Book Reviews

K. Harris (ed.), **Respect in the Neighbourhood: Why Neighbourliness Matters**, Russell House Publishing, Lyme Regis, £18.95 Pb, ISBN 978–1-905541–02–7.

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Respect in the Neighbourhood comprises an eclectic range of contributions that combine to highlight that the key weakness of the UK government's 'Respect Agenda' is a lack of understanding of neighbourhood and neighbourliness. However, it would be misleading to think that this volume comprises a direct and sustained critique of the 'Respect Taskforce', rather in drawing on a range of UK and international literature it seeks to explore the everyday lived experience of neighbourhood life, the challenges it poses and the types of strategies that might be effectively employed to encourage the much valorised concept of informal social control. In so doing, the aim is to broaden the parameters of the 'respect' discourse 'beyond the current media frenzy regarding anti-social behaviour' (p. x).

The contributions in the volume address pertinent and inter-related themes regarding the nature of, and influences upon, contemporary neighbourhood life. Chapters 1 and 8 most transparently address the 'Respect' agenda and its overwhelming focus on responsibilizing individuals, parents and communities. The first chapter, by Kevin Harris, reflects upon the increasingly individualized, privatized and commercialized nature of social interactions in contemporary societies, arguing that the associated loss of civility has been translated as a crisis of civil and pro-social behaviour. While arguing that top-down approaches to promote 'respect' may be necessary, he characterizes government rhetoric and policy as 'belligerent' and 'aggressive' (p. 8) and asserts a need to investigate the possibility of more inclusive approaches to engendering civil interaction. In Chapter 8, Jan Steyaert outlines how the 'Respect' agenda has been imagined and implemented in the Netherlands and Flanders. Similarities to the UK experience are found in Flanders where resort to fines, exclusions and the controversial banning of 'symbolic clothing' in public spaces have formed key strategies in addressing incivilities. By contrast, in the Netherlands the use of 'street etiquette' agreements and neighbourhood mediation schemes provide informative examples of successful bottom-up approaches to addressing neighbourhood conflicts. Notwithstanding the seductive appeal of authoritarian strategies, Steyaert argues that governments should note that 'respect' will only be forthcoming as a result of 'dialogue and reciprocity' with its citizens (p. 112).

The ghost of Wilson and Kelling's (1982) 'Broken Windows' thesis permeates the issues discussed in Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 which focus upon how housing policies and the built environment can impact upon civility. In Chapter 3, Liz Richardson describes the attempts of four social landlords to improve neighbourliness and discourage anti-social behaviour through 'good neighbourhood' agreements; the use of schemes to reward good behaviour and sanction negative behaviours and Local Authority-wide strategic work. She observes that people are willing to 'do their bit' to tackle anti-social behaviour, but to make such citizen action a reality Richardson

argues that public authorities need to maintain a visible presence within the locality, and provide the necessary environment, resources and opportunities. The vital role of public authorities in relation to the design, maintenance and management of streets and public spaces is echoed in Kevin Harris' analysis in Chapters 4 and 6 and that outlined by Philip J. Connolly in Chapter 5. In Chapter 4, Harris provides a literature review of the contemporary nature of neighbourliness, arguing that civil relations are fundamentally underpinned by neighbourhood relations. Hence in order to encourage civility our neighbourhoods need to incorporate spaces that provide and promote opportunities for intergenerational interaction. In a similar vein Connolly advocates a need to reclaim the street through the development of a 'quality street environment' (p. 82). Thus he argues that slowing down traffic; beautifying the landscape; visible community policing; the provision of safe play areas; an accessible street environment and the improvement of street lighting are strategies likely to promote 'the principle of social inclusivity for the person on foot' (p. 82) and hence informal social control.

The exclusionary potential of the government's 'Respect Agenda' is addressed in Chapters 2 and 7. In the former, Jacqueline Barnes focuses on the role of parents and adults in the community in setting standards and managing the behaviour of children and young people. Drawing on qualitative research undertaken in four locations in the UK, she highlights that poverty, social exclusion and diversity serve to promote fears in relation to crime and anti-social behaviour for both adults and children. Barnes asserts that 'the continued social, spatial and moral isolation of young people is at best unhelpful' (p. 32). Aydin Mehmet Ali's analysis with regard to black and bilingual young people and their 'inclusion' within UK culture, presented in Chapter 7, is perhaps the most powerful, and certainly the most critical, contribution to this volume. The issues discussed are at the cutting edge of contemporary criminological concerns and encompass immigration, political asylum, organized crime and terrorism. Ali regards the 'Respect Agenda' as a 'hollow' and 'desperate' response of 'the ruling elites' (p. 104) to the transforming social and political context in the UK. He convincingly argues that in order to tackle the challenging behaviour of young people, particularly those from black and bilingual communities, the government needs to address the injustices and inequalities that comprise their everyday lived experiences and highlights the crucial need to give young people a voice in shaping the policies that will impact upon them.

Kevin Harris concludes the volume in Chapter 9, outlining five principles for promoting neighbourliness and informal social control that emphasize a need to acknowledge and promote the ownership of strategies at the local level. He concludes that the aggressive, top down and moralist overtures of the 'Respect Agenda' are likely to engender 'more law and less order' (p. 123).

This edited collection should have wide appeal to academics, teachers, researchers, practitioners and students alike. However, I hope that it also finds an audience within government and policy making circles. Not least because it provides further evidence that exclusionary and punitive approaches to tackling the challenges of 'anti-social' behaviours are unlikely to promote conformity (see Burney, 2005: Squires and Stephen, 2005), and that the inclusiveness necessary to promote informal social control comes at a high price and will require public authorities to make significant financial, human and infrastructural investments.

References

Burney, E. (2005) *Making People Behave.* Cullompton: Willan Publishing.

Squires, P. and Stephen, D. (2005) *Rougher Justice*. Cullompton: Willan Publishing.

Wilson, J.Q. and Kelling, G.I. (1982) 'Broken Windows: the Police and Neighbourhood Safety', *Atlantic Monthly*, March: 29–38.