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Chapter 27

Antifeminism and backlash: A critical criminological imperative

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## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

**Trump:** Yeah, that's her. With the gold. I better use some Tic Tacs just in case I start kissing her. You know, I'm automatically attracted to beautiful — I just start kissing them. It's like a magnet. Just kiss. I don't even wait. And when you're a star, they let you do it. You can do anything.

**Bush:** Whatever you want.

**Trump:** Grab 'em by the pussy. You can do anything. (New York Times transcript, 2016)

The 2016 presidential campaign, culminating with the election of reality television personality Donald Trump over former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, pushed vitriolic forms of sexism, racism, and xenophobia back into the mainstream of American culture. While the most extreme rhetoric may have come from the right, the left was not immune to the existential threat of a female president. The right was not alone in producing and ignoring the flagrant sexism of the campaign. Many on the left alleged that gender had nothing to do with either their personal political affinities or the election outcome, preferring to focus on narratives privileging economic alienation (Hustvedt, 2017). The hyperbolic demonisation of Hillary Clinton and her supporters from the left spawned the label "BernieBros," echoing sexism in the American New Left and civil rights movements (Breines, 1988).

Trump took power in the context of overtly sexist commentary and revelations of an alarming catalog of candidates' and appointees' personal histories of violence and abuse against women. Once in office, the Trump administration immediately began to shore up structural

discrimination via attacks on women's reproductive rights, health care for pregnant women, implementing new forms of racialised discrimination against immigrants, and support for failed "tough on crime" policies. Rolling back the clock on incremental gains made over decades, the administration undertook wholesale destruction of programs and institutions intended to ameliorate the harms of inequality. While these actions will disproportionately harm poor people, they are also clearly about more than just economic alienation. Racism, sexism, racialised xenophobia, and transphobia were all actively foregrounded in the campaign. In fact, normalization of these forms of discrimination was arguably Trump's most articulate platform position. The struggle to deny, justify, and structurally reinforce racism, sexism, and classism bridges the gap between neoliberal and neoconservative factions which comprise the most recent iteration of right wing politics.

Reacting against Obama's eight years in office and the narrowly averted threat of a female president, the Trump administration is a virulent yet mainstream manifestation of what Kimmel has called "aggrieved entitlement" (2013), wherein white men feel like victims of challenges to patriarchal privilege. The involvement of mainstream politicians in antifeminist activism at the local level has also come to light. For example, a journalist discovered that New Hampshire State Representative Robert Fisher founded the misogynist reddit "Red Pill" (Bacarisse, 2017). As news consumption tipped to digital and social media formats, neoliberal appeals to formal equality merged with explicit attacks on social justice. The right reprised longstanding reversal tactics, claiming that efforts to address discrimination, or even identify it, are in fact symptoms of left intolerance and reverse discrimination (Moreton-Robinson, Casey, & Nicoll, 2008; Seidel, 1986).

Contemporary backlash has moved beyond efforts to enforce neoliberal calls for formal equality to denigrate the goal of social justice itself. This is a shift from earlier framings which pointed to the reduction in explicitly racist and sexist laws as evidence that anti-racist and feminist movements were no longer necessary. In criminology, attention to gender as a factor in crime and critiques of existing hierarchies of power have been targets of antifeminist backlash. The 2016 election cycle revealed connections between what many considered "fringe" backlash movements and mainstream American culture. Such reactionary politics are not unique to the United States, having been presaged by Brexit and accompanied by the rise of right wing political parties and misogyny around the world (Bachetta & Power, 2013; Hustvedt, 2017; Inglehart & Norris, 2016). While these developments are ripe for analysis, few critical criminologists have directly addressed the backlash against feminism or its connections to other social movements.

Some critical criminologists have called for greater scholarly attention to antifeminism (Chesney-Lind, 2006; Dragiewicz, 2009, 2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2016), racism (Alexander, 2010; Potter, 2008; Richie, 1996, 2012), hate crime (Chakraborti & Garland, 2015), and right wing nationalism (Winlow, Hall & Treadwell, 2017). Others have critiqued critical criminologists' failure to engage with feminist critiques and issues like violence against women and the family (Dragiewicz, 2011, 2014; Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 1991). Critical criminology is a potentially important location for the study of backlash phenomena, including antifeminism and its implications. Two important directions for critical criminology include examining antifeminist backlash by taking an intersectional approach and integrating the research on antifeminism, radicalization, and right wing extremism.

