

Book Reviews

Offenders or Citizens? Readings in Rehabilitation*

Edited by Philip Priestley and Maurice Vanstone

Cullompton, UK: Willan Publishing, 2010

ISBN: 978-1-84392-529-3, 340 pages, paperback, £29.95

This is a splendid collection of readings that takes the reader on a metaphorical journey through 120 years of rehabilitation within the criminal justice system.

The readings explore the gamut of arguments and debate that have taken place and continue to be had on the merits of rehabilitation as opposed to punishment. This is timely in Northern Ireland: at the time of writing this review, there was to be a ‘consultation on the review of community sentencing’ and one question was surely to arise: where should rehabilitation sit within the rationale of sentencing?

The book is divided into three distinct sections: historical roots (looking at first experiences of rehabilitation and nineteenth-century philanthropy), modern trends (punishment and punitive manners in the late twentieth century and rehabilitation as a ‘subversive’ activity), and the future (explores evidence-based innovations, restorative principles and ‘citizen theory’). Each section starts with an introduction and overview from the editors which helpfully sets the scene for the reader and gives a brief context to each reading and the authors.

The authorship of the readings is from a broad base including probation, social work, psychology, philosophy and political science. Each reading has a reference to the origins of the writing in the informative footnotes. I might have liked a little more information in

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regard to the authors of the readings, but this does not detract from the quality of the book.

In the first section, I would draw readers to the illuminating insight into our rehabilitation ancestry through two examples; “Work in the Courts” (1907) describes Thomas Holmes’s work in the North London Police Courts – heartwarming! “Difficult Cases” (1921) conveys the inspirational belief of the Probation Officer in their clientele. This first section provides the reader with a historical perspective of the choice between punishment and rehabilitation, and the tensions that have existed between these two strands of criminal justice. The extracts allow the reader to reconsider the place for punishment, the purpose of incarceration, what rehabilitation is and how these issues have contributed to a response to criminality.

A number of esteemed authors appear in Section 2, including Martin Davies, Philip Priestley, Jimmy Boyle, Anthony Bottoms and Bill McWilliams, to name a handful – names that will resonate with colleagues and their training. This section gives the reader a chance to reflect on the issues related to the steady rise in the prison population both in England and Wales and in the United States through the latter part of the twentieth century, and how policy makers, academics and criminal justice agencies have endeavoured to tackle the impact of this. The section also looks at the development of ‘offending behaviour programmes’ and the ‘what works’ debate.

In the last section some innovative and fundamental ideas around rehabilitation in twenty-first-century criminal justice emerge. The reader is given an opportunity to consider the role of the Probation Service and community-based organisations in the delivery of community-based justice with a rehabilitative rationale. The extracts allow the reader to consider the concept of offenders as citizens.

This selection of readings will, I believe, infuse and fuel debate. It offers encouragement that rehabilitation remains a key factor in protecting communities and changing behaviours and attitudes of offenders, and that it requires a collaborative approach that involves a range of individuals and groups – not least the offender.

Highly recommended and an enjoyable, inspirational read.

Offender Supervision: New Directions in Theory, Research and Practice*

Edited by Fergus McNeill, Peter Raynor and Chris Trotter

Cullompton, UK: Willan Publishing, 2010

ISBN 978-1-84392-935-2, 584 pages, paperback, £29.95

Academics often agonize over terminology, and this book is no exception. Only four pages in, the editors wonder whether the term ‘offender supervision’ is appropriate. They worry that designating people as ‘offenders’ will set in stone the very identities that people should be trying to cast off; and they speculate as to whether the term ‘supervision’ has negative connotations of surveillance. On balance, they prefer the term ‘offenders’ because it underlines that those serving a court order are not just ‘clients’, and they opt for ‘supervision’ because it is preferable to the term ‘management’, which seems devoid of any positive agenda.

While all this deliberation over terminology might seem like an academic luxury, it is perhaps indicative that the book consciously asks the reader to think hard about the concepts and practices that are customarily endorsed. The book seeks to broaden the debate about what works in the field of community corrections, in particular by asking what is left out from those practices informed by the principles of risk, need and responsivity (RNR). Judging by the length of the book, at over 550 pages, and with 26 chapters allocated to sections such as ‘Improving Offender Supervision’, ‘Significant Others and Social Networks’ and ‘Offenders’ Compliance with Supervision’, one might presume that quite a lot is. In a short review, it is impossible to do justice to all the fine pieces of research collected here, so I will just try to highlight what appear to me to be some of the most significant themes and chapters.

