

The Concept of Community Justice

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Mike Nellis, Law School, University of Strathclyde

Personal Interest in mid-1990s

- “Community Justice”: A better name for probation philosophy than “social work”
- “Community Justice Service (CJS)” - A better name – if it had to be renamed - for the Probation Service (better than Community Rehabilitation And Punishment Service (CRAPS)).
- A better term for the Quakers to denote their longstanding concern for offenders than “penal affairs” – still prison-focused despite wider interests in local meetings, eg probation and victims

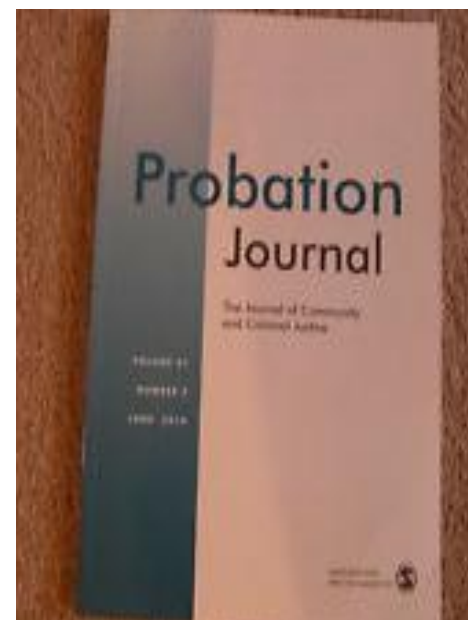
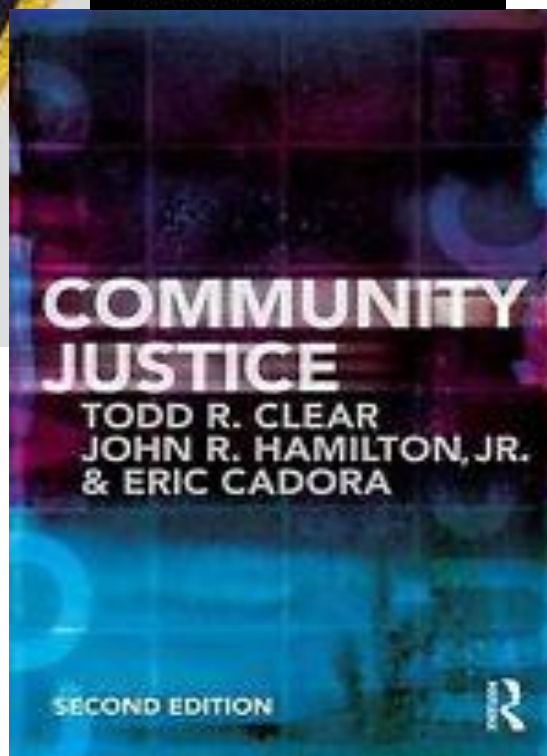
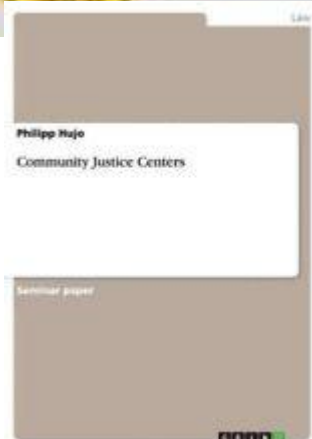
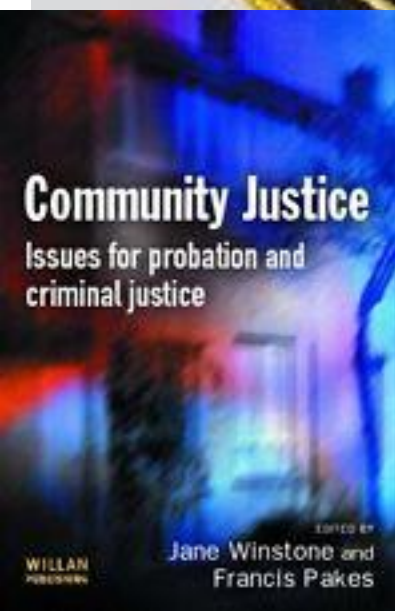
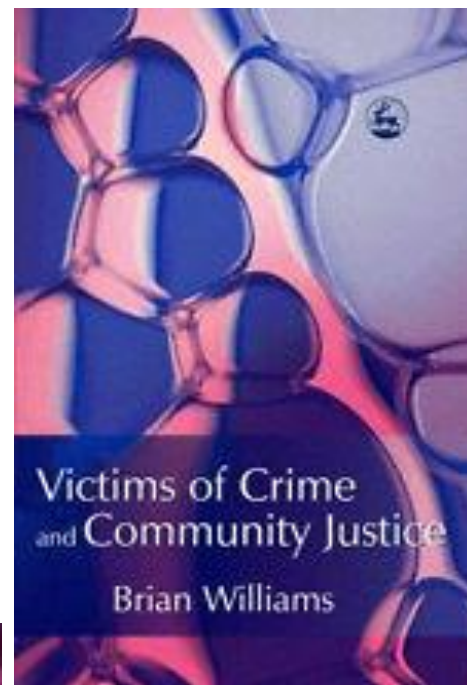
Probation and Community Safety

