

BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by David Phillips, Sheffield Hallam University

CRIME REDUCTION AND COMMUNITY SAFETY: LABOUR AND THE POLITICS OF LOCAL CRIME CONTROL

Gilling, D. (2007) Cullompton: Willan pp 265 pbk, ISBN: 978-1-84392-251-3, £19.5

In this book Daniel Gilling charts out New Labour's crime reduction and community safety strategy over its first ten years in office. Looking closely at the policies and practices that have shaped New Labour's 'third way' he manages to weave a coherent narrative through what could easily be described as a mind-boggling array of legislative and policy initiatives. This is no mean feat. Pulling together the seemingly disparate strands of New Labour's approach to crime control Gilling demonstrates his ability to marshal a vast array of material to explore the conditions, limits and paradoxes inherent in the New Labour project.

The book is split into seven manageable chapters that tackle distinctive themes. Chapter 1 provides the broad introduction, outlining the discussion to come as well as raising some important political and policy-making constraints that have influenced the development of crime reduction and community safety under New Labour. Chapter 2 then begins a systematic review of New Labour which reminds us of the core motifs of New Labour. Evidence-based policy, the third way, joined-up practice and new public management are succinctly outlined as key ingredients for understanding crime reduction and community safety. Chapter 3 then begins by considering the crime prevention legacy New Labour inherited from the Conservatives in 1997 had how this evolved under Blair's first term in office into the crime reduction programme. Here Gilling begins to debate in earnest the early tensions in the New Labour project – the battle between a managerial doctrine and a community strategy of civic renewal.

Chapter 4 continues this debate by looking at New Labour's second term in which it sought to reform both policing and local government; confirming them both as the key responsible agencies in the crime and disorder reduction partnerships. The upshot of this

phase was a gradual shift from crime reduction to community safety. The increasing emphasis on anti-social behaviour and localised problems birthed a community safety approach which included social exclusion, employment, leisure activities and neighbourhood renewal as central to tackling crime. In Chapter 5 Gilling addresses the reasons behind New Labour's focus on anti-social behaviour, arguing that the primary political drive for this focus was to address public anxieties about 'nuisance neighbours' and further invest a communitarian inspired neo-liberal ethos on individual responsibility and the civil society.

Chapter 6 develops this theme further, analysing the moral authoritarianism which underpins New Labour's approach to addressing both crime and social exclusion. The increasing focus on the depravities of a criminogenic underclass and their moral bankruptcy signify to Gilling a deeply flawed and 'impoverished' understanding of the causes of crime and how to address them. It is here and in his concluding chapter that he most effectively refutes the New Labour project; drawing together academic debate and policy initiatives to comprehensively deny a market driven, employment based and responsabilising approach to achieving inclusion. He argues that this approach belies a fundamental contradiction between the neo-liberal value to freedom and the need for government intrusion for this freedom to be achieved. Community safety under New Labour has therefore failed to offer a more socially just society, instead bolstering hegemonic neo-liberalism by further abandoning structural inequalities as relevant to any vision of either the 'good' society or its poor cousin the 'low-crime' society.

This is a good book with much to recommend it. Whilst reading it I found myself turning the corners of many pages (a terrible habit!) that I wanted to return to for one reason or another. It sits well alongside Hughes (2007) text 'The Politics of Crime and Community' and follows nicely on from Crawford's (1997) 'The Local Governance of Crime' as well as Gilling's (1997) earlier text 'Crime Prevention'. It will and should be useful to a wide audience of readers ranging from students of both criminology and politics through to academics, practitioners and policy-makers working in the field of community safety.

Yet I do have a couple of irritations with this text. The first is that it is more impenetrable than I think it needs to be. A fuller contents page and more subheadings would have made this text more accessible and more readable. The earlier chapters are reminiscent of some of Paul Rock's weighty chronicles (by no means a criticism) and given the number of abbreviations and policy discussions I think that this material could easily have been presented in a more 'bite-sized' style that would allow the reader to navigate through it more easily. Similarly, if you want to get to the more 'juicy' critical bits they are not well signposted and will require a certain amount of hunting to discover.

