

## **BOOK REVIEWS**

*Edited by David Phillips, Sheffield Hallam University*

### **SEXUAL OFFENDING AND MENTAL HEALTH**

**Houston, J. & Galloway, S. (eds); 2008, Jessica Kingsley. ISBN 978-1-84310-550-3**

Sexual Offending and Mental Health has its roots in the work of the Sex Offender Service (SOS) which is part of the Forensic Mental Health Services at South West London and St. Georges Mental Health Trust.

This book is written by current practitioners and began as an idea from a national conference on the multidisciplinary risk management of sex offenders held by the Sex Offender Service in March 2005.

Each chapter is written by practitioners who are acknowledged experts in their respective fields of practice, and it therefore focuses on a multidisciplinary approach to the assessment and treatment of sex offenders and those who have behaved in sexually inappropriate ways. The purpose of the book is to inform readers about the range of theoretical and legal issues relevant to working with sexual offenders but it does much more than that. It is also an informative review of many different aspects of current clinical practice with this diverse client group, covering both those who have been through the legal process and those that have not. Although it primarily deals with community-based adult male offenders who have committed 'contact' offences, many of the frameworks and concepts described are equally applicable to in patients and 'non-contact' offenders (i.e. indecent exposure, child pornography and internet related offences).

I found the structure clear and logical with the first section of the book (chapters one to five) dealing with theoretical perspectives and the second section (chapters six to thirteen) addressing clinical practice issues. Given that the theoretical perspectives informs clinical practice and vice versa, I found myself moving from one section to another seeking links and insights, something which I suspect most practitioners would find particularly helpful. The chapters in section one include an introductory chapter giving a very concise and informative overview of sexual offending, and chapters on risk

assessment, mental disorder and sexual offending, ethnicity, culture and diversity, and the law and sex offending. Whilst it is impossible to provide complete coverage of every aspect related to sexual offending, these theoretical chapters provide an excellent summary which I would recommend to any professional student of the subject. The UK focus of the book is of particular importance because in the past, offerings in this area have often disappointed usually because they emanate from North America and do not contain essential practical detail about UK systems and procedures. As a result, this is essential reading for the full range of disciplines working in the sexual offending and mental health arenas. As a chartered psychologist and an ex-senior probation officer who has experience of working in multidisciplinary teams, this is a book I would have liked to have had alongside me in practice and one which I will now recommend to my students.

The second section deals with the clinical applications of much of the theory presented in section one, and the chapters give a real flavour of the major practices and processes involved in working in a multidisciplinary, and multi-agency, way with people with mental health problems who have committed sexual offences. The first chapter in this section looks at the development and current operation of the Sex Offender Service with the next two chapters focusing specifically on formulation-based assessment and treatment. The difficult to define, and often difficult to work with, topic of personality disorder and sexual offending is dealt with in chapter nine, and some excellent examples of multidisciplinary/multi-agency community case management are given in chapter ten. The latter does not shy away from the realities of the challenges faced by professionals working in this way. The next two chapters look at wider issues related to the offender such as protective partners and systemic work with families of sex offenders. The final chapter should be essential reading for all current and would-be practitioners in this field because it deals with issues that all of us who have experience of working with both sex offenders, and mental health issues, will instantly recognise- the emotional impact of working with sexual offenders on professionals. The only serious criticism I have of this book is the lack of a concluding chapter, which in addition to summarising the main points from each chapter could have usefully reviewed possible future developments in the field of sexual offending and mental health.

The contributors to this book were chosen for their breadth of expertise, their differing clinical perspectives and professional backgrounds. As such, it would have been easy to produce something that felt disjointed and rather unreal, but the editorial team has done an excellent job of providing the most informative text I have read on this topic for a very long time. Sexual Offending and Mental Health represents an intelligent, informative and relevant contribution, which I unreservedly highly recommend. So much so, that having read the book for this review, I immediately telephoned a friend from the mental health field and told him I would send him a copy, knowing he would benefit from it as much as I have!

