

of security. The lead chapter in this section presents a dramaturgical analysis of policing. While this piece is devoid of much empirical evidence, it presents an interesting conceptualization of the police.

Perhaps one of the more theoretically sophisticated pieces, found in Chapter Ten, presents an alternative approach for the understanding of safety. Utilizing interview data, the author demonstrates how an interpretive sociological perspective may be used to understand how personal safety is constructed. This constructivist framework in conceptualizing the concept of safety is augmented by demonstrating a useful typology. Interviews are situated within a typology that considers perception of safety alongside expectations and perception of controllability. Several of the chapters are of note to criminologists utilizing a comparative perspective in applying well-established theories to cases in Europe. For instance, one chapter applies the Chicago School idea of social disorganization to juvenile offending in Antwerp.

The volume does have some weaknesses and limitations. Most of this is related to the specific scope of most of the articles that are spread over a wide variety of topics. While comparativists will find this a useful volume, many of the contributions are derived from either Belgium or the Netherlands, limiting the structural space that contextualizes the studies. The volume could have benefited from two or more macro-oriented chapters to position the varying contributions and provide greater breath of insight. That said, the studies give a much-needed understanding of crime and security from an international and comparative perspective.

In all, the individual selections in this volume represent a broad spectrum of topics, contributing to a whole swath of the spectrum in the global study of crime, law, and policing. On the whole, these contributions seem amorphous and often divergent. Putting all of these pieces in a single volume must have been an arduous task. The unifying framework can be found in the concluding chapter that examines police science within an interactionist lens. Adopting a dramaturgical framework promulgated by Goffman, the author of this epilogue proposes that systems of justice are involved in an

iterative interaction with other social systems. While this selection focuses on the police, it may be useful to consider many of the issues raised in the book within this framework.

While the book gives much-needed analysis and insight into the problems of security, crime, and justice, the volume could have benefited from a section or chapter situating the works within a broad sociological perspective, offering a critical account of systems of social control and the requirements of late-stage capitalism. For example, several selections deal directly with the privatization of security, but most give a superficial glance at what economic conditions may underlie them. The net expansion of surveillance and state control is highly problematic and poses genuine threats to democratic structures and individual liberty. Such an evaluation of the more questionable aspects of crime and the control thereof seems vital in considering the totality of the inequalities that drive the system of justice in capitalist societies. For instance, how do inequalities in punishment square with larger class divisions in a society? How do new control technologies that range from biometrics to electronic devices reframe our understanding of punishment and security? Such questions will be of paramount importance to future sociological analysis of crime and security.

The Land of Too Much: American Abundance and the Paradox of Poverty, by **Monica Prasad**. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012. 327 pp. \$39.95 cloth. ISBN: 9780674066526.

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Readers who open this justly acclaimed book are not quite prepared for what they are going to find. As its brilliant title intimates, though, *The Land of Too Much* is more than just a fine scholarly achievement. It is a lively and deeply entertaining tour de force that seduces by its style as much as by its substance. This is too rare a feat in the world of modern sociology to be left unnoticed. The introduction draws the reader in

right away with a sharp piece of history (the Thalidomide disaster) and an imaginary tour of Europe by American farmers. The wit is at times devastating, even though *this* reader occasionally recoiled at the fact that Monica Prasad seemed to selectively direct her best shots at the French—as in, “were myths of resistance to Roman rule passed down in old Gallic tribes along with recipes for black pudding and tripe?” (p. 17). Never mind that black pudding is English, at least to my knowledge; the rhetoric is efficient.

But I digress. The American consumer economy, Prasad argues, was not born in malls and sprawling urban spaces. And the small U.S. welfare state was not a product of the particular configuration of labor or racial politics in this country. Rather, both were the unlikely and wholly unexpected consequences of a specific conjunction of events that placed farmers and their concerns at the center of American politics at a crucial historical period, in a way that had no equivalent in other Western economies. Prasad’s explanation revolves around the nineteenth-century agricultural boom in the United States. A vast country where land was as bountiful as it was cheap, and where agrarian productivity grew at an overwhelming pace, America was the site of repeated crises of abundance and episodes of deflation in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In what Huey Long would later call “the land of too much,” food stocks were plentiful, but the population (and farmers in particular) starved. Overproduction caused prices to come down fast, threatening the farmers’ livelihood and throwing them frequently into debt default. Export markets had to be secured, but the flood of cheap American products prompted the Europeans to react and protect their own markets with tariffs and the beginnings of the welfare state.

Combined with the particular structure of the American political system, this situation gave farmers a remarkable influence over national politics. They railed against the concentration of wealth in the hands of the “moneyed trusts” and the insufficient purchasing power of the many; they asked for a debtor-friendly bankruptcy regime. According to Prasad, it is this particular political configuration, and the need to deal with the consequences of overproduction,

that produced two longstanding features of the American political economy: progressive taxation and the expansion of credit.