My second irritation with this book is that whilst it builds a strong critique of New Labour it doesn't seem to go anywhere, ending on what feels like a rather pessimistic note. Wasted opportunity, neo-liberalism gone mad and impossible contradictions is where this book finishes. I would have liked to have seen some crumb of comfort, some speculations about

more positive future directions, some policy or perspective that proffered an alternative. Given that the Conclusion's title is 'The Road to Where?' it would have been good if Gilling had managed to signpost at least a path or two less bleak than the road to nowhere he finally takes. In this book Gilling had a wonderful opportunity to begin to shape the future direction of policy under the next government. For a book that is as politically astute as this one it seems like a huge wasted opportunity and a tactical mistake of some proportion for Gilling not to have begun a debate about possible future strategies of crime reduction and community safety.

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RAISING THE BAR: PREVENTING AGGRESSION IN AND AROUND BARS, PUBS AND CLUBS

Graham, K. and Homel, R. (2008) Cullumpton: Willan. ISBN 978-1-84392-318-3 £36.00 hbk.

The expansion in leisure culture and the considerable growth of the night-time economy are significant features of late modern societies. Economically motivated policies aimed at regenerating towns and cities have resulted in the proliferation of drinking establishments, assisted by the liberalisation of licensing laws. Consequently, cosmopolitan and increasingly feminised 'brandsapes' dominate many urban centres. The geographical propinquity of such establishments has facilitated greater levels of patronage, principally by young adults, who dominate city centres at weekends. This, in turn, has spawned homogenised global drinking patterns throughout much of the western world.

Opposition to this growth in the night-time economy has emphasised the deleterious effects of pubs and clubs, which are filled with heavily intoxicated revellers whose binge drinking often carries violent and anti-social consequences. Yet political and media discourse habitually propagates a simplistic pharmacological causal relationship between alcohol consumption and violence and aggression in and around bars, pubs and clubs.

Graham and Homel's book moves beyond this unsophisticated explanation to explore the various factors that may be predictive and mediative of barroom aggression and violence, providing an international summary of research. Their work emphasises the need to understand alcohol related violence and address it through evidence based preventative strategies. Whilst the consumption of alcohol clearly impacts upon the perception, emotions, thinking and risk taking that contribute to violent conduct, this work identifies how such behaviour is conditional upon a range of environmental and cultural factors.

Thus, Graham and Homel not only consider the macro situation of regulatory change but also place emphasis on the micro situation, by focusing upon individual barrooms, their patrons and servers.

Chapter Five explores the barroom environment seeking to identify why some drinking establishments are a high risk for violence. The chapter highlights how the physical environment may help generate an atmosphere of permissiveness that contributes to aggression. Chapters Four and Six consider the characteristics of patrons and the role of staff in contributing to, and controlling, aggression and violence. The normative use of violence by young males and other marginalized groups, which has been so perspicaciously detailed by Hall and Winlow (2006), is echoed here. Yet what is also evident from these chapters is that the specific characteristics of clientele and staff may not be as important as the ways in which individuals interact with each other and how this is mediated by the barroom environment itself. Increasingly problematic in many large-scale, multi purpose venues is the erosion of informal controls, based upon staff-patron relationships, which amplifies the opportunity for conflict.

Utilising concepts from environmental criminology, Chapter Seven explores the ecology of public spaces, and identifies the processes through which violence spills out from licensed premises onto city streets. As discussed elsewhere (Hobbs, et al., 2003) the practices of door staff and security personnel play an important role not only in the maintenance of order and control within a venue but also in the level of associated violence beyond its boundaries. Furthermore, clear patterns to the spatial and temporal distribution of violence within public spaces can be identified, with outlet density, operating hours, and the position of taxi ranks and fast-food outlets all contributing to the likelihood of conflict. This suggests that preventative policies must not only seek to reduce violent behaviour within licensed premises but also target street level disorder, which may well occur more frequently and be more serious in nature.

As well as appraising previous interventions, Graham and Homel's book also seeks to identify and develop interventional models that achieve and sustain safer drinking environments. However, it is clear from this review of research that the task of establishing which factors act as indicators of barroom violence is complex, with empirical studies often producing contradictory findings. The ability to recognise key elements of effective prevention programs is undoubtedly essential if system wide good practice is to be implemented and maintained. Yet maybe most pertinently, the authors highlight that licensed establishments, their managers, staff and other stakeholders can be as influential as policy initiatives in reducing aggression and violence. The responsabilisation of the alcohol industry to reduce and prevent violent behaviour, both within and beyond the boundaries of their premises, is surely essential if safer night-time environments are to be achieved.

