



Book Review

Danielle Watson (2019) *Police and the Policed: Language and Power Relations on the Margins of the Global South*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan

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Danielle Watson's book, *Police and the Policed: Language and Power Relations on the Margins of the Global South*, is a well-considered work with much utility for lesser-researched jurisdictions, such as Trinidad and Tobago. The book is a welcome contribution to the academic literature on policing in the Global South, particularly nation states that, according to Watson, are on the periphery. Further, *Police and the Policed* is especially important in that it makes a distinct contribution to the growing body of literature in the Global South in the context of research that has been 'structurally skewed towards the global North' (Carrington et al. 2018: 3). To this end, Trinidad and Tobago, a nation state in the Global South is used as the proxy for the book.

Globally, policing is viewed as a function of governance that is responsible for the prevention, detection and investigation of crime; the protection of persons and property; the preservation of life and limb and the maintenance of law and order. These functions invariably bring police officers into contact with members of the public, including, but not limited to, those with criminal tendencies and an inclination towards despicable, recalcitrant and anti-social behaviours. The result of this police-citizen contact is some form of conflict that is usually resolved through power relations. Instructively, power relations are not the only visible aspect of the police-resident contact; language usage, though highly subjective, is key for both the police and the policed. In the context of language usage, King (1997) highlights that language plays an important role in policing and security studies, while Hanks (2005: 73) notes that there is 'a language game in which certain ends are pursued with certain discursive resources according to established guidelines'. In a similar vein, and following Bourdieu (1991), Watson acknowledges the creative force and usage of language in her research on policing.

The field of criminology has increasingly taken to heart an exploration of the contents and contours of policing, language usage in policing, social issues facing the Global South and the policed public—and Watson's book is no exception. Her years of in-depth field work have resulted in a book that questions the conventional dichotomy of police treatment of the policed public and examines the use of language by both entities in Trinidad and Tobago. Importantly, Watson identifies a paradigm of the police and the policed with the attendant 'we versus them' mentality. However, before offering my view of this book, a brief summary of the book's scope and findings are in order.

The book is neatly divided into eight concise chapters, each containing its own abstract and addressing the book's central thesis and attendant issues. Over the course of these chapters, *Police and the Policed: Language and Power Relations on the Margins of the Global South* generates an in-depth view of one aspect of Trinidad and Tobago's criminal justice system, the police, while paying attention to the policed. The eight chapters are logically sequenced and guide the reader from a brief introduction to examinations of marginalised communities, profiles of hotspot communities, assignment of labels by police officers, views of the police by the policed, descriptors of power constructs and stereotyping of police. They also consider how these stereotypes and labels may affect future policing in Trinidad and Tobago.

Chapter 1 is premised on brevity and introduces the book as a component of a wider study, and highlights its rationale, methodological approach and outline. In Chapter 2, Watson discusses marginalised and hotspot communities and takes a detailed look at police–community relations in a global context. Watson also draws attention to the rationale behind group/community marginalisation and situates marginalisation as an inherent problem for development. In this chapter, Watson identifies the police and the policed as individuals with divergent views who operate from different standpoints. Instructively, this chapter reports upon the media's representation of both groups in the context of policing on the margins. In Chapter 3, Watson presents an extensive description of the study's participants and explains the relationship between both groups. Importantly, according to Watson, this approach was utilised to provide a framework of understanding for readers to better understand the relationship between the police and policed in the context of policing on the margins in Trinidad and Tobago. Watson approaches the next chapter by focusing on the labelling of community residents by the police and considering the consequences for police–community relations.

In Chapter 5, 'Branding Babylon: How the Policed see the Police', Watson illustrates how community residents categorise and label police officers. A notable 14 labels emanated from the discourses with community residents; these include religious labels ('Babylon', 'sodomites'), popular culture labels ('five-O', 'po-po', 'shot callers') and villainous labels ('criminals', 'crooks', 'killers', 'bullies'). This chapter delves further into these labels by dissecting those used in the narratives to describe the police. In Chapter 6, Watson examines the position adopted by the police as it relates to the subjects being policed and the labels they (the police) ascribe to community residents. Of particular interest is how Watson identifies, categorises and describes the labels used to define the policed, as gleaned from the narratives of police officers. In a similar vein, the manner in which the author highlights the language used by police officers, as the power holders, to attach stigmas and stereotypes to the policed population is also interesting. The labels derived from the police narratives and ascribed to community residents include: 'deviance', 'dangerous', 'dishonest', 'social distance', 'criminality', 'poor communication skills' and 'dislike for authority figures'. These descriptors have broader implications for the policed on the margins in the Global South; however, they also express the position of the police and highlight the difficulty associated with policing the 'other'.

In Chapter 7, Watson assesses both the community residents' and police officers' positions as they relate to their stigmas and stereotypes of each other and marshals substantial evidence to support her assertions. Watson's book concludes at Chapter 8, which makes a valiant attempt to discuss the importance of negotiating labels, stigmas and stereotypes by explaining how the police and the policed use language in their interactions. Of much importance in this chapter are Watson's unmasking of the prevailing notions of labels, stigmas and stereotypes by the police and the policed and the manner in which she identifies how labels can undermine interactions of both groups when labels become the 'truth', while simultaneously linking the concepts to the future of policing.

This book is especially strong, as it focuses on the use of language in the policing process—an area that has traditionally received scant attention in the Caribbean (see Figuera and Wallace,

2016 as an exception). The most commendable achievement of this riveting and penetrating book is that it illuminates the actions and activities of both the policed and the police in Trinidad and Tobago in the context of power relations and highlights a plethora of language constructs used by both groups to describe each 'other'. Danielle Watson combines the rigour of an academic scholar with the critical and discursive reflections of a social scientist to examine the relationship between the police and the policed. If there is any weakness in the book, it is that it places sole emphasis on the 'discourses of police and community residents in Northern Trinidad' (p. 3) to the exclusion of power relations and language constructs that are distinctive in other locales throughout the island. However, this apparent shortcoming does little to detract from the book's immense value.

Based on wide and voracious readings of criminological literature on policing generally and, more specifically, policing in the Global South, there is a dearth of similar materials when compared to the contents of Watson's book. Therefore, anyone studying policing in the Global South will find much to tease their academic taste buds in this book. Importantly, the contents of this book by emerging scholar Danielle Watson serve to reverse what Connell (2007) refers to as a structural imbalance of knowledge production that has generated a hegemony of social scientific thought that is based on the experiences of societies in the Global North. *Police and the Policed: Language and Power Relations on the Margins of the Global South* is, therefore, set to become firmly entrenched in academia as a 'must-read' for academics, police officers, students and individuals with an interest in policing generally and, more specifically, policing 'on the margins in the Global South'. As a result of the foregoing discussion, this book is highly recommended without hesitation.

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