

# PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL

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# Reviews

Book Review

***Organizational Change through Individual Empowerment: Applying social psychology in prisons and policing***

By Hans Toch

Publisher: American Psychological Association (2014)

ISBN: 978-1-4338-1729-8 (hardcover)

Price: \$49.95 (hardcover)

I buy quite a lot of books that I never read, and many that I just dip into on occasion. I read this book from start to finish over a weekend and I will read it again and again. I am writing this review because I would like lots of other people to read it too, especially those who have never read anything by Hans Toch before.

Dr Hans Toch is distinguished Emeritus Professor at the University of Albany, New York, in the School of Criminal Justice. His book *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, published in 1961, probably invented the whole discipline of forensic psychology. But *Organizational Change through Individual Empowerment* is emphatically not just for psychologists, and Professor Toch is no detached, comfortable, armchair academic who merely observes and describes things. He has, as the foreword to the book puts it, 'Not just talked the talk but also time and again walked the walk' (p.ix). He is also tremendously, inspiringly, humanitarian.

A friend of mine<sup>1</sup> describes the contributions of major intellectual figures such as Toch as 'kicks at the can'. Each successful kick at a can represents a major change to practice, not just theory or knowledge. In this book, Toch has selected a few of his kicks at a can,

and for each provides a retrospective and reflective account of the project, how he conceived it, who shaped his thinking and worked with him, what they did, and how it turned out. Some of the projects were hugely successful for many years, others were relatively shorter-lived, but all of them represent excellent examples of turning theory and research into practice and in doing so, improving the state of the criminal justice system. The golden thread running through the book is the principle of empowering individuals within the criminal justice system (both staff and those who have committed crime) to correct the many shortcomings of the system. One of the things that struck me forcibly on reading this book was that every project Toch describes is something that we would regard as relevant and fresh today. We continually seek new ideas to address today's problems in prisons, but we might do better to re-examine the old ideas. As Toch says, it seems that 'some wheels just have to be reinvented every 30 years' (p73).

One example is peer mentoring between prisoners, something that NOMS has recently formally launched as an 'innovations project'. In 1967, Doug Grant, one of Toch's closest collaborators, wrote that:

*There is considerable evidence that shifting the offender's role from that of recipient of rehabilitative services to one of active participation in the rehabilitation of others helps in the process of breaking away from a given set of delinquent identifications. There is*

*also evidence that getting the offender to commit himself to a cause or movement can directly affect his attitudes and behaviour. (p41).*

This could have been written yesterday.

Another example is the chapter about the importance of using reward rather than punishment to shape behaviour. Again, this is something we are currently looking into across our organisation, as we have realised how poor we are at using rewards, both formal and informal. Toch writes scathingly about familiar-sounding 'incentive systems' where 'de-escalated deprivations are often deployed as the starting point for a schedule of 'rewards'.... Such exercises of ingenuity have reached impressive heights (or lows) in the creation of progression or 'level' systems'. I was appalled and ashamed to be a psychologist when reading about some of these systems, designed by psychologists, removing every last scrap of dignity from the prisoners forced to participate in them, all in the name of behaviour change. Toch describes both the theory and the practice of these schemes and leaves us in no doubt that punishment, even when it is dressed up as incentive or deterrent, is not just ineffective but is actively harmful.

Toch is certainly not effusive about those who practise forensic psychology and some of his other admonishments rang uncomfortable truths for me. For example, he describes his very early research where he began to discover that violent men had a higher incidence of violence

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1. Karl Hanson, to give him the credit he deserves, not just for the phrase but also for the cans he has kicked himself.

perception using an instrument called a stereogram. Toch's intention with research such as this was always to understand a problem as the first step in learning how to change it. However, the project quickly got diverted into an effort to improve the prediction of future violent behaviour. Toch reflects that this:

*...impressed me in retrospect as uninviting. For one, any measure that one can invoke to predict misbehaviour inevitably gets used to badly overpredict misbehaviour. More serious, average offenders have any number of incapacitating impediments facing them as they embark on life in the community and the last thing they need under those circumstances is for some over-eager psychologist to have uncovered an additional stigmatizing attribute (p31-32).*

I could go on much longer giving examples of all the things this wonderful book has made me think about, but I would rather people bought it and found their own shame and inspiration in it. It is also beautifully written and Professor Toch's own personality (which he describes as 'conventional and overwhelmingly pedestrian', p.xvii) is exposed as gently self-effacing and unrelentingly humanitarian. The combination of his humour with his care for the vulnerable leaves a forceful and long-lasting impression. I had an injection of reforming vigour from reading it and I hope you do too, because

there are a lot more cans out there that need kicking.

**Dr Ruth Mann** is Head of Evidence at the National Offender Management Service.

#### Book Reviews

##### **Power and crime: The Routledge international handbook of the crimes of the powerful**

Edited by Gregg Barak  
Publisher: Routledge (2015)  
ISBN: 978-0-415-74126-2  
(hardback)  
Price: £130.00 (hardback)

##### **Crime, inequality, and power**

By Eileen Leonard  
Publisher: Routledge (2015)  
ISBN: 978-1-138-82055-5  
(hardback) 978-1-138-82056-2  
(paperback)  
Price: £90.00 (hardback) £36.99  
(paperback)

##### **Power and crime**

By Vincenzo Ruggiero  
Publisher: Routledge (2015)  
ISBN: 978-1-138-79237-1  
(hardback) 978-1-138-79238-8  
(paperback)  
Price: £85.00 (hardback) £26.99  
(paperback)

The financial crisis of 2007 and 2008, and the subsequent period of economic recession have not exactly led to the Marxist crisis of capitalism, indeed there has been a significant rearguard action in order to protect and preserve the dominant neoliberal order. Austerity strategies have garnered wide international governmental and institutional support and general public acquiescence. It has been

argued, however, that these strategies are controversial and ideological.<sup>1</sup> From this perspective, a crisis emanating from the commercial and financial sectors has come to be the responsibility of the state. In other words, the crisis has been transformed from a private sector problem to a public sector one; has shifted from a financial crisis to a fiscal one; and has altered from an economic problem to a political one.<sup>2</sup> The reduced state envisaged through austerity also offers opportunities for an expanded private sector, while representing welfare recipients as undeserving and profligate enables attention to be diverted from the elite that precipitated the crisis.<sup>3</sup> The response to the crisis demonstrates the hold that dominant ideas about capitalism have upon the political imagination and the social system, as well as their resilience.

This reassertion of neoliberalism has not, however, gone entirely uncontested. The challenge has in most cases not come through mainstream politics, where a broad consensus has largely been sustained, but instead through grassroots movements such as Occupy protests, and through influential public intellectuals. For example, serious economists such as Joseph Stiglitz<sup>4</sup> and Thomas Piketty<sup>5</sup> have given significant credibility to the argument for an alternative to austerity, as well as the case for resisting and even reversing growing inequality.

Within criminology there is a long and distinguished history of critical thought which has sought to critique and challenge the dominant political ideas and social order. Critical criminology has for many years highlighted how

1. Blyth, M (2013) *Austerity: The history of a dangerous idea* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2. Clarke, J. and Newman, J. (2012) *The alchemy of austerity in Critical Social Policy* Vol.32 No.3 p.299-319.
3. Hall S (2011) *The Neo-liberal Revolution in Cultural Studies* Vol.25 No.6 p.705-728.
4. Stiglitz, J. (2013) *The price of inequality* London: Penguin.
5. Piketty, T. (2014) *Capital in the twenty-first century* Harvard: Harvard University Press.

criminal justice is constructed and operated in a way that serves the interests of the powerful whilst reinforcing the marginalisation of the poor, women and those from minority ethnic communities. Critical criminologists have sought not only to reflect this perspective in their research and writing, but have attempted to put it into action through activism. This approach is therefore one in which 'public criminology' is enacted, where there is a recognition that criminology is about more than crime alone, but is about broader social questions and concerned with realising 'a better politics'.<sup>6</sup> The three books reviewed here, whilst they vary in their precise scope and length, all reflect the critical criminology approach illustrating how it has been reinvigorated by and responded to the age of austerity.