*Dr. Kevin Downing, City University of Hong Kong*

## **UNDERSTANDING MODERNISATION IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

**Senior, P., Crowther-Dowey, C. and Long, M.  
2007; Maidenhead: McGraw Hill/Open University  
Press. 268pp. ISBN 978-0-3352-2065-6**

This book is part of the well-established Crime and Justice series, each of whose titles begins with the word 'Understanding .....' and a number of which are staple items on undergraduate criminology reading lists. In this volume, the authors set out to do something which I believe has not been done before in any detail: to assess the meaning and impact of New Labour's mission to 'modernise' public services in the context of the institutions and processes of criminal justice.

This is important as modernisation has been a central element of New Labour's attempt to reform and redefine much of what government does that directly affects people in their everyday lives. It has had huge impact on the way that core welfare services such as education, health and social care are resourced and delivered. It has generated profound changes in the roles, responsibilities and relationships of the professionals involved in planning and delivering services and of service users. Modernisation has been as much about the forging of a new relationship between state and citizen – hence New Labour's constant emphasis on the need for a re-balancing of rights and responsibilities – as it has about improving the efficiency, quality and relevance of public services. Although the criminal justice system stands outside the classic conception of the welfare state, it has also been subjected to processes of modernisation and an examination of what this means and what its effects have been is therefore to be welcomed.

The book is organised in three parts. Part 1 begins with an attempt to analyse and clarify the concept of modernisation and its relationship to the aims and methods of governance. The 'history' of modernisation is then examined, showing how the New Labour programme has its precursors in various developments in the way the welfare state has been organised and managed since its inception, and particularly focusing on the 'managerialisation' of the state and the emergence of New Public Management in the 1980s and 1990s. These trends, coupled with aspects of distinctive New Labour 'Third Way' ideology, are shown to have fed into and shaped the strategy of modernisation that has been pursued since 1997. In Part Two, individual chapters assess how this strategy has impacted on specific institutions and processes of criminal justice: youth justice; the correctional services; community safety; the court system; the police; and the voluntary and community sector. Each chapter follows a similar pattern, centred on a consideration of how the key dimensions of modernisation (development of a mixed economy of provision; contestability; performance management; audit and inspection; pluralization; etc) have been applied to the different domains of criminal justice and how they have

been accepted, adapted or resisted. Finally, Part Three summarises the emerging trends and patterns, explores the potential for future development in criminal justice modernisation and considers the applicability of the analysis in an international comparative context.

There is much here of value. Each of the substantive chapters in Part Two provides a useful account of the key changes and developments within the criminal justice system under New Labour, viewed through the distinctive lens of 'modernisation'. As well as providing a very full description of the ways in which the modernising impetus has been pursued in the context of criminal justice, the authors stress the uncertain and often contradictory impacts of modernisation, emphasising in particular the wide variety of effects across the quite different institutional settings in which various aspects of criminal justice are delivered. This critical account is highly pertinent in helping to explain many of the dilemmas that criminal justice services currently face.

'Modernisation' is, as the authors rightly point out, a complex phenomenon, in part because it signals both a political and a technical (or administrative) process, and I was never wholly convinced by the way the book addresses this tension. Insufficient attention was given to distinguishing changes in the conception of the fundamental aims and purposes of government that are promoted through New Labour modernisation from changes in the techniques of government through which the aims and purposes are to be achieved. It seems to me that much of what the modernisation of criminal justice has tried to do relates to the former, with criminal justice reforms guided by such concepts as responsibility, community, consumerism, social inclusion and risk; while the book does acknowledge the significance of some of these ideas (particularly responsibility and risk), it tends to view them as simply extensions of 'new public management' and to reduce modernisation to a series of managerial innovations.

'Criminal justice' is itself a contested term that is changing partly as a result of the modernisation agenda. The book recognises this in that analysis of the traditional criminal justice institutions of police, courts, prison and probation services is supplemented by the chapters on youth justice and community safety. But both of these are highly complex arenas involving agencies and activities that do not sit easily in conventional understandings of 'criminal justice'. Moreover, services such as housing, education, health and child care have become significant players in the implementation of crime control policy while remaining external to the criminal justice system and they form part of a continuing debate around the scope of the term criminal justice that is little touched on in the book. There is room for further discussion of this aspect of change.

