



Book review of Experiencing Corrections: From Practitioner to Professor

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Johnson, Lee (Ed) (2012). *Experiencing Corrections: From Practitioner to Professor*. Sage Publications, ISBN-1412988470, 279 pages, \$33.48.

More than most fields, correctional applications present a strong contrast between theory, and legal and procedural practice. Differences among governmental jurisdictions and even between boards and committees can make the handling of offenders a bit inconsistent. Yet in spite of this, many criminal justice textbooks approach corrections with a blanket exposition of history and theory. By largely focusing on how the system works, students may be left unprepared to meet the realities of their future employment. Johnson's text seeks to remedy this problem by providing a collection of essays about the corrections system. The result is a pedagogical tool to prepare students for their careers, as well as to provide educators with resources from which they can create lesson plans.

Corrections officers face many challenges including those pertaining to ethical and psychological considerations, most of which are poorly portrayed within the literature. The first essay within this book is provided by John Randolph Fuller. Dr. Fuller states that to orient himself to his new profession within corrections, he had to re-think previous conceptions of the field (pg. 24). This is where essays prove most valuable – they provide examples of real-world events in which classroom material was applied and misconceptions dispelled. Furthermore, these essays interject a degree of realism into the discussion so that students develop a more comprehensive appreciation and understanding of the field. More importantly, readers will learn how to critique the system, a necessity for the progress of corrections. Undoubtedly, these essays will succeed in preparing readers for the challenges they will encounter within their own careers. With helpful synopses, and a detailed table of contents, a professor well-versed in this text can easily locate and assign readings to students based on subject. In addition, discussion questions appear at the end of every chapter, further cementing this book's place in the classroom setting.

The language in which this text is written is brisk and personal in the many autobiographical statements that appear, helping make each account vivid and memorable. Every essay is preceded by a summary of its content, discussion questions, and a recommended list of sources for additional reading. Unlike most traditional textbooks, having numerous authors gives depth and nuance to a system that is rarely appreciated for its complexity. Discussions about bureaucracy and its effectiveness also give the system

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more depth, allowing students to better understand issues related to “red-tape” and “chain of command”. Each section serves as a basis for continued exploration, with supporting articles being offered for more in-depth reading.

While this text has many favorable traits, one drawback that is inevitable when providing an edited collection of essays, is that the final product may lack the coherent focus of a traditionally authored book – as such, this text is best suited to serve in a supportive role. Beyond providing insight into corrections, this book avoids delving into specifics of how the criminal justice system itself operates or how the correctional component of the system relates to the police or judiciary. The best use of this book would likely lie in its capacity to provoke contemplation of a potential career in corrections. It brings stories to life, making them an entertaining teaching tool, and as such, it might find its home in courses on the rehabilitation system, in courses on ethics, or organization and management; perhaps even on the shelves of career centers where it will faithfully represent the field. While I would not recommend it for those seeking an in-depth explanation of how the corrections system operates, it will serve admirably as an introduction to corrections since it approaches its subject matter in a no-nonsense, nitty-gritty way. It introduces readers to the field in a way that is interesting and informative – and few other works can compete with it on that level.