Spring 1987

Book Reviews

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarlycommons.law.northwestern.edu/jclc

Part of the Criminal Law Commons, Criminology Commons, and the Criminology and Criminal Justice Commons

Recommended Citation

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by Northwestern University School of Law Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology by an authorized editor of Northwestern University School of Law Scholarly Commons.
BOOK REVIEWS


Whether spelling out a liberal agenda\(^1\) or a conservative agenda,\(^2\) authors of crime control policy guides in the 1970s shared an abiding belief that crime could be reduced in American society by implementing appropriate changes in the criminal justice system. In the 1980s, a number of criminologists have evaluated the failed policies of the recent past and have pessimistically concluded that the criminal justice system by itself is inherently impotent in reducing crime. While many of these criminologists have proposed reducing crime by radically reforming the structure of American society, Kevin Wright advocates combatting crime by revitalizing the deteriorating social controls in American society. Characterizing social atomization in American society as the historical consequence of the differentiation of the formal authority of the state and the informal authority of society, Wright argues that coercive state controls are ipso facto ineffective as compared to informal social controls in achieving social constraint and law-abiding behavior. By contrasting these two forms of control, however, Wright neglects throughout his book to examine the problematic relationship between formal state control and informal social control.

In the first part of The Great American Crime Myth, Wright examines the myths about crime that have presumably created irrational public fear and provided justification for misconceived crime control strategies. Wright reviews the conventional wisdom about how the law enforcement establishment manufactures official crime statistics to promote its organizational self-interests and transmits these statistics to the media, which, in turn, promulgate recurrent myths about crime waves. Although Wright briefly discusses the nature and problems of victimization studies of the National Crime Survey (NCS) and compares NCS statistics with Uniform Crime Re-

---


\(^2\) See, e.g., J. Wilson, Thinking About Crime (1975).
ports (UCR) statistics, he never explains why the NCS statistics, which indicate greater stability in crime patterns than UCR statistics, are seldom quoted by the media. Wright also fails to address two further issues: how state level criminal justice statistics bureaus control crime reporting and how informal social controls, both in police organizations and in the community, affect crime reporting.

In attempting to counter the distorted view of crime presented by the law enforcement establishment, media, and politicians, Wright deprecates the public's irrational fear of increasing crime. To dramatize the unlikelihood of becoming a victim of crime, he states that more lives are lost to cirrhosis of the liver caused by alcoholism than to crime and that greater property loss occurs from natural disasters than from crime. Wright next argues that the public confuses crime with the environment of crime (i.e., the signs of incivility and disorder which create the public fear of crime such as vice, graffiti, vandalism, and vagrancy). Although he initially asserts the notion that fear of crime reduces social cohesiveness and contributes to social deterioration is a myth (p. 73), he later recognizes the circular nature of the relationship in stating that “as people become more fearful, they withdraw from social contact” (p. 208).3 Furthermore, after citing an NCS finding that the public depersonalizes crime by viewing crime as more serious and more rapidly increasing outside their own neighborhood, Wright seemingly contradicts himself by stating that changing neighborhood environments have created even greater fear and insecurity (p. 76). He fails to mention that the majority of the public takes precautionary measures to avoid crime. This fact is significant not only in terms of the apparent depersonalization of crime but also in terms of the effect of these measures on reducing the volume of reported crime. Contending that crime itself, which presumably is not a sign of incivility or disorder, remains stable while the environment of crime accelerates, Wright audaciously proposes making vice an enforcement priority in order to restore a greater sense of security among the public (p. 212), even though throughout his book he vigorously refutes the efficacy of such formal controls.

In the second part of The Great American Crime Myth, Wright examines the criminal justice system’s response to crime, focusing mainly on the conservative agenda and its underlying goals of deterrence, incapacitation, and retribution. Citing a limited number of

research studies, Wright provides a convincing but conventional cri-
tique of the following topics: increased police patrols; elimination
of the "exclusionary ruling;" preventive detention; mandatory and
career criminal sentencing; capital punishment; increased prison
population; limitations on appeals; elimination of parole; and waiver
of juveniles to adult court. He notes that the items which have been
implemented have had very little impact on reducing crime. In ad-
invention, the items which have been proposed would be, if successfully
implemented, ludicrously costly and could also threaten certain civil
liberties. He explains that deterrence will not reduce crime because
deterrence is based on the faulty assumption that a criminal act will
not occur if the costs of the action outweigh the benefits. He also
states that incapacitation will not reduce crime because of the faulty
assumption that career criminals can be accurately identified.

In regard to retribution, Wright takes a more equivocal posi-
tion. After stating that retribution also fails to reduce crime (p.
123), although such a reduction is not an intended purpose of retri-
bution, he acknowledges that retribution reaffirms a sense of justice
and fair play by formally defining right and wrong. Wright also rec-
ognizes that retribution, by relieving citizens of the responsibility of
taking vengeance, establishes a sense of social balance that avoids
feuds within communites (pp. 111, 124). Wright’s failure to recog-
nize the criminal justice system’s goal of retribution as the point of
intersection between formal and informal controls is unfortunate
given his identification of the moral, educative, and conflict-resolu-
tion functions of retribution. Instead of focusing on whether the
criminal justice system can reduce crime, Wright should have de-
voted his attention to evaluating specific mechanisms of the criminal
justice system that Gorecki\(^4\) and Fogel\(^5\) have suggested would en-
hance the performance of this retributive role and may also bolster
the problematic legitimacy of the criminal justice system.

Wright also neglects to discuss the role of informal controls on
the operation of formal controls. He does not discuss, as has
Walker,\(^6\) how informal norms of the “courtroom work group” and
the dynamics of the criminal justice system develop a “going rate”
that undermines the effectiveness of any criminal justice reform. In
addition, by comparing the supposed inefficacy of coercive controls
in the Soviet Union to those in the United States, Wright fails to

\(^5\) D. Fogel, “. . . We Are the Living Proof. . .”: The Justice Model for Corrections (2d ed. 1979). For a criticism of Fogel’s model, see F. Cullen & K. Gilbert, Reaffirming Rehabilitation 125-241 (1982).
realize how the totalitarianism of the Soviet Union, particularly during the Stalin era, involved the use of informal controls in combination with formal controls to achieve conformity.

