

Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

REECE WALTERS, *Deviant Knowledge: Criminology, Politics and Policy*. Devon: United Kingdom and Willan: Portland, Oregon, 2003, ix + 218p. Index.

In *Deviant Knowledge*, Reece Walters applies a “sociology of knowledge” approach and critical criminological perspective to the conditions in which criminologists work in Britain, Australia, and the United States. He focuses most particularly on the conditions of research funding in the burgeoning field of social control and crime management. Critical criminology has already demonstrated its power in exposing how technocratic ideologies of actuarial risk-based management justify the domination, marginalization, and outright exclusion of increasingly large groups of unwanted people now that the world is running out of acceptable asylums, supportive extended family systems, and open frontiers (see Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*, Garland’s *The Culture of Control*, and Deutschmann’s *Deviance and Social Control*). In Walters’ book, critical criminological researchers are the one who produce “deviance knowledge” and, as such, are banished to the edges of the profession and to the outer margins of public policy planning circles. It is neoliberal governments and successful grant-winning practitioners of distorted quantitative forms of criminology who have become the custodians of a limited and neutralized criminological thought and practice.

Walters demonstrates the critical perspective as he describes criminologists’ battles to gain access to good contracts and working conditions in the face of governmental agendas that favour “jobbing” (71) quick fixes, good optics, and increasingly neo-liberal policy alternatives. Chapter five largely examines George W. Bush’s “War on Terror” as a case study of the technology of power and the suppression of critical knowledge. There is recognition that such suppression can, when clumsy, produce resistance. Whether such resistance will support or enhance critical criminology remains to be seen. Walters does not discuss praxis, action research, or other practices which might arise from the application of critical theory. Rather his goal involves exposure and reflexivity.

I suspect that there will be many North American readers who find Walters’ comments about New Labour’s “evidence-based research” (56-57) to be unnecessarily argumentative. He is correct if he is arguing that such criteria are excluding qualitative research, although critical criminologists do not need to avoid quantitative and systematic methodologies. *Deviant Knowledge*, however, is emphatically

qualitatively-based. It rests largely on Walters' twelve years of experience as a criminological researcher in Australia, New Zealand, and Scotland. His experience involved doing research through varying forms of agreement with governments (6) and also included 36 semi-structured interviews covering criminologists from New Zealand, Australia, Scotland, England, and the United States (174). Walters also cites Willem de Lint and George Pavlich as Canadian contacts (175-176).

The idea that criminology cannot be true to itself because those who control the reward system are outsiders with different or hostile agendas has been around for a long time, as has the idea that this is connected intimately with the privatization of justice and the concurrent privatization of justice research. Walters traces his idea of "deviant knowledge" to the work of Manfred Brusten, who in 1979 queried the increase in social control over criminologists in West Germany (1). It could be argued (although Walters does not) that this control went hand-in-hand with a great deal of influence. Criminology and criminal justice have been linked much more closely in Germany than here in Canada, such that academic ideas have had – and continue to have – substantial impact in the courtrooms of Germany. Judge Christian Pfeiffer, for example, has been a prolific criminology researcher. What Brusten merely feared had already largely taken place in the adversarial criminal justice systems of the world.

Walters makes a convincing, if somewhat repetitive case, showing how this situation replicates itself in many specific contexts. I found Walters' discussion of information control around issues of grant winning, the signing or not signing of contracts, and the ever-thorny problematic of ethics review to be the most interesting part of the book. The short bit on criminological field research might well have followed more closely on his ethics discussion. For someone who is generally in agreement with the premises of this book, but was unfamiliar with many of the specific settings that Walters describes, it was a pleasure to read.

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