

BOOK REVIEWS

Gibbons, Don C. *The Criminological Enterprise: Theories and Perspectives*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1979.

Don C. Gibbons' *The Criminological Enterprise: Theories and Perspectives* is about the major themes and perspectives of twentieth-century American sociological criminology. Gibbons' primary concern is the development of criminological theory since 1900, and he reviews evidence which provides empirical support for different theoretical viewpoints. The book however, is not meant to be an introductory textbook. It is more of a "reflection" on seventy-five years of American sociological criminology. Gibbons writes that the book "is not a full-blown sociology of criminology, in which the societal forces behind criminological activities are spelled out in great detail" (p. xii). This book does not describe any new theoretical perspective, nor does it present any new empirical evidence on American criminality. The value of the book is Gibbons' concise review of a broad period of criminological theorizing and his extensive documentation of criminological writings. In short, Gibbons attempts to give the reader a review of the key ideas that have dominated American sociological criminology and to describe the social and academic context in which those notions developed. Some will feel that Gibbons fails to devote enough attention to some important ideas (e.g., there is only one brief reference to David Matza's *Delinquency and Drift* [1964]), while others will feel that he gives undue attention to some insignificant aspects of American criminology (e.g., a page-long discussion on Philip A. Parsons). Most sociological criminologists, however, should find little fault with *The Criminological Enterprise*. Gibbons has done a fine job of selecting, chronologically organizing, and describing the key themes in American criminology. Accordingly, teachers and students should find this to be a particularly insightful discussion of the historical development of sociological criminology and a valuable book for use in a graduate seminar on criminological theory.

The book begins with a general discussion on the "nature of criminology," pointing out that most criminology in the United States has been centered within academic sociology. He observes: "The plain fact is that, until recently, there have been few economists, geographers, or other social scientists who have devoted much attention to the study of criminality" (p. 3). Despite the fact that criminology has been largely approached from a sociological perspective, Gibbons feels that criminologists have often failed to incorporate elements of general sociological theory. "On the other hand," he observes, "theorists in the parent discipline have borrowed generously from the research findings of criminologists" (p. 6). Gibbons' introductory comments touch on other criticisms of American criminology in addition to its frequent isolation from mainstream sociology. He charges that criminologists have given little attention to the work of legal scholars, that contemporary criminology is largely ahistorical in character, that criminologists have been inattentive to economic forces in criminality, and that psychological factors in lawbreaking have not been dealt with adequately. These criticisms are important ones and Gibbons repeats them throughout the book.

After this general evaluation of the field Gibbons proceeds to an account of criminology's historical development. He reminds us that criminology was one of the first courses taught within American sociology departments and like sociology, criminology had many social reformist overtones. Indeed, early criminologists (1900 to 1930) are said to have been primarily concerned with "the 3 Ds": the study of the defective, dependent, and delinquent classes. The contributions of Maurice Parmelee, John L. Gillin, and Philip A. Parsons were influential during this period. Gibbons notes, however, that these early scholars bore little resemblance to later sociological criminology. In fact, Gibbons refers to their work as "relatively nonsociological and eclectic" (p. 35).

The major growth period for American criminology occurred between 1930 and 1955. Gibbons' detailed account of this period makes this chapter perhaps the best in the book.

He begins with a description of Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay's delinquency studies in Chicago, pointing out that they established a basic premise which guided criminologists throughout the period, namely, that crime should be perceived as a matter of normal people enmeshed in criminogenic life situations rather than as a matter of individual pathology. Shaw and McKay's writings on social disorganization, cultural transmission theory, and "delinquency areas" influenced a number of sociological criminologists, including the foremost criminologist of the century, Edwin H. Sutherland.

Sutherland's contributions to sociological criminology include the theory of differential association (formally stated in seven propositions in the 1939 edition of Sutherland's *Criminology* and revised into nine propositions in 1947), a description of the criminal profession of theft, the concept of differential social organization, and the introduction of the notion of white-collar crime. The twenty pages that Gibbons devotes to Sutherland is perhaps the most balanced and comprehensive overview on Sutherland that this reviewer has ever read. This is necessary reading for those who desire an introduction to the person Gibbons calls "the most important contributor to American criminology" (p. 65).

