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Robbing Drug Dealers: Violence Beyond the Law. Bruce A. Jacobs

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The authors conclude that psychological factors play a very important role in overcoming disadvantage. The pathmakers had a strong achievement orientation and an internal locus of control. However, sociological factors such as social support networks and significant role models were also important. The study found that religious activity was a relevant factor in accounting for success as was the influence of school teachers and the support of family members.

This interesting study is exploratory in nature but it sheds important light on why some people from disadvantaged families and communities succeed while others do not. By examining the way the pathmakers, as positive outliers, faced their challenges, the authors have provided valuable information about the role of psychological and sociological factors in social mobility in American society.

Bruce A. Jacobs, *Robbing Drug Dealers: Violence Beyond the Law*. Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter, 2000. \$19.95 paperback.

Fifteen years after the latest War on Drugs, the United States is still reeling with ambivalence about who the good guys and the bad guys are. In the wake of the nation's massive drug policy, concern is still placed on both identifying victims (law abiding citizens) and on the evil perpetrators of drug use and crime (dealers, drugs themselves and criminals). The division between victim and perpetrator is professed to be a clean one easily seen by the public at large and by law enforcement. But what happens when these two roles blend? This is the makings of a moral calamity which is the basis of Jacobs' well-written and thought-provoking book.

Through in-depth interviews with 29 drug robbers in St. Louis, Missouri, who are themselves drug dealers, Jacobs takes us into a world that is little seen by civilians—a world in which victims are not protected by due process but are held to the norms of their criminal environments. By sequencing the process of drug robbery into the four conceptual areas: motivation, target selection, enactment, and managing retaliation, Jacobs reveals the intricacies of each step during which there is constant assessment of benefits (large sums of money) and risks (injury or death) by the drug robber. Despite the sometimes meticulous planning of these

robberies, drug robbers are often caught in situations where they must make quick decisions which ultimately might jeopardize the robbery and result in violence against themselves or others.

This book provides a window into a culture within a culture that few consider important enough to even mention. A major strength of this book is that it combines two theoretical approaches, namely, rational choice theory and phenomenological interactionism. Jacobs relies heavily on quotes to illustrate in finer detail the decision-making processes and the emotions of his subjects as they plan, stage, and eventually execute a drug robbery.

It would have been useful if Jacobs had spent a little more time considering the policy implications of his work. Clearly, drug dealing and drug robbery are intractable problems which have no easy solutions. However, Jacobs provides very little insight into what approaches should be tried to ameliorate the conditions under which these individuals live. In the last paragraph of Jacobs' book, reference is made to legalizing drugs as a possible strategy to "... wiping out their black-market value." (p. 145), but he admits that this is unlikely to occur in the near future given the entrenched drug culture that has emerged. It would have been important for Jacobs to consider other policy options, perhaps less extreme than legalization, that might provide some leverage with this problem. For example, harm reduction strategies that provide broader based interventions to reduce the harm from drug use may be one step in this direction. Despite this limitation, Jacobs has done an excellent job of reminding us that criminal behavior is a very relative term.

Rebecca Anne Allahyari, *Visions of Charity: Volunteer Workers and Moral Community*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000. \$45.00 hardcover, \$17.95 papercover.

With the recent announcement of President George W. Bush's faith based initiative in social policy, interest in the role of religious organizations in meeting social needs has intensified. Of course, religious organizations have long been involved in providing services to people in need. In addition to the efforts of local churches, synagogues and temples, large scale operations managed by the major denominations are now well