The first section, entitled ‘New Directions in Theory’, begins with a review by Bonta and Andrews on the principles underlying the RNR model which has been translated into practice as the LSI-R risk assessment tool, used by, among others, the Probation Service in Ireland. They caution that these tools are not just about assessing risk but have been revised to take account of and often facilitate dynamic behavioural change. Incorporating both need and responsivity into interventions delivered in a community setting can lower recidivism by as much as

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35%. Practitioners will be well aware of these findings but they are worth labouring since the following chapter is by the New Zealand based psychologist Tony Ward, who has been prominent in outlining what he considers to be a distinct alternative to RNR-inspired practice, namely the Good Lives Model. He considers that adhering to the RNR triad means that issues surrounding the motivation to desist from offending are obscured and it is difficult to know how these kinds of programmes generate change. Because the former offender is mainly viewed as a bearer of risk, the task of interventions is to manage this risk. In contrast, the GLM model seeks to enquire of offenders what are their ultimate concerns that could turn them away from crime; in other words, what do ex-offenders conceive the good life to consist of? Supervisors should then try to ‘tailor an intervention plan around an offender’s core values and associated practical identities’ (p. 55). Ward claims that the GLM model can, more readily than RNR, incorporate recent research emanating from desistance studies which emphasise the importance of personal agency oriented toward the future.

Marun and Lebel take up this last theme by arguing that we should give less priority to programmes, which have little impact, and more to the actual lives of offenders to understand why rehabilitation succeeds and more often fails. Nowadays, many evaluation studies insist that it is not an intervention *per se* that produces change; instead, a programme might offer reasons and resources for a person to make the change that must ultimately come from himself or herself. They argue that one of the greatest resources for change derives from the high expectations of others as former offenders draw strength from the positive beliefs of others.

These ideas might seem to form the basis of what Chris Trotter has termed ‘pro-social modelling’, discussed here in a chapter with Philippa Evans. He suggests that thinking more intensively about the routine supervision skills used in community-based orders can yield beneficial results. Discussing his research, he argues that personnel were strong on rewarding pro-social actions through praise but were more reticent in terms of challenging pro-criminal behaviour. What this model seems to omit is consideration of how to get offenders to take the first step in thinking and acting in a more socially considerate manner.

In an interesting chapter by Pauline Durrance and others, they take up this issue. In their work in London, they introduced what they call a structured supervision programme into those interventions where there is no group-work requirement. It was hoped the former offenders could

develop a capacity for self-reflection by participating in various modules that explore their autobiographical path, what goals they have, empathy with victims and how to avoid relapsing. In line with the findings of someone like Maruna, they argue that 'helping offenders unravel how their different experiences have brought them to their current position holds out the hope of a new, reconstituted future' (p. 209). Such an approach combines the individual focus of case-work with the structured format of group-work. In another twist, Ugwudike's chapter suggests that supervisors first have to build relationships before having any chance of having a positive effect on those in their charge.

In one of the most interesting chapters, Robinson and McNeill probe into what lies behind the dynamics of offender compliance, drawing an important distinction between two different kinds. Formal compliance relates to behaviour that meets the specific requirements of a sanction, such as turning up for appointments at the designated times. Substantive compliance refers to the active engagement and cooperation of the offender with the requirements of his or her order which can eventually extend into long-term compliance as the person 'desists' from crime. Many jurisdictions privilege formal compliance, partly because it can be easily audited. However, this kind of compliance can mask an underlying posture of defiance and cannot be construed as an indicator of low risk. In fact, it may confirm some criminogenic tendencies as it encourages individuals to 'phone-in' a performance, to use a sports term, without any lasting commitment. They argue that those entrusted with the management of community sanctions should learn from regulators who operate a flexible enforcement style which seeks to elicit moral commitment while keeping a big stick visibly in the background.

In the conclusion, the editors put it best when they write that current research is no longer confined to the correctional focus on what works but has expanded to investigate the 'processes of supervision, the legitimacy of supervising agencies, the skills and qualities of practitioners, the impact of politics, the roles of families and communities and many other broader questions' (p. 544). By drawing attention to this broader context, they hope to avoid a centralising implementation process which views success purely in terms of adherence to programs. They are aware that in generating criticisms of this process, they may still find themselves lagging in terms of generating substantive suggestions for service improvement. To address this last issue, they 'still need a better understanding of what goes right and

wrong in implementation, and why' (p. 544). To accomplish this requires substantive engagement from practitioners, who should be willing to explore and extrapolate from the diversity of valuable findings contained in this book.

