

T H I R D E D I T I O N

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CRIMINOLOGY

JOSEPH F. SHELEY



Criminology

A Contemporary Handbook

THIRD EDITION

JOSEPH F. SHELEY

California State University, Sacramento



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Preface

As with the first two editions of *Criminology: A Contemporary Handbook*, this revision serves as a means to transmit many criminologists' thoughts about their specialties in a relatively consistent style and format. The chapters represent the 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 five new chapters as well as updated versions of the remaining chapters in the second edition.

I asked the authors to write within a general framework and to recognize space limitations. Beyond that, the chapters were theirs; 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.

Working with the authors has again taught me much about the present state of my discipline, criminology. It is important that professionals occasionally go back to school, and the authors have taken me there. In terms of a framework around which to structure the chapters, I asked the authors to step outside perceived academic concerns of their disciplines and to put themselves in the students' place. Most students enter criminology courses with very serious concerns about crime and its effect on their welfare in society. They believe they have a stake in discussions of crime by virtue of

their images, fears, experiences, perceived risks, outrage, and 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. More prisons house more offenders but also divert funds from other important social causes. In this sense, the accuracy of the perceptions that inform such decisions obviously becomes important. The authors 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 many 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 explores potential 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.

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 Fifteen, and the prosecution and sentencing elements of the court system are addressed in Chapter Sixteen. Correction within and without prison walls is investigated in Chapters Seventeen and Eighteen. And in Part Six, Chapters Nineteen through Twenty-three examine five

contemporary, and highly controversial, crime control issues: drugs and crime, gangs and crime, gun control, incapacitating career offenders, 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. Discussion questions appearing at the end of each chapter are designed to take readers back through the important points of the chapter.

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Those who have contributed chapters to this book obviously deserve my thanks. As well, Wadsworth Editor Sabra Horne merits praise for keeping this project on track. Production Editor Matt Stevens and Copyeditor Carol Lombardi somehow have managed to assure that a book with so many authors nonetheless stays focused and has its parts well integrated. Special thanks to the staff of the College of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies at California State University, Sacramento, for making sure that the exchange of packages between me and the Wadsworth staff always went smoothly. Finally, very helpful reviews of the book at various stages came from the following individuals: Alexander Alvarez, Northern Arizona University; Allan Barnes, University of Alaska at Anchorage; Byron Johnson, Lamar University; P. K. Manning, Michigan State University; Harry Marsh, Indiana State University; and Roberto Hugh Potter, Morehead State University.



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Outline

- ◆ The Study of Crime
- ◆ Sociological Interests
- ◆ Issues for Study
- ◆ Basic Concepts
- ◆ Substantive Law
 - Age*
 - Self-Defense*
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