on benefits expected in the distant future. Indeed, the contrarian impulse is embedded in our formally oppositional politics, which invents factual opposites even where they do not realistically exist.

Enter the CAs, which are meant to help us perform politics differently — more collaboratively and with fewer preformed partisan positions. In the inaugural example, British Columbia's CA in 2004, the body's 160 members were selected to be demographically representative of the larger polity. In their initial 'learning phase', an array of scholars tutored members for months. The CA then took submissions from 3000-plus members of the broader public, and finally deliberated and voted by near-consensus to recommend a new electoral system — as contentious a matter as any. The public response, and even that of political scientists not normally known for starry idealism, was widely optimistic. (Fifty-eight per cent of voters endorsed the CA's recommendation in a referendum; an epic figure by Australian referendum standards.) None of this either mattered or was known to media commentators.

Is Parliament a citizens' assembly? Only on a deliberately literal and obtuse understanding, which confuses a thing with its label. Parliament is a political cauldron in which a climate change policy — itself a flawed political compromise — twice failed, and arguably took down with it both party leaders who had lent it support. And what of the analogy of letting CAs diagnose diseases? Citizens' assemblies do not make scientific determinations. Medical diagnoses do not require democratic legitimacy. These disanalogies become evident only when terms are defined, examples explored and purposes investigated. Some who favour climate change action forget how difficult it is to achieve action through traditional routes. Parliament has an anti-deliberative record of frustrating action. (Indeed, if doctors needed Parliamentary endorsement for their diagnoses, citizens' assemblies *would* be an improvement.) The role of a CA is to translate scientific premises into specific policy prescriptions chosen from among many options. More important still, its roles are to bypass the partisan distortions of normal legislative politics; to give citizens rather than political professionals democratic decision-making power; and therefore to bridge the gap in trust that usually makes sweeping policy reform imposed from on high unpopular in Australia. Citizens' assemblies are designed to address complex and contentious policymaking, and to get the policymaking done. This necessarily requires in the first instance an authoritative body enjoying significant public trust for being deliberative, fair and impartial. Parliament is not that body.

There is a potent irony in the poor reception the CA received. The election highlighted an Australian deliberative Catch-22: that achieving institutional change to improve political deliberation may require, in the first place, some higher and better form of deliberative process. Yet, as mentioned, deliberation is a key subject of *Australia: The State of Democracy*, particularly in its third part, and by cataloguing many of the areas where laws fail to support robust public discussion, the book actually offers implicit hope. The solution suggested is that we might carefully tinker to remove some of the existing legal impediments to robust discussion. Again, the great value of the book's treatment is in its authoritatively broad sweep of the landscape, which helps to settle some of the usual — and usually ill-informed — debates.

The evidence speaks for itself as it begins to add up. Some recent laws intensify the concentration of media ownership, which already was more pronounced here than in any other western democracy; only three groups now own most Australian newspapers, in contrast with the 21 leading proprietors active several decades ago. As well, diverse educational programming on the ABC and SBS has come under risk from economic pressures and occasional political interference. In addition, the absence of formal protections for free speech is often dismissed as irrelevant, so long as speech remains free in practice in Australia; yet often it does not. The authors show, for example, how punitive defamation and national security laws, and weak freedom of information and whistleblower protections, chill journalistic speech and help confine discussion of public issues to the narrow universe of government spin. And so on. In copious and clear detail, this book shows us how some of the poor practice of political debate — a cultural and political problem — can be linked to lagging or malign laws. Yet as noted, the volume's most valuable contribution to understanding political deliberation may be the standard it offers to help gauge the situation directly, as the book's comprehensive detail becomes a reminder of all that is lacking in the rhetoric of Australian elections.

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OFFENDING YOUTH: SEX, CRIME AND JUSTICE

Kerry Carrington with Margaret Pereira, The Federation Press, 2009, 209pp, $59.95 (paperback)

'My parents don't understand me' seems to be the teenage mantra for every generation. Teenagers have been stigmatised since the beginning of time (or so it would seem) and no matter how much we swear up and down as kids that we won't become our parents, somehow we do.

It may surprise readers to know, however, that the perception of the 'evil teenager' and juvenile delinquency is actually a relatively new concept, having emerged in the late 19th century amid significant economic, social and political change.

Offending Youth: Sex, Crime and Justice is a documentation of the history of juvenile delinquency and punishment within Australia, beginning with 19th century institutions for neglected children through to today's welfare and justice system.

Based upon Kerry Carrington's 20 years of research into juvenile delinquency and juvenile justice, the majority of the research and cases in *Offending Youth* are Australian. However, the authors do a good job of incorporating research from the United States and the United Kingdom when they are engaging with issues and stereotypes found within youth culture more generally.

The first section of the book focuses on societal changes, beginning with the abolition of child labour and the introduction of compulsory schooling. At this time there was a growth in governmental control on family life, and the number of children who were

institutionalised for a variety of 'delinquencies' grew. However, the child welfare institutions, including the courts of the time, did not distinguish between neglect and delinquency, resulting in many abused and neglected children being incarcerated alongside those convicted of criminal offences.

