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***Community Policing: International Patterns and
Comparative Perspectives.* CRC Press, Taylor and
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By Dominique, Wisler and Ihekwoaba D. Onwudiwe
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In recent years, community policing as an agenda for policing reform has received a lot of global attention in a series of studies that stretch from organizational reforms to theories of modeling and implementation strategies. *Community Policing: International Patterns and Comparative Perspectives*, edited by Dominique Wisler and Ihekwoaba D. Onwudiwe represent a geographic anthology of various scholars and practitioners from different disciplines, such as, law, anthropology, criminology and sociology. Together, these policing authorities provided a vast array of thought-provoking and insightful perspectives in this fast extending and exciting arena of policing (see pg. v and xv for list of topics, contributors and background). Opening the discourse with “Rethinking Police and Society: Community Policing in Comparison,” Wisler and Onwudiwe make quite clear that their aim is to capture a global view of community policing from two angles: a top-down approach of formal institutionalized policing, where community policing is state initiated, and a bottom-up approach of informal policing, where community policing meets the state directly from the communities themselves.

Indeed, the authors by implication (including national segmentation of the contributors and topics) indicate that these two variants of community policing may best be

located in the developed and undeveloped world, respectively. Employing the pattern of case studies, the inherent ambiguities in the use of the phrase “community policing” is examined alongside the issue of policing models; perhaps asking should it be top-down or bottom-up? While examining informal vigilantes in developing nations like Nigeria, Tanzania, Kenya and South Africa, they argue that community policing is not something new, but for these nations, the approach from the developed societies would be novel—implying that total exportation from the later to the former therefore, would be highly impracticable. The authors’ assert that the adoption of the community policing strategy by undemocratic governments may create erroneous expectations for the public if unconstitutional governments maintain pseudo public images of the police that are in alliance with the people that they police. The lack of clarity on where community policing begins and ends in relation to traditional policing may make such undemocratic usurpation more difficult to identify.

Chapters 2-4 examine variants of community policing in Africa. South Africa is examined by Anthony Minaar’s (chapter 2) “Community policing in a translational state.” The post apartheid era in South Africa, beginning from 1994, was probably an interesting period for South Africans, but demanding times for police organizations as the country transitioned into democratic governance. Aside from the fact that South Africa had one of the highest crime rates (homicide included) in the world, policing a nation of unsettled freedom fighters with left-over cache of arms by a traditional police who still saw them as vagrants and viewed them with suspicion should elicit a natural call for understanding, compromise, and cooperation. The emergence of community policing in this period goes back to the ‘Bantustans’ or Black Townships (see page 24), the apartheid era of self-administered policing by the peoples court known as “popular justice” in the 1970s and 1980s. It’s not surprising as Minaar notes that the existence of these self-policing units resisted the introduction of state-initiated community policing by their former oppressors. What is surprising is the audacity of the SAP (South African Police) spearheading community policing without

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much prior work like image laundering with communities they oppressed for ages.

Although people may forgive historical tyranny and apartheid transgressions in exchange for peace and tranquility, memories of such chronological injustices may still linger. This exposes a methodological problem that many practitioners and scholars in the field of community policing have yet to cage (Wilson 2006); the importation of wholesale policing models into unique cultures and situations without proper domestication. Minaar, however, gives details to the implications of policy formulation in community policing reforms in South Africa, which included *preventive patrol*, *directed patrol* and *sector policing* strategies in that country.

In context of the perception of informal policing by the ordinary citizen more directly affected, the “*sungusungu*” vigilante movement gives us a preview through the eyes of Heald in chapter 3. “They represent the righteousness of the ordinary citizen, a response to the criminals within, and a guard against the corruption without in the form of state officialdom” (pg.58). This statement quite explicates the problem of community policing in Africa. Whereas Heald draws her example from Tanzania, it appears to be a generic situation; a citizen debacle in states with wildly official paranoia of their responsibility to the citizens. Torn between the criminal and the state, self-styled community police assumes the role of messiah, not until they turn against their own. Heald goes on to examine the practice of community policing in Tanzania down to antiquity, which sometimes borders into plain mythological storytelling—a little confusing and too deep at times, until you realize that perhaps she is reclaiming the state from the distant past of informal orders of policing.

In another section, Onwudiwe writes this informative chapter on the evolution, social control mechanisms and the typology of informal policing in Nigeria, including the current state of community policing in the country (pg. 96). Recounting the role of colonial authorities and the subsequent military governments in establishing a federal controlled police in Nigeria, he re-echo’s a point affirmed in the first chapter that community policing had always existed in certain cultures of the underdeveloped world before formal Western style police. By the end of the

chapter, we learn that the Nigerian society yearns for decentralization of policing and the emergence of vigilantes is primarily due to societal insecurity; suggesting that there may be an established failure of traditional policing in the Nigeria society. Gladly, however, Onwudiwe does not align decentralized policing to mean community policing, and in essence, does not advocate the abandonment of traditional policing in Nigeria.

