

The Aotearoa handbook of criminology

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Social work and criminology coalesce in many practice settings. My work in the HIV AIDS sector in the 1990s witnessed the arrests and detention of HIV+ men under what I argued then was a draconian application of public health legislation. At the time, I struggled to argue back to the power of such draconian applications; the ideas in this text would have most definitely helped my advocacy. I was pleased to read and review this new handbook covering contemporary debates and practice areas that are relevant to social work in Aotearoa today.

This is a comprehensive and accessible volume, taking a critical, decolonising and feminist view of the issues covered. I liked the approach as those involved in crime, those who work in the field, those arguing for reform and importantly those affected by crime are all in sight. Social workers take an ecological approach to social and interpersonal issues and a focus on both those affecting with those affected by crime is an important focus for our work.

Four sections house 32 chapters, with topics you would expect: Section one introduces crime and sets out clear theoretical understandings of crime and criminology. Section two provides a range of illustrations to bring the theory to life. Environmental crime was particularly interesting (Chapter 10). Sections three and four will be of particular interest to social workers—covering criminal justice and differential experiences respectively. Contemporary areas of police racism and reform, youth justice, neuro-disabilities, gangs and mental health are included chapters. Social work students and practitioners have placements in a couple of practice areas—the gift in this

book is insight into a significant array of experiences and issues.

The chapters are small, 10–12 pages, making this an easy-to-access set of debates. Study questions are always helpful to engage the thinking. A local text for a local audience may limit the book's wider international appeal; nevertheless we need local research and theoretical debates for our people in our place. While children feature in many chapters, a dedicated chapter on child abuse and child welfare would have enhanced the book. Youth justice gets a fuller treatment and, given Aotearoa has such a problem with child abuse, this seemed a curious omission to me.

The closing chapter, "Deportations: Sorting citizens across borders", sensitively and importantly covers the dawn raids from the 1970s and the legacy that is alive today. This chapter and others draw on Australia/Aotearoa-specific differences to highlight how national context and cultural histories so significantly shape both policy and state responses. We are, indeed, very different nations.

Social work students study the courts, legal and justice issues, and section three offers quite an in-depth discussion about the court system, sentencing, restorative justice and rehabilitation theories and methods. I found it refreshing to be updated in these areas; areas of practice I engage in because I work in statutory child protection.

I really like this book. I could dip in and out of areas I was drawn to. I've been a fan of Jan Jordan's work for years (Chapter 6—sexual violence). I have used the Good

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Lives Model (GLM) in radicalisation and extremism casework while in the UK (Chapter 22—Rehabilitations), and I enjoyed the comparison of GLM to the “risk needs responsibility” model. I welcome new and more debates about risk and risk-work. Social work is so often right there.

The application of the ideas to practice settings was underdelivered in the book, perhaps this is not quite the forum to attend to that task. That being said, social work students and practitioners could easily make connections between the ideas and practice responses. A couple of big-ticket items would have benefited from a more critical eye: *trauma* being one; such an overused term in social work today, something we need to take a more critical eye to. What does trauma actually mean, and to whom? Algorithms is another topic I was looking for a more critical treatment of. Like trauma, algorithms feature heavily in social work today, something we do need to be critical of, and question. Given the human rights and justice implications this may be our contribution to make.

Social work is so often in the risk business. Risk-work and making sense of risk and harm are not straightforward. So, we need to keep up to date with criminology ideas and

practice debates and this book is a helpful friend for social workers. Libraries should stock this. Undergraduate study in social policy and sociology would also gain from this text being recommended reading. The easy-to-read chapters provide overviews of the institutions, polices and methods of theorising criminality and penal policy—useful for social workers. I was expecting to see a chapter on pre-colonial Māori society, and while mentioned in Chapter 19 this is an area where I think more could be presented and learned from.

Social work gains from drawing on new knowledge and debate from a range of social sciences. Social work in Aotearoa New Zealand needs contemporary research and debate about criminology and how we come to understand and respond to it, in the most humane of ways, toward the greatest effect. Our ethic of care is enhanced through current knowledge debates about how we come to understand these issues. This book offers a range of critical and helpful chapters to help us do just that. Short and pithy chapters are supported by study questions that invite application of the ideas in theoretical and practical ways. This is a contemporary Aotearoa text that will support social work study, research and practice.

Reviewed by **Tony Stanley**, National Practice Advisor Design, Oranga Tamariki