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# Reviews

Book Review

## **International Perspectives on the Assessment and Treatment of Sexual Offenders:**

### **Theory, Practice, and Research**

Edited by Douglas Boer, Reinhard Eher, Leam Craig, Michael Miner, and Friedemann Praefflin

Publisher: Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell (2011)

ISBN: 978-0-470-74925-8 (hardback)

Price: £110.00 (hardback)

The assessment and treatment of sexual offenders has been the subject of a burgeoning academic and policy literature since at least the early 1980s, first in community then later in prison based settings. While there have been research endeavours and interesting developments on both sides of the Atlantic — in the United States, as well as the United Kingdom and Europe — and throughout the rest of the world, there has been a distinct lack of publications with an international collaborative focus. This book is aimed at filling this specific gap in the literature. It contains key contributions from some of the best well known names in sex offender assessment and treatment, both academics and practitioners, and thus emerges as an international showcase of current assessment and treatment practices around the world. At the same time, however, it has lost none of its breadth or depth in terms of diversity in national or local practices.

The book contains thirty six chapters in total and is divided into five main parts. The first part sets out the critical context by posing pivotal questions relating to the efficacy of adult sexual offender treatment in reducing recidivism rates; underlining the

contemporary importance of adult sexual offender assessment for legal as well as treatment processes; and concludes by examining the unique issues posed by the assessment and treatment of female sexual offenders as a challenge to the dominant paradigm of the adult male sexual offender. The second and third parts of the book pick up on some of the issues raised in the first part of the book by examining a diverse range of issues and applications which are central to current discourses on sexual offender assessment and treatment. These chapters explore the particular challenges presented by a range of offender types — adult and juvenile sexual offenders, male and females, offenders with intellectual disability and mental health issues, as well as the different offending contexts of rape, incest and the internet, and the importance of work with families as well as offenders.

A key feature of the third part of the book in particular is the inclusion of an assortment of treatment approaches which have been applied in a range of cultural settings such as South Africa, Denmark, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the United States. Indeed, there are also several significant chapters on the importance of culture and context within sexual offender treatment more generally. These serve to highlight a further important but sometimes overlooked aspect of international discourses surrounding sexual offender assessment and treatment — that assessment and treatment contexts, much like offenders themselves, are not a homogeneous entity.

There is a wide variety in subject matter and a good balance

of issues in terms of the individual focus of the substantive chapters. Several chapters, however, stand out for me chiefly in terms of their relevance to some of the key contemporary issues, not just within sex offender assessment and treatment specifically, but also within public and policy discourses on sexual offending more generally. These are all areas which, although of considerable current interest and meriting specific attention, not all have been subjected to rigorous debate. They include the issue of denial or minimisation by offenders and how this particular challenge might be addressed within assessment or treatment contexts; the use of pharmacotherapy and castration with sex offenders, particularly those who may be at risk of sexual offending; the potential cross-over between incest and extra-familial abuse, that is whether sex offenders are 'generalists' or 'specialists' or a mixture of the two; the role of the internet in sexual offending; and the controversial issue of institutional child sexual abuse within the Catholic Church and other youth organisations. It is the inclusion of these chapters in particular which will extend the book's appeal beyond practitioners, academics and students in the fields of sex offender assessment and treatment. In this respect, the book will also be of broader relevance to those interested in some of the wider debates concerning responses to sexual crime and indeed to some of the key issues within contemporary popular discourses on crime and social problems more generally.

The fourth part of the book examines human rights and ethical issues and constitutes a further significant addition to a book of

this nature. In an age in which the primary criminal justice or penal response to sexual crime has been heavily premised on risk management and the need to protect the public from the 'special risk' that sex offenders are seen as posing, these chapters serve to redress the balance by drawing attention to the need to be mindful also of the offender's needs, civil liberties and human rights. In this respect, the chapters on the use of pharmacotherapy and also on the latent consequences of community protection policies, such as sex offender registration and notification and residence restrictions, highlight the failure of such 'risk-based' approaches ultimately to prevent re-offending.

