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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

Crime in Biological, Social, and Moral Contexts edited by Lee Ellis and Harry Hoffman. New York: Praeger, 1990. 326 pp. NPL

Geoffrey W. Grant
South Dakota State University

The seventeen contributors to this book bring together materials on a biosocial approach to crime, which is not the biological theories of old, but a "new" blending of biological characteristics with social environmental factors. Readers will find a mixture of evolutionary theory, genetics, brain dysfunction, and orthomolecular imbalances. The materials of this book come down strongly on the side of "nature" in the nature-nurture debate. Whether this is in fact a "new" approach or an old biological approach may be open to some debate. Certainly most of the argument for a biological basis of crime comes from a long tradition in favor of biological causation.

Larry Siegal (misspelled "Seigal"), author of the well known criminology and delinquency texts, wrote the Forward. The misspelling is an example of the lack of attention to production details in the text.

The book is organized into four parts. The first part focuses on the nature of the biosocial perspective and provides basic definitions. The argument is made for a more catholic approach to crime including biological variables. Behavior, dichotomized into prosocial and antisocial, becomes the dependent variable to be explained by a combination of biological and demographic factors.

Part 2 emphasizes the evolutionary and genetic aspects of criminality. Chapter 5 argues for an evolutionary theory of crime, Chapter 6 makes a case for evolutionary and genetic origins of the criminal justice system, and Chapter 7 argues that rape is the result of genetically driven male courtship patterns. Chapter 8 attempts to test a theory of evolution and crime, and Chapter 9 considers individual genetic variations in delinquency and crime.

Chapter 10 focuses on race and crime. It would seem that the evidence presented is not "new" but is the old statistical argument that higher black arrest rates indicate a genetic cause in black's criminality. I fail to see how this argument is informed by the new science of genetics. No genetic evidence is presented, but the reader is given a reason for this lack of scientific linkage. "This lack of direct evidence either establishing or refuting that genetic factors underlie much of the racial variation is due to a dearth of modern direct investigation." (p. 135) What the reader gets instead of "science" is speculation which some may see as basically racist in nature. Whenever one advances a potentially racist argument, care must be taken not to go beyond the scientific data. This is exactly what appears here and it is

unacceptable.

The third section focuses on brain functioning and its relationship to pro/antisocial behavior. Chapters 11 and 12 discuss the impact of hormones while Chapters 13 and 14 discuss the ability of the brain to control states of arousal. Here it is argued that the reduction in crime with age is accounted for by changes in brain chemistry. Chapter 15 provides the reader with information on the impact of recreational drug use and predatory crime.

The last section contains two chapters on the extent of existing knowledge in biosocial theory. Chapter 16 discusses evolutionary and neurological roots of prosocial behavior, and the authors conclude that, "it is reasonable to conclude that biological factors play at least some role in the development or elicitation of social modes of prosocial responding." (p. 256) Chapter 17 discusses brain processes, drugs, and crime. The authors point to a neurophysiologic high as driving crime that involves risk. They see high risk crime as thrill-seeking behavior.

Unfortunately, the first two sections of the book present a debate which most social scientists argued generations ago; renaming the approach fails to bring freshness, perspective or clarity. The last two sections hold the greatest value and the least polemic. In these sections authors deal with more specific, empirical and testable relationships between biological processes and behavior. Over all, given the mixture of biological approaches to behavior, it is possible that valuable biological insights may be rejected along with the more traditional biological arguments. Readers wishing to become acquainted with contemporary biosocial approaches may wish to read this collection. Whether one agrees with the authors or not, the writing is generally clear and to the point, and its material is well presented.

Sociological Practice: Community Development and Other Community Applications, Volume 8 edited by Alvin S. Lackey. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1990. 246 pp. \$18.00 paper.

Thomas C. Langham
McNeese State University

Community development aims to promote development of the community rather than development in the community. The eighth volume of *Sociological Practice*, the annual publication of the Sociological Practice Association, is a welcome addition to the literature on community development. Lackey is to be commended for his well-balanced selection of articles. The sixteen articles making up this volume provide a good overview of the field. About two-thirds of them appear in this volume for the first time; the remaining are republished classics. Six key community development themes are treated in this volume: history/background, policy issues, exam

ples/cases/models, community cooperation, community economic development, and international dimensions.

