

Book Review

Allison McKim, *Addicted to Rehab: Race, Gender, and Drugs in the Era of Mass Incarceration* (Rutgers University Press, 2017)

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IN *ADDICTED TO REHAB: RACE, GENDER, AND DRUGS IN THE ERA OF MASS Incarceration*, Allison McKim highlights the complex ways in which addiction is used to govern women's lives. To illustrate the various expressions of addiction and treatment philosophy, McKim employs a comparative ethnographic study of two residential women's rehabilitation programs—a publicly funded penal rehab program and a private-pay facility. Through her analysis of Women's Treatment Services and Gladstone Lodge, McKim takes the reader through the divergent pathways to these programs, the different definitions of addiction that the programs employ, and the opposing treatment structures women encounter. Building on existing governance literature, McKim shows how governing through addiction both derives from and works to reproduce unequal racialized, classed, and gendered ideologies through techniques of punitive social control. What results is a bifurcated rehab structure in which the type of treatment a woman receives is largely dependent on her race and class. In contrasting the two programs, McKim exposes the repackaging of penal logics into addiction and treatment discourse, thus illustrating the ability of the penal state to reproduce marginality through exclusion, surveillance, and punishment beyond the prison.

In the introductory chapter, McKim familiarizes the reader with the field of rehabilitation and its relationship with deviance and the penal state. Historically, institutions like prisons and asylums have been tasked with managing particular populations through strategies of exclusion, surveillance, stigmatization, and coercion. McKim argues that we see a similar phenom-

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enon when we interrogate institutions that deal with addiction; thus, “We are also governing through addiction” (9). Inspired by Simon’s (2007) notion of governing through crime, governing through addiction is the major orienting framework for the book. For McKim, governing through addiction refers to “the process whereby logics and techniques from the addiction recovery field underpin how we think about and act on social relations,” an approach that is “most deeply rooted in punishment” (9). Although punishment is an important tool for social control, governing through addiction is not limited to prisons and jails. Extending the work of carceral state scholars such as Beckett and Murakawa (2012), McKim argues that the penal state is adaptable and expansive, as its punishing power can also operate through community-based institutions by invoking the ideology of rehabilitation.

Women’s Treatment Services (WTS) is a state-funded alternative to incarceration or penal rehab, and the majority of the women arrive there as a result of parole terms, the rulings of criminal courts, and mandates by Child Protective Services. Based on the pathways to rehab, it is perhaps unsurprising that the population at WTS mirrors the prison population—during McKim’s research period, approximately 70 percent were Black women, 20 percent were Latina, and 10 percent were white. They were also predominantly of lower socioeconomic status, with limited educational and work experience. At WTS, addiction is defined as “having a weak and dependent self” (49). Substances are not the focus, but rather substance use is understood as a manifestation of a woman’s addiction to pain and punishment, a consequence of her disordered self. Here, the damage of racism, classism, sexism, etc. is reframed as individual disorder. Because WTS is a gender-responsive program, this individualized construction of addiction is braided with gendered ideology, specifically the assumption that there is something about being a woman that makes the self problematic—that “something” is a woman’s dependency. Because the self is considered the problem, treatment at WTS revolves around fixing the self, specifically curing women of their dependence on outside sources of worth. In order to treat this dependency, WTS employs strategies of habilitation—a total remaking of the self, which aims to create autonomous, independent women who refuse to rely on others.

To cultivate this independence, WTS relies on isolationist techniques such as mutual surveillance and reporting by/of clients, effectively inhibiting bonds between them. As one counselor stated, “There are no friends in treatment” (71). Through mandated confessions in group therapy and reflection practices, the women also learn to see every struggle as evidence of their

addiction to pain and punishment, and their dependence as a source of their addiction. This process, McKim observes, is deeply gendered, as it requires women to understand the parts of their selves associated with womanhood as problematic, including their roles as mothers, their sexuality, and their physical appearance. In order to “reform the gendered aspects” (75) of their lives that exacerbate their weak, dependent selves, the women are encouraged to disengage from relationships and institutions outside of rehab, namely their families, employment, and education. Failure to disengage and focus on the self is considered resisting treatment. Importantly, resisting treatment is a punishable offense, and WTS has the penal state’s power to legitimately punish. Punishments can range from being assigned particular chores to being discharged from the program. The consequences for these women are profound, as discharge in particular could mean a parole violation or further difficulty in regaining custody of children. As McKim states, WTS’s definition of addiction and approach to treatment constructs an experience in which “the state uses punishment to make women love themselves” (98).

