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# Book reviews

*Baehr, P.* **Hannah Arendt, Totalitarianism and the Social Sciences** Stanford University Press 2010 231pp. $55.00 (hardback)

Hannah Arendt's hostility to the social sciences is a recurrent theme in her writing. In this book, Peter Baehr examines and evaluates her main objections, with a particular focus on the sociology of the 1950s. Along the way, he addresses many other issues, including the adequacy of Arendt's theory of totalitarianism, the foundations of her political theory and how we might draw on her work to comprehend the novel political developments of our own time, especially the rise of militant Jihadism.

As Baehr makes clear, Arendt's criticisms of sociology are inseparable from her theory of totalitarianism. That theory remains enormously influential, if contentious, among social and political scientists. Its defining characteristic, according to Baehr, is Arendt's claim that totalitarianism was a unique political constellation, an 'unprecedented event', that defied comprehension within our existing conceptions of political and social forms. The crimes committed under the aegis of totalitarian rule similarly exceeded our understanding, and fundamentally altered our grasp of what 'crime' and 'criminality' could mean.

Consistent with this theory, Arendt offered three main criticisms of the social sciences. First, she argued that the commitment to value-neutrality blinded social scientists to the radical evils of totalitarianism, particularly when they attempted to address the horrors of concentration camps. The attempt by sociologists and psychologists in the 1950s and 1960s, to examine the Nazi camps through the same impartial lens that they brought to other areas of social life both falsified the reality and produced disturbing resonances with the Nazis' use of the camps as 'human laboratories'. Second, Arendt objected to the various forms of functionalism that she believed pervaded sociology, and which she traced to Marxism. Arendt understood functionalism very broadly, as the refusal to treat phenomena on their own terms, but only in terms of their role within some general underlying schema, remote from the world of appearances. Apart from what she perceived to be their intellectual slovenliness, Arendt saw dangerous parallels between such habits of thinking and the toxic ideologies that pervaded totalitarian rule. Third, Arendt was allergic to what she saw as the tendency of sociologists to attempt to subsume every phenomenon under some general description, without proper reflection on the relevant historical and substantive differences. The outstanding example was the failure of social and political scientists to grasp the unprecedented character of totalitarian regimes, seeing them merely as augmentations of, or variations on, earlier forms of political tyranny, or as 'political religions'.

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These are serious charges, but on each of them, Baehr argues, Arendt had some justice to her case. On the other hand, Arendt was dealing with a set of disciplines that, even in the 1950s and 60s, were both far more diffuse and more sophisticated than she troubled herself to discover. And, while her aim was often true with respect to her primary targets, when the big guns fired back, her analysis was found to be more problematic. This was most clearly the case, as Baehr argues in chapter 2, with respect to her engagement with David Riesman, with whom, for a time, Arendt enjoyed a warm friendship and mutually respectful sparring. But Riesman defied Arendt's caricature of the social scientist. He was a careful, scholarly pragmatist who, both in correspondence and reviews of her work, took issue with many of her own reductionisms, such as her claims that totalitarianism depended on mass atomization and classlessness. Riesman, Baehr argues, ended up providing a subtle, empirically grounded and possibly truer picture of totalitarianism than Arendt herself offered. This was less the case for two other important sociologists of the time, Raymond Aron and Jules Monnerot, whom Baehr discusses in chapters 3 and 4. Both offered astute, thoroughly sociological, theories of totalitarianism, and produced sophisticated rebuttals to Arendt's own theory. Nevertheless, Baehr argues that Arendt's perspective on totalitarianism was, overall, more effective than either, because of her insistence on its 'unprecedented' character, a point that neither Aron not Monnerot could accept.

In a fascinating final chapter, Baehr explores the question of unprecedentedness in more general terms. Indeed, he asks, what does it mean (if anything) to say that an event is unprecedented? He then goes on to argue that the events of September 11, 2001, and the rise of violent Jihadism, constitute such events. In order to understand them in historical context, while also acknowledging their novelty, sociologists need to take Arendt's criticisms of their discipline seriously, and to develop a renewed conceptual armory.

The success of Baehr's argument in this book is due in no small part to the very extensive scholarship on which it is founded, which includes detailed archive research, close study of Arendt's voluminous correspondence and familiarity with the very broad range of secondary literature. But it is surprising that Baehr does not engage with Zygmunt Bauman's 1991 *Modernity and the Holocaust*, because the central theme of that book is precisely the dispute around the uniqueness (unprecedentedness), versus the 'normality' of the Shoah. Notwithstanding this point, Baehr's book should be required reading for political sociologists and historically-minded social scientists concerned with both the past and current states of their discipline.

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*Burt, Ronald* **Neighbour Networks. Competitive Advantage Local and Personal** Oxford University Press 2010 389pp. £22.50 (hardback) £14.99 (paperback)

*Neighbour Networks* continues Ronald Burt's ongoing task of rigorous empirical and theoretical explorations of networks and social capital. After previously exploring structural holes and network closure, Burt now turns to brokerage (managing structural holes) and spillover: whether neighbour networks (my contacts' network structures) affect my opportunities and performance. If my neighbour networks are rich in structural holes, does this further my capacity to innovate and perform my job well? (For the uninitiated, a 'structural hole' is a gap between individuals in a network chain: two of my contacts know me but not each other.) Research on networks has been limited to individuals' immediate network relations, but what of indirect networks? Do I benefit from spillover from my contacts' structural holes? To test this, Burt performs rigorous quantitative analyses on a set of rich

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data on network structures (e.g. with whom these people worked, how closely, for how long), performance reviews, and compensation. These came from surveys of managers and employees in different sectors: a software product launch network, a supply-chain group for an electronics firm, a human resource organization, and bankers and senior analysts in a financial organization. Burt's techniques are advanced, but his explanation of method and use of visuals should become comprehensible with some patience.

