

CRIME PREVENTION: FACTS, FALLACIES AND THE FUTURE

**Henry Shaftoe. Houndmills, Basingstoke,
Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. pp. 257; -18.99pbk.
ISBN 0-333-92128-3**

EVIDENCE-BASED CRIME PREVENTION

**Edited by Lawrence W. Sherman, David P.
Farrington, Brandon C. Welsh and Doris Layton
MacKenzie. London, Routledge, 2002. pp 456; -
85 hbk.
ISBN 0-415-27047-2**

These two books indicate that crime prevention has 'gone to scale'. Henry Shaftoe provides an introductory undergraduate text on 'Crime Prevention: facts, fallacies and the future' and Lawrence Sherman et al develop their 1997 report 'Preventing Crime: What Works, What doesn't and What's Promising' for policy makers, academics and community leaders. If these books were accidentally read by each others audiences there may be some benefit. Shaftoe points to the complexity of the field and Sherman et al illustrate that the best interventions often involve people and projects that are well thought out and build in a research-based approach. Undergraduates may therefore come to realise that good academic learning is an excellent preparation for making a difference in the world and politicians/researchers may start to appreciate that an abstract vision is difficult to realise in concrete practices, especially in the social and human domain.

The undergraduate text on 'Crime Prevention' is suitable for a wide variety of courses including traditional and more vocational ones. Students on first or second year criminology courses may find that definitions of crime, measurement and basic theories are covered elsewhere but this is unlikely to be the case for youth and community workers or social science/urban studies students. Offender managers and students on foundation degrees for the police service will benefit from the interdisciplinary and multi-agency focus to the book. For all students and professionals in this area it is crucial to understand how the different strands and currents of policy swirl around a variety of organisational, community and societal contexts. Understanding where other professionals are positioned in the discourse of crime prevention may help 'join-up' the multiplicity of new projects and practices in this area.

'Evidence-based Crime Prevention' does what it says on the cover and preface. It tells readers about the scientific evidence on a wide variety of programmes in the Western world. As such it provides an ethnocentric, established quantitative approach to addressing crime and its causes based on the hypothetico-deductive tradition. The limitations of this paradigm and the lack of balance with other approaches (or what it would probably call its own internal consistency) are perhaps its greatest weaknesses. Whilst it provides credible evidence, within its own terms, of the measurable impact of crime prevention it does not connect with the complexity of policy-making merely extolling the virtues for decision makers of basing policies on the 'knowledge' that they present.

The book is therefore a very limited first step in bridging the two communities of researchers and policy makers. Its influence may be more to do with politics and the power of ideological currents in contemporary community justice than the rigorous evidence it seeks to present. A similar criticism can be made of Shafteo's implicit ideologically based crime prevention utopia. This seems to suggest that if we could only achieve an inclusive and just society, with suitably empowered local communities utilising a variety of acceptable techniques, then current levels of crime would be reduced and the current repressive dimension to crime prevention could be ameliorated. Both Sherman et al and Shafteo need to add chapters on political ideology and crime control to provide a more reflexive perspective on their own positions. This might help to contextualise both the 'evidence' and 'fallacies' that they each present.

The undergraduate text describes itself as taking an eclectic approach and this is indeed true. It takes an approach that moves from traditional theory about crime towards crime prevention policy in practice with different pieces of empirical research discussed throughout. The book starts with a dystopian vision of the future (which is well grounded in the present) and an outline of espoused themes and principles. The technical aspects of crime prevention are intertwined with the social and political. An argument is made that long-term planning needs to supersede short-term political expediency and a desire for electoral favour. Similar points are made by Sherman et al in relation to better utilising the available research in the policy sphere. The negative situated, spatial and social aspects of crime are fully acknowledged in the opening chapters. A useful heuristic device is provided in the form of a diagram locating individuals in their societal context (at p.71). This is developed later in the book in a chapter on 'Crime control models and frameworks' which provides further diagrammatic and textual conceptual models to engage with crime prevention. These recognise different geographical areas and the significance of opportunity reduction as well as social crime prevention. The heart of the book's mission - to transcend arcane academic criminology and connect with the concerns of practitioners - is found in chapter 6 entitled 'From theory to practice: comparing, implementing and evaluating policy'.