- A BBC “CrimeWatch” programme – in which CCTV prevented a sexual assault and later identified the perpetrator
- The senior probation manager who said of a local Safer Cities programme “we should have been doing this years ago”
- The SPO who said “In the 12 years I worked as a probation officer I don’t think I realised how much high crime rates affect a local community”
- Coming to Dunblane – pondering “prevention”



Community Justice: Striving
for Safe, Secure, and Just
Communities

National Institute of Corrections:
U.S. Department of Justice



a term with official cachet (north of the border)



- Reflects recognition of the limits of criminal justice processes and agencies to reduce crime and create safety
- Many solutions to criminal behaviour lie in local communities
- Populism – greater responsiveness to public (not media!) opinion

Liverpool Community Justice Centre

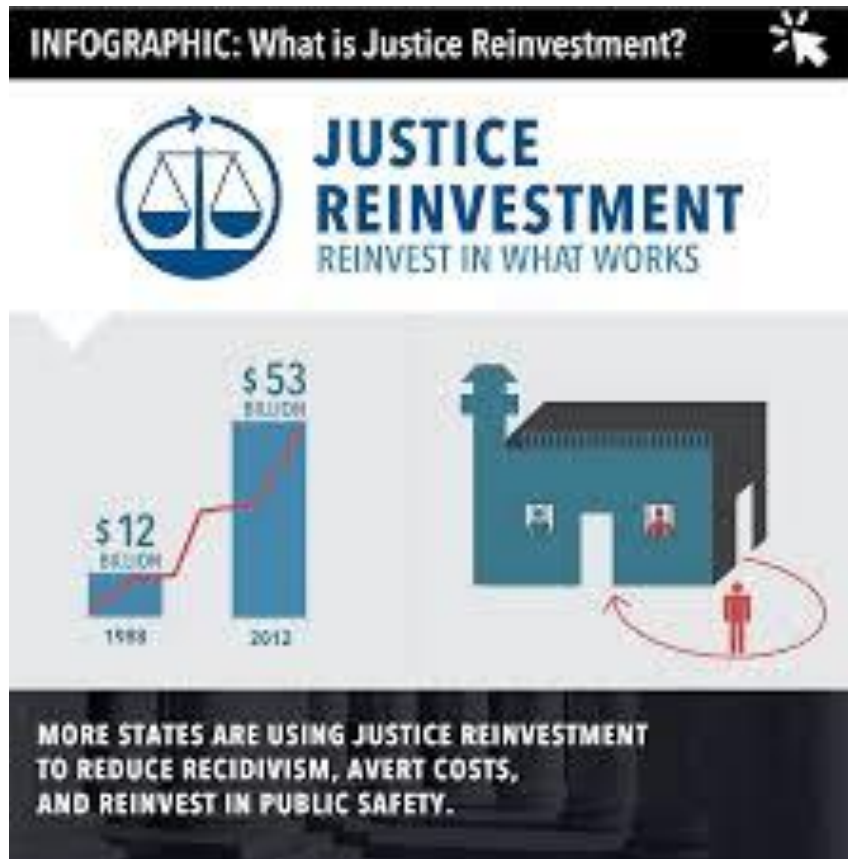
2005-14



- Housed in a former school, the centre focused on offenders making amends to the community with a judge also monitoring treatment programmes and community punishments.
- Closed due to falling caseload and MoJ cuts – despite huge opposition.
- Professor George Mair, at Liverpool Hope University, said: "I think it's very unfortunate that one of the most exciting initiatives in community justice has been closed down with little evidence to back up such a decision."
- "If the government is keen on the idea of criminal justice engaging more with communities then we need more community justice centres not less."



