

Decolonising Criminology? We're Not Interested: Indigenous Refusal and the Limits of the Discipline

Juan Tauri¹ ¹ The University of Melbourne

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Over recent years, long-standing tensions between criminology and Indigenous scholars in Australasia have intensified. These tensions arise from several sources: the continued support some non-Indigenous criminologists give to the settler-colonial state and its criminalisation of Indigenous peoples; conflicting views about how research methods, ethics, and theory should engage with Indigenous knowledge; and the racism, silencing, and marginalisation experienced by Indigenous scholars within the discipline. I begin by outlining the causes and features of this contentious relationship between criminology and Indigenous scholars. I then give attention to “Southern Criminology,” arguing that while presented as a “post-colonial turn,” this movement mirrors existing forms of exclusion and silencing by ignoring decades of decolonising work led by Indigenous Peoples. Following, I consider recent gestures by the Australian and New Zealand Society of Criminology towards Indigenous inclusion. While these are welcomed, they also echo familiar “indigenising” tactics that placate calls for Indigenous self-determination and authority yet leave untouched the structural violence of settler-colonial states such as Australia and New Zealand. I conclude by asking whether criminology can truly decolonise, arguing that until it confronts its deep entanglement with colonisation, any reconciliation with Indigenous scholars will remain rhetorical rather than real.

Introduction

Over the past few years Indigenous scholars have been asked by the Australian and New Zealand Society of Criminology (ANZSOC) officials and other non-Indigenous criminologists how to “repair” a fractured relationship and “decolonise” the discipline. These requests have come about because of a recent rise in disagreements and conflicts between non-Indigenous and Indigenous criminologists in Australia and New Zealand. Decades of problematic behaviour, exclusion, and marginalisation of the work of Indigenous scholars makes it difficult to respond to these requests: ostensibly, how to “decolonise” the discipline, in short form. Before addressing these issues, I wish to address an important question posed by Indigenous scholars: is it possible for a discipline that evolved during the colonial project, a project many of its practitioners serve through their contractual relationships(s) with the settler-colonial state, to decolonise criminology (see Agozino, 2003;

Cunneen & Tauri, 2017; Porter et al., 2022 for discussion of this question)? Secondly, due to historical but also more recent episodes of disrespect and silencing behaviour directed at Indigenous scholars, Indigenous knowledge, and Indigenous communities by members of the criminological community in Australia, should we, as Indigenous scholars, offer our emotional and intellectual energy and time to do so?

The Relationship Between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Criminology in the Antipodes

The problematic relationship between the discipline (in general) and its Indigenous practitioners has a long history, one that has recently elevated to a level that puts continued participation of Indigenous scholars in criminology at risk. The difficulties with members of the discipline are reflected in the ways practitioners, and the discipline more generally, in the form of its representative body, the Australian New Zealand Society of Criminology (ANZSOC) presents itself publicly. For example, I attended four Australian New Zealand Society of Criminology conferences between 1997 and 2012, and on three occasions I was the only Indigenous scholar involved, to my knowledge, and the only one whose research involved direct engagement with Indigenous individuals and/or communities (see Deckert, 2014, 2024 for analysis of non-engaging methodologies in criminology). For Indigenous scholars, the absence of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, and Māori voices on panels, paper presentations, and at the conferences generally is noticeable and concerning, given the general state of relations between Indigenous Peoples and the criminal justice system. However, it must be acknowledged that during this period the lack of Indigenous scholars could be explained, in part, by the fact few were working in the discipline.

This is not the case today. Over the past fifteen years, the number of Indigenous criminologists or those that work into spaces of criminal justice in Australia and New Zealand has grown substantially. There are now more Indigenous scholars and significantly more Indigenous scholarship, including a large body of work critiquing post-positivistic methodologies and ethics protocols that provide guidance to non-Indigenous researchers about how to “do better research *with us*” (see AIATSIS, 2020; Bargallie et al., 2020; Tauri, 2014). Yet, few non-Indigenous criminologists engage with Indigenous research or communities in any meaningful way, a fact no longer explainable by the relative lack of work in these areas by Indigenous scholars.