The eclectic content of this chapter with a mix of comparative, policy analysis and network approaches illustrates how challenging it is to connect abstract theory and

research with concrete informed interventions. This part of the book might have been more successful if evaluation was separated from the comparative and stronger linking statements were made. More case studies - separated off from the main body of the text - could also have aided the practical utility of the book. The subsequent chapter on 'The politics and failure of crime control' takes forward the thesis that prevention is needed in the face of the failure of current policy. The history of crime prevention is sketched and the concerns about exclusion/inclusion in current policy directions seeded. This is developed further in final chapters on 'What works' and 'Future prospects'. Here there is an overlap with Sherman et al as the established research is presented and conclusions drawn for practice. Points about sustainability are well made but lack support precisely because there has been no long-term research to evaluate a multi-modal, ongoing and comprehensive crime prevention programme. Concerns expressed about technical and repressive measures are also important especially at a time when human rights are headlined as assisting criminals rather than promoting a civilised society. The structure of this chapter (or perhaps an earlier one) could have benefited from a simple account of what different agencies and organisations do in respect of crime prevention. This is covered in a 'joined-up' way but for those new to the field these basic roles and responsibilities might be useful. The final chapter draws together several themes from the book and, rather strangely, introduces some more topics such as drugs and crime and policy governance. Neither are so new that they could not have been considered earlier and perhaps warrant attention in their own right even in an introductory text.

The content and structure of the book therefore warrants some improvement but this will hopefully occur with a future edition which brings further developments into the undergraduate curriculum with this very readable text. It provides a good mix of 'theory and practice' with the caveats outlined previously. Both staff and students new to this area are likely to find the work engaging and informative.

Whether policy makers, academics and community leaders will find the book by Sherman et al as accessible is a moot point. It assumes knowledge of quantitative research and analysis which is perhaps not as pervasive as is assumed. Without it, such readers may be overly impressed by the 'science' presented. Whilst the contingent and provisional nature of such knowledge is admitted the limits of crime prevention are not. This is surprising given the way the figures portrayed clearly illustrate that crime is never eliminated, let alone significantly reduced and that perception, politics and public opinion play an increasingly significant part in the policy making process.

The book contains an introductory chapter with key concepts and rationale. Chapter 2 explains the evaluative framework for deciding whether a particular programme works or not. This is based on experimental research with levels of random assignment that are increasingly being expected by policy makers in this area. Each subsequent chapter covers programmes in different institutions, or contexts as they are also called. These include schools, families, communities, employment, policing and the correctional sector. The scientific evidence is clearly presented with tables and text. Each chapter has an

introductory section on the theoretical aspects of its content. This might usefully inform undergraduate studies and help policy makers to develop their understanding. What this structure does, however, is suggest a 'recipe book' approach to crime prevention without an initial situational analysis which takes account of the variety of stakeholders within the field. Whilst the argument made in the concluding chapter is that closer links should be made with policy makers it is unlikely that the approach of the book - 'we have the answer' - is going to find favour with politicians who seem to like coming up with their own answers. It could also be the case that academics (like this one) will seek to undermine the high claims made and that community leaders will point to the uniqueness and special needs of their own communities. The book is, however, essential reading for academic and professional staff new to this area who want to know about the 'evidence' behind 'evidence-based' crime prevention policy.

There remains a gap between 'theory and practice' after both these books have been considered. This may reflect the need for policy makers and practitioners to connect with academic discourse in research, and researchers to understand the values, norms, contexts and complexities of action within the lived realities of those 'doing' crime prevention rather than examining it. Nonetheless both books provide invaluable contributions for different audiences within this expanding field. As community justice is concerned with community safety as much as the management of crime then such books are essential artefacts for enhancing practice.

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A LAND FIT FOR CRIMINALS: AN INSIDER'S VIEW OF CRIME, PUNISHMENT AND JUSTICE IN THE UK

David Fraser. Sussex, The Book Guild Limited, 2006. pp458. £17.99Hbk. ISBN: 1 857776 964 3.

The author of this book describes himself as a former Probation Officer with over twenty years experience and with an additional career in the National Criminal Intelligence Service. The book is intended for all those involved in the criminal justice system and for the general public and is endorsed by academics, a judge, a journalist and, Peter Coad, the director of The Criminal Justice Association who suggests that the book 'gives a unique insight into the corrupt sentencing policies of the current criminal justice system' (back cover). Professor Marsland has also written a foreword outlining the aims of the book and I shall make further reference to this below.

The book is a polemic written with passion as opposed to the alleged calm and dispassionate view of academics in their closed world. The narrative races along at a brisk pace rather like a novel. It examines the dystopia that is contemporary society in the United Kingdom. If the reader wants to know 'whodunit' then the book is very clear in its answer. The basis of the analysis is that the criminal justice system is not 'fit for purpose' and Professor Marsland, in his foreword, identifies two culprits. The first is modern criminology 'that constitutes a tissue of pseudo-liberal prejudice and counter productive phoney knowledge' (p.xi) and this is supported by the second, namely, a penal policy which comprises 'a vast body of misconceived and nonsensical doctrine which has the effect of exculpating criminals, punishing victims and escalating social collapse' (p .ix).

