

***The Sociology of Criminal Law*, Robert M. Rich, Toronto: Butterworths, 1979. Pp. v, 282. \$9.95 (paperback).**

There is a dearth of general, comprehensive reference material for novice criminologists, whether they approach the topic from the jurisprudential or the sociological perspective, and hence the title of this book holds out the promise of being a welcome supplement to the material now available. In the preface, Professor Rich states that his goal is to examine theoretical and empirical issues in the field of the "sociology of criminal law", but this tantalizing beginning leads disappointingly to a volume which is disorganized, tentative in style, and inconsistent in the selection and quality of content.

As the Table of Contents indicates, this short book is divided into two parts. In the first part, Professor Rich describes the theoretical and conceptual contributions of sociologists whom the author classifies as members of the Structural-Functional School, the Chicago School, and the Conflict School. Among those included are Durkheim, Jeffrey, Haskell and Yablonsky, Quinney, and the Schwendingers. Rich also briefly analyses the "Social Facts" paradigm, and the "Social Definition" paradigm, and contrasts the approaches of the Functionalists and the Conflict Theorists.

The second part of the book consists of brief descriptions of the history of, definitions of, and differing contemporary American statutory treatments of a selection of crimes. Those dealt with are categorized as sexual deviance, domestic deviance, gambling, or drug abuse and addiction crimes.

Generally speaking, Part I is uneven in depth of treatment and ambivalent in commitment. The Structural-Functionalists are dismissed initially in a few pages. The several who are discussed are treated as disembodied units and no effort is made in this chapter to tie their work together. Innovators such as Merton are not even mentioned. On the other hand, the Chicago School and its offspring are grossly over-represented, particularly because Rich presents a lengthy table of authors and their findings with respect to the differences between lower and middle class youth. This table lists ad infinitum the disadvantages of being a lower class youth and the advantages of growing up middle or upper class. Not only is this list out of place in a section intended to be generally theoretical, but its length and tone smack of a biased attack upon the lower class. This impression is strengthened by Rich's failure to mention any work on white-collar crime.

The chapter on Conflict Theory appears more balanced and timely, although unaccountably the recent works of Taylor, Walton and Young are scarcely mentioned. Rich explicitly omits discussion of the work of the "Social Behaviourists" from the book, apparently because the

Behaviourists aren't "Sociologists", and hence we are denied a description of any of the Psychological Theorists such as Freud and Redl. Moreover, the more quantitative empirical work by sociologists such as the Gluecks is completely omitted, and Rich never explains his avoidance of any discussion of the labelling theory of Becker and his followers, although their work is often treated as a separate school and has heavily influenced conflict theorists such as Quinney. There is no discussion of the work of any Jurisprudential Theorist.

While Rich has "examined" three major American Sociological Schools, the examination is more descriptive than analytic. Because of the confusing subheadings, one is never certain whether the opinions expressed are those of the sociologist being described, or of the author. Generally Rich has displayed considerable unwillingness to stick out his neck, and most of the critical analysis is second hand. He appears to lack commitment and incisiveness when he does venture out on his own.

The omission of description of some significant sociological theoretical contributions and the lack of real critical analysis are accompanied by a variety of less important but still frustrating flaws. The author treats the words "school", "theory" and "concept" as virtually interchangeable and this sloppy intellectual style gives the book an amateurish, undergraduate air. He has the disconcerting and sometimes confusing habit of concluding sentences with bracketed phrases. These apparently are meant to serve as afterthought explanations, but they would serve the reader better if they were incorporated into the sentences as full components. His tendency to confuse "i.e." for "e.g." further dismays, and the proofreading generally has been poor. Although the small size of the book permits a single index combining authors, subjects, case names and book titles, the listing of book titles beginning with "The" under "t" is probably unique.

Part II of the book consists of descriptions of the historical development of legal treatment of selected crimes. Few theoretical or philosophical conclusions are drawn about the success of the statutes and enforcement policies described, and no attempt is made to relate them to the theoretical approaches described in Part I. This section is interesting and straightforward, and, while containing no Canadian data, should prove a useful source for those wishing to compare the development of American and Canadian legal systems.

In the long run, the theoretical portions of this book should be treated as an incomplete and relatively simplistic collection of descriptions of the works of some important American Sociologists, some of whose works are critical in themselves. The second part may prove to have been a greater contribution to the sociology of criminal law in the final analysis.

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