
The policing and criminalisation of women

Chaired by **Helen Johnston** (University of Hull) and **Vicky Nagy** (University of Tasmania)

Colleagues from the BSC HCnet# and the AusNZ Historical Criminology Network met to share their research interests and experience under the broader theme of policing and criminalisation of women. Attendees were also at various stages of their careers making this a fabulous opportunity for people to come together, hear from, and support one another.

Discussion started with what had led participants to signing up to the session and what they hoped to gain from it. A range of interests were reflecting in the group, those interested in women and social control in the broadest sense and those approaching the theme from a more policing perspective. All historical research and interests reflected a wide period from the 14th century onwards from within the UK and Australia. Intersectionality and the ways in which womanhood or femininity is refracted by other identities (for example, age, transgender, ethnicity, class, sexualities) was the first area of convergence in the current and previous work of several colleagues to emerge from the discussion.

Very quickly, the importance of comparative perspectives and in general the lack of them and the tendency toward research that is bound by a particular geographical area was identified as a talking point for attendees. Here discussion highlighted how collaboration might inform us as a group on understanding a longer view about women's criminalisation and offending (for example, helpful to meet those working on early or later periods) but also considered trying to understand and collaborate on locally specific issues and the possible connections or divergence across different contexts. The sharing of research papers or the creation of a reading group was one suggestion put forward here.

The discussion finished on with a debate about how historical research might inform criminology today or indeed policy today. Can that be achieved? How? Is this necessary? What are the dangers or pitfalls of this approach in terms of 'it has all happened before' and 'nothing changes'? What can or could contemporary criminology take from historical research? This discussion developed more fully into

one about the importance of longitudinal approach and thinking about when and where change happened at critical junctures and how this might raise difficulties for policy implications. But that perhaps the important area to consider was change and looking for explanations for that change. Certainly, these are big topics to contend with not only in this group, but for criminologists in the UK, Australia and New Zealand.

Overall, the group felt that the network was an important opportunity for comparative historical research through international collaboration. We do welcome anyone else who is interested in being part of these discussions in the future to get in touch with the Network convenors to be kept up-to-date about future opportunities.