



Guest Editorial

Historical Criminology: Australian and New Zealand Perspectives

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The time has never been more appropriate than now for a discussion about the integration of history and criminology in Australia and New Zealand. Throughout 2020 and 2021, the people of both countries were subject to extraordinary government interventions into their daily lives to control the spread of the novel coronavirus. Given a respiratory pandemic of the same scale had not occurred for 100 years, we watched in real time as policymakers fumbled for guidance for the benefits and likely social consequences of imposing police-enforced legal restrictions on otherwise normal behaviours like freedom of movement and gathering with friends. Whether these were ultimately the correct decisions for controlling the disease is perhaps a question for others. Indeed, analysis of the interactions between the public and the state have always been the purview of criminologists and historians, yet we ceded this ground to epidemiologists who have little expertise in key issues of criminalisation and offending, or justice and policing, which are central to any system of state control.

Why bring history and criminology together? Recent events are a good example of why, to us, the answer is straightforward: data for analyses of the criminological consequences of the pandemic response reside in the past. Even so, this transdisciplinary question has been the source of considerable debate in recent years and has contributed to the growth of a new field that straddles the two disciplines: historical criminology. A consensus rationale for this field has emerged with supporting arguments from both sides of the traditional disciplinary divide. Churchill et al. (2021) argue that relating to the past is not just about history; it informs how we understand the present and how we envisage the future. This was well demonstrated during the pandemic. For example, it came as no surprise to historical criminologists that compliance with restrictions would decrease overtime, and correspondingly tighter restrictions would lead to greater civil disobedience. More obviously to those well versed in group criminalisation, it was predictable that in Australia and New Zealand people of low-SES, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, Māori, and other minority groups would bear the brunt of intensive policing, further straining public support. This—sadly—sustains historical trends in both antipodean, former British colonies. What could historical criminology have contributed? Research from historical criminologists on other themes, issues or topics have demonstrated the utility of bringing history and crime together to discuss the contexts of the present to recommend the application of solutions that are based on historical precedence and learnings from the past.

The overarching ‘presentism’ of traditional criminology is bemoaned by criminologists and is not a new criticism (Catello 2022). This was identified as far back as 1971 when Matza (quoted in Weis 1971: 53) stated that ‘anyone with half an ounce of sense has always said that a main defect of sociology and criminology is that they’re not historical. We’ve always admitted

it, but we haven't done anything about it.' Scholars in Australia and New Zealand have at various times scorned the ahistorical nature of criminology (Braithwaite 2001; Pratt 2000) and highlighted how much there is to learn through the application of historical scholarship to questions of crime, justice, policing, offending and victimisation. And, importantly, these lessons have real-world, immediate effects. Australian and New Zealand scholars who utilise history and criminology have uncovered trends in women's and men's offending, war crimes, incarceration policies, court and policing processes, sexual abuse and assault victimisation and offending, indigenous peoples and their experiences of colonisation and crime, and youth offending (a very small selection includes the following: Kaladelfos and Smaal 2019; Kehoe and Pfeifer 2021; Kehoe, Pfeifer and Skues 2019; Nagy 2021; Nagy and Rychner 2021; Piper 2020; Piper and Finnane 2017; Strange 2016; Webb 2017; Waretini-Karena 2017).

Recently there has been renewed criminological interest in examining ways in which criminology and history can intersect to provide more nuance and context to explain today's persistent problems and perhaps find solutions to them: inequalities and inequities (race, class, sex or gender-based); colonial criminal justice systems that overwhelmingly affect indigenous peoples; cycles of offending and victimisation; increased imprisonment; and increases in surveillance of citizens. Although dubbed 'historical criminology', the exact boundaries of the field remain unclear. For some proponents, it is a sub-branch of criminology; for others it is a methodology or tool that can be applied by criminologists (Churchill et al. 2021); further still, it is the application of criminological theory to traditional historical analysis that, in turn, allows that work to have present-day relevance (Nagy 2021). Frameworks for how circumventing boundary debates to understanding the varied works that fall under the banner of historical criminology were proposed by Kehoe and Pfeifer (2021: 6–9) and Bleakley and Kehoe (2021). They agree that the scholarly purpose must be discerned for clarity, but all of these works are 'historical criminology'. However, there is agreement that the field is not a variation of 'history of crime' or 'crime history' but rather a 'historical work of criminology' (Churchill 2017: 380). That is, criminological theories have a place, as does utilising methods and data that mirror contemporary options available to criminologists.