Prison Policy in Ireland: Politics, Penal-Welfarism and Political Imprisonment***Mary Rogan**

London: Routledge, 2011

ISBN: 978-0-415-61619-5, 264 pages, paperback, £47.95

This book on Irish penal policy spans the period from the foundation of the Irish state in 1922 to the present. Rogan identifies three central motifs of Irish penal policy: political imprisonment, penal-welfarism and politics.

The manner in which the prison system and penal policies have been shaped by the legacy of political conflict, specifically the Civil War and latterly the Troubles, is well illustrated. In fact the context of wider stagnation, political conflict and the response to this seems to have provided the main impetus for change within the prison system. For example, the Prison Rules introduced in 1947 came after the death of a Republican hunger striker, and movements towards securitisation were primarily motivated by political conflict. Indeed the breadth of the historical analysis within this book allows for a wider view of the role that prisons have played in state security. The prison system was utilised to contain and manage political dissent in both symbolic and very real terms. Here the parallels with the situation in Northern Ireland in later years is striking.

Apart from periodic crises the picture painted is one of stagnation and state neglect. One of the reasons posited for this is the fact that for much of the twentieth century the numbers detained within the Irish prison system were relatively low. In 1955, for example, the daily average population was 356 – contrasted with 3,881 in 2009. The relatively low penal population in that period has to be set against the high numbers of people ‘coercively confined’ in a range of other institutions, including industrial and reformatory schools, borstals, Magdalene homes and psychiatric hospitals – more than 1% of the total population in 1951 (O’Sullivan & O’Donnell, 2007).

A consideration of the wider social policy context is therefore particularly apposite in this case, and Rogan rightly links the inertia in

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penal policy with the lack of attention given to other social policy areas – health is one example. Using the analytical lens of ‘culture’ (derived from the work of David Garland, but not particularly well defined in the original), Rogan also tries to link penal policy to the wider cultural context. For example, she argues that the lack of long-term policy for the Irish penal system is a particular feature of Irish political culture characterised by middle-of-the-road pragmatism rather than any particular political ideology. Perhaps lacking from this analysis is the extent to which social class is also a significant issue. The research that does exist on the Irish prison system and those that it processes paints a consistent picture of a population largely drawn from the most socially deprived areas and scoring highly on most indices of social need (drug misuse, illiteracy, poverty, etc.) (e.g. O’Mahony, 2000; O’Donnell *et al.*, 2007). Part of the reason for state neglect of this area is precisely the constituent population.

The extent to which Irish prison policy and practice can be characterised as *penal-welfarist* is a second major theme of this book. Penal-welfarism, again derived from the work of David Garland (1985), is understood as the range of strategies and techniques targeted towards the rehabilitation of the individual offender. Given that this book demonstrates that articulations of the aims and purposes of the penal system, not to mention strategies, were fairly thin on the ground, the extent to which penal-welfarism can be said to apply is also limited. Some examples are given – in the 1960s rehabilitation is articulated as an explicit aim of penal policy; however, even then the gaps between policy and practice are demonstrated throughout.

Rogan approaches the historical material dealt with here (including records from the National Archives, contemporary media coverage and Dáil Debates) through periodisation. Each chapter deals with a specific period – the ‘Emergency’, the 1950s, 1960s and so on. The 1960s and 2000s are identified as particularly dynamic periods. This dynamism is attributed in large part to individual Ministers for Justice – most notably Charles Haughey and Michael McDowell. Haughey for example played a large part in the establishment of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Juvenile Delinquency, the Probation System, the Institutional Treatment of Offenders and their Aftercare in 1962 – the first Government committee to look at the aims and purposes of the criminal justice system including the prison system in any sustained way. McDowell was the Minister responsible for instigating the largest prison-

building scheme in the State – Thornton Hall, a scheme that has now run aground on the rocks of fiscal rectitude.

This book demonstrates the extent to which penal policy and indeed criminal justice policy more broadly do not appear to be driven by particular ideology. None the less the prison estate has continued to expand. In a similar vein to Kilcommins *et al.* (2004), Rogan highlights the limitations of explanatory frameworks based on analyses of criminal justice policy and practice in other jurisdictions. Her book is an important contribution to the growing canon of criminological research in Ireland. It also provides a fascinating historical overview that reminds one of the relevance of history to the present.

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