

BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by Rose Parkes, De Montfort University

A NEW RESPONSE TO YOUTH CRIME

Smith, J. D. (ed.) (2012). Abingdon, Routledge, 442pp. pbk. £27.99, ISBN 978-1-84392-754-9

This substantial and wide-ranging book sets out to provide a framework of evidence and analysis to support the work of the Independent Commission on Youth Crime and Antisocial Behaviour. Whilst highlighting the shortcomings of the existing systems, the emphasis is on supporting the effort to create viable, realistic and effective alternatives which are individualised, needs-led and ultimately more just.

In Chapter 2, David Smith offers a clear and very accessible piece which examines changing patterns of youth from the post war years to the present day. He starts by looking at the impact of population changes, immigration, life expectancy, education, employment and poverty. He then explores changes in maturity rates, sexual activity and pregnancy before focussing on young peoples' living arrangements and homelessness. Following an informative exploration of youth culture and the impact of advertising and marketing, Smith moves on to contend that a 'widening of horizons' has perhaps been the most significant change for young people. For the author, this widening of horizons encompasses the expansion of education, cheap overseas travel and the expansion of the media and later the breathtaking and complex expansion of the 'new media'. Smith suggests that the changes that he outlines in this chapter are very much linked to trends in crime and that changes in young peoples' transitions and social structures are pivotal to explaining youth crime.

In Chapter 3, Larissa Pople and David Smith look at trends in crime and the political debate, media coverage and public anxiety around youth crime. Chapters 4 and 5 focus on responses to youth crime, the 'creation' of the phenomenon of antisocial behaviour, 'moral panic' and politicians 'talking tough'. Chapter 6 examines the causes of offending and anti social behaviour and chapter 7 reviews progress in the development and testing of strategies for preventing crime. The focus here is on sustainable solutions and the capacity of communities to self-correct.

In Chapter 8 Barbara Maughan and Frances Gardener examine how plausible it is to conclude that family related changes are a factor in changing trends of youth crime. Chapter 9 explores models of youth justice, focussing on structures and systems and stresses the need for policy reform and a tangible person centred vision. Chapter 10 explores youth justice reform in Canada whilst in Chapter 11, Trevor Jones assesses the feasibility of a shift from 'populist punitive' responses in the UK towards a more balanced, evidence-based approach.

In the concluding chapter, David Smith sketches out a reform agenda for transforming youth justice. Smith recognises that the global recession and the consequent expenditure cuts could and should make cheaper and more effective alternatives to custody more attractive. However, the author also acknowledges the complexity of public opinion and the fact that 'punitive rhetoric' remains a potent vote winner.

'A New Response to Youth Crime' is an important addition to the youth justice literature and will be a valuable read for Social Work, Youth Work and Criminal Justice students and practitioners as well as for those involved in sentencing and policy-making.

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CRIME AND ECONOMICS: AN INTRODUCTION

Albertson, K. and Fox, C. (2012). London, Routledge. 318pp. pbk. £31.99 ISBN 978-1-84392-842-3

Crime and Economics: An Introduction reflects what Albertson and Fox (p. 1) describe as the growth in the “reach” of economics’ in recent years and a belief that ‘criminologists and economists can do more together than we are able to apart’ (p. 4). While, of course, it might be argued, given the current economic crisis, that economics should be the last discipline seeking to increase its influence, there is little doubt that *Crime and Economics: An Introduction* is a useful text. It provides an introduction to economic theory and analysis, and demonstrates how economics informs, and has further potential to inform, understanding in various areas of criminological concern.

In Chapter 1 the scene is set by, among other things, outlining a justification for the book and discussing what the authors understand by ‘crime’ and ‘economics’. Chapter 2 introduces readers to economic concepts, ideas and theory, including supply and demand, profit, utility, rationality, market inefficiency and failure, and the limits of markets. Chapter 3 focuses upon modelling criminal behaviour by in particular exploring ‘the seminal work of Becker (1968), on which all subsequent [economic analysis in criminology] is based’ (p. 36). The fourth chapter examines the place of rational choice theory in criminology, while the fifth chapter introduces readers to relationships between crime, poverty and unemployment. Chapter 6 focuses upon the methods – costs analysis, cost-benefit analysis and modelling – that economists may employ to understand efficiencies in tackling crime. Chapter 7 explores various aspects of measuring the costs of crime. In Chapter 8 the focus is upon the economics of crime reduction, with a particular focus upon policing, situational and community-based crime reduction, and developmental crime reduction. Chapter 9 explores the economics of prison and community-based punishments as interventions aimed at cutting crime. Chapter 10 examines the economics of various aspects of organised crime and Chapter 11 discusses issues related to illicit drug use and markets.