Overall, I think this book is important in drawing attention to the way that criminal justice policies and services in Britain have been influenced and altered by a governmental agenda that does not, in itself, originate in specific concerns about crime.

This marks the book out from much other work by criminologists. Despite its sometimes narrow approach, it will be useful as a resource for students wanting to find out about the way that specific elements of 'modernisation' have been applied to particular parts of the criminal justice system.

*David Prior, Institute of Applied Social Studies, University of Birmingham*

## **CRIMINAL IDENTITIES AND CONSUMER CULTURE: CRIME, EXCLUSION AND THE NEW CULTURE OF NARCISSISM**

**Hall, S., Winlow, S. and Ancrum, C. (2008).  
Cullompton: Willan. ISBN 978-1-84392-255-1**

This pioneering book is a major contribution to criminological scholarship. It possesses many strengths, not least of which is its trenchant theoretical insight into the motivations (conscious and unconscious) underpinning offending behaviour within the context of late capitalist consumer society.

Every criminology student knows that the British Crime Survey and recorded crime figures indicate that crime, overall, is consistently falling. That, however, may not be the whole story of crime in contemporary Britain. Any serious attempt to intervene with offenders who flourish under socially marginalised conditions must address not just the culture of liberal capitalism and the post-political neo-liberal state, but also the egoism and narcissism which suffuses advanced capitalist culture. Current fears of economic recession mean that this book, which outlines the brutality of existence and daily lived realities for those in economically dispossessed communities, is timely.

The data informing this work is rooted in a broad ethnographic study of criminal identities in the north-east of England. What renders this book particularly impressive is the quality of its ethnography, which is reflected in the intensity, persuasiveness and frankness of its interviews. No-one who reads this book will be surprised that Steve Hall lauds his co-authors Simon Winlow and Craig Ancrum as 'two of the best criminal ethnographers in the business'. In documenting 'life on the precipice' and providing a voice to the voiceless, they have performed an inestimable service not just to criminologists but to every criminal and community justice practitioner who seeks to understand their clients.

Those clients appear to constantly fantasise about another big drug deal, another offending opportunity, and wealth and riches which perpetually remain just around the corner, almost within reach. Whilst striving towards this fantasised end, they will engage

in brash, relentless and conspicuous consumption, ensuring that other community members do not fail to notice their 'success'.

In this fractured community, no shame is attached to offending. Life in socially marginalised communities is focused on not just the acquisition but the display of consumer symbolism. A researcher visits the home of a local drug dealer which is replete with expensive consumer items including:

'... at top of the range racing bike with all the accessories, an expensive crossbow, Xbox 360, Playstation 2, PSP, plasma TVs, home cinema systems, paintball equipment, a laptop computer, a huge Bose music system, a jetski parked in the yard...' (pg 33).

In the all-pervasive ethos of ornamental consumerism, offending is experienced as the product of the desire to be continually immersed in consumer indulgence. Reflecting the anxiety imposed by consumer culture, the dealer aims to convince the researcher that he is not a 'loser'. The only real ignominy and public dishonour for the interviewees is seen as being viewed by others as a 'skip-rat', 'no-mark' or 'Aldi basher'; that is, a member of the disposed urban poor who is so unconcerned with their own social status and sense of identity that they shop at discount stores. Even the everyday act of shopping is loaded with ramifications.

The only real ambition and aspiration for the interviewees was to achieve riches as a criminal, typically as a large-scale drug dealer, who is able to ostentatiously display that wealth to all by purchasing the desired consumer items. Any considerations of ethics, community or social conscience are not just irrelevant but confined to the legions of 'no-marks' and 'mugs' destined never achieve real riches. The interviews unconsciously echo Margaret Thatcher's famous injunction that there is 'There is no such thing as society'<sup>1</sup>. Working class and community roots are something to divest oneself and leave behind, rather than fight to maintain.

