic, but because standpoint and experience shape what questions are asked, what harms are noticed, and what solutions are considered

legitimate. Our aspiration is that Current Criminology will be a place where scholars do not have to translate their contexts into someone else's default assumptions in order to be taken seriously.

This commitment to equity also shapes how we imagine peer review. Peer review is at its best when it is both demanding and humane: demanding in its insistence on clarity, rigor, and honest inference, and humane in its recognition that scholarship is produced by people, often under conditions of unequal resources and risk. We seek reviews that are constructive rather than punitive, and we value reviewers who can distinguish between fatal flaws and fixable limitations. We encourage scholarly disagreement that is precise and respectful, and we will work to ensure that authors are not dismissed because their cases, datasets, or theoretical traditions are unfamiliar to reviewers. A global journal must also be a pedagogical institution, helping good work become better, not merely sorting manuscripts into winners and losers.

Ultimately, the reason to build Current Criminology is that the field is at a crossroads. The world is changing in ways that are reshaping crime, harm, and governance: the digitization of everyday life, the reorganization of labor and inequality, the movement of people across borders, the diffusion of surveillance technologies, and the evolving legitimacy crises of institutions tasked with maintaining order. These changes create new forms of victimization and new opportunities for exploitation, while also exposing old injustices in sharper relief. Criminology must respond with intellectual seriousness equal to the stakes. That requires a journal ecosystem that does not merely mirror existing hierarchies and incentives, but actively creates space for the kinds of scholarship the

field most needs: ambitious theory, rigorous evidence, careful replication, ethical transparency, interdisciplinary synthesis, and truly global inclusion.

We therefore invite submissions that are bold in question and disciplined in method, generous in theoretical imagination and precise in inference, attentive to human suffering and cautious about the power of claims. We invite manuscripts that revisit classic debates with better data, sharper designs, and clearer mechanisms. We invite studies that bring under-studied populations, places, and harms into view. We invite theoretical work that takes risks, that clarifies what our concepts mean, and that offers explanations that can be tested rather than merely asserted. We invite replications that strengthen the evidence base and teach the field what holds up and what does not. We invite case studies that reveal mechanisms and institutional realities. We invite systematic reviews and meta-analyses that discipline our collective knowledge. We invite interdisciplinary work that connects criminology to public health, education, psychology, sociology, economics, and data science without losing criminology's distinctive ethical and institutional focus. We invite AI-driven and causal-inference-driven research that uses modern tools to discover new patterns, interrogate old ones, and keep the field honest about what can and cannot be claimed.

If you are an early-career scholar with a daring theoretical idea that does not fit existing templates, we want you here. If you are a methodologist who can strengthen the field's inferential backbone, we want you here. If you are a qualitative researcher who can illuminate mechanisms that quantitative models cannot see, we want you here. If you are a scholar working outside the usual centers of academic power, or writing from a context that is too often treated as

marginal, we want you here. If you have a careful study with a null finding that is nonetheless informative, we want you here. If you have a replication that confirms a result, we want you here. If you have a replication that challenges a result, we want you here as well. The standard is not whether your finding is fashionable. The standard is whether your work is rigorous, transparent, and intellectually honest, and whether it adds to a criminology that is worthy of public trust.

Current Criminology is, in the end, an invitation and a commitment. An invitation to build a discipline that is more global, more equitable, more theoretically alive, and more scientifically credible. A commitment to evaluate work primarily on rigor and credibility, to cultivate theory rather than treat it as a relic, to treat reproducibility as a core scientific value, to welcome early discoveries without demanding artificial novelty, and to recognize that humane criminology requires that we listen broadly, especially to those whose lives and communities are most affected by crime and by the systems built to respond to it. We hope you will see this journal not only as another outlet, but as a shared space where the best of criminology can be made more rigorous, more open, more inclusive, and more consequential.

We look forward to the scholarship you will bring into this space, and to the collective work of building a criminology that is both scientifically strong and humanly serious.

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