The final part of the book, addresses future developments in terms of the role of the International Association for the Treatment of Sexual Offenders (IATSO), key challenges and issues for the future, as well as 'the promise' of the 'Dunkelfeld research'. This latter chapter in particular offers the prospect of unique insights into uncovering the different psychological and social processes of both detected and undetected offending processes and in so doing raises key issues for future prevention and treatment efforts. Having reviewed the evidence presented in the various chapters, the book poses several questions and possible solutions. The future of sexual offender treatment programmes in particular is presented in a rather sensible and pragmatic fashion in terms of a more 'mixed approach' — combining cognitive behavioural therapy with behavioural and process issues; strengths and needs-based approaches with risk and deficits models; integrating pharmacological interventions as a mainstream rather than an adjunct treatment approach; and a greater emphasis on the heterogeneity of

sexual offenders and individually tailored treatment programmes.

This book has much to commend it. In undertaking a book of this magnitude the editors have admirably accomplished an ambitious task. The breadth of subject matter on a diverse range of issues central to international contemporary discourses on sexual offender assessment and treatment will ensure that this book becomes essential reading for all those interested in issues pivotal to current thinking on sexual offending — academics, practitioners, policy makers and students. This is a thorough, comprehensive and welcome addition to the literature written by some of the foremost experts, drawn from a range of disciplines, in the field. While the book is specialised and state of the art, it manages to present itself nonetheless as a highly readable and accessible account of the current state of play as well as likely future developments in sexual offender assessment and treatment. As a result, this book seems set to become a key reference text in this field for some years to come.

The poem by Moira Mpanza composed and written for IATSO, and first delivered at an IATSO conference in Cape Town where I was also present, has lost none of its resonance. The poem is written in the first person and the editors in including this poem at the outset of the book have served to usefully remind us of two central principles: That the nexus of sex offender assessment and treatment is of course the offender. Moreover, ultimately, whatever the culture or context, our common goal in assessing and treating sex offenders, or indeed in writing about these processes, is to undertake to improve the efficacy of assessment and treatment discourses by empowering the offender (the 'I' in the poem) to

make the right 'choice' in terms of developing pro-social behaviour. In producing and contributing to this book, the editors and chapter authors have advanced our progress, individually and collectively, towards this end.

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Book Review

***Dovegate: A Therapeutic Prison in a Private Prison and Developments in Therapeutic Work with Personality Disordered Offenders***

By Dr Eric Cullen and Dr Judith Mackenzie

Publisher: Waterside Press (2011)

ISBN: 978-1-904380-54-2

(paperback)

Price: £22.95 (paperback)

This is a hard hitting, fast moving description of a unique experience of setting up a Therapeutic Prison (with five therapeutic communities within it) in the private sector of prison delivery. There are layers and layers of complexity within that outline and Eric Cullen and Judy Mackenzie take us through those with insiders' expertise that gives them a unique position to spill some of the beans about the process, the achievements, the risks involved in the massive undertaking and the continuing challenges and opportunities.

This is a book full of hope, backed with evidence, that there is a prison regime that can provide a chance for dangerous offenders of changing themselves in order not to have more victims. This hope is sustained by the commitment of hard pressed staff working to establish sound relationships of trust within a context of hearing the most horrific life stories and experiences.

It also depends upon the courage and perseverance of countless men who have seriously offended, to risk themselves in open discussion about the secrets and lies that have brought them to their sentence of punishment. Through this involvement it is possible for them to avoid feeling the victim of their experience and take responsibility for their past and present. The authors describe this process with great skill, insight and passion. So this book will help insiders of therapeutic work feel stronger in their commitment but will also provide for those not so convinced, as many colleagues in the Prison Service are, with a strong argument to look at the evidence of the outcomes of the work of therapeutic communities in prison.

The authors remind us of several key issues. It has been known for many years that there are many prisoners who would benefit from the therapeutic community experience — a task force in 1993 identified at least 2,400 when the prison numbers were half what they are now. It is also established through much research that the TC experience is the most effective in reducing reoffending with personality disordered offenders. The whole TC regime is accredited (uniquely) and thus has closely monitored and assessed procedures and processes for audit and inspection.