A useful introduction is provided by Bryan Phifer's history of the field and Drew Hyman's exploration of its theoretical directions. Phifer reveals that community development's origin can be found in the nineteenth-century rural American self-help tradition. Today the challenge to professionally-trained community developers remains: make sure that what is done is rooted in self-help rather than imposed from above. Hyman bases community development in a dialectical explanation of conflict and consensus sociological theories, using both orientations to explain models for organizing, planning, and managing community systems and human service programs. He suggests that application of the models in local settings will give rise to more complete theories and strategies for community change.

Five articles provide a balanced sampling of examples, case studies, and models of community development activities. Two of these articles (Leighton's and Stone's reprinted classics dealing with mental health) demonstrate that community development efforts reduce mental illness through satisfying individual needs and increasing self-esteem. Cumming and Cumming, reporting on their efforts to change attitudes toward mental illness in a small Canadian town, provide an insightful illustration of problems to be avoided in undertaking community development. Other newly presented articles provide an eclectic glimpse of professional activities, including Timmons' and McCall's case study of how a community revitalized itself to meet local individual needs, Hickman's application of sociological principles to community health, and Anderson's use of a phenomenological approach to understanding how individuals and organizations become involved in community action.

Attention is given to international development in a way that is relevant for domestic community development. Michael Bamberger examines evaluation of individual community participation in the design and management of international projects, raising the issue of whether programs should be arranged from above or carried out locally and democratically. Similarly, G. David Miller focuses on the problem of who really benefits from the international efforts of private voluntary organizations, the donor or the client. The volume's international articles remind the reader that this literature is a valuable resource for domestic practitioners.

The volume also furnishes appendices for those who are interested in the profession itself: 1) universities offering graduate programs in community development, 2) the scope of the discipline, and 3) a selected list of readings. Ultimately what is best about this volume is that Lackey's choices of articles convey an excitement about the possibility of applying sociological insights to help people build working and humane communities. Those who desire a solid introduction to community development will find this volume rewarding.

Mirrors of Madness: Patrolling the Psychic Border by Bruce Luske. New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1990. 130 pp. paper. NPL

Jerome R. Rosonke
Northern State University

After all, just what is reality? How is it defined? What happens when a psychiatrist or psychiatric worker defines reality for you? How do psychiatric workers negotiate reality, and powerfully impose it upon clients and themselves? Working in the mental health system demands an *a priori* reality in which some (clients) are labeled mentally ill, and others (staff) do the labeling and maintain the label--but often have their own personal experiences, self-labeled thoughts and doubts. This book is a participant observation study of a community psychiatric facility in California, a halfway house between the poles of mental hospitalization and independent living in the community.

Patrolling the psychic border is a good description and would have been the better title. The major theme of the book deals with the border between madness (labeled mental illness) and whatever the opposite is. Somewhere, there is a border which delineates which side one is on. However the border is nebulous, mysterious, ever-shifting, and negotiated daily (both internally and externally). Chapter titles are well chosen and descriptive: Constructing psychiatric reality, Border crossing, Border patrol, Border lines, Border disputes, and Borderland.

The psychiatric industry views mental illness using the disease model according to which it is an objective, identifiable, measurable, and thus, curable entity. Luske sees mental illness as more nebulous, negotiable, and problematic. He uses frequent quotations, discussions and negotiations of staff, clients, and others to illustrate his view. These quotations lend credibility to the theoretical paradigm which is rigorously followed and extensively (perhaps even laboriously) explained throughout the text.

This working halfway house is a good illustration of the social construction of reality, symbolic interaction, critical theory, ethnomethodology, and labeling theory paradigms and a rigorous application to a specific social problem, mental illness. After working for more than eight years in a variety of mental health settings, the author became a sociologist. He then chose to do a year and a half study in this psychiatric setting (1983-1984).