References

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- Winlow, S. and Hall, S. (2006) *Violent Night: Urban leisure and contemporary culture*. Oxford: Berg.

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R U LISTENIN'? HELPING DEFIANT MEN TO RECOGNISE THEIR TRUE POTENTIAL

Bianchini, T. (2008) London: Jessica Kingsley. ISBN 978-1-84310-616-6. 160pp. £16.99 pbk.

Terry Bianchini is a personal advisor working in the Prison Service. He has written a book that is difficult to classify. In part it is about understanding male prisoners and enabling them to prepare themselves for release and resettlement. Bianchini also uses the prison experience as a metaphor for how we all restrict our freedom and he offers advice and a series of exercises through which we can release our own potential. The book aspires to be both about working with people who offend and a self help personal development handbook for everyone, particularly men.

The book's chapters use a prison term as its title, e.g. 'An accessory to the crime', 'Know your jailers', 'Sentence planning', both to address a specific aspect of rehabilitation and to apply the approach to how we can all develop ourselves. Each chapter contains accounts of the author's personal experiences working in prisons, a little theory, a reference to a relevant exercise (described in the final chapter), a case study, discussion of more general application and a summary of the key points.

The title of Bianchini's book is taken from the poignant cry of the prisoner locked in a cell not knowing if anyone is paying attention to his voice: "R U Listenin'?" The book makes a strong case for listening and caring enough not to break promises to people who have experienced betrayal from an early age. Bianchini sees imprisonment as a positive opportunity to think about one's life without the distractions of the outside world and to develop self discipline. For him prison can also be an escape from responsibility, a haven from expectations and disappointments.

The core of the book explains how the way we cope with the world can have negative effects on our well being. Our beliefs about what we need to do in order to survive can

limit the possibilities in our lives. These beliefs may have been adopted in childhood and become internalised over the years. Often they are expressed and control us through self talk. Bianchini advises 'diplomacy', a method of distinguishing between rational guilt based upon one's moral code and irrational guilt based on a previous traumatic experience. The author believes that being rational, taking independent decisions and having the self discipline to carry them out provide solutions not only to prisoners but also to the rest of us.

In addition to a healthy mind Bianchini has advice for a healthy body. Chapters address physical exercise, good sleeping habits, and nutrition. The book concludes that one's freedom is ultimately about growing up or being mature and critically about the ability to set goals and be self disciplined in achieving them. To help us with this he outlines a structure for goal setting based upon the prison's systems of levels: Basic, Standard and Enhanced.

Bianchini has a very positive view of both the opportunity that imprisonment offers to prisoners and to his ability to engage with and to advise prisoners. There is no critical analysis of the prison system and its effects. His approach is very much based upon the personal responsibility of the individual to make the best of a sentence by following the guidance in this book. He is accomplished at describing concepts and ideas in simple accessible language which must be a great advantage in his work.

However, it is difficult to assess who would benefit from reading this book. It is not academic. Other than Maslow, there is no real discussion of theory or research. Professionals working in prisons will be familiar with the ideas and may feel that the book does not reflect the complexity of rehabilitation and resettlement. While the metaphor of the prison in relation to personal development is compelling, I am not sure that it will attract those who visit the self help sections of bookshops. Ultimately it falls between the two stools of a professional practice manual and a self help book.

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ADDRESSING OFFENDING BEHAVIOUR: CONTEXT, PRACTICE AND VALUES

Green, S., Lancaster, E. and Feasey, S. (eds) (2008) Cullompton: Willan. ISBN: 978-1-84392-243-8. pp.492. £26.99 pbk.

Receiving this substantial tome for review and identifying that there were 23 chapters (plus introduction and conclusion) from different authors or groups of authors and a total of 449 pages gave me a sense of the enormity of the editing task and the size of the project as a whole. I wondered how the book would read; was it a collection of disparate opinions vying for a voice with a structure just about holding it together?

