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Book Review

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Three interwoven events in the mid 1980's to the mid 1990's converged to produce possible fundamental changes in the way justice is carried out in the United States: the broken window theory, the high crime rates in New York City (NYC), and the idea of community justice. The broken window theory of crime posits that when properties are neglected, it encourages further crime and disorder, including misdemeanors and more serious crimes such as felonies. The *New York Times* labeled 1980 the worst year of crime in New York's history. Research at the time suggested that when citizens came together to clean up distressed properties in the neighborhood, crime rates dropped. Broken windows theory strongly suggested that collaboration between criminal justice professionals and regular citizens can have a positive impact on crime rates. This collaboration was the birth of community justice and the topic of this book. Community justice centers fundamentally rethink the role of community in the justice process, and involve judicial officers developing connections within the community.

The community justice concept aligns with the solution-focused movement and aims to address underlying problems through a collaborative multidisciplinary approach. Key features of community justice include co-location of services, local knowledge, community engagement and

crime prevention, emphasis on process, and individualized judicial orders that fit not only the offense, but also the offender's community.

Community Justice Centres: New Trajectories in Law describes four justice centers in diverse cities: Red Hook Community Justice Center, Brownsville Community Justice Center (both in New York City), the Neighborhood Justice Center in Yarra, Victoria, Australia, and recent centers in Israel. The community justice model is not designed to be a one-sized fits all approach. Each center presented illustrates unique features as well as the lessons learned, and the obstacles encountered. This book is an excellent description of how justice processes can be tailored to meet the community's needs, while strengthening society and the individual defendant.

Red Hook Community Justice Center began when a school principal was caught and killed in a gang shoot-out. Community members and justice system professionals joined forces in the planning of the center and its programs. This particular center houses the court and support services such as driver accountability, counseling, vocational training, and drug/alcohol rehabilitation. Court professionals, especially the judge, reach out to people/leaders who run the community garden, the local library, school officials, and residents of an apartment building called "the pharmacy" because of its frequent drug crimes.

While most support services are connected to the court, community members can take part in programs such as the Peacemaking Program, which trains residents to resolve neighborhood disagreements, and Bridging the Gap program that addresses improvement in connections between police and local residents.

Because the community justice systems are not one-size-fits-all programs, the evaluation measures will be somewhat different for each program. Evaluations must retain a central position in the overall planning scheme in order to ensure success. The Red Hook Center services assess whether or not an arrest is necessary, conduct an annual door-to-door survey, hold intermittent focus groups, and observe day-to-day interactions of participants. The Red Hook Center has reduced recidivism by 10% in adults

and 20% in juveniles, and compliance rates ranged between 63.7% to 75.5%, depending on the measures imposed.

Also, in New York City is the Brownsville Community Justice Center which was originally intended to replicate the Red Hook Center. The Red Hook model did not work, as the nature of the neighborhood is quite different. Brownsville has been described as the deadliest neighborhood in NYC.

The Brownsville center was planned without a co-located court due to safety concerns. The primary issue of community safety seemed to be the most likely problem; however, safety was more of an issue for outsiders. Everybody in Brownsville knows everybody in Brownsville! Even with this lack of concern amongst the residents, 26% of community members could not identify a strength in the community. A youth space was created in a dis-used shipping container on an empty block, as an initial step to address this issue.

Another center, the Neighborhood Justice Center in Yarra, Victoria, Australia also used the Red Hook Center as a model with more success. The crime rate in this community was double that of Melbourne. Improving community safety and the residents' relationships with justice agencies were the primary intents. The planners focused on a welcoming building entry, and in order to avoid courtroom dominance, located the courtroom on the floor above the lobby. At every step, the community was involved.

A panel, which included justice officials and the public, chose the magistrate/judge for the Yarra center. This court adjudicated criminal cases of adults and children, excluding sexual offenses and indictable offences. Also, a service team was co-located in the center, which included caseworkers, drug/alcohol addiction specialists, and family violence specialists. Additionally, employment assistance, housing support, mental health and financial counseling programs were housed alongside police, prosecutors, defense lawyers and corrections staff.

In addition to services, program innovations such as educational programs, an all-stars soccer program, and the Smity Street Dreaming Music Festival were created, which encouraged a buy-in from the whole

community. The crime rate in Yarra significantly declined, and since 2007, \$4.56M per year was saved in avoided prison days.

Community courts in Israeli created a sense of community through social and religious activities, engagement with local business owners, mentoring, and social soccer. Community members and students volunteered to assist defendants and their families. Each community justice court has a small court team consisting of the magistrate, program coordinator, social worker, defense and prosecutorial staff, and probation officers. While the court operations tended to be more emotionally restrained, the ethic of care was strongly evident.

Quantitative and qualitative evaluations for the four centers assessed community trust, safety, levels of community embeddedness, and participants' experiences. Communities do not simply have one problem, but rather a set of interrelated problems that need to be addressed in the evaluations. The four examples described above were quite successful in many ways; there were also some concerns, such as the government being too involved in citizens' lives and an unclear role of courts and services.

Additionally, the definition of community could be a stumbling block. Communities could become objects as opposed to subjects of the actions taking place in the centers. The final two chapters go into greater detail regarding legal rights, financial outlay, and the belief that community justice is criminal justice-light.

In spite of the criticisms, community justice centers offer a model of justice that can improve traditional criminal justice practices and create communities with greater efficacy. *Community Justice Centres: New Trajectories in Law* presents alternative examples of successful programs that consider the individualistic nature of communities. This is an excellent book for anyone interested in improving the justice program.