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Book Reviews

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THE YOUNG CAR THIEF

Juvenile Delinquents, in the sense of the laws of the State of New York—boys between the ages of 12 and 16—contribute to a large extent to the rising number of car thefts. A study of a group of boys in that age group committed to the New York State Training School for Boys at Warwick, New York for car thefts over a period of three years, 1952 to 1954, has revealed that these boys have certain distinctive characteristics as compared with other Training School students who had not engaged in car thefts. Within the car stealing group, furthermore there are noteworthy differences between those boys who did not commit any other offenses but car thefts ("pure" car thieves) and those who had become involved in other delinquencies, too ("mixed" car thieves). The following differences are most striking:

	"Pure" %	All Car Thieves %	Control Group %
1. Racial Distribution			
White	59.1	54.3	40.6
Negro	31.8	35.8	44.8
Puerto Rican	9.1	9.9	14.6
2. Intelligence			
Border Line or Lower	9.1	23.5	30.9
Dull Normal	40.9	35.8	25.9
Average	40.1	34.6	34.5
Bright Normal & Higher	9.9	6.1	8.7
3. Literacy			
Non-Reader (below 3rd Grade)	18.2	27.2	37
3rd-6th Grade	31.8	35.8	34.6
Above 6th Grade	50	37	28.4
4. Economic Situation			
Comfortable	40.9	23.5	11.1
Low	45.5	46.9	29.6
Marginal	9.1	12.3	34.6
Public Assurance	4.5	17.3	22.2
No Information	—	—	2.5
5. Home Intact or Broken			
Intact	59	46.9	37
Broken	41	53.1	63

Young car thieves appear to be immediately motivated by their desire for pleasure or, in isolated instances, by a wish to escape from an unpleasant home or institutional situation. No cases were found where boys stole a car in connection with other offenses, such as e.g. a hold up.

Car thefts are usually committed by groups of boys; in only a small number of the cases involving escape from a home or institution the car thief acted by himself. With this young group, girls were participants in a negligible number of cases only.

The personalities of young car thieves and the situations from which they come present an infinite variety. Efforts at finding a common denominator for all car stealings have proved futile.

The institutional adjustment of young car thieves does not differ essentially from that of other delinquent boys. Under after-care, boys who were not involved in car stealings apparently fared somewhat better than car thieves. While only about 26 percent of the original study group were discharged for good adjustment, almost 31 percent of the control group were in that category. 38 percent of the latter group went on to correctional institutions or were placed on probation to an adult court, while 57 percent of young car thieves had the experience of commitment to a correctional institution or of adult probation.

However, the ratio of "success" and "failure" was somewhat more favorable for the "pure" car thieves:

45.5 percent made a good adjustment.

45.5 percent went on to correction or probation.

When "pure" car thieves got into difficulties again they were, in the majority of cases once more involved in car thefts.—Erwin Schepes, Director of Soc. Services, N. Y. State Dep. of Soc. Welfare, N. Y. C.

BOOK REVIEWS

PATTERNS IN CRIMINAL HOMICIDE. By *Marvin E. Wolfgang*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1958. Pp. 413, \$8.00.

During the five-year period c. 1948-52 there were 588 criminal homicides involving 621 offend-

ers in Philadelphia. The author has made a comprehensive study of both victims and offenders involved in these cases.

Although no relationship was found between seasonal changes it was determined that the peak

of criminal homicide offenses is reached on weekends. Thirty-two percent of the victims were killed on Saturdays as compared with only seven percent on Tuesdays.

Over 90 percent of the victims and offenders were members of the lower social class structure. Negroes comprise but 18 percent of Philadelphia's population but 73 percent of the victims and 75 percent of the offenders were Negroes.

Stabbings accounted for 39 percent of the criminal deaths studied, shootings were responsible for 33 percent and beatings resulted in 22 percent. The author indicates that legislation to remove the availability of certain lethal weapons is not very effective as a means of reducing criminal homicide. The offender would merely utilize some other weapon to achieve the same end. It is also suggested that improved communications with the police, more rapid transportation to a hospital and advanced medical technology have contributed to the decreasing homicide rates in this country during the last twenty-five years.

It has been the contention of numerous criminologists that the typical person who commits criminal homicide is a first offender, a contention that is refuted by Wolfgang's study. He found that 64 percent of the offenders and 47 percent of the victims under study had previous records. Many of them had previously committed aggravated assault offenses, and the author suggests that such crimes should never be treated lightly since they are frequently forerunners of criminal homicides.

Twenty-six percent of the criminal homicides studied in Philadelphia were precipitated by acts of the victim, and a significant relationship was established between felonious killings and the consumption of alcohol.

Most previous research studies of criminal homicide have been largely confined to either offenders or victims. The present book embraces both. It also compares the results of the author's research with the findings of other students in this field.

