

BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by Rose Parkes, Senior Lecturer in Community and Criminal Justice, De Montfort University

SOCIOLOGY FOR SOCIAL WORKERS AND PROBATION OFFICERS

*Cree, V. (ed.) (1999) 2nd edition, London: Routledge. pp.272 (pbk) £26.99
ISBN 978-0-415-15016-3*

Cree offers a well-crafted and accessible introduction to sociological theory. The first chapter introduces definitions and perspectives and the following seven chapters address key concepts. Included are focused accounts of frameworks that structure the social environment. Obvious contenders like 'family' and 'community' are joined by 'health and illness', and 'crime and deviance'. Each chapter follows the same template: an introduction to the concept; some theoretical tools for study; and links between theory and practice.

The section on gender is particularly strong, presenting an even-handed picture of feminist positions. The text book is written explicitly to show the usefulness of 'thinking sociologically', of placing personalised understanding in a social context. This move is examined explicitly in the preface and in the final chapter, where Cree offers ways of integrating sociological thinking into practice.

Perhaps the most attractive part of this book is Cree's unwavering and unhidden belief that understanding the social world, and using the conceptual tools offered by sociology, helps practitioners to work. It is an ambitious project. Recognising that both sociology and social work 'may be regarded as an integral part of the process through which society investigates, controls and manages (or, to use Foucault's terminology, 'disciplines') its citizens' (p.6) is not comfortable. Without this understanding, Cree argues, social workers run the risk of perpetuating oppression and discrimination. Working from this stance to offer a comprehensible account of theory is a challenge well-answered. Cree is interested in how concepts develop over time and in discursive explanations. Her approach in the book is based on broad questions paraphrased from Foucault (Cree, 1995). These questions frame the link between structural explanations and individual actions that can be hard to bring into practice situations. I found her explanations of major approaches compelling; from Marx to Rousseau, from identity politics to the post modern turn, the short entries are consistent, clear and readable.

It is hard to find fault with what is in this book but, despite the title, probation officers are not well served here. There is almost no mention of probation work or workers and, worse, some comments could be inimical. For example, she comments that the use of the term 'offender' could be seen as discriminatory (p.173). This may be true but is unhelpful to practitioners whose organisational structure demands the use of the word. Omissions are everywhere; the section on family does not look at criminal or criminalised families, the section on community looks at gender, sexuality, age and disability, but not offending. It could be expected that probation work would come into its own in the section on crime and deviance. Here, there is a useful overview of deviance, but no discussion of offending. The probation service is mentioned in the implications for practice box, bracketed with social work as a 'social control agency' (p.197). While this statement is in some senses true, it totally leaves out the relative positions of the agencies in current policy and practice.

Cree herself spent 16 years in social work practice. In the preface she locates herself personally and reflectively (p.xii) and discusses changes in the role of social workers and training over the last 20 years. During the same timeframe, probation training has separated from social work training and the service has undergone a step-change towards punishment rather than care. The service is teamed with custodial workers, not social workers. A social work degree is not a 'relevant degree' for entry into the service any more. This does not mean that social work practice and probation practice require different skills, but that the context in which those skills are practiced is different. Trainee probation officers are exploring case work in a political climate that unapologetically prioritises control. To write a book aimed at these trainees without exploring this is, I think, to miss the point.

This leaves me with a dilemma. I would like trainee probation officers to read this book. I would like them to explore the underlying value system that demands good practitioners move past individual case work and explore social explanations for behaviour. There are other books that attempt this: Knepper (2007) 'Criminology and Social Policy' or, in broader context, Craig, Burchardt & Gordon (2008) 'Social Justice and Public Policy' both spring to mind. Yet neither of these contenders offers the clear and concise introduction to *thinking* in a sociological way that Cree offers. So I will put the book on reading lists and recommend it to trainee probation officers, but I will do this with an apologetic feeling that I am letting them down as only some will be able to benefit from the practice lessons offered. More will feel excluded by a book that labels itself as suitable for probation officers but does not offer them an inclusive experience.