Generally speaking, *Crime and Economics: An Introduction* is successful text. At an introductory level it takes readers through the ideas that underpin economic analyses and the ways in which those analyses have been used to help inform understandings of crime. It is undoubtedly the case that many criminologists from sociologically-informed traditions will find some of the claims and arguments of *Crime and Economics: An Introduction* difficult (for example, that offenders are rational, that emotions are rationally expressed and, as such, can be modelled (p. 8) and that ‘abuse’ can be monetised (p. 137)), but it is also the case that many criminologists in their own work will have made at least some venture into the economics of criminology when, for instance, engaging with the antecedents of offending and victimisation, and critically evaluating punishment regimes and other criminal justice interventions.

The strengths of *Crime and Economics: An Introduction* lie in its theoretical and empirical foci. It takes readers from the abstract to the empirical with a sharp focus. For the most, there is a critical engagement with particularly the empirical evidence, with it being

highlighted, for example, how and why studies have different results when substantively focusing upon the same issue. In this context, there is a great deal of discussion and evidence that is useful to criminology students. In particular, these relate to the effectiveness and, especially important for economists, the cost-effectiveness of criminal justice interventions. Chapters 9 and 11, for example, respectively provide particularly useful economic analyses of incarceration and community-based punishments, and of interventions in drug markets.

Crime and Economics: An Introduction though, is not without some limitations. One of these has been noted – a need to accept economic concepts and methods that are premised upon the ideas of rationality and quantification that are central to the application of economics to crime. In the final analysis, criminologists have to be convinced by concepts – such as ‘rational addiction’ and an ability to rationalise emotions – that, at least at first glance, seem counterintuitive. *Crime and Economics: An Introduction* makes strong arguments for the acceptance of such conceptualisations, but it also gives the impression that where analyses do not fit with the concepts, they are merely adjusted to help take account of any anomalies. In this context, for example, ‘the lack of apparent rationality’ witnessed in some models of rational choice theory is held to have ‘its root in the restricted model of rationality adopted’ (p. 83).

There are other issues that are by omission rather than commission. First, it is somewhat surprising (given that the book was written in 2010) that such little is noted about the current economic crisis that many countries, particularly but not limited to those in Europe, are facing. It has many implications for various discussions in the book, but makes little more than a couple of glancing appearances. Second, the externalities of crime that are considered are essentially negative in nature (a focus upon the potential harms produced by crime). However, there is little acknowledgement that, for some people (and the state) there may be some more positive externalities of crime. For example, an ability to increase a low income through cash or goods derived from crime may mean an individual and / or household might be better fed and clothed as a consequence of that crime. This may mean less need for social service, health and possible social security interventions. Third, the lack of conclusion brings the book to a somewhat abrupt halt. It would have been useful for the themes – such as difficulties with the nature and amount of existing criminological data, and economic problems with criminal justice and other policy interventions – that are apparent throughout the book to have been brought together for discussion in a conclusion.

That said, I would recommend *Crime and Economics: An Introduction* for teaching at an undergraduate level. Its analysis and in particular its focus upon evaluating empirical work in major areas of criminological debate means it is useful in understanding the efficacy and efficiency of many developments in recent nation-state and, in some instances, international criminal justice policy. Given the amounts of money spent on criminal justice policy, particularly in a period of austerity, it would also be useful for politicians and policy makers to avail themselves of the economic evidence of the ineffectiveness of many of the policies that they pursue.

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Becker, G. (1968) 'Crime and Punishment: An Economic Approach', *Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 76, pp. 169-217.

QUEERING CONFLICT: EXAMINING LESBIAN AND GAY EXPERIENCES OF HOMOPHOBIA IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Duggan, M. (2012) Farnham: Ashgate Publishing. 174pp. hbk. £55.00 ISBN 978-1-4094-2016-3

This short, but packed, book offers a focused account of homophobia in the particular setting of Northern Ireland, where social, political and religious currents create tempestuous storms. Tracing different strands present in that space, and making sense of one manifestation of those currents, is a daunting prospect. The author states that the aim of the book is to '*account for the ways in which homophobia has become normalised in facets of Northern Irish social and political cultures to the detriment of those affected by it*' (p.3) and certainly the book does this. It also presents a wider and soundly theoretical account of ways in which particular discourses work to support and legitimate fierce heteronormativity. Marion Duggan introduces her work by referring to the public statements of Mary Robinson in 2008 condemning homosexuality. This illustrates her contention, that the microcosm of Northern Ireland has produced particular and traceable manifestations of homophobia that contain lessons for understanding homophobia more generally.