In the final section of The Great American Crime Myth, Wright enumerates the causes and effects of the breakdown of social control, which he myopically traces to social changes in the last ten to thirty years—and the necessity for regenerating informal controls. After lamenting the breakdown of stable neighborhoods and suggesting the need to re-establish solidarity, Wright states that the ultimate amelioration of the crime problem cannot be achieved until there is a basic reorientation of the cultural values of the entire society. In contrast to his analysis of coercive controls, Wright's argument about the potential effectiveness of informal controls is only minimally supported by empirical studies. He fails to cite any research examining Travis Hirschi's control theory and does not refer to the vast empirical literature on bystander intervention. In addition, he cites only a few studies on community crime prevention and control.

Instead of viewing crime as the product of cultural conflicts or particular subcultures, Wright states that crime is determined within the dominant culture of the society. Crime is supposedly "but one manifestation of the exploitative behavior prevalent in our achievement-oriented but weakly constrained society" (p. 210). Even though Wright recognizes differences in class and rates of victimization by social category (p. 59), he assiduously avoids commenting on differences in crime rates by social category. Consequently, when Wright discusses changing conditions undermining the informal controls that inhibit crime, he identifies conditions that are much less relevant to social categories with the highest crime rates, such as the diffusion of social networks beyond the community and geographical mobility. In addition, in an attempt to de-emphasize subcultures of crime, he refers to the low crime rates that have been found in heterogeneous countries like Switzerland and unjustifiably asserts that the ethnic and racial homogeneity of neighborhoods in America has been disappearing (p. 206).

Despite the publisher's touting of The Great American Crime Myth as a "challenging new analysis," Wright's treatment of the myths of crime and crime control policy is quite conventional. His treatment of the breakdown of informal controls is a reiteration of the work of Ross and other earlier twentieth century social control theorists who also eschewed the utilitarianism of their time. By failing to evaluate

---

major research studies and theoretical work relevant to his control thesis, Wright has produced an analysis more suitable for the general reader than the serious scholar interested in the relationship between formal and informal social control. Given the price of the book versus the competing work of its genre, the likelihood of it being adopted as a textbook or supplement for the classroom is doubtful.

STANLEY K. SHERNOCK
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE STUDIES AND SOCIOLOGY
NORWICH UNIVERSITY


In addition to the general standards of significance, originality, and validity by which all works of scholarship are measured, scholars attempting to inform the beginning student about their discipline incur special obligations. While subject to varying interpretations and disagreement, especially in an area as unsettled and contentious as radical criminology, the special burden of an introductory text is to effectively communicate and comprehensively cover an area’s major theories, methods, and research issues. Lynch and Groves’ A Primer in Radical Criminology stands up well under both general and particular standards of scholarship. The book is a readable, provocative, and informative introduction to recent research and theory in radical and Marxist criminology. Although only 121 pages, the book’s coverage of radical and traditional literature on criminal causation, policing, courts, and corrections is remarkably comprehensive and thorough. The book makes a useful contribution to the field of undergraduate criminology and criminal justice texts. The primary drawback of the book is its failure to adequately examine the flaws of the radical perspective criminology.

The first point of A Primer in Radical Criminology is that there is a reasonably coherent radical perspective in criminology based on Marxist social theory that may be contrasted with “traditional” perspectives. Although Lynch and Groves acknowledge the diversity of approaches falling under the rubric of radical criminology, they wisely eschew lengthy discussion of the differences among “critical,” “dialectical,” and “socialist” perspectives in favor of concentrating on the basic concepts and guiding orientations common to
them all. Students and instructors interested in pursuing the fine points of Marxist debate are directed to the appropriate sources. The authors next apply the radical perspective to the central issues of criminal justice theory and research. Lynch and Groves comment on the definition and causes of crime, the structure and functions of policing, the court system, and the punishment and corrections system. In each topic area, the radical perspective is contrasted with other approaches. For example, the radical "social harms" conception of crime is contrasted with consensus-oriented conceptions that neglect the role of power in the selective application of law to behavior. The authors criticize such approaches for their nonpartisan pluralism and relativism. In the chapter on crime causation, which is the most interesting and original portion of the book, Lynch and Groves emphasize the compatibility of certain traditional perspectives, especially control and community disorganization theories, with a radical analysis of the social sources of conventional crime. *A Primer in Radical Criminology* ends with a brief consideration of the policy implications of radical criminology.

A problem with Lynch and Groves' exposition of Marxist theory involves the concept of "the dialectic." Dialectical analysis is introduced as a cautionary lesson to consider different perspectives, to think historically and contextually, and to relate theory and practice. Lynch and Groves pursue this important point in both a general description of instrumental and structural theories of the state and in specific applications of the theories to the criminal justice system later in the book. Instrumentalism, with its deterministic conception of the capitalist state as merely the administrative arm of the bourgeoisie, is rejected in favor of the more dialectical structuralist understanding of the autonomy of the state and the law from ruling-class control.

The problem is not that Lynch and Groves distort recent Marxist thinking on these issues; rather they too faithfully and uncritically reproduce such thinking. Structuralist corrections to the instrumental view of the state have come to function as a kind of safety net for Marxism, catching those cases that seem to run counter to the premise that the upper class is a "ruling class." Marxist theory is thereby protected from disconfirmation because instrumentalist "distortions" absorb all the criticism. Yet, is there not an element of intellectual bad faith in such efforts to, in effect, save Marxism from itself?

The book's description of the "dual role" of lawyers in modern capitalist societies illustrates the problem with a dialectical-structural analysis: "defenders of the rich and poor; defenders of corpo-
rate capitalism and champion of the lower classes’ legal rights” (p. 86). If this is dialectical analysis, then who needs radical criminology? The structural Marxism advanced in this book is nearly indistinguishable from pluralist conflict theory. Lynch and Groves need to be more specific about the conditions under which the instrumental and structural perspectives apply and, more basically, about the grounds for rejecting radical interpretations of criminal justice in favor of traditional alternatives.