This situation is no longer excusable or acceptable. Nor can ANZSOC or non-Indigenous criminologists claim ignorance of these issues, as Indigenous scholars have aired these with members of the discipline and ANZSOC on recent occasions through publications, conferences, and seminars. And yet, non-Indigenous scholars and mainstream journals in Australia continue to disregard or dismiss the value of Indigenous knowledge or misrepresent our research and critique of mainstream criminology (see Carrington, 2021;

Weatherburn, 2010, 2014; Weatherburn et al., 2024). Others continue to publish materials that criminalise and marginalise Indigenous and other peoples of colour (see Porter et al., 2022 for a detailed examination of this issue), and the marginalisation of Indigenous knowledge and scholarship continues.

As a result, few of us now belong to ANZSOC or attend the annual ANZSOC conference. While I am not a spokesperson for Indigenous scholars, it is clear many now choose instead to support Indigenous conferences such as the annual event hosted by the North American Indian Studies Association (NAISA), and regular symposia organised by Macquarie University's Centre for Global Indigenous Futures. Furthermore, a significant body of work produced by this growing Indigenous cohort critiques the discipline and the conduct of its devotees, laying bare Indigenous issues with criminology and its representative body (e.g. Porter et al., 2022; Tauri, 2013, 2017; Watego, 2022).

The Colonising Turn in Australasian Criminology

To understand the tension that exists between Australasian criminology and many Indigenous scholars, a crucial starting point is the preponderance of criminological research designed and oriented to support crime control processes of the settler-colonial state. These processes are part of the continued massive overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples in the criminal justice system, but also the social construction of “deficit based” models and assumptions of Indigenous Peoples and communities. Furthermore, many criminologists remain fixated on individual explanations of offending that mirror the ideological foundations of settler-colonial policy, while ignoring the enduring impacts of colonialism, institutional bias, and racism (especially from within the criminal justice system), and the work of Indigenous scholars in addressing these issues (see Marie, 2010; Weatherburn, 2014; Weatherburn et al., 2024 for examples of this approach; also see Tauri, 2016, for discussion of “silencing” criminological discourse and actions towards Indigenous peoples). And then there is the colonising attitude of some practitioners towards Indigenous scholars and scholarship, that makes reconciliation difficult to contemplate (e.g. Carrington, 2021; Carrington et al., 2018; Hill, 2020; Weatherburn, 2014, p. 2024). Colonising attitudes include ignoring Indigenous scholarship when writing about Indigenous issues (Anthony et al., 2021), speculating about Indigenous lifeworlds or experiences of crime control, such as police contact, without having researched with Indigenous Peoples on the issue (Cunneen, 2006), and creating barriers to publication of Indigenous scholarship (Tauri, 2016); all of which coalesce to form a body of techniques for silencing Indigenous voices and scholarship and promoting the hegemony of non-Indigenous criminologists.

For an exemplar of the *silencing strategies* that exist in contemporary Australasian criminology toward Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous scholarship, I turn my attention here to the rise, development, and growing popularity of what is called “Southern Criminology.”

Southern Criminology – Old Wine in a New Bottle?

Advocates of Southern Criminology have made several significant claims about this latest criminological movement. These claims include strategies to “decolonise the discipline” by challenging its Northern, western-centric biases (e.g. Brown, 2018; Carrington et al., 2016); situating analysis of crime in the periphery on theoretical formulations emanating from “the South” (Fraser et al., 2017; Matthews, 2017); and challenging the largely one-directional flow of knowledge production and legitimization from North to South – all in order to attain a more rounded criminological knowledge of crime and social harm. Here, “Southern” criminologists have also critiqued the prevalence of crime-reduction strategies transported from the North to the periphery such as psycho-therapeutic programs, risk based rehabilitative models, and policing strategies without consideration by policymakers of local context and “cultural” suitability (Travers, 2017).

