



8th EDITION

Sense AND

Nonsense

ABOUT Crime, Drugs,
and Communities



SAMUEL WALKER



Sense and Nonsense about Crime, Drugs, and Communities

EIGHTH EDITION



Australia • Brazil • Mexico • Singapore • United Kingdom • United States



***Sense and Nonsense about Crime,
Drugs, and Communities,
Eighth Edition***
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Foreword

Shortly after its initial publication, Samuel Walker's *Sense and Nonsense about Crime* was recognized as an important new book, a substantive contribution to the literature on crime and justice. Over the years, he has reworked its themes and developed its arguments in five more editions (updating the title to reflect an expanded discussion of drugs and drug policy in the third edition), and the field's appreciation of this book has only increased. Today, it is a major text in the study of crime and justice; some call it a nascent classic work in its field. It is a respected argument about our knowledge base for crime and justice, and it is one of those rare books that are deeply respected by scholars and policymakers alike.

It is, therefore, with extraordinary pleasure that I welcome the eighth edition to the Wadsworth Contemporary Issues in Crime and Justice Series. The series is devoted to giving detailed and effective exposure to important or emerging issues and problems that ordinarily receive insufficient attention in traditional textbooks. The series also publishes books meant to provoke thought and change perspectives by challenging readers to become more sophisticated consumers of crime and justice knowledge. If you are looking for a book that will make you an informed student of crime and justice policy and practice, you could *not* do better than the one you are now holding.

Why is this book so important? There are two reasons. First, so much of what is commonly believed about crime—and so much of what shapes public policy on crime—is nonsense. Second, Walker's book was the first (and is still the most effective) book written to point that out. The book provides a masterful critique of the U.S. penchant for short-sighted, metaphorical strategies to prevent crime (boot camps are a good example) or feel-good rhetoric about crime priorities (end poverty, end crime) that have, over the years, not gotten us far in our pursuit of a safer society. Today, we are enjoying a welcome, sustained national drop in crime rates. But this drop still leaves us with higher rates of crime than we want, and (perhaps more

to the point) the source of the drop is more of a mystery to us than a lesson in crime prevention policy.

The contribution of this book—what makes this book special—is its willingness to show evenhandedly how favorite strategies of diverse political agendas have as their foundation some degree of “nonsense.” If there is a lesson that this book brings to us repeatedly, it is that cherished images of crime and justice are flawed, inaccurate, and doomed to fail for particular reasons of the more or less well-known facts that we so often want to ignore to sustain our favorite ideologies. This book challenges us where we need to be challenged: in our willingness to ignore reality to nurture our frequently inadvisable pet ideas about crime and crime fighting.

You want your police to be tough, to chase dangerous criminals, to make life-saving arrests? Well, Professor Walker points out that you have to contend with the fact that police spend little of their time acting in this way, and even when they do, not much in the way of crime control seems to result. You want your judges to lock'em up and throw away the key? Walker shows all the ways that this belief is expensive and ineffective, even counterproductive. You think we need to save money through closer surveillance of the people convicted of crime? Make our lives safer by treating juveniles as though they were adults? End drug abuse through an all-out war on drugs? Here again, the book sheds cool light on hot emotions, showing how such strategies can backfire.

This book is not, however, just about nonsense in crime and justice. Perhaps nonsense gets the majority of the attention because so much of what we do is based on faulty thinking. But Walker is willing to tell us what makes “sense” as well. Big proposals lack much support, and politically popular proposals may be downright silly. But there are smaller, less ambitious ways in which we can contribute to a safer society, and we can do so without suspending our constitutional rights or giving up our public freedoms. One way we have learned to be smarter about crime is through the philosophy of evidence-based practice. This approach asks hard questions about criminal policy, seeking to base crime strategies on established studies that show those policies will work. Professor Walker applies the evidence-based criterion to his review of crime and justice policy: what emerges is a powerfully dispassionate analysis that gives us a carefully crafted challenge to start “making sense” in the way in which we talk about crime and develop policies to cope with it.

If you are getting ready to read this book, chances are you are contemplating a career in the field of criminal justice. At the very least, you have an informed citizen's interest in the problems of crime and justice. In either case, you have come to the right place to become more knowledgeable in your pursuits. After you read this book, you will join a large number of its alumni, dedicated to crime policies that make sense. I commend you.

Todd R. Clear
Series Editor

Preface

The eighth edition marks the thirtieth anniversary of *Sense and Nonsense about Crime*. Much has changed over those thirty years in U.S. society and in criminal justice. It has been an exciting challenge to keep pace with those changes and make sure that this edition is relevant to current developments.

When the first edition appeared, crack was just beginning to appear on the streets of the United States. One result was an epidemic of gun violence among young men. Some criminologists predicted that youth homicides would continue to soar. They didn't. Instead, serious crime, including homicide, began a completely surprising decline that is unprecedented in the United States. In New York City and other cities, violent crime has dropped to levels not seen since the early 1960s. Keeping track of these changes, and attempting to explain them, has been an important but necessary task. When the first edition of this book appeared, policymakers and criminologists were in the midst of a fierce debate over "career criminals." The questions of the day were how to identify that small group of offenders and what would be the impact of different policies that targeted them. You don't hear much about career criminals today, however. Policies that were hot new ideas twenty-five years ago did not work out, criminological research undermined most of the underlying assumptions, and the policy debate has moved on.

The eighth edition of *Sense and Nonsense* continues the expanded title *Crime, Drugs, and Communities*, which is the second change in the subtitle since the first edition. These changes reflect my efforts to keep the book relevant to the changing world of crime and criminal justice. The focus on communities began with the sixth edition and is now incorporated into the expanded title, *Crime, Drugs, and Communities*. As various chapters explain, some of the most important innovations in crime policy have a community focus: problem-oriented policing, community policing, community prosecution, focused deterrence programs,

and now a new emphasis on community reinvestment as a strategy for better dealing with offenders released from prison.

