

# Book reviews

**The Impact of Addictive Substances and Behaviours on Individual and Societal Well-Being (Part of the Series: Governance of Addictive Substances and Behaviour)**

*Edited by Anderson, P., Rehm, J. and Room, R.*

*Oxford University Press*

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This book is the second in a series of publications arising from the Addictions and Lifestyles in Contemporary Europe – Reframing Addictions Project cross-national study examining drug and alcohol use. Peter Anderson's foreword outlines the study's aims: to consider cross-European addictions and lifestyles in context "so that we can better redesign their governance".

The first section puts substance use into a wider context. Sullivan and Hagen's historical and anthropological perspective underlines that drug use has been driven by biological and behavioural reinforcers and that drug users are active in the constantly changing process, not the passive actors they are often portrayed as. They do this by discussing plant toxins which have been part of animal and human diets for millions of years, often with beneficial consequences. Schmidt reflects on the increasing number of behaviours considered under the heading "addictions", calling this the "pan-addiction model", largely in response to the rise of the internet and general globalisation.

This means there are greater arrays of behaviours constantly available to potential "addicts". She links this to the medicalisation of what may be "normal" behaviours, increasing medical power-bases. She concedes that the society has not been able to respond to the changes presented by the pan-addiction model; and medicine may be providing a valuable function, preventing greater societal harms.

Stoll and Anderson's chapter provides a number of helpful models to consider health

and well-being, individual and societal. They conclude that there is no country or group of countries which are "optimal in promoting quality of life, material living conditions and sustainability of well-being over time." Shield and Rehm consider the global burden of disease and disability presented by addictive behaviours by considering alcohol, illicit/prescription drug use, gambling and tobacco. Using data from the Global Burden of Disease's study, they conclude that the burden of addictive behaviours/substances increased between 1990 and 2010. They emphasise that the impact on deprived populations is greater than on affluent ones, leading to greater inequality.

Two chapters consider research on prevention and education. Conrod *et al.* focus on binge drinking and drug use amongst European youth, concluding that although some interventions have shown local promise, no recommendations can yet be made for broader policy implementation. Moskalewicz and Klingermann's chapter summarises the impact of societal stigma, historical and current, on how substance users are regarded. They show how this has exaggerated health inequalities because of the way "treatments" have been operationalised through the addiction treatment and criminal justice systems and the moral judgements that underpin how substance users are regarded.

The remainder of the book discusses the socio-economic costs of substance use. Dubanowicz and Lemmens consider the impacts of austerity and economic downturns upon different types of substance use. Alcohol and tobacco use tends to fall in response to restrictions in affordability; however, the impact is increased, e.g. increased alcohol-related suicides. The impact on illicit drug use is inconsistent. The most important driver of inequality is welfare cuts, invariably introduced in times of economic austerity. Shields *et al.* summarise the social costs of addictive behaviours in Europe, estimating them at 300 billion euros.

Robin Room's chapter emphasises how policies which aim to control addictions create greater social and economic inequalities as poorer users are subjected to greater marginalisation and stigmatisation. Miller and Harkins' final substantive chapter summarises some of the evidence concerning how the behaviours of big alcohol and tobacco are at times "institutionally corrupt", and that minimal governmental responses add to wider societal costs and greater inequalities.

In the final chapter, Room Anderson and Rehm identify what they regard as the book's key messages. First, addiction is part of a continuum of substance use, with wider societal costs at all stages of this continuum. Second, the aim of policy makers should be to promote positive health, which requires balancing the interests of key stakeholders – opposing

them if they act to wider public detriment. Third, "nudging" techniques should be employed to point the wider population in the direction of positive health changes.

The editors have made a commendable effort to combine a series of disparate topics. I recommend this book as an excellent overview of substance use and addictive behaviours for students and practitioners interested in gaining an international insight into the promotion of public health and understanding the interaction between this and substance use.

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**Palgrave Macmillan**

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Close in content and structure to the original PhD thesis completed at the University of Sheffield, this book contributes to our understanding of the background, trajectory, and experience in the dual worlds of crime and prison of Jamaican origin drug dealers locked up in British prisons. The scene is set over the first 80 or so pages, with chapters on the Jamaican and UK contexts, reviews of the literature on drug supply, and accounts of the migration experience. It is from Chapter 5 onwards that the author comes to the gritty heart of the matter, taking us into the drug dealing life world of her informants, their experience of violence used both instrumentally and casually, of the contrasting policing styles in Jamaica and in the UK, and of prison seen respectively through Jamaican and Black British eyes.

While much of it is familiar, the material contains extensive excerpts from recorded

interviews with her eight informants that resonate with the authenticity of lived experience and the deep insight of people with time for self-reflection. It is a story worth retelling, both in order to, pace Phillippe Bourgois, humanise marginal populations and draw out the ambiguities of people's situations in the realities of the illicit drug markets. Even with the most harrowing experience of violence, the distinction between victim and perpetrator is so unclear in cultures with deep histories of injustice and living outside the law. As entrenched as criminal behaviour may be, it rarely seems to deserve the label "organised". There appear to be loose associations rather than firm structures, which raises questions about the assumptions behind the sentencing tariffs.

Based on prison interviews, the book sits between or across different genres, but cannot be classified either as a biography, life story or oral history, or an ethnography. One of the difficulties with the interview-based approach, without the confirmation from third parties or routine observations in ordinary settings, is checking on the veracity of the accounts.

**Journeys into Drugs and Crime: Jamaican Men Involved in the UK Drugs Trade**