In short the 'utopian nonsense' of the academic and liberal elite has ignored the concerns of the 'man in the street' whilst misleading the public about the success of community interventions, simultaneously politicising the police, insisting on 'political correctness' and viewing the world from the offender's perspective. However the book is less ingenuous, when it claims in the light of the introductory passage, to be 'devoid of ideology with no professional, ideological or organisational position to defend' (p.3).

Each chapter develops an aspect of the main contentions around dysfunction of the criminal justice system and the resulting dystopia. Two chapters may suffice to provide examples. The chapter devoted to the police discusses 'the obstacles to detection' and the way that the police are 'crushed between an enormous avalanche of crime and enormous obstacles' (p.24) impeding detection. The chapter entitled 'The Undeclared Propaganda

War' is devoted to examining the ways in which the criminal justice system has gone about making life 'easier and more rewarding for the criminal'(p.53) and regards organisations such as NACRO as 'fifth columnists'(p.69) and the Probation Service of becoming the 'criminal's champion'(p. 230).

The final chapter 'Stepping Back from the Brink' advocates acceptance of an escalating prison population of between 200,000 and 300,000 convicted offenders, not just serious offenders but persistent property offenders, with few early release schemes. We are back in the 'prison works' agenda. Indeed the only criticism of the former Home Secretary Michael Howard was that he was unable to go far enough with his agenda.

In support of this agenda the author advocates the scrapping of lay justices, and their replacement by district judges with a professional course of training. There should be a new sentencing code, with a mandatory custodial sentence for persistent offenders, ensuring that there is sufficient clarity to ensure that the penalty always outweighs the benefits of crime. Early release schemes would be scrapped. The police would become more numerous and powerful in order to facilitate arrest and conviction. The Crown Prosecution Service would be abolished allowing the police to take over their role.

The author also rejects those who 'sneer' at populist solutions and advocates instead the democratic 'will of the people'. However this treats opinion as a homogenous and universal without deviation. There are many strands of opinion in any democracy of which this author represents one. The balance is always important to maintain and everyone must always be vigilant both against a system that is perceived as too lenient and one which tends to be too harsh. The USA is held up as an example of successful practice, by the author, but a reading of recent research into desistance and the concept of 'endless punishment and exclusion' may provide further food for thought. (Maruna and Immarigeon (2004).¹

A well argued and passionate polemic is often useful and refreshing. It holds up a mirror to society. Thoughtful academics, victims, practitioners in the criminal justice system and the general public will be grateful for that. However academics and practitioners also live in the world. Many have individual experiences of working with offenders and some of being victims. The way in which individuals experience the criminal justice system may well depend on a number of factors such as where they live: their ethnicity, sex, gender, sexual orientation and religion. Sensitivity to these issues is presumably what the author describes as 'political correctness'.

It is an old adage that in criminal justice terms a 'liberal is a conservative who has just been arrested'. In short many people advocate harsh regimes for 'offenders' whilst excusing themselves from any such justice system (for example, motorists caught on 'safety cameras', many of whom are repeat offenders). The same journalism that advocates harsher sentences deplores the systematic persecution of the otherwise law abiding. Offenders are not a homogenous group and desistance theory helps to examine the ways

in which 'social capital' can be accumulated and rehabilitation enhanced. There are a number of ways in which offenders may be worked with effectively in the community and encouraged to rejoin society. It is misleading to interpret particular incidents as an indication of a general dysfunction of the system.

In conclusion the author, perhaps, exhibits an over reliance on journalistic sources without examining the factors that lie behind the headlines. A polemic is only useful if it encourages readers to challenge their own perceptions and knowledge and does not serve merely to confirm them in their prejudices. Herein lies the danger of such a book. However it is an exciting 'roller coaster' of a book that challenges accepted ideas. Practitioners should be ready to refute its main propositions and generalisations whilst, in turn challenging their own.

¹. Maruna ,S & Immarigeon ,R (Eds) (2004): After crime and punishment: Pathways to offender reintegration,Cullompton: Willan Publishing. ISBN 1-84392-057-3

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HANDBOOK OF CRIME PREVENTION AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

Edited by Nick Tilley. , Willan, 2005; pp.782; £29.95pbk. ISBN 1-84392-146-4 ISBN 1-94392-147-2.

Having commissioned the Handbook of Policing which was published back in 2003, Willan's Handbook of Crime Prevention and Community Safety is a timely and useful complement to this original handbook. The editor, Professor Nick Tilley succeeds in utilising his vast experience at Nottingham Trent University, the Jill Dando Institute of Crime Science and the Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate to pull together a plethora of theories, policies and practices which span the field of crime prevention and community safety.

