Changing Lives: Delinquency Prevention as Crime Control Policy
Tanner, Julian
Social Forces; Jun 2007; 85, 4; ProQuest
pg. 1814

Changing Lives: Delinquency Prevention as Crime Control Policy

By Peter W. Greenwood
University of Chicago Press, 2006. 224 pages. $37 (cloth)

Reviewer: Julian Tanner, *University of Toronto*

This book is about crime prevention – what works, what doesn't work, and why. This is not exactly uncharted territory. Nevertheless, Peter Greenwood has delivered a fascinating and persuasive overview of the efficacy, or otherwise, of contemporary crime preventative programs operative in the United States.

Prevention is defined in a fairly rudimentary fashion: as the process of discouraging young people, particularly the small number of high risk adolescents who stand the greatest chance of becoming chronic offenders, from delinquent activity and adult criminality. His focus is very much on interventions that might interrupt life course trajectories from early delinquency to lifelong criminality. He emphasizes early on in the book that many crime prevention programs have never been properly evaluated, and of those that have, relatively few can be deemed successful.

An early chapter traces the development of the preventative ideal, contrasting it with more reactive, control-oriented, anti-crime policies. He identifies a small number of delinquency prevention programs aimed at high risk youth that achieve their crime reduction goals at a lower cost than other anti-crime initiatives. Invariably, these programs involve some form of family therapy, and are not conducted within the confines of correctional institutions. At the same time, he also acknowledges that some of the more successful delinquency prevention programs were never initially conceived as such. He cites a well-established and rigorously evaluated nurse visiting program – in which community nurses in regular contact with low-income new mothers are provided tutelage in parenting skills – that has the welcome long-term affect of reducing crime among their otherwise high-risk children as they reach adolescence. Similarly, programs more explicitly concerned with adolescent development and health promotion than criminal justice issues have often been more effective in discouraging crime than other programs formally charged with this task.

For the most part his discussion of prevention involves fairly conventional measures of program success and failure – recidivism and reconviction rates, and so forth. However, what it is innovative about Greenwood's account is the additional application of economic criteria – cost benefit and cost efficiency analyses, which help determine how much success can be achieved with the available dollars. Some programs might be very effective, but also very costly. Other programs might be just as effective and also less expensive.

The crime prevention programs that we are most likely to have heard about often turn out to be the least successful, contrary to the claims of their advocates. Greenwood tells an interesting tale about such high-profile deterrence-based duds as Scared Straight, Project Dare and boot camp. Their ineffectiveness has not led, however, to their abandonment. It is quite remarkable how unsuccessful projects continue to be funded. Partial explanation of this farcical outcome stems

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

from the latent functioning of these programs. Project Dare may have failed to turn American teenagers against drugs, but as a means of enhancing the public's perception of the police it has worked wonderfully well.

The final part of the book deals with the implementation of delinquency prevention programs: more precisely, the nature of the barriers that prevent the implementation of programs, that properly evaluated, have passed muster as successful programs. One would have to be extremely naïve to believe that the accumulation and dissemination of evidence supportive of one type of programming over another will axiomatically result in its adoption. Such is not the case; politics are involved, to state the blindingly obvious. As Greenwood sees it there are two perennial problems: "the American penchant for punishment and the demand for quick solutions in dealing with crime." (p. 156) Therein lies the reason for the continued existence of anti-crime programs that repeatedly fail.

This book is a welcome addition to the field. Few will be surprised to hear about the failings of Scared Straight and boot camp. However, program evaluation that includes cost benefit analysis is new – or at least is new to me. The book will also be very valuable for policymakers, those in a position to pick and choose crime prevention programs. Greenwood's advice in this regard is faithful replication of successful programs. He has fashioned a remarkably erudite volume out of what might be regarded as rather dry raw material.

In a New Land: A Comparative View of Immigration
By Nancy Foner
New York University Press, 2005. 327 pages. $65 (cloth), $22 (paper)

Reviewer: Aubrey W. Bonnett, *SUNY College at Old Westbury*

Nancy Foner is a prolific writer on the immigration front, especially with reference to aspects pertaining to West Indians – both in London and New York – and, indirectly, on the out migration from their native homelands.

The text is divided in three sections, with a total of nine chapters, in which the author draws historical and sociological comparisons between West Indians, while focusing also on the "comparisons across time between New York's two great waves of immigration." In these chapters Foner is able to weave the issues of gender, transnationalism, the concern of some working and lower-class African Americans with the use of immigrants to further depress their socio-economic position (especially in urban contexts), the social construction of Race, and a comparison with past and current immigration trends in Europe.

The chapters are well written, especially the first, which gives a vivid description and socio-historical analysis of the advantages of Race in American immigration, the use of "whiteness" as a salient discriminant among early immigrants, and its use now to further exclude African Americans and other recent transnational immigrants from enjoying the American Dream. In the first section, Foner continues to use the comparative thrust as she further examines the social distance and competition among African Americans and the newest immigrants

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.