Regardless of one's position on the precise definition, attention is on moving beyond the present that criminology is stuck in and reaching backwards to move criminological thinking forwards. A great deal of this sustained work in historical criminology has, however, been driven by scholars from the United Kingdom (Bosworth 2001; Channing, Churchill and Yeomans 2023; Guiney 2020; Lawrence 2012). As a result, historical criminology theorisation is currently extremely rooted in Global North perspectives and theories that are often irrelevant to those in the Global South, and this risks recreating the issues with which criminology is still grappling, most notably the impacts of colonisation and a gender-blindness (Nagy 2020). Connell (2014) and Carrington, Hogg and Sozzo (2016) have noted that there is still a tendency among criminologists in Australia and New Zealand, as much as those from the Global North, to try and transplant European and North American theories to the Global South without considering sociohistorical and cultural context. There has been a concerted effort to research and highlight how colonisation and dispossession have impacted indigenous people in Australia, New Zealand, Canada as well as South America and many other parts of the world today (Carrington and Hogg 2011). Yet, often here as well, historical context is sidelined, or it is used to quickly explain the *before* for attention to be on the *now*. Conversely, history as a discipline has been little better, with similar issues of ignoring another pertinent discipline. A problem beginning after the end of World War II, historians especially from the United Kingdom did not see a reason for the social sciences to permeate historical scholarship. Elton (1977) argued against the need for social science theories in history—a message that clearly had long-term impacts—as in the 1990s Garton (1991) criticised historians for a century of studies into British convicts transported to Australia, which completely ignored relevant theories of crime—an issue that is still in convict studies. While there are plenty of historians who research crime in various geographic locations and periods, these are rarely interested in intersecting with theories of offending, victimisation or exploring their findings for contemporary issues.

The benefits of incorporating historical data to criminological research are exciting. Foremost for the enthusiasm is perhaps the additional quantitative and qualitative data that can be used to trace social, political and economic policies that have impacted communities and people within the criminal justice system. This allows the mapping of the past to the present and can provide useful insight into what has been tried and tested in the past, so we do not repeat the mistakes of history. Conversely, it allows us to consider reworking programs that were beneficial to lowering incarceration and creating community safety. The problems with today's prison systems were apparent to people of the past; for example, in the late nineteenth century, judges, police, gaol staff and medical officers all reported to successive governments that prisons should not be the place to house those who are destitute, mentally or physically ill, or elderly and without familial support, all of whom were criminalised for their poverty or ailments. They argued that it was the government's role to ensure that there was adequate housing and support (Nagy and Piper 2021). Rather than the stereotype of the nineteenth-century criminal justice system that enjoyed inflicting pain on the bodies of criminals, activism from those within the system helped the discourse for the introduction of universal education and then pension in Victoria—in turn helping to quite successfully alleviate pressures on the criminal justice system. Across Australia, by the end of the 1920s prison rates in all states and territories were low. Incarceration rates again began to rise in the 1960s as governments wound back social policies that had been instrumental in lowering prison numbers. This was not all rosy or wholly

progressive. Concurrent to these shifts in criminal justice policy, schemes throughout the nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth centuries were aimed at the ongoing dispossession of land, culture and freedom of Indigenous Australians and non-white Australians, with their ongoing brutal effects today. Funding for social policies continues to be dwarfed by funding for prisons, police, and criminal justice responses in the early twenty-first century that are 'tough on crime', and, thus, prison populations have again boomed. Bringing historical insight into the problems facing Australia's and New Zealand's communities today with crime, over-policing and incarceration and growing youth offending may offer arguments and solutions for change for policymakers and stakeholders.