Naturally, 588 criminal homicides committed in one city over a five-year period represent but a very small percentage of the Nation's total. It is conceivable that a research study embracing a much greater sampling might alter some of the conclusions.

It would be of particular interest to know also the extent of criminal homicides which never receive that classification. Very probably many deaths attributed to natural causes are actually criminal homicides.

The study made by Wolfgang provides a valuable contribution to the literature on criminal homicides and suggests many other areas for profitable research.

VIRGIL W. PETERSON

Chicago Crime Commission

MAJOR SOCIAL PROBLEMS. By *Earl Raab and Gertrude Selzwick*. Row, Peterson & Co., 1959, \$6.50.

"This textbook is primarily directed to the citizen who faces, or will face, at least the minimal responsibility of having a point of view on the social problems of his community" (p. 27). That includes everybody who is able to form or to acquire a viewpoint!

"All community problems are not social problems" (p. 3). Are these categories mutually exclusive? Or do the authors mean to say, "Not all community problems are social problems?" A questionable saying, that!

Drought occasions serious problems for farmers, the authors say, "but the drought does not in itself constitute a social problem. When the question is raised as to how the more fortunate members of the community should assist those stricken, then the problem acquires a social dimension. It becomes a matter of the kind of relationship which members of the community have established, or should establish among themselves" (p. 3.)

But naturally the farmer's first reaction to the drought is, doubtless, "how can I feed my family?" He is then concerned with the "relationship" which he wants to establish or maintain with his family—a part of the community. Isn't it (drought) a social problem, therefore? Must the social quality of the problem await enquiry as to how the "more fortunate" should "assist the stricken?" Suppose there are no "more fortunate" who will or can help? In that case must the "social dimension" continue in retirement?

The farmer will communicate with his neighbors. They may cooperatively find a plowing technique or what not, which will head them toward a "Victory in the Dust Bowl,"¹ without bothering the "more fortunate." This reviewer believes that in the process, they will be solving a social problem and in the most wholesome way imaginable. People who even try to do it are the salt of the earth. There is no "drought in itself"—not in an inhabited area

¹ See IRA WOLFERT in *Victory in the Dust Bowl*, READER'S DIGEST, August, 1959, Pp. 86 ff.

—but there are farmers-in-drought-area. Drought and traffic congestion (p. 4) are in the same category. Both frustrate people who are trying to attain their goals. Neither exists in a way that means anything, where there are no people who are trying to reach goals. A second edition could clear up the text considerably at least to this point.

The authors' discussion of "causation" (p. 23) is superior to what precedes it. The child, they say, "will not steal if he has absorbed the values which keep . . . under social control" (p. 16). They properly give more attention to values than many other writers do. And they give the individual his due: ". . . The citizen remains the key to the deliberate solution of social problems" (p. 26). It is probably a safe inference that Raab and Selznick would not be so naive as to tell us that the theory of individualism is "conducive to criminality"—certainly not without pausing to say whether the babe in his cradle or what he may be 50 or 60 years hence (a world figure because of his wisdom, knowledge and public service) represents their concept of the individual. Maybe their concept is represented by one of the untold number of individuals on the straight line between the two extremes. These authors would then agree that individuals who are included in the upper segment of that line can implement the social theory of individualism. They should recognize the fact that the development of men and women of stature is the most basic social problem.

The arrangement of this book is rather unique. Each major problem (Delinquency, for example) is analyzed from a sociological and/or psychological angle. "Meeting the Problem" follows which acquaints the reader with patterns of social action whereby the problem is being met here and there.

Frequently one or more paragraphs occur under the heading, "Evaluation" (pp. 41-42, e.g.). They include estimates of the value of what has preceded. In the reviewer's opinion this device can rob a text of the spice which belongs to it—an unfortunate result where youthful readers are concerned. Besides, students like to make their own evaluations, and they will, when intelligently and imaginatively guided and challenged; subtly led to an awareness that they are confidently expected to find a solution, because they are deemed strong enough for it. The nature of youth demands such treatment.

There are two chapters on delinquency and one on crime—aggregating 141 pages. Conventional topics are discussed. The authors mention some of

the defects in statistics which deprive us of reliable knowledge of the volume and trends of delinquency and crime. They might have mentioned the fact that, of the many thousands of burglaries reported yearly in the U.S., only around 30 percent are solved by arrests. What then becomes of the statement which has been repeatedly made, even in high places, that 48 percent of burglaries in our country are committed by youths under 18 years old? Uncaught, and therefore unknown, burglars could be octogenarians!

Other chapters relate to prejudice, immigration, the family, the schools, dependency, and finally, "The Individual and Society."

