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This is the published version of a paper published in *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*.

Citation for the original published paper (version of record):

Ceccato, V. (2021)

Introduction to Special issue: Brazilian Criminology in the 21st Century

Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice, 38(1): 4-12

<https://doi.org/10.1177/10439862211050450>

Access to the published version may require subscription.

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<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:kth:diva-307193>

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Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice

1–9

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DOI: 10.1177/10439862211050450

journals.sagepub.com/home/ccj **Vania Ceccato¹**

Abstract

This article introduces the special issue “Brazilian Criminology in the 21st Century” that is composed of seven studies of contemporary security problems and related public security initiatives in Brazil. They are multidisciplinary contributions employing a large variety of methods, written by researchers based on Brazilian universities or research executed in cooperation with international colleagues. This is a unique and valuable reference source for researchers interested in Brazilian and Latin American security challenges as well as attempts to address them. By recognizing current barriers in knowledge production and sharing, the special issue calls for the creation of new opportunities for joint knowledge from the “criminologies” of the Global South and those from the Global North, befitting an inclusive global criminology worthy of the 21st century.

Keywords

crime, safety, Brazilian criminalology, Global South, multidisciplinary, barriers, publication, knowledge sharing

Is There “a” Brazilian Criminology?

High homicide rates, drug trafficking, police violence, and high levels of fear are just a few of Brazil’s security challenges (Caldeira, 2013; Cano, 2010; IPEA/FBSP, 2016; Machado & Ceci, 2002; Naim, 2006). Together with crime prevention initiatives, these problems occupy a large portion of the Brazilian criminological literature (e.g., Beato Filho, 1999; Cano et al., 2016; Kahn, 2007; Silveira et al., 2010). Yet, much of this scholarship is unknown to most of the international research community, as most

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articles written in Portuguese are not widely accessible (despite it being the ninth most common language in the world and the second most common Roman language, after Spanish) (Meneghini & Packer, 2007).

The existent body of “Brazilian criminology” research is highly multidisciplinary, stemming from sociology, law, psychology, as well as economics, political science, and forensics, just to name a few. Thus, there is not “a” criminology, but a multitude of disciplines tackling overlapping research questions and creating new evidence from the Global South. This variety of fields speaks to the vitality of the discipline in the country, but it also makes it more challenging for researchers to contribute to a specific “niche of research” to exchange ideas with an international audience. Therefore, in a humble effort to help remedy the gap between the recent Brazilian body of research and the international criminology literature, this special issue provides examples of a wide range of studies, from contemporary security problems to public security initiatives implemented to address these challenges. The special issue also takes the opportunity to call for increased knowledge sharing between the criminologies of the Global South and Global North.

Bridging the Gap in Knowledge Between the Global South and Global North

This special issue is also a contribution to criminology as a discipline. There have been several claims that a Global North¹ perspective dominates the discipline (e.g., Carrington et al., 2015, 2018; Liu, 2009; Moosavi, 2018), not only in terms of the choices of topics but also the processes of research making: the theories, the methods, and the available toolboxes. The distinctive legacies of colonialism in different countries and their contemporary security challenges legitimize the search for answers beyond the North-centric perspectives that currently characterize criminology. As Carrington et al. (2018) indicate, there is an abundance of criminological research and experiences of significance in the Global South that are worthy of recognition, with important implications for South-North relations as well as global security and justice.

The new frontiers of research in the Global South are creating fertile territory for new forms of knowledge appropriation given the dominance of particular institutions that exercise control over systems of funding, production, and publications. Empowered academic voices in established official languages (e.g., Portuguese, Swedish, Swahili, Siamese, or Slovenian) are still virtually invisible to international, mainstream criminology, unless they are translated into English and follow the pre-established molds of publication. In the classrooms of countries of the Global South in particular, poor access to scholarly resources in English is a problem that exacerbates the knowledge gap between the two worlds.

Those who jump to the conclusion that “research in the Global South is lagging behind” ignore not only the non-English research evidence per se, but also the societal value of research practices and its products (in the respective native languages) for policy. Although non-English findings may not be well known internationally,

evidence from other fields shows how the use of such findings can enhance data completeness and reduce knowledge gaps (Angulo et al., 2021).

