

***Gender, Crime and Criminal Justice*, 2nd edn, Sandra Walklate,
Willan Publishing, Cullompton, Devon, 2004**

Ever since Kathleen Daly and Meda Chesney-Lind's 1988 article invited colleagues to reflect upon the androcentrism of criminology and to appreciate the promise of feminist inquiry for rethinking problems of crime and justice and Carol Smart (1990) suggested feminists abandon criminology as it had not been moved by the feminist project, the question of whether there is or can be a criminology truly informed by feminist theory and a gendered analysis has hung largely unresolved. Sandra Walklate's text introduces the reader to this question and related debates and provides a thorough grounding from which to think through the issues raised.

Gender, Crime and Criminal Justice covers theory: feminist thought and masculinity; practice: a gendered analysis of major issues in crime and victimology such as fear and sexual violence; and policy: the nature of the criminal justice system, including those who work in it. How have 'the questions, that feminists' work' has addressed, progressed our 'understanding of the crime problem' and 'to what extent' does 'sex as a variable in crime, warrant a gendered explanation' (pp 15-16)? These are the questions Walklate explores. The first edition of *Gender, Crime and Criminal Justice* was published almost 10 years prior to this one and was based to a large extent upon a course on gender and crime that Walklate had developed for undergraduate students. This edition was partly sparked by revisiting and renewing the course and it remains a most valuable text for tertiary students wanting to gain both a solid grounding and one of some depth in the field of gender and crime.

At the outset of the book, Walklate makes sure we understand the difference between sex and gender - sex being the biological given (male and female) and gender being the culturally shaped roles, expectations and positions imposed upon males and females - and argues throughout the book that understanding the impact of gender in crime and victimology *is* centrally important to understanding crime. She establishes that using sex as a variable certainly yields the most potent variable in crime - that males are by far and away the greater perpetrators of crime when compared with females by something like 10 to 1. Despite the rapid rise, proportionally, in women prisoners for example (from around 2.5 per cent in the late 1970s to over 7 per cent today), this massive difference remains a central one to be explained. Walklate acknowledges other important variables, such as age, class and race, and by no means dismisses them as also important in understanding crime. She discusses them in the contexts of various theories and positions - for example, that of socialist feminism which recognises class as a fundamental variable in understanding the oppression of women. Nevertheless, *Gender, Crime and Criminal Justice*, Walklate argues, provides a guide to the particular insights a gendered (including feminist and masculinist) analysis has on understanding crime and the criminal justice system. Although this observation probably betrays more about my standpoint than a failing in the text, I was a little disappointed that there was not more attention given to understandings of patriarchy as fundamental to the many faces of feminism and masculinism and thus to a gendered understanding of crime.

One factor in putting together a good text is making the key authors, researchers, topics and themes accessible to students. Walklate does this admirably by introducing the reader

to the major feminist schools, such as liberal, radical, socialist and postmodern, and to masculinist theory and themes, such as sex-role and categorical theoretical trends of the past half century and draws out how these conceptual turns have affected or can be applied to understandings of crime. She takes us through pivotal theoretical influences outside criminology, such as Parsons' structural functionalist sociology that underpins the biological determinist position (that sex differences, which are biologically given, determine male and female socialisation and thus their place in crime and victimhood); and, most recently, the postmodern turn whose influence is yet to be fully determined but which has set serious questions for criminologists. Walklate most aptly positions the underpinnings of criminology, along with social science in general, in the rational science model of knowledge that equated human experience with male experience. Feminist work, both general and criminological, and some masculinist work, such as that of RW Connell (whose work Walklate sees as foundational), challenges these assumptions and, thus, she argues, challenges much in the foundations of thinking about crime and social behaviour.

As is appropriate to a teaching text, concepts and approaches to a particular topic are introduced, explained and critical questions asked. For example in Chapter 3, 'Crime, Fear and Risk', the strengths of the radical left realist approach to fear of crime are discussed and acknowledged and its shortcomings when subjected to a feminist analysis then highlighted. Walklate takes this approach throughout the book, so providing students with the information and key writings they need to come to their own conclusions.

There are, however, some developments impacting upon gendered criminological thinking that Walklate could have engaged with more fully. The risk-averse society has had profound effect upon criminological theorising, policy and practice over the past decade or two and nowhere is this more obvious than in the arguably gendered nature of risk assessments. Although she gives risk attention in Chapter 3, it seems that this is largely from a risk of being a victim and fear of crime perspective rather than from the impact the risk paradigm is having upon all aspects of the criminal justice system. Key writers, such as Pat O'Malley (1998) and Hazel Kemshall (2003) are not referenced, nor are the implications their analyses suggest for a gendered analysis drawn out. These writers, along with Kelly Hannah-Moffat (e.g., 1999), provide well-argued positions that formulations of risk in the criminal justice system, including risk assessment, are deeply embedded in gender. This lack is linked to another: that of attention to some criminological thinking and understandings from a non-United Kingdom perspective. For example, Canadian Hannah-Moffat's work regarding women, crime and risk and Indigenous women is of significance and it is surprising that it is not represented. For those of us in Australasia, a gendered analysis addressing the dreadful experiences Indigenous women have in the criminal justice system as both victims and offenders is vital in any consideration of gender and crime. So the text, although excellent in its introduction to implications of gendered thinking upon an understanding of crime, does not venture far from the United Kingdom context.

Walklate does not claim to provide answers to the many matters raised, although she does argue that a gendered analysis, when taken seriously, can upend much foundational criminological thinking. She gives students the resources to think through the issues and challenges them to explore more deeply by providing key readings at the end of every chapter. *Gender, Crime and Criminal Justice* is not a clearly ideologically positioned text, like for example Pat Carlen's work, but that has its advantages in providing the student with the wide array of arguments and theories from which she or he can choose some to explore. Despite the quite minor shortcomings noted in this review, the book is an excellent introduction to the concepts and debates in the field of gender, crime and criminal justice.

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References

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