

The Community Justice Ideal: Preventing Crime and Achieving Justice, by **Todd R. Clear** and **David R. Karp**. Boulder: Westview Press, 1999. 224 pp. \$65.00 cloth. ISBN: 0-8133-6765-4. \$25.00 paper. ISBN: 0-8133-6766-2.

QUINT THURMAN

Wichita State University

thurman@twsum.uc.twsu.edu

The Community Justice Ideal might be judged from several perspectives. At the most abstract level, it might be judged for its contribution to the development of sociological thinking regarding what Robert Nisbet (1996) has identified as one of four unit ideas of sociology—that of community. From a criminologist's perspective, it might be assessed according to its ideas for the reintegration of criminal offenders into conventional society and for expanding our view of the potentially positive roles for offenders in communities and families. For criminal justicians, we may learn an ambitious plan to reorient criminal justice system resources for the benefit of a safer society.

Each person who reviews a book ultimately asks (maybe even to the point of self-ridicule) why he or she hadn't put the effort into producing a worthwhile book like the one reviewed here, or, in some cases, will be relieved that they hadn't bothered. This book is one of those that falls somewhere in between. On the one hand, it is ambitious and well-intentioned and promotes ideals that will undoubtedly stimulate discussion and further scholarship. On the other, perhaps because it tries to encapsulate such an ambitious agenda in a somewhat hurried fashion, it lays a foundation that looks more like a rather lengthy preface to greater works soon to follow.

Clear and Karp's text offers discourse on the community movement and much of what this entails for a new model of justice that they refer to as the community justice ideal. According to their definition, the ideal of community justice is that "the agents of criminal justice should tailor their work so that its main purpose is to enhance community living, especially through reducing the paralysis of fear, indignities of disorder, and the agony of criminal victimization" (p. 16). Clear and Karp

note the timeliness of such a model due to credibility lost with the current means of achieving justice in this country, the obvious benefits to be gained by a different model, and the fact that our society appears to be moving into an era where the community expects to play a larger role in the administration of justice.

The authors cite developments in American society and throughout the criminal justice system that suggest the timing is right for a change for the better. Community policing, community courts, community corrections, and restorative justice are examples of public recognition of the need for a more responsive system of resolving social problems related to crime and disorder. What remains is to develop an integrated approach to the crime problem, pulling together scarce resources in a fair and equitable way for all communities.

The book succeeds in the appeal of its message, and at times it is powerful and seductive. Maybe the reckoning that Elliot Currie (1993) has warned us about is moving society in the direction of something like the community justice ideal. Certainly we cannot continue to endure rising incarceration rates and criminal justice costs in our courts and correctional institutions without a commensurate return in rehabilitation or public safety. Clear and Karp identify some of the challenges that should force changes in criminal justice that speak to the failures of past and current practices. Community corrections, for example, is suggestive of a good idea that has never been fully implemented as intended. The community's role in reintegrating criminal offenders in the United States, as some Scandinavian and European countries (the authors mention Australia, New Zealand, and Canada as non-European examples) have done, has not been successful, leaving considerable room for proponents of restorative justice to implement hoped for improvements.

This far-reaching text implores the reader to consider the possibilities that the community justice ideal may yield, but it is not without its weaknesses. For all of its passion and ambition, the text might be characterized as utopian in its vision and rhetorically underdeveloped. Two problems that typically plague utopian themes might apply here: First, the authors tend to ignore or gloss over inconsistencies between a couple of their

competing assertions; second, this relatively brief book charts a fairly abstract course without much consideration given to more pragmatic issues concerning the ultimate accomplishment of such feats. With this latter point in mind, an alternative selection or a companion read to the current text might be Kelling and Cole's *Fixing Broken Windows* (1996), a book that succeeds in this regard.

One such weakness in their argument concerns the idea of including offenders in community justice to the great extent that the authors do. Clear and Karp lament the consequences associated with removing criminal offenders from their communities (e.g., loss of economic support for families and communities and the usual financial drain to society from institutionalization). Perhaps they simply have overstated it (or maybe I have misread it), but portraying criminal offenders as integral "cocitizens" who may be counted upon as assets in strengthening families and communities (instead of deficits) may not prove workable or even advisable in many cases. Perplexing, as well, is that in their excellent treatment of the concept of community in Chapter 3, the authors assert that the inclusion of diverse groups (including criminal offenders) ought to be an ideal feature of strong communities while also acknowledging that the most identifiable attribute of strong communities is homogeneity or what the authors refer to as "shared identity."

Certainly it would be a wonderful feat if we could transform strong, homogenous communities into diverse and inclusive places where criminal offenders might discover the error of their ways and rededicate themselves to lives of honesty, reintegration, and community building. However, as wonderful as this ideal is, there remains a public who covets retribution for criminal offenses, a need to exercise formal sanctions in cases where guilt has been determined in order to support the idea of general deterrence and a commitment to conventional values, and some place to incapacitate or rehabilitate the most serious, violent offenders who pose a measurable danger to society. While I do not expect that Clear and Karp would disagree with the latter, I believe that in their development of the community justice ideal they have rushed to indict a system that they would eagerly replace without giving a great deal of thought to why we have the system we have, and what obstacles

to change would prevent its transformation (or once in place, what challenges must it meet to survive?).

The Community Justice Ideal is deserving of a place on the reading list of every faculty member and graduate student with an interest in issues of crime and justice. Clear and Karp's work will make a unique contribution to graduate education in sociology, criminology, and criminal justice—it will challenge the best of our students, encouraging them to examine critically the system we have and contemplate necessary reforms. Many readers may not fully appreciate this text for it is not a light read. Its utility lies more in its ideological import and the discussion it might generate and less in the prose used to deliver the message.

References

- Currie, Elliot. 1993. *Reckoning: Drugs, The Cities, and the American Future*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Kelling, George L. and Catherine M. Coles. 1996. *Fixing Broken Windows: Restoring Order and Reducing Crime in Our Communities*. New York: Touchstone.
- Nisbet, Robert. 1966. *The Sociological Tradition*. New York: Basic Books.

HEALTH, ILLNESS, AND MEDICINE

Coming Clean: Overcoming Addiction without Treatment, by **Robert Granfield** and **William Cloud**. New York: New York University Press, 1999. 287 pp. \$55.00 cloth. ISBN: 0-8147-1581-8. \$18.50 paper. ISBN: 0-8147-1582-6.

LESLIE IRVINE
University of Colorado-Boulder
irvine@colorado.edu

A True-or-False quiz:

Addiction is a disease over which people are powerless.

Addicts need professional treatment and group support.

If you answered "True" (as do ninety percent of the American public), Granfield and Cloud's book will change your mind about

addiction will struggle.

As I have seen, conquests and conquests are more than recovery. The discipline are pre-emptive. In a way, Twelve Anonymous. Allegedly prevent even the never-ending.

If addiction could save itself? I don't know about surrendering how could but even eradication?

To the model, the "hercept," the addiction prevalence. Cloud's. Rather than, sized, space, abuse, how per day-life" subjectively formerly had become use was introduced works, a stance, a pleasure class or grounds had stable jobs, families. Most important