The same problem emerges in a different form in an otherwise compelling account of the causes of conventional crime. While acknowledging that radical criminology has been criticized for sidestepping etiological issues, Lynch and Groves maintain that such criticisms are obviated by recent radical research on conventional crime. In order to encompass much of this work, however, they are forced to stretch their already permissive concept of radical scholarship almost beyond recognition. For example, the authors claim that Blau and Blau’s research on inequality and violence relies “explicitly on Marxian predictions” (p. 49). In general, Lynch and Groves are too quick to turn limited points of compatibility or consistency between radical criminology and traditional etiological perspectives into grounds for major theoretical integration. Some selection bias in their proposals for synthesis also exists. Control and community disorganization perspectives are emphasized over strain perspectives. Cultural theory is not discussed, even for purposes of critique.

The flaws in the radical perspective are most glaring in Lynch and Groves’ discussion of policy and social change in the final chapter. They insist that radicals are not unwilling to embrace “middle range” liberal reforms “while we wait for a revolutionary transformation of society” (p. 107). Whatever irony is intended in this comment may well be lost on the introductory student and, in addition, begs the question of what specific revolutionary transformations are required to realize the radical vision in criminology. A specific examination of this issue would necessarily require a discussion of socialist society, a topic conspicuously absent from the book. The reader is left with the impression that radical criminologists are either uninterested in the problem of crime and justice under socialism—surely a misleading conclusion—or are hesitant to address the problem with the categories and methods of Marxist analysis. The authors quickly conclude that if capitalism is part of the problem of crime and justice then “changing capitalism must be part of the solution” (p. 108). But into what should capitalism change? What are the models of change and of a new social order consistent with the
radical analysis and vision championed in this book? Twice on the final page, Lynch and Groves ask “where does the future of the radical perspective lie?” Yet, they do not answer this question, perhaps because doing so would require probing, even transcending, the limits of radical criminology.

Richard Rosenfeld
Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work
Skidmore College


When several crime leaders from the major New York organized crime families were each sentenced in early 1987 to one hundred years in prison, a national spotlight was turned on the federal government’s current successes in dismantling significant portions of the nation’s leading Mafia groups. At roughly the same time, the arrest of Carlos Lehder, the Columbian cocaine baron allegedly responsible for a majority of America’s annual cocaine importation, signaled some success in both American and Colombian efforts to stem the tide of drugs and corruption. These two events occurred against the backdrop of continued awareness of the growth of Asian organized crime groups, which are seen as “emerging” in position of power and profit in the United States.

With an eye toward success and toward future developments, the lessons of Italian and Sicilian experiences with Mafia enterprises are noteworthy. Over the years, there have been several academic and investigative journalistic accounts of the power and position of the southern Italian Mafia, as well as various considerations of the influence it had in spawning some of the variants of American organized crime. Eric Hobsbawm’s seminal chapter in Bandits differentiated the mafioso from the bandit in showing that the former succeeded by direct confrontation with and frustration of the legal system. Henner Hess depicted the mafioso attitude as one which is contemptuous of law; even Gaitano Mosca explained decades ago the crucial distinction between the Mafia as an attitude and the Mafia as an organization. Recently, Gaia Servadio’s Mafioso examined the many bases of power of contemporary Sicilian criminality, and Anton Blok’s The Mafia of a Sicilian Village provided a penetrating historical view of the mafioso as a power broker who is accepted by a
society with a weak central government and a need for dispute resolution and enhanced social control mechanisms. Even Mario Puzo, taking historical license with the true life adventures of one prominent Sicilian gangster, offered a “prequel” to *The Godfather* in *The Sicilian*.

While these works have been instructive, the historical nature of the better works, such as Blok and Hobsbawm, has meant that there is a general lack of a powerful contemporary examination of Mafia activities in the framework of the modern world. This void is filled by Pino Arlacchi’s *Mafia Business: The Mafia Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Arlacchi combines two valuable roles—that of academic observer and that of involved advocate of anti-Mafia policies—while at the same time identifying some political attitudes toward organized crime often missing in this country.

The great transformation Arlacchi identifies as occurring during the 1950s and 1960s was both structural and symbolic in nature. At the same time as wealth and expertise opened new opportunities to the Sicilian gangsters, wealth itself became a goal and even the basis of a reputation, which is the key ingredient in awarding honor. As one informant noted, before the end of World War II very little was required to become “a man of respect.” In addition, power was a product of criteria other than merely wealth. The informant explained that consumer and luxury goods grew more important as the post-war economy expanded: “To get respect, you started to need money.” By the 1970s, wealth became intrinsically honorable, and conspicuous consumption increased. At the same time, conflict and violent episodes declined, indicating to Arlacchi that one of the traditional functions of Mafia power—mediation in internal conflicts—was decreasing in importance. To Arlacchi, the post-war transformation of the Mafia phenomenon coincided with a decline in the legitimacy of Mafia power. In addition to the shift in Mafia organization came a rise in the power of modern mass movements and parties that threatened the Mafia’s pursuit of its goals. Coinciding with these phenomena was the centralization of the state’s prerogative to employ violence. This state action threatened a key source of Mafia power: the means of enforcing public order in a system characterized by a weak central government.

An anti-Mafia commission, long sought by leftist groups, came to fruition in the 1960s and resulted in the imprisonment of many existing Mafia leaders. During the 1960s, the Mafia “...ceased to enjoy official recognition and legal immunity, which meant a further loss of support and general legitimacy.” (p. 63) Mafia leaders were loathe to display their relationship with politicians and local officials
and vice versa. Together, Arlacchi explains, the cultural, political, and economic factors served to marginalize the Mafia and provoke the labeling of them as deviants and common criminals. Recruitment lapsed, in a fashion not dissimilar from that of contemporary American "traditional" organized crime groups, and the mafioso often acted as intermediaries between entrepreneurs and government officials in industries such as the construction industry. The gangsters of the 1960s, figures of a Mafia in transition and crisis, were not particularly devoted to or adept at capitalist accumulation. Nor did they perceive the wisdom of channeling their profits derived from illegal enterprises into legitimate sector investments. Arlacchi qualifies this conclusion by asserting that the powerful competition posed by a cohesive financial elite might have prevented even a wise and coordinated mafiosi from succeeding in the legitimate sector in that particular era.