Professor Gregg Barak's 38-chapter, edited collection, *The Routledge international handbook of the crimes of the powerful*, is an impressive, wide ranging and accessible examination of its subject matter. It has a broad scope, considering not only violations of criminal law by powerful people, such as white collar and corporate fraud, but also those other harms perpetuated by the powerful that do not formally come within the ambit of criminal law, including environmental damage, defective products including pharmaceuticals, war and international conflict, and even intensive animal farming. The essays expose the problems of regulation, culture, social power and the very structures of capitalist production and exchange that create and sustain these harms. The collection attempts to expose these 'suite' crimes, committed by faceless, suited executives in offices and boardrooms, that are often invisible to the public, media and

criminal justice system, in contrast to the 'street' crimes of interpersonal harms that dominate the notion of 'crime'. This book offers up to date research and scholarship that will be essential for any academic with an interest in the subject area.

*Crime, inequality, and power* by Professor Eileen Leonard provides an excellent overview of the topics, which will be particularly valuable to students. As with Barak, she introduces the idea that 'crime' is a social construction. The way that it has been constructed has been to encompass the harms more likely to be caused by those at the margins of society, whilst the harms caused by the powerful are often hidden and unregulated. She describes how there are far more deaths and injuries caused by faulty products, unsafe working practices and environmental damage, let alone war and conflict, than those caused by the street crimes that dominate criminal justice. Leonard illustrates how such harms are also invisible, as systematic government data is not collected. As well as exposing the 'crimes of the powerful', Leonard also reiterates some of the core concerns of critical criminologists regarding the disproportionate impact of criminal justice on the poor and members of minority ethnic communities, as well as the way that it marginalises the harms committed upon women. The book therefore takes a broad approach to unpicking the ways in which crime and punishment are an expression of, and a means of maintaining, power and inequality.

In his short book, Professor Vincenzo Ruggiero of Middlesex University, offers a deep theoretical analysis of power and crime. It is part of a series entitled 'New directions in critical criminology', which is not intended to provide an

overview of literature but instead to offer strong positions on significant subjects. Its focus is upon the crimes of the powerful, which is situated in a grey area between licit and illicit behaviours. Ruggiero draws upon a wide range of different disciplines to understand this subject, including economic, social, legal and political theory. He also offers a closing chapter that illustrates how power and crime have been reflected and explored in culture, drawing upon the literature of Honor de Balzac. Despite being short, this is a complex and challenging book, full of erudite dissection and interpretation of some of the most prominent thinkers of recent centuries. It reveals how the issues of power and crime are not new but have a long history and are fundamental to understanding the society in which we live.

These books offer a variety of ways in which crime, power and inequality can be approached. It is significant that three such books should be published at this time and indicates a critical intellectual questioning of the dominant capitalist order. This is the manifestation, within the field of criminology, of a broader resistance that can also be seen in politics, economics and the media. The precise nature of the questioning is also relevant as it reveals an evolution of critical criminology. This approach gained traction in the post-War welfare era and was particularly concerned with the perceived iniquities and unfairness of the time, focussing on the effects upon the most marginalised. In contrast, the emerging critical criminology seems to be shaped by a new terrain and a new age. Rather than simply drawing attention to the harmful effects on the powerless, aim is instead being increasingly taken at the powerful in an attempt to

6. Loader, I. and Sparks, R. (2011) *Public criminology?* Abingdon: Routledge p.124.



undermine their legitimacy and foster discontent. This is critical criminology for the age of austerity.

