Social Work *in* Juvenile and Criminal Justice Systems

FOURTH EDITION

David W. Springer
Albert R. Roberts

Social Work in Juvenile and Criminal Justice Systems

Fourth Edition

SOCIAL WORK IN JUVENILE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEMS

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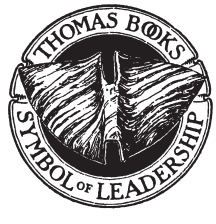

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To Stephanie

~DWS

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Foreword

The pendulum of criminal justice sways left to right every few decades. Starting in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the nation as a whole, in concert with individual states, began declaring a "War on Crime." Few politicians got elected without the slogan of being "tough on crime." From New York's draconian Rockefeller Drug Laws to California's Three Strike Laws, states and the federal government were building prisons as fast as they could and filling them up even faster. In 36 states the prison population has tripled since 1978. In another four states the prison population increased six-fold. Thirty states spent more money per year on prisons than on education. Across the United States, there were more African American men involved in the criminal justice system than in the education system.

The pendulum of social work also sways every few decades. In the days of the Settlement House movement and the very early days of social work emerging as a profession, reformers and advocates such as Grace Abbott and Julia Lathrop founded the Children's Bureau and pioneered services for children, including those involved in the court system. By 1899, Illinois, the home state of Hull House, established the first juvenile court. By the 1920s, social workers were prominently employed in juvenile correctional facilities. Indeed, according to Patterson (2012), in the first 30 years of social work as a profession, the profession was closely aligned with law; in fact, more closely aligned with law than it is with mental health today. The social work profession's interest and involvement with criminal justice remained strong until the late 1970s.

By the latter part of the 1970s, the Attica riots had occurred, crime reports were up, and politicians were elected on a platform of "Getting Tough on Crime," emphasizing punishment over rehabilitation. Correctional departments diverted funds traditionally used for treatment into tighter security and bigger and more numerous prisons. Social work as a profession seemed to align itself with this ideology of punishment over rehabilitation, and in many respects abandoned its role in criminal justice. In lieu of a strong interest in criminal justice, the profession embraced mental health. Accordingly, many Schools of Social Work were producing psychotherapists rather than social workers. This culminated in the mid-1990s, with the publication of Specht and Courtney's (1995) Unfaithful Angels, an indictment of the social work profession's abandonment of the poor and the social and economic justice issues that affect their lives while embracing private psychotherapy.

At last, in 2017, we seem to be coming full circle. Social work once again seems to be returning, at least in part, to its roots. More and more Schools of Social Work are realizing that criminal justice issues are not, and cannot be, isolated from other issues. Criminal justice intersects with all other fields of practice, including but not limited to: child welfare, gerontology, housing, homelessness, poverty, health (both physical and emotional), LGBTQ, gender, racial and ethnic disparities, immigration, employment, mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, and all other aspects of social and economic justice. Certainly the recent media portrayals of inequities of social justice throughout the United States from Staten Island to Baltimore to Sanford, Florida to Little Rock have brought

the issue of social justice into every home in the nation. In addition, with the advent of DNA testing, more men and women are being exonerated and their wrongful convictions overturned. According to the Innocence Project (2015), 330 people have been exonerated based on DNA evidence since 1989; 263 of the 330 have been exonerated since 2000, with 20 living on death row at the time of their exoneration. How can social work as a profession and the Schools of Social Work that educate future professionals stand by and not react to these injustices? How can almost daily reports of people being exonerated and wrongfully imprisoned go unnoticed? How can the media's attention on the skewed number of poor people and people of color involved in the criminal and juvenile justice systems go without comment? Without action? The social work profession and our Schools of Social Work are slowly waking up, and there is a renewed and growing sense of the profession's obligation to social justice.

It is within this context that *Social Work in Juvenile and Criminal Justice Systems* (4th edition) is written. The beauty of this book is that each chapter understands the interconnections of the various components of juvenile and criminal justice. The chapters, all authored by experts in the field, all committed to the mission of social justice, are written with the clear understanding that we cannot study criminal justice in a silo.

Another prominent aspect of this book is that it is strength-based. It views those involved in the criminal and juvenile justice systems as individuals, dare I say clients, rather than inmates or criminals, each with unique positive talents and abilities. Indeed, the authors recognize that involvement in the criminal and juvenile justice system automatically negatively affects one's self-esteem. The labels "felon," "delinquent," and so on are some of the most powerful negative labels that American society can place on a person. Such labels define an individual as "bad," "evil," "dangerous," "untrustworthy," or "not deserving of respect." Often these labels mean that the person labeled has to be removed from the larger society. This has to negatively affect one's self-esteem, self-worth, and identity. Therefore, anyone working with a person involved in this system must always be sensitive to the issue of self-worth, such that part of the social worker's job becomes helping raise the client's sense of self-worth and competence. In addition, many of the chapters in this book approach their respective issue or population from a social justice lens. Of course, this new edition continues to reenforce the social work profession's commitment to providing quality and ethical services to those involved in these systems.