It is in the third and final stage of evolution that we encounter Arlacchi's mafioso as entrepreneurs. In a simple sentence of explanation in Chapter Four, entitled "The Mafia in Business in the 1970's," Arlacchi provides the key to the next phase of Mafia transformation: "the tendencies that emerged during the seventies were the opposite of those prevailing during the great transformation." (p. 84) As the legitimate government lost its ability to effectively monopolize force, the mafiosi's power directly increased. They were able to re-employ violent methods which had been their forte in previous decades. Meanwhile, as the Mafiosi regained a position of power, the industrial use of Mafia power posed an innovation unseen in prior decades. As Annelise Andersen and Peter Reuter have persuasively argued, there are numerous competitive advantages accruing to a mafioso-turned-business operator: the discouragement of competition; the suppression of wages; and the access to financial resources. Together, these three factors are identified by Arlacchi as the driving forces in the expansion of the Mafia firm. These factors also explain the market strengths and economic power of the present-day Mafia. Remarkably, Mafia firms have not developed with existing firms but, rather, have taken their place.

In Chapter Five, entitled "The Mafioso-Entrepreneur, the 'Family' and the Cosca," Arlacchi delves into conspicuous consumption and other features which characterize the modern mafioso. Arlacchi depicts the most powerful young Mafia bosses as moving gracefully into Italian high society, blending in among "international swindlers and speculators . . . and members of the ruling class" (p. 118) without calling attention to themselves as Mafia members. The mafiosi move in diverse circles and speak many languages.
As a group, the modern mafiosi are better educated than their predecessors and are born into families well-integrated into the social structure. These features are well-suited for a career that requires economic sophistication and a willingness to use violence—another factor that may add to the attractiveness of mafioso careers in legitimate enterprises.

In Chapter Six, entitled "The Limits of Mafia Captialism," Arlacchi addresses the increased investigation and prosecution of mafiosi. Arlacchi attributes some of the increased activity to the inability of contemporary mafiosi to manipulate judges across the board. Attorneys have naturally grown in importance to the entrepreneurial Mafia, as have doctors and psychiatrists who attest, as in the case of the always "infirm" Meyer Lansky, to the unfitness of Mafia defendants to withstand trial or imprisonment. Territorial imperatives have remained because of the replacement of conflict over geographical control with conflict over encroachment in economically concentrated areas. In fact, Arlacchi adds, "the traditionalism and entrepreneurial values are proving to form a most explosive mixture." In an interesting twist, Arlacchi argues that the volume of Mafia-related killings has encouraged the dissolution of prohibitions against murder in non-Mafia circles, resulting in a multiplier effect. This argument negates the notion that gangsters "only kill each other."

As the economic power of the contemporary mafioso entrepreneurs grew, so too did their political autonomy. This increase in political power is the subject of Chapter Seven. While some growth of Mafia power in Sicily and Italy may be attributed to institutional disintegration in the legitimate order, Arlacchi argues that the causality may run in the opposite direction. One result of such an increase in power is the direct actions of the Mafiosi entrepreneurs. The Mafiosi entrepreneurs no longer rely on government officials to serve as intermediaries. At the same time, a veritable "Mafia political lobby" competing for supremacy in government has emerged. Arlacchi adds further support by citing the increased number of public officials convicted of corruption and the high proportion of political candidates in Western Sicily with criminal records.

In Chapter Eight, entitled "The Entrepreneurial Mafia and the Heroin Economy," Arlacchi argues that many of the entrepreneurial Mafiosi of Sicily and southern Italy have plowed their profits from the construction trade and other legitimate enterprises into international heroin trafficking. Although Mafia elements have been involved in the heroin business since the 1950s, Arlacchi argues that their previous undercapitalization prevented them from achieving
their current position of dominance. With an increased amount of capital, however, the Sicilian Mafiosi were able to obtain a comparative advantage over their European competitors. Indeed, some of the Sicilian mafiosi are amassing enormous financial fortunes.

Arlacchi argues that heroin-generated capital takes four routes. The smallest portion returns to illegal circulation such as for the purchasing of more drugs. A second portion is illegally exported to Swiss banks and foreign investments. A third portion enters the legitimate economy in the form of construction financing (e.g., Palermo suburbs, and other legitimate investments). The largest portion however, remains in Sicily in liquid form. These figures, however, should not be adopted without additional substantiation. Arlacchi is not an economist, and his allocation of heroin profits to the four sectors may be skewed. He may also rely too heavily on the role of Iran-Pakistan-Afghanistan-area opium in the United States and European heroin consumption. Competition from Mexican heroin has significantly affected this role.

Arlacchi's conclusion, "Current World Trends in Organized Crime," was added for the English addition of his book. For that reason, the chapter's failure to adequately conclude an excellent examination of the transformation and current behavior patterns of the Sicilian and southern Italian mafioso-entrepreneurs should be forgiven. In this chapter, Arlacchi points to an international development that has become more noticeable during the Iran-Contra arms scandal: the overlapping of the markets for drugs and weapons. Unfortunately, Arlacchi uses heroin and cocaine seizures as a measure of the magnitude of the international illicit drug trade. This effort is speculative at best.

Arlacchi also notes the vertical integration that has linked organized crime with localized juvenile and common crime. He bases this link on the growth of illegal world markets. Although interesting, this connection is too tenuous to be asserted without additional evidence.

Nevertheless, Arlacchi's primary point emerges as a powerful warning: "Organized crime, then, has made itself markedly autonomous of its roots: it can reproduce itself outside its original environment." (p. 229) The freedom of capital and the opportunities for expansion and diversification have changed the faces of organized criminal groups. The impact on economic development in certain locales, such as Italy and Colombia, is striking and, Arlacchi concludes, negative. The typical Mafia areas have experienced economic stagnation or decline at a time when other Italian regions are growing. In Colombia, he notes, the effect of the cocaine trade on
the economy has been more complex and often positive. In both instances, Arlacchi’s notion of the Mafia driving out legitimate competitors spells doom for the economy in the long-run.

Despite his service on the Italian government’s Anti-Mafia Commission, Arlacchi unfortunately fails to devote sufficient discussion of strategies for combatting organized crime. By focusing on the economic nature of contemporary organized crime, he argues, the type of sanctions chosen to control crime will naturally be affected. Some of Arlacchi’s recommendations are being implemented on the national level in Italy and the United States. At the international level, however, such implementation is more complex. If criminal capital threatens the world financial situation, as Arlacchi believes, such complex interventions are needed soon. In any case, while he himself does not develop the range of needed actions, Arlacchi’s *Mafia Business* provides an understanding into the financial bases of contemporary organized crime.