The sheer irrelevance of the criminal and community justice system for many of its clients is one of the many insights afforded by this groundbreaking book. Criminal justice intervention into the day to day lives of the interviewees is represented as an inconvenience, while intervention by probation staff appears to be not just irrelevant but mostly invisible. The authors provide a wealth of interview data, some of which is astonishingly frank, on the perceptions and experiences of poorer, socially marginalised offenders. They are portrayed as narcissistic and acquisitive individualists. The seductive attraction, for some, of violent offending and a lifestyle of crime are skilfully and faithfully delineated. It is utterly clear that the daily lived realities for many of those clients render the intervention offered by the 'What Works' agenda somewhat superfluous. Any practitioner who wants to fully understand the daily experiences of their socially marginalised clients needs to read this book.

Perceptions of intervention by the penal system are also instructive. One offender, discussing his six year prison sentence, views it as impediment to accumulating ever greater wealth in comparison to his peers, rather than an experience which either deters or rehabilitates:

'Not that jail bothers me, it's fuck all especially when you've got a few quid behind you, it's the poor divvies with fuck all that jail hurts. I had everything in the jail, loads of phone cards, nice food, radio, little telly, it was sound, but every cunt on the out was raking in the money' (pg 84).

The authors argue that if this is considered to be a one-dimensional portrayal, it is doing no more than accurately reflecting the absence of influential alternative socio-cultural institutions (for example, the educational system, organised religion, and community groups) on the global world view of their interviewees.

It is interesting that not a single one of the interviewees considers themselves to be victims of 'social exclusion', or views themselves as part of a social class which has been subjugated. Rather, they appear subsumed under the symbolism of consumer culture and the values of competitive individualism and entrepreneurialism. They are single-mindedly focused on obtaining symbols which both reflect their fantasised identities and define them as individuals. These symbols include key consumer artefacts (such as training shoes) which separate them from all the 'losers' and 'mugs' who surround them.

This is a challenging and rewarding work, not just because it sidesteps detailed analysis of criminal and community justice interventions to offer a more profound comprehension of how socially marginalised individuals experience life and understand their own offending.

This book is essential reading not just for students and academics but also for community justice practitioners who care about how their clients experience the criminal and community justice systems.

*Michael Teague, Senior Lecturer in Criminology, University of Teesside*

### **End Note**

1. 1987 Sep 23 Margaret Thatcher: Interview for Woman's Own ("no such thing as society") from <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=106689>

## **RAPE CRISIS: RESPONDING TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

**Jones, H. and Cook, K. Lyme Regis: Rusell House Publishing (2008) pp. 123, ISBN: 978-1-905541-27-0.**

After reading this comprehensive and detailed history of the 'enduringly powerful' Rape Crisis movement one is struck by the dedication and commitment of those activists involved in myriad ways in campaigning for and supporting the complex and needs of survivors of rape, most notably their struggle with the often deficient response of the formal criminal justice system over the last three decades. The lack of money and the alternative forms of provision, resulting in fragmentation and some uncertainty amongst those survivors in need of different types of support, as well as those offering it, have threatened the future of the non-hierarchical organisation. It is an important book that should be read by a wide audience, not least those practitioners whose work is affected by the sexual violence of men. Academics teaching and researching in the area of sexual violence should also find this book a very useful resource. Also, the authors are donating the royalties to Rape Crisis, so purchasing this book lends support to the much needed future of this organisation.

The book explores the impact of feminist thought on practice, demonstrating how theory and practice are intricately intertwined.

It succeeds in reinforcing the message that existing statutory arrangements in place for enhancing the health and well being of survivors are deficient and fundamentally flawed, and that without Rape Crisis the suffering and innumerable injustices experienced by many women would be far worse than they are presently. A painful reminder of this is that the attrition rate in rape cases, for example, is the worse it has ever been, and as a national average less than 6% of cases actually results in a successful conviction. Legislators and policy makers have invested intellectual and fiscal resources towards securing improvements to the formal criminal justice response to rape, but the deeply embedded structural causes of this offence and the obstacles prohibiting reform remain, apparently obdurate as ever. Helen Jones and Kate Cook are not directly concerned with these factors yet this contextual information is an important backdrop for appreciating the significance of what has been achieved by Rape Crisis.