**Dr Jamie Bennett** is Governor of Grendon and Springhill.

#### Book Review

##### ***An Eye for an Eye: A Global History of Crime and Punishment***

By Mitchel P. Roth

Publisher: Reaktin Books (2014)

ISBN: 9-781780-233598

Price: £20

This refreshingly affordable text is designed for a broad audience of students, academics and general readers. Hence its remit is ambitious both in terms of accessibility and breadth of historical coverage. The book meets these multiple challenges well and gives the reader a real feel for historical change in this subject area: how various societies have defined and prioritised different kinds of crime, how they have legitimated punishment of those crimes, the forms punishments have taken and what philosophies have underpinned that punishment. This is a text which can be used as a resource to dip into as required or can be read in its entirety.

Broadly, this book is structured chronologically (from the pre-historic era to the twenty-first century) and with regard to geography, there is extensive consideration of non-western philosophies, practices and patterns. The structure begins as the first chapter title notes 'In the Beginning' and covers the period from prehistory to the ancient world, exploring the earliest written codes in, for example, Egypt, India and China. Chapter two examines the range of legal traditions that have existed and the extent to which they have survived into

modern times. Chapter three considers crime in feudal societies, when the pillory was a widely used punishment across regions we now know as Germany, France, Austria and Britain, prior to the rise of centralised, bureaucratic states. The next chapter discusses the use of penal colonies and the rise of incarceration as punishment. Chapter five explores the development of 'more organized forms of criminality prior to the globalization of crime' (p.14), that is the period when crime was primarily a local and very diverse concern seen, for example in the bands of outlaws existing virtually everywhere. Concentration is upon the emergence of international criminality and the crime of murder in chapters six and seven. Contrary to the idea that serial killing is a modern phenomenon, Roth claims that from 'Africa to western Europe, shape-shifting stories of leopard men, wolfmen and the like were probably inspired by actual mutilation murders in a time of superstition before the birth of modern policing and forensic investigation' (p.15). The final two chapters concentrate on colonialism, the post-colonial relationship and the hybrid penal practices that developed. Examination of the twenty-first century (chapter nine) enables the author to emphasise the level of continuity and change over time. Roth asserts that his book demonstrates ultimately that 'the history of crime and punishment remains an inconsistent chronicle of experimentation — borrowing, adapting and finding new alternatives — often finding penal officials going back to history books to retool ancient sanctions for a new world' (p.16) which he identifies in the return of 'shaming, chain gangs and exhibitionary punishment' (p.16).

The breadth of this text enables the author to demonstrate the degree of inter-connectedness

between developments across countries, in particular as a consequence of the colonial expansion of the British Empire. Given the expansive coverage of this text it perhaps inevitably tends towards being quite descriptive at times, although that description often displays an impressive command of historical detail and is no less interesting for that. The author draws upon an equally impressive range of, amongst others, anthropological, historical, literary and criminological evidence. Indeed the breadth and quality of the scholarship embedded in this text is undoubted and the ability of the author Professor Mitchel P Roth, Professor of Criminal Justice and Criminology at Sam Houston State University, to successfully produce work of this nature has already been proven. For academic tastes this may be a little under-referenced but the selected bibliography is well-chosen and will be extremely useful for undergraduate readers especially. Inevitably, the author has had to make decisions about which specific areas of crime and punishment to concentrate on and may have been influenced by current concerns and even fascination with serial killing and organised crime. This is a readable and fascinating book.