Thus, a key motivation for the devolution of Southern Criminology is the argument that criminological theories and concepts produced in the North have dominated the discipline, to the detriment of understanding and responding to crime and social harm that occurs in the South (Carrington et al., 2019; Goyes, 2015). Goyes (2018, p. 337) has underlined the emancipatory ethos of this “new” approach in arguing:

[R]ather than creating divisions, southern criminologies seek to build epistemological bridges, based on the premise that an important form of decolonial action is achieved by ‘affecting and transforming the contents of Western science, through the use of knowledge, realities and cosmologies’ of the south.

Founding members of Southern Criminology also claim that one of its primary purposes is to work as a “decolonising project,” making the discipline more relevant to “the South.” For example, Carrington (2021) has claimed, “As an empirical project, epistemologies of the south seek to cultivate knowledges of and from the periphery that have been relatively invisible or marginalized.” She thus asserts, “One of the emphases is to reinsert the historical legacies of colonialism back into analysis of contemporary crime and justice” (Carrington, 2021).

Few critical criminologists, including Indigenous scholars, would disagree with these claims – other than to perhaps note these are not new critiques. A divergence emerges, however, in what to do about these problems. In a 2016 article published in the *British Journal of Criminology*, Carrington and colleagues argued:

[Southern criminology] seek[s] to modify the criminological field to make it more inclusive of histories and patterns of crime, justice and security outside the global North . . . [It] seeks to work with and complement—to *Southernise*—other established and emerging fields in criminology: feminist, green, postcolonial, queer, rural, cultural and Asian." (Carrington et al., 2016, p. 11; emphasis added).

However, the supposed emancipatory ethos of this new “movement” has been undermined by continued denigration of “other criminologies” by leading members of Southern Criminology. For example, referring to “other” decolonial criminologies, Carrington (2021) contends that:

Unlike the negative decolonial projects (which have their place), the project of southerni[s]ing criminology does not set out to denigrate the contribution of metropolitan criminology – or to damn all criminologists as ‘racist’, ‘westerncentric’ ‘control freaks’ on some sort of ‘bandwagon’. Rather than creating divisions the projects of southern criminologies seek to bridge global divides precisely as form of a decolonial praxis in action.

As Anthony et al. (2021) argue, Carrington offers no evidence to support these statements about Indigenous and other post-colonial criminologies – and indeed criminologists – contradicting her claim that the movement she champions is attempting to bridge the North-South divide. Rather, Carrington (2021) calls out purportedly “negative” decolonial projects and alludes to the work of specific scholars (Biko Agozino in particular) while dismissing these wholesale as “having their place,” although clearly not a place in Southern Criminology. Anthony et al. (2021, para 17) thus rightly critique Carrington when they note, “In other words, without offering evidence to support her claims – these claims amount to an unevidenced rejection of alternative knowledges.”

Furthermore, Carrington gives no clear explanation for dismissing or excluding the works and voices of purportedly “negative” decolonial projects and related scholars, leaving only speculation about how and why these are excluded. What is clearer here, however, is an attempt to gatekeep “negative” criminologists, scholars, and activists – including the plethora of Indigenous scholars who rightly focus on issues of systemic racism and bias, the relationship between the power of the settler-colonial state and the legitimisation of knowledge produced on its behalf, and the silencing of lived experiences by such Indigenous Peoples and their communities.

This is ironic, given claims that a defining characteristic of “epistemologies of the South” is that they are “born in struggle” (Santos, 2014), a position often claimed by leading architects of Southern Criminology (Carrington et al., 2016; 2018). And yet, in her 2021 reaffirmation of the purpose and

focus of Southern Criminology, Carrington offers the type of unsupported claims about “other” criminologies discussed previously. These “other criminologies,” such as Indigenous criminology and Agozino’s (2003, 2004) counter-colonial criminology, emerged out of struggles of Indigenous and other peoples of colour who live and survive in the midst of the (ongoing) colonial project. In other words, as a significant figure in the movement, Carrington’s attitude towards “other criminologies”, replicates some of the fundamental causes of the conflict that exist between the discipline and Indigenous scholars across Australasia, including the misrepresentation of Indigenous critiques of criminology, and colonialist attitudes towards Indigenous knowledge.