Another emergent danger is that current rules of open-access publications in well-established journals are widening the gap between the Global South and Global North. Researchers from selected Global North universities can publish open access with their fees covered, solidifying the hegemony of well-established universities.² The assessment rubrics of some criminology journals are inflexible and tend to discourage non-native English speakers from submitting their high-quality research. In addition, publishers lack resources to support language editing or open-access fees. Although there is no quick solution to these problems, we call for more efforts to decrease the knowledge gap, enhance the value of shared knowledge, and improve the development of criminology, in ways inclusive of perspectives and experiences from the Global South.

Some steps in this direction are being taken within the international criminology community. The explosion in the number of criminology-related webinars, conferences, digital meetings, and podcasts, connecting people all around the world during the pandemic, is such an example. Moreover, the increasing number of repositories for articles and pre-prints is also encouraging (see, for example, CrimRxiv, which is a criminology open archive) as well as a way to improve access to research and promote open scholarly dialogue within criminology. Finally, publications of special issues, such as this one focused on Brazilian criminology, can also effectively contribute to tackle this knowledge gap. In particular, this special issue explores a number of challenges that may be specific to Brazil but remain relevant for the whole region of Latin America (and beyond), including homicides, inequalities, racism, gender violence, urban–rural violence, and security governance. Note, for instance, that 25% of homicides in the world are currently concentrated in just four Latin American countries—Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela—and that Brazil is the country with the highest number of intentional homicides in the world, with 57,358 recorded cases in 2018 (UNODC, 2018).

Another feature of this special issue is that it includes multidisciplinary contributions beyond the fields of sociology and criminology. Similarly, methods employed in the special issue vary from highly quantified pieces (with modeling, Geographical Information Systems and spatial statistics) to qualitative studies (based on survey data, fieldwork observation, and text analysis) and mixed-methods approach. Researchers at Brazilian universities produced four of the included articles, while scholars in Brazil in cooperation with colleagues from the United States and Europe wrote the remaining contributions. Multi-language collaborations are necessary to enrich scientific knowledge (Angulo et al., 2021). We are delighted that this special issue has promoted collaborative frameworks of research and by doing that we hope to have contributed to reducing the gap between the Global South and Global North.

Framing the Special Issue

Although the seven articles in this special issue, described here, cannot represent the overall variety of studies within Brazilian criminology, we hope they will provide a

“taste” of some of the most important strands of contemporary research in Brazil with articles on violence, policing practices, crime prevention initiatives, vehicle crime, the death penalty, and crime trends pre-post Covid-19.³

To understand violence and crime in Brazil, it is useful to know more about Brazil as a nation. For example, it is a country of continental dimensions, and the most populous country in Latin America (and the sixth most populous globally) with 213 million inhabitants in 2021. The country comprises one federal district, 26 states, and 5,570 municipalities (IBGE, 2021). It is also one of the most criminogenic countries in the world (UNODC, 2018), although as a country of the Global South, violence has historically been an inherent feature of Brazil’s colonization over centuries of forced occupation and slavery (Langfur, 2006). This legacy of violence has contributed to Brazil’s contemporary socioeconomic, ethnic, and gender inequalities, which directly affect patterns of victimization and declared levels of fear.

In the United States, there exists a long, well-established debate about the role of race in violent victimization after controlling for structural and individual factors. Less well known is that in Brazil, as in the United States, the racial homicide differential is also large, with minorities exhibiting much higher homicide rates than Whites (Phillips, 2014; Sampson et al., 2005). Making a contribution to this debate, the study by *Truzzi and colleagues* sets out to investigate inequalities in victimization in Brazil, in particular the ethnic component of violence victimization (physical assaults and homicides). They combine data from the 2009 Brazilian Household Survey with the data from the Mortality Information System to show that Blacks are relatively more exposed to homicides and physical assaults than the rest of the population. They show that only part of the difference in victimization among groups is explained by structural attributes; a significant amount of this differential (at least 40%) persists as evidence of the racial discrimination against Blacks that still permeates Brazilian society, although there exist clear regional differences.