McKim contrasts WTS’s approach to addiction with that of Gladstone Lodge, revealing a bifurcated treatment structure. Gladstone Lodge is a nonpenal, modestly priced private rehab facility. The Lodge does not accept Medicaid and is not formally connected with the criminal justice or welfare systems. Instead, it contracts with insurance companies, employers, and labor unions, and thus most residents arrive there after being encouraged to seek treatment by their families or employers. As a result, the population at the Lodge is mostly white and working or middle class. During the study, approximately 12 percent of the residents were Black, 10 percent were Latina, and 78 percent were white. At the Lodge, addiction means, rather simply, chemical dependence. Treatment focuses on teaching the clients how to manage without substances so that they can return to their preexisting lives. A number of assumptions undergird this approach—principally the assumption that these women’s lives are worth getting back to, and the assumption that addiction is a foreign entity separate from the self. In contrast to WTS, substance use is the problem, not a disordered self, and thus Lodge clients are understood as respectable people who simply need assistance in learning how to live without substances. A return to respectability, rather than a resocialization of the self, is the ultimate goal of treatment. This is an important distinction when we consider the racial and class makeup of the clientele at the Lodge. Because the Lodge identifies as part of the health care industry, actively distances itself from the penal state, and denies Medicaid recipients, the Lodge serves what one administrator described

as the “cream of the crop” or the “best addicts” (112). These entwined and reinforcing factors then determine the treatment approach.

Whereas WTS uses the dependency framework to understand and respond to women’s lives, the Lodge relies on the 12-step framework. In this program, women accept their lack of self-control and surrender their will to the process, learn to rely on others for help and guidance, and integrate into positive social institutions like family and work. McKim argues that the 12-step framework wins out because, unlike the dependency framework, it largely aligns with the Lodge’s population, mission, and politics. Framing the Lodge clients as disordered in their dependence would alienate the institutions that forge the pathways to rehab in the first place and weaken the Lodge’s source of informal social control. The dependency framework is also imbued with racialized and classed assumptions that would challenge the Lodge’s understanding of these clients and their lives as respectable, and thus would undermine the work it tries to do in returning them to respectability. However, although the Lodge manages through 12-step techniques rather than dependency, the clients are still very much governed through their addiction; McKim notes that “the Lodge exercised a form of social control that labeled clients with a deviant identity and tried to normalize people to conventional standards” (126).

It is the differences in treatment discourse and practice that lead McKim to the conclusion that WTS and the Lodge represent different modes of governing through addiction that are divided by race and class. It becomes clear throughout the book that the way a person ends up in rehab and the kind of treatment they receive is more dependent on their social and economic positionality than their substance use. As exemplified through her analysis of WTS, the socially and economically marginalized are managed through strategies of criminalization and exclusion deployed by and within penal institutions. At the same time, the more privileged, like the clients of Gladstone Lodge, are managed through integration and the informal power of mainstream institutions like work and family. WTS is a stigmatizing, punitive institution based in logics of individual failure and responsabilization that is most often invoked to manage marginalized populations. In contrasting it with the Lodge, McKim convincingly argues that WTS operates as an extension of the penal state, not as an alternative to it. However, in exposing WTS as a penal satellite, McKim refuses to let the Lodge off the hook. As she demonstrates, the Lodge also embodies the politics of the punitive turn by reproducing distinctions between worthy and unworthy addicts. Thus, WTS and the Lodge represent two sides of the

governing-through-addiction coin. In illustrating how governing through addiction can directly and indirectly extend the penal state's power and perpetuate racialized and classed inequalities, McKim makes an important intervention into reformist discourse and the associated community corrections literature that praises such alternatives.

Significantly, McKim does not use the final pages to detail how we can make rehab better. Although she does offer some suggestions for mitigating harm, such as limiting the number of people who are criminalized for substance use, McKim instead challenges the reader to think critically about the function of rehab. Throughout the book, she demonstrates the intricate connections between rehab, the penal state, and social control, and effectively argues that—just as we have done with prisons, jails, drug courts, and so much more—we are now asking rehab to cure the ailments of our society. This is perhaps the book's greatest contribution, as it requires the reader to recognize how deeply punishment is embedded in our social mindset, as well as the myriad forms it can take and the countless ways it can be deployed to manage marginality. In order to move forward, then, we should take seriously McKim's suggestion to "abandon the belief that addiction can explain social problems and that rehab can address them" (172).

REFERENCES

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