The author offers six chapters, all of which present a different perspective and can be read alone. The first of these gives an overview of the history that has created the Northern Irish position that is one of the most concise and clear accounts of this troubled period that I have read. Using this background, the author develops a sophisticated account of ways in which nationalist and loyalist discourses both situated homosexual as 'other' and 'threat'. Linking this with colonial discourses makes for a convincing argument for the specificity of the experience of homophobia at this point. This argument is well made and presented in writing that moves from theoretical to practical with clarity. This chapter is the conceptual underpinning of Duggan's account.

The following chapters establish this conceptual analysis within action and reaction. The British Government's failure to extend the 1967 Sexual Offences Act, (decriminalising some sexual acts between consenting men), to Northern Ireland meant that being gay was experienced against a background of secrecy, vigilance and fear even after the social positioning of gayness had begun to change on mainland Britain. This experience was situated against political, moral and religious discourse that Duggan presents as creating a climate of fear and revulsion which also created and recreated particular forms of support for families and masculinity. In their turn, these institutions were inimical to homosexuals.

There is a sense of relief in this reader when much of the work concentrates on the voiced experience of gay people, living through and resistant of the dominating force of homophobia so well established and explained. Chapter two uncompromisingly begins by discussing techniques of resistance to the actual and the perceived danger. However, there is also a thorough and grounded empirical account of violence, harassment and oppression experienced by homosexuals in Northern Ireland. One specific point here that

deserves further exploration is the difference in experience between rural and urban living: Duggan touches on this experience in the Irish setting, but does not extrapolate. The account leads back to the exploration, in chapter three, of ways in which the political climate and the actual policies that govern homophobia have changed and been changed and, therefore, offers a hopeful path through a book that could have been uncompromisingly doom laden.

It would be unrealistic to attempt to examine Northern Ireland without making some attempt to untangle the different religious perspectives of the actors. As Duggan herself says 'Christian teachings around homosexuality have led people to focus on the primacy of sexual activity whilst overshadowing all other aspects of the committed relationship' (p.94). This leads to specific and painful dilemmas for homosexuals and for others alike. It also can lead, and in Northern Ireland appears to have led, to contradictions in ways in which faith and sexuality interrelate. It is interesting that Duggan argues that protestants may have more difficulty in working with homosexuality than Catholics: it is an argument well-presented and justified in the book. Some of the experiences presented here could reverberate wherever faith and sexuality converge. For example, there could be lessons here that would inform inner city experience of conflict between faith and sexuality communities.

It would also be unrealistic to present the experience of homophobia without recognising that gender is a key player in this history. Duggan's answer to this is to present the experience of lesbians as a specific chapter. Lesbians have a separate relationship to law from men: for example, the Sexual Offences Act 1967 does not have direct implications for women. They also have, arguably, a different relationship with dominating discourses from men. In this book, that experience is backgrounded throughout the discussion except in chapter 5. It would be difficult to broaden the arguments that support Duggan's conceptual base by including a gender dimension, but it is sometimes frustrating that heterosexual and gender based arguments are not made more explicit.

To some extent, this points to both the strength and the weakness of this book. It is short, thorough, specific and packed with evidence to support a strong analytical model. This in turn reduces the opportunity to explore ways on which that model could be made more universal, or could be informed by other analyses.

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DOING PROBATION WORK: IDENTITY IN A CRIMINAL JUSTICE OCCUPATION

Mawby, R. and Worrall, A. (2013). London, Routledge. 154pp. £85.00 hbk, ISBN 978-0-415-54028-5

'Someone has to do it'. The final remarks in a long overdue but brilliantly incisive examination of the occupational culture of probation. This misunderstood and much maligned occupation is facing its worst crisis since its inception over 100 years ago. Government are intent on delimiting and denigrating the role of the probation service to the seeming but deceptive rigour of competition and payment by results. If ever there needed to be an exploration of the essence of what probation is about now is that time and this book does this job excellently. It is not a simple story nor one which can be told in a sound bite and this can explain the way in which the media often fails to grasp the essential significance of the work undertaken. Mawby and Worrall make no such mistake painstakingly drawing out the key features from 60 in-depth interviews conducted in 2010/11 with probation workers spanning over 50 years of collective experience.