So, do neighbour networks matter? Sometimes yes, sometimes no. There is much going on here, and I can only summarize his rich analyses. Examining network effects on performance reviews and rewards in Chapters 3 and 4, Burt shows that an *individual's* structural holes matter, but neighbour networks have less of an effect. The local and personal are more important than the global. This raises an interesting problem: if structural holes are supposed to provide better information and strategic advantages, why does indirect access to structural holes provide little real gain – as it should if information and strategic advantage are central to network advantages? Burt suggests the real contribution of structural holes is cognitive. Structural holes bring the individual into contact with others who hold different worldviews, ideas, or experiences. This forces that individual to expand her own knowledge, ways of approaching issues and solutions, and communicating or cajoling. That is, structural holes contribute to human capital and improve perception. To continue testing spillover and structural holes, Burt moves up one level of analysis, to organizations, in Chapter 5. Here results are more mixed: spillover can matter sometimes. To address this threat to theoretical consistency across levels of analysis, Burt makes two propositions. First, if information in an industry can be easily routinized and transferred, spillover should matter more. Second, norms help constrain opportunism with guile between individuals but not between organizations in highly competitive fields, which might account for some spillover (and which has vague parallels to clans and organizational power).

In Chapters 6 and 7 Burt turns to closure and spillover. Closure augments network stability and helps stabilize reputations: too little closure risks reputational decay and allows potential structural 'backdoors' through which contradictory information or claims about reputation can enter. Closure also has a stabilizing spillover effect (perhaps like a cocoon): indirect closure enhances stability of direct ties, and spillover (indirect) closure can compensate for weak direct closure. In Chapter 7 Burt shows how neighbour networks provide strategic access for outsiders, who would otherwise be viewed with suspicion. Burt leaves us with a theoretical climax in Chapter 8, where he addresses agency, how networks construct 'bent preferences', and why structural holes enhance cognitive flexibility. Some ideas are as follows. Network brokers gain cognitive flexibility and advantage because of incentives to understand, balance, bridge, and utilize different worldviews and improve their own human capital. Structural holes allow emotion to enter into work as a part of the synergy between ideas and work; if creativity and emotion are linked, then networks enhance the latter by augmenting the former. Further, network brokers have fewer easily identifiable functional peers than individuals in more closed networks. The latter are motivated to improve performance by fear of falling behind easily identifiable peers, as network structure can augment feelings of relative deprivation. The former have fewer peers and less fear of relative deprivation; they can be more 'intrepid' and innovative in applying human capital from brokerage.

Burt's real contribution is an empirical demonstration of the *limits* of network effects to the local and personal. This is quite welcome when 'globalization' and the like dominate discourse, and not always with the strongest foundations (and possibly contributing to a sense of individual powerlessness and low accountability). Score one for agency. Yet in revealing the limits of indirect networks and the transformative power of structural holes, Burt reveals limits to a structural approach. In Chapter 8 Burt pushes the envelope on

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structural determinants of perception and practice, yet he says too little about content of those perceptions, just as he elides multiple roles and meanings of self that wind through networks (as my anthropology colleagues like to remind me). Consider his second hypothesis from Chapter 5 about organizational spillover. Norms constrain individuals from acting opportunistically vis-à-vis other individuals but not organizations, unless organizational culture prevails. Rational choice scholars invoke monitoring and iterated games to explain this, but competing work suggests roles matter tremendously. The others in my network at work are a combination of colleagues, friends, enemies, and curiosities; how do these important aspects of everyday practice fit in Burt's structural model? Further, do Burt's conclusions hold across other dependent variables besides job performance as measured through formalized organizational procedures? (I can imagine neighbour networks being more significant in a negative way in Stalin's USSR.) For this reason, it sometimes seems Burt's claim about networks and cognitive reflexivity is a (meticulously developed) variation of the old adage that 'travel broadens the mind.' (This also has parallels to work on class and cultural capital, and Basil Bernstein's 'elaborated codes' came quickly to my mind.) Structural holes do broaden the mind – but maybe the real issue is how this contributes to the emergence and propagation of new categories, classifications, and logics that shape practice.

These last questions are more a reflection of Burt's intellectual challenges than of serious problems. *Neighbor Networks* is first-rate scholarship. For those who study networks, Ronald Burt's new book is a must, if anything as an impressive how-to guide on rigorously modeling complex networks and effects. For those less enamoured with networks, Burt provides important ideas to ponder. For those interested in economic sociology (or who want to make it in business), *Neighbor Networks* provides important detail on advantages and limits of networks: for example, why we should cultivate structural holes that provide variation in the learning experience, not variation in entries into the Rolodex. Academics should readily welcome that conclusion.

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*Eyal, G., Hart, B., Onculer, E., Oren, N. and Rossi, N.* **The Autism Matrix: The Social Origins of the Autism Epidemic** Polity Press 2010 312pp. £55.00 (hardback) £17.99 (paperback)

Autism is often described, clinically, as a developmental disorder, with a wide array of severity, and typically associated with problems in three broad domains: social interaction, communication, and repetitive behaviour or interests. First described in the 1940s, the number of diagnoses has increased in recent decades, with the most recent (UK and the USA) prevalence estimates hovering around 1 per cent. This increased visibility of autism, much debated epidemiologically, has latterly attracted interest from scholars in the social sciences and the humanities.

In *The Autism Matrix*, a 'social origins' account of this phenomenon, the authors argue that 'the current rise in autism diagnoses' is actually an 'aftershock of the real earthquake' – which was 'the deinstitutionalization of mental retardation that began in the 1960s' (p. 3). In the wake of 'custodial institutions,' they argue, an entirely *new* 'institutional matrix' emerged – made up of 'community treatment, special education, and early intervention programs' (p. 3). But this emergence troubled the hitherto neat distinction between 'illness' and 'retardation'. Unmoored, the categories of childhood disorder gradually became amenable to 'occupational therapists, speech therapists, ABA specialists [and] behavioural

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psychologists', and an 'ecological niche' formed, allowing a hybrid entity to gain a diagnostic foothold (p. 39). The authors call this phenomenon 'diagnostic substitution' – the practice through which (in this case) 'children who in the past would have been diagnosed as mentally retarded are now given the diagnosis of autism at increasing rates' (p. 47). The way to understand this practice, they argue, is to focus on the space produced by deinstitutionalization, and on the emergence of a new 'domain of intervention' centred on an emergent hybrid entity, 'the autism spectrum' (pp. 49–57).