In sum, there are two disciplines that often have overlapping and overarching interests but in the past there has been little communication between them, though this is now changing. The disparity is understandable; both disciplines have different research methods and correspondingly divergent approaches to teaching, and they have tended to focus on different outcomes. Dixon (1996: 78) has taken both disciplines to task, telling criminologists that they 'underestimat[e] ... the complexities of historical research and writing' while admonishing historians for not clearly demonstrating how their research offers practicable outcomes. While we write this in 2023, little has changed but we hope that the articles and reviews in this special issue highlight how much there is for us in criminology to learn, explore and utilise if we turn our attention to the past. This special issue on historical criminology research is an attempt to bring together historical criminology scholarship from Australia and New Zealand or those undertaking research related to Australia and New Zealand. There are two articles discussing historical criminology in a very broad perspective. Roberto Catello makes a call for a critical historical criminology in the Global South, arguing for critical perspectives that can enrich historical and criminological understandings from an antipodean and a Southern perspective. As Catello argues, doing this historical criminology requires one to move beyond the social sciences and be truly cross-disciplinary, or as Catello puts it, 'de-disciplined'. Katy Roscoe and Alana Piper discuss how investigating historical occurrences of crime can not only aid research in the discipline but also create a public pedagogy of criminal justice that can bring academics and the public closer together. By using digital histories, members of the public can engage with research in a way that criminologists traditionally may not be able to create public literacy about crime and justice.

This special issue contains two articles examining crime and justice during the colonial period in Tasmania and New Zealand. Jessica Smith and Rob White unpack how the experiences of 180 convict women from the nineteenth century were vastly different from female prisoners in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and not in the way that many may expect. There were over 7,000 women convicted to Van Diemen's Land during the probation system in the nineteenth century; they experienced a system that was harsh but attempted to retrain and upskill these women with the effect of much lower levels of recidivism over their lifetimes than what faces women returning to their communities following release in the twenty-first century. Across the Tasman, the creation of Wellington Gaol in 1844 until its demolition in 1931 served two purposes, as argued by Rebekah Bowling and John Pratt: first, the gaol was of symbolic importance to maintaining settler identity with England, and second, it was established to demonstrate British imperial power over the Māori resistance to colonisation as well as indigenous forms of justice. The demolition of the gaol in 1931 came at a time when the building was seen as a stain on New Zealand's burgeoning identity as a modern society and when it was assumed that the assimilation and subjugation of the indigenous population was complete.

Moving to the twentieth century, Marinella Marmo, Andreas Varkova and Evan Smith analyse Australia's historical cases of 'suspect' and 'undesirable' migrants between 1902 and 1972. As the authors argue, Australia's current policies of deportation are closely linked to its history with a focus on expelling individuals who are considered detrimental to the 'health' of Australian society, evident in shifts throughout time about the definition of desirability. As this article demonstrates, Australia's deportation policies have often been based on Global North punishment and exclusion policies that heavily rely on surveillance, coercion and punitiveness. Henrietta McNeil and Marinella Marmo's article on Australia's deportation of Pacific Islander peoples from Australia between 1901 and 1921 examines how circular Australia's border policies have become, inasmuch as current policies draw heavily on historical policies to justify differential inclusion in Australia today. While Pacific Islander peoples have been considered 'undesirable others' by successive Australian governments attempting to limit their migration to Australia, there have also been policies put into place to ensure they can enter to fill labour shortages as required. This demonstrates the harsh Australian policy of deporting those whose labour can no longer be exploited.

Finally, rounding out the special issue is Paul Bleakley's article examining police correction, anti-corruption practices and what this can mean for policing today within and outside Australia. Through analysing Queensland police corruption between 1963 and 1989, Bleakley identifies several key areas to improve current anti-corruption bodies tasked with investigating police misconduct globally. He argues against politicisation of this issue, as it demonstrably leads to interference of judicial responses.

We also have two book reviews, one from Michael Guerzoni who reviews Sinead Ring, Kate Gleeson and Kim Stevenson's book about adult survivors of child sexual abuse and legal responses in Ireland and Australia, which begins with a historical

context of child sexual abuse from the nineteenth century through to today. Our second book review is from one of us, Victoria Nagy, reviewing Rachel Dixon's book on expert evidence and testimony in infanticide cases from 1688 through to 1955.

We hope that this collection of articles and a special issue about historical criminology in Australia and New Zealand today leads to criminologists reconsidering the merits of engaging with historical methods and records. The articles utilise a wide variety of data and analysis of topics that are relevant to us today: incarceration and rehabilitation, border control and security, state corruption, and the need for a criminology to consider how it can better connect across disciplines and across audiences. We have enjoyed working with the authors on bringing this collection to our readers, and hope you find something in this collection of articles that challenges and excites you about historical criminology.

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