## Defining Antifeminist Backlash

Susan Faludi's (1991) book *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* argued that, "the last decade has seen a powerful counterassault on women's rights, a backlash, an attempt to retract the handful of hard-won victories that the feminist movement did manage to win for women" (p. xi). Faludi observed that backlash aimed to undo the changes wrought by feminism. It also blamed feminism for women's problems, as well as a host of other social ills. Rather than a new phenomenon, backlash is a "recurring feature in the history of feminism. Feminist successes have often been met, not only with resistance, but with renewed determination by patriarchal forces to maintain and increase the subordination of women" (Walby, 1993, p. 79).

Backlash is not simply the interaction of two opposing forces. Nor is it the juxtaposition of two similarly situated authorities or interests. Most often used by scholars to refer to conservative reaction against progressive social change (Thomas, 2008), backlash is a dynamic process that occurs in response to threats to the interests of the powerful. Activism by disadvantaged individuals or groups poses a challenge to existing power relations. Backlash is rooted in the members of the powerful group feeling that their privilege is imperiled (Mansbridge & Shames, 2008, p. 625). "Any change-oriented social movement challenges the vested interests of the leaders of major social institutions, who readily perceive threats to their privileged status. However, feminist movements in particular, because they challenge deeply embedded structures of privilege, elicit powerful reactions" (Chafetz & Dworkin, p. 38). Chafetz and Dworkin argue that backlash emerges in response to the successes of progressive social movements. While they

are a response to credible threats of social change, Mansbridge and Shames' emphasis on a *felt* loss of power is key. The rhetoric of the American right increasingly and explicitly frames the interests of the most powerful groups as under siege by social justice activists. The deeply felt threat posed by advocates of social justice is so central to right wing discourse that right wing activists have attempted to make SJW, an acronym for social justice warriors, into an insult. Hustvedt argues that,

Trumpism (and its populist relatives elsewhere) is a collective fantasy of humiliation that has genuine power, and it turns on contempt for the other that enhances a precarious perception of the self. Trump embodies the roiling insecurities that white people, especially white men, feel in a changing America, a growing sense of emasculation and impotence charged by a terror of sinking into the polluted swamp of the feminine. (2017, p. 2)

In the 2011 edition of the *Handbook of Critical Criminology*, I wrote that efforts to reaffirm structural inequalities had undergone a rhetorical transformation from the blatantly discriminatory laws and speech of yesteryear to more subtle efforts that appropriate the neoliberal language of formal equality (Dragiewicz, 2011). Accordingly, the most visible backlash efforts at that time promoted “blindness” of important cultural categories like race and gender as a solution to the social problems of sexism and racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; DeKeseredy & Dragiewicz, 2007; Ferber, 2007). The push to enforce formal equality in the context of pervasive and persistent structural inequality continues to reproduce injustice along the lines of gender, race, and class. The political climate in the United States and other countries

has shifted rapidly over the past few years, intensifying overt expressions of racialised misogyny and multiplying the harm of threats via digital media.

Backlash works by simultaneously denying and justifying social inequality. This involves the individualization of problems that progressive social movements sought to radically contextualize. In effect, backlash rhetoric seeks to sever the personal from the political. Ann Cudd argues that individualizing inequality obscures the nature of oppression, which affects individuals as members of groups that experience invidious discrimination (2002). The context of group-based oppression and privilege is essential to understanding how demands that we ignore existing inequalities feed the backlash. Cudd writes, “that progress harms some identifiable group that previously enjoyed an unjustified advantage, sows the seeds of backlash” (2002, p. 8).

