

Book Reviews

DÉLINQUANCE JUVÉNILE ET DÉVELOPPEMENT SOCIO-ÉCONOMIQUE, by Y. Chirol, Žarco Jašovic, Desanka Lazarević, Boleslaw Maroszek, Vincent Peyre, András Szabó, and the collaboration of Helmut Ornauer: Moulton. Paris, 1975, pp. 317. This book reports a study, sponsored by the "Centre Européen de Coordination de Recherche et de Documentation en Sciences Sociales" and carried out by five research centers in France, Hungary, Poland and Yugoslavia, into the relationship between juvenile delinquency and socio-economic development. The whole project, involving the study of seven European countries, is divided into three phases and this book reports on the first "statistical" survey.

The book begins with an introduction and a discussion of methodology. Each country was first divided into regions and for each of these regions an index of socio-economic development was created by amalgamating a variety of social and economic indicators, such as numbers employed in the tertiary sector and level of general education. The index for each region was then compared with the juvenile delinquency rate for that region, derived from official sources.

The second part of the book is a country-by-country account of the various regions. A profusion of tables illustrates the demographic and socio-economic status of the different countries and their various regions together with corresponding delinquency rates.

The third part consists of two essays. One merely summarises the findings presented in the preceding chapters and concludes, rather lamely, that regions with higher levels of socio-economic development within countries have higher rates of juvenile delinquency than those with lower levels. The other essay compares the figures from Poland, France, Hungary and Yugoslavia and finds a close connection between the level of socio-economic development of the last three countries and their juvenile delinquency rates.

To many people these findings will be trite: it has become almost a commonplace that the processes immanent within advanced industrial societies necessitate the break-up of the old social order. Juvenile delinquency is just another indicator of this general social malaise. Such thoughts echo those of that great French sociologist Emile Durkheim who, in his book "Suicide", applied a similar argument: he suggested that certain types of suicide would increase with the dissolution of the old social order of traditional communities. But there the similarity ends. If this work is compared with that of Durkheim, written eighty years ago, it can only be seen to be totally inadequate.

The first and perhaps most telling criticism is the free use of official statistics. Durkheim too has been criticised for assuming the validity of his figures of suicides: should he not have explored how coroners arrive at their definitions? For instance, the low rates for Catholics in certain areas might have been the product of family pressures on the coroner to record an accidental death rather than the more stigmatising suicide. Yet this criticism of official suicide statistics pales into insignificance when official delinquency figures are considered. When suicide is studied, the person concerned is dead – little room for disagreement there – and has only to be classified into one of three categories for which often good evidence exists. Delinquency rates, in contrast, raise many questions. i) What is a delinquent act? Getting drunk? Breaking a pane of glass? Stealing a bar of chocolate? Knocking an old lady down? ii) What proportion of “delinquents” (defined by the police?) are apprehended? iii) What proportion of “delinquents” are actually convicted?

Each of these questions must be answered before official delinquency statistics can be made meaningful. Nowhere in this book are these questions considered except to acknowledge that the regional and national figures are assumed to be comparable. Hence the authors have presumed that such questions have been, or can be, given the same answers in Paris, rural Hungary and urban Yugoslavia.

Of course such assumptions may be justified if their validity can be tested in other ways. Construct validity, in the psychometric jargon, is one way: that is, do the interrelationships discovered between the variables make sense within some theoretical framework? Durkheim, without the mathematical support available today, used a crude but effective form of multivariate analysis by examining the relationship between two variables while controlling for a third. Yet in this study we are presented only with a correlation and an implication that it might be causal.

The correlation between the level of socio-economic development and juvenile delinquency rates could have been controlled for, say, numbers of cars, (the French figures apparently included a high proportion of traffic violations), or for the size of police force in each region, to name but two important variables. A decrease in the association between the two variables (socio-economic development and juvenile delinquency) might then have presented the very credible alternative hypotheses that high levels of socio-economic development produce high car ownership which in turn increases the rate (per head of population) of traffic violations; or that high levels of socio-economic development mean that the society can afford a larger police force who in turn catch more delinquents.

It seems a pity that such resources of manpower and finance should have been expended to reach such a trite conclusion. At a time when cross-cultural studies are at a premium it is disappointing that international cooperation cannot produce something more inspired than this.

David Armstrong

AGGRESSION, by John Paul Scott. University of Chicago Press: Chicago, London, 2 edn, 1975, pp. xiv + 233. \$4.95. When first published in 1958, Scott's *Aggression* served, as it still does today, as a useful brief introduction. Aimed at the newcomer to the field, it is a readable, concise, and integrated presentation of behavioral research concerned with the aggressive behavior of both animals and men. Evidence from psychology, psychoanalytic theory, sociology, anthropology, physiology, genetics, ecology and behavioral biology bearing on the nature, circumstances of initiation, and control of aggressiveness is presented in a behaviorist framework. The book indicates the full spectrum of variables affecting the frequency and intensity of aggressive interaction, while emphasizing the importance of principles of conditioning and reinforcement for understanding the production and control of aggressive behavior.

The first eight chapters of the present edition are those of the 1958 volume, and should be familiar to all who study aggressive behavior. Two chapters have been added to update the earlier material. Their style and level of sophistication are concordant with those of the earlier work. In the first, entitled "Progress and Problems", the research of the past twenty years is incorporated in the framework of the earlier volume, with some change in emphasis, giving a more balanced perspective. Hereditary and ecological factors affecting the frequency of aggressive interactions and the evolution of aggression receive greater attention. There is, however, very little direct description of the ethological contribution to the understanding of agonistic behavior, and the debate on the internal motivation of aggressive behavior is treated as a dead issue, at least insofar as the behavior of mammals is concerned.

The final chapter, "Violence and the Disaggregated Society", is, perhaps, of greatest interest to the specialist in the field of aggressive behavior. Here Scott proposes a general theory of the causation of destructive aggressive behavior compatible with the multifactorial approach presented in 1958. In brief, Scott suggests that disaggregation (destruction of the organization) of systems at any level (ecological, social, physiological or genetic) increases the frequency of occurrence of destructive aggression. The evidence in support of this hypothesis is strongest at the higher levels of analysis, and it provides a unifying framework for discussing such phenomena as isolation-induced aggression, crowding-induced aggression, aggression toward strangers, and the effects of food distribution on frequency of agonistic interaction. As Scott points out, the principle of disaggregation has less application at the genetic and physiological levels. It is, for example, difficult to understand why injections of testosterone should increase aggression by female mice, while castration of male mice reduces aggression, if disaggregation of hormonal systems, is an underlying factor in the production of aggressive behavior.

The expanded edition of *Aggression* is a useful and readable introduction to the psychological approach to the investigation of aggressive behavior, especially for those with interests in the history and development of the area. If used with

a more ethologically oriented introduction, it could serve as a framework for an undergraduate course on aggressive interaction. The clarity of exposition, interest and wealth of examples, and clear accounts ranging from experiments with animals to the problems of control of human aggression and violence are sure to maintain the interest of the "beginning specialists" to whom Scott has addressed both editions.

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