The new edition continues the “nonsense” theme of the first edition. We continue to have crime policies that are not supported by empirical evidence and which, in many cases, only make matters worse. Chapter 7, for example, covers sex offender registration and notification laws, which often include restrictions on where sex offenders can live. As you will learn, these requirements cover many offenders who are not going to be dangerous predators. As a result, law enforcement and corrections officers carry huge caseloads and struggle to focus on the few offenders who really do pose a possible risk to the community. Other new policies that seem to have little empirical support continue to appear. This is the latest in “predictive policing.” Our discussion is highly critical of it. Time will tell whether it proves to have some value or whether it is simply one more item in the long list of nonsense policies.

At the same time, this edition puts a greater emphasis on the “sense” theme. There is growing evidence that some programs actually do work, because they are solidly rooted in the best criminological research. People often ask if academic research ever makes a practical contribution to crime policy. The answer is that yes, some of it does. As you will learn, there is an emerging consensus that some—but not all—problem-oriented policing programs, drug courts, and community prosecution programs can be effective. Most interesting, as you will learn in Chapter 6, is that focused deterrence programs have been found to be effective because they differ significantly from traditional deterrence-oriented programs.

The emergence of crime policies that have been found to be effective through rigorous evaluation is an extremely exciting development. If nothing else, it demonstrates the maturity of the field of criminology, and the new standards for effectiveness that have developed. Future editions of this book will assess whether this promise is fulfilled in practice.

New elements in the Eighth edition include the following:

- Chapter 1 includes up-to-date information about gun violence, including mass shootings and the gun violence crisis in Chicago; a new Sidebar on “fads” in crime policy, citing issues that were current in older editions of the book but have since faded away; an expanded discussion of evidence-based crime policy; a provocative new sidebar on the argument that lead in the environment explains long-term crime trends.
- Chapter 2 contains discussions of both the Sandy Hook School shooting and the George Zimmerman trial to illustrate the celebrated case syndrome; the most recent data on school safety to illustrate the gap between public perceptions of violent crime and the empirical reality.
- Chapter 3 has been substantially revised to provide a better discussion of long-term imprisonment trends, with a discussion of “mass incarceration,” as well as the new developments that indicate a change in the public mood.
- Chapter 4 replaces the outdated emphasis on career criminals with a more relevant focus on the prediction problem in criminal justice.

- Chapter 5 has been reorganized to put all of the various “smart policing” efforts in a broader perspective; additional information of focused deterrence programs; new material on the Boston Marathon bombing in the discussion of closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems as a deterrent to crime; brand-new discussions of both “predictive policing” and the potential role of drones as a form of police patrol; a critical discussion of the recent “reinvestment” proposal to shift public funding from imprisonment to innovative police programs.
- Chapter 6 has an important discussion the recent National Academy of Sciences report on deterrence and the death penalty and its implications for the entire theory of deterrence. This chapter also has an important new section of special DUI courts that are modeled after drug courts, which have proven to be effective.
- Chapter 7 has been completely revised to provide a more coherent discussion of trends in sentencing over the past few decades and the evidence of a new turn in state sentencing laws against the overuse of incarceration.
- Chapter 8 has a new critical discussion of the two 2012 Supreme Court decisions on plea bargaining, which some people believe will have a radical effect on the practice, whereas others disagree.
- Chapter 9 has been completely rewritten and reorganized, with a new emphasis on “special populations” of crime victims: women, the elderly, and juvenile runaways and thrown-aways.
- Chapter 10 has been updated with discussions of the important recent mass shooting cases and the George Zimmerman trial. There is a new sidebar on “Stand-Your-Ground” laws and the evidence on their impact. There is also a new discussion of guns and the mentally ill.
- Chapter 11 has a greatly expanded examination of drug courts and a discussion of why they are often more effective than other treatment programs.
- Chapter 12 has been completely reorganized and rewritten to focus on procedural justice and the prospects for securing greater compliance with the law.
- Chapter 13 includes new material on the impact of the Mexican drug cartels on crime and violence in the United States.
- Chapter 14 continues and expands the discussion begun in the seventh edition that draws on the promising new developments discussed in the book that have demonstrated effectiveness, including focused deterrence, drug courts, and procedural justice.

Ancillaries

eBank Instructor’s Resource Manual with Test Bank. The manual includes learning objectives, key terms, a detailed chapter outline, discussion topics, and a test bank. Each chapter’s test bank contains questions in multiple-choice, true–false, fill-in-the-blank, and essay formats, with a full answer key. The test bank is

coded to the learning objectives that appear in the main text, and includes the page numbers in the main text where the answers can be found. Finally, each question in the test bank has been carefully reviewed by experienced criminal justice instructors for quality, accuracy, and content coverage. The manual is available for download on the password-protected web site and can also be obtained by e-mailing your local Cengage Learning representative.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this book to Mary Ann Lamanna, who has been a wonderful companion over thirty years. But despite the demands of her own publishing deadlines over the years, she knows that there is always time for a movie.

About the Author

Samuel Walker is Professor Emeitus of Criminal Justice at the University of Nebraska—Omaha, where he taught for thirty-one years. He is the author of fourteen books on policing, criminal justice history and policy, and civil liberties. His most recent books include *Presidents and Civil Liberties from Wilson to Obama* (2012) and *The New World of Police Accountability*, 2nd. ed. (Sage, 2014). He continues to write and consult on issues of police accountability, focusing primarily on citizen oversight of the police and police early intervention systems.

Samuel Walker

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