

Policing and justice in island communities

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Abstract: Research focusing on policing and the justice systems from an island perspective is available, but extremely rare. Additionally, available research on policing and justice systems in island contexts is usually conducted by non-island scholars using a limited frame of reference on ‘islandness’. It is, however, academically imprecise and improper to universalise scholarship from countries with large land masses onto islands with unique topographies and challenges. This thematic section highlights the inherent qualities of policing and justice systems in island communities by engaging with the existing body of island studies literature and through theoretically informed and methodologically appropriate research conducted by scholars at a mix of career levels. The authors in this thematic section present their scholarly efforts from diverse perspectives and contribute to decolonization efforts in island studies. Ultimately, the articles call for a move away from colonial epistemology and hegemony in knowledge production. In sum, this thematic section contributes to the emergent body of literature on both policing and the justice systems and studies on island communities.

Keywords: colonialism, decoloniality, island communities, islandness, justice, policing

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Introduction

As guest editors, we are pleased to welcome you to this thematic section of Volume 18(1) of *Island Studies Journal* which examines policing and justice in island communities.

First, a debt of gratitude is owed to the Editor-in-Chief, Dr. Adam Grydehøj and the Editorial Board of *Island Studies Journal* for accepting our proposal to produce a thematic section within *Island Studies Journal* and for taking the lead and guiding us from 'start to finish' through the arduous process of editing and producing the thematic section. Second, the authors of the heuristic articles contained in this thematic section must be acknowledged and commended for their hard work and diligence in producing such an outstanding body of scholarship on the timely and topical issues of policing and justice within island communities. The articles that make up this thematic section cover a range of issues that are currently 'trending' in criminology and criminal justice, policy sectors and the media in island communities. Importantly, the articles contained in this thematic section add weight to the arguments for the decolonization of criminology and criminal justice and police and justice studies in island societies.

Island studies focusing on policing and the justice systems are extremely rare, despite being highly relevant. With this in mind, the guest editors of this thematic section encouraged the involvement of scholars working in the fields of policing and justice studies in island states as well as scholars from various parts of the world working with islands to contribute to this special issue. The guest editors also sought the involvement of researchers who focused on comparative island research and researchers using qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches were invited to make contributions.

Despite being highly relevant, research focusing on policing and justice in island communities is not a major focus for researchers in island jurisdictions. The outcome of this lack of focus on policing and justice is sparse scholarship on this important issue. With this limitedness of scholarship in mind, it is important to focus on the critical issues of policing and justice using island perspectives that place island processes or 'islandness' at the centre of our discourse and analysis. Instructively, islandness at the epicentre of our discourse and analysis is important in the era of post-coloniality as policing and justice in many island communities are still premised on historical antecedents that are rooted in the colonial era. Though islands have historically been locales steeped in repressive struggles for citizenship and self-identity, they have the potential to become instruments of knowledge creation and transference if island scholars are given the space. Therefore, this thematic section of *Island Studies Journal* offers a varied look at the operation of policing and justice in island communities and how island peoples have, and/or are attempting to shape policing and justice in the contemporary era to reflect their island ideals. Instructively, this is done in a manner that does not 'universalise' the findings, for as Milan and Treré (2019) emphasize, problems do not manifest themselves in exactly the same manner everywhere, thus, researchers cannot disregard island features.

Contents of this section

This thematic section consists of five articles describing, analysing, and addressing policing and justice issues on islands with a distinct focus on islandness. These studies advance new knowledge by way of research and in some instances proffer suggestions and strategies for the development of policing and justice within the islands that are the topic of inquiry. The scholarship is advanced from a variety of disciplinary perspectives.

The thematic section begins with the work of Chand et al. (2023) whose focus is on understanding the dynamic nature of policing in Fiji, given the widespread reaches of the COVID-19 pandemic. In an environment with unique circumstances, police officers were expected to perform additional health enforcement and protocol duties which were met with several challenges. It is in this context, that issues such as the changing roles of the police in Fijian islands and the public's perception of police performance during a national crisis is presented. Perceptions of the police are further explored in the article by Cheon, Freemon, and Katz (2023) as they examine legal socialization, perceptions of the police, and youth delinquency in three Small Island Developing Caribbean nations. Youth legal socialization factors, for example, parental supervision and influence of peers are examined against delinquency and police perceptions and this forms the locus of this article. Both studies further our understanding of how islandness is embedded in our societal institutions, and how it defines the relationship between citizens and law enforcement agents.