Last semester I taught a social work graduate-level elective, entitled *The Effects of the Criminal and Juvenile Justice System on Individuals, Families and Communities.* Two of the required books assigned were *Conversations with the Capeman*, by Richard Jacobs and *All God's Children*, by Fox Butterfield. Both books are essentially biographies about "infamous convicted murderers" in New York, Salvator Agron and Willie Bossett. Both books humanize their subjects and dramatically illustrate how both young men were shaped by the environment, and in return, shaped the environment. A number of guest speakers visited the class, all of whom were in various stages of reentry. My main goal was to have the students realize and accept that people in the criminal and juvenile justice system are people not unlike most of us. They have dreams, fears, desires, hopes, regrets, strengths, weaknesses, good judgment at times, and bad judgment at times. They had no say into the environments in which they were born and raised, just as the students in my class

had no real say in their own environments. I wanted to dispel the myths of shows like *Oz* or films like *Penitentiary* where all people in the criminal justice system are portrayed as sociopaths, or hardened, amoral men and women. As potential clients of social workers they need to be treated with the same dignity and respect afforded any other clients. To this end, I believe I was successful. At least, I hope so.

This is also an overarching goal of S*ocial Work in Juvenile and Criminal Justice Systems*: To humanize the young men and young women who find themselves enveloped by the criminal and juvenile systems. The teams of esteemed authors of this book, individually and collectively, have succeeded in helping us all to better understand the issues and populations that we are here to serve.

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Specht, H., & Courtney, M. E. (1995). *Unfaithful angels: How social work has abandoned its mission.* NY: Free Press.

Foreword to the Third Edition

In recent years there has been a surge of interest and evidence-based studies on social work practice in forensic settings, such as juvenile offender assessment and treatment programs, victim assistance and domestic violence intervention programs, and adult correctional rehabilitation and reentry programs. This timely and thoroughly up-to-date third edition of a classic book provides valuable summaries of key issues, trends, program developments, and research findings on the most effective policies and programs in forensic settings. This book is timely because the number of men and women under some form of correctional supervision in the United States and Canada has reached epidemic numbers – approximately 7.5 million alleged and convicted offenders. There are also several million victims of violent crimes without access to woefully needed crisis intervention, trauma recovery services, cognitive-behavioral treatment, victim assistance, legal advocacy, victim compensation, case management, and other social services. In addition, as more and more inmates max out or are released on parole, they have to be better prepared for the transition to the community, including obtaining full-time employment, becoming involved with a local church and faith-based programs, building social relationships, coping with everyday stresses, reuniting with families, and gaining access to urgently needed social services. **This groundbreaking book provides the necessary blueprints and guidelines for best practices with crime victims as well as juvenile and adult offenders in institutional, community-based, diversion, and aftercare programs.**

Almost ten years ago, Charles C Thomas published the second edition of *Social Work in Juvenile and Criminal Justice Settings,* which became an essential guide for all forensic social work administrators and practitioners. As the number of incarcerated juvenile and adult offenders reached unprecedented proportions, it became clear that an updated edition of this work was critically needed. The result is practically a new book with half the book consisting of 16 brand new chapters, and the other chapters thoroughly updated. Professors Albert R. Roberts and David W. Springer called upon 50 of the most diligent and respected forensic social work scholars to contribute original chapters on the current state-of-the-art of evidence-based forensic social work. Thus, this third edition surpasses the two earlier editions in scope and content. This is the first all-inclusive, authoritative, exceptionally well-written volume on social policies and social work practices in both juvenile justice and criminal justice settings.

In Professors Roberts and Springer's overview chapter they eloquently document social work's mission toward respecting human dignity, accepting individual differences and believing in each individual's self-worth and potential for positive change. In response to the examination of forces and factors that enhance or inhibit creative solutions, the authors state:

> We wrote Chapters One and Two, and compiled and edited the other 30 chapters, in full support of the social work profession's 107 years of dedication to serving oppressed, vulnerable, at-risk, and devalued groups. During the past century, the most neglected and devalued groups have been

> victims of violent crimes and criminal offenders. In the past two decades, professional social workers have made growing progress in advocating for and obtaining critically needed social services for juvenile offenders, adult offenders, and victims of violent crimes. However, the case, class, and legislative advocacy efforts of forensic social workers (also known as correctional social workers) have increased and decreased in cycles over the past century. Specialized training and standards for forensic social work practice are critically needed. Therefore, we highly recommend that our professional organizations, including NASW, CSWE, NAFSW, and SSWR, form a task force to draft forensic social work educational standards, and lobby for federal and state legislation that mandates a minimum of an MSW, DSW, or Ph.D. in social work and five years post-master's experience, plus 90 hours of specialized training in forensic assessments and treatment protocols in order to be a forensic social work or correctional social work supervisor. (Roberts & Springer, p. 18)