References

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- Knepper, P. (2007) *Criminology and Social Policy*, London: Sage.
- Craig G., Burchardt, T. and Gordon, D. (2008) *Social justice and public policy: seeking fairness in diverse societies*, Bristol: Policy Press.

Dr Clare Beckett, Senior Lecturer/Programme Leader Diploma in Probation Studies, University of Bradford

REBUILDING LIVES AFTER DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: UNDERSTANDING LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

**Abrahams, H. (2010), London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. pp.208 (pbk)
£18.99 ISBN 978-1-84310-961-7**

This newly published book by Hilary Abrahams makes a very distinctive contribution to the growing literature on victims of domestic violence with the following claim:

This is the first study since the late 1970s to follow women from the refuge into their new lives, and the only one to cover such an extended period[...]It is unique in offering contemporary factual evidence on the long-term effects of domestic violence and abuse and of women's needs in areas such as housing, health and employment. (p.1-2)

Not only does this book deliver on this assertion but it also bears testament to the fortitude and courage of the women who participated in the study, as well as offering practical guidance and insights for those who work directly, or indirectly, with victims of domestic violence.

The research consisted of interviewing 22 women who had previously been involved in two earlier enquiries; these previous studies looked at the immediate consequences on those who had just left an abusive relationship. The research methods and practical, as well as the ethical, issues are clearly explained in detail in the appendices. It is noted that, although there were differences in the respective women's experiences, they were united by shared experiences. Moreover, Abrahams counters any criticism which could be made that these particular experiences lack broader relevance by making links with wider research findings. However, it is significant that the individual experiences are privileged over and above the more general findings, as some of the aims of the book are to celebrate the achievements of the women involved in the study and provide inspiration for others.

Chapter One looks at the issues related to how and why women leave abusive relationships. It highlights that women experience low self-esteem and 'diminishing horizons', which can restrict their options. It also makes links with Maslow's hierarchy of needs and charts the difficulties of meeting these needs. In regards to theoretical developments, this study is not ground-breaking, but the chapter comes into its own in relating this to the women's own experiences of leaving home and seeking a new life. It vividly highlights the pervasive emotional ambivalence around leaving an abusive relationship. It lucidly conveys the emotional enormity at stake in deciding to leave the home and offers a robust challenge to the question 'why don't they just leave?'. The chapter ends with a summary of the key points, which lends itself ideally for training purposes.

The later chapters follow a similar structure and pattern: a general introduction to the topic, the foregrounding of the experiences of the participants, and a summary of the general points. Chapter Two identified the practical as well as the emotional obstacles to

be addressed in the pursuit of a new home and Chapter Three leads onto the significance of establishing various support systems for both short-term and long-term needs. What is interesting to note in this section is how favourably police intervention has been appreciated in comparison with other agencies. It stands in positive contrast to previous research findings and may be indicative of improved developments in police training and practice.

Chapter Four examines how the women began to fashion links within the community and establish new social ties and Chapter Five identifies how this moves into 'managing a new life'. This particular section brings home the long-term consequences of abuse as a significant number of women have to (re)learn what it means to exercise a greater degree of independence and autonomy. It is in this section that the attempt for some women to enter an educational environment is recorded. It is a salutary message as it is identified as one of the most obdurate of obstacles they face. It is even more concerning as these difficulties were encountered prior to the current cuts in higher education funding.

Chapters Six and Seven, respectively, identify the significance of the women's health and overall well-being, both for themselves and their children. This highlights some interesting points, for example, in regards to health, it identified the multiple and complex needs the participants still had to contend with long after leaving their abusive relationships. In connection with their well-being, for the majority of the women this was inextricably bound-up with caring for their children as their sense of motherhood was easily the most dominant aspect of their life.