What follows is an historical sociology of the network that makes this spectrum possible: two nodes that quickly became connected, for instance, were the 'history of care and research on the "feeble-minded" . . . and the history of problematizing the middle-class child,' both under the aegis of a new 'surveillance of childhood' (pp. 83–97). With this familial turn came 'parent activists' who 'found ready allies in the more marginal professions' focused on self-treatment (p. 111, p. 121). And this enabled an entirely new suite of therapies – 'outsourced,' marked by 'modularity, even eclecticism,' and which 'actively hybridized . . . the boundary between illness and retardation' (pp. 148–57). It was the category of *autism* that was best placed to stand in the centre of this network: 'the crucial dynamic,' the authors argue, 'the real revolution of lasting significance was this rearrangement of the relations with mental retardation' (p. 259). Throughout this interpretation, the authors give particular space to the question of expertise, and to the organizations of expert professional parents who formed a 'critical nucleus' of 'moral entrepreneurs,' enabling the autism spectrum to become today's 'paradigmatic childhood disorder' (p. 186).

The primary concept underlying the analysis is Ian Hacking's 'looping' – here, an argument that 'classifying and naming autism set in motion processes that act on the phenomena classified and possibly change them in ways that, in turn, react back on the classification, leading to its revision' (p. 209). In particular, the authors use 'looping' to elide the fraught division between 'naturalist' and 'social-constructionist' approaches to the rising number of cases; here, that number becomes the 'final spiral in an increasingly widening vortex' (pp. 23–4). Looping processes can also bring kinds of people into existence (thus the belated subscription of Asperger's Syndrome to the spectrum) as the widening loops make it possible to 'embody and claim affinity with this type of person' (p. 227). Similarly, autism's blurring of the boundary between 'mainstream' and 'alternative' medicine created a 'fuzzy zone,' allowing others to come within the spectrum's remit (pp. 246–9)

*The Autism Matrix* makes innovative use of empirical material to form a compelling historical and sociological account; marking an important intervention into this emerging field, it will be of great interest to scholars of mental disorder, childhood, institutions, and expertise, among others. The book does lean quite heavily on Hacking's conceptual framework, however – and sometimes mirrors, perhaps a little too well, the elegance and neatness characteristic of some philosophies of science. There is, for example, perhaps too much stress on the apparently real and autonomous unfolding of various 'social' phenomena (the descriptive language occasionally borrows from classical economics), and the account might benefit from more of what Stuart Murray has called 'autistic presence' – which 'stops the condition being *only* subject to the workings of metaphor and fascination' (*Representing Autism*, 2008: pp. 11–16). Eyal and colleagues are hardly guilty of this, but one may make a similar argument against the '*longue durée* of practices', to whose particular workings they do attend (although a second, more ethnographic volume is promised) (p. 8). Somewhat absent from this account of 'social origins', then, is the sheer *vitality* and *materiality* of autism, and, in particular, its implication in a relentlessly human- and earth-bound clinical and research practice – amid whose gravitational pull, no *Matrix*, however elegant, ever floats truly free.

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*Franks, D.* **Neurosociology: The Nexus Between Neuroscience and Social Psychology**
2010 Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag 216pp. £70.00 (hardback)

Sociology, it is fair to say, has enjoyed a complex if not vexed relationship with all things 'biological', both past and present. These relations none the less have at times been quite close, within certain sociological strands of bio-friendly or bio-social thinking at least. They also chime with the broader materialist and affective turns in the social sciences and humanities today, as sociology undergoes something akin to its own 'renewal' in the twenty-first century.

This latest offering by Franks on the so-called 'neurosociology' frontier is timely and topical therefore given: (i) important developments in the neurosciences in recent decades, including social neuroscience, and (ii) the 'neuro turn' in the social sciences and humanities today.

Based on a spirit of genuine 'openness' or 'cross-fertilization' between neuroscience and sociology, Franks' abiding message here it seems is that neurosociology, as the sub-title of the book suggests, provides the 'nexus' between neuroscience and social psychology, thereby demonstrating how the American pragmatists' emphasis on the priority of motor behaviour is confirmed by the latest research in the brain sciences, particularly work on so-called 'mirror neurons'.

Chapters for example, following a useful introduction, address the evolution of the human brain; the social nature of the human brain; the 'new' unconscious (i.e. more neuroscience than Freud); mirror neurons and embodied intersubjectivity; the neurosociology of emotion and its relation to cognition and decision making; the self in neuroscience and social psychology; consciousness, quale and subjective experience; imitation in social life and its neural supports, and finally those thorny underlying matters of determinism and free will. A short conclusion provides a final recap on these matters, including a restatement of Franks' epistemological stance on *emergence* as a way out of reductionism and the 'neurological supports' for the Chicago pragmatist priority of action.

So what then are we to make of all this?

On the positive side of the balance sheet Franks certainly does us a great service in pulling together and spelling out the relevant links or potential bridges between neuroscience and sociology, highlighting many areas of 'mutual interest' in the process. The book moreover may be read as a collection and culmination of Franks' work to date on these issues, given he has been a leading advocate of 'neurosociology' for some time now, following the lead of Warren TenHouten in the early 1970s, whom he duly acknowledges as the 'father of this new field' (p. vii).

On the flip side of the balance sheet, however, the book is not without its shortcomings alas, particularly as far as sociological engagements with the neurosciences go. Yes, neuroscience has important things to say about the social nature of our brains, yes a 'balanced social constructionism' seems eminently sensible, and yes there are doubtless many potential convergences here with (social) neuroscience if sociologists care to look carefully or closely enough, as I myself have argued. The absence of any sustained, let alone critical, sociological engagement with the *social shaping* of neuroscience, and the *social production* of the 'brain-facts' or 'findings' Franks draws upon, is striking however. Despite the emphasis on cross-fertilization, mutual engagement and the like, moreover, there appears to be a heavier flow from neuroscience to sociology in the book than vice versa, with the former in the main serving to confirm, deepen or extend insights stemming from the latter in ways that might have 'otherwise been impossible, or at least very difficult to develop' (p. 2).

At the very least, some preliminary discussion and positioning of neurosociology vis-à-vis other recent sociological engagements with the neurosciences, including important work in

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science and technology studies (STS), would have been useful – STS incidentally does get a mention, but this time it stands for the superior temporal sulcus!

