

VIOLENT CRIME

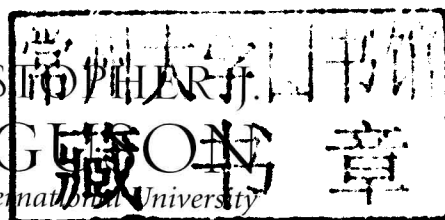
CLINICAL
AND
SOCIAL
IMPLICATIONS

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FERGUSON
EDITOR

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Preface

Violent criminal behavior, despite being on a precipitous decline in the United States, Canada, the UK, and most other Western countries for a decade and a half, remains a cultural and academic area of fascination. In the media, crime shows such as *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* and *Law and Order* remain among the top-rated shows, giving birth to a dizzying array of spinoffs and copycats. At universities, courses and majors in criminology, criminal justice, and forensic psychology are among the most popular. Indeed, if every student in these majors obtained a job in the field, there arguably would be more criminologists than criminals. Many students come to my office and inquire about careers in law enforcement, predictably voicing an interest in criminal profiling or “CSI” jobs. Clearly, there is much desire for information on violent crime. Yet, in a field that is arguably rampant with politics and ideology, there is a risk that the information widely available may be what is expedient or, indeed, politically correct rather than empirically supported. That was the genesis for this book: I envisioned it as a book that would break through the old tropes, adages, and false paths of society’s understanding of violent crime and return the discussion to the science of violence and the current direction of research.

Science is inherently self-correcting. However, sometimes it takes its time to do so. I think that societal understanding, and even academic understanding, of violent criminal behavior may linger in the past at times. I submit that social science still labors, despite the “nature/nurture compromise,” under decades of behavioral and social learning dogma. This is not to say that these paradigms don’t enjoy some window on the “truth” of human behavior, but at least some proponents of this view have set up unnecessary roadblocks to our understanding of the biological and genetic roots of violent behavior. Similarly, old theories that should have been laid to rest may continue to exert considerable influence, despite the limits of their empirical support. First, I set out to develop this book to be a core, introductory text on the current science of violent crime. Second, I view this text as a catalyst for discussion of what we think we know, how we

study violence, and where the research may take us in the future. This book is not wedded to a single theoretical viewpoint or even an overarching paradigm, such as social constructionist or biological essentialist perspectives. Theory is important, and the major views are presented in the first part of this book, yet the single most important question in the development of this book was “What does the research say?”

This text may differ in some notable ways from other texts in this area. First, I have observed that most texts and theorists focus on sociological or social constructionist perspectives of violent crime. Although these approaches are important to examine, the comparative lack of coverage of biological and genetic influences is a major oversight. Thus, this text includes a more thorough examination of biological theories of aggression than is common in most similar works. Second, violent criminals are not treated as a homogenous group. Specific chapters are dedicated to major categories of criminals, from sex offenders to domestic violence perpetrators to serial murderers. Attention is focused on similarities and differences between male and female perpetrators, particularly in areas related to domestic violence and homicide. Third, the text examines the clinical implications of violent crime with respect to treatment of offenders and the experience of victims.

This book is designed to be an introductory text to the research on violent crime. This makes this text suitable for academic classes on criminal violence, criminal justice, forensic psychology, criminal offending and profiling, violence and victimology, and sociology and social work classes focused on violence. Broader classes on criminology or criminological theory may also benefit from this book, perhaps as a secondary text. This book has several features that I believe distinguish it:

- *An interdisciplinary focus:* Chapter authors consider multiple theoretical frameworks, and they are experts in criminal justice, criminology, sociology, psychology, psychiatry, and medicine.
- *An international focus:* Chapter authors are from the United States, Canada, England, Greece, and Spain, providing a wider perspective on criminal violence.
- *Discussion of biological theories:* One of my concerns in writing this book is that biological theories of violence continue to be given short shrift in the criminological literature. To my reading, this is unfortunate, given that current data to support biological causes of violence are strong. The inclusion of this data, at least as a springboard for discussion, is essential for any complete understanding of criminal violence.
- *Relevant case studies:* Empirical and theoretical data in each chapter are highlighted by relevant case studies from the historical record or the authors' case files. It is my opinion that the inclusion of these case

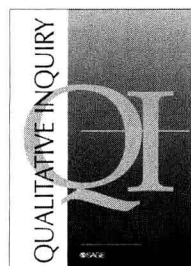
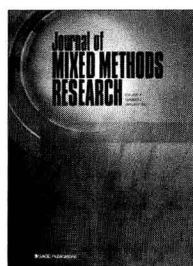
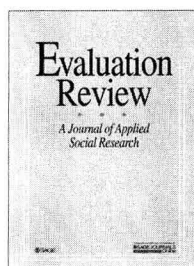
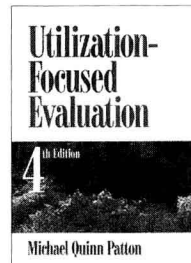
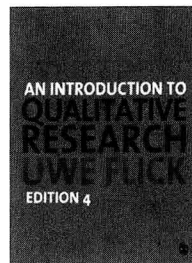
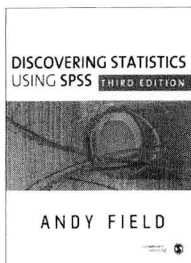
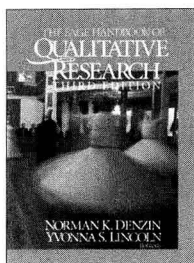
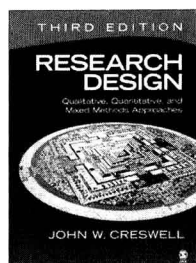
studies enhances the reader's experience, both by giving real-world examples of the material discussed in the chapters and by appealing to the reader's fascination with criminal violence. In other words, these case studies help draw readers in so they become interested in reading the empirical material.

- *Internet resources:* Each chapter includes a list of Internet resources that readers may use to learn more about the topics. They include links to law enforcement agencies, advocacy groups, and even some of the original empirical papers that are freely available on the Internet.

Not surprisingly, there are a number of people whom I would like to acknowledge for their contributions to this book. First, the chapter authors who have contributed their knowledge and expertise, not to mention their time and effort, to this project. Without them, this book simply could not have been possible. This book also benefited from several stages of reviews that provided excellent suggestions and feedback. I would like to thank the reviewers for their thoughtful comments and for their time and hard work: Chris Anderson, Concorde College; Geri Brandt, Maryville University; Sara Broaders, Northwestern University; Delores Craig-Moreland, Wichita State University; Stan Crowder, Kennesaw State University; Mitch Eisen, California State University, Los Angeles; Kelly Goodness, University of Texas at Dallas; Christopher Hale, Southern Connecticut State University; Chandrika Kelso, National University; Kay King, Johnson County Community College; Travis Langley, Henderson State University; Hua-Lun Huang, University of Louisiana, Lafayette; David Myers, Indiana University of Pennsylvania; Douglas Peters, University of North Dakota; Allan Roscoe, University of Massachusetts, Lowell; Ira Sommers, California State University, Los Angeles; Amy Thistlethwaite, Northern Kentucky University; Louis Schlesinger, John Jay College of Criminal Justice; Stephen Schnebly, Arizona State University; Mike Stevenson, University of Toledo; Lori Van Wallendael, University of North Carolina at Charlotte; Mark Winton, University of Central Florida at Daytona Beach.

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