Progressive taxation was a longtime favorite among agrarians from the South and Midwest. The main reason is that the distribution of income in early twentieth-century America was such that in a progressive system the tax burden fell mostly upon the shoulders of the manufacturing North, on reviled bankers and “monopolists.” But the institutionalization of progressive taxation had unintended consequences. First, it encouraged the wealthy to ask for tax preferences for certain activities, for instance private welfare. Second, because income tax was constituted as a legitimate path to finance the state, alternatives (like a national sales tax) failed repeatedly. Thus when the United States faced the 1970s economic crisis, progressive taxation had exhausted its expansionary potential and become a highly contentious issue. In the much less auspicious political climate of the late 1970s and early 1980s, U.S. politicians had few options but to help people bear the burden of their own welfare needs (most prominently, healthcare) through credit.

America was already a credit-loving country, partly thanks to the very same dilemmas brought about by high productivity and overproduction. In the Great Depression, the coincidence of material abundance (with agricultural goods flooding the market) and human misery (people unable to afford them) shocked many witnesses. It is in this context of a paradoxically poor land of plenty that credit emerged as a solution to the problem of under-consumption and was actively encouraged as a growth-generating engine by every administration since the New Deal. Somewhat counter-intuitively, this policy of easy credit was constrained below the surface by a tight regulatory arsenal originally favored by the agrarians—prohibitions against branch banking, adversarial financial regulations, and the Glass-Steagall Act of 1933. It is this regulatory arsenal that came under pressure from the 1970s onward, when credit appeared to be the only politically feasible palliative to the unfilled dimensions of the U.S. welfare state. We now live with the dramatic consequences of this deregulation of finance. Ironically though, the momentous burst of the mortgage

credit-fueled financial bubble in 2008 has restored some political momentum for the state provision of welfare, in the form of the Affordable Care Act.

In other words, progressive taxation and the availability of credit, both of which Prasad traces back to the political power of agrarians in the early part of the twentieth century, undermined possibilities for expanding the U.S. welfare state. Credit, in particular, was available because the U.S. state, seeing overproduction as the major threat, focused on consumption rather than protection. In Europe, by contrast, credit was always considered with more suspicion. Furthermore, in Europe restoring the productive apparatus after two world wars took precedence over the development of consumption and wage growth, although European states expanded their welfare interventions in return for the bargain.

Prasad is often brazen about the novelty of her claims and equally so in her presentation of the claims of others, who may have been more nuanced. She clearly chews on a lot, so it is inevitable that her master narrative would feel both tremendously appealing and curiously discombobulated. Some elements of the book may be overblown: Louisiana governor and Democratic Senator Huey Long, who articulated the truth about the nature of the U.S. political economy, becomes the pivotal character in her story—others do not receive the attention that her own argument calls for. For instance, Prasad ignores the uncomfortable national cases that do not fit her narrative about the credit/welfare trade off: Denmark and Norway have very high household debt or mortgage credit/GDP ratios in spite of their well-developed welfare states; by contrast countries with smaller welfare states like Italy or Greece also have low levels of household debt and less developed credit markets. Second, recent research has shown that the rise of household debt in the United States had different causes in different segments of the social structure. Prasad's story fits the bottom best: "credit is how Americans survive" (p. 261). But at the top the lending boom was driven by investment strategies and the desire to keep up with the Joneses, in a context of sharply rising inequality. Credit is also how other Americans hope to get rich.

These weaknesses are, however, the ransom of Prasad's strengths. *The Land of Too Much* is resolutely polemical, often partial, and it does not balk at the use of sarcasm as an efficacious rhetorical tool. But it is, undeniably, a book with a strong authorial voice, brimming with narrative skill, a flair for pertinent anecdotes, and a real talent at juggling cases and synthesizing disparate elements into a coherent story. It is a deeply scholarly book that confidently ventures into the realm of policy prescriptions, a rare enough thing to merit notice. The book's core insight—about the relevance of agricultural production (and overproduction, in the U.S. case) to the development of the welfare state—is simply brilliant, and impossible to ignore: future generations of scholars will have to engage with it, whether they like it or not. If that is what defines academic success, then so be it. I'll stand in line to buy the next one.

Global Rivalries: Standards Wars and the Transnational Cotton Trade, by **Amy A. Quark**. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013. 282 pp. \$24.50 paper. ISBN: 9780226050676.

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The sociological study of standards has become something of a cottage industry in the past fifteen years or so. ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) has been the prime subject but other standards-setting bodies, like the International Accounting Standards Committee and the International Telecommunication Union, have also drawn attention. One conclusion that ineluctably emerges from this growing body of work is that far more standardization has been accomplished, and is currently in process, than anyone can fully appreciate. Much standardization is highly technical, to the point that many standards-setting processes can reasonably be described as rather pure forms of rationalization. But much of it is less rationalized than political, involving efforts by powerful corporations, industry associations, and states to shape standards to their advantage.