Violence, as any other crime, does not occur randomly in space or time. Changing economic dynamics in particular regions in the country are thought to be the leading cause behind the growth in homicide rates in inland municipalities (Andrade & Diniz, 2013; Ceccato, 2017). Recent studies have highlighted concerns surrounding the growth patterns of lethal violence across Brazilian regions over time (Scorzafave et al., 2015; Waiselfisz, 2016). To investigate this process, *Aransiola and colleagues* explore the spatiotemporal growth of homicide rates in Brazil from 2000 to 2017 and identify predictors of its possible growth using spatial statistical techniques and GIS. Their findings indicate that changes in the geography of homicide rates are highly related to socio-disorganization indicators at the municipal level. In particular, the authors find that homicide rates have lessened in the South and Southeast regions which have historically had higher rates, but have increased significantly in the North and Northeast regions which have previously exhibited lower rates, especially in coastal municipalities.

The third article also addresses violence but from another perspective, namely the acceptance of capital punishment. The study by *Boateng and Dzordzormenyoh* investigates the extent of public support for the death penalty in Brazil and examines factors

that influence public opinion using individual-level, cross-sectional data collected by the American Barometer Survey. The article concludes that factors such as the frequency of murders, safety, and perceived institutional legitimacy largely influence support for the death penalty in the country.

The next two studies are devoted to evaluations of public security intervention programs; the first to prevent violence against women (the “Maria da Penha” [in Portuguese] domestic violence police patrols set up since 2015), and the second, a neighborhood program called “Solidary Neighbor” (*Vizinho Solidário* in Portuguese), active since the early 2010s. Drawing on interviews with police officers who have set up and operated the patrols, operational data provided by police forces, and empirical evidence produced by policy entrepreneurs within the police organizations, the first study by *Macaulay* outlines the core features and divergences in patrol practices across the country and critically assesses their effectiveness. Results show that victims participating in the protection program are much less likely to suffer repeated assault or femicide than those who are not. In the second study, based on interviews, document analysis, and observation, *Lopes and colleagues* evaluate the Solidary Neighbor program. Despite the fact that the program functions as a community governance node aimed at reducing criminal opportunities, it may also create hostile and exclusionary practices and generate feelings of isolation in public spaces.

Drawing heavily on environmental criminology and particularly routine activity principles (Brantingham & Brantingham, 1984; Clarke, 1983; Cohen & Felson, 1979), two comparative pieces illustrate the importance of country and urban contexts in understanding crime patterns, both spatially and temporally. In the first comparative study, *Felson and colleagues* report thought-provoking figures and patterns regarding the geographic distribution of carjacking in Campinas (Brazil) and in Detroit, Michigan (United States). They find that although these cities differ greatly in terms of transportation systems and structures of the urban fabric, the cities also demonstrate commonalities in estimates of carjacking risk; it was greatest where motorists stop at gas stations or corners (Detroit); or on short street blocks (Campinas). They predict that given recent advancements in car tracking technologies, the risk of carjacking can be reduced to a minimum in the near future.