It is important to clarify that backlash does not refer to any reaction against social change. A key component of backlash is the desire to return to aspects of an idealised past in which structural inequality was normalised. Accordingly, while social change is sometimes described as a pendulum, and backlash as a neutralising correction to swinging "too far," backlash does not refer to the interaction of two similarly situated forces (Dragiewicz, 2012, p. 280). The midpoint between extreme gender inequality and gender equality is not neutral, just as the midpoint between racism and racial equality is not neutral. While efforts to achieve social justice or equality can be conceived of on a continuum from more to less equal, the neutral point is the equitable end of the continuum rather than the middle. Thus, backlash is a reaction against what Hawkesworth calls "emancipatory political objectives" (1999, p. 135) rather than the reversal of social hierarchies.

Violence in response to the threat of feminism is often portrayed as aberrant, extremist, or historical. Critical criminologists have worked to shift thinking about crime to challenge the idea that violence is necessarily a sign of deviance or alienation from society. As critical criminologists have observed, much violence is both produced by and productive of masculinity (see Messerschmidt & Tomsen, in press, this *Handbook*). Indeed, norms against hitting girls rest closely alongside imperatives for men's capacity to use violence where appropriate. In addition, popular culture provides a laundry list of circumstances under which men's violence against women is justified (Greenblat, 1985).

Godenzi argued that antifeminist backlash is not as marginal as it may seem, "given that most people live in genderized societies, every man reacts to challenges of the existing order of the sexes" (1999, p. 385). Feminism sought to challenge patriarchy through the production of alternative narratives to counter the gendered status quo. Likewise, efforts to end violence against women resist patriarchy by authorizing woman-centered or feminist stories about men's violence against women. These narratives pose an implicit threat to patriarchy by revealing its negative influence on society. Although norms for female subordination and formal equality appear contradictory, they are utilized together in efforts to circumvent serious challenges to patriarchy. Antifeminists work to reinforce patriarchal norms even as they deny their existence (Dragiewicz, 2008; Girard, 2009; Mann, 2008). But gender is only one valence of social stratification. In order to understand antifeminist backlash it is necessary to address the ways that gendered justice is deeply marked by other categories of privilege and disadvantage including, but not limited to, race, nation, class, and sexuality.

What Does Backlash Have to Do With Critical Criminology?



Feminist criminology grew out of the broader women's movement and the voids in early criminology. Smart wrote about the "overwhelming lack of interest in female criminality displayed by established criminologists and deviancy theorists" she encountered while pursuing a Master's degree in criminology (1976, p. xiii). At the same time, Smart noted that the few publications available on the topic presented an "entirely uncritical attitude towards sexual stereotypes of women and girls," and presumed women's biologically derived inferiority in crime and delinquency as elsewhere in life (p. xiii). With few exceptions, when women were acknowledged at all, gendered cultural stereotypes and antifeminist ideology prevailed in early explanations of crime. Smart worried that the study of women and crime would be marginalized, and accommodated via token inclusion in criminology akin to that afforded "mentally abnormal offenders or twin studies." She also forecast the emergence of the moral panic about delinquent girls and violent women, noting that female criminality was likely to become the object of increasingly punitive attention by media and criminal justice systems (p. xiv). Smart argued that despite these risks, it was necessary to "critically challenge the emerging moral panic over the relationship of women's emancipation to increasing participation by women in criminal activity" (p. xv). Smart's prescient remarks challenge the notion that resistance to feminism emerged recently, as a result of feminism having "gone too far." Rather, Smart's observations affirm Walby's (1993) articulation of antifeminist backlash as ongoing, historically contingent, and culturally contextualized efforts to reassert the patriarchal domination of women.

### Tactics of Antifeminist Backlash

A growing interdisciplinary literature analyses antifeminist backlash (Chunn, Boyd & Lessard, 2007; Cudd, 2002; Faludi, 1991; Newson, 1991; Oakley & Mitchell, 1997; Roman &