I commend the two editors, the 50 esteemed chapter authors, and the readers of their important work. When you read this book, you can rapidly focus on a neglected and sometimes forgotten group of vulnerable and oppressed individuals – juvenile and adult offenders – who desperately need our help, guidance, and support. As social workers, we dedicate our professional careers to helping vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups. A major part of our social work mission is advocating for vulnerable clients, groups, and communities at the individual, group, community, and legislative levels. Professors Roberts and Springer, and their esteemed author team document the challenges, insights, experiences, and best practices of forensic social workers in beginning to meet the critical needs of vulnerable and at-risk populations. Furthermore, Professors Roberts and Springer express the hope that this third edition will stimulate debate and discussion. They are being humble. I firmly believe it is destined to be one of the foundations on which further forensic research and practices will be based in the important years ahead. **This book is a landmark achievement.**

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Foreword to the Second Edition

The system established to deal with crime and justice in the United States is huge and complex, consumes billions of dollars annually, and affects millions of individuals and families. A look at the size and makeup of the correctional population provides one indicator of the nature and magnitude of the criminal justice problem. At mid-year 1995, more than 1.5 million adults were confined in prisons and jails. The majority of persons were poor and a substantial number, in some states as many as 60 percent, were African Americans. Most were young and parents of dependent children and many were convicted on drug charges. Most new admissions to the system during the year were for nonviolent, economic-related crimes. More than five million adults were under correctional supervision with some groups affected more negatively than others. One out of every three African American males between the ages of 20 and 24 was under some form of correctional supervision, up from one out of every four only five years earlier.

The large and rapidly increasing correctional system population can be traced to several key factors. Foremost among these is the absence of public policies and programs that address major social problems, i.e., poverty, unemployment and the absence of work in many communities, hopelessness and despair, and the lack of opportunities for success that are the root causes of most illegal activity. Other factors include a willingness to use punishment as a means of addressing drug addiction and drug-related crime, politicians' perceptions that they must be seen as the toughest on crime in order to be elected to office, and the enactment of new laws that call for harsher punishment and longer sentences. No less important is the philosophical orientation toward the poor and racial minorities held by many persons in power. The lack of compassion for the poor and the willingness to label and define entire communities as the "underclass" and "endangered species" help create an atmosphere of fear of these groups. They also support the mindset that some groups are dispensable, undeserving, and beyond help and need to be separated from the rest of society.

If we continue to move along the same path established by the enactment of punitive social welfare reform measures and tough criminal justice legislation, the future can be expected to bring more of the poor and other disadvantaged groups into the criminal justice system and the custody of the state. It is not possible, however, to process all of the poor through the criminal justice system, nor is it wise or economically sound to label and stigmatize entire groups of people for life, or to lock up more and more people for longer periods of time. Research studies and policy impact analysis indicate that more prisons and harsher punishments do not prevent crime, lower recidivism, reduce fear of crime, or restore crime victims. Ongoing punishment and humiliation of the most vulnerable populations of society are likely to lead not only to widespread rebellion in prisons and jails could be better spent on meeting other social needs such as education for children and health services for the elderly.

The promotion of safe communities and the well-being of children and families command a different orientation and vision at the highest levels of public policy making. The

problem of crime and the administration of justice, however, is not just a matter of enforcing laws but also one of providing programs and services that meet common human needs, address human behavior problems and improve social and economic conditions. Social workers and other human service professional are needed as active and willing partners in shaping and directing a different kind of criminal justice system. Envisioned is a system wherein justice and fairness, social and behavioral understandings, empirical research, practical realities, and ethical standards are as important as political considerations.

Meaningful social work partnerships depend heavily on professional endorsement of criminal justice as an important area of social work advocacy and practice and the educational preparation of social workers for practice in criminal justice settings. During the latter half of the twentieth century, however, social workers and established social services organizations have overlooked the needs of individuals and families involved in the criminal justice system. Social workers have had minimal involvement in providing social services for prisoners or their families, in advocating for changes in the criminal justice system, and in establishing correctional family programs. Only about one dozen schools of social work prepare students to work in criminal justice and social work degrees are not required to provide social services in most prisons, jails, courts, and community programs.

Social Work in Juvenile and Criminal Justice Settings is an excellent resource for helping social workers understand why the social work profession and other social and behavioral scientists should be involved in criminal justice and the history and reasons for periods of both intense interest and limited or noninvolvement in the past. The primary thrust of this inspirational and very timely volume is that justice social workers, juvenile justice specialists, correctional counselors, and victim advocates have important roles in criminal justice and can be effective in rehabilitation and restoration.