The answer to this is a resounding 'no' and this is down to the skill and hard work of the editing team, plus of course, the expertise and experience of the contributors. The editors were motivated to produce this book because they were concerned with the lack of literature that brought practice and research into work with offenders, coherently together. They wanted to offer a critical appreciation of current policy and practice. As a result, the bulk of the chapters explore actual work undertaken with offenders including the skills required, the assessment tools and intervention strategies employed along with the strengths and limitations of underpinning theories. This clear emphasis on actual practice with offenders helps span intellectual and practical considerations.

What are the strengths of the book? Firstly the contributors; there are 26 of them (including the editors) and they have each written or shared in the production of chapters. Between them they have a huge amount of academic, research and practice experience to draw on and this expertise is evident in the quality and authority of the various chapters. The second strength of the book is its organisation as a whole. It is clearly structured with a helpful introduction which enables the reader to rapidly understand what the book offers and ensures that any student picking up such a weighty volume is not daunted by the prospect of using it. Reading the introduction I felt a strong sense of anticipation to delve into the chapters as the editors draw out themes which are explored subsequently in the chapters. For example, the way in which the pre-occupation with dangerousness and dangerous offenders has dominated the criminal justice agenda over the past 10 or so years at the cost of less serious and more common offenders whose needs get overlooked if they are not identified as contributing to risk. Thirdly, the writing style and structure of each chapter; each contributor has been asked to cover certain common issues, for example, the relevant skills and techniques that need to be employed by practitioners, and to include some discussion points along with some suggestions as to further reading. There are clearly differences in writing style and some of the chapters are

targeted at slightly different readers. For example, Ashworth (Chapter 6) looks at 'Written communication' which is an invaluable chapter for the student about to embark on placement for the first time whereas Phillips' approach in 'Beyond the risk agenda' (Chapter 10) suggests the need for some preliminary familiarity with risk procedures as he gets into some quite complex discussions about the effects of risk-driven practice. However, all the chapters are written in a clear and engaging style with an emphasis on explaining concerns, free from obfuscation.

The book is divided into 4 parts though the middle section containing parts 2 and 3 contain the majority of the chapters. Part 1 of the book provides a contextual framework for understanding work with offenders including chapters which outline the legislative framework (Wasik) and policy context (Nash) whilst part 2 focuses on the generic skills required, for example, engagement skills (Tallant, Sambrook and Green) and written communication (Ashworth). Part 3 looks at specialist areas of practice including the treatment of vulnerable offenders and other neglected groups (for example, Canton discusses 'Working with mentally disordered offenders' whilst Senior examines resettlement practice with offenders after prison). Part 4 draws the book to a close with a review of the value base of the criminal justice system with all of the contributors within this section expressing degrees of dissatisfaction. For example, Green argues that welfare and redistribution values have been replaced by those which emphasize personal and civil responsibility such that the issue and impact of poverty on offending is often overlooked.

Although each contributor has added their personal emphasis a number of common themes emerge within the book as a whole. These include the need to be sensitive to the impact of social influences when assessing and addressing offending and also to be cautious about the 'one size fits all' approach to offender management which undervalues the impact of diversity and difference. There is also ongoing concern about the evidence base for many of the adopted methods of intervention. For example, Senior in Chapter 16 argues that 'what works' should still be 'what works?' to encourage practitioners and managers to keep evaluating and learning about ways of intervening with offenders.

The book will be useful for teaching and training purposes as the discussion points included in each of the chapters provide ideal essay questions or themes for debate within seminars. The straight-forward nature of the writing and the way in which common concerns are drawn out makes it a valuable resource for students to extend their knowledge-base and to support essay writing. It will also be a useful text for current practitioners who make time to read (though many feel they do not have the time to do so) as whilst it does not shy away from acknowledging many of the problems inherent within current practice it recognises lots of the strengths that recent practice developments have achieved, so it is not a depressing read.

Editing a book can involve hours and hours of work nurturing and supporting contributors to bring chapters to fruition and ensuring that they have fulfilled their original brief. It is to the credit of both the contributors and the editors that the chapters are of such high quality. 'Addressing Offending Behaviour' is an invaluable resource for students, academics and practitioners. Maybe the editors could be persuaded to produce an abridged version for politician and policy makers to help them appreciate some of the key dilemmas of practice today.

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