



Steven E. Barkan

# CRIMINOLOGY

A SOCIOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING 5E

# Criminology

A Sociological Understanding

Fifth Edition

Steven E. Barkan

*University of Maine*

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# Dedication

To Barb,  
Dave,  
and Joe,  
and in memory of my parents



# New to This Edition

**T**his fifth edition has been thoroughly revised. It includes the latest crime and criminal justice statistics available as the book went to press, and it discusses the latest research on crime and criminal justice issues that had appeared by that time, with more than 160 recent references added and some older ones deleted. To have a more streamlined book even more readable than before, material that was deemed somewhat tangential has also been removed from each chapter. This edition continues the popular features of the previous one, including the chapter-opening *Crime in the News* vignettes ripped from the headlines (almost all from 2010) that engage students' attention and demonstrate the text's relevance for real-life events and issues; the *Crime and Controversy* and *International Focus* boxes, several of them new for this edition, that respectively highlight crime and justice issues within the United States and abroad; and the *What Would You Do?* feature at the end of each chapter that presents hypothetical scenarios on real-world situations faced by criminal justice professionals and average citizens alike.

Changes or additions to specific chapters include the following:

**Chapter 1. Criminology and the Sociological Perspective.** Recent Texas case involving a claimed use of self-defense; discussion of random assignment experiment by California Youth Authority.

**Chapter 2. Public Opinion, the News Media, and the Crime Problem.** New material on views on police use of force and on attitudes of Alaska Natives and American Indians about police; new International Focus box; updating where appropriate.

**Chapter 3. The Measurement and Patterning of Criminal Behavior.** New material on aspects of the African-American experience that reduce African-American criminality; updating where appropriate.

**Chapter 4. Victims and Victimization.** New material on indirect victimization and neighbors; new material on crime victims' views of crime and justice; updating where appropriate.

**Chapter 5. Classical and Neoclassical Perspectives.** New chapter, including new *Crime and Controversy* and *International Focus* boxes.

**Chapter 6. Biological and Sociological Explanations.** New material on molecular genetics research on aggression; expanded discussion of the biosocial perspective; updating where appropriate.

**Chapter 7. Sociological Theories: Emphasis on Social Structure.** Discussion of new research supporting differential opportunity theory; updating where appropriate.

**Chapter 8. Sociological Theories: Emphasis on Social Process.** New *Crime and Controversy* box; updating where appropriate.

**Chapter 9. Sociological Theories: Critical Perspectives.** Updating where appropriate.

**Chapter 10. Violent Crime: Homicide, Assault, and Robbery.** New section on violence against children; updating where appropriate.

**Chapter 11. Violence Against Women.** Child abuse material from this chapter moved to Chapter 10 to allow violence against women to be highlighted; new *International Focus* box; updating where appropriate.

**Chapter 12. Property Crime and Fraud.** New material on residential burglary victimization; new material on consumer sentiment and property crime; new material on situational prevention and expanded discussion of target hardening; revised discussion of identity theft; updating where appropriate.

**Chapter 13. White-Collar and Organized Crime.** New material on suspected fraud in the financial crisis of 2008 and 2009; new material on financial fraud by Bernard Madoff; expanded Crime and Controversy box; new material on suspected deception by Toyota motor company regarding reports of sudden acceleration; new material on suspected safety violations in BP oil spill; other updating where appropriate.

**Chapter 14. Political Crime.** Updating where appropriate.

**Chapter 15. Consensual Crime.** New material on drinking by high school students; expanded Crime and Controversy box; updating where appropriate.

**Chapter 16. Policing: Dilemmas of Crime Control in a Democratic Society.** Expanded Crime and Controversy box; revised discussion of directed police patrol and of zero-tolerance policing; new material on community policing (problem-oriented policing); updating where appropriate.

**Chapter 17. Prosecution and Punishment.** Revised discussion of the impact of race and ethnicity; new material on gross incapacitation; updating where appropriate.

**Chapter 18. Conclusion: How Can We Reduce Crime?** Updating where appropriate.

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# Preface

Welcome to this sociological introduction to the field of criminology! This book emphasizes the need to understand the social causes of criminal behavior in order to be able to significantly reduce crime. This approach is similar to the approach followed in the field of public health. In the case of a disease such as cancer, we naturally try to determine what causes it so that we can prevent people from contracting it. Although it is obviously important to treat people who already have cancer, there will always be more cancer patients unless we discover its causes and then do something about these causes. The analogy to crime is clear: Unless we discover the causes of crime and do something about them, there will always be more criminals.

Unfortunately, this is not the approach the United States has taken during the past few decades. Instead, it has relied on a “get tough” approach to the crime problem that relies on more aggressive policing, longer and more certain prison terms, and the building of more and more prisons. The nation’s prison and jail population has soared and has reached about 2.3 million. Many criminologists warn that the surge in prisoners is setting the stage for a crime increase down the line, given that almost all of these prisoners will one day be returned to their communities, many of them penniless, without jobs, and embittered by their incarceration.

In offering a sociological understanding of crime, this book suggests that the “get tough” approach is short-sighted because it ignores the roots of crime in the social structure and social inequality of society. To reduce crime, we must address these structural conditions and appreciate the role that factors such as race and ethnicity, gender, and social class play in criminal behavior. Students in criminology courses in sociology departments will especially benefit from the sociological understanding that this book offers. But this understanding is also important for students in courses in criminal justice or criminology departments. If crime cannot be fully understood without appreciating its structural context, then students in all these departments who do not develop this appreciation have only an incomplete understanding of the reasons for crime and of the most effective strategies to reduce it.