The handbook contains some twenty five chapters, which are authored by academics and research consultants from a number of countries, providing a truly international flavour to the product. The chapters are themed into five underpinning areas. After Tilley's broad brush introduction, Part 1 goes on to consider the context in which crime prevention and community safety initiatives are located, through the contribution of Gordon Hughes and Adam Edwards in chapter 2. Part 2 deals specifically with the prevention and reduction of crime. Ron Clarke (chapter 3) puts forward a robust defence of the philosophy and practice of situational crime prevention. Ross Homel (chapter 4) goes on to debate the controversial issue of early intervention to prevent the development of career criminality before George Kelling's (chapter 5) case study of a problem oriented approach to prevention with regard to a 'Safer Cities' project in New Jersey, USA. Graham Farrell's penultimate chapter in Part 2 provides considerable insight into best practices in the context of research around repeat victimisation before Ken Pease (chapter 7) concludes by noting the invaluable contribution which the natural sciences can make to crime prevention.

Part 3 of the volume begins with an articulation of Paul Ekblom's (chapter 8) influential work in 'designing out' crime. Henry Shaftoe and Tim Read are keen, in chapter 9 to discuss some of the limitations of environmental design as a means of crime prevention, reminding the reader not to overlook social issues in terms of their contribution to combating crime and feelings of insecurity and this refocusing on 'the social' is inherent in Tilley's next chapter. Mike Sutton (chapter 11) provides considerable insight into the so-called 'market-reduction' approach to prevention with specific regard to the reduction of property crime. Martin Gill moves on (chapter 12) to attempt to methodically document the types of resources which need to be accessed by potential offenders contemplating the commission of crimes before Kate Bowers and Shane Johnson (chapter 13) explore the strengths and weaknesses of publicity as a potential for crime reduction and prevention. Those interested in the prevention of youth offending will find Tim Newburn and Anna

Souhami's chapter 14 thought provoking as issues around 'minimal intervention', 'community-based mentoring' and 'restorative justice' are given due attention. Part 3 concludes with an insight into problem-oriented policing from a former police practitioner, Michael Scott, and argues well that 'joined-up' approaches and partnership working, rather than police primacy, is the way forward.

'Prevention in Practice' is the theme of Part 4 of the volume and Niall Hamilton-Smith and Andrew Kent kick off (chapter 16) with their reflections of the burglary reduction component of the wider Crime Reduction Programme which flourished at the time of the new millennium. Barry Webb's focus in chapter 17 encompasses the diverse tactics utilised in the sphere of vehicle-crime reduction before Matt Hopkins and John Burrows (chapter 18) paint a picture concerning explanations and trends in crimes committed against businesses. Violent and sexual crime and its relationship to alcohol abuse is the subject matter of chapter 19, authored by Mike Maguire and Fiona Brockman and this overlaps in a complementary way with Tim McSweeney and Mike Hough's (chapter 20) work on the complex relationship between alcohol, illicit drugs and offending. Measurement of the fear of crime is at the core of Jason Ditton and Martin Innes' concluding chapter in Part 4, where 'risk' and 'signal crimes' are discussed in the context of the National Reassurance Policing Programme. (NRPP).

The notion of 'evidence based practice' is at the heart of the theme of Part 5 of the volume on 'The Preventive Process'. Alex Hirschfield (chapter 22) sets the ball rolling with an articulation of what the twin techniques of Crime Centred Analysis and Crime Environmental Analysis can offer in the field before Gloria Laycock's (chapter 23) explanation of some of the key theories and concepts which have guided crime prevention and community safety practices over the years. In dealing with the strengths and weaknesses of a multitude of research designs, John Eck (chapter 24) successfully explores the prerequisites for the future generalizability of research findings. The final chapter by Daniel Gilling refocuses on partnership working with a consideration of how problems and barriers to 'joined-up working' may be overcome in the present political environment which continues to stress the importance of 'accountability' of individual agencies through managerial technologies such as targets and performance indicators.

The obvious strength of this volume lies in the sheer range and diversity of relevant material which is covered. The reader is able to navigate around the work through the concise but informative introductions to each of the five subsections, which signpost the volume excellently. For those not fully acquainted with the discourse of crime prevention and community safety, the 13 page glossary at the back of the text provides a welcome way of taking the fear out the terminology and acronyms which are an inevitable part of the discourse.

In identifying weaknesses of the handbook, one has to applaud the intellectual honesty of its editor who openly acknowledges at the earliest available opportunity its tendency to focus on volume property crime and violence. In stating that "Professional malpractice,

corporate malfeasance, terrorism, fraud, environmental crime, traffic offences, political crimes, anger about crime and most victimless crime...are either not discussed at all or are mentioned only in passing" (p.7) Tilley clearly sets the parameters for this invaluable handbook which will continue to inform policy makers, practitioners and those of an academic disposition for years to come.

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