Even on its own terms of reference, important controversies within the neurosciences are largely glossed or glided over altogether, perhaps the most serious in this case, given the grand claims Franks makes about them in the book, pertaining to very nature and status of mirror neurons in humans (see Tallis 2011 *Aping Mankind*, for example). Controversies concerning brain scans too are only briefly mentioned, thereby skating over some of the important assumptions read 'into' and 'out of' these images, as Dumit for instance (*Picturing Personhood,* 2004), so clearly demonstrates. Here again then we return not simply to the way in which neuroscience can help us sociologists 'break out of our comfortable sociological "assumptive order" ' (p. 2), but how we sociologists can, or should perhaps, repay the favour, particularly as far as the social shaping and social production of neuroscience and neuro-technologies go.

Questions also arise by the end of the book, in my mind at least, as to what precisely is being proposed here by Franks and how far neurosociology might go in 'breaking down' these 'walls'. Is it simply a case, for example, of sociologists trading relevant insights with (social) neuroscientists across extant disciplinary boundaries, or does neurosociology imply or include more genuinely interdisciplinary if not trans- or post- disciplinary endeavours. The latter, to be sure, is a far bigger ask than the former, given the huge linguistic, conceptual and methodological issues involved (see J. Cromby, (2007) 'Integrating Social Science and Neuroscience', *BioSocieties* 2: 149–69, for instance).

Despite these shortcomings none the less, not to mention the steep hardback only price tag, I would still recommend this book to the interested reader. We might well, as Tallis (*Aping Mankind*, 2011) warns, have reason for suspicion regarding the rapid proliferation of neuro-hybrids in the social sciences and humanities today – a case by his reckoning of 'neuromania' the remedy of which is to turn on your 'bullshit detector' if not reach for 'your gun' (R. Tallis, 2009 'Neurotrash', *New Humanist* 124 (6) (Nov/Dec) – but there are good grounds I think for giving an, albeit more *critical* neuro-sociology perhaps, its due as a key front or face of sociology in the decades to come.

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*Gordin, M. D., Tilley, H. and Prakash, G.* (eds) **Utopia/Dystopia: Conditions of Historical Possibility** Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2010 293pp. £44.95 (hardback) £18.95 (paperback)

Gordin, Tilley, and Prakash's collection is an important contribution to critical works on utopia and dystopia because it shows how notions of ideal and catastrophic societies can be applied across cultural boundaries and the ways in which these notions condition how people have thought and continue to think about a variety of social forms. I would argue that the introductory chapter of the book really merits extension into a study of its own. Its import resides in the ways in which it attempts to unite the ideas of utopia and dystopia and generate a theory of what we might call utopia/dystopia. As the authors note, this is a project rarely undertaken in the critical literature, but which is very important for understanding why utopian dreamworlds often seem to collapse into dystopic catastrophes upon realization. Moving beyond the introduction, there is interesting work in every chapter of the book. Fredric Jameson, who is still one of the big names in utopian studies, kicks off the collection by discussing the idea of utopia as method.

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Taking perhaps the key issue of contemporary utopian studies, the clash between global capitalism and the anti-capitalist alternative leftist movement, Jameson explores the utopian/dystopian dimensions of both positions, noting that the essential problem of utopian thought continues to be its inability to think of quantity in terms that do not simply condemn it as dystopic. Against this problematic of what he calls the enclave structure of utopia, which sees conditions such as over-population become markers of dystopia, Jameson takes the examples of the capitalist monolith Wal-Mart and the anti-capitalist idea of the multitude, in order to think about whether it is possible to save utopian hope from the dystopia of excessive quantity. Considering Wal-Mart, the largest corporation in the world, and signifier of the ultra-capitalist dystopia that has no concern for humanity, he explains that we must search for a kind of utopian unconscious within apparently dystopic formations. In the example of Wal-Mart, this possibility is the utopian technology for the potential management of social ills which is contained within Wal-Mart's global reach and global control systems. In this way Jameson reads the dystopia of Wal-Mart as containing the utopian potential to oppose the social and political uncertainty that colours dystopic visions of processes of globalization.

Regarding this dystopic vision, he then shifts his focus to the anti-capitalist idea of the multitude, which appears in the works of the Italian autonomist Paolo Virno as well as the now famous books of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, to show how dystopic notions of over-population and social fragmentation can be read utopically to signify social possibility and revolutionary potential. In conclusion, Jameson suggests that this move, which entails re-thinking the Heideggerian problem of homelessness in terms of the Deleuzean possibility of nomadism, may sum up the essential method of utopianism today – the method of excavating hope from the most dire of circumstances. I would say that Jameson's piece comes the closest of any of the chapters in the collection to illustrating the theoretical model for understanding the inter-play between utopia and dystopia outlined in the editors' introduction. Whereas his work illustrates the transitions between dystopia and utopia that are necessary to keep hope alive, other chapters are less successful in connecting back to the editors' overall project. I think this is the case with both Wenzel and Chakrabarty's chapters on millennial dreaming in nineteenth century South Africa and the lives of historical documents in India.

Although these pieces are interesting in themselves, it is never really clear how they plug into the overall project of the book. On this score, White's piece on Rhodesia is much more successful. In the context of processes of decolonization, she shows how independent Rhodesia was constructed as a white man's utopia on the basis of its apparent commitment to civilization, infrastructure, and technology relative to black Africa, which was identified with the descent back into a kind of Hobbesian state of nature. White is interesting throughout, showing how the Rhodesians conceived of themselves as inheritors of the civilizing mission of the utopians par excellence, the Spartans, and recalling Hannah Arendt's references to Rhodes as a kind of megalomaniacal proto-totalitarian. Given these connections, and especially the possible link between the Rhodesian utopia and the later European totalitarianisms, White's chapter struck me as having the potential to develop into a much longer study about the history of utopianism in Africa, a part of the world often neglected by utopian studies.