The Epistemicide of Southern Criminology

To fully understand Carrington’s “southern” attitude towards Indigenous and other post-colonial perspectives, we can turn to the concept of epistemicide deployed by Dimou in her 2022 critique of the movement. Dimou (2021, p. 434) defines epistemicide as “[t]he active destruction of different ways of being, knowing and thinking through practices of delegitimation, denial, obliteration and suppression”. Dimou (2021, p. 436, emphasis added) reveals the epistemic nature of Carrington and colleagues’ approach when she states that:

By presenting Southern criminology as the latest intellectual advancement, while omitting previous works and engaging in under exploration and misrepresentation of the ‘decolonial option’, Southern criminology – specifically, that of Carrington and colleagues... *engages in unconscious epistemicide* by downplaying, ignoring, and silencing other ways of understanding that could prove significant allies in decolonising criminology (emphasis added).

Dimou (2021, p. 446: emphasis added) further argues:

Carrington’s choice of words, such as North and South, understates past and present structures of oppression. A telling omission in her language (and analysis) is the lack of reference to geo-political divisions of “colonisers and the colonised.” By *failing to confront ongoing colonising relationships*, the type of ‘Southern Criminology’ Carrington champions cannot challenge this divide. This is highlighted in its main mission to ‘democratise’ knowledge by promoting a partnership between the North and South through simply expanding ‘the repertoire of criminological knowledges.’

The imperialist undertones of Southern Criminology observed by Dimou have also been addressed by Anthony et al. (2021) who have argued:

[C]olonialism not only meant the imposition of Western authority over [I]ndigenous lands, [I]ndigenous modes of production and [I]ndigenous law and government, but the imposition of Western authority over all aspects of [I]ndigenous knowledges, languages, and cultures.

By making unevidenced claims against post-colonial, counter-colonial and Indigenous criminologies exposed previously, Carrington appears to be *telling us where we belong* in the hierarchy of decolonising approaches. And, given the exaggerated claims made against our scholarship, that place appears to be one of subservience to the latest in a long line of western-dominated perspectives on crime and social harm.

I have focussed on Southern Criminology not an emblematic of mainstream criminology in Australia and New Zealand, but rather for its proposed focus on “decolonising” criminology. While Carrington and colleagues have sought to gatekeep those that belong in such “decolonising” criminologies, as I have noted above, much of criminology in Australia and New Zealand has largely *ignored* such concerns until quite recently. Given these drivers of the conflict that exist between Australasian criminology and many Indigenous scholars, I ask whether it is possible for the discipline to decolonise, and indeed whether Indigenous scholars, practitioners, and activists even care.

Can Criminology Decolonise?

The short answer to the question “can criminology decolonise” is yes. All the adherents of mainstream criminology in Australasia need to do is replicate what governments in the region have done for decades when faced with Indigenous critique – namely, define for themselves what decolonisation means, and implement strategies designed to maintain the status quo rather than respond to concerns expressed by Indigenous scholars and communities (see Tauri, 2017; Tauri & Webb, 2012 for discussion of this approach). The key question is whether the discipline can decolonise in ways that are *meaningful to Indigenous scholars, practitioners, and communities*. Given the issues discussed earlier, this is highly unlikely. Recent attempts by ANZSOC to respond to ongoing conflict with Indigenous scholars does little to assuage our feelings of unease about that organisation, or the discipline it represents.

