
**Reviewed by** Thomas Guiney, Oxford Brookes University, UK

When it comes to the study of crime you could be forgiven for concluding that there is history and there is criminology - and never the twain shall meet. While repeated attempts have been made to cultivate a more productive dialogue between the disciplines (Bosworth 2001), they remain largely discrete intellectual enterprises, each ‘*with its own constituency, avenues of publication, conferences and networks*’ (Lawrence 2012, p.315). The impact of these distinct disciplinary cultures can be seen in diverging attitudes towards temporality and the meaning with which researchers imbue their work. But it is perhaps most pronounced in epistemological debates which continue to contrast the ‘ideographic’ or ‘descriptive’ research of historians, who seek to capture the uniqueness and complexity of their objects, with the ‘nomothetic’ or ‘explanatory’ research of social scientists who tend to prize parsimony and generalizable research findings (Sewell 2005, p.3)

In this excellent book *Crime Control & Everyday Life in the Victorian City: The Police & the Public*, David Churchill embraces the challenge of inter-disciplinary research and demonstrates that, despite its many difficulties, a dialogue between history and criminology can yield new insights. Presenting a social history of crime control in the Victorian city, Churchill offers a critique of the ‘state monopolization thesis’ which, broadly speaking, holds that between 1820-1850 the largely informal crime control mechanisms of the pre-modern era were superseded by an increasingly professionalized police force as the State assumed a more central role in the maintenance of social order.
The result is a powerful work of historical criminology. Churchill clearly possesses the instinct and craft of a historian: this is a meticulous and carefully researched study, guided throughout by a steadfast commitment to understanding the richness and complexity of the social world. In the author’s own words,

‘… we are only just beginning to appreciate the rich regional diversity of criminal justice and penal practice… detailed research on the governance of crime is likely to expose complex realities which cannot satisfactorily be subsumed within an overarching narrative of state monopolization’. (p.251)

However, this is also a work that is not afraid to grapple with questions of contemporary social theory. Churchill draws attention to the shortcomings of official policing strategies and seeks to re-centre everyday people as active participants in the production of a mixed economy of crime control. In this respect, *Crime Control & Everyday Life in the Victorian City* offers a powerful corrective to reductive and overly simplistic modernisation meta-narratives which juxtapose the distinctiveness of post or late-modern crime control with what came before.

In seeking this balance Churchill eschews the usual conventions of historiography in favour of an analytical structure that prioritises intellectual depth over chronology and mastery of narrative. A number of trade-offs flow from this approach which are, on the whole, well judged. First, Churchill restricts his focus to crime control and the immediacy of the ‘criminal encounter’ rather than attempt a broader survey of deviance and social control under conditions of rapid urbanisation. Second this is a study primarily concerned with crime control as it relates to property offences, a decision which arguably promotes a less contested account of crime, and power dynamics more generally, than one might expect to find in comparable studies on the history of violence (p.8). Above all else this is a book that is orientated towards the everyday interactions between the police and public, and Churchill adopts a limited geographical focus.
encompassing Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester; three Northern English cities which experienced significant growth and demographic change during the nineteenth century.

This inter-disciplinary exchange between history and social theory runs through the key passages of this book. Part 1 documents the shift from the ‘old’ to the ‘new’ police during the nineteenth century. Chapter 1 traces the organisation of the ‘new’ police as local administrators struggled to operationalise a ‘preventative principle’ which sought to reduce the commission of crime by means of a regular system of visible, deterrent patrol (p.98). Chapter 2 examines the uneven development of policing as an institution that was primarily orientated towards urban governance and the ‘improvement’ of public spaces. Chapters 3 and 4 unpick the limited impact of emerging policing strategies as police administrators contended with limited resources and the criminal opportunity of the Victorian city (pp.105-107).

In Part 2 the focus moves on to consider how the shifting contours of urban crime control were navigated by everyday people. Chapter 5 explores the role of citizens and private security markets in protecting property from crime, before turning to the role of the police and journalists in promoting a ‘responsible’ agenda that was closely intertwined with Victorian conceptions of patriarchy and proprietary rights (p.141). Chapter 6 examines the evolution of criminal investigation and Chapter 7 offers a fascinating overview of how everyday people confronted criminal behavior in the Victorian City. Chapter 8 rounds off the substantive sections of this book by reflecting upon the contested legitimacy of conflict resolution as the State came to play a more central role in prosecuting and sanctioning breaches of the criminal law.

Finally, Part 3 offers a thorough re-appraisal of the relationship between the police and public in nineteenth century England. Chapter 9 explores widespread public resistance to police authority and how the general public interacted with this new authority at street level. The book concludes with a revisionist account of the mixed economy of crime control that emerged in
the Victorian city and considers the contemporary relevance of these findings at a time when
the pluralisation of policing and the governance of security remain highly contested within
contemporary criminological scholarship.

This is an accomplished work that will be of interest to police researchers, criminologists
and crime historians. The style is accessible, and Churchill clearly delights in his subject matter,
making excellent use of biographical details from the archival record to foreground broader
theoretical themes. We learn of William Gains -- a fishmonger from White Hart Lane, Leeds -
- who hides in his fish cart (for an extended period of time) in order to catch a prolific offender
rather than report the matter to the police (p.152). At a later point we encounter the unfortunate
case of Mary Turner who instantly regretted reporting her brother to the police for stealing the
families’ savings upon realising that they would pursue criminal charges against him rather
than broker the informal resolution she was seeking.

In this respect Crime Control & Everyday Life in the Victorian City is at its most assured
when subjecting widespread academic theses to careful historical scrutiny. For example,
Churchill demonstrates that while the impact of the new police was operationally limited,
existing research has tended to underplay its subjective effects. In practice, the preventative
principle did help to promulgate a more generalised ‘police consciousness’ and an awareness
that one’s every day conduct in public spaces was subject to sanction and norms of appropriate
conduct,

The psychological imprint of policing was more nuanced than this; instead each
micro-level intervention on the street communicated something of the shifting
thresholds of official tolerance of public conduct. It was a key function of the police
to communicate these new norms of urban order, irrespective of whether they had
much hope of enforcing them. (p.121)

Not every aspect of this project is quite so successful. For a study that aligns itself with the
tradition of a ‘history from below’ questions of race, gender, poverty and social class are
occasionally obscured by an archival record that centres, to a significant extent, upon public
life and the voices of powerful white men – chief constables, traders, fathers and civic leaders.
By focusing on the immediate criminal encounter, we gain only tantalising glimpses of the
broader political economy of crime in the Victorian city or how this shaped the politics of the
police at this time. Intriguing reference is made in the concluding remarks to a ‘left realist’
position without fully unpacking the implications of this claim (p.260). But this perhaps reveals
more about the reviewer’s adherence to the prevailing disciplinary conventions of criminology
and the social science tradition. Overall this is an impressive study that makes a very significant
contribution to contemporary police scholarship.

References

Bosworth, M (2001). The past as a foreign country: Some methodological implications of

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