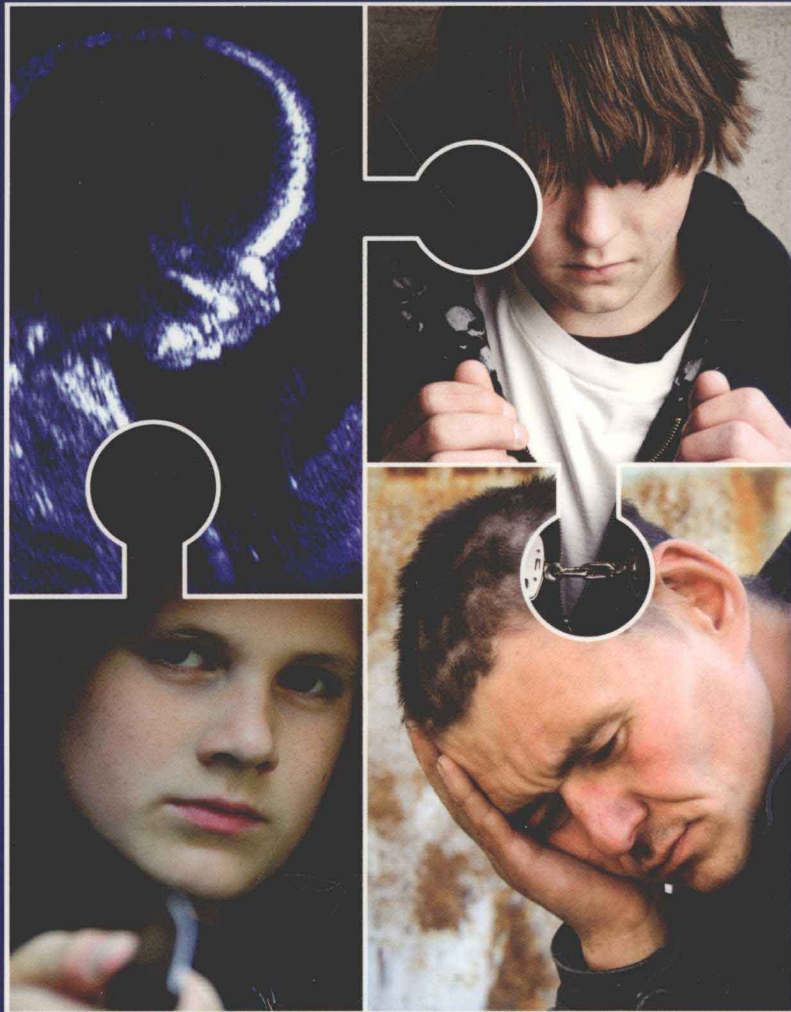


Criminological Theory

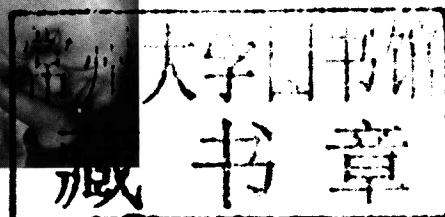
A Life-Course Approach



EDITED BY
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Criminological Theory

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Preface

Theory is one of the most intellectually exciting areas of study in criminology and criminal justice curricula. All learners have an intuitive notion about the etiology of antisocial behavior, but often they believe their pet idea is just that—a personal, perhaps silly, idea that lacks scholarly sophistication. However, upon reading theories of crime, learners often quickly discover that their own ideas are not only substantive but also consistent with explicit schools of thought in criminology. As such, this book is intended for criminology undergraduate and graduate students with an interest in theories of antisocial behavior.

Theory is also viewed as challenging to students, and we believe this stems from four limitations of extant theory and in turn limitations of criminology theory texts. First and foremost, learners are frequently overwhelmed by the sheer volume of theories and the cast of theorists that are associated with the ideas therein. In this sense, criminology theory texts run the risk of being a mere compendium of theories and theorists for students to commit to memory. This undermines critical thinking and the joy of intellectual discovery.

The second and third points are interrelated. For many decades criminological theories rather narrowly focused on adolescence and the universe of maladaptive and antisocial behaviors that occurred between the ages of approximately 13 and 17. Consequently, there was neglect of antisocial behaviors occurring during adulthood (which comprises most of the life course) and, more importantly, there was neglect of antisocial behaviors occurring in childhood. Because the focus was on adolescence, the behavior of interest was juvenile delinquency. But again, this neglected conceptually similar forms of antisocial conduct occurring during toddlerhood; early, middle, and late childhood; and early (or emerging), middle, and late adulthood. Criminology theory, in other words, ignored large swaths of life.

Fourth, just as the theoretical focus was myopically on adolescence and delinquency, the disciplinary perspective was frequently one-sided and sociological. Sociology is integral to the understanding of criminological theory, but it is just one piece of the intellectual puzzle. Other academic disciplines have provided insights into the etiology of crime also, but these were commonly ignored.

Criminological Theory: A Life-Course Approach remedies these limitations and presents criminological theory in a way that promotes a true life-course understanding of

antisocial conduct. The book is divided into three parts. Part I, Aggression, focuses on prenatal and early childhood and the biosocial processes that cause lifelong antisocial conduct. Part II, Delinquency, spans adolescence and early adulthood and covers an array of subject matter relating to delinquency and violence and a diverse collection of theoretical perspectives that seek to explain these phenomena. Part III, Crime, includes theory, research, and policies that address continued offending among adults.

Criminological Theory: A Life-Course Approach contains 16 chapters written by scholars whose training and expertise spans the social, behavioral, and medical sciences. The contributors are eminent scholars, and we genuinely appreciate their exciting, interesting, and straightforward chapters that together provide a global look at criminological theory over the life course.

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