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Book Review: Jeffrey Ian Ross and Stephen C. Richards *Beyond Bars: Rejoining Society After Prison* New York: Penguin Group, Inc., 2009. 224 pp. ISBN 978-1-59257-851-1

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roles of public fear, claims-making, and media attention in sex offender policy. The material offered by these authors could be used to bridge the gap between our sociological and psychological understanding of sex offenders, offending, and the legislative solutions offered to address the problem behavior.

Jeffrey Ian Ross and Stephen C. Richards

Beyond Bars: Rejoining Society After Prison New York: Penguin Group, Inc., 2009. 224 pp.
ISBN 978-1-59257-851-1

Reviewed by: Lisa Marie Carter, *Indiana University of Pennsylvania, PA, USA*

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Offenders leaving prison may see rejoining society as a source of incredible liberation, full of freedoms only dreamt about behind bars. However, their fantasies are rarely experienced once outside and in recognition of this, ex-cons face harsh realities as they rejoin society. Ross and Richards (2009) suggest that every ex-con would benefit from a “reality check” where reality and fantasy are aligned so that ex-cons, if properly sensitized to the barriers of reentry, might avoid recidivism. This book is that “reality check”—a no-nonsense “practical handbook” for those reentering society and learning to “make good.”

Ross and Richards write as advocates in a book that speaks directly to ex-cons, warning them of the temptations and pitfalls of returning to the environments that contributed to their incarceration. This balanced book provides readers with two equally important lessons: the first half (Chapters 1–4, 6) is about preparing to exit the prison system and how to deal with correctional gatekeepers. The second half (Chapters 5, 7–11) is about how to gain human capital and establishing social capital.

Chapter 1 discusses how to prepare for “reentry,” or, returning to and becoming part of the community. Simple matters such as adjusting to stigmas brought on by the moral panics of politics, making small talk with community members, and where to turn to ease the shock of transitioning from imprisonment to freedom are discussed.

Chapter 2 illustrates a fictional, but typical account of an inmate’s final day of incarceration. For “Joe Convict,” leaving prison means a stay at a halfway house with some gate money and a bus ticket. For “Jill Convict,” opportunities are bleak. Many women will not complete sentences in halfway houses, simply because states have not been able to accommodate the increasing female populations.

Chapter 3 informs ex-cons on matters of dealing with their probation period and parole requirements. Ex-cons are warned about what to expect at the offices: long waits, drug and alcohol testing, and suspicious natures of POs. Ex-cons are advised to come to meetings with professional and nonconfrontational attitudes and patience, and to leave behind items that may indicate violence and/or drug use.

Chapter 4 discusses the purpose and types of halfway houses and work release centers. Extended efforts are made to discuss house locations and advise inmates that their best interests are to find houses away from neighborhoods that may have influenced onsets of criminal lifestyles or tempt them to reengage in these behaviors. Special focus is placed on halfway houses operated under the direction of ex-cons, those who truly understand the experiences of returning ex-cons.

Chapter 6 advises ex-cons on how to interact with and react to their PO and deal with parole restrictions. The authors briefly describe “types” of officers one may encounter when attending parole meetings. Officers are categorized as ranging from “great” to “straight from hell.”

The second set of chapters explains to the reader about what “making good” means, and how this is accomplished. Finding opportunities and accomplishing tasks for a second chance is the focus of these chapters. Chapter 5 discusses the obstacles ex-cons face seeking safe and affordable housing. The authors warn ex-cons about the dangers of living with people who may be hazardous to their probation/parole stipulations. Ex-cons are prepared for background checks and hard to answer questions about one’s criminal past that appear on rental applications. Meeting the approval of one’s PO in regard to housing is stressed as a priority.

Chapter 7 unveils jobs prospects ex-cons will generally encounter: dead-end, minimum wage, and low skilled. However, finding and obtaining suitable employment upon one’s release is still necessary. Ex-cons are given advice and ideas about where they can look for work, how to fill out job applications, preparing resumes, and how to handle oneself in a job interview. Ex-cons are counseled on how to turn low-end jobs into more advanced, higher paid positions within the company. This chapter may be considered the crux of the concept “making good.” If given the opportunities for a second chance in the workforce, and to be trusted by employers, ex-cons may be allowed to experience the routines of employment, hard work, and eventually success.

Chapter 8 encourages ex-cons that going back to school, particularly college, gives a person greater advantages for finding employment after prison. Ex-cons are made to realize that like the general population, they too can earn a college degree and should not fall into the beliefs that prisoners are illiterate failures. Specifically, ex-cons are provided counseling on the process for admissions, housing, and financial aid. Finally, the chapter suggests degree majors that ex-cons should consider and avoid.

