

BOOK REVIEWS.

Counter-Colonial Criminology: A Critique of Imperialist Reason
by Biko Agozino. London: Pluto Press, 2003.

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Since its inception, the goal of criminology has been to answer the age old question: "What causes crime?" With *Counter-Colonial Criminology*, Biko Agozino joins the ranks of notable criminologists such as Lombroso, Durkheim, Agnew, and Akers in attempting to answer this question. However, Agozino's interpretation is a radical yet refreshing departure from traditional explanations by seeking to explain not only the causes of crime, but also the existence of criminology. Agozino re-invigorates and rejuvenates the study of criminology, and with this work, he will undoubtedly change the way criminologists think about crime and the discipline of criminology.

One of the more compelling arguments made by Agozino is the inability of conventional criminology to explain the incarceration of individuals who lobby for social change. For example, criminologists have failed to adequately address why such persons as Nelson Mandela, Mumia Abu-Jamal, or Martin Luther King, Jr., whose only "crime" is speaking out against political injustice, become the target of the criminal justice system. Agozino has stepped in to fill this void and offers his own criminological theory, which broadens the scope of traditional criminology and seeks to explain all types of crime. Rather than look to the problems of an individual to explain criminal behavior, Agozino takes a more controversial role and examines the structure of a society, and how that structure causes or creates crime.

In addition, *Counter-Colonial Criminology* attempts to examine crime and the labeling of criminal acts and criminal actors in light of colonialism that has taken place in numerous countries. It also presents the controversial view that imperialists have used (or rather misused) criminological information, and criminology has been used to serve the imperialistic purpose of the state. Agozino explains, in-depth, how criminology has assisted in systematically targeting minorities, women, and the lower class in order to exert control over them. The book also examines the importance that recognizing the link between colonialism and criminology may have for third world countries, and the empowerment it can give them, as many of the peoples of these countries are experiencing oppressive class, race, and gender divisions at the hands of their governments.

Agozino recognizes there has been previous research on the link between social structure and crime and he offers a clear and concise review of current theories on social structure such as feminist, labeling, and critical theories. He also cites particularly useful and prominent sources in each respective area, as well as lesser known authors beyond traditionally cited works. Agozino carefully critiques each of these works and points out where these theories have been lacking in their depth or scope of analysis.

The book also examines past research on colonialism, which Agozino thoughtfully incorporates into his work. He takes what is already known of African criminology, African-American criminology, and colonialist history and delves into this

area with more depth than any other scholar to date. Agozino points out both the utility as well as the flaws of writings in each of these areas. He also incorporates the works of numerous authors with his own ideas and visions to form a cohesive and clear theory of crime and criminality.

One of the more controversial subjects that Agozino takes on is his chapter entitled, "Lesbian Rape." The chapter is intended to explain the concept of international rape, or the rape of one country by another for its resources. In explaining this phenomenon, Agozino uses very graphic images and explicit language. By doing so, the reality and the horror of the situation is conveyed, however, more conservative readers may find this particular chapter somewhat offensive or disturbing. However, it by no means detracts from the overall purpose of the text. To the contrary, it is just another example of how Agozino refuses to shrink back from some of the more sensitive issues that have been inadequately examined within criminology.

This is an excellent resource for all scholars of social science. The book is detailed and has enough references to intrigue and challenge even the most serious academics. Throughout the book, the author asks probing questions of the reader to determine where they stand on the issues or further challenge their understanding of both the text and criminology. At the same, students will find the conversational writing style a refreshing departure from other more jargon-laden criminology books. In addition, every work discussed in the text is critiqued in-depth for easier analysis, and also to link the works to the broader idea of the text. This book could easily serve as a primer to both scholars and students who are ignorant regarding the role imperialism has played in the development of criminology as a discipline.

Counter-Colonial Criminology is not only innovative, but it also will help to further the cause previously advocated by both critical and feminist criminologists that class, race, and gender has received inadequate attention within criminology and as a result, has yielded a distorted picture into the causes of crime, and hinders the development of criminology. It will once again bring to the forefront the role of social structure in creating crime. If the quality of a book is determined by its ability to promote new thought and change the direction of the discipline, then *Counter-Colonial Criminology* succeeds where other text have failed.