The final two chapters record the experience of participating in the study which encompasses both the existential/internal changes, as well as the practical developments. The final chapter arguably brings together the central thread which runs throughout the entire book: it offers a 'message of new life' as it stands as a testament to women as survivors. In rebuilding their lives as well as providing guidance for those who are directly experiencing such abuse, and for those who are in a position to assist.

In conclusion, although this book does not offer any new theoretical insights into the experience of domestic abuse, it does provide a better understanding of the long-term needs and experiences of victims. Moreover, it provided practical and challenging advice for other agencies to try and meet these needs. As is made clear in the introduction, the aims of this research had three aspects:

to identify the needs of women after leaving the refuge, help to identify any gaps in service provision and assist the development of services structured to meet the long-term needs of women and their families. (p.12)

It also seeks to make a simple but very powerful and important point, that it is more cost-effective in the long-term to provide some support, usually at a 'low level', than to provide no support at all. The untended long-term problems can, and do, result in far greater social costs. This point has taken on far greater significance at the time of completing this review because the cuts in service provision to support woman who are abused have

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become so severe it has prompted Denise Marshall, Chief Executive of the Eaves charity, which supports women who have been abused, to return her OBE in protest at the reduction in funding. How workers can meet this in the light of the austerity measures being imposed on these services is, arguably, the subject of another study.

Tom Considine, Senior Lecturer in Criminology, University of Huddersfield.

RELATIONSHIP-BASED SOCIAL WORK

Ruch, G., Turney, D, & Ward, A. (eds.) (2010). London: Jessica Kingsley. pp.272 (pbk) £19.99 ISBN 978-184905003-6

This book is a well-structured look at the place of relationships in social work practice and examines the theoretical base as well as the need for training in, supervision of, and reflection on, its use.

The opening chapters by Gillian Ruch and Adrian Ward are well-argued and enlightening, locating the theories of relationship-based work in an historical context, and contextualising the discussions that follow. The links to reflective practice are many and offer sound advice to social work students trying to locate 'self-awareness' in social work and, more explicitly, in reflective practice. The editors' discussion of the ambiguous nature of social work, 'Social Work occupies an ambivalent social space' (p.22), will help the desired 'light-bulb' moment looked for, in my experience of teaching, in this subject area. The book also develops the why's and how's of there being 'no right answer' to service users' problems, and how a sound knowledge of relationships can help with working in 'Schon's (1983) swampy lowlands'. Adrian Ward's note that 'I am suggesting that this is more of an art than a science, more a question of growth and development, rather than merely training' (p.64) sums up, for me, the need for a fluid approach to working from such a perspective.

The next section of the book moves into a series of contributor discussions around the place, and use, of relationships in practice. Chapter Four gives clear evidence of how the understanding of relationships can be used in drawing out information from vulnerable service users and disaffected clients. This aspect provides reference to sound transferable practice skills for working in high-risk situations, such as child abuse cases. However, I felt there was a missed opportunity in the lack of discussion of the evidence from research in such situations, which underpins empowering practice when working with involuntary clients.

Kohli and Dutton's links to short-term work gives added breadth to the use of relationships in brief work where they may often be seen as less important because of the time-limited nature of the intervention. They additionally draw in and provide an anti-managerial argument applicable to child protection when they note, 'there is a danger that with families on the move colliding with professionals making haste, little is made into too much and that too much is left invisible and compressed into too little' (p.101). In my view, they draw out culturally-competent practice, although it is not named as such, with diverse ethnic groups, refugees and asylum seekers.

Chapters Six, Seven and Eight then move into working with strong feelings and the emotional costs of working with service users whose behaviours can be unexpected and, very often, intimidating. These chapters draw out issues from risk assessment to reciprocity, although the debate was not as clearly delineated as in previous sections in making a case for relationship-based practice. However, the links to understanding the

possible pitfalls in this side of the work do include and develop the theme of self-awareness as being as important as an awareness of service users' agendas.