Transforming ANZSOC

In a recent consultation paper on enhancing its relationship with Indigenous scholars and communities, ANZSOC (2022, p. 3) acknowledged its failure to “be inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori within ANZSOC’s membership, executive, activities and publications and has failed to support and advocate for First Nations communities in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.” In response to this recognition, ANZSOC established a sub-committee tasked with examining known concerns and to

make recommendations to rectify these. The following is a compendium of the range of actions ANZSOC (2022, pp. 5–19) offered in their consultation paper, for consideration by the wider criminology community in Australasia:

- Modify ANZSOC's *Rules of Incorporation* to acknowledge the First Peoples of Australia and New Zealand.
- Actively promote representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori in the Society by holding formal positions (i.e., in the Committees of Management).
- The creation of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori External Reference Group or Steering Committee.
- Increase the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori peoples in the justice profession and academia, and mentorship support.
- Nominate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori scholars, and scholars from other diverse backgrounds for positions as Editors, Assistant Editors, Editorial Board members and other positions of management on the ANZSOC Journal (*The Journal of Criminology*).
- Development of a truth-telling forum that “would demonstrate ANZSOC’s commitment to justice and safeguarding self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori scholars and Communities across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand”.

While ANZSOC officials are to be commended for the range of issues and responses highlighted above, they represent what Indigenous scholars commonly refer to as “Indigenising products” – i.e. responses that serve the needs of organisations like ANZSOC rather than those of Indigenous scholars and communities (Tauri, 2016). Indigenising products represent a disconnect between how predominantly white organisations define (and in some cases reframe, repackage, and re-present) problems it has with Indigenous scholars, and acceptable solutions to them, against Indigenous focus on the systemic annihilation of racism and white privilege.

Most of these activities are the academic equivalent of Indigenisation projects implemented by settler-colonial states including New Zealand, Australia, and Canada in the 1980s, in response to aggressive Indigenous critiques of the racialisation of crime control processes. These Indigenisation projects focused on a) increasing brown bodies working in the “system”, and b) utilising “acceptable” cultural artefacts that are subsumed within Eurocentric crime control processes (see Cunneen & Tauri, 2017 for an overview of the

Indigenisation project in criminology and criminal justice). Both strategies focused on enabling the state to present itself as responsive to Indigenous concerns, whilst ensuring it retained hegemony over the crime control edifice.

Indigenous scholars have experienced a range of “Indigenising” strategies and tactics that ensure the continued hegemony of the “Western” discipline and the privileging of the theories, research, and pedagogies of its adherents. Popular “silencing” or limiting practices include tokenistic inclusion of “Indigenous” issues as distinct from criminological research and (white) theory in criminological curriculums (when included at all); framing colonisation in teaching or research as a past historical event (thus debasing claims of Indigenous scholars on colonisation as an ongoing reality); and of course, hiring one Indigenous scholar who thereafter is restricted in their ability to design and implement a range of subjects across the curriculum, while also being expected to sit on every committee that requires a brown or black body.

Does all this recent activity towards Indigenous inclusion and privileging “southern” perspectives mean that contemporary, Australasian criminology is capable of decolonising? From a critical Indigenous standpoint, no, clearly not. Instead, criminology has a lot of work to do, including:

- acknowledging its past and present role the colonial project and the existence and impact of racism and white privilege;
- critically scrutinising, and where necessary holding to account, members who perpetrate racism;
- calling out those who continue to utilise non-engaging methods while presenting themselves as “experts” on Indigenous lived experiences; and
- surrendering authority over decision-making on key policy and practice issues to Indigenous Peoples.

Ongoing Barriers to Decolonising Criminology

Decolonisation is much larger than criminology as a discipline. Indeed, some of the largest challenges involve the continued push for treaty recognition in Australia, treaty settlement in New Zealand, and corresponding forms of increased self-determination and authority over matters of crime and social harms.