This pathfinding and extraordinarily comprehensive work critically examines the most salient issues, policies and program developments related to helping both persons who commit crime and victims of crime. Doctor Roberts and the other contributing authors give the reader insight into traditional and newly emerging areas of criminal justice practice and concerns and provide many illustrations of how to implement reform legislation and develop quality services. Family programs in prison, services for battered women, police social work, and wilderness programs for juveniles are among the featured topics. The chapters are well written and instructive and highly appropriate for use as both a major text for courses focused on social services in criminal justice and as assigned readings in more general social policy or social work practice courses. This is clearly the best single source on social work in criminal justice settings as well as a valuable resource for the many professionals who have responsibility for formulating and carrying out the mandates of the criminal justice system.

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Foreword to the First Edition

Social Work as a profession is a twentieth century development, but it has a long legacy in private philanthropy and religious movements. The "Good Samaritan" (Luke 10: 30–37) was only one example during ancient times of compassion for less fortunate people that can be traced from primitive man to the present day. The monasteries provided services to children and minor offenders through the Middle Ages. Welfare programs began in England on a small scale after Henry VIII closed the monasteries in 1636 to 1639. Concern for the welfare of children and minor offenders was included in the Elizabethan Poor Law of 1601, which made use of the "bride wells" begun in 1557 to house debtors, dependent children, and others who needed governmental care. In 1648, concern for children in trouble was shown by the establishment of a home for wandering children in Paris by St. Vincent de Paul and the establishment of a church-affiliated institution in Milan to house boys with behavior problems. Pope Clement XI established the Hospice di San Michele (House of St. Michael) in 1704, in Rome, to care for children now referred to as "delinquent." That institution still stands and is still used for its original purpose. While there had been places for detention, including rooms in the ancient temples, there were jails and private prisons from the twelfth through the eighteenth centuries, prior to the beginning of prisons as they are known today.

The first prison was introduced at Simsbury, Connecticut, in 1773, when an old copper mine was converted into an institution for detaining "criminals"; George Washington used it as a military prison. In 1787, the Quakers started the Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of the Public Prisons. The goal of the Society was to improve the sad plight of convicts by advocating that imprisonment in solitary confinement be substituted for the death penalty and physical torture. As a result, the "penitentiary movement" began with the Walnut Street Jail in 1790. The name of the Philadelphia Society was changed to the Pennsylvania Prison Society in 1887.

John Howard (1726–1790) and Elizabeth Gurney Fry (1780–1845) initiated lay visiting in England's jails and prisons that marked the beginning of private social work in prisons. Fry was known for lending material aid to individual prisoners, while John Howard was most concerned with improving the overall prison condition. The Correctional Association of New York was formed in 1844. The Prisoners' Aid Association of Maryland was formalized in 1869, but its beginnings went back to 1829, when the rector of St. Paul's Church in downtown Baltimore provided food and other assistance to men leaving the penitentiary. The Massachusetts Correctional Association was established in 1889 as the John Howard Society. The first John Howard Society had been established in England in 1866. Since that time, there have been prisoners' aid societies functioning around the world that handle all probation and parole functions in many countries.

A group of Quakers opened a halfway house for women in New York City in the 1880s, which continues today as the Isaac T. Hopper House and now houses the American Correctional Association for Women. Settlement houses began to appear in London in the 1880s. The first settlement house in the United States was the "Neighborhood

Guild" in New York City in 1887, an outgrowth of the London Movement founded in Toynbee Hall. The most significant and influential settlement house was Hull House, founded in 1889 by Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr. Addams and Starr rented a house built by Charles G. Hull at 800 South Halsted Street in Chicago. Although it was geographically replaced in January, 1961, by the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, the original Hull House still remains as a museum, and in 1967 it was designated a national landmark. The present Jane Addams School of Social Work is a part of the University of Illinois.

Social work had its beginnings as a profession around 1904. Charles Booth participated in the Charity Organization Movement, studied social condition in London from 1886 to 1903, and his Life and Labour of the People of London, published in 1904, became a monumental contribution of the time, and others in England and America followed its tradition in social work. With Paul Kellogg, Charles Booth's most ambitious work was the Pittsburgh Survey in 1909 to 1914, financed by the Russell Sage Foundation. Summer training courses for charity workers were begun by the New York Charity Organization Society in 1898. By 1904, the first School of Social Work was established at Columbia University as a one-year program, then called the New York School of Philanthropy. As of 1919, the 15 Schools of Social Work had organized into the Association of Training Schools for Professional Social Work, including nine programs operating within university auspices and six independent schools. Adoption of a minimum curriculum had taken place by 1932. In 1935, the American Association of Schools of Social Work ruled that only those schools connected with universities could be accredited. By 1940, the Association required graduate-level education as part of all social workers' professional development. Social work had emerged as an accepted profession.

From the beginning, the field of corrections had been an anathema to professional social work. Problems of the poor, family services, child protective services, philanthropy, and general social welfare became the primary concern of social work. Some writers, such as Warner, Queen, and Harper, in 1935, date the beginning professional social work back to 1893, when settlement workers were trying to gain recognition just to be on the program of the National Conference of Charities and Correction. This group subsequently gained recognition and "blundered" into the emerging professionalism of social work.