Chapter Nine deals with long-term relationships and the necessity of clear professional boundaries that nonetheless allow 'love' to be expressed appropriately. Chapter Ten covers the issue of 'endings start with beginnings' and makes some sound points that, once again, were applicable to other ways of addressing and applying skills of honesty and consistency. Chapter Twelve allowed service users to 'speak for themselves' and modelled a respect that social workers can emulate, as generally this chapter allowed service users to 'speak' without too great a commentary about their input into the associated research project.

Chapter Thirteen drew in supervisory relationships and laid the foundation, in my view, for Chapter Fourteen's look at the future of social work in multi-disciplinary teams and the associated difficulty of maintaining a clear professional identity in modern practice.

This is a book that will have a resonance with both social work lecturers teaching reflective practice to students and the students themselves, especially those struggling with its difficult concepts alongside their placements, where ambiguity reigns. In some ways, I feel the chance to develop counter-arguments to an unthinking adherence to evidence-based practice and risk-averse child protection practice has been missed, although it is touched on in many parts of the book. This, of itself, would not stop me recommending it as a very helpful supplementary book to a range of other texts used on professional programmes. Due to the complexity of relationship-based social work, I am left feeling that it is most appropriate for final year students who should have developed the level of self-awareness and insight to make the best use of the content. However, this book could equally be applicable to unqualified workers, especially in those areas of practice where a balanced view of relationships should underpin more objective assessment. Last, I am, perhaps, a mite disappointed that, whilst alluding to the importance of challenging a managerialist agenda, this was not developed in greater depth.

Courtney Jones, Visiting Lecturer in Social Work, University of Bedfordshire

PROTECTING THE PUBLIC? DETECTION AND RELEASE OF MENTALLY DISORDERED OFFENDERS

**Boyd-Caine, T. (2010). Cullompton: Willan Publishing. pp.202 (hbk) £39.50
ISBN 978-1-84392-527-9**

This book provides a focused approach to UK and Australian policy issues regarding mentally disordered offenders, with insights from practitioners and related professionals. It is a considered approach that allows the reader to become familiar with the everyday intricacies and challenges of working with mentally disordered offenders. The book is written in a comprehensive way to allow non-experts in the field to grasp the main ideas and concepts. The efforts to combine academic sources with policy inform knowledge about how processes should and actually do operate.

The book begins with an exploration of legislation and the way executive discretion informs the process. The distinction, for example, of the difference between judicial and political functions offers an explanation on policy variations and practices. The argument progresses from detainees to prisoners to patients, drawing from previous literature, which explores the way the law rules on the person. The use of examples from Australia and the UK add to the understanding of the process and help develop a comparative narrative between policy issues in different countries. Ultimately, this may be overly ambitious and possibly confounds understanding of the population at hand.

Then the focus switches to methodological issues relevant to data collection and the conceptualisation of theoretical ideas. As such, this chapter lays the foundations for exploration of the area at large. The difficulty, for example, of having a common term that refers to all mentally disordered offenders is confusing, as they are not a homogenous group and each of their conditions has different clinical foundations and requirements. The focus on policy analysis informs the methodological framework and transforms policy, legislation and other documents into data. These, along with the author's interviews, generate a qualitative narrative that puts the people working with mentally disordered offenders firmly in the centre of the analysis.

Further on in the book, attention is placed on the operations of a Mental Health Unit and the dual responsibilities of officials are explored. These are identified as executive discretion and maintenance of the system's reputation. This distinction allows the reader to understand administrative responsibilities between praxis and structure. Executive decisions, and relationships between contributing factions in the wider area of working with mentally disordered offenders, are also investigated. For instance, the relationship between the Home Office Mental Health Unit and the Mental Health Review Tribunal acts as a demonstration of cooperation (or lack of) between interested parties. The relationship between various 'actors' involved in the mental health care system identifies levels of satisfaction and acceptance of the system itself.