However, contemporary criminology in Australasia faces several challenges if it is to repair its relationship with Indigenous scholars and communities. The first is to recognise historical and present forms of gatekeeping in terms of what “counts” as legitimate knowledge within criminology and ways this, in turn, continues to serve a colonial state that criminalises and

marginalises Indigenous Peoples and other peoples of colour. This is not only an historical issue, but a contemporary reality. For example, Griffith University, the largest criminology programme in Australia with over 50 criminologists – many of whom conduct research *about* Indigenous Peoples – exhibits a decidedly poor record of researching *with* Indigenous peoples or engaging with Indigenous methodologies and forms of knowledge. However, Griffith is only the largest by number in a problem replicated across many criminology programs throughout Australasia. These research programs are heavily geared toward procuring and producing work that legitimises and refines the policies of the colonial state, with academic prestige awarded through such financial accolades—a negative feedback system that ensures the continued sidelining, if not outright silencing, of critical Indigenous perspectives.

Indeed, a related barrier to decolonisation is the prevalence of what Deckert (2014) calls “non-engaging methodologies.” As a result, a significant amount of work published by non-Indigenous scholars on Indigenous issues is produced without the use of direct, engaging methods. In research design and ethical approvals, this is often referred to in Australia as the “any Elders will do” approach, where demonstration of such engagement (when required at all) is turned into a tick-box exercise. Indigenous participation is often tokenistic, with individual Indigenous scholars (often early career researchers) asked or pushed to come on board larger research projects already developed by more senior non-Indigenous criminologists. Unfortunately, this lack of direct engagement fails to stop some Australasian criminologists from speculating on the Indigenous experience, or the causes of Indigenous offending (e.g. Weatherburn et al., 2024).

And then there is the issue of *what is left out of analysis of Indigenous experiences of crime control*. Far too much work published by Australasian criminologists ignores that which makes it, and the sources of their external grants, uncomfortable. For this reason, the colonial question as a *present reality*, and not simply a past event, is rarely engaged with meaningfully in research on the “Indigenous problem” that is the significant Indigenous overrepresentation in the criminal justice system (e.g. Marie, 2010; Weatherburn, 2014; Weatherburn et al., 2024. See also the well-known “debate” between Cunneen, 2006 and Weatherburn et al., 2003). Rather, Indigenous overrepresentation and criminal injustices towards Indigenous Peoples more broadly are framed as problems created by other “bad” white people in the past, with little reflection or analysis of ways that contemporary criminology and correlated policies and practices remain a central feature of present forms of ongoing colonisation (see Ironfield, 2025 in this issue for further discussion of this problem).

A similar approach is taken to colonial institutions such as policing. Indigenous scholars and communities have long recognised the reality of racism in Australasian police institutions. So why is there so little attention to systemic racism and bias within the administrative and authoritarian strands of Australasian criminology? Don Weatherburn, a leading Australian proponent of this approach, has argued that his research shows systematic racism or bias by the police are not significant factors in the arrest, sentencing, or imprisonment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (Weatherburn, 2014; Weatherburn et al., 2003). However, what is clearly missing from this type of research is the historical context, the racialisation of policing in Australia since its inception, any substantial observational research on police–Aboriginal contact and, most importantly, meaningful engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about their experiences of policing (Tauri, 2013, 2017; see also Cunneen's 2006 response to Weatherburn et al.'s approach to the issue of police bias).

Indeed, given the prevalence of more sophisticated data collection methods in countries such as the UK and especially the US—where systemic racism and bias are well-documented factors in differential contact, arrest, and sentencing—it is difficult to accept that such dynamics are absent in the Australasian context. Rates of overrepresentation are comparable for Māori to those of African Americans, and far higher for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Yet the approach of Weatherburn and others reflects a crude “null hypothesis” model, whereby Indigenous Peoples must prove the existence of racism—even when the official data relied upon by such administrative scholars are defunct in capturing these realities, or worse, designed to mask them (Knox et al., 2020). This approach assumes, a priori, that the broad and consistent experiences of police racism and bias reported by Indigenous Peoples and communities are less legitimate, or even irrelevant, compared with the administrative data produced by settler-colonial justice agencies.

