

One of the powerful contributing factors of *Illegal Leisure Revisited* is how it illustrates the misconceptions and clichés of government policy makers regarding recreational poly-drug use by young people. The discursive narrative rewinds the clock, taking you to the Thatcher years, and discusses what may have been the social causes of heroin manifestation in parts of Britain. It looks at the timeline of what government policies were and the historical impact of former governments on drug law, the reclassification of cannabis and methadone, and the ill-considered strategies and policies that surround illegal drug-taking. It analyses the fear-mongering tag lines that successive governments have put out: 'War on Drugs' and 'Tackling Drugs Together', created by the then Home Secretary Michael Howard, focusing on crime associated with heroin addiction, marrying this with cannabis users, the bad youth of Britain. The Conservatives created the sweeping, demeaning strategy of 'yob culture', which was followed by New Labour with their strategy of 'Tackling Drugs Together to Build a Better Britain' in order to control 'antisocial behavior' in the 'decade of dance' with the appointment of a 'drugs tsar'. *Illegal Leisure Revisited* illustrates the ineffectuality of government policy and strategy to understand young adults who take drugs for recreational purposes – they are *not* dependent on drug-taking. It shows how governments have continued to deafen themselves to the drug experts, the research and to young people, who have gained enormous knowledge on the effects and impact of illicit drug use for recreational purposes. Why are governments doing this? Is it about playing to the media and their uninformed electorate for votes?

Within the narrative, you pick up the independent, quiet and unseen power of young people who use illicit drugs. They learn from their friends and siblings. They acknowledge that their parents are uninformed on poly-drug use and will only buy their drugs from friends or known sources, avoiding underworld drug dealing and developing no-go areas. They avoid drugs such as heroin, naming heroin addicts as 'diseased' or 'saddos'. Through the longitudinal survey, these young people come across as maturing within their life changes and the acknowledgement of moving on in a transition to adulthood. It is difficult to understand why governments create knee-jerk reactions in relation to the classification and understanding of certain illicit drugs. They appear to have little understanding of the difference between drug addiction and recreational drug usage and the natural transition to adulthood, as is illustrated here.

Illegal Leisure Revisited creatively explores the drug culture of 'the noughties', with the lingo of illicit drug culture spread alongside charts and graphs. The quotes from the cohort give a power to the book, the human side drawing you in and giving the real-life scenario. Packed solid into an encyclopaedic narrative of illegal recreational drug use and culture, this is a book for anyone who is interested in transition to adulthood research, drug culture and addiction, alcohol and public health research, social sciences, social work, human geography and qualitative research.

Now, where are those recreational drug-taking 'yobs'?

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**Change Matters: critical essays on moving
social justice research from theory to policy**

sj Miller & David E. Kirkland (Eds), 2010

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sj Miller and David E. Kirkland write in the introduction to *Change Matters: critical essays on moving social justice research from theory to policy* that 'social justice ceases to be a concern for educational policy; instead, we see educational policy in the U.S. exclusively dominated by accountability issues at the national, state, and local levels' (p. 7). Noting the social inequities that persist in the political hegemony of modern society, these editors have collected a series of short essays with the expressed intent of moving the conversation around social justice from the realm of intellectual

navel-gazing towards practical action. In selecting a wide array of modes of discourse for their collection, ranging from literature reviews to personal narratives, they concede that the actual work of social justice is pluralistic and multiperspectival. As they state:

Neither we nor our contributors are interested in participating in the intellectual performances of politically angled critique impenetrable to the unknown masses, offering impractical and utopian solutions. Neither do we purport to have access to the silver bullets capable of slaying the dark dragons of injustice that conspire, with their hidden fires, to hold captive educational equity.
(p. 2)

Instead, they seek to influence and advocate for social change by acknowledging its complexity and creating, through the very structure of their work, the possibility for approaching change via multiple pathways.

The book is divided into four parts. In section 1, 'Conceiving Social Justice', the various authors seek to create a framework for conducting social justice research, drawing upon the vast bodies of literature from a variety of academic disciplines. The focus on research in this first section is not meant to dismiss the call for praxis. On the contrary, the production of social justice-based research that identifies the existence of inequities and injustice might well aid in dismantling the system that reproduces inequitable educational practices. In section 2, 'Multi Social Justice Methods in English Education', the editors have amassed a collection of essays that discuss various empirical methodological approaches which fall within a social justice framework. Noting that these methods and methodologies emerged 'organically' from the research, the editors urge all social justice researchers 'to remain open to letting contexts speak' (p. 107).

The essays in section 3, 'The Politics of Social Justice Representations: right-ing and re-researching', speak to the claim that our traditions of research at once obfuscate existing issues of power, limit who can participate in the production of knowledge and recreate social injustices. The authors interrogate traditional modes of representation in research and offer alternative approaches that strive to be more accessible. By suggesting alternative modes of communicating their research, however, these authors do not seek to establish new dogmatic types of representation. The editors hope, rather, that by presenting the realities of the messiness of research, they can 'help readers see how truths, much like lies, are man-made' (p. 111). Finally, in section 4, 'Subject of the Transformation: policy and possibility', the authors move away from merely observing and critiquing social injustice, towards actually seeking ways to affect policy and bring about change. Miller and Kirkland have taken care to stress that the call to action need not be framed within a discourse of political partisanship. They understand, however, that ideological positionalities often obstruct social change and that efforts to create a more just social world must be based in a clear and irrefutable demonstration of the multiple oppressive regimes that surround us.

There are far too many essays in this collection to discuss the merits or faults of each individual selection. Suffice it to say that – on the whole – *Change Matters* does, indeed, matter. Although this group of essays emerges from the field of English education, this timely and well-conceptualized collection undoubtedly speaks across the disciplinary divide. The topic of social justice in education has become, unfortunately, somewhat of a platitude. At educational conferences throughout the world, everyone seems to have jumped on the bandwagon.

The editors and authors in this collection have argued powerfully for a coherent framework within which to conduct social justice research that is grounded in the traditions of multicultural education, critical pedagogy, anti-racist education and critical feminism, amongst others. In so doing, they have sought clearly to delineate – if not to define – the parameters that determine the nature of social justice work. The greatest strength, I believe, of *Change Matters* is the editors' ability to honor the complexity of the field, the multiplicity of perspectives and the messiness of social justice research, even as they have striven to delimit what constitutes the work of social justice. Moreover, in keeping with their conviction that social justice work must lead to praxis, the editors end this fine collection with a series of specific policy 'resolutions' that espouse the values and beliefs set forth in the text.

In conclusion, I recommend *Change Matters* unreservedly to educational researchers and practitioners committed to creating a more just world. If there were anything I would like to have seen in this text that is not there, it would have been the inclusion of essays of scholars and thinkers from outside the USA. This is a minor criticism, however, and I believe that much of this text is

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applicable to a more global context. This collection is filled with thoughtful ideas for moving social justice theory to policy, and it represents – as the editors repeatedly state – an invitation to ‘join the dialogue’ (p. 23).

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