Chapter Five is the one that addresses the title of the book. It explores the impact of public opinion and public interest in policy and practice. This facet of research, according to the author, of exploring public issues has previously never been investigated

empirically. There are two obvious issues; who are the public and how are they responded to, by the professionals, working in the area of mental health? This section is informed by several anecdotes and extracts from various 'actors', who help to provide an insightful view as to the way in which professionals respond to the public.

Following on, the author addresses the difficult task among policy makers and other professionals working in the mental health field, to provide adequate public protection while considering the rights of the patients. The question here is: which group of people should take priority over the other? Arguably, not all professionals in the field see the protection of the rights for both groups as mutually exclusive.

The pre-existing legislative framework provides a clear mandate for the protection of the public. However, the European Convention on Human Rights focuses on the rights and welfare of the patients. In this legal minefield, 'actors' are required to produce coherent policy, which responds to both legal frameworks. The author suggests the way to address the issue is to interpret all legal requirements in a way that is not mutually exclusive. This however, does not resolve the potential conflict between different organisations when different agents within the system follow different mandates. This is one of the key themes this book focuses a great deal of attention on.

In the final chapter, the author summarises the main points of the book. This implicit balance, between patients' rights on one end and the protection of the public on the other, reveals the systemic problems in the way mental health policy is pursued.

This is a very relevant and up-to-date book for those interested in the way managerial procedures inform practice within the field of mental health. More critically, this is quite an ambitious book, arguably trying to do too many things at the same time. It appears to go into a number of different areas and attempts to collect views from various different 'actors' in the system. It is informative and the primary data used provide an insider's view to a heavily-guarded and protected area of public policy.

Manos Daskalou, Senior Lecturer, University of Northampton

OFFENDER SUPERVISION: NEW DIRECTIONS IN THEORY, RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

McNeill, F., Raynor, P. & Trotter, C. (eds.) (2010). Collumpton: Willan. pp.584 (pbk) £29.95 ISBN 978-1843929352

This edited collection is a series of papers produced by a group of academics with an interest in the concept and practice of offender supervision. The book is edited by Fergus McNeill, Peter Raynor and Chris Trotter and, in their introduction, they chart the development of the international network of researchers and academics who have collaborated, encouraged each other's thinking and worked together to produce the book.

This is a substantial book and its 26 chapters offer a variety of perspectives on the business of offender supervision. Part One provides theoretical underpinning for the subsequent debate. Bonta and Andrews outline the Risk-Needs-Responsivity model, Ward sets out the Good Lives Model, and Maruna and LeBel write about the importance of desistance in correctional practice. These chapters provide useful, accessible and, at least for a while, current accounts of the concepts and ideas that are shaping thinking about rehabilitation and offender supervision.

The book draws on a number of research studies and projects to make its case. Part Two includes a chapter by Raynor, Ugwudike and Vanstone, reporting on their study of the practice skills (including communication, use of authority, pro-social modelling, problem-solving and the making of referrals) of probation officers in Jersey. Trotter and Evans write about researching similar themes in the practice of juvenile justice workers in New South Wales, Australia. Both chapters make valuable observations about the process of researching the people skills of professionals, for example, explaining how the researchers constructed tools to use in the analysis of observed practice. Both chapters also argue that paying attention to the quality of individual supervision of offenders should be part of the development of effective practice.

The chapters in Part Three of the book consider contrasting ways in which offender supervision may be improved. Topics covered include the role of assessment tools, the importance of organisational culture and the scope for increasing the involvement of sentencers in the process. Durrance, Hosking and Thorburn write about the development and delivery of a structured programme for one-to-one supervision within London Probation. Their chapter raises some interesting questions for practitioners and managers to consider. The programme was generally well-received by both staff and offenders. Offenders commented positively on the material and the chance that the one-to-one programme gave to discuss individual problems and needs. Staff who were supervised and observed in their delivery of the programme benefited from this additional input and support. The authors ask whether the degree of structured input and framework for staff development achieved by this programme should be a routine feature of offender supervision.

