

BOOK REVIEW

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A Review of "Armed Robbery: Offenders and Their Victims"

REFERENCE: MacDonald, John M., *Armed Robbery: Offenders and Their Victims*, Charles C Thomas, Springfield, Ill., 1975, 444 pages, \$18.50.

In this book, to date his largest volume, Dr. MacDonald gives us another in his series of studies of criminal behavior. He has written on rape and murder as well as indecent exposure and general considerations of psychiatry and the criminal. In all of his books he presents a breadth of material, statistical and clinical, which illustrate his text. This is an ambitious study of the crime of armed robbery from a comprehensive standpoint, including the perpetrator, the victim, aspects of prevention, and motivation. In addition to two specific types of robbery—bank robbery and skyjacking—Dr. MacDonald introduces two chapters by Lt. C. Donald Brannan of the Denver Police Department on the criminal investigation and reporting of armed robbery.

Typical of MacDonald is his first chapter on the Robin Hood tradition, setting in romantic style, historically and culturally, the scene for armed robbery in the United States. Generally the book is more helpful to criminologists and police scientists than it is to behavioral scientists, except in the areas of the offenders and their victims. With the rise in victimology as a special study and the increasing legislation to award monetary damages to victims of crime, the chapter on victims is an important one. Another presentation of his that is helpful is the one on homicide and robbery, indicating a relationship between the two, and in which robbery may result in homicide for a number of reasons.

As a psychiatrist, I was looking to his chapters on motivation and origins of robbery to help understand psychodynamically the reasons for this particular type of criminal behavior. I was disappointed because my expectations were not met. The chapter is fairly superficial and devoted to environmental origins rather than intrapsychic ones.

As in most of his other books, Dr. MacDonald is a master at collecting data, organizing it, and presenting it in a statistical and clinical manner. If there is a weakness in his presentation, it is in the lack of depth or editorial commentary on the significance of his findings and proposals for solutions to the problems he uncovers. His work is of great interest and value, but he leaves too much for the reader to interpret for himself from the data presented. It would be helpful if Dr. MacDonald would lend from his vast experience and expertise in the area of crime and psychiatry suggestions for further study, and to present his own interpretation of his data. For example, in this book on

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armed robbery, I would like to have read some of Dr. MacDonald's psychodynamic interpretations of the crime and his recommendations for optimal management of the armed robber. Furthermore, does he have suggestions for reducing the recidivism rate for robbery? Generally, what has he to offer from his presentation of the data that would help us to deal more effectively with future offenders and, specifically, the armed robbers? These questions are raised only because of Dr. MacDonald's experience and the feeling of frustration in reading some of his material which is of great scope but lacking in the depth of interpretation.

Finally, the study is important and should be read by students of crime, since it is the only one that I know that is presented in such a broad and comprehensive manner. It may be more significant, however, for police scientists than for behavioral scientists, unless it is read as the beginning of further studies which go beyond the presentation of statistical and clinical data.