



1961

## Sociology of Crime edited by Joseph S. Roucek

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SOCIOLOGY OF CRIME. Edited by Joseph S. Roucek. New York, The Philosophical Library, 1961. 551 pp.

This book consists of twenty-one separate papers dealing with various aspects of criminal behavior and crime. All of these papers, including the last five by Professor Roucek, were apparently written expressly for the present volume.

It is difficult to assess the papers collectively since there is no central theme to the volume and the individual selections differ markedly in range of subject and quality of presentation. In general, however, the papers are discursive and superficial. One suspects that the absence of a meaningful plan for the work—for example, geography is classified as a “socio-psychological aspect”—prevented many of the contributors from formulating and developing the scholarly papers of which they are capable.

There were several papers which were informative and well written. In this regard, the selection by Sidney Kaplan and that by Pauline Callard come to mind. In the former, the relationship of geographical factors to crime is carefully considered with respect to contemporary research findings. Professor Kaplan observes that climatic and ecological influences are generally of negligible consequence, but that they cannot, therefore, be summarily dismissed. In “Crime and Criminology in England” Pauline Callard analyzes recent trends in crime rates. The increase in indictable offenses during the nineteen-fifties is found to be greatest in sexual offenses, violence against the person and malicious injuries to property.

Perhaps it is not an inaccurate generalization to hold that the present collection of papers reflects the contemporary state of criminology in America. While there are several scholarly papers included in the work, the over-all impression conveyed to the reader is that of an omnibus discipline without a foundation in empirical science. Platitudinous injunctions directed toward school teachers, counselors and administrations—“Juvenile delinquents, no matter what their problems, are human beings in need of affection, recognition, security and understanding,” (page 233)—are an inappropriate substitute for empirical statements and analysis. And while it may be apt and clever to observe that “prostitution is here to stay as long as sex remains,” (page 112) such statements hardly contribute to our knowledge of female criminality. In sum, I believe this collection of papers would have been much improved had there been a more careful selection of studies and had these been related to a central topic in criminology.

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