**Professor John Dombrink**
Program in Social Ecology
University of California, Irvine


During the early 1970’s, viewers of the movie *Serpico* had a nagging feeling throughout the film that the hero was fighting a losing battle in his struggle against police corruption. In the end, even after the guilty are exposed, Serpico is almost killed in a set-up and eventually disappears to a Switzerland. His own integrity is upheld, but the same could hardly be said of the NYPD. In *Conduct Unbecoming*, Maurice Punch draws on the New York of Serpico and the Knapp Commission in a close study of police corruption in Amsterdam during the latter half of the 1970s. His well-executed effort lends more than enough support to the idea that police corruption is universal and even inevitable. Yet, at the same time, by examining police misconduct within a broader conceptual framework of organizational deviance, Punch seems to restore at least some of the errant policeman’s integrity.

The comparative dimension to this study, which includes evidence from London as well as New York, is certainly welcome. Typ-
ically, case analyses based on lengthy participant observation—as was this one—have been more successful in making the reader feel knowledgeable about one department than in illuminating generic problems in urban policing. Punch, however, deftly weaves the comparative material into his investigation of Amsterdam. The result is an almost startling display of the similarities in police behavior, attitudes, and style across cultural and national boundaries. Because of this approach, the actors in Punch's drama become more credible and his argument more compelling. Can policemen who sound so much alike across such wide spatial and cultural distances not possibly be telling the truth?

Amsterdam changed rapidly in the 1960s and early 1970s, and it was well on its way to becoming the "anything goes" capital of Europe. Its notoriously casual moral standards, pervasive drug culture, and inner-city criminal underworld quite simply overwhelmed traditional police practices. Although Amsterdam's police officers worked streets and neighborhoods where they increasingly faced unfamiliar and unconventional value systems and life styles, Punch embeds deviance not in the broad cultural change and the disruption of values, but in the nature of everyday police work and the organizational structure defining it. He sees the wayward cop not as the proverbial "bad apple" succumbing to the anomie around him but rather as an average functionary trying to satisfy organizational imperatives and the demands of effective crime-fighting.

Punch, therefore, prefers to look at the police from the perspective of occupational and organizational deviance in general. The appropriate theoretical framework in his view is a symbolic interaction emphasizing the situational basis and complex constructionist one. He introduces a typology of police deviance designed to consider non-mercenary ends while moving away from the structuralist focus on the "dysfunctional." His point is that policemen can view supposedly improper activities as a requirement for getting the job done—just as in other organizations the real go-getters often bend the rules to get what they want, and are looked upon with admiration and approval for doing so. In the manner of other interactionists such as Manning,1 Punch sees a chasm between the official departmental definition of deviance and the situationally justified actions of police officers on the street. In Amsterdam, the accused officers were guilty of straightforward "grass-eating" offenses. Yet, Punch remains unconvinced that the officers did not have more "strategic" crime-fighting goals in mind.

The gap between "objective" standards of behavior and the reality of street work for patrolmen and detectives is personified in the divergent perspectives of the rank and file on the one hand and senior officers on the other. The men who filled the higher ranks in Amsterdam's police department came directly from the academy. They had no experience in actual street work. Isolated from the average police officer, the senior officers were driven by quite different professional goals and organizational impulses. Moreover, many younger, mid-level supervisors were frustrated by an older and entrenched elite at the top. Ambitious departmental zealots among this middle-management group, more conversant with the police ideal than with the realities of life on the beat, were the ones who blew the whistle on police corruption.

The result was a true organizational crisis, whose intra-departmental ramifications are one of Punch's key concerns. Because students of police corruption are usually preoccupied with examining the political or public relations impact in the wider community, Punch's examination of this issue is a major contribution of his book. His findings in this area are of relevance to anyone interested in the dynamics of police organization. Punch shows, for instance, how the absence of effective internal machinery for dealing with the crisis simply exacerbated it. He describes as predictable, from an organizational standpoint, the tendency for rank-and-file officers under assault from above to turn and attack the organization itself. Finally, in perhaps one of his most interesting observations, Punch attributes the failure of official corrective action to the fact that the need for a proactive internal investigation was out of character for an institution that took an essentially reactive approach in its real work. In the end, the guilty were identified and public relations served. The illicit practices, however, soon returned.

Although readers will find this study provocative, they may ask why more direct and specific comparisons were not drawn between the police and other organizations upon which so much of the theoretical modeling rests. Moreover, Punch's conclusion that offending officers must be judged on their own terms—that is, in the context of the street and its demands—implies that the police must try to chart a course between the rules of the organization and the pressures of outside systems. Punch seems to be saying that the police are unique after all.

These concerns aside, Punch's effort at a comparative and more conceptually sophisticated approach to police corruption is laudable. Many readers will certainly appreciate the attempt to study the problem without the burden of presumptuous and often demeaning
ideological perspectives. The officer’s struggle to perform his job makes especially telling Punch’s observation that policemen could easily be shattered by the realization of being labelled as members of the very same criminal element they were charged with controlling. The men whom he quotes throughout the study were clearly hurt by their experience. Though guilty of formal transgressions, many somehow never lost sight of the order-keeping mandate upon which they acted. They perceived their acts not as criminal but rather as “benevolently illegal” within a larger institutional and social environment intent on placing obstacles before them.

JOHN C. SCHNEIDER
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
CORPORATE AND FOUNDATION RELATIONS
TUFTS UNIVERSITY


Television Viewing Related to Aggressive and Prosocial Behavior reports the results of a careful study of the impact of television viewing on two groups of Dutch children. In the study, one group consisted of children approximately seven years of age, and the other group consisted of children approximately nine years of age. The children were interviewed three times over a three-year period. Their aggressiveness and prosocial behavior was measured using peer ratings in classroom units. What they watched on television, as assessed by checklists of dramatic shows filled out by the children, was scored for its aggressive and prosocial content by independent raters. The children indicated how frequently they watched each show, while the raters counted acts of violence and supportive behavior, whether each act was verbal or physical in character, and if the act was carried out by a male or female character. The interviews also probed the children’s perceptions of the reality of television events, identification with the characters, sex-role orientations, and the size, strength, intelligence, and school performance of the children. The mothers of the children were also interviewed about these and other topics, including their punishment and rewarding
actions and the degree to which they strived for upward mobility. The data was gathered in conjunction with a larger multi-nation study, and the report compares most of its measures and findings to data from several other nations.

