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***Supervising offenders in the community: A history of probation theory and practice* by Maurice Vanstone, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007, 208 pages. Paperback price £19.99.**

The development of probation services across the Western world has an interesting history. Its location has been in the political debate of what should be done with people who breach the norms of society (in other words offend). This book, which is based upon Vanstone's PhD thesis, covers two distinct periods of time, the inception phase of probation that occurred during the 19th century and then the second half of the 20th century. This latter period mirrors many of the same debates about what approaches and models were effective in various fields of social work from the post war period through to the turn of the millennium.

What I liked about this book was how Vanstone recounted the history. While there is some speculation about the origins of probation work, the concept of releasing people without conviction on some kind of condition that they behave themselves in the future, was a radical departure from the harsh punishments at the time.

While the early period of probation work was signified by addressing moral degeneration and dangerousness through temperance and faith, there was a belief in the efficacy of the probation officers as change agents. This continued through until the 1970s where this position changed. Many of us will remember the managerialism push within agencies during this period. Coupled with this we saw a trend developing within society of risk aversion with actuarial approaches taking centre stage. Criminal justice responses to crime saw a significant increase in incarceration and less trusting of community-based justice. Probation practice found itself caught in the middle of expectations from society while endeavouring to maintain a casework approach which has historically been at the heart of the social work tradition within probation work. Probation practice changed to a focus upon managing risk and public protection and scepticism about efficacy.

Vanstone notes that probation work has always been situated within the political debates of the time about the causes and responses to crime. He notes that probation practice is always balancing competing perspectives: individual explanations versus social constructions, help (care) versus control, and treatment versus practical assistance. Vanstone makes the observation that towards the end of the 20th century probation practice became more prescribed and rule bound with casework taking a back seat.

One could finish this book with a sense of despair for the place of the social work tradition within probation practice. However social work has always been innovative in maintaining a sense of social justice where justice has been absent. It has also stood as a constant reminder that crime is a product of social as well as individual factors.

So what is the future of social work within probation practice? As Vanstone notes 'the single most positive feature of the Carter Review (2003) is its commitment to reducing prison popula-

tion and widening the contribution of community supervision; probation might yet be able to exploit that commitment to further the contribution of social justice to criminal justice' (p159).

Vanstone's work speaks to the New Zealand context as much as to other Western contexts (UK, USA, Canada, Australia) and therefore is informative about where probation practice might need to travel in order to remain a worthy part of the social service fabric. While probation practice and policy cannot help being influenced by those in power (who are in turn influenced by lobby groups such as the Sensible Sentencing Trust), probation practice must trust its experience in knowing how to manage offenders in the community, use the most current evidenced based ideas about change, and remain true to its humanitarian roots. Otherwise it will become yet another form of unthinking control.

Ken McMaster
Social worker.

Eloise's excellent experiment by Nikki Evans and Brontë Evans Pollock, University of Canterbury. Paperback, 36 pages. \$22 (incl. postage and package).

When this book arrived for review my interest was immediately raised because it is obviously a children's book. The bright and inviting cover with the childlike artistic portrayal of Eloise's face is an appetiser for what is to come. In 36 pages divided into five chapters, Evans and her daughter Brontë tell an 'excellently clever' story. Eloise is a 'regular' girl with not so regular 'worries' that interfere significantly with her ability to enjoy life. Eloise has an 'excellently clever' idea. She will experiment with all the suggestions of helpful others to find out what works and develop a 'super duper worry taming package'. The story reminded me of my own efforts as a parent to help one of my daughters with the 'worries'. Our experiments were in the pre-internet days and included telling your worries to the Thai Worry Dolls and putting them under the pillow before sleep at night. Garth's (1992) *Moonbeam*, was also amongst our repertoire with its guided meditations and visualisations especially for children.

Eloise's excellent experiment is a book that a child could use independently or with support from a caring other. Stylistically the book is evocative, written in large print peppered with differing fonts and BOLD lettering. This coupled with the illustrations make for a fun read. When Eloise taps into her power through taking massive whale sized breaths I found I was drawn in, experiencing the exhilaration of it all. This is an empowering book given how disabling worries and anxieties are for young children. Mostly it is well paced and will be a great resource for young and middle years children, schools, families and those providing therapeutic support to children. It can be obtained from the University Bookshop (Canterbury) or ordered directly from Nikki Evans, School of Social Work and Human Services, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch 8140. Order forms are available on line.

Helen Simmons,
Book Review Editor.

Reference

Garth, M. (1992). *Moonbeam: A book of meditations for children*. Melbourne: HarperCollins.

Postscript (from Ria, Helen's daughter)

I felt the book would be good to use with children who have the worries, as it does offer suggestions or ways to cure the worries. If a parent was reading this book for a worried child, they could suggest trying out all of the suggested worry cures with their child. It is a relatively easy read with simple illustrations.

