JOSEPH F. SHELEY

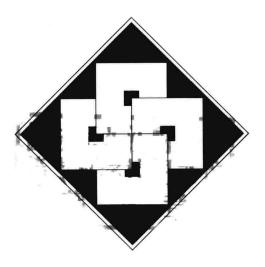
CRIMINOLOGY

CRIMINOLOGY

A Contemporary Handbook

SECOND EDITION

JOSEPH F. SHELEY





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PREFACE

As with the first edition of Criminology: A Contemporary Handbook, this revision serves as a vehicle by which to transmit many criminologists' thoughts about their specialties in a relatively consistent style and format. The chapters represent their authors' ideas about the current state of the research and theory in their respective areas of expertise. The reader receives more than a summary from each. There are ideas in these chapters that no one author of a text could have provided. The present revision contains three new chapters as well as updated versions of most of the chapters in the original edition. It also contains an expanded introductory discussion of the nature and basic concepts of criminology.

For me, the editor, production of the text was a powerful and gratifying learning experience—much like going back to school. I became a better criminologist through the dialogue I had with the authors over their chapters. I asked them to write within the general framework I sought, but beyond that, the chapters were theirs. Editor and author did not always see eye to eye. In some instances, critical exchanges provided clearer thinking; in other instances, space constraints limited authors. But within space limits, each author was the arbiter of substance. The level of cooperation from, and the extent of consultation with, the authors exceeded every expectation. Each recognized the need for restraint and direction. Criminology: A Contemporary Handbook thus became a structured team effort that allowed team members to display their considerable individual talents.

I am unsure which was more difficult for the writers of this book's chapters—bowing to my stylistic demands or working within the framework I requested. Stylistically, I sought a consistency that assured instructors that their students would not be jerked to and fro by uneven prose as they worked their way through the book. This was no small task, but I feel we succeeded overall. There is a uniformity in presentation here that generally is absent in the standard collection of articles that only secondarily might suit the classroom.

In terms of a framework around which to structure the chapters, I asked the authors to step outside what they perceived as the academic concerns of their discipline and to put themselves in the students' place. Most students enter the criminology course with very serious concerns about crime and their welfare in this society. They believe they have a stake in discussions of crime by virtue of their images, fears, experiences, perceived risks, outrage, and

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advocated policies regarding it. Given this, Criminology: A Contemporary Handbook employs as its theme the notion that crime must be understood as a "social problem." Social conditions become social problems when they are defined as such by significant numbers of people. The perception may not be accurate, but the concern it generates is real. The social construction of perceptions and fears—the sources of ideas about crime and its causes, the likelihood of victimization—is itself a complex problem for study. Equally complex is how people respond to perceptions and fears. Whether at the personal or governmental level, anticrime policies carry potentially costly consequences. The decision to place bars on one's window makes entrance more difficult, but exit becomes harder as well. Eliminating the exclusionary rule might make it easier to catch crooks (although research suggests it would not), but it also opens the door to greater levels of state intrusion in our lives. In this sense, the accuracy of the perceptions that inform such decisions obviously becomes important. The authors of the book's chapters were asked to address this problem—to link their themes to the larger issue of challenging readers' ideas about crime and to convey to them the complexity and, more often than not, the futility of most crime control efforts. This framework links the twenty-three chapters that constitute Criminology: A Contemporary Handbook.

Part One includes two chapters meant to encourage readers to think about crime in terms other than "good guy-bad guy." Chapter One reviews the content and sources of public notions of contemporary crime and punishment. Chapter Two examines the role of major interest groups in determining who and what come to be labeled criminal in this society and in shaping the content of our perceptions of crime as a social problem.

Part Two explores various dimensions of criminal activity, including a critical look in Chapter Three at the statistics we use to gain a sense of crime in America. Chapters Four and Five offer detailed analyses of four correlates of criminal activity: gender, age, race, and class. Chapter Six profiles victims of crime.

Part Three explores five types of crime, some of which the public knows well, others of which the public is relatively ignorant. Chapters Seven and Eight examine violent crime and property crime, respectively, and challenge readers' stereotypes of these most feared offenses. Chapter Nine covers vice crime—about which readers will be surprised how little they know. Chapter Ten, on organized crime, and Chapter Eleven, on white collar crime, both are designed to turn readers' attention away from street crime and toward other costly criminal endeavors more intimately intertwined with conventional business pursuits.

Part Four addresses a more traditional criminological concern: explaining criminal behavior. Chapter Twelve provides a critique of contemporary notions of biological links to offense behavior. Chapters Thirteen and Fourteen offer fresh looks at old causal themes—strain and subcultural theories and control and deterrence theories. Chapter Fifteen explores two relatively contemporary challenges to mainstream causal theorizing—the labeling and critical perspectives.

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The final two parts of the book deal with crime control. Part Five studies the criminal justice system. The institution of policing is described in terms of its bare essentials in Chapter Sixteen, and the prosecution and sentencing elements of the court system are addressed in Chapter Seventeen. Correction within and without prison walls is investigated in Chapters Eighteen and Nineteen. And in Part Six, Chapters Twenty through Twenty-Four examine five contemporary, and highly controversial, crime control issues: drugs and crime, gun control, career offenders, civil liberties, and capital punishment.

The theme and format of *Criminology: A Contemporary Handbook* notwithstanding, the book is both comprehensive and flexible. No two instructors design their courses in precisely the same manner. Hence, I have tried to give users of this text many options. If instructors so choose, they can work through the several self-contained sections of the book in order. Or, given the number and diversity of chapters, instructors easily can adapt them to nearly any course outline.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The people who have contributed chapters to this book obviously merit my sincere gratitude—not just for the written page but for teaching me so much. As well, Wadsworth Editor Serina Beauparlant's level of insight into the difficulties of editing a book like this remains a source of amazement. Angela Mann and Robert Fiske provided expert copyediting of a book with so many authors that one wonders how they did it. Special thanks to Stephen Feiler for bibliographic assistance and to Rhoda Carr and Victoria Brewer for indexing help. Finally, very helpful reviews of the book at various stages came from the following individuals: Robert G. Culbertson, Northwest Missouri State University; Martin Dosick, Springfield College; Travis Hirschi, University of Arizona; Eleanor M. Miller, University of Wisconsin; Daniel M. Schores, Austin College; and Harwin L. Voss, University of Kentucky.

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