

Scull, Andrew T. *Decarceration: Community Treatment and the Deviant—A Radical View*. Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1977, vii+184pp.

“Decarceration” is a word which describes a policy of closing down asylums, prisons, and reformatories. Instead of housing criminals and the mentally ill in institutions, we have begun to “treat” many of them in a community setting. Dr. Scull’s new book asserts that there is massive ignorance about community treatment and “on closer examination, it turns out that this whole enterprise is built on a foundation of sand” (p. 1).

This book is about more than just community treatment, however. Scull examines the shift from institutional control to community-based corrections in comparative and historical perspective. His focus is on England and the United States and his analysis begins with the early houses of correction and workhouses. The second chapter has a good review of the historical development of institutionalization. Scull argues that “many of the transformations underlying the move towards institutionalization can be more plausibly tied to the growth of the capitalist market system and to its impact on economic and social relations” (p. 24). The relationship between capitalism and policies of social control (institutionalization versus decarceration) becomes the principal theoretical theme. The emphasis on capitalism should make this book interesting reading for those sociologists who normally would not be concerned with correctional issues.

Scull closely examines the conventional explanations for the move toward decarceration (such as the introduction of psychoactive drugs and growing disenchantment with the dehumanizing nature of total institutions) and finds these explanations to be unsatisfactory. Instead, he argues that “the fiscal pressures on the state have intensified during the 1960s and 1970s, so noninstitutional techniques for coping with the criminal and the delinquent have come to exert an ever greater fascination for criminal justice planners and policymakers” (p. 135). In other words, expanded social services and welfare programs become the alternative to institutionalization. Scull’s point is an important

one: "this shift in social control styles and practices must be viewed as dependent upon and a reflection of more extensive and deep-seated changes in the social organization of advanced capitalist societies" (p. 152).

There are a number of features about this book which make it a valuable contribution. First, Scull offers extensive statistical documentation for his position. The reader is presented with a wide variety of data that shows how and why decarceration is occurring, but the documentation is not so overwhelming as to make this tedious reading. Second, the emphasis on an historically informed, macrosociological perspective reminds us that decarceration has many historical foundations and is directly related to economic and social organization. Any study of deviance or corrections which fails to incorporate structural factors into its analysis will undoubtedly result in too narrow a view. Scull understands this and his book is a masterful attempt at demonstrating the interrelationship between deviance and social control. Third, this book critically challenges the notion that community-based treatment is more effective than institutionalization. Although there is considerable support for the position that institutional treatment is largely a failure (see Lipton, Martinson and Wilks, *The Effectiveness of Correctional Treatment*, 1975), one is left with the pessimistic feeling, after reading Scull's book, that community treatment is hardly any better.

Andrew Scull's *Decarceration: Community Treatment and the Deviant—A Radical View* is an important contribution to the sociological study of corrections. His analysis is theoretically strong and his conclusions are persuasive. Those who are interested in policies of social control can ill-afford to ignore the analysis Andrew Scull presents.

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*An Introduction to Sociology*. By R. Serge Denisoff and Ralph Wahrman. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. 1975. XIV, 529pp.

Another introductory textbook is hardly a novelty at a time when even the recent offerings occupy several feet of shelf space. This text is, on the whole, a welcome addition. The authors have attempted to eliminate the "scholargok" and present an attractive readable text without losing the "nuts and bolts" of sociology. I must admit to a mixed reaction on both counts.

The text is eminently readable and illustrative material is both interesting and thought-provoking. However, the authors have not proven totally immune to "scholargok". They have succumbed to the temptation to categorize and apply labels to these categories rather freely. This is particularly irritating in the areas of deviance and collective behavior. Their examples, while interesting and generally well presented, are numerous and lengthy. They occasionally reach the point of diminishing returns, frustrating even the earnest student. They are set in such a manner that they may be selectively assigned, just as individual topics need not be taken up in the precise sequence the authors have chosen to present them.

The "nuts and bolts" are there. As with all survey texts, they are covered with varying emphases. Denisoff and Wahrman have chosen to place strong emphasis on socialization and micro-sociological processes. This may be disturbing to those who prefer an organizational or institutional approach.

Their coverage of stratification systems was disappointing. This area is highly over-simplified. The slave system is passed over in a single paragraph plus one sentence without the slightest appreciation for the unique characteristics of the slave system as manifested in the United States. A single page and one-half is devoted to a system which is alternately referred to as "estate" or "feudal". This is very brief coverage of an enduring and complex system. As a student of South Asia, I am struck speechless by the coverage given the caste system which repeats some very old time-worn misconceptions concerning the Indian caste system.