Eyre, 1997; Rossi, 2004; Storrs, 2007; Walby, 1993). Because violence against women and family law are core backlash issues, criminology has been a key location of antifeminist activism and one of the primary sites of research on it (Boyd, 2004; Burman, 2016; Caringella, 2009; Chesney-Lind, 2006; Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2007; Chesney-Lind & Jones, 2010; DeKeseredy, 1999, 2011; DeKeseredy & Dragiewicz, 2007; DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2005; Dragiewicz, 2000, 2008, 2010, 2011; Girard, 2009; Hacker, 2016; Halperin-Kaddari & Freeman, 2016 ; Koss & Cleveland, 1997; Mann, 2008, 2016; Menzies, 2007; Minaker & Snider, 1996; Rosen, Dragiewicz & Gibbs, 2009). Central tactics of antifeminist backlash include: efforts to reverse the changes wrought by feminism; blaming feminism for social problems; claims that feminism has “gone too far”; and attacks on women’s authority. In criminology, these goals are often accomplished through the misrepresentation of research; the decontextualization of violence; and attacks on services and laws that are useful to abused women (DeKeseredy, 1999; DeKeseredy & Dragiewicz, 2007; Dragiewicz, 2011). Central to backlash is the appropriation and reversal of the language, concepts, and complaints of progressive social movements. Reversal includes claims of reverse discrimination. Appropriation includes adopting reflexive critiques of flawed feminist, antiracist, and anti-capitalist movements and using them to attack the resources they provide.

#### An intersectional approach to antifeminist backlash

Criminological research on backlash and resistance to progressive social change is an area that would be enriched by intersectional analysis. The significance of cultural forms of backlash that extend beyond economic interests cannot be denied in the wake of the re-assertion of overtly white supremacist and sexist political movements across the globe. For example, communication research has investigated the impact of racist and xenophobic backlash on the

Bangladeshi diaspora in the United States. This research illustrates the inadequacy of binary understandings of identity for explaining the impact of bias, as well as the ways state surveillance and the criminal justice system are deployed against citizens and documented immigrants (Rahman, 2010). Likewise, religious and cultural studies scholars have documented the ways that "devaluing cultures and religions that are not Western [obscures] the forces in Western cultures and religions that continue to subordinate women and mask similar types of violence" (McKerl, 2007, p. 189).

As I have argued elsewhere (Dragiewicz 2012a), antifeminist backlash is entwined with broader resistance to feminism and other progressive social movements. Shifts in women's social and economic status pose challenges to the gendered status quo (Smart, 1979). The nature of these challenges differ across subcultural, geographic and historical locations. They have been accelerated by growing inequality due to negative developments like global capitalism and structural adjustment programs. Backlash also arises in response to positive developments such as increasing pressure for gender equality from global women's movements (Fulu & Miedema, 2015; Pease & Pringle, 2001; Walby, 2005). State adoption of antidiscrimination policy, for example via Title IX (United States Department of Justice, n.d.), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (UN Women, n.d.), and the Violence Against Women Act, have been met with resistance as well as support (Dragiewicz, 2008).

For example, some commentators have characterised shoring up the patriarchal gender order, alongside racial, sexual, and environmental orders, as an essential bulwark against the destruction of civilization<sup>i</sup>. At the same time, others have made paternalistic claims about the need to protect white women from the deprivations of patriarchal Muslim fundamentalism

(Serisier, 2008; Tufail & Poynting, 2016; Winlow, Hall, Treadwell, 2007). This rhetoric is reminiscent of gendered and racialised justifications for lynching, colonization, and anti-suffrage campaigns (Alexander, 2010; Barnard, 1993; Chafetz & Dworkin, 1987). Antifeminist backlash is incomprehensible without recognition of the intersectional nature of contemporary right wing politics. Intersectional scholarship indicates that women's experiences are not simply defined by essentialist identity categories. They are shaped by the interaction of structural, ideological, interpersonal factors. As Yuval-Davis explains,

Social divisions have organizational, intersubjective, experiential and representational forms, and this affects the ways we theorize them as well as the ways in which we theorize the connections between the different levels. In other words, they are expressed in specific institutions and organizations, such as state laws and state agencies, trade unions, voluntary organizations and the family. In addition, they involve specific power and affective relationships between actual people, acting informally and/or in their roles as agents of specific social institutions and organizations. (2006, p. 198)

The core of intersectional analysis is political. Significantly, intersectional analyses offer a more accurate account of the ways expectation and experience interact to shape crime and responses to it. For example, while men's feelings of shame due to being disrespected are a well documented contributing factor to men's violence (Gilligan, 2001), their empowerment relative to women begs the question why women aren't similarly triggered. Nor can deprivation or class explain the profoundly gendered social construction of race and ethnicity. For example, the projection of issues like sexism and violence against women onto racialized and foreign men are core tactics

of contemporary backlash movements (Serisier, 2008). These dynamics cannot be accounted for without attention to multiple forms of social stratification.