This chapter on the period from 1930 to 1955 concludes with an analysis of Thorsten Sellin's work on culture conflict and crime, and Robert Merton's popular theory of anomie and deviant behavior. Gibbons notes that Sellin's idea of rejecting legal rules in favor of conduct norms as the defining basis for criminological inquiry was ultimately rejected as an illusory proposal. Merton's argument, however, "possesses considerable plausibility and is congruent with many common-sense observations about deviance in modern societies" (p. 71). Gibbons believes that the period from 1930 to 1955 provided the skeletal structure of modern sociological criminology and the contributions of Shaw and McKay, Sutherland, and Merton were "major factors in the maturation of sociological criminology as a coherent perspective on crime and delinquency" (p. 73).

Gibbons characterizes the period from 1955 to 1970 as one of further theoretical refinement for American criminology.

Gibbons suggests that there were a number of new developments during this period: studies on hidden or self-reported delinquency, the creation of offender typologies, theorizing and research on delinquent subcultures, increased interest in social control and deterrence theory, and empirical investigations of criminal justice and correctional organizations. Gibbons' descriptions and critiques of Albert Cohen's *Delinquent Boys* (1955), Richard Colvard and Lloyd Ohlin's *Delinquency and Opportunity* (1960), and Walter Reckless' containment theory are the highpoints in an otherwise rather dry review of empirical findings on adult and juvenile criminality. Moreover, Gibbons' discussion on deterrence mentions none of the extensive literature on the relation between capital punishment and deterrence, and his review of the sociology of correctional organizations is so brief that he could have left it out entirely.

Gibbons concludes this section with an explanation of why mainstream criminology has adopted a liberal, reformist stance rather than a more radical posture. His answer is that both criminology and sociology "bear the stamp of the society that nurtured them" (p. 133). He writes: "No wonder, then, that American sociologists have often constructed theories and accounts on a foundation of ethnocentric assumptions that reflect a sanguine view of their own society" (p. 134).

One of the most important recent developments in modern criminology has been the rise of labeling theory. In "New Directions in Criminological Theory," Gibbons locates the origins of labeling theory in Edwin Lemert's *Social Pathology* (1951), noting that Howard Becker's *Outsiders* (1963) did much to advance the perspective. Gibbons' critique of the labeling perspective is succinct and unfavorable. He observes that "labeling theory is revealed to be an extremely loose set of themes rather than an explicit and coherent theory" (p. 146). Gibbons characterizes the labeling perspective as having an "ambiguous character" (p. 151), noting that "current versions of this orientation are entirely too gross or simplistic" (p. 155). This reviewer shares Gibbons' generally critical posture towards labeling theory, but Gibbons fails to make explicit the real contribution that labeling theory made to criminology in directing attention

to societal reaction as an important element in defining what is deviant.

The last perspective that Gibbons describes is what is variously known as conflict, Marxist, radical, or critical criminology. He reviews the contributions of Richard Quinney, Austin Turk, Anthony Platt, David Gordon, Steven Spitzer, and William Chambliss, among others, to this emerging variety of criminological theory, pointing out that this perspective represents a major challenge to mainstream criminology. Gibbons seems to approve of the radical criminologists' emphasis on class relations, political power, and law creation as important elements in criminological inquiry, but he finds that "most radical arguments contain crude, monolithic, and misleading claims about a ruling class and its domination of economic and social life in American society" (p. 193). Gibbons does not see Marxist criminological theory as a replacement to mainstream criminology, in part, because it is "not sufficiently robust to capture the allegiance of most criminologists" (p. 195).

Gibbons concludes *The Criminological Enterprise* by urging that criminological theory be more closely linked to history, economics, political science, and sociology. He suggests that criminologists pay closer attention to the social and political forces that create law, be more attentive to the interrelationships between crime and economic organization, and not avoid the psychological issue in crime causation. His comments about needed changes in criminological theory are instructive and should be considered seriously. American criminology is currently in a process of theoretical transformation and many of Gibbons' suggestions, especially the idea of giving more attention to law, should be incorporated into sociological criminology. *The Criminological Enterprise* is a valuable appraisal of criminology's past and a perceptive view of its future.

University of Texas at San Antonio

Roger C. Barnes