**Alyson Brown** is a History Professor at Edge Hill University.

#### Book Review

##### ***Carceral Geography: Spaces and practices of incarceration***

By Dominique Moran

Publisher Ashgate, Farnham (2015)

ISBN: 9781409452348 (hardback)

Price: £54 (hardback)

Human geography has long been considered a cognate discipline to criminology. Geographical conceptions of space

have, for instance, been instrumental in the development of theories on urban crime and community safety since the pioneering work of Henry Mayhew in the mid 19th Century. In the past few decades, the connections between criminology and human geography have grown further, as criminologists have turned their attention to issues of crime and justice associated with globalisation, technological advances, and the move away from welfare-orientated approaches to crime control towards risk management technologies aimed at managing everyday activities, and securitising public and private spaces, national and regional borders. As Dominique Moran notes in the introductory section to *Carceral Geography*, this 'spatial turn' (p.7) in criminology has more recently extended to analysis of prisons, and the increasingly symbiotic relationship between prisons and poor, urban areas. In the past few years, Moran continues, human geography has likewise turned its attention to prisons. Inspired, among others, by Michel Foucault and Irvine Goffman's classic work on panopticism<sup>1</sup> and total institutions,<sup>2</sup> Giorgio Agamben's account of the contemporary phenomenon of spaces of exception,<sup>3</sup> and Loïc Wacquant's writings on hyperincarceration,<sup>4</sup> Moran describes carceral geography as a new field of academic research that explores the synergies of criminology/prison sociology with 'human geographical understandings of space and spaciality as multiplicitous and heterogeneous, lived and experienced' (ibid.).

Moran describes the book as an introduction to 'the ideas, practices and engagements that

have shaped the development of [carceral geography] and scopes out future research possibilities' (p.1). She divides the text into three sections, relating to what she observes to be the three most important themes to have emerged in geographical analysis of prisons: *Carceral Space* (which centres, in contrast to Foucault and Agamben, on the lived experience of prison, in particular the means by which prisoners are able to resist power and authority, occupy and 'personalise' prison space); the *Geographies of Carceral Systems* (that explores the links, this time contra Goffman, between prisons and communities); and the *Carceral and a Punitive State* (covering macro-level analysis of the use of prison as an instrument of punitive and exclusionary social control). Following overviews of the breadth of research falling within these three major themes, the remaining chapters expand on particular areas of research that Moran expects will be important in shaping 'the development of this new and vibrant sub-discipline' (p.1). These include prisoners' experience of the connection between space and time, prisoners' emotional responses to the experience of incarceration, prison design, media representations, and (projects that Moran has played an instrumental part in developing) the movement of prisoners to, between and within prisons, and the effect of the physical manifestations of imprisonment on life post-prison.

*Carceral Geography* is a rich text that covers a wealth of perspectives on spaces of incarceration. It should prove to be a valuable resource for prison researchers working within the disciplines of criminology and sociology as well as human geography. The breadth of research

explored in the book is both its greatest weakness but more importantly its greatest strength. Experienced researchers will find certain gaps in the subject matter, and some may question whether the book might have taken a different shape and focused on different areas of research had Moran waited longer to write it. And while academics and students will find individual chapters informative and absorbing, the latter may also find the overlaps between them difficult to untangle. However, any such criticism is minor and does not detract from the quality and ambition of the book, nor its stated purpose. From the outset, Moran makes it clear that the text is not intended to serve as a definitive description of the parameters of carceral geography, but to explore the state of the field, and to stimulate future research and debate.

**Dr Sacha Darke** is a Senior Lecturer in Criminology at the University of Westminster.

#### Book Review

#### ***Inmates': Narratives and Discursive Discipline in Prison***

By Jennifer A. Schlosser

Publisher: Routledge

ISBN: 978-1-138-81423-3

Price: £85.00 (Hardback)

Jennifer A. Schlosser's book starts with a routine sociology project that aimed to understand how Mid-western United States prisoners cope with custody through their own self-identity and what impact this had on release. This project quickly developed into a critique of a flawed cognitive behavioural intervention. It concludes with a macro-level

1. Foucault, M. (1979) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, New York: Vintage.

2. Goffman, I. (1961) *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and other Inmates*, Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.