Although street crime has declined since the early 1990s, it remains a national problem, as the residents of high-crime communities know all too well. Meanwhile, white-collar crime continues to cost tens of billions of dollars and thousands of lives annually, even as it receives far less attention than mass murder, terrorism, and everyday violent and property crime.

In presenting a sociological perspective on crime and criminal justice, this book highlights issues of race and ethnicity, gender, and social class in every chapter and emphasizes the criminogenic effects of the social and physical features of urban neighborhoods. This fifth edition features a new chapter on classical and neoclassical perspectives and continues to include certain chapters that remain uncommon in other criminology texts, including Chapter 2: Public Opinion, the News Media, and the Crime Problem; Chapter 14: Political Crime; and Chapter 18: Conclusion: How Can We Reduce Crime? In addition, the book’s criminal justice chapters, Chapter 16 (Policing: Dilemmas of Crime Control in a Democratic Society) and Chapter 17 (Prosecution and Punishment), continue to address two central themes



in the sociological understanding of crime and criminal justice: (1) the degree to which race and ethnicity, gender, and social class affect the operation of the criminal justice system; and (2) the extent to which reliance on the criminal justice system can reduce the amount of crime. These two themes, in turn, reflect two more general sociological issues: the degree to which inequality affects the dynamics of social institutions and the extent to which formal sanctions affect human behavior.

## Supplements

### INSTRUCTOR SUPPLEMENTS

The instructor supplements available for the fifth edition include:

- Instructor's Manual with Test Bank
- PowerPoint presentations
- MyTest computerized test bank
- Test item file for WebCT
- Test item file for Blackboard/Course Compass

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# Acknowledgments

**T**he first edition of this book stated my personal and intellectual debt to Norman Miller and Forrest Dill, and I continue to acknowledge how much I owe them. Norman Miller was my first undergraduate sociology professor and quickly helped me fall in love with the discipline. He forced me to ask questions about society that I probably still haven't answered. I and the many other students he influenced can offer only an inadequate "thank you" for caring so much about us and, to paraphrase a verse from a great book, for training us in the way we should go. Forrest Dill was my mentor in graduate school and introduced me to criminology and the sociology of law and to the craft of scholarship. His untimely death almost three decades ago continues to leave a deep void.

My professional home since graduate school has been the Sociology Department at the University of Maine. I continue to owe my colleagues there an intellectual debt for sharing and reaffirming my sense of the importance of social structure and social inequality to an understanding of crime and other contemporary issues. They continue to provide a warm, supportive working environment that often seems all too rare in academia.

I also wish to thank the editorial, production, and marketing staff at Prentice Hall for their help on all aspects of the book's revision. In particular, the assistance of development editor Elisa Rogers on this edition was indispensable, as was Eric Krassow's and Tim Peyton's faith in the vision underlying the book. In addition, thanks go to Jessica Sykes for her help and patience in the final stages of the book's production.

I also wish to thank the reviewers who read the fifth edition and provided very helpful comments and criticism. Any errors that remain, of course, are mine alone. These reviewers are: Brian Colwell, University of Missouri; Corey Colyer, West Virginia University; Sheryl J. Grana, University of Minnesota-Duluth; Allison Ann Payne, Villanova University; and Lisa Anne Zilney, Montclair State University.

Finally, as in my first four editions, I acknowledge with heartfelt gratitude the love and support that my wife, Barbara Tennent, and my sons, Dave and Joe, bring to my life. They put up with my need to write, my quirks, and my reactions to the success and failure of our favorite sports teams more than any husband and father has a right to expect.

The fifth edition of this book is again dedicated to my late parents, Morry and Sylvia Barkan, who instilled in me respect for learning and sympathy for those less fortunate than I. As I continue to think about them after so many years, I can only hope that somewhere they are smiling with pride over this latest evidence of their legacy.



# About the Author

**S**teven E. Barkan is professor of sociology at the University of Maine, where he has taught since 1979. His teaching and research interests include criminology, sociology of law, and social movements. He was the 2008–2009 president of the Society for the Study of Social Problems and had previously served as a member of the SSSP Board of Directors, as chair of its Law and Society Division and Editorial and Publications Committee, and as an advisory editor of its journal, *Social Problems*. He is currently a member of the council of the Sociology of Law Section of the American Sociological Association and previously served on its student paper award committee as well as that of the ASA Crime, Law, and Deviance Section.

Professor Barkan has written many journal articles dealing with topics such as racial prejudice and death-penalty attitudes, views on police brutality, political trials, and feminist activism. These articles have appeared in the *American Sociological Review*, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *Journal of Crime and Justice*, *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, *Justice Quarterly*, *Social Forces*, *Social Problems*, *Sociological Forum*, *Sociological Inquiry*, and other journals. He has also authored another text, *Law and Society: An Introduction*, with Prentice Hall.

Professor Barkan welcomes comments from students and faculty about this book. They may e-mail him at [BARKAN@MAINE.EDU](mailto:BARKAN@MAINE.EDU) or send regular mail to Department of Sociology, 5728 Fernald Hall, University of Maine, Orono, Maine 04469–5728.



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