Finally, the second comparative article (and the last article in the special issue) is devoted to the effects of pandemic restrictions on spatiotemporal crime patterns in three cities: São Paulo in Brazil, New York City in the United States, and Stockholm in Sweden. Each of the three countries and cities experienced different levels of pandemic restrictions and societal closures. Temporal quantitative methods, spatial statistical techniques, and GIS underlie the methodology used in this study. *Ceccato and colleagues* show that there is a statistically significant break in the trend of crime levels after the stay-at-home orders were implemented in São Paulo, New York City, and Stockholm during the first months of 2020; the only exception was for murder. The rates, first lowered, vary according to crime type and city context, and then increased again after a few months, indicating how fast crime and criminals adapt; and so should countermeasures to be able to follow changes in criminogenic rhythms.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to all the authors who contributed to this special issue and, in so doing, increased extant knowledge of Brazilian criminological studies in the international literature. I would like to thank Chris Eskridge and the *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* for welcoming the idea of this special issue and for his stewardship and support along the way. I also thank my editorial team, in particular Marianna Patelida (Sweden) and Gavisha Dhonsi (India), but also the anonymous peer reviewers for kindly offering their time and for sharing their invaluable knowledge through their comments and suggestions. *In alphabetical order by given name:* Alexandre Diniz, Anna Barker, Bruce Jacobs, Circe Monteiro, Edilberto Nunes de Moura, Eduardo Paes, Gustavo Moreira, Luisa Schwartzman, Ignacio Cano, Sales dos Santos, Silvia Staubli, Simone Tulumello, Susanne Strand, Tamara Herold, Tulio Kahn, and Yasemin Irvin-Erickson. I am grateful to Marcelo Justus, Temidayo James Aransiola, and Bruno Truzzi for organizing the workshop “Crime e Percepção de Segurança in Brazil” (Crime and Perceived Safety in Brazil), December 4–5, 2019, at the Institute of Economics, University of Campinas (Unicamp). Most of the articles of the special issues were presented and discussed in this workshop that was partially funded by the São Paulo Research Foundation—FAPESP. This workshop supported the creation of a new arena of discussion (“Criminology and Economics”) among Brazilian scholars that is currently active as a digital platform.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Final Considerations

Brazil is a country of continental dimensions, as well as one of the most criminogenic countries in the world (UNODC, 2018). These facts alone can inspire researchers from all around the world to join ongoing research projects devoted to crime and public security challenges in Brazil and the Global South. It is desirable that a research agenda for public security should reflect national as well as region-specific challenges, some related to organized crime that extend far beyond borders. Ethnicity continues to be among the most important predictors of homicide and victimization in the Brazil, an issue that has received attention from criminologists and other researchers. There are, for instance, major differences in victimization between Whites and Blacks. However, the interactions between structural and racial differences on victimization at the neighborhood level or how racism affects interracial homicide rates should be further investigated. In addition, since the 1980s, rural areas have experienced greater increases in violence than urban areas, but little is known about the mechanisms and the nature of violence along the rural–urban continuum, from the urban fringe to the most remote areas of the country. Genocide linked to land conflicts, organized crime and violence in border regions, gender and hate crimes, environmental and wildlife crimes, as well as threats against the overall social sustainability of areas are research topics that demand urgent attention. There is a risk of neglecting both the big questions that are relevant to Brazil and Latin America, and the

knowledge of local scholars. In recent decades, Brazil has carried out an abundance of countermeasures against crime and violence that can also be of interest to an international audience. In addition, there is a need to test comparative hypotheses to fight violence and crime, explore new innovative methods, and develop theories that are more appropriate for the challenges of the countries of the Global South, such as Brazil. With this special issue, we hope to raise awareness regarding issues surrounding violence and crime, as well as the studies of such, in the Global South in general and Brazil in particular. Furthermore, we hope the knowledge shared in this special issue proves insightful and befitting an inclusive global criminology worthy of the 21st century.

Notes

1. The term “Global North” is used as a synonym for developed countries, often Western Europe and North America, while the term “Global South” encompasses Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Pacific Islands, and the developing countries in Asia, including the Middle East. There is an ongoing debate about its adequacy in terms of geographical boundaries or regional entities, see, for example, Hollington et al. (2015).
2. There is no doubt about the advantage of an open-access article; it can be read by anyone, which automatically promotes knowledge sharing. However, to make it open, costs are paid to publishers. Most publishers offer discounts for open-access publishing, but they are often not large enough to make such publishing financially accessible to academics in the Global South. An emergent danger is that current rules of open-access publishing in well-established journals are widening the gap between the Global South and Global North. This is partially because researchers from “rich” countries have greater opportunities to publish open access with their fees covered by governments or individual universities. For example, there are universities in the Global North that cover open-access fees only if the first author of an article is employed by that same university. In practice, this means that young visiting scholars from the Global South cannot take the opportunity to publish open access in the universities of Global North, even if they write the article in English, because they do not fulfill this employment criterion.
3. For a selection of other crimes, see also the special issue published in *Criminal Justice Review*, 2022.

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