Generally the writing is straightforward, but the book is sometimes confusing due to the author's fixation on verbal gymnastics, such as: "And what of Vern's claims? As architects of social life, do we not create incredibly complex inner (psychological) and outer social worlds? Consulting my own life, I experience a kaleidoscopic, often cacophonous array of thoughts, feelings, sights, and sounds--'lots of things and conversations on different levels of reality at once' (analogous in cybernetics to an endless

feedback loop). What if this plentitude were suddenly to contract to only a narrow and rigid band of experience?..." (p. 35) At other times, the chosen conversations sound much like a television soap opera. Critical, derogatory language is used regarding capitalistic psychiatry, though no other form of psychiatry is suggested as an alternative.

The author's psychiatric map of the U.S., after living on both coasts and then three years in South Dakota, is interesting. While writing the book, the author received two quarter time releases from teaching, special arrangements for classes to increase student dialogue with the data, and colleague idea exchanges. However, selective amnesia has deleted these experiences from the book and its credits.

Social Control of Deviance: A Critical Approach by Nanette J. Davis and Clarice Stasz. New York: MacGraw-Hill, 1990. 324 pp. \$24.95.

Kathleen A. Tiemann
University of North Dakota

Howard Becker's (1967) challenge to sociologists to note "whose side are we on" is taken to heart by Nanette J. Davis and Clarice Stasz. In the *Social Control of Deviance*, they take a critical perspective that is explicitly value-oriented.

This book is split into two sections. Part One examines social control from a critical perspective. Here Davis and Stasz argue that social policy values are essential elements in thinking about social control and in constructing remedies for social problems. Thus, their focus is political processes in deviance and control.

In their brief historical review of social control, the authors begin with the strong moral nets of the Middle Ages and move to the confinement institutions based on Bentham's *Panopticon*, which dominated the 19th century. Social control in contemporary society consists of moral nets and confinement institutions under deregulation and a combination of decentralization, deinstitutionalization and decriminalization (p. 15). The panoptic perspective was replaced by the therapeutic ethic and resultant medicalization of deviance. This model assumes that adequate sources of assistance are available from which to choose. Finally, the authors discuss the 1980's, when service-for-profit agencies co-opted the earlier self-help model.

Davis and Stasz subsequently show how critical theory makes policy values explicit by comparing it with other theoretical traditions. While they generally do an excellent job of this, the Frankfurt School discussion will confuse some students and require further explanation.

Part Two applies the critical perspective to seven contemporary social

issues. The topics include legal and illegal drug abuse, policing and prisons, organizational deviance, sexualization of deviance, sexual exploitation of children, and violence and the state. Each chapter provides a historical context from which to examine changes in societal definitions and control strategies. This allows the reader to see how solutions to social problems may become dysfunctional as social conditions change.

Pedagogically, this book is exceptionally strong and can be used in both graduate and undergraduate classes. Highlighted boxes define important concepts, describe ancillary research and compare theoretical models. Additionally, a summary of major arguments, key concepts, challenging review questions and student projects that apply critical thinking follow most chapters.

Most importantly, Davis and Stasz consistently encourage readers to engage in critical thinking by modelling it. They do not pretend to present the "Truth" and expect readers to agree. Instead, they attempt to empower readers. They are encouraged to engage in social participation and to raise questions of social control. By doing so, the authors argue, we become better equipped to make wise decisions.

In short, this thought-provoking book fills a void by linking deviance to social control. It should help us become more aware of our values and how they constrain our understanding of our social world.

Can Modernity Survive? by Agnes Heller. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990. 177 pp. NPL

Harry Hoffman
Minot State University

Can Modernity Survive? represents yet another in a series of highly ambitious and thoroughly engaging readings by Heller. Since the publication of *A Theory of History* (1982), Heller's concern with and about the human condition has remained a paramount issue. This concern was further outlined in *Beyond Justice* (1987) where Heller viewed the conditions responsible for the disharmony between politics and ethics while at the same time developing an "incomplete ethico-political concept of justice" which is to serve as a precursor for the "good life."

In this volume, which seems far more accessible to a general readership, Heller once again sets her sights on the human condition. Acknowledging the formidable challenges posed by the twentieth century, Heller analyzes whether or not present social arrangements can meet and ultimately survive such challenges. During the course of Heller's analysis additional concerns surface. For example, how does the present social formation impact emotional satisfaction relative to the individual? Is it

disappearing or are we merely turning our attention away from it? Are contemporary structures eliminating the legitimate components necessary for the good life, and if so, why and in what direction? What informs these and other questions and concerns and ultimately what accounts for the urgency with which they are posed is the recognition that our fate is at stake as we prepare to enter the twenty-first century.