I would say the same about Mitchell's chapter on the hydrocarbon utopia because of the ways in which this work could be expanded into a much wider consideration of the evolution of the capitalist relationship to energy and the emergence of the environmentalist camp as a kind of counter-utopia to the hydrocarbon model within the anti-capitalist movement. In explaining the idea of the hydrocarbon utopia in his chapter, Mitchell argues that the discovery of the energetic potential of fossil fuels some 200 years ago eventually led to the

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emergence of on the one hand a utopia of limitless social and economic growth and on the other hand a dystopia of scarcity and resource war. Tracing the history of this utopia/dystopia, which finds representation in various science fiction texts such as *Mad Max*, Mitchell also illustrates how the new industrial metabolism gave rise to novel class relationships. Glossing the traditional Marxist theory of the emergence of class struggle based around the relations of production contained within the factory, Mitchell argues that the turn to coal produced a highly political working class of miners who were characterized by critical thought by virtue of need to employ independence in their work. I found this thesis, which suggests that while the factory worker was created as a kind of subordinate drone by virtue of his alienation from praxis, the miner was transformed into a free thinker because of the necessity of making judgments about the locations of cuts and so on that would avoid cave-ins, very persuasive because of the ways it suggests a broadening of traditional accounts for the emergence of the labour movement as being rooted in the experience of immiseration.

Against the coal powered-welfare utopia that eventually became a kind of unionized dystopia for capitalists, Mitchell moves on to show how the oil utopia was far more friendly to business interests because the basic stuff of this energetic utopia, oil, was far easier to transport than its predecessor, coal. The result of the transition from coal to oil power was, therefore, the decline of a major pillar of the union movement, the mining union, especially in the original industrial powers where the welfare state was found in its most developed form, and the emergence of the pure capitalist model premised on limitless growth. Although Mitchell could have been more explicit about the relationship between the turn to oil, the decline of labour politics, and the rise of the neo-liberal model of capitalism with its utopian notion of limitless production, consumption, and value generation, he skips over this work to conclude by showing how the hydro-carbon utopia eventually ran up against its own dystopic limit in the idea of limited energy resources, the nightmare scenario of the militarization of fossil fuels, and the related environmental utopia proposing alternative ways of living.

Beyond this chapter, the collection moves on with chapters relating to the idea of utopian construction and the limits of this project. Although chapters by Krige on the utopian-dystopianism of atomic power and Shore on the notion of cosmopolitanism in central Europe are interesting in themselves, they fail to capture the movement of the dialectic of utopianism which was so well illustrated in the Mitchell chapter. Pinder is more successful in this respect and his piece on the struggle between two different variants of urban utopianism is the stand-out chapter in this section of the book. Contrasting Le Corbusier's idea of antiseptic urbanism, which held that the street must be destroyed in the name of a high modern utopia, with the situationists immanent urbanism, characterized by drift and the idea of the street as a rough, dirty, and chaotic utopia designed to enable novel human interactions and creativity to take place, he provides an excellent discussion of the ways in which utopia and dystopia have been thought through the lens of perhaps the most discussed utopian-dystopian space in history, the city.

Still on familiar ground, Halfin considers the utopian-dystopian dimensions of the Stalinist show trial. Although this material is extremely interesting, and notions of the futurity of guilt will always provoke the reader by showing how ideas contained in sci-fi dystopias such as Philip K. Dick's *Minority Report* originated in real social and political conditions, Halfin does not really extend the analysis of others such as Žižek who have similarly analysed the dystopic aspects of the show trials. More original in this respect is Nigam who explores the utopian politics of Dalit capitalism in contemporary India. Against the traditional leftist vision of global capitalism as dystopia, Nigam shows how the Dalits re-read capitalism as a utopian force with the potential to liberate them from centuries of caste-based oppression. Exploring the rise of the Dalit millionaire as less an example of neo-liberal capitalist excess

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and more a symbol of the possibility of the escape from tradition, he uses Deleuze and Guattari's anti-oedipal works to talk about the Becoming-Dalit, a minority figure who stands against dominant social norms and values, in much same way that Deleuze and Guattari's schizophrenic opposed the paranoia of normal society. Concluding the book, then, in much the same way that Jameson began it, Nigam shows how we must strive to re-think the capitalist dystopia and find the traces of a better world within it, in order to continue to develop the utopian imagination and the utopian dialectic. The Becoming-Dalit provides this utopian hope in his chapter.

Overall, Gordin, Tilley, and Prakash's collection is something of an uneven collection, primarily because of the lack of explicit fit between some of the chapters and their overall project. However, their overall project is a necessary and timely one and some of the chapters are excellent and add a great deal to our understanding of non-western utopianism. It is on this basis that I would say that *Utopia/Dystopia: Conditions of Historical Possibility* is an essential collection for academics and post-graduate students interested in utopia and dystopia today.

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*Hall, John, A.* **Ernest Gellner: An Intellectual Biography** Verso 2010 400pp. £29.99 (paperback)

Ernest Gellner was a towering figure in the intellectual world of the twentieth century, author of numerous books on diverse subjects, in philosophy, sociology, philosophy of history, and above all, nationalism, with a niche for Islam. John Hall's is a worthy biography of the great man, intimate and searching, covering the episodes in his personal life, and following his intellectual journeys with critical sympathy and detailed analysis. We learn of Gellner's formative years in Prague and the cultural milieu which was to be of such lasting significance, then his settling in Britain, alongside the many central and eastern European intellectuals who were to contribute so much to modern philosophical and social thought, and the little known fact that Gellner actually saw action in France in the last year of World War 2, with the Czechoslovak Armoured Brigade. The biography is especially sensitive to the significance of Gellner's Jewish background, within the intellectual milieus of other mid-European intellectuals of the time, and the part it played in his interest in nationalism. Gellner was a brilliant polemicist with incisive critiques and irony. He first made his name with the famous attack on the then dominant linguistic philosophy, in his *Words and Things*, 1959, which raised heated public debates involving some of the luminaries of the time, with Bertrand Russell siding with Gellner. This episode is explored in careful detail here, as indeed are all the many contributions and debates marking Gellner's long career. Gellner's widening interest in anthropology, history and social thought continued to be animated by philosophical concerns and reflections, with particular emphasis on the place of science. He remained passionately committed to a universalistic and rational outlook, but was aware of the problematic foundations of the universalism of values. This is where science becomes key: scientific advances have overwhelming pragmatic demonstrations, and have underpinned the advances of modernity. Industry, prosperity, communications and the social revolutions they engendered have science as their base. A constant element in Gellner's work is the attack on various forms of relativism and departures from rationality, often with biting irony. Post-modernism was the object of his ire in later life, attacked in *Post-modernism, Reason and Religion* (1992), especially with its manifestations in anthropology and the social sciences.

