

This would be, of course, another study; and it would shift the focus from the social roots of homicide to the behavior of the legal system. In any event, I am grateful enough to Adler for what we have. I enjoyed this book, and I learned a great deal from its pages.

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*Language of the Gun: Youth Crime and Public Policy.* By Bernard Harcourt. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006. Pp. 264. \$55.00 cloth; \$25.00 paper.

Reviewed by Michael Massoglia, Pennsylvania State University

Harcourt undertakes an ambitious examination of the meaning of guns through a series of interviews with youth detained in a juvenile correctional facility—the Catalina Mountain School in Arizona. The book is divided into three distinct parts. The first section focuses on the youth interviews, the second deals with methodological considerations in interpreting the language from the interviews, and in the final section, Harcourt deals with the public policy implications of his work.

Immediately apparent is the methodological care Harcourt uses in both constructing the sample for interviews and carrying out the interviews. This care produces interviews rich with information on the meaning of guns. In some respects, the interviews confirm accounts found in other places. For instance, Harcourt finds that youth associate guns with protection and self-defense. In other cases, the meaning youth attach to guns is less expected and perhaps even contradictory. Even among those who use guns, some youth attach negative meanings such as “dislike.” Along similar lines, while one dominant meaning youth attach to guns is “power,” a number of youth see the use of guns as a sign of weakness—as those who need guns are too weak to engage in traditional forms of fighting using fists or bats.

These differing views help illuminate the complexity in the meaning of guns. To decipher and bring together these differing meanings, Harcourt uses correspondence analysis to identify three primary clusters of meanings—action/protection, commodity/dislike, and recreation/respect. What is perhaps most clear and striking from the interview data is the remarkable attraction that the youth have to guns. Harcourt does a masterful job of conveying the seduction of guns and the fascination these youth have with guns. The clusters are informative—even if daunting for policy makers hoping to minimize the number of guns on the street—as

they show the wide range of reasons youth are drawn to guns. Readers will find this section of the book a fascinating inquiry into the appeal of guns for delinquent youth.

Harcourt's discussion of the policy implications of this work is equally informative. In framing the policy debates, Harcourt identifies and discusses six major explanations of crime from the fields of sociology, law, and economics, each with different policy implications. Readers will find this discussion succinct and enlightening. Harcourt demonstrates a clear grasp of these competing explanations and their relevance for public policy. Perhaps most intriguing, Harcourt traces each perspective back to its key assumptions—from the “moral poverty” embedded in theories of human nature to the rational calculations underlying economic theories of crime.

Next Harcourt takes an unexpected turn. Conventional wisdom suggests he would prefer one or two of the theoretical positions and their accompanying policy implications. True to form, Harcourt does briefly advocate interventions that reduce access to guns and the need for action/protection of youth strongly associated with guns. Yet in a thought-provoking discussion of the gaps in evidence across each field of study, the larger message that resonates from Harcourt's writing is the ethics underlying the development of law and public policy on youth gun policy. Harcourt argues that there are always gaps between data and subsequent interpretation, gaps between social science research and policy. Rather than run from such gaps, Harcourt embraces their inevitability and suggests that many policy decisions are not based on science, but rather ethical choices about how law and policy should shape human subjects. All readers may not agree with his position, but they will find it thoughtfully developed and provocative.

Sandwiched between the interview data and the policy discussion is a detailed discussion of the methodological sensibilities needed to interpret the interview data. This section of the book will be of particular interest to those who study how meaning is attached to language and behavior. Harcourt goes into great detail to explain differences between the phenomenological gaze associated with Sartre, the structural position advanced by Lévi-Strauss, and the practice theory of Bourdieu. Despite the clear command of the different positions, in places this section seems to drift and is somewhat removed from other sections of the book. As a small example, to highlight the challenges in attaching meaning to the interviews, Harcourt devotes a tremendous amount of text to the play *Les Mains Sales* (by Jean-Paul Sartre). At times, the links to the Catalina interviews are unclear and one is left to wonder if the section could have been trimmed without compromising Harcourt's interpretation of the interviews.

This minor criticism aside, Harcourt has written a masterful and innovative book on the meaning of guns to youth and has developed a provocative policy position based on the interview data. There is much to recommend about the book. The analysis is carefully done, the theoretical positions thoughtfully articulated, and the policy implications fairly discussed. The book will have broad appeal to scholars across a range of substantive fields and constitutes a major contribution to debates on youth gun crime.

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*Citizens, Cops, and Power: Recognizing the Limits of Community.* By Steve Herbert. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006. Pp. 180. \$40.00 cloth; \$16.00 paper.

Reviewed by Mathieu Deflem, University of South Carolina

Everybody knows about community policing, but nobody really knows what it is, let alone what it accomplishes. As Herbert reveals in this short book, even those directly involved—the police and their citizens—hold conflicting ideas about community policing and its constituent elements. The general narrative is simple: community policing involves improved relations between police departments and citizens in order to fight more effectively the crime problems that affect localized communities. Through community policing, informal and formal controls join hands through a partnership between the citizens in a community and the professional agents of crime control. Yet underneath the façade of the community policing rhetoric lies a complex normative and sociological reality, the basic contours of which are usefully examined in this work.

Herbert's book is based on qualitative research involving interviews and observations of police officers and community participants in three police beat regions in West Seattle (Washington State). The regional police beats are diverse in terms of their demographic and socioeconomic structure and crime rates. The research is theoretically framed around the discourse on community in political philosophy and, in confrontation therewith, the reality of community perceptions held by citizens. The main thesis of Herbert's study is that the notion of community is unbearably light in that it cannot effectively hold the policy responsibilities it is meant to fulfill and because the police apparatus remains unresponsive to the community, even when a partnership is formed. At least two central problems are revealed in the police-community