The chapters on the creation of a Children's Court and the development of the penal welfare system are interesting and bring insight into the criminalisation of immorality, poverty and cultural differences that are still seen today in Australia.

During the height of the penal welfare system, it was commonplace to sexualise girls' offences by presenting them to the court as uncontrollable and exposed to 'moral danger' if they ran away from home or engaged in sex. The case studies detailed at the end of the book exemplify how unfair and unfounded such ideas were. The justification for controlling girls is that it was said to be 'in their best interest', so that no matter the crime, girls were often processed before the courts on welfare or status charges. Often girls ended up in worse positions coming out of the system than they had been in before.

In recent years, the penal welfare system has collapsed to make way for a separate judicial and welfare system for children. Statistics show that there is an increase in girls being brought to the attention of the juvenile justice system, and *Offending Youth* examines the various theories as to why.

The 'sisters in crime thesis', which originated in the early 20th century, was based upon the belief that female crime rates would increase with women's liberation. The authors acknowledge the ridiculousness of this theory and note how it emerged in the post-war era to predict that female crime rates would rise as their status became more on a par with that of men. They then move on to more accepted concepts such as the 'sexualisation thesis', which is attributed to Meda Chesney-Lind.

In the late 1970s, Chesney-Lind was credited with pioneering a study of sex and juvenile justice in Honolulu's judicial system. She claimed that the 'system selects for punishment girls who have transgressed sexually or defied parental authority' (p 64). Her research points to court officials routinely questioning girls (but not boys) about their sexual behaviour, then using this information to lay additional charges, no matter the original offence. The authors refer to a UK study by Shacklady Smith, which concurs with Chesney-Lind's research. It stated that 'non-sexual offences are often overlooked in favour of sexual (mis)behaviour' (p 64). In 1982, the editors of the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology* published an editorial, summarised from a range of Australian and New Zealand research on female delinquency. They concluded that 'agencies of the law appear to be preoccupied with the sexuality of girls, while turning a blind eye to sexual transgression of boys' (p 65).

While this thesis provides an explanation for the increase in female delinquents, the authors clearly point out its flaws, including the failure of the theory to take into account the large number of Indigenous women and women of colour drawn into the system.

The authors then move on to contemporary issues such as female violence and cyber bullying. On the latter, they highlight the lack of research, but do an excellent job of giving the reader the information that is currently available, with reasonable and logical suggestions on how to reduce the impact and existence of cyber bullying.

However, while statistics of female delinquency may be on the rise, it is still widely agreed that boys vastly outnumber girls in the juvenile justice system.

The chapter discussing boys and delinquency begins with the contentious 'biological theory' of male delinquency, which basically assumes that it is in male nature to be criminal, rather than being linked to social or economic factors. However, the sociological explanation of delinquency seems to be more compelling. The authors begin with an analysis of Albert Cohen's book *Delinquent Boys,* the first of its kind to offer a sociological analysis of delinquency by linking it with social conditions. Cohen argues that only boys who are constrained by their class or social position from attaining the economic status desired in American society will be attracted to 'delinquency'.

Regarding this, the authors state that since publication in 1952, Cohen's theories of masculinity and delinquency still tend to be an assumed fact rather than a theory to be criticised. As such, those few who disagreed with this theory looked to feminist theorists to give a more adequate explanation of male delinquency. However, the authors state that few feminist theorists could explain masculine delinquency.

The 'masculinity theory' is the most recent attempt to explain male delinquency. Here, theorists combine sociology, psychological and masculinity theory to explain male delinquency. In this theory, the analysis moves beyond an understanding of delinquency as a mere consequence of sex to an interplay of external and emotional factors, such as: respect from peers, achieving a sense of power and attaining a social status otherwise unattainable. Unfortunately, the authors have not pointed to any research as to how these factors can be circumvented to avoid repeated male delinquency in the future.

The chapter on youth and sex, while interesting, does not suggest anything new with regards to what is happening in the sexual world of teenagers. It delves into the 'boy bonding' theories with suggestions and comments on how society currently allows such bonding to take place, yet stops short on suggestions on how society can change to make such actions unacceptable. It explores the reasons behind the growing trend of youth violence in Australia, including feminist perspectives as to youth rape culture and how the law inhibits victims' rights and decency.

The discussion of the concept of society creating passive female victims with slogans such as 'just say no', rather than discussing sexuality and taking charge, was insightful. However, unfortunately I do not believe that this will catch on in the near future, as society still seems to view sexually active girls as promiscuous and boys as 'just being boys'.

The book is quite analytical, with the majority of its assertions backed up by empirical research. The feminist legal perspective is explored as an accompanying framework throughout the issues within the book, which helps to give a balanced outlook.

Offending Youth: Sex, Crime and Justice would make an excellent resource for an analytical paper on the growing trend of youth violence in Australia.