Lastly, the significant divide between Indigenous scholars and mainstream criminology in both countries, but especially Australia, was the catalyst for the decision made in 2021 by numerous Indigenous scholars to avoid further engagement with ANZSOC, including its conference and its journal (now called *The Journal of Criminology*). This decision was made because of the long-standing issues discussed earlier in this article. So, when we hear criminologists working in settler-colonial jurisdictions claim that “criminology has to decolonise,” I am only one of many Indigenous scholars who shrugs my shoulders in response in asking, “but what do *they* mean by decolonisation?”

Why Should Indigenous Criminologists Care?

An important question to ask at this point, is do Indigenous criminologists care whether the discipline decolonises? Some might, but the large majority of those that I engage with do not. Many of us, including those working directly in areas of criminology and criminal justice, do not need the discipline, or its representative body ANZSOC, to do the vital work and change we seek for our Peoples and communities. Our Peoples and communities are our foremost priority, the institutions that sustain and support us second, and attempts to reform or “decolonise” criminology a distant third, when this is considered at all. The issue we have with assisting criminology to decolonise is the one of inevitable *hybridisation* and *Indigenisation*, with our black/brown bodies and our cultural contexts being subsumed/consumed and enveloped within a Eurocentric ontology hell-bent on ensuring the hegemony of white privilege. Such hybridity, often touted as providing opportunities for opening formal structures to “the possibility of the Indigenous,” and of *incremental changes*, have done little for Indigenous Peoples in Australasia – indeed within such emerging approaches the incarceration rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders continue to increase. Rather, for us, such hybridity represents what the esteemed Māori legal scholar Moana Jackson once described to the author as “death by incrementalism” (personal communication).

For all the reasons discussed above, I withhold advocacy for “decolonising” criminology. Rather, like an increasing number of Indigenous scholars, I support the ongoing development and growth of a *critical Indigenous criminology*, and the continued growth of our own representative bodies. Our energy is best directed towards the needs of our communities, not at assisting non-Indigenous criminologists in addressing and fixing the problems of mainstream criminology. This is especially true of those criminologists who have done little to demonstrate a willingness to reflect on their own research and practice, or to risk even a modicum of the irrespectability so well-known and understood by Indigenous scholars, practitioners, and activists. To quote the well-known Māori film director Taika Waititi when asked “can Hollywood decolonise?” – “You fucken broke it, so you fix it.”

Until criminology rids itself the tendency to hide behind deficit-based models that start with the “Indigenous problem” and not the “colonisation problem” – including support of the violence of settler-colonial crime control – critical Indigenous scholars must continue to be careful about the extent to which we enrich and indeed legitimise criminology with our experiences, our scholarship, and our support. Here, this is not a rejection of mainstream, post-positivistic approaches. After all, to paraphrase Carrington, they have their place. Indeed, I have referenced several such examples throughout this article. Yet these examples reflect the margins of such epistemological approaches where non-Indigenous researchers have earnestly engaged with

Indigenous scholars and communities, and where the starting point of research is a critical orientation towards the “colonial” problem (as opposed to the “Indigenous” problem).

At present, however, there is little evidence that the discipline “down under” is capable or willing to take such steps. Rather, it is evident that many non-Indigenous scholars and their corresponding professional bodies conflate “Indigenisation activities” or token involvement of Indigenous scholars with Indigenous empowerment and self-determination. If this is an unsettling criticism for some readers, I ask them to consider the possibility of a critical Indigenous scholar – indeed *any* Indigenous scholar – serving as the head of ANZSOC. Could this happen in the near future? Or is the reality of token awards and incremental roles in “diversity” and “inclusion” the more likely path as mainstream criminology in Australasia continues to be populated by non-Indigenous and mostly white scholars whose work continues to churn out purported new avenues to fix Indigenous Peoples and communities?

What is taking place now is thus less “decolonisation,” and more the criminological equivalent of the beads and blankets strategies of the old colonial project. Whether criminology can decolonise is, in the end, of secondary importance to *our project*, which is to facilitate Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty.

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