Chapter 9 includes a discussion of: the purposes of schools; the question of public or private schools; the curriculum; decision making; staffing and financing. From that the authors pass on to teacher shortage; salaries; overwork; low social status. For the most part these are important minor problems. The major school problem is suggested by the authors' words: "[The] success of the [school] finally rests in the hands of its teachers" (p. 443). But their preparation (academic or other) for realizing this success is not discussed. Preparation should establish zeal for teaching and knowledge of the art of motivating and challenging pupils. Young folk by nature demand challenges as surely as they require opportunity for recreation. Where there is no challenge there is boredom and hence truancy is encouraged. No discussion of schools or their management should neglect this most important angle.

The book includes 32 "adaptations." Each is a longer or shorter abbreviation of a pertinent article or book, and is introduced by a paragraph or more for orientation—a good textbook feature. There should be more frequent references in the text to these adaptations.

ROBERT H. GAULT

Evanston, Illinois

INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOR AND GROUP ACHIEVEMENT.

By *Ralph M. Stogdill*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1959, pp. xi + 352, \$5.00.

The purpose of the book, according to its author is "to develop a theory of organization achieve, ment." Stogdill adds that his "theory is based on the assumption that the structure and operations of a group can be described in terms of the behaviors of its members in interaction." Few group workers, group therapists, or group "dynamicists" will find themselves in disagreement with the

author, as all of them, this reviewer included, subscribe to a like "theory." Nor will there be many criticizing Stogdill for his organization of his text. He deserves commendation for his bibliography, containing 800 numbers. Even 8,000 titles would be incomplete today.

Space does not permit a detailed evaluation of this valuable book. There are just two comments this reviewer would venture to submit: (1) To the ever-growing list of titles on group behavior the present one is a valuable addition if the reader bears in mind the limitations which it (as almost any book on this subject) suffers from: we just do not know much about groups yet (and Stogdill seems to give the impression that he does). And (2): The sub-title encourages one to expect to find "The Experimental Evidence." But it was not apparent to this reviewer what kind of "evidence" was offered. On the other hand, to the researcher and student of group dynamics, *with particular emphasis on correctional settings* (see the author's remarks on authority, control reinforcement, role performance and structure!) this book is a "must" on his shelf.

HANS A. ILLING

Los Angeles

PRACTICE AND THEORY OF PROBATION AND PAROLE. By David Dressler. New York: Columbia University Press, 1959, pp. ix + 252, \$6.00.

Who should write textbooks? Since their function is primarily pedagogical, should they not be written by academic pedagogues—professional scholar-teachers? The student is then assured that the customary instructional aids in the form of section headings, study questions, suggestions for further reading, etc., will be found somewhere between the covers, and that the presentation of textual materials will be accompanied by a continuing evaluation based upon the writer's scholarly judgment. On the other hand a text in an applied field can easily wander off into a dreamy Utopia if written by one who lacks extensive field experience. The virtues and shortcomings of Dr. Dressler's latest book reflect, respectively, his many years' experience as a parole officer during which he developed an admirably lucid style of writing, and his recently assumed role of college professor.

Practice and Theory of Probation and Parole is an authoritative and readable work intended for both academic students and field trainees. It reflects the

eclecticism which most practitioners in corrections are obliged to adopt because of practical work limitations on the one hand and of contradictory theories of treatment on the other. The seventeen chapters begin with a description of the origins of probation and parole, proceed to the principles and routines involved in their application, and conclude with an evaluation of results and some observations on the training of officers. A liberal use of illustrative cases, and the author's practical and realistic approach to his subject heighten the book's value, but this value is considerably greater to field trainees than to strictly academic students. Its relative brevity, its nearly complete lack of instructional aids (including a bibliography), and its limited capacity for intellectual training reduce its usefulness as a text for a collegiate course in probation and parole.

The book would have been strengthened if Dressler had undertaken, among other things, a critical discussion of the basic assumptions underlying these correctional measures beginning, perhaps, with the provocative findings of follow-up studies which reveal nearly uniform rates of "successful" outcome (particularly among probationers) despite great diversity in the circumstances of probation within the several jurisdictions studied.

And in adopting uncritically the correctional slogan that "we must individualize each offender" the author overlooked the need for viewing clients not only idiosyncratically, but also as representatives of various sub-cultural groups whose values, typical personality structures, and so on, are perforce imported into the social work situation. To illustrate: in citing the case of an unemployed operatic tenor placed on probation for desertion and who objected almost hysterically to the clerical job found for him by his officer, one feels that Dr. Dressler's assessment of the problem ignored the fact that professional entertainers, as a sub-cultural group, are highly prone to status anxiety. The singer's strenuous objections to being declassed (even though he felt it only as a temperamental incompatibility with clerking) make sense sociologically. Without this kind of sociological insight a worker's capacity to make accurate assessments of his clients' responses to probation and parole procedures is severely limited.

A third shortcoming, from the academic standpoint, is the author's tendency, exhibited particularly in his three chapters dealing with research findings, to allow his eclectic orientation to lead