The advantages of privatisation of prisons were stated to be the potential for innovative systems to be established and there is certainly greater flexibility within Dovegate which the book explores. The capacity to alter systems and improve processes is impressive but the potential advantages in the dynamics of operating a set of therapeutic communities within a large Cat B Local prison have not been explored by management until very recently as the book describes. This may well be largely because the managers of the main prison for

several years did not realise the implications of having such a specialised and sensitive group of treatment systems within the whole prison. It is with the conviction of the key prison manager that therapeutic communities work and have value that the potential for the placement within the bigger prison is being explored, developed and celebrated. The prison as a whole is beginning to celebrate the therapeutic communities rather than resent them and see them as prima donnas. This insiders' view of the changes taking place to maximise the potential of the public investment in developing the prison and its regime is fascinating from authors who only late in their careers have worked for the private sector and who may have had misgivings about the ethics of the venture from the start. The issues concerned with privatisation are well explored by them.

The critical tension between the safety of the therapeutic communities and the need to meet the number of prisoners required in the contract to be paid appropriately has worried senior staff for years and the pressures to maintain numbers has led to dangerous levels of men not in therapy and causing staff stress as a consequence as well as poor audit and inspection results. That the therapeutic communities are recovering from a disastrous period of near collapse as bravely described is due to bold management understanding of the basic safety measure of building a culture of enquiry within the communities rather than seeing them as places to keep full. The demanding dynamics underlying the sensitive and potentially dangerous work when exploring people's traumatic history together in community calls for well qualified staff, good levels of supervision so that they remain safe in their practice and a management that provides a

setting of stability, responsiveness and understanding.

The timing of the publication of the book is helped by a recent review of prison therapeutic communities so that their function is focused on programmes for the personality disordered prisoners and their future looks more secure than at other times in the past. The authors gather strength from this fact and make bold recommendations that may seem challenging at a time of the resource neutral reconviction revolution. It is worth repeating some of these here. They propose -

- a third large TC in the north to complement Grendon and Dovegate
- ten 30-40 bed units in other prisons to match some of the current ones
- four TCs for drug offenders
- PIPES or psychologically informed planned environments to support prisoners as they approach resettlement priorities

This would result in 630 beds for independent democratic therapeutic communities, 400 beds for regional units, 220 for hierarchical units and developed principles in several other prisoners. All these within a context of continuing at Dovegate

- to explore the advantages of having the therapeutic prison within the main prison,
- improving the understanding within the main prison of the nature of the regime in a tc,
- developing the research programme to include an aspect of cost benefit over the years
- integrating more closely with other prison therapeutic communities
- extending the role of prison custody officers
- developing thinking behind the model of a DSPD stepdown regime

- developing a learning disabilities service for prisoners with low IQs or with autistic traits
- developing a sex offender unit to provide safe treatment setting for them
- moving the assessment and resettlement into the main prison and focusing the therapeutic opportunities on all the units with the TC.

You could not ask for much more in a book about a specialised regime in prison. There is enthusiasm for the subject, honesty in the description of the history of Dovegate's therapeutic community enterprise, accessible description of the complexity involved in establishing safety when working with trauma, and boldness in recommending a future that should prove a rollercoaster for those involved.

**Tim Newell** is a retired prison governor, formerly Governor of HMP Grendon and Springhill 1991-2001.

#### Book Review

##### **Prisoners' Rights: Principles and practice**

By Susan Eaton

Publisher: Routledge (2011)

ISBN: 9781843928089 (paperback)

9781843928096 (hardback)

Price: £ 24.99 (paperback) £80.00 (hardback)

In this book Susan Eaton, a Reader in Law at Brunel Law School, provides an introduction to the developments in prisoner rights over the last half a century in the UK, Netherlands and USA. The book is particularly distinguished as it examines the issues not only from a purely legal, jurisprudential perspective, but places these developments in their wider socio-political context and discusses the

underpinning philosophical issues regarding the position of prisoners in society.

The book opens with a context-setting chapter which discusses the notion of the prisoner as citizen. This traces historical developments from prisoners being seen as non-citizens or 'civil dead', to the legal recognition that they retain those rights not necessarily forfeited as a consequence of imprisonment. The succeeding chapters discuss the historical development of prisoners' rights in the three countries. Eaton discusses this development in the context of both wider social developments and emergence of international human rights standards, including the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, the European Prison Rules and the European Convention on Human Rights.