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Gellner's name was most prominently associated with nationalism, and with Islam. His theory of nationalism rested on a fit between the social transformations of industrialization and the integration of 'national' units: a modern emergence with an integral ideology of historical ancestry. His initial prototype for nationalism was the Habsburg world of central and eastern Europe and its post-imperial transformations. This was to be elaborated into typologies and exceptions to include the diverse nationalisms of the post-colonial world, with a special place for what he considered to be the unique case of Islam. His typologies and exceptions of nationalism became ever more elaborate in successive works. The critical question, which is not quite explicit in the biography, is whether a general theory and typology of nationalism is feasible, given that nationalist ideologies and associations are moved by particular histories, politics and social formations. This question becomes more acute with respect to Islam. Gellner's universalism gives way to the Islamic exception. While transformations to modernity and national cultures are typically secularizing, Islam, in Gellner's characterization, has its own literate 'high culture' of scriptural and legal formations which animate its modernity. As such, Islam is highly resistant to secularization. The long modern history of secular politics and culture in many countries with Muslim populations, then appear as a diversion and a side show. Again a passion for systematizing resulted in the simplification of great historical and modern diversities: a religious essence overrules sociology, politics and economics.

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*Lyon, D.* **Identifying Citizens: ID Cards as Surveillance** Polity Press 2009 192pp. £45.00 (hardback) £14.99 (paperback)

Currently many nation states are in the process of introducing advanced ID card systems. For David Lyon, 'identification is the starting point of surveillance' (p. 4) and at the same time the 'securitizing of identity' has become increasingly necessary for people wanting to exercise their freedoms and responsibilities as citizens. We need to establish our identity to travel, vote or enter the workplace. Post 9/11 the state has come to require a higher degree of identity assurance from people wanting to be legitimately categorized as citizens. The aims of Lyon's book are to offer an overview of the issues related to the introduction of 'new' ID systems; to identify the connections between identification, citizenship, ID cards and surveillance, and explain how these new systems can reinforce existing global inequalities. The new ID systems are based upon the use of networked, searchable data bases and population registries and it is this that makes the new systems distinct from traditional paper-based systems and enhances their surveillance capability. In this sense Lyon's book adds to our knowledge of dataveillance or the use of data matching or record linkage as a form of mass surveillance.

Lyon traces the historical background to the identification of citizens and includes a number of very interesting discussions of pilgrims, diplomats, couriers, Gypsies and others. The new ID systems originate in colonial and war-time conditions and the continuities with the past are striking. However, all the historical systems for establishing identity were designed to help identify a partial segment of the population unlike the current ID schemes that are planned to cover the whole population.

The new ID card systems help to facilitate 'social sorting'. Readers who are familiar with Lyon's previous work will be familiar with his argument that surveillance power is to be found in the state's ability to discriminate between different categories and groups of people for differential treatment. The technology may change but the prejudices of the system

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designers do not, as their stereotypes become embedded in the software itself. There has, however, been a shift in the rationale for this data gathering from 'risk' to 'precaution': 'anticipating profiles of risk from previous trends, and projecting them by generalization upon the potential behaviour of each individual pertaining to the risk category' (p. 54).

One of the most interesting aspects of this sorting process is the relation to biometric identification, where citizens use the body as a password. Our understanding of the body has shifted from an anatomical to an informationized data-based definition of the body. As Lyon suggests, with the self-attesting body there is always the risk that identity can be constituted and imposed by others.

Whilst developing his argument that the driving force behind the introduction of national ID card systems is the unintended consequence of political and economic restructuring and technological dependence on software protocols, Lyon develops the idea of the 'card cartel'. ID card production is a joint effort between nation states who want to validate the identity of individuals claiming to be its citizens, global corporations who also have an interest in 'identity management' and software protocols that like all forms of technology are socially shaped by powerful interests. Retail corporations have for some time had success in building profiles of identities of 'unknown' individuals from transactional data derived from store cards, loyalty cards and credit cards. Such techniques for exploring unknown populations can be applied to identifying potential terrorists as well as potential customers. Software protocols are also viewed by Lyon as 'actors' in this process that operate through code which provides the standards governing how technologies are implemented and as such is regarded as the 'law of cyberspace'. Governmental, commercial and technological interests come together to produce an ID card that appear to offer solutions to several common problems. A key concept here is interoperability, having an agreed format for transmitting data between different devices and organizations such as the International Civil Aviation Organization's protocol ensuring that passports globally machine-readable. Interoperability emerges because of the desire of states to prevent terrorists from travelling and corporations concerns about identity theft.

The historical and comparative aspects of the arguments within the book are excellent but the sociological significance is understated. In particular, I would like to have had a much fuller account of the argument that software protocols should be seen as 'actors'. More generally, surveillance studies have moved away from its initial dependence on Foucault's arguments in relation to disciplinary technology. Instead Lyon makes reference to Bauman on liquefaction and Deleuze on control. There needed to be a much fuller account of why Foucault's ideas are now inadequate and a much fuller account of how control and liquefaction are central to our understanding of ID cards.

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*Peck, Jamie* **Constructions of Neoliberal Reason** Oxford: Oxford University Press 2010 301pp. $45.00 (hardback)

In this major contribution, Jamie Peck rejects the big *N* story of 'Neoliberalism' in favour of a series of little *n* stories. He calls for the analysis of diverse neoliberalism*s* and, relatedly, of the interacting, variegated forms of neoliberalization. Drawing on conceptual and intellectual histories, narrative policy and discourse analysis, and multi-scalar and multi-site geographical inquiry, Peck seeks to denaturalize neo-liberalism as a theoretical construct and analyse it as a multi-faceted, decentred process of constructing neoliberal reason and governmentality. In this context, he addresses: (a) the role of intellectuals, academics, and think tanks; (b) the

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'second-hand dealers' in ideas and policy wonks who popularize neoliberal views and produce policy recommendations; and (c) the politicians and state managers who implement and readjust these recommendations in the light of shocks, resistance, and failure. The book's title reflects this focus on the always incomplete discursive, or ideological, construction of neoliberalism as an emerging and changing set of foundational arguments, legitimations, and rationales for economic, political, and social governance. Indeed, Peck emphasizes that neoliberalism is an impossible project, doomed to incompletion and impurity, messiness and hybridity, that none the less tends to fail forward, i.e., its 'manifest inadequacies have – so far anyway – repeatedly animated further rounds of neoliberal invention . . . institutional reinvention spawned as much by the *limits* of earlier forms of neoliberalization as by some advancing "logic" ' (pp. 6 and 7). Because neoliberalism is always 'under construction', agents and agency must be at the heart of this analysis and, in Peck's book, they are.