The thematic section also provides an evaluation of contemporary perspectives of victimization against historical constructs of islandness. The impact of colonization on criminal justice practises in island communities highlights the distinct complexities embedded in the treatment of perpetrators and victims. The encounters between criminal justice actors and victims bring to forefront issues of interpersonal treatment, effectiveness, efficiency and dissemination of information to victims. The following article by Leah Cleghorn (2023) documents victims' experiences with criminal justice professionals such as police officers and the impact of these experiences. Interactions with police officers are further examined with investigations into police brutality by emerging scholar Tamara Forde (2023). In this article, the author explores the use of excessive force and inappropriate reactions to citizens and thus raises questions regarding human rights and the relationship between police and community in an island context. Similar to the previous article, the complexities of colonialism are highlighted and as such, the research furthers scholarship on the treatment of citizens by police officers in contentious situations.

The final article in the thematic section is authored by Wendell C. Wallace and Karen Lancaster-Ellis (2023). In this article, the authors sheds light on citizen and police officer perspectives on the use of mediation to resolve citizen-police conflict in Trinidad and

Tobago. Given the emphasis of the previous articles on the challenging encounter between citizens and police officers, the article proposes the use of mediation as an avenue in resolving disputes between police officers and the community residents. This novel approach to resolving conflicts in the small islands may prove to be effective in improving communication between police officers and community members.

Conclusion

This thematic section helps to shed light on policing and justice and how they relate to island states and nations as well as to island peoples and their ontologies. However, this thematic section is not without limitations. Instructively, despite the global nature and scope of 'islands', the research presented in this thematic section is distinctly Trinidad and Tobago in orientation as four of the articles originate from this specific locale, while one article is focused on the wider Caribbean. Thus, in the larger global context of 'islandness', there is a noticeable lack of diverse island perspectives. This lack of diversity is not because island perspectives are unavailable, but, because it appears that Trinidad and Tobago is the fulcrum of research potential due to its location as the gateway between the North and the South. Despite this limitation, it should be noted that the articles contained in this edition of *Island Studies Journal* are extremely efficacious as they serve to serve to alleviate the "epistemic dominance and invisibility which continue to limit island studies' potential" (Nadarajah et al., 2022). The articles also facilitate a greater understanding and production of knowledge about islands that is aimed at exiting contemporary paradigms of knowledge production and transference that is so Western-centric that Hall (1993) refers to it as 'the West and the rest'.

By directing empirical studies to the development of islandness, the articles provide evidence of advancements in policing studies as well as the capability of local researchers to conduct research through localised, island lens, if given the appropriate space. The findings offer a novel perspective to a variety of pertinent topics, some of which contradict the findings of research undertaken in larger developed nations. The unique context, history and cultural underpinnings of islands were explored against a plethora of criminological issues that are dynamic and exclusive to small developing countries and this widens pragmatism in this field of study.

The results of each study encompassed in this thematic section are valuable because not only do they challenge existing scholarship but also offer comprehensive highlights about phenomena that have not been discussed in extant research. The efforts of the researchers are pivotal in facilitating change and establishing alternative measures to improve the criminal justice system throughout various islands. Appropriate policies and strategic changes to a system embedded in archaic processes commences with the

knowledge and framework provided by these articles. The use of policing methods and strategies that were adopted from already developed countries which comprise a distinct composition when compared to Small Island Developing States is challenging and, in actuality, may not garner desirous outcomes. The contributions of each author have inculcated beneficial thought-provoking concepts useful in globally expanding the discipline.

In light of the present contributions made to islandness and its associated elements, this thematic section is a stepping stone for further discovery of uncharted areas of research. The burgeoning perspectives of the island diaspora create a niche for innovative thinking and modern approaches in understanding policing in a new era. The intellectual content from each of the authors is well-received and the significant contributions to 'island studies' are commendable.

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