

Migration, Culture Conflict and Crime (2002) edited by Joshua D Freilich, Graeme Newman, S Giora Shoham and Moshe Addad, Ashgate, Dartmouth, ISBN 0 7546 2258 4

Migration, Culture Conflict and Crime is a very timely topic for study in Australia and other countries of migration, and where immigrants and asylum seekers have been increasingly criminalised and have become folk devils in escalations of xenophobic panic. This book arose from a 1999 conference in Israel, 'Migration, Culture and Crime', sponsored (among others) by the Israeli Ministry of Science. Criminologists from some 50 nations participated, and 'the best' 18 papers, according to the editors, were compiled into this book. Conferences are often mixed bags, and so are edited books; yet there are enough gems in this bag to make it well worthwhile to sift through the rest.

The book is divided into four sections: global perspectives; prevention and policy; gender issues; and country studies. Diverse theoretical, methodological and political approaches are to be found throughout, as might be expected from such a gathering.

'Are migrants more likely to commit crime?', ask the editors. They conclude that 'reviews of the research literature tend to reinforce the stereotype [that they are]' (p8). Yet such reinforcement relies on manoeuvres such as equating of arrest rates with propensity to commit crime, which is explicitly cautioned against in the chapter by Satyanshu Mukherjee (Ch12) in his Australian 'country study', along with a number of other dangers, including about the categorical aggregation of 'migrants'. The editors nevertheless recognise, perhaps even overstating the case, that, '[m]igrants are easy to blame for crime because they are as a group almost always poor, and we know that traditional street crime tends to be higher among the poorer classes, to [sic] live in the poorer housing and congregate in the inner city' (p7). Lynch's and Simons's chapter (Ch5), a seven-nation meta-study, suggests that immigrants have lower crime rates than the native-born in the immigrant countries, Australia, Canada and USA.

Ruth Hertz's 'Prevention and Policy' chapter (Ch9) is trenchantly critical of what she terms 'official criminology' in Germany for the way it focuses on foreigners and crime in seeking to make a realistic policy impact (and to attract research funds) in a political climate of 'moral panics concerning "foreigners"'. 'Foreigners' can here — and in crime statistics — mean ethnic Turks (say) resident in Germany for three generations. Thus 'schemes are proposed for problem areas in town and problem populations which have been singled out by the studies. ... These have classifying and controlling effects' (p138). She is critical of the 'culture conflict' approach, which she says 'boils down to marking foreigners as having trouble fitting into the majority culture, instead of embracing the opposing view that the majority have trouble adjusting to newcomers' (p138).

Roland Eckert, in his German 'country study' (Ch13), explains that in this country during the 1990s, 'growing xenophobia was obviously not a phenomenon of the entire society but of some specific groups' (p212). These are of course those most affected by economic insecurity and crisis (p217). Moreover, the new 'enemy image' conflates asylum seekers with all 'non-ethnic German' residents: 'Turks, Africans, Jews and so on' (p214). Thus Eckert refreshingly looks at the nexus of crime and migration to investigate hate crime against immigrants.

Such an approach is also taken by Chris Cunneen and Julie Stubbs in their 'gender issues' chapter on (domestic and homicidal) violence against Filipina immigrant women in Australia. They also present 'a challenge to simple notions of culture conflict', in their case by 'demonstrating the importance of specificity in the manner in which post-colonial identities and representations are constructed, and the need for specificity in understanding practices such as violence against immigrant women'. Here the analysis, in its specificity, comprehends orientalist images of Asian women in the media, in connection with the commodification of the images and the women themselves, and details the disastrous consequences for immigrant women victims. Thus the chapter provides a fine model for dealing with social relations of class, gender and ethnicity in relation to (specific) crime in historical and concrete terms.

Hans-Heiner Kühne (Ch6) also makes the point that hate crime is not the same as culture conflict. He concludes that there is no evidence 'that clashes of different cultures in Europe meaningfully contribute to the crime rate' (p94). The (indirect) causes of criminality among migrants, he argues, lie rather in 'lack ... of access to social and professional opportunities', including opportunities for integration. As we have seen, integration is a process with two sides, and blaming migrants for failing to integrate rather exonerates those people and processes which marginalise and discriminate against them. He reiterates the point that the feelings of threat produced by economic insecurity 'are fertile soil for hostile reactions against anything foreign'.

Eckert notes, among gangs of (presumably male) immigrant youths in confrontation with racist 'skinheads', 'a tendency to self-ethnicisation in the face of the xenophobic attacks' (p216). I find this a much more convincing form of explanation for the disaffection of immigrant young people than the 'culture conflict' model which relies (as in Ch15 by Alexis Aronowitz) on notions of 'paternal conflict' or the several chapters which advance (as does Caitlin Killian, p124), concepts of second generation immigrant youth being caught between two cultures.

Despite being marred by rather too many typos (many arising from transliteration of foreign titles, which should especially have been checked in a book dealing with cultural diversity), the book is not hard to read. Theoretical terms are, by and large, made accessible to the lay reader, and theoretical positions are generally made explicit and clear. Its range and contrast of approaches can be seen as an asset in pursuing its goal: 'to add to our scientific knowledge concerning the relation between immigrants, crime and justice ... to broaden public understanding of this extremely important issue' (p10).

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