Though Heller offers no absolute answer, suggesting instead that the questions themselves transcend the capacity of a single framework--this explains the style which moves between argumentative and narrative--the essays are nonetheless optimistic albeit tempered with caution. In terms of modernity, Heller informs us that we have yet to arrive. By not knowing whether we in fact will arrive at modernity, a certain degree of open-endedness survives. This lack of certainty suggests that possibilities are not limited by that which may be framed sometime in the future. The caution comes into play with the recognition that we will write "the next installment" ourselves. The framework for the next installment is already available, i.e., symmetric reciprocity, freedom, and democracy; it is now necessary to "fill this framework." If successfully filled, such a framework will allow for the development of a "common spirituality."

Can Modernity Survive? will surely contribute to the on-going debate regarding modernity. Because of its engaging style and accessibility to Heller work in general, this volume will be of interest to a wide audience.

Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques by Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin. Newbury Park: Sage, 1990. 270 pp. \$36.00 cloth; \$17.95 paper.

Janet Kelly Moen
University of North Dakota

As social science research has matured, sociologists are no longer driven to attempt to imitate the natural sciences as closely as possible to legitimate their enterprise. If frequency of use is any predictor, then qualitative research is emerging as a mainstream sociological research paradigm. The rapid growth in the number of qualitative texts, particularly those offered by Sage Publications, has been remarkable. Strauss and Corbin have made a succinct contribution to the advancement of such qualitative research.

Basics of Qualitative Research is the fourth in a series which was initiated with the *Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). *Theoretical Sensitivity* (Glaser, 1978) and *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists* (Strauss, 1987) were written for audiences of more advanced researchers. This latest book explains in precise detail how to do qualitative research. As the authors state, "rather than testing the relationships among

variables, we want to discover relevant categories and the relationships among them." (p.49).

This is a comprehensive book, linking theory construction to data analysis. While some qualitative methods books are more oriented to data collection procedures, this book assumes a working knowledge of interviewing and observational techniques. It encompasses a wide range of methodological issues of concern to the conscientious researcher, including chapters on theoretical sensitivity, sampling, coding (open, axial, and selective types), and the presentation of research findings. Also included is a seven point set of evaluative criteria which can be used to judge any grounded theory study. Specific examples are interspersed throughout the text, taken from the rich research which has been done by these authors.

Strauss and Corbin note that this book was especially written for beginners. I would hesitate to use it in an undergraduate research methods course without supplementing it with several other books, including one on data gathering. It is a good choice for a general graduate level course, and an essential text to be included in a graduate course in qualitative research methods.

Overall, *Basics of Qualitative Research* is both a concise and practical work. It is presented in a pedagogically sound format which makes it easy to use, both as a text and as a reference. It should be read by researchers in any field who are interested in qualitative techniques.

The Sociology of Gender, edited by Laura Kramer. New York: St. Martin's. 1991. 518 pp. NPL

Patricia Ann Wasely Lomire
Minot State University

Kramer organizes *The Sociology of Gender* around three broad themes: gender and society, social institutions, and the future. The 28 articles are organized in six chapters: Culture and Ideology, Socialization, Family and Intimate Relationships, Economy and Work, The Political and Legal System, and The Potential for Change. .

The thought-provoking collection in this textbook/reader has been written by established authors of gender studies. A partial listing of titles and authors include: Gender and language (Kramer and Freed), Mentors we never met: reflections of men in the media's eye (Garfinkel), How men feel: dividing lines (Astrachan), It's all in the mind: personality and social structure: (Fuchs-Epstein), Masculinities and athletic careers (Messner), Single-sex education: an anachronism or a beneficial structure? (Miller-Bernal), Intimate relationships and the creation of sexuality (Blumstein and Schwarts), More work for mother: the postwar years (Schwartz-Cowam), Chicano men and masculinity

(Baca-Zinn), *From separate spheres to sexual equality: men's responses to feminism at the turn of the century* (Kimmel), *The new feminist movement: visions and revisions* (Marx-Ferree and Hess), *Feminism and criminology* (Kaly and Chesney-Lind), *Catholic women and the creation of a new social reality* (Wallace), and *In the face of threat: organized antifeminism in comparative perspective* (Saltzman-Chafetz and Dworkin).