Gender is central to right wing politics as "constructs of gender are deployed to recuperate the virtue of white masculinity and femininity as the embodiment of the nation and civilization" (Moreton-Robinson, Casey & Nicoll, 2008, p. xiiv). White women's participation is a key strategy in the legitimization of right wing backlash movements. Laura Bush's faux feminist justification of the U.S. war on terror is one example of the ways white women serve as figureheads to selectively deploy putatively feminist goals as weapons in the culture war against Muslim Others (Serisier, 2008). Likewise, antifeminist women are promoted by antifeminist men's groups as if they somehow disprove the existence of sexism (DeKeseredy, Fabricius & Hall-Sanchez, 2015). Kandiyoti described white women's participation in antifeminist activism as a "patriarchal bargain" in which women assess and adopt the most appealing of limited options in patriarchal societies (Kandiyoti, 1998). The ways that women and men in different social locations deal with social change cannot be explained without reference to multiple social categories.

While feminist approaches to criminology have included efforts to direct attention to women as criminals, victims, and players in the criminal justice system, feminist criminologies need to go beyond the study of what are putatively "women's issues" to investigate the ways in which multiple identity categories intersect to shape experiences and perceptions of crime and justice (Potter, 2013). Domestic violence is a case in point. Despite 40 years of antiviolence advocacy and scholarship, battered women have greatly uneven access to resources to escape abuse. The profoundly racialized social construction of gender means that Black women and

girls who defend themselves against domestic violence frequently face extreme criminal justice penalties (Richie, 1996).

For example, new mother Marissa Alexander was sentenced to twenty years for firing a warning shot that harmed no one in an attempt to defend herself and her newborn from her abuser. Bresha Meadows has been incarcerated since she killed her abusive father in self defense at age fourteen. Richie argues that cases like these show how Black battered women's experiences are qualitatively different from men and white women's experiences, resulting in what she terms "gender entrapment" -- heightened vulnerability to violence and difficulty escaping from abusive relationships. Potter's (2008) research expanded on these findings, noting how racism shapes Black women's experiences of and reactions to violence as well as system and community responses to abused Black women. These cases show how despite shifts in public discourse about domestic violence, racism, sexism, and other identity categories continue to intersect to harm abused Black women.

The Alexander and Meadows cases may also be viewed as examples of antifeminist backlash against pressure to address violence against women as a crime problem. While civil and criminal legal changes have been implemented to improve criminal justice responses to domestic violence, there has been a backlash against these policies that has resulted in disproportionate arrests of women, dual charging, and punishing women for failure to protect their children from abusive partners. These effects weigh disproportionately on Black women who have historically been less likely to receive protection by the state and more likely to be subjected to state surveillance resulting in loss of custody of their children, incarceration, and receiving harsh sentences for defensive violence (Potter, 2008; Ritchie, 1996 & 2012). These realities point to the utility of intersectional approaches to understanding backlash.

## Connecting Antifeminist Backlash, Radicalization, and Other Forms of Extremism

Research on backlash and resistance to social change is interdisciplinary and largely unintegrated. In addition to the research specifically on antifeminist backlash and criminology discussed above, a significant body of work addresses resistance to organizational change and diversity initiatives in business (Hill, 2009; Kidder, Lankau, Chrobot-Mason, Mollica, & Friedman, 2004; Thomas, 2007). Another is focused on electoral politics (Carlin, 2009; Carroll, 2009; Katz, 2016; Storrs, 2007). Other studies investigate resistance to anti-racist education and multiculturalism in schools (Lindgard, 1999). Communication and digital media research take up issues of online misogyny and harassment (Dragiewicz, 2016; Edstrom, 2016; Elizabeth, 2016). Separate from this backlash literature is another body of work on radicalization and extremism.