“Justice Reinvestment”



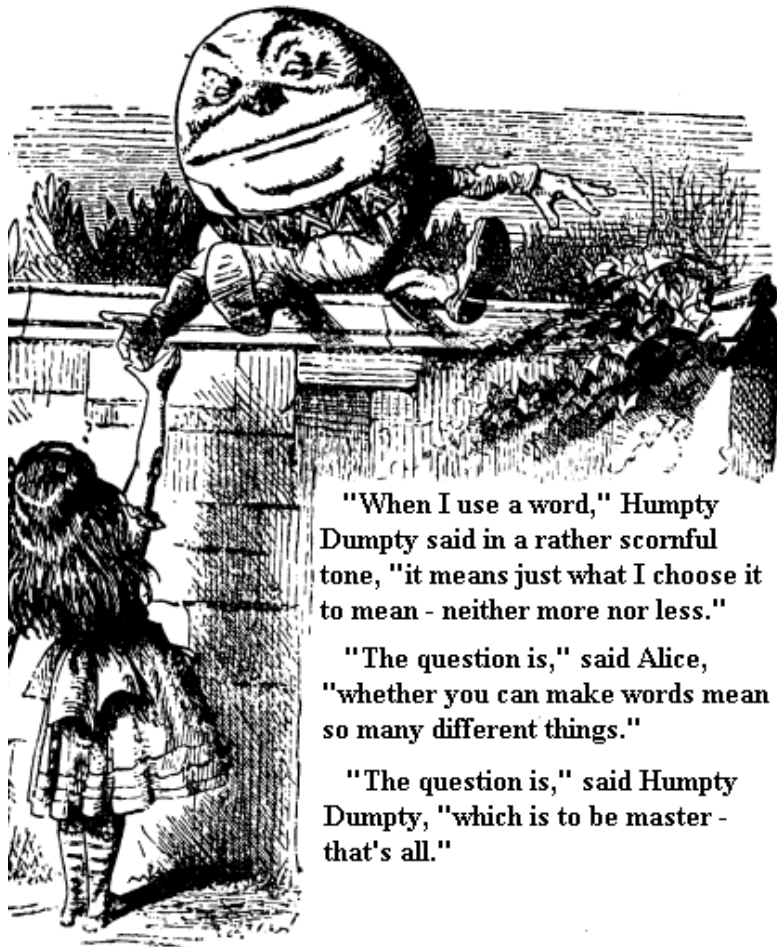
- Roger Houchin’s (2005) snapshot of SPS releases – majority are to Scotland’s poorest wards and highest crime areas
- Implies targeted response to “social exclusion” -community development in poorest areas
- JRI developed in USA- but mutated into a drive for evidence-led cost-effectiveness
- The original JR ideal still matters - but is it likely?

Community Justice - a good term?

- What does it help us to THINK about (that we have not perhaps thought enough about before?)
- What does it help us to DO – differently and/or better?
- Does it have any drawbacks?



Words, Meanings and Things



"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean - neither more nor less."

"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."

"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master - that's all."

- Not necessarily a “term” that is meant to invite deep thought or to suggest precise directions
- “Community” = fuzzy.
“Justice” = commendable but imprecise social good
- It appeals to decency and good sense.
- It can mean what you make it
- and there are competing versions