What may be considered as part two of the book, starting from page 103, examines perspectives from the Western hemisphere; representing the base of formal institutionalized policing. In comparison to the earlier chapters, policing in this section expectedly follows the more rational programmatic and strict detailed organizational approach of measurements and evaluations. Here Mouhana focuses on the French policing model, which she indicates is centralized. Policing in France is quite a shift from what we may have assumed from the previous chapters of this book. Here, we are introduced to a police force in the West that is a stickler to its traditional views in an era of community policing reforms. The closest we are told you can get to community policing in France is from private security agencies that have been quick to cash in on the gap; from the yearning of the French public to have more say on how they are policed from their ultra conservative national structure. In a situation where the local police must hand over offenders to the national police, it is so easy to see why Mouhana infers on page 105 that theirs is “a system not focused on public service.” Following the extant models in Europe further down, in Belgium (chapter 6), the context of community policing is said to be a political showpiece; defining and understanding the proper concept of community policing still remain contentious. In this chapter, the authors’ discuss police reform, organization of local police, and community policing implementation in Belgium. They also present a case study which looks at women and immigrants in the police, and the exportation of traditional Belgium police best practices, while concluding at best that community policing in Belgium is mere window dressing. However Oliver (2004) only supports the earlier portion of the author’s contradiction here; when he stated that Belgium’s police have been in the business of international

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development of community policing units [see Community oriented policing: a systemic approach to policing by Willard Oliver pg.429].

By contrast community policing in Britain by Kalunta-Crumpton, identifies that in spite of its long history, the modern era of people-oriented policing as we know it became an issue in Britain because of the awareness of increasing racial plurality and tensions. However, it is disagreeable if the possibility of skirmishes between the police and the Black communities as narrated by the author are enough reasons to forestall community policing (pg. 159). This may be taking too simplistic a view of history and the intrinsic value in cultivation of relationships founded on proactive community input into police activities as advocated by community policing paradigm. It, however, does not detract from the author's questioning of the fundamental practice of community policing in Britain and the inherent contradictions in the generalization of the concept of the word "community."

While not over-asserting change, Barlow and Barlow's multidimensional use of history presents community policing along the tortuous paths of America's pre and post industrial revolution. The authors identify social control as a major change area as America wavered from a quasi fundamentalist traditional society to that which had to grapple with civil rights for African American, hippies, students and series of other social conflicts that tested the resilience of the America police organization. Efforts at making the police more perceptive to public opinion had been in the making long before the rhetoric's of community policing took flesh in the 1980's. The authors identify with the postulations of Wilson and Kelling (1982:583) "broken windows theory" that in spite of whatever lapse in the reduction of crime, community policing reduces the fear of crime, thus describing this police paradigm as "image – management policing." In chapter 9, Casey and Pike deal directly with the processes and outcome of community policing stratagem. The case of Victoria, a major province in Australia, offers a refreshing view—a successful implementation of community policing. (pg.189). This is a different view from the historical overview of the previous two chapters. The process of community engagement is looked at within key selective parameters. Like Belgium,

community policing in Australia seem to have been wooed into existence by international interests and happenings. The authors describe evaluation reports of community policing and inherent problems are articulated. The point being made here is that in spite the problems of models of implementation, community police has met with some measurable success in Victoria.

Towards the end of the book, Wong in Chapter 10 introduces a new angle with the Chinese theory of community policing, which he specifically describes as “Mass Line Policing;” a kind of policing that requires the people’s utmost involvement to solve their own problem, unlike normal CP in which the police solely fights crime. The power of the police is thus situated from the perspective of the people other than the state. This radical view of policing as articulated by the author mostly demands self-help. A form of policing that though may be strange to some, appear pertinent to nations where informal social control still obtains as part of officialdom. Even at that, it is difficult to see this brand of CP working in so many developing nations notwithstanding existing remnants of informal officialdom. Moreover, Wong cleverly began the chapter by underscoring this variant of policing and its link to China’s tradition and revolutionary beginning under Mao’s communist hegemony. Wong quotes Damin, 2001, (treatise on the broad definition of public security pp.200-2005) to buttress his point (pg. 223);

“As an occupation title, renmin jingcha captures the basic nature and essential characteristics of police in Communist China; the police are at one with, belong to, and dependent upon the people.”

Vincentnathan and Vincentnathan (pg. 257) recognize that India, like China, remains steeped in traditional subcultures that enable informal social control practices. Because of this, Western imported CP variants have met with mixed reactions. This relates to the earlier part of this review which noted the unreliability of undomesticated imports of community policing cultures, because it may not be all so easy to discard ancient and entrenched informal cultures. But modern processes could be easily grafted for refinement. Police–community partnership is seen as

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difficult in India because it lacks required social trust capital due to police corruption. The chapter expounds on research methods and case studies of community policing in various villages in India, and the role of traditional community courts (panchayats), which the authors advocate should be absorbed into the formal social control structure. The book ends on the score of 'CP reform in Latin America in Chapter 12 by Hugo Fruhling. The author introduces police organizations in El Salvador and Guatemala as politicized and repressive institutions controlled by the military. The origin of CP reform process in the region is examined with a number of case studies. The most important hindrance to community policing is seen as the challenges of internal and external institutions of government including the police itself. The author believes that lack of public confidence in the police is aiding the acceptance and inroad of community policing.

Though, the strength of this book is its variety, and the persuasive language of many of its authors, there is a failure to harness a single position and definition for community policing. Many of the voices in this book affirm variations on categorization of modern community policing. While community policing has assumed a global policing ideology, its practicability and usefulness on the long run remain contentious, and would appear to depend on domestication. A search for global variety was the impression one got at the beginning of the book, but its contents seemed to have been quite skewed. Notably, Africa and Europe received a disproportionate portion of this review. Perhaps the editors may consider a second, and even a third compendium which will provide a full view of community policing as understood and practiced in other parts of the world. This would help for transnational comparison and moreover extend appreciation of certain methodological and theoretical issues involved on a broad geographical scale. Meanwhile, with this present work, the phenomenon of community policing continues to seek to finally seize its place and role in the modern global policing ideology by refining and defining itself.

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