Subsequent chapters consider specific issues and provide a macro-study of the incremental development of prisoner rights through litigation. The issues include: prison conditions, procedural justice, contact with the outside world and the right to equality. Much of this will be familiar to those who have studied or worked in prisons in recent decades, for example the formalisation of prison discipline, the de-politicisation of indeterminate sentencing and access to family contact. There is a particularly interesting chapter on prisoners' voting rights. It was during the 2005 general election campaign that the *Hirst* judgement was issued by the European Court, ruling that the blanket ban on convicted prisoners voting in the UK was unlawful. Lengthy public consultations and full-throated criticisms from within Parliament have followed, but still no change has been introduced. This chapter places the debate within an international and broader philosophical context. This careful analysis brings out the central

importance of the issue and also strips away the emotion.

The closing chapter brings new light to contemporary public debates. Rights, human rights and international standards have been subject to considerable challenge over recent years. There have been proposals to balance rights with responsibilities, suggesting that they should be more conditional; and there have also been controversial public discussions about the importance of rights and whether they have been misused, trivialised or ridiculed. This book concludes by strongly supporting the rights-based approach for protecting those who are vulnerable and curbing the potential excesses of state power.

This discussion of prisoner rights is a welcome addition to the current literature and is particularly timely. By placing rights in their historical, philosophical and social context the book encourages a long-view that is essentially rational and progressive.

#### Book Review

##### **Police culture in a changing world**

By Bethan Loftus

Publisher: Oxford University Press

(2012)

ISBN: 9780199653539 (paperback)

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Price: £ 19.99 (paperback) £55.00 (hardback)

In researching this book, Bethan Loftus interviewed 60 police officers and spent over 600 hours observing them at work. The result is an impressive and enlightening insight into contemporary police culture.

The book opens by setting out the classic works on police culture, which have identified a set of enduring predispositions and values

that have informed police work and shaped their working identity. These include: a preference for the action and excitement of crime fighting; intolerance and prejudice towards those who do not fit into the dominant white, male, heterosexual mould; a suspicious and cynical disposition; and, isolation, solidarity and conservatism. Loftus goes on to describe how it has been argued that a new social field of policing has emerged as a result of changes in policy and politics. She highlights moves to control police practice such as the extensive formalisation brought about by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (1984), but also a demand for more punitive policing through 'crackdowns' and 'zero tolerance' policing. Other changes have included the increasing predominance of race and ethnicity in policing, with moves to improve the sensitivity and reduce discrimination. However, it has also been argued that increasing social and economic inequality has led to the growth of an underclass that the police have been enlisted to control.

The project that Loftus has undertaken is to use her extensive observations and interviews to explore how far the traditional elements of police culture have been maintained and reproduced;

and to see how far they have been displaced by the wider social and organisational changes that have taken place. In doing so, Loftus is essentially exploring the essence of late modernity in the organisational context, with its series of dualities between local and global, traditional and modern, and agency and structure.

Her detailed work reveals that many aspects of traditional culture endure, in particular the preference for action, suspicion, isolation and conservatism. Many of the changes in relation to policing diversity have had some superficial impact, including managing domestic violence and being aware of the issues surrounding the disproportionate policing of minority ethnic groups. However, although policy changes sometimes constrained or enabled particular behaviours, there was still and undercurrent of prejudice, which played out in back-stage talk but also permeated into interactions and the use of discretion. Loftus also helpfully highlights the often unrecognised class dimension in policing, where police would focus on those areas or individuals who on the economic margins. These observations clearly tie the micro-aspects of police work with wider macro-level issues of power and domination. This was reproduced

and reinforced both structurally in police priorities and resourcing but also at an individual level in the ways that officers understood and carried out their work.

This work provides a valuable insight into police work and wider organisational cultures in late modernity. In particular, the dialectical nature of contemporary practice is revealed, characterised as it is by a complex, dynamic interaction between local and global, traditional and modern, and between structure and agency. Loftus has produced an impressive work which will be essential reading for anyone with an interest in the police or wider organisational culture.

As a final word, it is worth acknowledging and recognising that the police supported and facilitated this research at some considerable organisational risk. The work will at times make unpalatable reading and could be used to criticise them. Nevertheless, it is an important work that has provided an insight and raised questions that would not be readily apparent without such in-depth research. Their commitment to a questioning and open approach deserves recognition itself

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