In denaturalizing neoliberalism, he studies its diverse ideational, ideological, political, and institutional moments over time and across space. He investigates neoliberalism where it is out of place as well as at home, its normal and banal moments, its more audacious and extreme manifestations, its twists and turns, its contradictions and compromises, its flows, backflows, and undertows. While noting that the boldest experiments occurred in Chile in the 1970s and post-communist Europe in the 1990s, Peck grounds his ideational analysis in Western Europe and the USA and focuses his political analysis on economic, urban, and social policy in the States.

A thought-provoking introduction explores the transatlantic dialogue that shaped the rise of neoliberalism and neoconservatism and highlights the spatio-temporal complexity of neoliberal projects and practices in different contexts. In short, 'not only does each "case" reveal a conjuncturally unique relationship with the evolving and globalizing neoliberal "whole", the distinctive integration of each regulatory formation also contributes to the remaking of transnational neoliberalism' (p. 22). This highlights the need to study rollback and rollout phases, efforts to flank, support, and reinforce neoliberalism in the face of resistance or signs of failure, and the role of techniques, apparatuses, and other means of embedding neoliberalism.

Chapter 2 explores how neoliberalism became a polycentric ideational movement with competing bases in Freiburg, Paris, London, Chicago, and Washington. It also claims that the eventually hegemonic Chicago School did not change the world: the world changed to make its politics and policies acceptable after the crisis of Fordism and Keynesian-welfarism. Chapter 3 investigates the conditions that made Chicago the epicentre of the neoliberal project despite the unpromising soil offered by a blue-collar industrial city distant from New York and Washington. Peck highlights the intellectual climate, pedagogic practices, and evangelical socialization that produced a tight-knit band of market fundamentalists who sustained the neoliberal flame until it gained traction as political project in the 1970s. Chapter 4 addresses the Fordist-welfarist crisis in New York and post-Katrina rebuilding of New Orleans as instances of what Naomi Klein might call 'disaster neoliberalism'. Chapter 5 rehearses Peck's critique of Richard Florida's creative class thesis and its translation into an over-hyped panacea for urban regeneration. Chapter 6 concerns the timidly pragmatic, presentationally polyvalent character of Obamanomics before and after Obama's election to the presidency. It depicts his economic worldview as ideologically elusive, market-friendly, and pro-trade and argues that Obama has adapted to the neoliberal order even as the global financial crisis revealed its limitations. Peck concludes with comments on possible futures for neoliberalization after the global financial crisis and outlines ideas for future research.

This book is well-informed, thought-provoking, largely jargon-free, rich in metaphors, and easy to read. It offers many lessons on neoliberalism through its detailed engagement with policy, taking the reader beyond ideational and/or ideological critique to the complexities of

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neoliberal practice. Yet the latter analysis is largely confined to narrative policy analysis and does not adequately address why neoliberalism is doomed to failure but none the less capable of recuperation. This problem is especially acute in Peck's analysis of Obamanomics. More generally, Peck operates primarily at the level of 'critical actualism' rather than 'critical realism'. In other words, his work is thickly descriptive and contextualizing, focusing on ideas and policies, and giving detailed accounts of intellectual and political actors. This offers a refreshing contrast to claims that neoliberalism is best understood in terms of class struggle or the interests of financial capital. But it also leads to neglect of the underlying material as opposed to ideational mechanisms that shaped the rise of neoliberalism and/or that explain why neoliberalism is an inherently infeasible project. Thus *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason* is far stronger on *Ideologiekritik* than *Herrschaftskritik* (critique of domination). But this would require far deeper engagement with a critical political economy of capital as a social relation and the forms of domination in the contemporary state and governance.

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*Portes, Alejandro* **Economic Sociology: A Systematic Inquiry** Princeton: Princeton University Press 2010 307pp. £19.95 (paperback)

Inspired largely by Mark Granovetter's seminal paper on the 'embeddedness of economic action' economic sociology has undergone a major revival over the past two decades as a generation of ambitious young sociologists began to examine the interactions of firms, industries and markets, including the now infamous financial markets. One of the most significant innovations that these scholars introduced was the study of social capital and the success of this concept, notably in the study of networks within and between firms, has seen it adopted by economists and other social scientists. Despite the achievements of this research, some economic sociologists have begun to wonder what the field might do next apart from improve on its measures of social networks. So when one of the most eminent figures in US sociology (a former President of the American Sociological Association) promises a conceptual framework designed to move the field out of its current impasse then it ought to be worth reading carefully.

The book opens by elaborating on some of problems emerging in the revitalized sub-field of economic sociology. Too much of the work, according to Portes, consists of '. . . exegeses of the classics, repetition of *one* of the founding notions of the field, and a growing number of individually valuable but disparate studies' (p. xi). What is needed, he insists, is not an overarching theoretical framework but a clear set of meta-theoretical principles, explanatory mechanisms and strategic sites of inquiry. By meta-theoretical principles, Portes means the cognitive 'lens' through which a discipline views the social world. Three such principles are listed in Chapter 2: socially oriented economic action, the unexpected consequences of purposive action and power. While none of these need any elaboration for sociologists what is worth noting is the argument that the field of economic sociology should not be limited to the first principle and I believe he is right to castigate others for limiting it in this way. Also, one of the more significant points about the three principles is that, when they are taken together, they direct social researchers towards those elements of economic exchange that are often missed in neo-classical economic models. Economic sociology, therefore, has the potential to provide a much-needed theoretical corrective to neo-classical economics at a time when the limits of that disciple have been brutally exposed by the economic crisis of 2008–10.