The results of this study generally resemble those of past survey-based studies of naturally-occurring variation in child television viewing. There is a positive association between television and aggression, but this relationship virtually disappears when other factors are taken into account. The basis of the problem is "selection bias." Because television viewing was not experimentally manipulated in these studies, the personal characteristics of the subjects and their family life could affect both their viewing habits and their aggressive or prosocial behavior. The apparent correlation between viewing and the behavior it produces is spurious. Thus, researchers must try to control for extraneous factors.

This study was based on a careful review of past research and included measures of the major confounding variables identified by others. The study, by documenting the powerful role played by the child's IQ, independent of school achievement, social class, or parental factors, makes an important contribution in revealing the role of a child's IQ in shaping both television viewing habits and children's behavior. There was little evidence of any television sex-role modeling effects for either boys or girls. Yet, in both groups, punishment-oriented mothers seemed to spawn aggressive children.

Research of this type often finds a small remaining viewing-aggression correlation after controlling for other factors. The Wiegman, Kuttschreuter and Baarda study, however, indicates in an analysis of the over-time data that this remaining association is as likely to be a result of aggressiveness tendencies stimulating television viewing as it is to television viewing stimulating aggression.

What about prosocial behavior? While not unique, this research was set apart by its attention to the positive effects of television viewing. The researchers argued that writing off television based on some potentially negative effects without considering the possible positive effects was one-sided. Thus, when children rated others in their class, they also nominated those who lent their toys, gave comfort when someone cried, stuck up for kids being teased, and performed other socially positive acts. Sample episodes of the television dramas watched by the subjects were observed for evidence of such behavior. This evidence, however, is not well-documented in the book, and there was no compelling evidence that television viewing had any positive effects.
Some of the most careful and interesting parts of this research failed to consider the uncontrolled viewing habits of its subjects. The correlation between the frequency of viewing aggression and viewing prosocial acts in television dramas was 0.90. The children's viewing was unspecialized. Basically, some children watched lots of television and saw lots of both prosocial and antisocial behavior, while others watched less television and saw less of both types of behavior. Thus, in the end, few conclusions could be drawn from the careful measures of the subjects' viewing habits. Most of the final analysis of the authors' causal effects model (using sophisticated LISREL methods) focused on a simple "viewing" measure. This measure was not effectively related to any aspect of the children's behavior.

*Television Viewing Related to Aggressive and Prosocial Behavior* is the latest in a long line of research reporting the effects of television on viewers. Despite increasing sophistication, all the research points in the same direction. There is no evidence that the measures of aggression used in this or other studies predict even juvenile delinquency. Most of the careful research has examined only children. The "prosocial" aspects of this study provide evidence that there is a lot about television that needs to be examined—including the news, public service announcements, and public consumption habits. Perhaps the effects of television are both more fundamental and more mundane than researchers fascinated with child aggression can discover.

WESLEY G. SKOGAN
CENTER FOR URBAN RESEARCH AND POLICY RESEARCH
NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY


Over the past two decades, debate regarding the proper role of criminological theory as a basis for the development of crime control policy has left many criminologists—particularly those trained in the sociological tradition—reluctant to adopt a policy-oriented approach. Having been called to account for everything from the conservative leanings of functionalism to the more radical views of positivist criminology as a tool of capitalism, sociological theorists
concerned with crime causation retreated from the policy arena. In recent years, this void has been filled primarily by political scientists, the most notable of whom is James Q. Wilson. Wilson is known for his advocacy of a return to classical, utilitarian assumptions about criminal behavior as a basis for public policy. Now, Michael Roche, a political scientist at the University of South Dakota, addresses an issue infrequently mentioned in criminological theory: the assumption that urban crime control measures are appropriate for rural communities. *Rural Police and Rural Youth*, however, goes far beyond examining this single issue. The entire realm of positivist and utilitarian theory is questioned and a thorough review of the policy implications of an interventionist versus non-interventionist strategy is presented.

Making use of the writings of the interactionists associated with the labeling tradition, Roche argues that a policy of nonintervention is the only logical solution to juvenile delinquency in rural areas. Roche maintains that rural justice officials are faced with a rural crime rate that continues to rise, even though crime in urban areas has declined in recent years. Despite this change in crime patterns, funding for rural justice remains a low priority in most states. Roche contends that part of this dilemma is due to the focus of criminological theory on the urban crime problem. It has been assumed for years that what is true of urban delinquent behavior is also true of rural delinquents. Citing the 1940s work of Marshall Clinard, Roche maintains that rural juveniles who engage in delinquent acts are significantly less likely than their urban counterparts to perceive themselves as criminal. Although rural youths may "drift" between conventional and deviant values as David Matza suggests, they are less likely to adopt a deviant self-perception unless an interventionist strategy thrusts such a label upon them.

Roche visualizes potential juvenile crime policies on a continuum ranging from formal processing and intervention to radical nonintervention. In his analysis, urban delinquency control strategies have in recent years continued toward greater formal intervention, despite the increased use of diversion programs. He contends that the rural strategy, characterized by informal social control mechanisms, has fallen somewhere in the middle of this continuum. As rural delinquency becomes more problematic, Roche argues that most scholars will attempt to formalize rural juvenile justice, thereby exacerbating rather than alleviating the delinquency prob-

lem. Inadequate detention facilities, an absence of specialized services, and little chance of improving the already inadequate financial resources of the rural justice system are posited as sufficient reasons to abandon any effort to imitate their more formal urban neighbors.

Roche, however, is not satisfied with the informality of rural justice. On the contrary, he maintains that rural law enforcement cannot remain in the middle of the intervention continuum. It must move toward the noninterventionist extreme. Foremost among Roche's reasons for recommending this strategy is his contention that the "unbridled discretion" characteristic of informal, rural law enforcement leads to discrimination in the treatment of juvenile offenders. Finally, Roche provides a series of detailed recommendations designed to assist rural communities in the move toward a noninterventionist policy.