The chapters in Part Four of the book address the significance of families, friends and the wider community in offender supervision. This section of the book is particularly

interesting to read from a UK-based perspective. Current offender management practice in England and Wales makes little systematic use of resources offered by offenders' families and by the wider community. These chapters offer a variety of case studies illustrating the potential benefits that come with taking account of the significant influences on and support available to an individual offender.

Part Five of the book brings the important reminder that engaging individuals in the process of supervision is a complex task. Securing compliance with orders and licences requires more than simply setting a firm framework of penalties for breach. Robinson and McNeill develop some existing ideas about compliance (from the areas of both criminal justice and personal taxation) and offer a dynamic model of compliance. This model has important implications for policy and practice; it highlights the need for an enforcement regime that is flexible enough to respond to the individual offender's attitude and approach to supervision.

Part Six brings together a number of chapters with historical and political perspectives on offender supervision. Gelsthorpe, Raynor and Robinson, drawing on Probation Service court reports from different periods of the service's history, chart the changes in the way that defendants are portrayed to sentencers and discuss the extent to which these changes reflect the broader policy and political changes to the business of offender supervision. Nellis provides an account of the less than enthusiastic adoption of the electronic monitoring of offenders in England and Wales. He considers its use in other jurisdictions and asks whether it could play a more creative and integrated role as part of offender management.

Taken together this is a comprehensive, readable and well-informed collection of essays. It is the case, as the editors acknowledge, that there is an Anglophone bias to the contributions, with the vast majority of chapters reflecting the practice of offender supervision in the UK, North America and Australia. However, for anyone concerned with the supervision of offenders and wider issues of offender management and effective practice, the book offers a strong introduction to the key concepts and perspectives as well as many policy and practice insights. I would recommend the book to academics, criminal justice managers and practitioners; I have made good use of my review copy as I plan teaching materials for students training to be probation officers.

Jane Dominey, Programme Leader Probation Programmes, Principal Lecturer, De Montfort University

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN PRISONS

Scott, D. & Codd, H. (2010). Maidenhead: Open University Press. pp.xiv,208 (pbk) £22.99 ISBN 9780335223039

This book is something of a 'call to arms'. Eschewing conventional, media-inspired understandings of prison; most likely to identify escapes, riots, in-cell television, or holiday camp conditions as the most controversial issues in prisons; it focuses on the use of imprisonment by 'advanced capitalist-patriarchal society' as a primary means of controlling the poor and marginalised. The book starts by rooting penal controversies in principles of human rights and social justice, and ends by questioning the moral legitimacy of prison itself. To arrive at this point, the authors assess the destructive impact of prison on the people disproportionately processed by it. They discuss those with mental health problems, women, children and young people, black or minority ethnic groups and foreign nationals, as well as some of the deleterious effects of imprisonment (including the propensity of prisoners to commit suicide and self-harm). They examine the limitations of institutionally-based psycho-medical models of rehabilitation, particularly in relation to people who sexually offend. Consideration is also given to prisoners that resort to drug-taking and the disruption caused to prisoners' families. In academic circles at least much of this is well-known, but this is not simply a re-analysis of the 'pains' or 'penal harm' of imprisonment, although a wealth of references, statistics, case studies and footnotes is provided to this end. Rather, it sets out to challenge the very existence of prison and reformulate arguments for its abolition.

