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Miscellaneous Studies

Editorial

Most academic journals depend on spontaneous offers from authors who want to have their articles published. The contents of these journals vary considerably. This might be the reason that there seems to be an increasing specialisation in the titles of journals. (Another reason for this might be the marketing policy of proliferation by the publishing companies.) The European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research aims to be a general journal for the criminal justice field. Its specialisation is evident in the single topic issues, which seem to be of interest from a research based policy perspective. Every issue of the journal concentrates on one main topic and is compiled using articles from experts (mostly researchers, sometimes policy makers. The Editorial Board is responsible for the make-up of the issue, and is guided by knowledge of the field, searches of the Information Department of the WODC (Research and Documentation Centre of the Dutch Ministry of Justice) and sometimes by suggestions put forward by members of the Advisory Board of the journal. Every edition of the journal can actually be seen as an state-of-the-art collection of information on the subject.

For this reason the journal has an invitational editorial policy. Authors are invited to contribute to the journal, and the Editors are happy to announce that their requests are scarcely ever ignored or turned down.

Regularly, however, articles are spontaneously sent in by authors who want to have their work published in this journal. These contributions are welcomed by the editors. Sometimes they trigger the idea for a complete edition on the subject. Sometimes they are published in the Current Issues section, and sometimes they are kept in stock or have to be refused. Over the last few months of 1998 the Editors received a series of high quality articles. They therefore decided to make an exception to the editorial policy and proudly present this issue of miscellaneous studies. It is an indication that the journal is appreciated and trusted as a publication in the criminal justice field.

The issue begins with an article by Michael Tonry on community penalties. These penalties have proliferated in the United States since the early 1980s. Simultaneously it is true to say, however, that they, conceptualised as 'alternatives to incarceration', have conspicuously failed as a device for diverting otherwise prison-bound offenders from penal institutions. The US Department of Justice has supported a series of evaluations carried out on a wide range of newly developed community penalties, like house arrest, electronic monitoring, intensively supervised probation, mandatory drug treatment, community service, day-reporting centres, restitution centres, and day fines. Boot camps which, though not 'community penalties', are generally considered 'intermediate sanctions' because they are sometimes used as substitutes for lengthy prison terms. Tonry writes about each community penalty, although the emphasis is on the more substantial evaluations and literature reviews. The last part of the article discusses the difficulties of community penalties in the United States and compares the US to European states.

Felipe Estrada offers an interesting comparative article on the development of juvenile crime. Explanations of juvenile crime trends often try to account for a continuous upward trend for the post-war period. This study indicates, however, that what ought in fact to be explained is a situation where the number of juvenile offenders first increases (circa 1950(1975) and then is stable during the subsequent decades. On the basis of data from several Western and Northern

European countries the author tries to find answers to this decrease in several theories, such as the routine activities approach and social control theory, and in differing social circumstances. Since violent crimes make up a very small part of the total of juvenile offences, changes in the level of violent offending are easily lost in descriptions of underlying crime trends. A more specific analysis of the trends in juvenile violence is conducted for the period after 1980. The study suggests that the usual accounts of post-war trends in juvenile crime do not correspond with the factual development.

Thomas Ohlemacher presents a study on a very difficult subject to investigate. A substantial quantitative sample of restaurateurs of different ethnic origin in Germany today was interviewed using a variety of methods with a focus on their victimisation experiences. They were particularly asked for information on their experience of extortion, especially demands for protection money, and corruption among government officials of any kind. Although the restaurateurs actually interviewed are similar to the (starting) samples drawn from the yellow pages, there are differences relative to the target population and - this is the major flaw - the samples are based on a low response rate. Therefore, the indicators of direct and indirect victimisation (own victimisation and that of friends or acquaintances) cannot be generalised. However, the perceived victimisation (that is, the estimated rate of victimisation in the same city or region, business sector and ethnic group) may be used as a valid test. The perceived victimisation is the cumulation of individual realities and therefore it is of substantial value as the aggregate social reality of real and potential victims (which can be contrasted with several other constructions of reality (e.g. the media's)). The perception of the Lebenswelt-experts seems to be far removed from the media's claim of a ubiquitous threat.

Karin Wittebrood and Paul Nieuwbeerta examine whether there is a link between offending and the risk of violent victimisation in the Netherlands. They explore the extent to which this link can be explained by differences in people's lifestyle. Two explanations for the relationship between violent victimisation and offending are usually given in criminological literature: a comparable general lifestyle or a direct influence of delinquent conduct on the risk of violent victimisation. Data are analysed on the past 25 years in the lives of 1,939 respondents, who constituted a representative reflection of the Dutch population in 1996. The results show that people who engage in violent crimes and vandalism are at greater risk of being victims than people who do not and that this relationship can only be partially explained by lifestyle.

J.C. Wilson and G.M. Davies write on the use of videotapes for juvenile witnesses in Criminal Courts in England. The UK Criminal Justice Act of 1991 allowed the videotaped evidence of a child to be substituted for the child's evidence-in-chief in a criminal court. The present study examined both a sample of children testifying and the national UK statistics on children appearing in court. Most child witnesses appeared in cases of indecent assault with nearly all child witnesses being victims of some form of sexual assault.

Annie Kensey and Pierre Tournier discuss the prison population in France by analysing changes in terms of individual detainee characteristics and the issue of prison overcrowding. In France, density is calculated on a national basis. This leaves two important questions unanswered: are the different prisons comparable in terms of the accommodation they provide, and consequently, are detainees incarcerated in similar conditions according to their penal status? Other subjects discussed in this article are long prison terms and recidivism rates. Attention here was exclusively focused on those prisoners released in 1982, and on every sentence subsequently entered on their criminal record, irrespective of whether a prison sentence was involved or not, over the same four-year observation period.

Because of the miscellaneous character of this issue there is no Current Issues section. The Crime Institute Profile is about the Centre for Criminal Justice Studies of the University of Leeds. It was prepared by Adam Crawford and Clive Walker.