Contemporary radicalization research is primarily focused on Islamic extremist radicalization and terrorism (Patel & Koushik, 2017). While one of the most recent books includes a section called "Gender," the one page section describes the sex breakdown of lone-wolf terrorists (virtually all male) rather than discussing the gendered causes of the sex difference (Hamm & Spaaij, 2017, p. 52-53). The authors cite Simon (2013), who glibly attributes men's greatly disproportionate involvement in terrorism to women's biologically determined risk-adverseness. On one additional page, Hamm & Spaaij wonder in passing whether masculinity might have something to do with the marked sex asymmetry of the violence. These recent examples indicate that the analysis of gender in this area of criminological research appears to have progressed little since Smart published *Women, crime and criminology* in 1976.

The research on right wing extremist groups has incorporated broader consideration of racism and xenophobia (Winslow, Hall & Treadwell, 2017). With few exceptions, such as Bacchetta and Power (2013) however, this research does not attempt to understand the role of gender or antifeminism in extremism, even when informants raise it. For example, an English Defence League supporter said,

‘ANTIFA [the Anti-Fascist Network] are the worst of the lefties. I mean most of them are fucking wet as, but they have some decent types that will have it [he means, who will have a fight]. But if you look at most of those who oppose us, most of the lefties, they are fucking gangly ginger-haired fucking animal rights-supporting vegans that fucking want Muslims to have the freedom to eat Halal meat! They are the fucking man-hating feminists with faces full of metal piercings that oppose patriarchy, but they’re defending Islamic FGM [Female Genital Mutilation] and the Sharia idea of the women being half of a man. I mean, seriously, I just want to know what it is that makes them so fucking stupid. I mean a lot is brainwashing in universities, you can see it. (Winslow, Hall& Treadwell, 2016, p. 127)

Attacks on feminists for not participating in racist and anti-immigrant campaigns are a common feature of right wing activism by these groups on and offline. Right and "alt-right" activists like the one quoted above cannot understand why feminists aren't thrilled with the opportunistic projection of men's violence against women and girls onto racialized immigrant Others. Indeed, the featured post on the English Defence League (EDL) Facebook page as of May 17, 2017 is about the Rochdale grooming case.

For those that missed the first part of [#Three Girls](#) tonight, you can watch it on the [iPlayer](#) link below.



This is why we protest, this is why we march and this is why we confront them whenever we can. [#EDL](https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=english%20defense%20league)  
(<https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=english%20defense%20league>)

While several of the offenders in that case have already been incarcerated, none of the police officers or social workers who failed to act in response to the girls' reports of abuse received meaningful disciplinary action. As Tufail and Poynting observed, in the Rochdale grooming case "sexual exploitation and violence were racialised as characteristic of whole cultures and entire ethnic and religious populations, at the same time as the sexual exploitation and violence of the 'mainstream' were rendered invisible" (2016, p.16). How can we understand the lack of commentary on the EDL former leader's own history of violence against women against claims that gendered violence is the animating force for this right wing group? Critical criminologist would be well placed to undertake such analysis. As of yet, however, they have not done so.

### Conclusion

Critical criminologists share an interest in progressive social change. Yet critical criminology has yet to take on intersectional issues of discrimination and structural inequality in a truly substantive way. Perhaps the recent election will inspire more critical criminologists to recognise the importance of hierarchies and cleavages other than class in understanding crime and violence. Backlash is evoked by an experiential threat to privileged status linked to multiple, specific social identities. Antifeminist backlash is intensified in the face of real shifts in mainstream discourses on issues related to social justice. Accordingly, we shouldn't be distracted by the hysterical tone of the so-called alt right. It is more than the voice of a marginal fringe of extremist "provocateurs." It is a symptom of the right's recognition of the real challenge to the

status quo posed by cultural and demographic shifts. This is an opportunity to outline strategies for social change that can account for multiple forms of crime, oppression, and disempowerment. Feminist criminology continues to be a key location of the ongoing work to understand these changes and reactions to them. While some critical criminologists focus on class inequality as the root cause of oppression, other scholars have argued that cultural and structural inequality are discrete yet interact. As Fraser argues, "As a result, misrecognition cannot be reduced to a secondary effect of maldistribution" (Fraser, 2015).

