

# **SUMMARY**

## **Environmental factors and offenders with intellectual disabilities**

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There is widespread and longstanding agreement that offenders with intellectual disabilities should receive treatment and rehabilitation in the least restrictive settings, ideally in the community, rather than in prisons or secure hospitals. Yet progress has been notoriously slow (as documented in the recent policy review ‘The Bradley Report’). While policy continues to recommend diversion to the community, life in the community for offenders with intellectual disabilities has received only limited research attention. In particular, little work has addressed the impact of social and environmental factors in the lives of offenders with intellectual disabilities, despite the potential relevance of these circumstances to offending, and also to the provision of effective community-based support. This project set out to address the omission, calling on environmentally-oriented research in criminology for theoretical and methodological guidance and undertaking a systematic analysis of the everyday lives and experiences of community-based offenders with intellectual disabilities.

Offenders with intellectual disabilities joined the study directly following incidents of alleged or convicted offending. A case-control design was used. Control participants were supported by the same community services and were of comparable age, gender, and level of intellectual disabilities. Offenders and non-offenders’ neighbourhoods were surveyed (1056 neighbourhood residents from 67 neighbourhoods returned postal surveys) and people with intellectual disabilities, their carers, support workers, and local service practitioners, were interviewed (97 interviews). This thesis focuses on the statistical analysis and theoretical integration of this material.

Findings suggested that multiple proximal, but not distal, factors strongly differentiated between offenders and non-offenders with intellectual disabilities. Preliminary integration of these findings with mainstream criminological work suggests considerable intersection. Overwhelmingly, despite contact with community services, offenders lacked structured activity and satisfying personal relationships. Emphasising these issues might help to focus and strengthen community support services, but also highlights complex practical and ethical problems which remain to be tackled.