Correctional work had always been part of philanthropy and preprofessional social work. As social work became recognized as a profession, however, the field of corrections was excluded from its purview as being beyond its concern. While professional social workers did work with families, settlement houses, low-income families, and the new child guidance clinics begun in Philadelphia in 1897, and worked with predelinquents and delinquents in that context, they were moving away from the criminal offender. In 1917, Mary Richmond's Social Diagnosis (published by the Russell Sage Foundation) established the guidelines and the norms for professional social work. It was aimed at, "those processes which developed personality through adjustments consciously effected, individual by individual, between men and their social environment." Among the dicta were that caseworkers worked with individual "cases," not large groups and – most damaging to corrections – the doctrine of "self-determination," which cannot function in an authoritative setting. The "constructive use of authority" was seen as withdrawing services when the individual became ineligible for any reason.

Professional social work had moved out of corrections. Attention continued in family problems and social welfare concerns, but the emphasis began to focus toward mental health. In 1921, the American Association of Social Workers was founded to provide an organizational base for professional social workers. In 1922, the Commonwealth Fund created scholarships for professional "Social Workers" to become assistants to psychiatrists in the mental health field, and this funding continued through 1928. With the coming of the Great Depression, social work was inundated with income maintenance problems, but continued its other functions in private Family Welfare Associations, the Child Welfare League of America, the National Federation of Settlements, and other private organizations, while governmental concerns primarily focused on poverty and income maintenance as a result of the Depression. In the meantime, social work remained away from corrections because of (1) the large caseloads, (2) the doctrine of self-determination that prevented them from working in an authoritative setting, (3) the definition of "authority" as a withholding of services, rather than as an authoritative person or agency, and (4) the belief that social work techniques should remain the same, regardless of the clientele and the circumstances of the host agency, which is an oversimplification in the correctional setting.

In 1945, Doctor Kenneth Pray, Director (frequently called Dean) of the School of Social Work at the University of Pennsylvania, was a major speaker at the annual meeting of the American Association of Social Workers in Chicago, where he had been elected president. His speech was revolutionary. Dean Kenneth Pray contended that professional social workers could and should work in corrections. All that was needed was an extra step in the early confrontations to "sell" or motivate" the client into wanting to help "reform" himself. The response was vitriolic. Traditional social workers engaged Dean Pray intensely and almost viciously. Some of the debate can be read in the issues of the Social Service Review after that 1945 meeting and several years afterward. His papers were subsequently published posthumously as Kenneth Pray; Social Work in a Revolutionary Age and Other Papers by the University of Pennsylvania Press in 1949. The debate continued for years.

In 1959, the famous thirteen-volume Curriculum Study was made under Werner W. Boehm in order to consolidate the social work curriculum. Volume V on Education for Social Workers in the Correctional Field was done by Elliot Studt, who concluded that, "no separate specialty seems required in order to prepare social workers to take their place in correctional service." The last sentence was that, "professional education should elect and prepare students for early leadership responsibility." Even this writer entered the fray with an article on "The University Curriculum in Corrections" that appeared in the September, 1959, issue of Federal Probation. The article presented two possible curricula, one for corrections and another for social workers interested in corrections. The Council on Social Work Education had a five-year Corrections Project (1959–1964) financed by The Ford Foundation. Throughout its deliberations, the debate involved whether additional information should be added to the curriculum for corrections or whether it should not. Those in favor of adding new information referred to the problems resulting from Mary Richmond's Social Diagnosis in 1917. The project reached the same conclusions that Elliot Studt had made in the curriculum study, that no separate or additional information was needed.

An outgrowth of that project, however, was the Arden House Conference on Manpower and Training for Corrections, held June 24 to 26, 1964, at Harriman, New York, involving over 60 national organizations. Outgrowths from this conference included the Correctional Rehabilitation Study Act of 1965, the Prisoner's Rehabilitation Act of 1965, and Joint Commission on Correctional Manpower and Training, which was funded by The Ford Foundation, 1966 to 1969. The social work profession continued to maintain that no new information was needed to serve social workers working in corrections. This history of social work practice in corrections has been one of bouncing back and forth between expressing inability to work in an authoritative setting, to having state legislative committees demanding that the M.S.W. (master's degree in social work) be the basic requirement for the correctional position, particularly in probation. The push for the M.S.W. requirement was successful in several states, such as New York, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and others. Some long-term probation officers were surprised when the M.S.W. probation workers in New York discharged persons who had violated probation as "not eligible for probation," rather than recommending that the judge revoke probation and send them to the institution, as had been their custom. But the social work concept of "constructive use of authority" is based on ineligibility for service, rather than further punishment. Such conceptual misunderstandings have occurred between social workers in corrections and some correctional personnel and administrators with backgrounds in other areas.