Having outlined what he thinks should be the guiding meta-assumptions Portes proceeds to deliver chapters on three explanatory mechanisms, namely social capital, social classes and

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social institutions. The aim, in describing these lower-order concepts, is to show how issues of power and class-based inequality, for instance, can be subjected to empirical research in a range of different contexts. I found the chapter on social capital to be both wonderfully informative and provocative as Portes insists that concept has been intellectually 'kidnapped' to play a role in other social sciences that is quite different from that intended by its originators in sociology. The chief villain is the political scientist Robert Putnam whose conceptual stretching has redefined the concept as 'civic spirit', with the result that the term loses the original analytical value it had in economic sociology as it moves into the realms of political ideology. By contrast, the chapters on social class are less impressive possibly because they show surprisingly little knowledge of the substantial literature on this topic including relevant contributions by European sociologists. One result is that his empirical indicators for social class are largely based on income (e.g., pp. 90–1) which is not necessarily consistent with the stated aim of defining class by differential access to power while also making for some rather unstable categorisations given that earnings can rise and fall over time.

The remainder of the book consists of empirically-oriented chapters in which the principles and mechanisms identified in earlier chapters are used to explain significant developments in three 'strategic research sites': the informal economy, ethnic enclaves and transnational communities. As each of these also happen to be areas where Portes has done a substantial amount of research the chapters stand as masterly exercises in sociological analysis that draw on an encyclopaedic knowledge of the subjects. Even so, economic sociologists might wonder how Portes can claim to offer 'a systematic inquiry into economic sociology' when ethnic enclaves, for instance, represent the kind of marginal social phenomena that the 'new' economic sociology left behind as it sought to focus on the central components of capitalist economies. In other words, the book has relatively little to say about the economic sociology of markets and capitalisms that have fuelled much of the recent growth in the sub-field. Unfortunately, the main reason is that the book could really have been entitled *Portesian Sociology: A Systematic Inquiry* as it is essentially a collection of essays drawn mostly from his research on immigration that have already been published elsewhere. Despite the author's protestations I am not convinced that his attempt to rework these essays have produced the coherence that the title suggests. Even so, I would still recommend Portesian sociology to anyone needing an intelligent, lucid and thought-provoking vision of what 'middle range' theory might offer economic sociology beyond the preoccupation with 'embeddedness'.

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*Smith, P., Phillips, T.L. and King, R.D.* **Incivility: The Rude Stranger in Everyday Life**
Cambridge University Press 2010 218pp. £55.00 (hardback) £18.99 (paperback)

A discourse of moral decline has been popular among certain strands of sociological and criminological enquiry; that 'we are all going to Hell in a handcart' – for example Wilson and Kelling (*Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety*, 1982) and Putnam (*Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, 2000). As Smith, Phillips and King have noted in their new book, the evidence of this is frequently said to be a ' "crisis" of civility' (p. 1). There is an alternative view, that while behavioural and moral norms and expectations may change, it makes little sense to say they are in decline. As the authors observe, '*there has always been* talk of poor public behaviour, of increasingly unruly streets and of the decline and fall of good manners' (p. 1, emphasis added). It seems talk of decline is a constant through history. In this new book Smith et al. consider the incivility which is said to signify contemporary decline. Their starting point is that incivility research has been

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hijacked by criminology, and especially by a narrow conception of incivility as promulgated through Wilson and Kelling's famous 'broken windows'. They claim this has led to a 'relentless focus on the deprived inner city which means we know quite a lot about underclass environments' (p. 5), but little about more general attitudes and beliefs about incivility.

Beyond the problem of uncritically using such a value-laden term as 'underclass', the authors are too dismissive of some excellent research by criminologists, who appear to be the villains of the piece. The authors' attempt at 'broader and more creative thinking' (p. 4) is through large scale quantitative research on rude strangers in Australia. They claim we should not impose external definitions on what constitutes incivility (p. 22); however, the authors do this by limiting their focus to rude strangers – a rather narrow sub-set of incivility which typically includes a wide array of minor indiscretions, anti-social behaviours and annoyances. Furthermore, the authors make the bold claim that their approach 'could radically change the understanding of incivility in our time' (p. 1). This is quite a claim. While their research is useful, it is not radical in terms of methodology, in finding that 'rudeness should be studied as a commonplace rather than exceptional act' (p. 41). For those familiar with Goffman (*Behavior in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings*, 1963), this is no surprise.

The bulk of the book is dedicated to unpicking data produced by the Australian survey. Different aspects of everyday rudeness are considered, including people's experiences, emotional and behavioural dynamics, general social attitudes to strangers and relationships between experiences of rudeness and socio-demographic factors. It would have been interesting to see greater focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as well as other minorities. The authors state that small numbers in these sub-samples made finding statistically significant differences difficult – something they admit could have been overcome by over-sampling or by employing more sensitive data collection methods. Something for next time perhaps.

One interesting finding is that 48 per cent of those perceived to be rude strangers were also 'quite respectable looking' (p. 31), thereby challenging the stereotype of incivility being dominated by youths, street people and other 'undesirables'. The finding supports the 'commonsense' view that we can all be rude (or be perceived as rude). It also lends weight to criminological research, for instance by Karsteadt and Farrall, that we can all be criminal; that '[t]he "law-abiding majority", which politicians like to address, is a chimera' (*Law-Abiding Majority? The Everyday Crimes of the Middle Classes*, 2007: 8).

The authors also found that 56 per cent of rude encounters were in places not particularly crowded (p. 57). Rather than just being a product of crowdedness, rudeness was influenced by other stresses to everyday life. Drawing on Virilion (*Speed and Politics*, 1986) and Urry (*Mobile Sociology*, 2000), the authors considered the influence of movement. They found that 69 per cent of encounters occurred under conditions of mass movement.

The main interest of this book to sociology and to criminology is the everydayness of rude encounters and the claim that rudeness can come from anyone – especially if there is movement involved. The authors suggest possible strategies including self-help, legislation, diversion, education and design. Yet the authors also note that the labels 'rude' and 'incivil' have been used to 'discredit the marginal and disempowered' (p. 160). They warn: 'If we get the judgement wrong, then efforts towards regulation and control might simply assist the reproduction of social hierarchy' (p. 161). This is an interesting book based on a novel survey. However, it is debateable whether the findings will 'radically change the understanding of incivility in our time' (p. 1). The interesting conclusion is that, 'We will probably have to live with rudeness. Forever' (p. 192).

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