

BOOK REVIEWS

William G. Staples, *Castles of Our Conscience: Social Control and the American State*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990. xii + 193 pp.

Just to chart the vicissitudes of the history of social control in the United States over a time span of nearly two centuries would be a seemingly insurmountable task. To integrate a theoretical and methodological approach into such a history that not only describes what developments transpired in social control practices, but also illuminates why and how these changes occurred is highly commendable. It is precisely this methodologically and theoretically integrated approach that Staples employs throughout *Castles of Our Conscience*, the historical narrative of the relationship between social control practices and the American State.

Staples traces the development of the modern state interventionist apparatus from non-institutional social control to a society of direct intervention in individual lives. In the transition from community responsibility to increasingly larger forms of state and federal control of "social misfits," a bureaucratic mechanism emerged resulting in a fragmented network of social control agencies. This "state-centered" form of social control was in part a consequence of economically inspired attempts to rationalize the implementation of social control policies. It is within the context of the historically-specific rise of American liberal-capitalism that "the accumulative-oriented activities of ...[the]...'new' interventionist state form had the affect of accelerating the breakdown of community cohesiveness and isolation and hence the practicality and effectiveness of non-institutional social control" (p.25).

The transition from the private, morally-inspired almshouses to highly differentiated specialized institutions was not simply the consequence of determinate substructural forces. Rather, Staples contends, the bureaucracy that emerged resulted from the intended and unintended consequences of interactions of individuals within the social structure. The interplay between individuals--state managers--and the social structure--legal, criminal institutions and agencies--is facilitated through the use of Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration. Structuration views social structure as both the medium and the outcome of social agency; structure entails the "rules" and the "resources" that are "recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems" (Giddens, p.377). In effect, structuration contends that individual agents are both enabled and constrained through social structure.

In the "state-centered" approach taken by Staples the various social control agencies are the representations of state power. The state managers (or actors) are those agents who actively exercise state power and are responsible for daily reproducing the state apparatus. "[S]tate actors are social agents who draw upon the rules, power, authority, and material resources available to them in order to act in ways that reproduce the state and their place within

it" (p.11). Thus, state managers are enabled to act in self-interest through the repository of power accorded by their position, yet they are also constrained in that their actions must result in the execution of policy which, in semblance, needs to address public expectations. This is not to say that self-interests of state managers and the interests of the state are necessarily incommensurable, but recognizes that the state does not act in a strictly formal fashion.

Although it is beyond the scope of this review to sketch the concrete historical modulations of social control agencies, two examples best illuminate the dialectical nature of the history of social control. The rise of the "Bureaucratic State" resulted in a radical transformation of the institutions of the elderly after World War II. Staples refers to this movement as deinstitutionalization. The movement away from the state hospital in the post-war era resulted in redefining elderly mental patients as frail elderly. They were transferred to nursing homes. The census of state hospitals was reduced, but the number of institutions remained constant. He carries this argument further in his discussion of the institutionalization of adolescents. Juvenile delinquents are now re-diagnosed as having mental disorders. Or, as the author so aptly states, go from "bad to mad." Juveniles are shifted from training schools to psychiatric facilities.

"Transinstitutionalization," the movement of relocating patients due to re-diagnosis, began after World War II and widened the net of social control by maintaining the existing state institutions as well as instigating the formulation of private facilities. But how could such a widening of the net occur? State actors wielding the power accorded their positions were able to maintain the state apparatus thereby preserving their positions. And, simultaneous to patients being re-diagnosed was a movement towards the commodification of patients. Stemming from the commodification of patients was the economic incentive for privatization. Thus, the state apparatus was maintained while private agencies, spurred on by profit-motives, were able to develop and grow.

Arriving at the current status of social control, the intersection of state and private institutions and interests, Staples presents a social critique. It is the dilemma that on the one hand, as the proliferation of privatization occurs patients are not only treated as commodities, but as necessary to insure profit. On the other hand, even though the state apparatus appears to "shrink" in an effort to become more efficient the reality is twofold and to the contrary. In contracting private agencies to provide "care" (or control), state and federal governments shirk their responsibility of protecting patients' interests and rights thereby turning patients into commodities. Necessary for the maintenance of both private agencies and the remnants of the state apparatus is the increasing penetration into individual lives to secure "clients" for "filling beds." Though the wound runs deeper there is no time for seeking a remedy because in either case it is more "important" (and lucrative) for a surplus of "patients" to be sustained than for the interests and rights of such individuals to be served.

Staples' theoretically and methodologically informed approach demonstrates its strength by successfully accomplishing the agenda set out at the beginning, a historically informed presentation and explanation of the vicissitudes of social control. Bolstering the strength of Staples' work is the apt social critique, alerting us to the carcinogenic effects of privatization and commodification on the health and well-being of society. However, one drawback that inheres in the development of Staples' argument is the neglect of the specific actors involved in the various transformations of social control practices. More attention to the empirical historical actor, rather than the conceptual "state actor," would add greater insight into the experienced realities of individuals. Nevertheless, this one flaw is minor and does not detract from the overall quality of the historical analysis of nearly two centuries of social control.

REFERENCE

Giddens, A. 1984. *The Constitution of Society*. Berkeley: The University of California Press.

University of Kansas

Andrea Anders
Tony A. Foy
Jean Van Delinder