This is the first book of major importance that covers professional social work in the field of corrections. It covers all the fields in which social work functions in just about the amount proportionate to their functioning in practice. The reentry of social work was first in the juvenile area, particularly in the court and the community, followed by adult probation. Parole took a little longer, as did medium and minimum security institutions for adults. The maximum security prison has been the last to experience this reentry. This book reflects this progression in its text and in its format. More than the first half of the book is devoted to social workers in the juvenile field, the point of reentry. Probation, parole, and court settings are discussed next. Finally, the maximum security prison is discussed as well, although there are more restrictive settings in some stronger maximum security institutions in which some of the examples used could not have taken place – the setting of the writers of this chapter was the Mental Health Unit of the Kansas State Penitentiary, rather than the maximum security unit. This fits into the scheme and reflects the progression of social work back into the correctional field as it actually did happen. The other three chapters in the prison section involved volunteers and family relations. In summary, then, this book reflects almost exactly the way social work came back into corrections and discusses the problems of working with authority, the problem of client self-determination, the problem of caseloads, and the problem of specialization in social work, as it relates to the entire field of corrections. Ellen Handler's excellent article (published in *Criminology: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, August, 1975) focuses on corrections and social work being "an uneasy partnership." This is only one example of the thorough breadth of literature that characterizes the support for this book.

Dean Kenneth Pray would have been proud to see this book after his being embroiled in turmoil and debate following his revolutionary speech in Chicago in 1945 when he said that social work could and should work in the field of corrections. As a participant in

and a follower of the field of corrections and welcoming the assistance of any legitimate profession for many years of turbulent and frenzied efforts to stay even with the challenge, this writer is also proud of this book. It has been, in fact, "an uneasy partnership," but it should not have been. There are still many professionals working in practices based in the behavioral sciences who have difficulty in working with authority and want to "help the client help himself" and have other troubles in working with offenders. Even so, the number of people who can work comfortably in corrections is increasing – even in maximum security prisons – which are a rewarding observation after these many years of frustration. It is a gross disservice to the client for a professional to wait for the client to become "motivated" so he can "help him help himself" when that client is so "beat down" and angry that he will never achieve that kind of motivation. There are some who consider this kind of aloofness as downright immoral in a "helping" profession. There are now professional social workers who can talk about "aggressive casework," "hard-to-reach groups," "reaching out," and motivating people "to help themselves." While this book is important to help social workers understand corrections, it is far more important that all correctional administrators and practitioners read it to gain an understanding about what the new professional social worker has to offer and how he or she functions. This book is the most significant contribution in many years to the mutually rewarding understanding of the alliance between professional social work and corrections.

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Austin, Texas

Contents

SECTION III

JUVENILE JUSTICE

SECTION IV

FORENSIC SOCIAL WORK IN THE 21ST CENTURY: SPECIAL ISSUES AND POPULATIONS

Social Work in Juvenile and Criminal Justice Systems

Section I

Forensic Social Work: Theories and Trends

Chapter 1

Forensic Social Work

David W. Springer, Albert R. Roberts,
Patricia Brownell, and Terrence Allen

INTRODUCTION

Forensic social work assessment and treatment with crime victims, juvenile offenders, and convicted felons has been viewed by some as the weakest link of social work practice, and by others to provide much needed services to large groups of poor, vulnerable, and neglected clients. In recent years there has been a growing concern regarding the increasing number of offenders and victims in urgent need of mental health treatment and social services; some of them are at high risk of future violence if they do not receive the evidence-based interventions they so desperately need. Social workers and other human service and health care professionals devote their careers to helping vulnerable and at-risk populations. Thus, forensic social work seems to be a challenging and ideal way to advocate for social justice while facilitating assessments and improved psychosocial functioning among a large and vulnerable group of clients.

Social workers such as Michael Clark embolden the future of forensic social work. For those reading this introduction who might be considering entering the field of forensic social work, or for those already in the field who long for a sense of renewed energy to advocate for and empower their clients, we'd like to highlight the career of an exemplary forensic social worker – Michael D. Clark, who is the Director of the Center for Strength-Based Strategies. When we approached Mr. Clark about contributing to this book, he was asked to share his story about how his career had evolved. Accordingly, his biographical narrative below is exactly that – a narrative – written in the first-person.

Michael D. Clark, MSW, LMSW, Director, Center for Strength-Based Strategies

It is humbling to be asked to describe my career as a forensic social worker. However, it would be a mistake to begin by speaking of my career path without first acknowledging two groups of people who have absolutely changed how I practice forensic social work. The first group involves mandated clients with whom I have been fortunate to meet and to work with. The second group consists of authors and researchers who have brought their research into my world through publications. I am so thankful for the written word as these texts caused profound shifts in my social work practice. Allow me to describe my career path and the positions I've held by addressing these two groups.