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ANIMAL KINGDOM

Directed and written by David Michôd; starring Joel Edgerton, Luke Ford, Ben Mendelsohn, Guy Pearce, Jacki Weaver; 2010; 112 mins.

Inspired by events in the late 1980s, the film *Animal Kingdom* continues Melbourne's love affair with violent crime, murder in particular. It may seem surprising that in a city renowned for being amongst the world's most liveable, violent death, on screen and in the streets, remains an enduring motif. Shot in Melbourne's inner city lanes and backstreets, *Homicide,* Crawford Production's original television series based on their successful radio show D24, debuted in 1964 and finished in 1976 after more than 500 episodes. Melbourne's recent gangland killings — more than 30 over ten years — were home delivered, in the cringe-worthy series *Underbelly*.

Former factional leader in the Ship Painters and Dockers Union, and convicted murderer, Bill Longley, interviewed on ABC Radio National, put the gangland murders in historical context arguing that:

> Melbourne is your murder capital, you know, it's not only the murder capital of Australia, you could say it was one of the murder capitals of the world, because it's been going on ever since I can remember, you know, always your odd gangland shooting, always, always.[1]

Murder lives on in the popular imagination at the location of infamous slayings. Easey Street, Hoddle Street, Russell Street and Walsh Street are amongst the major coordinates on the city's contemporary murder map. *Animal Kingdom* is inspired by the events leading up to and surrounding the October 1998 fatal shooting of two young policemen in Walsh Street, South Yarra. The officers were shot while on a routine check of a suspected stolen vehicle. Police believed the murders were a payback for the Armed Robbery Squad's fatal shooting, thirteen hours previously, of the likeable convicted armed robber, Graeme Jensen. Jensen was shot in the back of the head by members of the squad, in a shopping centre parking lot, while driving away from police. He had gone to the shops to buy a lawn mower spark plug.

Family and friends always suspected a set up and maintain that the (inoperable) gun police said Jensen pointed at them was a 'thrown down', planted by police after the shooting. Police pulled out all stops after Walsh Street. Within six months, two of Jensen's associates, Gary Abdallah and Jedd Houghton, were shot and killed by police in circumstances that led some to believe 'revenge had overcome reason' amongst police.

Four men, associates of Jensen, were charged over the Walsh Street killings and found not guilty by a jury. The police continue to believe they were guilty. In 1993, in news that made headlines around the world, ten serving and one former police officer were charged in relation to the fatal shootings of Abdallah and Jensen. After some political manoeuvring that resulted in the resignation of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the charges were dropped against all but three of the police, who were subsequently found not guilty.

Those who have followed the city's real life drama of police murder, gangland killings and crime wars will recognise some of the film's characters: the two innocent young police, the bank robber crew, the young man caught between bent cops and his family, the family matriarch, the cocaine addicted lawyer, homicidal police, outgunned straight police, corrupt drug cops and civilian collateral damage. The film invokes a gritty realism but it isn't real. The narrative takes on the flavour of Melbourne, the life and crimes, circa 1988, but it isn't a documentary; rather it is a synthesis of people and events.

The film is intense, compelling and intelligent. It is critically acclaimed and has won international awards. The performances are outstanding. At heart, it is a crime family drama where loyalty and rivalry are confronted head on. 'Families: can't live with them, can't shoot them' provides a succinct summary of, and critical rebuttal to, one of the film's central themes. It is also a coming of age film where the central character, James Frecheville, playing seventeen year old 'J', has to discover where he fits in, in order to survive.

The film captures an important shift in the business of crime and policing. Black and white surveillance tapes of bank robberies feature over the opening credits. The older generation of viewers will recognise these scenes from television news of decades ago. By the late 1980s, old school armed robbers and their counterparts in the Armed Robbery Squad were at the end of their run. The banks had hardened as targets so that making a living out of robbing them had had its day. In one scene, two professional armed robbers talk about alternative ways of making a living, one optimistic about making it on the stock market and the other confused and frightened about an uncertain future.

As robbing banks (but not robber banks, which continued to make a killing) faded into history, the trade in illicit drugs took over as the staple criminal enterprise. In the days when armed robbery was ascendant, the Armed Robbery Squad was real police. The ARS official tie featured a pistol motif and those who wore them were married to the hard life of the brotherhood. Brutality was normal and considered 'noble' in the cause of catching crooks. When those crooks proved too elusive for the justice system, summary execution was a possibility.

The tension between the old and new ways of doing the business of crime is deftly woven into the film's plot. In one scene a drug dealing crook, working in harmony with the Drug Squad, asks his armed robber mate, worried about the police, why he doesn't 'give them a drink', that is, cut them in on the action. His mate responds, 'It's the Armed Robbery Squad, they don't do business'. One of *Animal Kingdom's* strengths, and it has many, is that it acknowledges the many bridges and roundabouts between the over and underworlds.

The business of chasing profits is the modern heart of police corruption. Entrepreneurial considerations have overtaken ideological ones in deciding who is 'off'. The relationship between the