The concluding chapter appropriately addresses the question, "How can we predict the future meanings and systems of gender of this society?" Kramer suggests that the following basic premises should be considered in future discussions of social change: 1) people can change in important ways more quickly than is suggested by the current studies of socialization and differences between women and men; 2) culture and social structure are interdependent; 3) social institutions are highly interdependent; 4) gendered realities cannot be understood separately from memberships in social categories of race and class; and 5) economically and politically dominant groups have more control than others over the nature of the stratification system, including the ways in which it is gendered. Kramer concludes that by integrating these premises into our views of gender relations, "we may produce a 'second generation' of questions that will help in the development of a more accurate and complex understanding of [gendered] reality" (434).

Kramer is to be commended on her ability to design an authentic textbook/reader that is true to its name. *The Sociology of Gender* is highly recommended as an undergraduate textbook that introduces students to basic sociological concepts, and as a reader that encourages a critical examination of existing gender arrangements. From an instructional standpoint, the primary advantages of Kramer's work are the appropriate thoroughness and attention to detail contained in the introductions to each chapter, the direct, easy-to-read approach which may attract students with little knowledge of contemporary gender issues, and the conceptual coherence brought to the massive research on gender that has evolved over the past twenty years. Although the book would have benefited greatly from a concluding afterward, both instructors and students will certainly be stimulated to develop their own "afterward" following an intense reading of this well-conceptualized, well-executed and intellectually intriguing work.

Marginal Conventions: Popular Culture, Mass Media and Social Deviance, edited by Clinton R. Sanders. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1990. 183 pages. NPL

Jon Flanagin
University of South Dakota

More assembled than edited, *Marginal Conventions* is a loose collection that intends (as the sub-title indicates) to explore the relationship among deviance, the media and popular culture. The intent is commendable, for little serious attention has been paid in the literature to the questions posed by this book, and there is a need for this book. Unfortunately, this is not the book which is needed.

Organized into four major sections (I: Introduction; II: Social Reactions to Popular Cultural Deviance; III: Popular Culture and Deviant "Taste Publics"; and IV: Media Content and Deviance), the book begins with a rambling and murky discourse by the editor that is of little or no use in setting up the essays which are to follow because it bears no relationship to them. The editor fails to establish a consistent theoretical perspective which would inform the contributions, nor does he provide a context within which it is possible to read them. In essence, the introductory section has nothing to do with the balance of the book, and breaks no new ground.

Nor is the editing improved in the introductions to each of the three major sections into which the book is subdivided. The introductions are short (in some cases less than a page in length) and they do not set up the contributions which follow, integrate them with previous sections, nor refer back to the lengthy introduction. Instead, most of each Section's introduction consists simply of a brief reprise of the papers which you will soon be reading.

As for the papers themselves, they are severely hampered by this lack of a consistent vision on the part of the editor. None of the contributions have been previously published (although several have been presented as papers at professional meetings), and they are extremely uneven in quality, tone, style, methodology, and content, ranging from essays to empirical studies to thinly disguised political statements in which the need to be "politically correct" overrides the chance to say something. If they were solicited specifically for this book, the editor failed to meet his responsibility to provide contributors a clear sense of what he intended to convey about the interpenetration of popular culture, the mass media, and social deviance.

Considered separately, several of the individual essays are excellent (particularly those by Markson and by Friesen), and these might be useful as specific reading assignments. That would probably be the best way to access this material: picking and choosing among the specific contributions, rather than trying to utilize the book as a whole. The book's lack of integration and consistent vision makes it of limited usefulness.

The Rural Church in America: A Century of Writings, by Gary A. Goreham.
New York: Garland Publishing, 1990. NPL

Although this unannotated bibliography does not lend itself to review, GPS would like to set a precedent of noting books authored by members of GPSA.
--Ed.