***Poverty, policy and the state: Social security reform in New Zealand.* By Michael O'Brien. The Policy Press, United Kingdom, 2008. Hardback, 280 pages.**

In whatever social work role I've had poverty has always been a prevalent theme. My friend, the late John Bradley, talked regularly about the 'culture of poverty' and the pervasive impact it has on the lives of our clients. This has also been my observation over the past 25 years of social work practice. It reinforces the need to centralise structural analysis in our work. This alongside my need to 'bone up' on social policy led me to request this book to review.

O'Brien states that as social workers we have a 'fundamental moral and ethical requirement to do all that we can to improve the lives and circumstances of those who have inadequate incomes and/or poor living standards' (p. 86). The political context we work in this century appears to have marginalised this requirement and practitioners who hold onto it in their practice can find themselves at best ignored and at worst, alienated and silenced alongside their clients.

O'Brien's work confirms what you as social work practitioners already know; that Pacific peoples have the lowest standard of living in Aotearoa, that Māori are next, that lone parents are vulnerable to poverty and that children are over represented amongst the poor. The reality of poverty is best illustrated for me in O'Brien's book in the tables. I have heard too many parents say they went without food so their children could eat and in Table 5.1 O'Brien names this straightforwardly as households going without meals. He later describes the psychic consequences of poverty as 'desperateness, sense of failure, stigmatisation, hopelessness and frustration' (p. 106).

I found the change in citizenship over time theme running through the book most interesting. It has been a powerful shift in our society – from social policy being focused on the rights of citizenship to responsibilities. The ultimate goal for us all is assumed to be financial independence and to do everything we can to participate in the workforce. If we fail in this we may be seen as 'deserving' and receive some assistance or if 'undeserving' we will have to take whatever steps the state ascribes in order to get financial support. The resonance to the 19th century is present in this thinking and discourse, for example, giving 'a hand up and not a hand out' (p. 179). What I find disturbing is the ease with which this ideological shift is accepted by the 'average kiwi'.

In part an explanation for this is given in discussing the reality of globalisation. In 2009 the reality will 'hit home' as the impact of the global recession permeates our daily lives. O'Brien describes this process as 'soft globalisation'; the state 'mediates' (p. 142) the impact of external forces.

Overall the scholarship in this book is excellent; it is an informed and thoughtful work. It is also an important contribution to our 'body of knowledge' in that it intelligently addresses

how the state deals with poverty. However, I found it 'hard going', which may reflect that I was on leave and it is not light holiday reading, but rather somewhat 'dense'. That said, it is still a useful edition to any social work library, for social policy students or for those particularly interested in the topic.

Lesley Pitt,
Tutor, Western Institute of Technology at Taranaki.

***Ethics for health care.* Edited by Catherine Berglund. Published by Oxford University Press, South Melbourne, 2007. Paperback, 239 pages.**

Ethics is at the heart of social work practice and the relationships between ethics, values and morals are clearly reflected in our Code of Ethics (ANZASW, 2007). Our emphasis on social justice and identifying with oppressed groups means that we are at times in conflict with our health colleagues and the organisation we work within when faced with ethical issues and dilemmas (Banks, 2006; Beckett & Maynard, 2005). Social work students and beginning practitioners in the health field need to be supported to develop critical thinking and reflection in relation to ethical issues in order to work in the health field and Berglund's latest edition on ethics provides a sound starting point.

The preface to the third edition of this book succinctly explains that reading this text will not make the reader an expert in ethics, but will rather 'start you on the path of ethical reflection' (p. xi).

This is an easily accessible primer on ethical practice in the health care arena for all health care professionals. The chapters are well set out and logical in sequence with clear objectives, keywords and an outline at the start of each chapter. A positive aspect of Berglund's work is that she uses examples from both the Australian and New Zealand health systems.

Berglund highlights how ethics are dynamic and she encourages self reflection with 'pause and reflect' boxes throughout. All these factors make the topic of ethics, which can seem daunting to students and new practitioners, easy to understand. Berglund's approach is to gently guide the reader by starting with '... small steps, and gradually build your options for analysis' (p 2). The book is interactive and has numerous exercises throughout.

In the 'real world' of health care social workers have to work with the multidisciplinary team (MDT). Although conflict will inevitably arise in teams, discussing ethical viewpoints can enhance teamwork and collaboration. Ethical decision making in an MDT needs to move from '... abstract philosophy to sociological concerns about the ongoing processes involved in patient and family care' (McGrath, Henderson & Holewa, 2006, p. 158). Berglund's book supports this and encourages the development of MDT discussions on ethics as part of team development with the client/patient in the centre of all discussions.

I recommend this book for social work students and those new to health care as a solid and practical text that will engage the reader. This text should also be supplemented by other specific social work texts on ethics and by the use of critical reflection to encourage the integration of ethics with practice.

Kim Fry,

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