Feminist criminology has undergone remarkable growth and development since the 1970s (see Renzetti, in press, this *Handbook*). In 1982, the Division on Women and Crime (DWC) was established as the first division ever created in the American Society of Criminology (ASC) (DWC, 2006). Today, DWC is one of ASC's largest divisions. As of early 2017, there were 338 members, just under eleven percent of the total membership of 3118 (Abby Moran, personal communication, April 4, 2017). *Feminist Criminology*, the official journal of the DWC, was launched in 2006. In 2017, it is ranked as "Q1", in the top 25% of scholarly journals in Scimago's law and gender studies categories. Susan Sharp, the journal's inaugural editor, noted that feminist criminology was still marginalized, despite the growth of influential speciality journals such as *Violence Against Women* and *Women and Criminal Justice* (2006). Further, Sharp and Hefley (2007) noted that even today, where women are acknowledged in the most prestigious "mainstream" (i.e. not focused on women) criminology journals, gender is most often included only as a sex variable. This means that while criminological studies are more likely to distinguish between women and men than in the past, little effort has been made to explain the sex differences that have long been recognized as characteristic of crime and violence. In other words, while feminist criminology has experienced rapid growth in recent years, it has also been

met with significant resistance, and has not yet been fully integrated into criminology. In addition, the variety of women's experiences across multiple axes of social stratification often remains invisible even today.

As Potter observed, despite publication of research documenting the intersection of race and gender in sentencing in *Criminology* as early as 1983, "it is bewildering that many criminologists still do not hypothesize and theorize that arrests and other criminal legal system procedures may differ across race and gender due to the social construction of racial and gender identities" (2013, p. 310). The failure of much mainstream and critical criminology to incorporate feminist and intersectional research and theory is evidence of resistance to the changing face of scholarship from within criminology.

As Siri Hustvedt noted,

Donald Trump did not win the election simply because he appealed to the justified resentment felt by innumerable working-class families who have lost their livelihoods to trade deals or lost manufacturing jobs. He garnered millions upon millions of votes because his far-right campaign gave voice to a simmering, amorphous rage about what half of the voting citizenry perceives as a loss of or threat to its cultural status. (2017, p.2)

Critical criminology can do more to address the cultural dimensions of antifeminist backlash and other regressive impulses from the left and the right alongside the economic dimensions of social inequality. Antifeminism is a blind spot for criminological analysis of backlash and other forms of resistance to social change. Attention to antifeminism is essential to understanding backlash and organising to reverse the rightward slide of politics in the U.S. and abroad.

The current state of antifeminist backlash points to multiple future directions for criminological research. First, backlash and resistance to social change are essential areas of scholarship to which critical criminology can make a substantial contribution. Without attention to resistance to social change, it is likely that the failures of social movements will be misunderstood and attributed to the movements themselves. Marginalized groups may be scapegoated and blamed for the failure to achieve social change, regardless of the scope and weight of institutionalized and informal obstacles. Second, intersectional approaches are necessary to understand the multivalent challenges and opportunities for progressive social change. Recent political developments make clear that backlash strategies incorporate class, race, gender, sexuality, nationality, and other anxieties that operate simultaneously to push back against progressive social change. Third, research on antifeminist backlash can inform and be informed by the research on radicalization and violent extremism. Scholars focused on antifeminist backlash can also learn from resistance and reaction to other social changes. Finally, despite uneven, incomplete, and imperfect changes, it is important to recognize that antifeminist backlash is a reaction against credible threats of women's empowerment. Critical scholars can investigate where there have been real areas of improvement for women over time as well as areas where future work remains to be done.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This chapter includes modified sections of work published previously by Dragiewicz (2008), Dragiewicz (2011), and Dragiewicz and Lindgren (2009).

<sup>2</sup> See for example the Facebook page Never Hillary <https://www.facebook.com/Never-Hillary-679497808848579/>; <http://www.ejfi.org/Civilization/Civilization-7.htm>

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