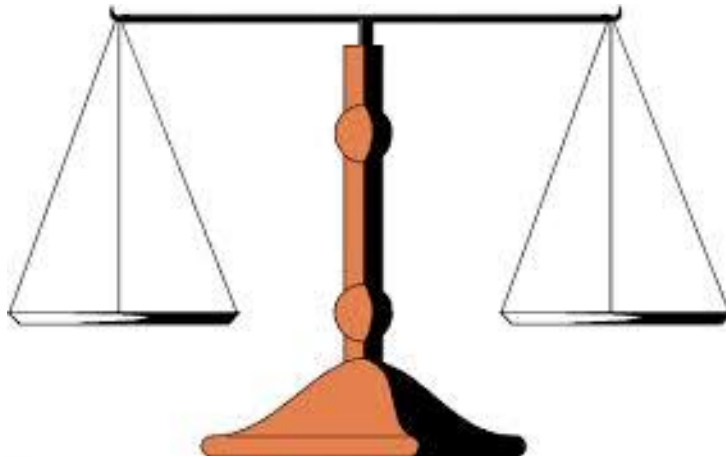
I meant as a start

Community

- An identifiable local administrative unit or neighbourhood in which a range of local resources (statutory and voluntary) could be mobilised to give sensitive expression to national policies on crime, punishment, victims and offenders

Justice

- The moral heart of all debate on how to deal with offenders and victims More so than “safety” or “public protection” (tho’ safety matters)
- Justice is deliberative, tied to wider debates about changing social values (DUI), gender (DV) and technology (CCTV and EM)
- Enables segue from criminal to social (distributive) justice – poverty, inequality and social exclusion.

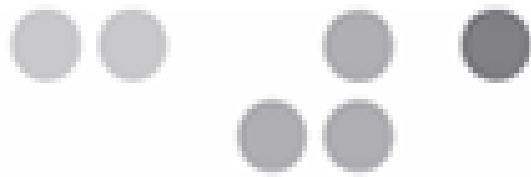


Justice That Promotes Healing

Community Justice & The State

- Community Justice is not fully separate from or independent of state-based criminal justice ..
- ... it's an extension of it, which encourages greater involvement of civil society. (A good thing.)
- It encourages more multi-agency (and partner -ship) working at local level ...and more use of volunteers in penal and preventive interventions (Same old, same old)
- It rebrands what was already being done, dignifies it with a new name. (None the worse for that, mostly)
- A danger – “community justice” celebrates “the local” at a time of increasing centralisation of state authority, and disguises where power lies in the local-central relationship
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Scottish Community Justice



Glasgow
Community
Justice
Authority

- GCJA – reducing offending through partnership
- Creating safer communities
- Reducing risks
- Improving outcomes for offenders, communities and criminal justice system

Community Justice and Restorative Justice

- An obvious affinity in terms of balanced understanding of the needs, rights and interests of both offenders and victims, but ...
- Advocates of RJ (in the USA) have worried about the imposition of “community morality” on offenders, especially young offenders, and prefer to individualise the RJ dialogue. (This matters less in Europe?)
- Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA) are a plausible expression of “community justice”, and might not have come into being without that underpinning concept. (“We are all members one of another”).

Higher Hopes in the 1990s

- Penal reform organisations, probation services and crime reduction partnerships had similar/related aspirations for offenders and victims – to which reduced use of imprisonment was central - but lived in silos, had different emphases and used different language.
- Could “community justice” unify them, constructively?
- Could “community justice” become a reform movement rather than a policy initiative?

The Community Justice Triangle

Presumption against
Prison Use

Restorative Justice Community Safety

- Whither “desistance” and “rehabilitation”?
- Why would it NOT make sense to build an organisation or network that entwined and expressed this triangle? Redesigners, take note!.

Community Justice: Obvious Problems

- Privileging “the local” can become parochial and isolationist – sentencers and agencies.
- Licence for vigilantism – against paedophiles?
- Vagueness and pusillanimity: “If you can’t change the world, change the words”.
- The real relationship between “central” and “local” can be obscured by a descriptor that only emphasises the local.
- Many structural social problems (and online crime) cannot be addressed by merely local actions .. But national strategies need local expression, knowledge and expertise.
- “Community justice” is NOT a useful analytical concept – for understanding the changing nature of penal systems or “the criminal justice landscape”
- But as a normative, prescriptive, aspirational concept it has some potential ...

In Conclusion

- If “community justice” – two worthwhile worlds in themselves – can help us to effect improvements in the way we deal with victims and offenders, to express the best of ourselves in a contentious and riven field of social life, then we should use it and collectively work out the forms of practice that best give legitimate expression to it. The meaning of it will be what we make it. There are worse words that we could use.