

appear vital for coordination and knowledge diffusion. It would have been icing on the cake to understand how politics shapes these networks over time and might avoid common reification of industry networks found in both advanced and developing nations.

Given the extraordinary breadth and depth of this research, these concerns are better placed for future research, which undoubtedly will use this book as a springboard. In sum, those who want to be on the cutting edge of public policy and research on development and technological change would do well to read this book.

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***Against Prediction: Profiling, Policing, and Punishing in an Actuarial Age.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. vi + 264 pages. ISBN 9780226316130, \$55.00 cloth. ISBN 9780226316147, \$25.00 paper. Bernard E. Harcourt. 2007.**

A challenge in addressing issues inherent in the variety of activities that constitute “profiling” is that in order to promote conceptual and theoretical development in this characteristically divisive area, competent researchers will have to confront deeply held and ingrained assumptions many hold about the population being profiled. These assumptions apply to particular racial groups, particular types of offenders (e.g., terrorists, gang members, rapists, and so on), and what might plausibly be assumed to merit effective responses, at all levels of the criminal justice system. Ultimately, therefore, it takes a scholar of great skill and impressive command of research data to effectively challenge some of the most rigidly held aspects of these assumptions. Fortunately, Bernard Harcourt has not only risen to the challenge but has produced a book of such exceptional quality that this reviewer can only describe his offering as not only a welcome breath of fresh air on profiling, but urgent, required reading for all students of criminology, criminal justice, and of course, profiling in all its forms.

What *Against Prediction* offers is a multipronged poke at commonsense views on aspects of profiling that are embedded in, and simultaneously give rise to, ultimately misguided (although often noble in intent) assumptions about “what to do, and who it ought to be done to” in responding to criminal activity. The author makes clear from the outset his provocative claim that “criminal law enforcement and correctional institutions should be blind to predictions of criminality based on group characteristics. We should adopt a presumption *against* prediction” (p. 6). Harcourt argues that the kinds of problems underpinning those that “plague racial profiling . . . are problems about criminal profiling more generally” (p. 21), and sets about exploring the implications of implicitly and otherwise embracing “the actuarial paradigm.” Put simply, *actuarial* implies the use of statistical methods, as opposed to clinical methods, “on large datasets of criminal offending rates in order to determine the different levels of offending associated with one or more group traits, and on the basis of those correlations, to predict the past, present, or future criminal behaviour of a particular person and to administer a criminal justice outcome for that individual” (p. 16).

From highlighting some of the basic mathematical limitations to uncovering the many hidden social costs, to showing how the uncritical acceptance of the logic of profiling has begun to unhelpfully “determine punishment largely on the basis of an actuarial risk assessment,” Harcourt presents the reader with no-nonsense, cold-headed rationale of the limitations and potentially negative implications of the uncritical use of actuarial measures to infer risk. He demonstrates how narrow and limited conceptual models of punishment have obscured, largely via the steady growth of our beguiling reliance on technical knowledge, the pathway toward less simplistic although ultimately more beneficial methods of punishment.

In making his case (or perhaps more accurately, one of several cases), Harcourt suggests that in the very act of questioning the bases of actuarial profiling, we regain a sense of the importance of the *random*. One of the implications of acknowledging and accepting this would, Harcourt explained, result in an ideal situation where “everyone who commits a crime should have the same likelihood of being apprehended, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, class, or any other irrelevant group trait. Randomization is the only way to achieve a carceral population that reflects the offending population. It also avoids the risk that profiling will ultimately increase rather than decrease the overall amount of crime in society” (p. 38). Greatly richer than a mere critique of profiling approaches, this book sets out the cost of relying on actuarial profiling and warns of nestling a false sense of security about just who commits crime and what should be done about it in an effort to control it.

Although Harcourt himself describes the impetus behind his work as shaped by a realization that actuarial measures were gradually molding people’s perceptions of “just” punishment, there is much more to be found in this volume. Harcourt, in fact, ably demonstrates how actuarial methods targeting what is assumed to be a “risky” population may in fact increase the overall amount of crime given the nature of some of the possible responses from that same population (itself a result of being profiled in this way). There are critical lessons to take from this amid current developments in counterterrorism, both at home and abroad, and his brief exploration of terrorism-specific issues (pp. 227–36) sums up in nine pages a cogent argument that has largely remained incoherent and implicit throughout several years of often less than rigorous research by many terrorism “experts.”

Does Harcourt succeed in making a solid case for his claims? In a word, yes, and he does this with nothing less than great skill in careful, measured, and logical analysis. This extraordinarily well-researched book is a labor of love. Well-chosen and historically rich case studies illustrate the concepts throughout. Harcourt knows his subject intimately and is able to draw on an impressive array of data to illustrate his contentious, although gently conveyed, arguments. Harcourt is neither patronizing nor dismissive of the concerns that underpin the widely held assumptions he carefully, and ably, undermines. This is scholarly analysis of the bases of actuarial criminal profiling at its very best and is an outstanding book. A new benchmark in the field.

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