
Book Review

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C Cunneen, *Conflict, Politics and Crime: Aboriginal Communities and the Police*, Allen & Unwin 2001
S Walklate, *Gender, Crime and Criminal Justice*, Willan Publishing 2001

These books are a valuable addition to the criminal justice literature, since they deal with the critically important areas of race and crime and gender and crime. They will be of interest to lawyers, criminal justice professionals and those with a general interest in crime and the community. One is from Australia and deals with a neglected issue in Australian criminal justice, the other is from England and deals with a neglected issue in English criminal justice.

From the Australian perspective, Cunneen's book, subtitled *Aboriginal Communities and the Police*, contains ten chapters, dealing after the introduction with:

- (2) the criminalisation of indigenous people;
- (3) the nature of colonial policing;
- (4) the shift from over-policing to zero tolerance;
- (5) terror, violence and abuse of human rights;
- (6) police culture and use of discretion;
- (7) policing indigenous women;
- (8) governance and the policing of contested space;
- (9) the reform of policing policies; and
- (10) policing and postcolonial self-determination.

From the English perspective, after discussing whether the key issue is women and crime or gender and crime in the introduction, Walklate's book deals in three sections (theory, practice and policy) with:

- (1) criminology, victimology and feminism;
- (2) criminology, victimology and masculinism;
- (3) crime, fear and risk;
- (4) gendering sexual violence;
- (5) gender in policework and the criminal justice process; and

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- (6) gender, the law and criminal justice policy and in conclusion, gender, crime and politics.

In their analyses, both books place considerable attention upon the role of the police in the criminal justice system: Cunneen in the Australian context and Walklate in the English context. Cunneen's concern is to locate the over-criminalisation of indigenous people in Australia in the context of our colonial past, and he theorises the relationship between the processes of colonisation and the criminalisation of indigenous people and in particular the role of the police in this process.

Both books point to the limited effectiveness of current policing policies and practices in the areas with which they are concerned. Both books reveal that not only is criminal justice work largely men's work,¹ it is also largely white men's work, but that the "multiple layers of interventions" provide a different experience for indigenous women, one that is more in common with indigenous men² than with white women, who make up a very small proportion of the prison population.³ Cunneen's book, which is filled with useful statistics and information to support his contentions about over-criminalisation of indigenous people in Australia records "that a specific group of women comprising around 2 per cent of all women in Australia should constitute half of the total number of women placed in police lock-ups is extraordinary".⁴

The conclusion is that there is a clear link between gender and Aboriginality. Whereas Walklate is more concerned with the debates around gender, policing, law and crime, and the circumstances under which the relationship between gender, crime and criminal justice is the salient one.⁵ Walklate concludes that three issues emerge from her analysis: that a gendered lens may help us see the crime problem more clearly, that criminology and victimology could be transformed by embracing other disciplinary domains such as feminism and that there is a need for a gendered political debate around criminal justice policy. Walklate points us to the gender blindness of criminology and victimology which has persistently asked us to take the question of maleness of crime seriously.⁶ Once we link that with Cunneen's arguments and persuasive information, we see that crime is not value-free and the extent to which it involves issues of gender and race that are rarely featured in media reports or political debates. The solution, for Cunneen, to the problem of over-criminalisation of Australia's indigenous people, is for the "fundamental right of Indigenous self-determination" to provide the "foundation for developing respectful and effective policing in Indigenous communities".⁷

These are valuable and thought-provoking books, with Cunneen's the more valuable from the Australian perspective for providing clear evidence of a problem, and a convincing need for the development of a new interface between crime, policing and Aboriginal Australians.

¹ S Walklate, *Gender, Crime and Criminal Justice*, Willan Publishing UK 2001 at 150.

² C Cunneen, *Conflict, Politics and Crime: Aboriginal Communities and the Police*, Allen & Unwin Crows Nest 2001 at 157.

³ S Walklate, *supra* n 1 at 170.

⁴ C Cunneen, *supra* n 2 at 165.

⁵ S Walklate, *supra* n 1 at ix.

⁶ *Ibid* at 19.

⁷ C Cunneen, *supra* n 2 at 2.