Review of *Community Disorders and Policing.* Tony Marshall. Reviewed by William G. Archambeault, Louisiana State University.

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Recommended Citation

Book Reviews

Tony Marshall, *Community Disorders and Policing*. Concord, MA: Paul & Co., 1992. $29.95, Papercover.

Writing a book is challenging. However, the process of writing becomes much more difficult when an author attempts to connect multiple academic areas of study, two continents, different cultures and various divergent theoretical perspectives. Yet, this is the challenge that the author undertook in this book of readings. The book bridges the fields of law enforcement and social work and the academic areas of social work, criminal justice and criminology. It links the continents of Europe and America. It connects the various subcultures of law enforcement, violence, mediation and conflict management. It also applies different ideological, theoretical and philosophical perspectives.

The book consists of twenty-three short essay chapters that are organized into five main topical sections. The first section introduces various philosophies and theories of community violence, police intervention and conflict resolution. It links the experiences of British police with those of American police in dealing with the problems of community disorders.

The second and third sections present antithetical perspectives on issues of community violence and police intervention. The second section presents the community's perspective, while the third presents the police viewpoint. The fourth and fifth chapters focus on the roles of police mediators first the United States and then in Great Britain.

The sixth and final section presents a series of essays that focus on analysis of social conflict, crisis intervention and post-crisis intervention. The last essay in the book draws these discussions to a coherent conclusion.

The book is not a comprehensive analytical analysis of scholarly literature on civil disorders and the police role, although it does contain some scholarly research material. It is not a "how to mediate social conflicts" manual for police, although the book also does contain some of this material as well. The entire book can be summarized in a few sentences, drawn from the author's

conclusion. "This book is not intended to provide answers so much as possibilities; nor explicit techniques so much as orienting principles. Nevertheless, certain recommendations emerge relatively clearly from among the various contributions, written as they are from a great variety of standpoints."

The approach taken by the author may be called a *bridging work*. In fact, the book tries to link so many divergent perspectives that its conceptual organization might be described as an iconoclastic network of bridges linking numerous disparate human thoughts and actions. It connects the real world of policing to the scholarly worlds of social philosophies and community theories. These worlds are divided by deep gorges that are filled with different experiences, perceptions, mistrust, conflicting ideologies and myopic convictions of what constitutes life. Like other academic-real world bridging works, this one may not be well received by some people on both sides of issues. The book's unusual character is both its weakness and its strength.

The book has several weaknesses. One is that scholars from any one of the many paradigms presented will probably find this work to be superficial and lacking in serious scholastic value. Its review of literature is reasonably comprehensive, but its analysis and discussion of complex and enigmatic issues is cursory at best. In addition, the writing is too often uneven and gives simplistic interpretations to complex social, legal, law enforcement and research related issues.

The book also makes a feeble and unsuccessful attempt at trying to conceptualize community violence within a clinical "social disease" framework. The author simply fails to provide a valid theoretical framework, empirical research or diagnostic evidence to substantiate need or utility for this approach.

Traditional law enforcement trainers will tend to find the book less than useful for uncovering pragmatic solutions to serious community order problems, although the bibliography may be of some value. Still other readers may reject the work because it rambles around issues without providing a consistent theoretical context within which to study them. Yet, the book is not without considerable merit.

Scholars and practitioners alike who are looking for an easy-to-read book for students and one that can serve as a platform

for discussion and debate will find this to be an interesting and instructive book of readings. The organization of the reader is clear and could serve as an outline for a series of class lectures. When augmented with other materials, the book could be a valuable teaching aid. Its bibliography is also one of its strong points.

Another strong point is that the text has significant value for the areas of international criminal justice and comparative criminology. On every issue the author presents material from both Great Britain and the United States as well as limited materials from other countries. It presents valuable comparative information that allows the reader to appreciate a variety of different points of view and international experiences. Taken together, these make it possible to compare the experiences of any single country or those of any single community (such as the Los Angeles Riots of 1992 in the United States) with community disorders of other cultures and nations.

Finally, the book, even with its shortcomings, serves as a valuable interface among the areas of social work, criminal justice and criminology. Students from all three areas can gain a better eclectic understanding of commonly shared problems and appreciate the unique contributions of each academic area.

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Scott Cummings and Daniel J. Monti (Eds). *Gangs: The Origins and Impact of Contemporary Youth Gangs in the United States*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993. $59.50 hardcover; $19.95 papercover.

Herbert C. Covey, Scott Menard and Robert J. Franzese. *Juvenile Gangs*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1992. $54.75 hardcover.

Both the print and electronic media are bombarding the public daily with dramatic and shocking reports of violence including drive-by shootings, drug busts gone awry, and other incidents involving the actions of youth. Not uncommonly, the violence is ascribed to gang activities. These two books present