

Crime Control Strategies

An Introduction
to the Study of Crime

HAROLD E. PEPINSKY

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TO LES WILKINS

pioneer
teacher
inspiration
and friend

Preface

The purpose of this book is straightforward, if ambitious. It attempts to help novices and experts use information about crime and criminal justice for social purposes. To this end, the book has several unusual features.

It is customary to separate information about criminology and criminal justice. Criminologists have traditionally limited themselves to the study of why people commit crime, students of criminal justice to the study of the behavior of officials of crime control. It seems to make little sense to divide the two fields. Whether people are more or less likely to commit crime depends largely on how officials do their jobs, and how and why officials act as they do depends largely on the nature of the crime problem they face. Considering it a waste of effort to study the two fields separately, I have grouped them together under the heading of criminology, which literally means “the study of crime.” The purpose of criminology is to learn how to control crime. To stress the need for integration in this field, I have drawn from the work of those trained in the humanities, natural sciences, social sciences, and professions such as engineering, law, medicine, and social work.

I reject the “value neutral” position held by many criminologists who hold that knowledge of the causes of crime has intrinsic value, that it should be mastered regardless of its practical utility. In the book I have evaluated information about crime and criminality in terms of its usefulness in aiding the control of crime.

The book is both comprehensible to the beginning student of

criminology (or criminal justice) and novel to the expert in the field. Much research in the field (including, unfortunately, some of my own) is written in such esoteric jargon as to be incomprehensible to the beginner. I know of no research that cannot readily be explained to the beginning student in simple language. I have tried to write simply without writing simplistically. And, just as in any scholarly article or monograph, I have tried to carry the analysis in this book beyond the existing limits of knowledge and understanding. If I have succeeded, both the beginner and the expert will finish this book with a more profound understanding of criminological issues.

It is a disservice to students for criminologists to disseminate their beliefs as certainties. I therefore invite readers to share my own skepticism about the validity of even my own beliefs. Readers are invited to transcend rather than to accept or memorize the author's conclusions. I invite readers to take issue with my propositions, try to give them enough information to do so, and conclude each chapter with questions (entitled "Food for Thought") rather than with answers on criminological issues.

Criminological knowledge is integrated with political consideration and ethical issues. The questions and answers of criminologists are tied to political and ethical presuppositions. It is only fair to make the connections explicit.

For teachers who share the above premises with me, this book is suitable as a primary text in either an introductory criminology or an introductory criminal justice class. The coverage of material in these areas is broad enough to prepare students for more specialized courses. For teachers who wish their students to review the literature in the manner of standard introductory texts, this book is concise and readable enough to be used as a supplement, exposing beginning students to a particular (social systems) point of view.

The book is also written to be read by a lay person without benefit of a lecturer or tutor, and yet (particularly from Chapter 4 on) has enough original material to challenge the advanced student. In sum, the book is designed to transcend the need to classify and compartmentalize workers in criminology.

AN OVERVIEW

Chapter 1 of the book resembles an abridged edition of a traditional criminology text. Here, a sketch is drawn of various schools

of criminological thought, from Beccaria and the utilitarians (or classical school) to Wilkins and the systems theorists. Obviously, the survey is incomplete, but it does indicate how diverse approaches to studying crime can be.

Chapter 2 outlines the topics of each of the remaining chapters, and Chapter 3 introduces themes and issues that recur throughout the book. Then follow four chapters on controlling crime, four on controlling criminals, a chapter on cost-benefit analysis, and a conclusion. Chapter 7 reviews the material in Chapters 4 to 6, Chapter 11 the material in Chapters 8 to 10, and 13 the entire book.

Note that for reasons given at the beginning of Chapter 9, that chapter is twice the length of any other. On the other hand, as integrative chapters tying together loose ends, Chapters 11 to 13 are shorter than the others. A teacher allocating course time for various parts of the book can plan accordingly.

Most students who have used this book in manuscript form have become depressed by the end of Chapter 3. Chapters 2 and 3 emphasize the problems and ambiguities in criminological knowledge; students may begin to wonder, at this point, what criminological knowledge can be good for. The tone of Chapter 4 is cautious, too. Chapter 5 is somewhat bolder, however, and by Chapter 11, I affirmatively emphasize personal views and ideas for crime control. By this time, readers should be more optimistic about the utility of criminological knowledge, but should be well armed and prepared to read my arguments with an independent, critical eye.

For easy reference two appendices are provided, one describing stages of the criminal justice process and the other defining crimes and elements of crimes.

While readers can glance at different parts of the book in any order they please, the chapters are written progressively, each chapter presuming familiarity with prior material. The reader would probably do best to read them in order.

Many serious issues are considered in this book, but the reader still ought to be able to—have fun! (I did)

H. P.

Bloomington, Indiana
November 1978

Acknowledgments

Of the many fine teachers I have had in recent years, Leslie T. Wilkins is outstanding. Formally a colleague of Les's at the State University of New York at Albany, I team-taught a seminar with him for four years. With his rich experience and keen insight, he gave me far more than I could possibly have given him.

Les has always treated me as a peer, like all his students. He thrives on a good intellectual fight, and we have often argued fundamental research and policy issues. In the course of these debates and exchanges, even if I did not let on at the time, