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Exploring the Criminology Curriculum—Reflections on Developing and Embedding Critical Information Literacy

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Introduction

In this chapter, we explore a particular challenge faced when teaching criminology and criminal justice; how to apply critical information literacy ourselves, and how to encourage our students to develop these skills when engaging with criminological material. Our aim when teaching is to go beyond decolonising the curriculum, to pay attention to

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issues around intersectionality, and to consider how to develop students' awareness of the content they engage with. This chapter, therefore, seeks to share our journey so far; discussing why we need to explore our criminology curriculum before sharing some of the key findings from our initial research around criminology reading lists and student engagement with criminological literature. The chapter shares personal reflections: Ismail Azam shares his experience as an Asian male social science graduate; Rowan Sweeney describes her journey as she progresses through academia in her Graduate Teaching Apprentice role; Kelly Stockdale considers her position as senior lecturer and criminology programme lead; student Jodie Brown discusses her experience and involvement in the research project and uses this to reflect back on her studies; and Clare McCluskey-Dean shares insight from her role as an academic liaison librarian. These reflections, positioned in relation to the themes of belonging, reflexive practice, and resource creation, provide insight into the authors' experiences both studying and working in academia. We conclude by arguing the case for developing critical information literacy within the discipline.

Reflecting on Our Criminology Curriculum

Exploring the curriculum which we have developed, inherited, and continue to use when we teach criminology is important. Continually reflecting upon the topics considered, perspectives included, and teaching approaches used within the curriculum is central to ensuring that learning is an active, meaningful, and inspiring process for students (Freire, 1970). Knowledge construction is fundamentally linked to power relations due to the inherent interconnection between knowledge and power (Foucault, 1980; Mader, 2012). It is therefore important to critically explore the literature used within criminology, to identify the

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perspectives of criminological topics which students are exposed to, as well as voices which are not represented. The variety of existing voices and perspectives (such as LQBTQ+, Black and Minority Ethnic (BME), and non-male), regarding an array of criminological topics, provides opportunity for the discipline to be diverse and authentic. However, it is not understood how this range of voices is represented across teaching. We argue that it is important to reflect on the criminology curriculum and the information students use to construct knowledge about such topics.

Criminology is a rapidly expanding discipline with the number of courses being offered at universities across England and Wales growing at an exponential rate (Stockdale & Sweeney, 2019: 86–87). New criminology courses have the potential to develop and reimagine subject content, as well as enable the development of criminological awareness and understanding in a larger number of individuals. There have also been movements across academic institutions to widen participation, resulting in increased numbers of criminology students, and staff, from a diverse range of backgrounds (Watts & Bridges, 2006). Yet similar inclusivity and representation is arguably not mirrored in the criminology curriculum. While it appears that the 'character of contemporary criminology', which has diversified in relation to research areas, should provide the ideal scenario for the criminological canon to be diverse and representative, this opportunity is arguably not being harnessed in the classroom.

Researching Critical Information Literacy

Since 2019, the authors, as an academic team, have been exploring and developing the concept of communities of practice in information literacy (McCluskey-Dean, 2020). As part of this we have actively been researching student experiences of the criminology curriculum by conducting interviews and focus groups (Stockdale & Sweeney, 2019) and working with students, including employing student curators to help us develop new material (Stockdale et al., 2021a). We have also explored criminology provision across England and Wales, particularly

the content of undergraduate degree criminology programmes (Sweeney, forthcoming), as well as an in-depth study of indicative reading for criminology course validation, and specific module reading lists (Stockdale & Sweeney, 2022).

A starting point was to prompt students' critical thinking and in so doing we developed the 'intersectionality matrix' (Stockdale & Sweeney, 2019) as a pedagogical tool to allow students to clearly visualise the prominent authorship of their reading (Stockdale et al., 2021b). Our research shows that most key texts used on degree programmes are written by white, male authors, and these are the authors most known to students; students struggle to name any Black or minority ethnic female authors that they have read or whose work they are familiar with. Our research also highlights how criminological issues relating to race and gender are typically covered in separate modules within the degree programme and are not embedded as a form of critical praxis throughout degree content. Key to our findings is that undergraduate students were both shocked at their gap in knowledge, but also reflective as to the reasons why there was a lack of diversity in their knowledge. When students had the time and space to consider the authors they were reading, they were eager to engage with a wider range of voices and experiences of crime, criminal justice, inequality, and oppression. Students want more, as our narrative reflections from two students in the chapter highlight. Hopefully, this chapter provides the space to consider why there needs to be a change, highlights some of the potential pedagogical opportunities, and considers the challenges faced.

Staff and Student Personal Reflections on the Criminology Curriculum and Curriculum Development

The following is built from personal reflections from each of the authors, documenting their experiences, their thoughts, and their feelings in relation to teaching criminology, learning criminology, and supporting academics in developing their pedagogical practice. It is important to

note that these reflective pieces are from a situated point and place in time. Reflections took place at the end of the academic year 2019/20 following our initial research into reading lists and student experiences of the curriculum. It was also Kelly's first year as programme leader, Rowan was midway through her PhD, Clare was coming to the end of her Ph.D., and Jodie and Ismail were approaching completion of their undergraduate studies. We have all continued reflexive practice and learning, and our views and ideas have continued to grow and develop as part of this journey.

The following themes arose from our reflective statements:

1. A sense of belonging—how the current curriculum includes and excludes students and academic staff.
2. Reflexive practice—how students, staff, and academics reflect on curriculum content.
3. Creation of resources—opportunities and barriers to the creation and co-creation of curriculum resources.

A Sense of Belonging—How the Current Curriculum Includes and Excludes Students and Staff

How curriculum content can include, and perhaps more importantly, how it can exclude both students and staff is an important starting point when considering our criminology curriculum. As hooks (1994:8) argues, everyone, both teachers and students, influence the classroom dynamic, and everyone's presence must be acknowledged and valued. Yet this is not always the case for Black and Minority Ethnic students who witness this exclusion throughout their studies; something their white peers (and teaching staff) are often unaware of.

> *As an Asian student, witnessing and experiencing a monolith of whiteness within both the modules and staff/student body, makes you feel like a black dot against a bright white canvas - isolated, excluded, as if you're not meant to fit in. I must admit, I was used to white spaces, though I was taken aback*

when coming to university, especially given the narrative of universities being the epicentre of progressive thought. But the dominant white structures which are entrenched within university institutions and their pedagogy is enough to affect any Black, Asian, or other minority ethnic students. Ismail

Doing a placement in the research team put the issues within the criminology curriculum into the spotlight. When undertaking analysis of criminology core module reading, I spent many hours researching authors' details, and almost every time I found the same result: the text was written by a white male author. I found this time and time again: it became obvious that there was a significant problem with the criminology curriculum reading list. What I had been learning, by and large, was the white male perspective. I am certain that the majority of white students who take this course and have this learning experience will not recognise this problem or be aware that our understanding of criminology comes from a very limited world view. This experience made me reflect on aspects of the curriculum other than the reading lists. I recalled studying a module on prisons where issues of race were only briefly mentioned. This is problematic when Black, Asian and other ethnic minority groups are significantly overrepresented in prisons. It seems inaccurate not to teach this module through the lens of race. Jodie

Centring the student voice, among other voices, and exposing whose voices have been marginalised should therefore be key to our teaching. Tewell (2019) argues that a contextual approach to engaging with learners from marginalised communities is vital, as their academic studies are one part of a large picture of considerations and adaptations to a society which at best does not understand their needs, and is often wilfully working against them. This is asserted strongly by Owusu-Kwarteng (2019: 9) in relation to the higher education (HE)experience as a whole, who states that there is:

Failure to ensure that the curriculum includes content which analyses varied social groups and their experiences, and opportunities for students to express their views on these issues and their own encounters. Instead, students are frequently expected to assimilate, and their lived experiences are negated.

Ismail's reflection below highlights that we are teaching topics that have the potential to be transformative for our students, however, we need to recognise our own biases and privileges and the political ideologies that pattern our values (Sexton, 2020; Twyman-Ghoshal & Lacorazza, 2021). It is not only about considering the colonial and imperialist nature of the discipline but, as Friere (2001: 36–37) asserts, those teaching should have more respect for what students know, discussions should include the concrete reality of students' lives whereby a connection can be built between the curriculum and lived experience.

> *The field of study has been of particular interest since setting foot in my sixth form sociology classroom. Deriving from a working-class background with Indian/Pakistani heritage and growing up in the North-East of England, my lived experiences have been nothing short of a challenge. This discipline has allowed me to process and articulate the structural racism and class struggles that have defined me as a person. However, as an Asian student I have concerns about the racial disparity that I have witnessed within Higher Education, from the one-dimensional white perspective, which is taught to all students, to the lack of diversity seen amongst the staff and even the student body.* Ismail

What is therefore particularly important within criminology, as students are often the criminal justice practitioners of the future, is the need to understand that we have "a powerful opportunity to provide rigorous, critical, social science education to practitioners before they are indoctrinated". (Sexton, 2020: 249)

> *As a very early career academic, completing a PhD and teaching criminology in my Graduate Teaching Assistant role, I am positioned as a staff member while still being acutely aware of engaging with the discipline as a research student. The marginalisation of certain voices within criminology is something which I have often noticed and reflected on as a student and new academic. My early experience of teaching criminology raised two key questions for me. Firstly, how can we as criminologists expect students (as members of deliberative democracy and potentially the criminologists and criminal justice practitioners of the future) to understand, critique, and reimagine social conditions central to criminology if they are not exposed to*

the variety of perspectives which are relevant to these matters? Secondly, why does the discipline, and many of the individuals who work within it, not feel more compelled to open up spaces for the voices and work of people from all backgrounds? The main conclusions I came to were that the impact of the marketisation of Higher Education heavily impacts staff workload, and ability to create innovate and inclusive curricula; and the elitism which exists within the academy obstructs the inclusion of a range of voices and sources which are fundamental for students to fully learn and develop their criminological imagination. I believe that criminologists, due to the issues which we profess to be concerned with, have a duty to act against the curriculum challenges brought by neoliberal HE and elitism. This is not only important to empower criminology students, but also to develop, strengthen and improve the discipline. Rowan

The evidence for a critical approach to the resources around which a university course is designed, and in affecting structural change in the way these sources are used, is apparent in the accounts of students from communities which suffer from systemic discrimination. Shaffait (2019) outlines the experiences of Muslim students, showing how drinking culture leads to the social exclusion of those who are teetotal, that the prevalence of Islamophobic stereotyping and language impacts feelings of belonging, and that "A diverse curriculum could help to create a sense of belonging" (4). The report breaks this down into specific recommendations such as "Incorporating non-western voices that are often silenced through a Eurocentric curriculum can help to overcome institutional whiteness" (Shaffait, 2019: 4) and that student input is vital in highlighting which voices to include. Eddo-Lodge (2018) and Ahmed (2012) both reveal the transformative nature of their experiences of single university courses which finally integrated voices and sources linked to their own experiences—Eddo-Lodge as a Black woman and Ahmed as a woman of colour and a member of the LGBTQ+ community—after educational journeys that were white and euro-centric.

As an academic librarian, I inhabit a role at the intersection of collection development in terms of the resources offered to the members of the community at the university at which I work, and how those resources are found,

evaluated, and used, commonly referred to in library research and literature as information literacy (CILIP, no date). I spend a great deal of time dealing with individual queries from students, in one-to-one tutorials and in email conversations, which reveal the specific experiences and frustrations they encounter in their studies. Each of these aspects of my job informs the others and show that there is much more to the process than the learning of skills to complete assignments: instead, there is a need to centre the student as researcher, understand their experiences, and move away from a deficit skills model which is based on a specific 'ideal' student, excluding many (Donovan & Erskine-Shaw, 2020*).* Clare

I am a final year criminology student and I have loved studying criminology. What drew me to the discipline was its desire to understand and incite positive change for those who have experienced disadvantage. I was initially interested in class-based inequalities and feminism; however, I can reflect now that the feminism I was aware of and interested in initially was mainstream white feminism. Reflecting now, I had a very limited world view, which the discipline of criminology should have helped me open up, but I found it did not. My world view has only begun to open up outside of the criminology curriculum, through some reading, but mainly through learning from the knowledge and passion for tackling racial injustice as well as the lived experience of someone close to me. Without having that opportunity to learn from someone so passionate I wouldn't have the curiosity or understanding that enabled me to take part in this project. Throughout my time studying criminology I found that criminology was not as progressive as I had once believed. As explained above, the tradition of the discipline has marginalised certain voices which has distorted the production of knowledge in criminology . Jodie

Reflexive Practice—How Staff and Students Reflect on Curriculum Content

Critical information literacy asserts that the traditional skills models have generally not considered the social and political structural influences on what information is available to an individual, or how their social circumstances impact upon how information is evaluated (Elmborg, 2012). In terms of how a student is supposed to engage with their

studies, there is often a lack of representation of their own lived experiences, especially if they are from a community (or indeed more than one community) which is marginalised. Donovan and Erskine-Shaw (2020) have researched this in terms of academic literacies, focusing on students arriving at university, and asserting that issues of identity and socialisation in the academic environment are key to their experience, especially if they come from backgrounds where going into HEIs is not the norm.

> *We are not embedding critical information literacy at the start of our degree programmes, we are teaching students to explore how societal structures and criminal justice agencies might recreate and perpetuate social divisions such as sexism and racism, but we are not necessarily considering that criminology as a discipline is overwhelmingly white, male, cis-gendered and heteronormative in the way that it discusses the structural and personal context of crime.* Kelly

> *I would like criminology to truly start to represent the voices of groups that experience marginalisation, like I once thought it would. My degree in criminology has not equipped me with the knowledge to understanding the world from a wider perspective than my own. The discipline needs to provide a wider world view by teaching literature from an accurate representation of society. I think this needs to come from more than just the authors on the reading list and include the contents of modules within the programme. This would mean properly integrating race and gender perspectives into all the modules rather than just a tokenistic single lecture.* Jodie

Curriculum change and design and the importance of the student's voice is a recommendation of research into the experience of all traditionally marginalised communities, including trans staff and students in HE. McKendry and Lawrence (2017) argue it can make the experience inclusive, and also impact upon other sectors in terms of raising awareness of those on professional programmes:

> *Consider trans inclusion and inadvertent transphobia within the curriculum and ways to include trans history, identity, and experience within content [...] For those who design and deliver professional programmes [...] consider opportunities to raise awareness amongst professionals of the future and*

include trans issues within the curriculum. (McKendry & Lawrence, 2017: 18–19).

This is important as students should be able to engage in reflexive practice within their studies, to understand which voices have been historically excluded and marginalised, and which are being routinely presented across their course. It is only by embedding these critical information literacy skills that our teaching practices can be transformative, can empower students, and can contribute to social justice.

When speaking to students during classes about the weekly readings I continued to hear phrases such as: 'how am I supposed to understand this?', 'why are we having to read such old texts?', 'that is a very old-fashioned view', 'I didn't realise this was what criminology was going to be like' and 'this just doesn't make sense'. Students clearly felt overwhelmed and understandably resistant to the course because the sources they were being told to read were largely out of context to them. While, of course, it is important to encourage students to explore traditional social and criminological theory, my own experience as a student showed me that including a diverse range of voices does not mean that the 'old' or 'traditional' voices need to be removed. Instead, I focused on providing students with materials and ways of learning which resonated with them and include diverse viewpoints (both old and new), to try to open up new ways of understanding and knowing, ultimately leading to empowerment, transformation, and active critical thought inside and outside the academy. Rowan

Realigning my practice in accordance with critical information literacy principles has been an important shift in my work in 20 years in academic libraries, and I believe it is vital to continue along these lines if we are to truly claim that higher education contributes to social justice. Clare

Creation of Resources—Opportunities and Barriers to the Creation and Co-creation of Curriculum Resources

The centring of the student is vital in acknowledging their experiences as members of various communities. It is also vital in unveiling and dismantling the structural discrimination in the information and publishing landscape, which in turn impacts on the dominant content and discourse in university curricula. Sociologists such as Zeballos (2019) have critiqued the academic peer-review process as allowing white male voices to dominate. Within evidence-based medicine, there are those looking at systemic impacts on what is published (Heneghan et al., 2017). Students must be empowered to investigate these issues:

> *To be able to reflect on the implications of how […] knowledge is historically constituted and reproduced, to understand the racialized, gendered and classed contexts in which it is developed and to notice the silences and exclusions upon which it establishes its authority.* (Rupprecht, 2019:16)

The following reflections describe the challenges and barriers that the authors have either faced themselves, or have experienced or recognise as being key issues when attempting to create resources:

> *It would be great to see a wider perspective of voices taught, though many people believe that simply including more Black, Asian, and other minority ethnic perspectives in the curriculum will solve the disparity of one-dimensional teaching. However, this could so easily be reduced to a tick-box exercise if not implemented properly. To mitigate this, lecturers who are conveying the newly taught theories of race need to have a solid comprehension of the information that they are teaching – especially if it comes from the perspective from someone who differs to them ethnically. If they do not properly adopt an epistemological approach to these theories, information and experiences bear the potential to be relayed incorrectly, and in turn, could hinder their validity. This is something which I as a student witnessed first-hand, and I am sure that my experiences are not isolated from others.* Ismail

Prior to my current role, I completed a BA (Hons.) in Criminology and Politics and a MSc in Social Research for Criminology at the University of Stirling in Scotland. Throughout these degrees I became increasingly aware of, and thankful for, the critical and diverse nature of the criminology curriculum and teaching which I had been exposed to. To me, criminology, due to the vast array of intersecting topics and fields it encompasses, offers unique opportunities to intricately consider social order and control as well as related oppression and social harm. In my view, criminological exploration enables the experiences and vulnerabilities of individuals, in the context of various forms of control, to be understood and challenged. This understanding, developed from my own studies, is the principal reason why I wanted to pursue a career as a criminology academic and facilitate criminological learning to act against marginalisation and harm normalised by hegemonic social structures. As a new academic I was eager to develop my critical pedagogic approach to facilitate criminological teaching and learning, shaped from my view that criminological thought and education can enable de-mystification of inequalities and injustices which often result from normalised systems of criminal justice and social control. Inclusion and empowerment of the vast array of voices which have a stake in, and experience of related issues, I therefore believe, are essential to the criminology curriculum. However, upon speaking to others and taking up my current position teaching criminology I realised that the way I had explored criminological thought as a student was, sadly, not the norm. Involvement in teaching on a variety of modules evidenced to me that inclusivity within module and programme curricula was not always viewed as vital. I increasingly saw, and continue to see, that curriculum materials are often recycled and maintained for many years. Resultantly, focus is given to well-established, often harmful, criminological voices. This does not support students, particularly those from diverse backgrounds, to actively engage in the curriculum. Rowan

My first thought when reflecting on this journey is to consider my own positionality within academia and the experiences that led me to start this research at this point in my career. Like many working in HE, my own journey is one of precarious employment, which comes with low wages, limited opportunities for progression and few benefits (i.e., pensions, sick pay, parental/carers leave, or paid research time) compared to those on permanent contracts. Working as an hourly paid lecturer on people's modules, you are either given pre-existing material from previous years, which you may update, or you may need to (or decide to) design content from scratch, however, the rate of pay

remains the same at 1 hour preparation time for 1 hour delivery. You are allocated teaching often only a week or two before starting. With one hour to prepare a lecture on content that is unlikely to be in your area of expertise, you are heavily reliant on previously used material. You are reliant on textbooks/reading materials that you can source quickly, and new books cannot always be purchased and available for students in that time. So, you do your best; you engage students, you encourage critical engagement with the material at hand, but it is difficult to introduce dramatically new content. You cannot redesign the wheel in an hour, there are limitations and constraints on what is achievable in these conditions. We need to address the working conditions of staff in HE which we already know is structured unequally for academics of colour, female academics, and those with disabilities. We also need to work together to improve the way our discipline is taught and the content that we deliver to students. As a senior lecturer and programme leader for criminology I want to do more, the research we have conducted with students suggests they want more too. But we are relying on individual pockets of work; academics working well beyond their paid hours to create and develop materials and inspire students to think critically. As a discipline we need to work together, we need to acknowledge the issues within our discipline and work together to create diverse content. Kelly

The identification and development of this community of practice in critical information literacy has not been without challenges. It requires trust between the members as each one interrogates their own practice, individually and collectively, to reveal whose voices they are privileging in their teaching, and how to not only address this, but do so in a way that involves the student voice. However, in linking it to other initiatives in the development of pedagogic practice and social justice, we have been able to support each other in this. I have recently undertaken research into my role which investigated a sustainable model for embedding information literacy in the Higher Education curriculum, in which I as a librarian position myself as a facilitator of a community of practice. Through this, staff across an institution can learn from each other about critical information literacy and design learning and teaching influenced by the various aspects of the theory (McCluskey-Dean, 2020). Clare

There are clear structural challenges faced by new academic staff, while work is being done by individuals it is clear the current environment

in HE is not conducive to decolonising and transforming the current criminology curriculum. Changes in HE in England over the last decade have impacted on criminology in particular: the relaxation of the number of students able to enrol at university; the subsequent exponential increase in criminology courses offered; and the ever-increasing number of students entering these courses (Stockdale & Sweeney, 2019, 2021a, 2021b, 2022). Staff working conditions across the sector have been adversely impacted: workloads have significantly increased, meaning there is little opportunity to plan and recreate materials with decolonisation and critical information literacy in mind. Universities are choosing to rely on increasing numbers of casual contracts for academics, resulting in precarious working conditions that cause stress, fatigue, and impact on the ability to engage with literature that has not previously been included, and unsustainable workloads where staff are not paid for any additional work beyond basic preparation and teaching delivery. Furthermore, gender, ethnic, and disability pay gaps are continuing, with female academics, academics of colour, and those with disabilities experiencing significant pay discrimination. At the time of writing the University College Union (UCU) has launched a 'four fights' campaign to address these issues. Unfortunately, until some of these structural issues are addressed it is difficult for academics to be able to bring about meaningful change in the wider criminology curriculum.

However, on an individual level we need to recognise that the discipline needs a more inclusive curriculum; it is by overtly recognising this, by embedding critical information literacy and opening up discussion, that we can see that students are well-placed to contribute and co-create resources.

> *When I look at my course, I see a white, western curriculum that does not reflect all students. An equal curriculum not only builds wider perspectives but builds self-esteem for all Black, Asian, and other minority ethnic students, and can also contribute to diminishing racial prejudice through better understanding. Universities could become more enticing for Black, Asian, and other minority ethnic students if they see modules that correctly reflects them.* Ismail

> *It is so important that the curriculum is representative, because without broader and more representative perspectives of criminology being taught to students, white students like myself will continue to not recognise or question the problem because it simply appears to be the norm. It is the responsibility of universities as educators to provide students with this information so they can question the status quo, which now unquestioningly pushes a white, Western, male perspective. If criminology had been more representative and diverse it could have helped me and others like me to begin to question problems in our society and the criminal justice system. Criminology students will be the future professionals and will be creating policies within the criminal justice system. Without these students being given the knowledge and tools to question and challenge the injustices within these institutions, they will not be in a position to accurately represent and advocate for marginalised groups.* Jodie