The authors use the heuristic device of 'the square of probation' to shape their thinking about occupational culture. They argue firstly that probation is a socially tainted occupation by dint of its undeserving client group and the negative perceptions of the media and the public. Probation does 'dirty work' and it undertakes it in turbulent times where social, economic and political upheaval threatens its very existence. The book then describes the way the occupational culture is built focusing on concepts of motivation, artefacts, job crafting, coping strategies, nostalgia and diversity. The final element of the square is the way in which probation workers respond to the twists and turns of this organisation. They describe a range of responses which workers can turn to and this includes exit, voice, loyalty, neglect, cynicism, expedience and edgework. Edgework is most interesting as it expresses the notion of pushing the boundaries within which the institution seeks to hold its members accountable. The authors regard edgework as something which has been a constant feature of practice and continues to be practised to respond to the challenges of the working environment. It reminded me of the edgework described many years ago in Bruce Hugman's book 'Act Natural' where he worked as a detached probation officer working from his own home in the community in which he worked.

The authors build a convincing typology which describes three distinctive groupings emerging from their sample. These are then labelled 'lifers', 'second careerists' and 'offender managers'. These pen portraits are idealised conceptions but also demonstrate distinctive characterisations of the probation worker. They conclude that taking the key contributions of each ideal type would create a defensible description of the perfect probation worker. This draws on the idealism, vocationalism and intellectualism of the lifer; the life experiences, transferable skills and commitment to 'making a difference' of the second careerists; and the victim empathy, concern for public protection and willingness to challenge offending behaviour of the offender manager.

They go on to look at the daily routines of probation noting the differing environments in which this work takes place and they identify the changing nature of probation practice from being focused in the community and autonomously undertaking their work to the much more accountable and desk bound operatives of today. They look closely at the nature of the partnership work of the probation service and identify their changing relationships with the courts, the police and prison. They note the strong partnership that has developed in recent years with the police in contrast to a reduced emphasis on being a 'servant of the court' and a continuing though somewhat ambivalent relationship with prison, despite organisational merger within NOMS.

One of the most interesting chapters was the authors attempt to grapple with the lack of observer understanding, at times confused and almost contemptuous perceptions of the work of the service represented through worker's families, the wider public and the media. At a time when probation is under a real threat to its survival, the difficulties of developing a positive media image are crucial to this debate. The contribution here should certainly be read by all those seeking to develop a communications strategy to defend the service.

Grappling with four different voices of the probation service is attempted in chapter 7. The authors were somewhat surprised to find a continued commitment to religious motivation to practice, which whilst strongly expressed in the early years of probation the authors had speculated that this would now have disappeared. On the contrary they found the resilience of religious influence surprisingly sustained. They look at the declining influence of the trade unions, they examine the commitment to diversity and, in one of the most interesting sections, they contend that the organisation, though male dominated until the early 1990s, was undergoing what they describe as a 'feminisation' of the service. They regard this process as fundamental to the nature of the organisation today and they unpack this in detail and the implications of this for the future.

In the final chapter, despite concerns over the potential decline of the influence of the probation service, they noted a resilient morale and continued sense of direction from those they interviewed. The authors would regard the breakup of the probation service as deeply problematic. This would lead in their view to the fragmentation of criminal justice delivery and the dilution of a culture which is worth preserving because it does a difficult job well.

Clearly this book raises important questions about probation as an institution. If the institution becomes fragmented and even dismantled in the course of the next few years and suffers the loss of its collective wisdom, the ability to innovate and undertake edgework, will the essence of this rich occupational culture, so painstakingly described, simply disappear? How far is the rich complexity of probation work bound up with the transference of identity and practices through the culture of the organisation? Can probation be sustained in a myriad of loosely federated private and voluntary sector delivery partners with a tightly prescribed public protection service being the only vestige of this probation institution. It is a doubtful proposition.

I would have liked to have seen the authors use the material to discuss the role of training and staff development in the maintenance and reconstruction of the culture in recent

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years and how this factor might sustain 'probation' in a non-institutional form. The debates on probation worker registration will be interesting to observe. They touch on the move from social work training to the current training model but without drawing it centrally into their analysis. This minor criticism apart I found this book one of the clearest statements of what probation is about, if you like, its very 'essence' is brilliantly captured here. Undoubtedly this book forms a robust defence for probation's continuation for another century and I can only hope that our Justice Ministers take time out to read this invaluable contribution to the conundrum of what probation does to support and reform our most vulnerable and sometimes difficult citizens. As Mawby and Worrall simply affirm: someone has to do it!

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