The Mandated Clients

I must begin by mentioning the one probationer who died while under my probation supervision. Shot and killed in broad daylight, a homicide statistic listed on police blotters in Lansing, Michigan during the 1980s. A life ended because of some capricious drug dispute. I'm sure he's all but forgotten now save those family members and friends who loved him, and oddly enough, me. I believe he would have been approaching his forties this year. As I think of how many serious cases "age out" of trouble, odds are he would have found his way out of the system by now, probably married with children and working a job or having started a small business in our community. But he's not – he didn't get the chance to "age out." It's a form of healing to write this exemplar as it allows one more chance to speak of this boy. I wish he had lived to know this kind of accolade. Surely many more died and I read their obituaries in the local papers, but their deaths came after dismissal from my caseload. Their printed names and pictures would begin a shadowy malaise that often

lasted for days. The University doesn't prepare you for the deaths, nothing could I suppose. Sometimes I wonder if you pick the field of forensic social work or if somehow "it" picks you. Don't come into this field to help. Come into this field to *help people live.*

Even though I seem to have worked mostly with males, it is two adolescent girls that I remember distinctly. One was a juvenile delinquent who had also suffered sexual victimization. She sat in a courtroom and suffered through endless retelling of her past abuse. First the prosecutor, then the defense attorney, then the police officer, then a psychologist, all recounting the horrors she had experienced in dispassionate and dehumanizing detail – and all seemingly justified in the pursuit of the "right" treatment plan. The scenario reminded me of the adage, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions." As the litany of her ill treatment was recounted, her body language changed, growing increasingly angry until tears ran from her cheeks. Suddenly, she stood up with such force that her chair catapulted backwards. When she reached full height, she screamed, "YOU CAN ALL JUST SHUT UP! You stupid people could never know that *I am more than the worst thing that has ever happened to me!*" In the stunned silence that followed, I had come "up close and personal" with resiliency because in that instant, resiliency had moved from classroom concept to the actual and tangible. As a forensic social worker, my fear was that the juvenile "system" was stymied in a learning curve that was far behind her and wasn't keeping pace. The other female was a young adult who had successfully completed drug court programming. She had been brought in front of a focus group – a panel of professionals convened by the Department of Justice to investigate and compile "sanctions and incentives" that might aid drug court programming. She was asked by a panel member, "So many participants don't graduate from drug court programs, yet you did. You stayed with this year-long program and finished successfully. Could you tell us: What sanction, in your view, helped to keep you 'on board' and in compliance with your drug court program?" The girl immediately threw her head back and laughed. It was through this belly-laughter that she replied, "No *SANCTION* helped me. I mean, c'mon, get real! Whenever I broke program rules and used drugs, I knew I was going to get caught by a urinalysis screen, so I would just go on the run until they caught me!" A stunned silence passed over this focus group as well. The Chair found his voice and stumbled to ask, "Well, ah, then, could you tell us what *did* work?" To this question, the girl immediately looked down at the floor. Silence ensued until tears began to stream down her cheeks. Finally, she looked up and said, "Because the staff never gave up. No matter how many times I got locked up, they never gave up. How can you run from that? I couldn't run from their love." I remember looking into myself and thinking, "*We're asking these kids the wrong questions.*"

Another courtroom drama brought still more hushed silence that engendered change. An adolescent boy committed to a juvenile drug court program had relapsed (again) as his urinalysis drug screen had tested positive for street drugs. He was back in the courtroom and was being pelted by professionals in the courtroom with a litany of his failures and faults. Detention was authorized (again). The mother rose in anger and yelled at the professionals assembled, "WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU PEOPLE? You're the ones who should know better. *Do you really think you can punish my son into sobriety?*" As the saying goes, "the silence was deafening." The judge eventually found his voice to hush this mother and weakly tried to recover the collective pride of the drug court professionals assembled in the courtroom. Too late though, as the mother's indictment of the program's approach stood firm like the walls of Jericho – for this drug court program, designed to engender sobriety through therapeutic means and motivational incentives had experienced a form of negative "drift" – a slow receding lapse back to a sole focus on sanctions and punishment. These epiphanies and "wake up calls" have not always occurred in courtrooms. As a newly-minted juvenile court officer, I remember visiting a juvenile residential facility with another officer to check up on a court ward under probation supervision. In an open campus setting, he was not in his "cottage" day room when we arrived, which sent the staff member scurrying to find him. It was believed he had "just left the building" and the staff member invited us along to walk the campus to find him – noting that he couldn't have gone far. As we threaded our way through a parking lot adjacent to the cottage, we quickly came upon him in a startling scene. Here was the boy, having opened a gas cap on a parked pick-up truck, bent over "huffing" gasoline fumes for a noxious "high." Although my anger at this "violation" peaked immediately, I witnessed an almost unconscious split-second reaction by this residential staff member – one that I will never forget. He immediately gathered up the boy in his strong arms, wrapping him in almost a fatherly hug. As he kept the boy in this embrace he repeated, "*I'm not going to let you kill yourself, Johnny. We're going to love you, son. Love you 'till you can love yourself.*" The boy did not grapple or wrestle, but allowed himself to be held. The staff member continued in almost a chant-like fashion, "Y*ou are loved son. You are loved. You are loved.*" This time the silence that ensued was all mine. This unconditional love had been exhibited so quickly, I knew it came from a place beyond "treatment," beyond technique or theory. At that moment I realized that a great portion of forensic social work was an "inside job" that consisted not only of imparting discipline, but also extending compassion for

those that hurt – a deeply-held concern that emanates from within. How shortsighted to believe forensic practice all comes from knowledge and the building of requisite skills.