Although Roche has carefully articulated the theoretical logic governing his rationale for a noninterventionist strategy in rural areas, he fails to make a consistent transition from labeling theory as a causal explanation of future delinquency to a "just desserts" rationale for applying the "least restrictive alternative" available. An examination of the assumptions of the interactionist and just desserts models is clearly warranted given the different position these perspectives might take on justifying punishment for serious juvenile offenders.

Of even greater concern is Roche's tendency to overstate the results of previous findings in order to make a case for rural nonintervention. In his effort to polarize the differences between rural and urban youthful offenders, for example, Roche repeatedly contrasts the rural delinquent with the urban delinquent by noting that "the self-image maintained by most urban transgressors ... is one of self as criminal" (p. 66). Such a distinction runs counter to the traditional interactionist position that all youth, rural or urban, utilize neutralization techniques to maintain a non-criminal perception of self when confronted with the delinquent label.

While maintaining that rural justice is characterized by discrimination and misplaced discretion, Roche's own analysis of police agencies in South Dakota clearly goes no farther than establishing the use of informal sanctioning in rural areas. Whether this informality results in the discrimination Roche envisions cannot be ascertained from his data. In addition, his rather simplistic presentation of the data prevents any inferences regarding many of the complex relationships between police discretion and the type of intervention that Roche discusses. Despite the methodological and empirical shortcomings of *Rural Police and Rural Youth*, Roche's work has re-
newed the debate regarding the adequacy of labeling theory as a basis for social policy. In so doing, he has opened the way for further examination of the rural crime phenomenon.

**Brent Smith**

**Department of Criminal Justice**

**University of Alabama at Birmingham**

---


Selective incapacitation is indeed a very seductive idea. Who would quarrel with a policy that would imprison the dangerous few for a "long time," significantly reduce street crime, and alleviate the overcrowding of prisons while saving money in the process? But, is this policy a good idea? Is there, in fact, a hard core group of offenders that can be identified in a reasonable and cost-effective manner? How long should they be incarcerated? Will there be a sufficient reduction in crime to justify the increased costs of such a program? Does giving special attention to such offenders encourage the criminality of the sporadic offender? And, finally, can selective incapacitation be accomplished without compromising important civil liberties? These are some of the thorny questions addressed in *Dangerous Offenders: The Elusive Target of Justice*. In the process of dealing with these issues, the authors have produced perhaps the most comprehensive, professional, and responsible treatise on the subject. Although the book is primarily a statement of advocacy for selective incapacitation, the authors skillfully utilize the available systematic social scientific knowledge while explicitly alerting the reader to the limitations and risks of selective incarceration.

Two major tasks are pursued. The first deals with such empirical issues as estimating the size of the chronic offender population, documenting the extent to which the current system follows a selective incapacitation policy, and specifying what needs to be accomplished by the various segments of the criminal justice system in order to implement a viable selective incapacitation program. The second task is polemical, attempting to establish the moral efficacy of selective incapacitation.

Determining the size and nature of the dangerous core of criminals seems to be the easiest of the empirical problems. Draw-
ing primarily from the Rand studies, the authors conclude that there are a sufficiently large number of such offenders whose incapacitation would have major consequences on the amount of street crime. On the other hand, the determination of whether one could significantly improve the current selective incapacitation qualities of the criminal justice system is a far more formidable endeavor. Clearly, the current system deals more harshly with the repeat offender, even though it may be in an implicit, unplanned, and inconsistent manner. Unfortunately, there does not seem to be sufficient data to establish a base line for the current system. Thus, a reasonable evaluation of what improvements or efficiency could be gained by implementing a coordinated formal selective incapacitation program is difficult to determine. The authors believe that such a gain is clearly possible, but they fail to make a convincing case.

One major insight achieved by *Dangerous Offenders* is the importance of considering more than sentencing in creating an effective selective incapacitation program. Police, pre-trial detention, prosecution, and parole boards all play vital roles. In fact, the authors contend that the most critical stages are arrest and prosecution. Police, they argue, should be more “offender oriented,” rather than the current approach of “offense orientation,” and should improve their ability to clear additional offenses after an arrest. This emphasis would increase the number of charges, and, as a consequence, also increase the likelihood of a harsher sentence. Prosecutors are urged to exercise more care with the evidence in cases involving dangerous offenders and to refrain from reducing the most serious charges through plea bargaining. The effect of such a practice would be longer prison sentences, assuming of course that there is no decrease in conviction rates.

An effective selective incapacitation system requires a viable criminal justice information system, and, accordingly, the authors have devoted an entire chapter to this critical issue. In addition to the very obvious need for accurate information, the authors also advocate a national information system that would include data on “serious” offenses committed when the individual was under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court. Such a system would enable intervention in the early adult years of the dangerous offender’s career. Those who have experienced the frustrations of a woefully flawed record system that is now current remain very skeptical of achieving such a goal, especially in light of the parochial nature of the criminal justice system and the enormous difficulties in linking records.

Will a strong selective incapacitation program be “just” and not endanger important civil liberties? The answer to that question de-
pends on the particular notion of "justice" being advocated. The authors' very explicit view is that selective incapacitation is consistent with the concept of retribution. The logic is simple and straight-forward: those who have committed a large number of crimes have already demonstrated an "evil" character, and, as such are blameworthy and deserving of harsher treatment or punishment. The fortuitous gain of selective incapacitation is that, to the extent that a past criminal record "predicts" future criminal misconduct, incapacitation will have a utilitarian payoff of a reduction in street crime. If we are incorrect in our predictions, however, no moral harm will ensue because these are blameworthy people who are simply being punished for past behavior.