The book comprises six chapters, supplemented by a glossary and very informative appendices. Chapter 1 starts in the most logical of places, outlining the origins of the Rape Crisis movement in the United States in 1972. Although acknowledging the variations existing between the American and British experience, principally the professionalism of the movement in the former context, the main focus is on the British

case. Not surprisingly, this part of the story commences in 1976 London, where the influence of second wave radical feminist values on the approach Rape Crisis adopts to its work are described. What is especially remarkable about this history is how the principles defining Rape Crisis have over the year spread outwards in the England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland, inspiring the creation of other bodies in the voluntary (e.g. Fawcett, YWCA, Amnesty, Zero Tolerance) and statutory sectors. According to chapter 5 some of these agencies complement Rape Crisis values whereas others go against their grain. In the statutory sector, for example, the emergence of Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) has been a particularly important development, because this model is the preferred option for the central government, yet its prioritisation of evidence gathering for criminal justice agencies is potentially restrictive.

Chapters 2 and 3 consider how the growth of Rape Crisis and changes in the wider external environment brought about some redefinition of the politics and ethical governance of the movement. A strength of these chapters is their incorporation of empirical work, drawing on interviews with three groups, to explore the concept of the 'living dynamic' to show the ways in which and how the directions taken by Rape Crisis are changeable and influenced by conflicting experiences and expectations. Despite there being a distinctive set of core values and principles, all directed towards bettering the quality of life of survivors of rape, the women participating in rape crisis are exposed to all kinds of pressures, on some occasions producing discomfort and stress. Added to this, as one would expect, are the pressures of ever dwindling finite resources. A powerful argument that emerges by the end of chapter 2 (and assessed further in chapter 5) is that the SARC model, because of its problematic orientation (mentioned above), makes life difficult for Rape Crisis because it does not adequately respond to the needs of some of the most vulnerable women in society. However, the authors are quite realistic about the position of Rape Crisis in relation to statutory agencies, stating in chapter 4 that to avoid assuming an 'isolationist' stance the movement must work in partnership with the 'mainstream', so long as it retains its own distinctive 'national voice' and 'brand' and is not co-opted. The mainstream does pose a threat to the values of Rape Crisis, yet there are opportunities too, depending on the orientation of the movement. This has been far from straightforward, though, because as Chapter 4 shows a national framework was, problematically, absent before the 1990s yet equally challenging when one was created in the form of the Rape Crisis Federation. When this body was closed in 2003 ideological disputes were still evidenced, but these could actually weaken its viability. There is a clear need for Rape Crisis to respond to local issues although it does need a national identity to ensure funding is secured for future work.

The concluding chapter (6) contemplates the uncertain future of Rape Crisis in England and Wales, not least the fact that there are relatively few groups remaining. One indomitable strength is the politics of the movement and its activist stance in theoretical and practical domains. It is suggested that anti-rape work is a collective activity, which reveals the imbalance of power in wider society, which marginalises concern with the structured nature of male violence against women. One challenge is to ensure Rape Crisis

has a more evenly distributed geographical presence and that it creates more effective coalitions, alliances and networks. Regarding the latter it is necessary to be mindful of the dangers of Rape Crisis values being co-opted or distorted. Unsurprisingly, adequate funding is key, whether these resources are secured from mainstream or independent sources. Rape Crisis needs to be more vocal, using the media and internet to publicise its vital work. What this important book does is make an indispensable contribution towards ensuring that the name Rape Crisis stays 'enduringly powerful' as it campaigns for and protects women from violent men and the ideological and institutionalised failures of criminal justice agencies.

*Chris Crowther-Dowey, Senior Lecturer in Criminology, Nottingham Trent University*