Flash forward to the present and my most recent client experience is one that has lingered for months. It occurred while serving as a Strengths consultant to a court program that sought better partnerships with parents. With the promise of anonymity, I interviewed a mother of a delinquent son and asked her what she thought of this staffing group. Her reply? *I may not be as educated as some of these court workers, but from the way I see it, they do a whole lot of tellin', but very little askin'!* I can't get her words out of my head. I may be in danger of oversimplification, but I feel her answer represents the absolute crux of what ails our field.

What about this field of forensic social work? I began my social work career at Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan at the height of the punishment decade in the early 1980s. In my senior year at Michigan State, I was fortunate to be assigned to the Family Division of the Circuit Court for my field placement. When the practicum concluded, I was hired by this court and took my oath as court officer immediately after graduation. I was overjoyed to be "in" but *what was I in for?* As a rookie juvenile probation officer, I was quickly "pounced" on by older probation agents who ridiculed my "social work" penchant for creating a helping alliance with probationers. I was angry that they would use the term "social work" to describe ineffective or indulging practice. Their advice was harsh, "You're not friends with *these people.* You come on hard – you can't save the world, these aren't friendships." My answer was one of "quiet defiance." I realized that I could not turn my back on my social work training as well as my own inner beliefs as to the type of helping relationship I should try to establish. Regardless of the jeers and the teasing, my approach has never changed. I held firm to my social work tenets and began to see success. Compliance seemed a good starting point, but what of behavior change? I soon noticed a complete absence of any tactical curiosity regarding positive behavior change. Why was the offender always blamed for lack of success?

The Researchers and Authors

I experienced the impact of this second group when I returned to Michigan State University for a Master of Social Work degree in 1990. I returned for graduate training in the hopes that I would be able to find and detail offender problems and pathologies with more sophistication and specificity. What I found was the exact opposite. I found the Strengths Perspective and Solution-Focused Brief Therapy. I was struck by the fundamental difference found in eliciting, amplifying and reinforcing someone's strengths and resources. Finding these positive approaches became the single greatest event in my career. After so much training in how offenders "fall down," my passions were ignited as I had discovered the science of "getting up." I have dedicated my professional life to bringing a Strengths Perspective into forensic work and encouraging methods that move the offender from the role of passive recipient to that of active participant. Embracing a Strengths Perspective in a criminal justice world has been fraught with frustration. Criminal justice is a field that is unbalanced as it entertains only problems, failures, and flaws. Compliance is king while behavior change is often left wanting – viewed as something best left to others (treatment). I began to find inroads for using a Strength-based approach with my probation caseload and soon published articles detailing the application within juvenile delinquency. Also I loved writing as it gave me a chance to put voice to all that I was learning – and in an odd sort of way, gave me a chance to apologize.

Practicing from a Strengths Perspective soon made me aware of the dangers of inflicting iatrogenic harm or harm committed in the act of helping. I felt the burden of all the past assessment and probation plans that I had developed. Believing that I was "helping" and doing all that I had been taught, I know now I stole hope from those who could least afford it. It's an insidious injury we can impose on marginalized offenders. I can't tell you how many juvenile offenders and family members I brought into my office to develop a court report/probation plan. The harm began as I reviewed only what was wrong, broken, missing, and flawed. Strengths, past successes, indigenous resources, or aspirations were ignored.

As I would walk them to the lobby door, I realize now that by my sole focus on deficits, the problems for the family had *grown* during the office visit and their sense that they could overcome these problems had *shrunk.* This was the exact opposite of what I intended, yet sadly it was the maddening result of deficit-based work in the juvenile field. The redemption I had found with a strength-based practice became as empowering for me as it proved to be for my offenders.

I made progress in my probation department, and believe I influenced it for the better as well. I found a small group of like-minded practitioners and increased my skills. After a full year of advocacy, I was able to convince our court management to change a deficit-based family history form to one that was balanced between both problems and strengths. The old form was so bad I often have groups review the old deficits form in my trainings as a good example of "what not to do." To gain more experience, I moved into a child welfare position and spent five years performing abuse and neglect casework. I was eventually appointed a Senior Juvenile Court Officer, which included the duties of a Judicial Referee (Magistrate), holding