This program requires that only events of legal culpability, such as indictments or convictions, be utilized for selection. Non-culpable predictors such as age, race, and work-history, must be scrupulously avoided. Unfortunately, despite the explicit avoidance of non-legal factors, it is still possible that they remain and may result in some "injustices." For example, as this author and my colleagues Savitz and Lalli¹ have argued, blacks will have a higher rate of false positives because of their higher rate of offending, an outcome that is explained by Baysian theory. If this same pattern follows for "serious offending," then blacks will be more likely to be unnecessarily incarcerated for longer periods (from the perspective of preventing future crimes). Determining if this is racial injustice is not an easy philosophical problem to resolve. But, clearly, it is an issue which has to be addressed. As already indicated, the authors have no reservations in warning about the moral risks of selective incapacitation. One danger in this regard is that some decision-makers may be overzealous and may be tempted to broaden the definition of "dangerous offender," the result of which could be a risk of civil liberty violations, such as harshly punishing those who are not "blameworthy" as the true dangerous offender. In order to minimize this danger, it would be necessary to install an effective monitoring system. Not only will this add to the cost of a selective incapacitation program, but, given the history of criminal justice agencies in policing themselves, one has some doubts about how effective such a system would be.

One desired spinoff of selective incapacitation would be a reduction in prison overcrowding, the assumption being that fewer people will be imprisoned. In the short run, this seems inevitable, so long as non-prison alternatives are used for the convicted "non-dan-

¹ Rosen, Savitz & Lalli, 7 Int. J. Soc. Pol'y (1987).
gerous" offender. When viewed from a long-term perspective, however, the reduction in the prison population is more problematic. If nothing can be done to reduce the size of new cohorts of dangerous offenders, then there clearly will be a relatively large intake into the system and a constricted out take, depending upon the average sentence length. Certainly, to date no one has any clear ideas as to how to diminish the number of new recruits into the pool of dangerous offenders. And, given what is known of the chronic offender, a strong selective incapacitation program will not in itself be a very effective deterrent in this regard.

Although the quality of Dangerous Offenders is very impressive, it fails to convince this author that the selective incapacitation program advocated will significantly improve the current situation. Paradoxically, this conclusion is reached because Moore, Estrich, McGillis and Spelman were so effective in detailing the limitations and dangers of selective incapacitation. Without question, this is an important book, even if it fails to persuade. Careful reading of Dangerous Offenders can only inform a reader about this very complicated issue.

LAWRENCE ROSEN
TEMPLE UNIVERSITY


One of the most devasting aspects of imprisonment for many women is the separation from their family. For incarcerated women who are also mothers, this situation is particulary acute. In Mothers in Prison, Phyllis Jo Baunach offers an insightful examination of the psychological effects such separation has on inmate mothers. Based on her analysis of inmate records and interviews with women in prison, staff, and foster parents, Baunach effectively argues for programs that consider the needs of inmate mothers and their children. The book Mothers in Prison is based on Baunach's 1979 study of women inmates in three state prisons in which innovative mother-child programs were implemented. Records of all the inmates (284) were examined. In addition, volunteers (196) were given in-depth interviews. The volunteers included both mothers and non-mothers.

The study had several objectives. The first objective was to explore and document the effects of the separation on mother and
child. The focus here was primarily on the mother’s reaction to the separation and her perception of the effects of it on her children. A second objective of the study was to describe and analyze the programs offered to inmate mothers and their children. To this effect, staff and inmates, both mothers and non-mothers, were queried on their impression of the programs. The third objective of the study was to ascertain the role of foster parents and their perceptions of the progress and problems of the programs.

As one might expect, the psychological effects of separation on the inmate mother are numerous and generally negative. A common feeling expressed by the women interviewed by the author is an overwhelming sense of guilt because their behavior in some way caused the separation. Another major concern for many of the inmate mothers is the question of whom is taking care of their children. They worry about the quality of care their children are receiving and are fearful that they may lose their children, particularly if the children have been placed with non-relatives. Finally, many of Baunach’s subjects expressed ambivalence about their ability to reassume their mothering role upon release from prison. According to Baunach, the statement that “you can’t be a mother and be in prison” illustrates the general feeling of most of the inmate mothers (p. 48).

The effects of separation on the children of incarcerated mothers include emotional and physical problems, as well as problems in school. This information, however, is based solely on the perceptions of the inmate mothers. Interviews with some of the children of the inmates would have been interesting. Based on the statements made by inmate mothers, staff, and foster parents, the mother-child programs appear beneficial to the children. In light of the fact that these programs are designed to ease the pain of separation for the children as well as the inmate mothers, illumination of the ways in which these programs accomplish these results would be helpful.

On the issue of whom is caring for the children, Baunach found that most of the children were placed with family members. In the cases where the children were placed with foster families, the inmate mothers often felt threatened by the children’s caretakers. A primary concern was the possibility of losing custody permanently. A mother’s concerns were often eased somewhat if she knew the foster parents and had the opportunity to discuss the care of her children with them. Ultimately, according to Baunach, the success of any foster-care program rests upon the foster parents and caseworkers working with the inmate mother.
The message in this book is explicit: for most of these women, the role of a mother is intrinsically tied to their self-concept. Once incarcerated, they are, to some degree, stripped of this aspect of their identity. This situation is especially critical for those women who may feel that their role as a mother is the one area in their lives in which they have not failed. Baunach stresses the importance of correctional administrators taking this crucial factor into account when planning programs for inmate mothers. She also succinctly points out the potential for rehabilitation in these programs:

Mothers who care about their children have a vested interest in their well-being. Using this vested interest as a way to enable inmate-mothers to develop a sense of responsibility may be the best means of rehabilitation available. However, in this country, giving incarcerated women real decision-making authority, particularly in matters concerning their children, has rarely been done (p. 127).

A major strength of *Mothers in Prison* is the strong policy content. Baunach does more than point out the problem areas; she offers concrete suggestions on ways these issues might be dealt with in a more effective manner. This book is important for those interested in understanding the unique problems of women in prison. Correctional administrators and staff will benefit from the practical suggestions and implications which can be found throughout the book.

Overall, *Mothers in Prison* is well organized and well written. Baunach’s unique study of mothers in prison addresses an important issue and is quite timely. The author incorporates inmate quotes where appropriate and offers statistical analysis and tabular presentation of all relevant variables. Baunach accomplishes all of her stated objectives and offers several suggestions for future research, including an examination of the impact a father’s incarceration has on his children because “fathers also play a major role in family life, and many more fathers than mothers are imprisoned” (p. 130).

**SALLY J. LAWRENCE**

Center for Studies in Law and Criminology

University of Florida