

are not viewed passively and their agency in responding to and adapting to these contexts is also revealed throughout the book, alongside the manner in which different forms of organization also serve the professions' own interests. The text also takes a historical perspective to examine the manner in which the occupations have developed over time. Furthermore, the contributions provide theoretical frameworks which are generalizable to other professions and, indeed, to the work organization of non-expert occupations. The book, therefore, has wider applicability than may be initially thought (the chapters by Adler and Kwon, Hodgson, Kirkpatrick and Kipping are particularly strong in this regard).

The book generally takes a Marxian perspective which is reinforced by focussing on neo-liberal nations and it may also have been beneficial to see what is happening in other politico-economic systems to further test the applicability of the editors' framework. Although not problematic as the analyses are heavily contextualized, this remains a caveat nonetheless. It may also have been beneficial to broaden the focus more explicitly to other professions and occupations attempting to professionalize (for example in HR) but it is noted that a wider focus may have detracted from the richness of analysis.

I would wholeheartedly recommend this book to anyone interested in the professions and to students of work and organizational sociology, although the price may be off-putting and the book is not currently available in paperback. I would also recommend the book as supplementary reading on courses concerned more generally with the changing nature of work in society as a whole, possibly through library purchases.

J. Bennett, B. Crewe and A. Wahidin (eds)

Understanding Prison Staff

Devon: Willan Publishing, 2008, no price stated hbk, \$44.95 pbk (ISBN: 9781843922742), 384 pp.

■ **Karen Lumsden**, *University of Aberdeen*

Understanding Prison Staff is a collection of essays focusing on the daily lives of individuals working within prisons. The editors argue that the study of prison staff is important because of the effects of prison staff on individuals in custody and the impact of prison work on staff themselves. Prison staff should be viewed as a distinct occupational group worthy of study in their own right (p. 2). This collection also contributes towards conceptual issues beyond the realm of criminal justice, such as 'the nature of power, punishment, order, inequality, care, discretion and resistance' (p. 2). It demonstrates that considerable progress has been made in the UK in recent years in terms of furthering our understanding of the occupational world of prison staff.

The book is intended as a starting point for those interested in the subject and as such, the editors make no claims that it is comprehensive or conclusive. The contributors consist of practitioners, research students, established academics, and a former

prisoner. Each chapter is accompanied by suggestions for further reading and review questions for seminar discussions. They also vary in tone, orientation, political framework, methodological stance, and analytical and descriptive content. The book is organized into five distinct sections: (1) Prisons and Staff Issues; (2) Prison Officers; (3) Prison Managers; (4) Prison Staff; (5) Developing the Human Resources of Prisons.

The first section on 'Prisons and Staff Issues' is comprised of five chapters. Jason Warr begins with an insightful personal reflection on the effects of prison staff on prisoners. King discusses international perspectives on the problem of violence, negligence, and abuse in prisons, and how this might be avoided by various improvements in staff numbers and training. The remaining three chapters are concerned with the experiences of ethnic minority prison officers, the influence of gender in prison officer culture, and the role of prison staff in the public and private sectors. This group of contributions is the least cohesive and at this point it becomes evident that the book's structure would benefit from the inclusion of an outline at the beginning of each section.

The second section on 'Prison Officers' discusses industrial relations, cohesion, conflict and order in prison officer culture, and occupational morality. Bennett and Wahidin outline the stereotypical portrayals of industrial relations in prisons while Crawley and Crawley discuss the occupational culture of prison officers. Included here are the ways in which prison officers who are involved in more therapeutic regimes manage a 'spoiled identity' (p. 146) and how workers are changed by prison life. In the next chapter Drake argues that forms of order differ depending on the ways in which staff emphasize the policies and control mechanisms at their disposal. The final two chapters in this section focus on human suffering and punishment in prison. Scott's chapter is analytically and theoretically illuminating in its discussion of the denial and acknowledgement of prisoner suffering by prison officers, while Sim focuses on the negative impact of prison officer culture on prisoners and those staff who show 'humane empathy' to prisoners (p. 189).

In 'Prison Managers', the roles of governors, middle, and first-line managers, are discussed in relation to organizational changes in the Prison Service. The fourth section on 'Prison Staff' is concerned with different occupational groups within prison culture such as probation officers, teachers, psychologists, drug workers and health professionals. These sections are particularly relevant in demonstrating that prison staff are not a 'homogenous bloc'. As a group they are 'complex and differentiated', and there are significant distinctions both within and between different staff groupings (p. 425). The final section follows on from this by providing an analysis of human resources within prisons.

Due to its broad scope and the variety of contributors, the text is more descriptive than analytical; however it is methodologically and politically diverse. Each chapter either implicitly or explicitly suggests what should be done in the future and the theme of 'discretion and power' is also common throughout a number of chapters (p. 421). Due to its broad scope it is best placed as an introductory text for students, practitioners and academics interested in this topic.

This collection of essays does what it sets out to do. It sheds light on the under-researched and hitherto ignored world of prison staff: the so-called 'invisible ghosts of penality' (Liebling, 2000: 337). Overall, *Understanding Prison Staff* provides a long-awaited insight into the lives of those individuals who work within the prison

confines and is thus a welcome addition to criminal justice, criminology, sociology and the study of work, employment and organizations.

Reference

Liebling, A. (2000) 'Prison Officers, Policing and the Use of Discretion', *Theoretical Criminology* 3(2): 173–87.

Geoffrey Wood and Chris Brewster (eds)

Industrial Relations in Africa

Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, £60.00 hbk (ISBN: 023001366X), xiii + 264 pp.

■ Adam Rostis, Saint Mary's University, Canada

In *Industrial Relations in Africa*, Geoffrey Wood and Chris Brewster set out to explore the contemporary state of labour unions in Africa, and determine the prospects for revitalization. Despite this rather gloomy supposition that there is nowhere to go but up, Wood and Brewster attempt to bring together a balanced picture of African labour relations. This is a much-needed book, as the editors correctly indicate, because little has been written on industrial relations in Africa. The editors have taken a geographical approach and lead the reader through a wide-ranging tour of Africa. This tour is bookended by a very useful introduction that summarizes the chapters, and a conclusion that examines cross-continental trends. This presentation style allows the book to be used in at least two ways. First, as a desk reference, the individual country chapters provide in-depth narratives on contemporary and historical industrial relations in many African nations south of the Sahara. While the editors suggest that the internal chapters are the result of primary research by the authors, it would be more appropriate to say that they are historiographies. One exception is Pauline Dibben's chapter on unions and insecurity in South Africa. The second possible use of the book can be found in the introduction and two concluding chapters: these provide an ideal primer on the opportunities and challenges for industrial relations in Africa for those with little to no knowledge of the continent. What the internal chapters lack in analysis, the introductory and concluding chapters make up for in terms of their synthesis of common themes.

The treatment of industrial relations on a country-by-country basis is a welcome portrayal of Africa as a diverse, complex continent. However, the re-emergence of themes throughout the country chapters suggests more commonality than difference in industrial relations on the continent. The final chapter on intra-African issues confirms this suspicion: industrial relations is dominated by colonialism, structural adjustment, the informal sector, the involvement of unions in liberation struggles, the role of international organizations, and multinationals. Therefore, the case that industrial relations is sufficiently different to warrant country chapters is not clear, and repetitions of

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