3. Agamben, G. (2005) *State of Exception*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

4. E.g. Wacquant, L. (2010) 'Class, race and hyperincarceration in revanchist America', *Daedalus*, 140: 74-90.

analysis of the state's role in rewriting individual histories to attribute responsibility to those individuals, for life choices that lead to incarceration. Schlosser is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Tennessee Tech University in the USA and the book already boasts favourable reviews by criminology heavyweights such as Shadd Maruna.

Although the research and analysis is based on a USA perspective, the book has at its core the key role of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy or Cognitive Behaviour Programmes in reducing reoffending and recidivism. This approach is a constant in most developed nation's justice systems and ensures applicability of this book outside of the USA. It is also the subject of much debate as to the effectiveness of these programmes in addition to varying approaches to 'accreditation' of those programmes that appear to 'work'.

The issue that Schlosser develops is that of the premise of most programmes in the justice field; namely that individual bad choices have led to the committal of crime and subsequent imprisonment. Schlosser argues that through her own empirical research there is a key role for the individual's circumstances to partly account for the resulting criminality. Schlosser cites examples of prisoners voluntarily describing their view that they had little opportunity but to take the choices that they did which led to their imprisonment. They cover a wealth of situational factors that restricted their choices, for example restrictive probationary supervision that prevented them from maintaining employment and left them seeking money through crime. However, those prisoners that engaged in the flawed cognitive behavioural programme seemed to have the histories they readily described re-written. They would

readily describe and believe that the reason they were in custody was solely due to the poor life choices they had made, with no focus on the circumstances of that choice.

Schlosser builds on this phenomenon to suggest that this re-writing of the narrative of personal histories to a shared narrative of bad choices (what she describes as Discursive Discipline) is endemic not only of this programme but the entire Mid-Western justice system. She analyses the programme in the prison she studied to describe coercive patterns that misuse the tenets of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy to oppress prisoners. This is brought to the macro level through a variety of analyses including the use of the term 'offenders' to describe those in the prison. Schlosser suggests this term forms part of the macro-narrative that suggests everyone called an offender has done something 'wrong'. In this case 'wrong' is defined by those in power, and it may be the case that some have offended through necessity due to circumstance. However, Schlosser argues, the key part in the discursive discipline is the point when the prisoners themselves refer to each other as 'offenders' and thus become agents in their own oppression.<sup>1</sup>

Schlosser's aims for the book are made explicit. They are to examine the cognitive behaviour programme and compare her own interviews of prisoners regarding their narrative of their personal histories against the content of the programme manual. From this Schlosser aims to examine the tensions in the prisoner-institution relationship and finally suggest practical improvements to policy. The improvements are 'practical' because Schlosser believes that they don't involve significant additional cost or increased risk to improve results.

Schlosser recommends a number of areas for improvements. These include making use of prisoners as 'experts' in their individual narratives of their paths to reduce re-offending. Also articulating joint responsibility for their current circumstances helps prisoners to understand their place in society and social institutions. Importantly, recognising that choices presented to prisoners in society are not always a good or bad choice, but sometimes choosing between two bad options or multiple options with unclear outcomes is relevant. Schlosser suggests the focus should be on the process of making choices rather than on the outcome. Prison staff should not be 'instructors' on cognitive behavioural interventions but rather 'facilitators' of shared experiences among prisoners. Building on this Schlosser also recommends a collaborative approach to the design of prison interventions and narrative, making use of current and former prisoners' ideas.

Overall, this book presents a convincing argument that is applicable across most Western justice systems. It identifies how a pragmatic and systematic approach that appears to show benefits can slip into causing harm and failing to identify effective methods to reduce reoffending. The book is aimed at academics and students and therefore can be quite a difficult read for most practitioners. However, the convincing argument, patiently crafted from empirical research, is worth pursuing for an enlightening analysis of the critique of the Cognitive Behavioural approach to recidivism interventions.

**Paul Crossey** is Head of Corporate Services at HMYOI Feltham.

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1. Foucault, M (1979) *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. New York: Second Vintage books.