The Importance of Critical Information Literacy for Criminology

While critical information literacy evidently offers a tangible, and valuable, way of improving inclusion and intersectionality within curricula across Higher Education, arguably it is particularly important to criminology. Indeed, this chapter has explored the historically marginalised voices which are often missing from criminology curricula, those of the global south, BME communities, non-males, and LGBTQ+ communities, and the damaging impact this can have on the learning experiences and development of critical thought for students. The subject matter of criminology, broadly focusing on justice, punishment, and power, affords opportunities to illuminate, as well as work to overcome, inequalities and injustices experienced by oppressed groups and individuals (Cohen, 1988; Davis, 1998; DeKeseredy, 2010). Arguably, this interdisciplinary and advocacy character of criminology is unique. However, the philosophical concepts of punishment, crime, human rights, justice, and modernity on which criminology rests are historically, and contemporarily, shaped by white (largely male) perspectives (McEachrane, 2014). This is not necessarily a call for traditional criminological perspectives to be denied or eradicated, rather that criminology curricula and

pedagogy must recognise the role it plays in reproducing white privilege and gender norms, as well as harmful discourses and stereotypes (Peters, 2018; Salami, 2015). Critical information literacy, which works to disassemble hierarchical knowledge by incorporating all voices relevant to a topic, offers an effective approach to overcome the inequality of perspectives within criminology curricula.

Indeed, critical information literacy centralises the inclusion of authentic and relatable perspectives, ideas, and literature within modules and degree programmes, supporting students and staff to engage fully in the curriculum—enabling collaboration, and active rather than passive learning (Freire, 1970). Embedding critical information literacy within criminology curricula provides a way for criminology students and staff to actively engage in the way criminological knowledge has developed and act against the harmful discourses and social divisions criminology often reproduces (Agozino, 2003; Boukli & Kotzé, 2018; Davis, 2003; Moore, 2016). The range of voices welcomed by critical information literacy provides opportunities for both students and staff to connect with various perspectives relevant to the criminological issues they are studying or teaching. In doing so, encouraging all involved to reflect on voices which resonate with them, as well as those which do not. Arguably, enabling individuals to recognise their own positionality and become open and empathetic to the experiences of others. Such awareness and understanding, supported by critical information literacy, reduces the 'othering' which is common to curricula in neoliberalised HE, particularly in criminology due to its subject matter (Peters, 2018). Thus, a critical approach to criminology education, can equip students with the knowledge, confidence, and skills to question harmful discourses and stereotypes in their curriculum as well as in their own personal and political lives outside of the academy (Barton et al., 2010).

Concluding Thoughts

This chapter has argued that there is a need for criminology as a discipline, and for us as educators to develop and embed critical information literacy practices within our teaching and our curriculum. We have

recognised the deep structural inequalities in the sector which inhibit decolonising and the embedding of critical information literacy. We have reflected on our experiences as academics and students, and in so doing we recognise this as a starting point. The issues addressed here are broader than the curriculum; for those working in academia we need to reflect on our own research, writing, and peer-review practices too. It is about developing a critical consciousness or conscientisation (see Freire, 1970 and Hooks, 1994): a more diverse curriculum in some modules or some degrees is not an end, it needs to be joined by meaningful praxis. The authors also acknowledge the necessity of developing a community of practice themselves, whereby librarians, other professional staff, academics, and students learn from each other, develop, and recognise the links between pedagogy and information literacy and use this to design and deliver our criminology curriculum.

Top Tips: Embedding Critical Information Literacy

- We highly recommend building your own community of practice within criminology departments. This should include library and professional staff across the university in order to develop a community of practice around curriculum design and delivery, and also as part of staff development whereby all are learning from each other.
- Critical information literacy as a skill needs to be taught to (and co-developed with) students when they first start their degree programme.
- Pedagogical tools, such as the intersectionality matrix (Stockdale & Sweeney, 2019) can be used to reflect on reading list content and also as a prompt for students and staff to reflect on as part of their writing practices.
- An equal curriculum is imperative to ensure all students are included in their criminology degree programmes. Not addressing the colonial roots of criminology, teaching race and gender as separate issues to prisons and punishment, not including voices from female, indigenous, non-western, working-class, non-binary and LGBTQ+ authors effectively excludes our students.

- Teaching and learning provide opportunities for transformation. As educators in a discipline that claims to challenge power structures and address inequalities at its heart, we need to actively do this ourselves and encourage our students to explore and disrupt the structures within the discipline that propagate this. Developing their/our critical information literacy, and in doing so their/our critical thought and criminology imagination, is essential.

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