

Editorial

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the fourth edition of the European Journal of Probation. The editorial board continues to be delighted with the journal's expansion and growing reach, which is reflected in this edition in two papers from North America – extending our coverage in the last year to three continents. European probation continues to have much to learn from jurisdictions further afield – both in terms of progressive innovation and in terms of policies and practices that might be best avoided. Happily, both of the North American papers in this edition fall clearly into the former category.

Serin, Lloyd and Hanby's paper on prisoner re-entry ('resettlement' in European parlance) begins by explaining the scale of the re-entry challenges facing probation and parole services in the USA as a result of its recent history of penal expansionism. As they note, fiscal pressures and ideological shifts have recently aligned in such a way as to re-energise rehabilitative work, but it remains an open question whether the available research evidence can adequately equip services to face the re-entry challenge. Reflecting and developing previous debates in EJP about models of rehabilitation and about their role in supporting desistance from crime (Raynor, Robinson, 2009; McNeill, 2009; Ward, 2009; Trotter, 2009), perhaps the principal importance of Serin, Lloyd and Hanby's rests in its original and rigorous attempt to bring together bodies of evidence that have too often been discussed and debated separately. In doing so, they edge us closer towards a more fully integrated theory and practice of reintegration.

Loren Walker's paper on Huikahi Restorative Circles provides for a quite different, but equally fascinating and useful paper on re-entry; this time focused on the way in which restorative circles serve to mobilise people's own resources, and those of their informal social support systems of family, friends and fellow community members in the re-entry process. In some respects, this is a salutary paper, challenging probation professionals to think and look beyond their own resources and expertise, and even to cede control to those most centrally involved in the change process.

Trish McCulloch's paper on community service, pro-social modelling and desistance, also focuses in practice innovation, specifically reflecting on her experience and evaluation of an effort in one Scottish locality to enhance community service supervision by training staff in pro-social modelling. As she reveals however, enhancing community service turns out to be a complex business – and will continue to be so as long as its core purposes remain contested.

Continuing the concern with practice development, Sirdifield, Gardner and Brooker's paper presents a compelling case that mental health training should be a part of any developing European probation curriculum. Sirdifield, Gardner and Brooker draw effectively on Canton's (2009) earlier work on the transfer of probation policy and practice across jurisdictions to guard against the risks of the inappropriate or ill-considered imposition of culturally insensitive approaches to training and practice development.

If these four papers represent quite diverse (though not inconsistent) arguments for developing more progressive practices, then Aline Bauwens' paper on method triangulation in probation research makes an equally important contribution by encouraging us to think more deeply about how we might best construct research studies that allow us to better understand and evaluate probation practice. Her arguments apply as much to researching existing practices as they do to evaluating new initiatives, like those discussed above. Bearing in mind Canton's arguments about policy and practice transfer, Bauwens' paper is also important in helping us to develop approaches to probation research that help us to understand more deeply what probation is and what probation means in different places.

After all, progressive practice development depends as much on understanding where we are in probation terms and who we are as probation educators and practitioners, as it does on determining where we want to get to and who we want to become.

The Editorial Board

References:

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