Each controversy is analysed according to a common structure. First, consideration is given to how each is conceived and defined, and the problems and misconceptions which accrue from this. For example, mental health is mostly conceived as a physical illness, which denies its social dimension; similarly, racism is regarded in individual or institutional terms, which negates the wider significance of power and social inequality. Second, the limitations of official data are outlined. This highlights how differences in definition or methodology interpret the scale of particular issues in different ways. For example, mental health problems in prisons are over-estimated when drug and alcohol dependency is categorised as a mental health issue; alternatively, owing to the unreliability of the testing measures used and the tendency of prisoners to successfully subvert the tests, prisoners' drug-taking is much higher than official figures suggest. Third, the historical context of each controversy is described. The consistent failure to end, for good, penal practices which are inherently harmful makes for sober reading. Throughout the 19th century, the high number of deaths in prison left the prison authorities perplexed, but today, it is put down to increases in mentally-disordered prisoners and changes in staff working practices. In many respects, the life story of 15 years old Edward Andrews, who hanged himself in 1854 after being made to turn the crank 10,000 times a day, does not apply to the contemporary experience of imprisonment. Yet, notwithstanding changes in regime, the authors' point that 'prison has always been deadly' (p.99) is forcibly made. Finally, the legitimacy of present day penal policy is called into question. The conclusions are uniformly damning: the imprisonment of women is 'nothing less than systematic sexualized abuse' (p.50); children and young people 'are being scarified in the name of political rhetoric' (p.69); 'the treatment of foreign nationals is at times nothing short of

appalling' (p.86); and 'the penal apparatus of the Capitalist State has blood on its hands' (p.106).

So what is to be done? In the two chapters that book-end the analysis, the authors set their stall out. Rather than construct an argument for the amelioration of prison conditions - a misguided response to the damage prison does to prisoners which, they claim, merely serves to prop up a failing institution - the book is concerned to lay bare the deep structural fault-lines of 'a prison place that is inherently harmful and systematically undermines human dignity' (p.12). The policy prescription advocated is 'selective abolitionism', the deliberate exclusion from prison of vulnerable people in need of help - those with mental health problems, women, children, immigration offenders, and people with suicidal ideation. Although this is thought to constitute a credible strategy for reducing the prison population, the authors are careful to note that considered in the wider economic, social and political context of contemporary capitalism, selective abolition alone is not sufficient to challenge the underlying punitive rationale of imprisonment, particularly as focusing on vulnerable groups is likely to mean 'that the sufferings of those who do not fit easily within its construction of vulnerabilities are ignored' (p.166).

The criticism often levelled at the abolitionist agenda is that it is publicly and, therefore, politically implausible. Progress is dependent on changing 'common-sense' understandings of imprisonment derived from everyday life experience and the popular media, which often refuse to even entertain the notion that prisons are illegitimate. A key aim of the book is to challenge the widespread 'penological illiteracy' which maintains this detrimental state of affairs. The authors set their sights widely. Indeed, specific criticism is levelled at liberal penal reform organisations for working too closely with prisons and, thereby, being 'co-opted into maintaining the status quo' (p.168); (I should perhaps admit to some previous in this regard myself. For six years I was Deputy Director of the Prison Reform Trust. I remember once asking the formidable and now, sadly, deceased Director of Women in Prison, Chris Tchaikovsky, to contribute a chapter to a pamphlet I was editing at the time entitled 'Constructive Prison Regimes'. 'There's no such thing', she snapped, 'prisons are only ever destructive'; although being the person she was she wrote the piece anyway, departing from the brief, naturally).

Towards the end of this carefully-researched and well-argued book there is an exhortation to 'step out', 'be brave', and Scott and Codd have, indeed, written a brave book which deserves to be read widely; not only for the detailed analysis it unfolds on the toxic effects of prison, but also for the energy and passion they bring to bear in exploding the many myths which support its continued use.

