

***Criminal Justice and Political Cultures: National and International Dimensions of Crime Control*, Tim Newburn and Richard Sparks (eds), Willan Publishing, Devon 2004**

This collection examines the 'changing relationships between national cultures or traditions in criminal justice, on the one hand and, on the other, influences or knowledge and practice that exceed or subvert the boundaries of these systems as we conventionally understand them' (1). The bulk of the contributions, six out of eleven chapters, arose out of a Keele University symposium focused on 'How crime policy travels' held in June 2001. The symposium chapters (previously published in *Criminal Justice* and *Theoretical Criminology*) focus on the 'interdependence of criminal justice systems and criminological commodities' and 'how crime control policies, practices, ideas and ideologies flow within and between nation-states' (1–2). The editors argue that although this is not a new subject it is undoubtedly 'one whose "moment" has arrived' (2). Two basic premises run through the book. The first is that there is 'increasing evidence of certain forms of convergence in the languages and practices of crime control particularly in 'the emergence and promulgation of supranational legal orders, international standards and common intellectual currencies'. The second is that the 'mechanism, directions and outcomes of such flows and transfers are both more complex and less elucidated empirically and theoretically than is commonly assumed' (3). The issues explored revolve loosely around seven questions set out in the editors' introduction. These are: why particular policies, practices or ideas are transferred?; who is involved in such transfers?; what exactly is transferred?; where are lessons drawn from?; what are the constraints on such transfer?; how complete is the process?; and, finally, how is the process related to policy success or failure? (4–6). The introduction, which takes the first half of the title of the book, explores issues related to policy transfer, lesson drawing, the problems of comparative criminology and the importance of politics and political culture. The ten chapters that follow provide comparative or illustrative examples mainly from and across the United Kingdom, Europe, the United States, Canada, and Australia. One chapter focuses on South Africa. The collection includes leading criminologist including Pat Carlen 'Controlling Measures: The Repackaging of Common-sense Opposition to Women's Imprisonment in England and Canada', Pat O'Malley 'Globalising Risk? Distinguishing Styles of "Neoliberal" Criminal Justice in Australia and the USA', Ian Loader 'Policing, Securitisation and Democratisation in Europe', David Dixon and Lisa Maher 'Containment, Quality of Life and Crime Reduction: Policy Transfers in the Policing of the Heroin Market' and John Muncie 'Youth Justice: Globalisation and Multi-modal Governance'. The comparative dimension adds to the book's depth and appeal. Nevertheless it seemed to me that some of the cautions set out in the introduction under the heading 'some problems of comparative criminology' were given flesh in the chapters. The juxtaposition of the tenor and trends in the US and Australian criminal justice systems in Pat O'Malley's chapter seemed to be too sharply drawn. The notion, for example, that the treatment of Indigenous people within the criminal justice system is an example of Australia's relatively progressive and non-punitive criminal justice system compared to the US is not an observation I can square with the Australian criminal justice system that I know. The idea that Australia has an enlightened approach to Indigenous people is also asserted in Susanne Karstedt's chapter 'Durkheim, Trade and Beyond: the global travel of crime policies' where she writes about Australia that 'The

Aboriginal population were seen as victims of pathogenic situation, and the principle of “cultural sensitiveness” prevented a further increase of the none the less over-representation of this group in Australian prisons’ (25). True, it would always be possible to imprison *more* Indigenous people, the idea however, that the continued massive overrepresentation of Indigenous people; at every level of the criminal justice system is emblematic of the principle of ‘inclusive solutions’ as Karstedt puts it, is a distortion worthy of the tag Orwellian. (See Cunneen 2001 for a thorough and critical account of the treatment of Indigenous people in the Australian criminal justice system).

One of the themes throughout the book is the influence across the globe of ideas, policies and practices from the US, including private prisons, the ‘war on drugs’, zero tolerance policing, mass incarceration, and law and order politics as an election staple. The introduction points out that many observers argue that the US is ‘the penal workshop of the world’ (9). Given this focus it is lamentable that there is *no* reference to the events of 9/11 or the ‘war on terror’ and the degree to which this has extended what some have dubbed the ‘long arm’ (see Andreas & Price 2001) reach of US criminal justice around the world. The US has progressed from being merely the penal workshop of the world to the world’s jailer and police force with the establishment of Guantanamo Bay and ‘peacekeeping’ military adventures (McCulloch 2004). While this dimension is glaringly absent from the book, some of the observations do foreshadow the issues raised. The editors point out in the introduction, for example, that ‘[t]here are questions of sovereignty, of democratic accountability, and, indeed of national self-definition at stake in this field’ (2). Likewise the observation made in Ian Loader’s chapter that transnational policing is ‘marked by a deep asymmetry in the social distribution of its benefits and burdens’ and particularly productive of discourses that set up sharp divisions between ‘us’ and Others in the name of security resonates strongly in the post 9/11 environment (68). Some analysis, on the other hand, seems to have been rendered redundant or proved inaccurate by the tide of events.

The editors argue that ‘[u]nderstanding similarities and differences in the pattern of contemporary systems of crime control --- and understanding the movement and translation of commodities between and within these systems --- is ... arguably one of the key tasks facing criminology’ (10). In addressing this issue the collection makes an important contribution, however, it is clear that work on this topic is still at an early stage.

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Reference

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