



Book Review of:

Offender Rehabilitation: Theory, Research, and Practice

Gwen Robinson and Iain Crow

Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2009

Hardback \$99.95; xii + 190 pp.

Offender Rehabilitation: Theory, Research and Practice examines the rise, fall, and rebirth of the conceptualization and practice of rehabilitation. Robinson and Crow discuss the theory and practice of offender rehabilitation and their relative merits. The very definition of rehabilitation is explored as is whether or not rehabilitation should be offered in place of punishment or as part of punishment. The very concept of rehabilitation is called into question. Rehabilitating an offender might be returning that person to a “socially desirable state” where he/she does not offend, is psychologically and socially well-adjusted, and is productive. Many offenders, however, may never have occupied such a “socially desirable state” to begin with; so how does rehabilitation return a person to a place that he/she has never been? This is one of the aspects of rehabilitation that is explored.

The authors begin their book by exploring the historical context of three periods of offender rehabilitation: classical to positivist, corporal to carceral, and carceral to community. Classical criminology focused on the offense but positivists began to focus primarily on the offender. Corporal punishment transformed into incarceration, and more recently incarceration has transformed into community treatment.

Offender Rehabilitation also contains a chapter on the evaluation of offender rehabilitation: program aims, program implementation and integrity, outcome criteria, and offending as an outcome. Many previous rehabilitation programs have not

been evaluated and so their efficacy has been unknown. The remainder of the book focuses on: offender assessment, behavioral programs, social rehabilitation, and rehabilitation in the relational context. Offenders must be assessed properly so that they can be placed into the correct program. These programs may focus on individual behavior, how an offender fits into social groups, and even how offenders relate to their victims in programs such as restorative justice.

Robinson and Crow have developed a satisfactory primer on the complex and increasingly important topic of offender rehabilitation. The financial, personal, and

social costs of offender rehabilitation are high. *Offender Rehabilitation* is well-written, easy to comprehend, and touches upon major issues in less than 200 pages. The book is appropriate for undergraduate students, graduate students, or anyone interested in a general reference about offender rehabilitation. The book is suitable as a stand-alone text or in conjunction with scholarly articles on the same topic.

While *Offender Rehabilitation* has no fatal flaws, readers should not expect the authors to provide them with a complete review of the entire subject matter. This is not to the authors' detriment; to provide a thorough review of the subject matter Robinson and Crow would have to publish a book with several times the number of pages. Even still, the authors would have to publish updated editions every few years as the practices and research in the area of offender rehabilitation changes rapidly.

Offender Rehabilitation provides a framework for scholars and students to understand the topic. It is easily read and written by experts in the field. Anyone interested in the topic of offender rehabilitation should read this book.

*Reviewed by Daniel W. Phillips III, Ph.D.,
Associate Professor of Sociology and
Criminal Justice, Lindsey Wilson College,
Columbia, KY 42728,
phillipsd@lindsey.edu.*