Dr. Nick Flynn, Senior Lecturer in Applied Criminology, De Montfort University

DRUG INTERVENTIONS IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Hucklesby, A. & Wincup, E. (eds.) (2010) Maidenhead: McGraw Hill / Open University Press. pp.236 (pbk) £23.99 ISBN 978-0-33523-581-0

Drug-related crime is an important policy issue for politicians, policy makers and practitioners in the UK and internationally and, in recent years, there have been significant innovative shifts towards the development of services for drug users drawn into the criminal justice system. These services have the primary intention of accessing individuals, whose criminal activity and subsequent processing through the criminal justice system is directly related to problematic drug use, and linking them into treatment services. In recent years, interventions have been introduced at key points from arrest to imprisonment with resources directed at both community and custodial settings. With the recognition that a reduction in crime is associated with a reduction in drug use (Gossop *et al.*, 2001), it has been considered appropriate to invest in treatment interventions as a way of addressing drug-related crime; a feature that has become embedded in successive drug policies.

This edited book consists of eight chapters based on key points of intervention with drug users throughout the criminal justice system, from arrest to aftercare; a section on further resources is also provided. Most of the chapters are based on evaluations, largely commissioned by government agencies and generally applicable to England and Wales, although chapters by Gill McIvor ('Drug Courts: lessons from the UK and beyond') and Alex Stevens ('Treatment sentences for drug users: contexts, mechanisms and outcomes') usefully locate current initiatives within an international context. The contributors have first-hand experience of conducting research on interventions for drug users and approach the issues from a criminological/criminal justice perspective. A chapter by Hucklesby and Wincup ('Researching Drug Interventions in Criminal Justice') sets the scene for the discussions that follow.

The book is of dual interest. On one level, the findings and implications of the studies on which the chapters are based are presented and discussed; each chapter reviews the impact and effectiveness of one or more intervention. By bringing these reflective discussions together, there is an opportunity to obtain an overview of the inter-relating (or not) aspects of recent and current interventions, and some indication of the complex and ever-shifting nature of the management of responses, notably the Drug Interventions Programme (DIP), introduced in an attempt to bring together many of the initiatives discussed throughout the book (see the chapter by Turnbull and Skinnis, 'Drug Interventions Programme: Neither Success nor Failure?').

Of equal interest are the reflections on how researchers and practitioners try to make sense of the nonsensical in order to meet the ongoing demands of funders and governments in their search for evidence of 'effectiveness'. The book provides an opportunity for the authors to reflect on the methodologies employed and some of the practical (occasionally philosophical) challenges of conducting research in this area; indeed, some question marks overhang the certainty of findings which aim to evidence the 'effectiveness' of drug interventions in the criminal justice system. Interestingly, they

highlight the limitations of our knowledge in this area. The evidence in this area is challenging and sometimes inconclusive, and a range of reviews have usefully drawn attention to the problems experienced in conducting and interpreting research carried out in the area of drug interventions in the criminal justice system (notably Holloway *et al.*, 2005; McSweeney *et al.*, 2008). Studies continually illustrate the incomparability of interventions due to the different methodologies used, distinct timeframes and, indeed, challenges in identifying and/or obtaining data for comparative populations, in addition to gaps in data-collection systems relating to service provision and subsequent follow-up (notably in relation to levels of drug use and reconviction rates). Many of these points could equally be applied to evaluations of criminal justice interventions more generally, where innovative initiatives are often short-term, with little opportunity to provide longitudinal data on the longer-term impact.

The 'dynamic' policy agenda which underpins the implementation and delivery of drug interventions in criminal justice has implications for practitioners and policy makers attempting to provide 'effective' services, but also for researchers and research teams attempting to evaluate the impact of these interventions. Attention is also given to the theory and practice of 'partnership working'. 'Drug Interventions in Criminal Justice' usefully brings thoughtful considerations of a range of research studies together in a coherent and structured way. It engages with the challenges of 'coerced' intervention and provides some fascinating insights into the murky waters that lie beneath 'effective' interventions. Indeed, the content of this book, without doing so directly, provides some impetus for those advocating the need for drug policy to take a broader social contextualisation of drug use and responses to it (e.g. Buchanan, 2010); a context that is often overlooked when interventions are designed and implemented.

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Margaret S. Malloch, Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research, University of Stirling.