Anyone who has studied corrections understands the devastation imprisonment has on an inmate’s relationships, especially those involving children. Chapter 9 examines the steps needed for ex-cons to reconnect with family members, regaining custody of children, and finding new relationships. Ex-cons must remain patient and understand that time rebuilds tarnished relationships.

Chapter 10 focuses on the three most dangerous temptations: illegal drugs, alcohol, and weapons. These must be avoided and removed from an ex-con’s life during reentry to avoid release violations. While back on the streets, ex-cons are strongly advised to enroll in programs to stay sober, deal with depression and violent personalities, and associate with others trying to avoid negative lifestyles.

Chapter 11 deals with the sad reality that many ex-cons will return to society with very little money, possessions, or other assets. Oftentimes ex-cons have little to rebuild their lives once released and have to start from scratch. This chapter informs ex-cons how to manage and save money, organize budgets and prioritize bills, manage credit, apply for loans, and alleviate debt. The second half of the chapter focuses on ideas for generating a plan to start a business.

Chapter 12, “Special problem for Jill Convict,” is the book’s crown jewel and deserves special attention. Females are often ignored or at least given little attention by research. Women face special needs not equally experienced by their male counterparts, especially for those who are parents, battle substance dependence, and are victims of sexual abuse. These issues hit the female population in greater proportions and often have greater emotional effects and require lengthy recovery periods. The chapter highlights the special circumstances under which women become involved in crime and the burdens and repercussions women face once they are incarcerated. Because of these special circumstances and experiences, it was pleasing to find a chapter focusing on the barriers and needs of this population.

This review would be negligent not to mention some limitations of the book. First, the reviewer wonders how will this plethora of information be of use if not found in the hands of those needing assistance. Ideally, the book should be distributed in halfway houses and not waiting at a bookstore in suburbia. For academics, the lack of theoretical and conceptual applications might be disappointing. The most obvious reason deals with understanding the foundations of why barriers are present for ex-cons, and how these suggestions are expected to work. Without any underlying theoretical

assumptions or conceptual commitments, the development of future frameworks for research and policies seem to be put on hold.

The book may be of greater benefit if also geared toward practitioners. For greater success in the battle of reintegration and alleviating recidivism, ex-cons and criminal justice practitioners should develop relationships to understand what is needed for success. The book's approach might be used to guide practitioners on the basis of a sympathetic understanding of the burdens one faces even before hitting the streets.

Looking past any limitations, this book is a must have for anyone interested in topics concerning correctional matters. The authors must be acknowledged for their contribution of offering the audience a firsthand look into the issues facing those returning to society. These concerns may be overlooked but should be listed as a priority when developing policies geared toward alleviating the revolving door of the criminal justice system. By offering ex-cons sound advice to steer their lives in the right direction, they may build skills needed to exit criminal lifestyles and reduce recidivism.

Perrone, D.

The High Life: Club Kids, Harm, and Drug Policy New York, NY: Criminal Justice Press, 2009. xiv, 247 pp. \$35.00. ISBN 978-1-881798-46-0

Reviewed by: Ryan B. Baker, *Indiana University, USA*

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Recent attempts to understand and control illicit drug use have begun to shift focus, adopting ideologies weighted in models calling upon prevention, education, and treatment. Much of this shift can be traced back to scholarly case studies, specifically ethnographies using qualitative research, which embarks upon a specific subset of drug users. *The High Life* adds to the theme described above and provides an excellent glimpse at one particular subset of drug users, that is, the club drug culture and the participating club kids.

Drug use ethnographies are rare commodities in academia. This predicament has less to do with the raw availability of data and more to do with the researcher navigating boundaries and crafting social relationships between the subsequent drug using populations. Perrone begins her book by addressing these very real tribulations, referencing the possible adverse events inherent to the investigation of "hidden" and "deviant" populations. Perrone personally discloses several of these encounters including being branded as a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) informant, managing intoxicated interviewees, collecting field notes, and issues of gender (in regard to the role of a female researcher embedded within a sexualized subculture).

Perrone executes a mixed methodology, although traditional, in researching small sets of drug users. Using data collected via snowball and convenience sampling, Perrone was successful in securing formal interviews with 18 club drug users from 45 participant observations/venues over a 15-month period. Although some readers may question the validity of such a limited sample, it should be noted that this book offers insight into a hidden population that has, until now, been absent among drug research. Specifically, an older drug-using demographic (mean age of 27), all of which are middle to upper class who exhibit stable indicators of both social and economic capital.

Guided by research questions that seek out the club drug users' (a) decision to use, (b) setting to use, and (c) negative consequences of use, Perrone provides a practical framework intended to question the role of the criminal justice system and public health authorities in addressing the advancement of drug-use prevention theories. Departing from Zinberg's classic work (*Drug, Set, and Setting: The Basis for Controlled Intoxicant Use*, 1984, New Haven: Yale University Press) detailing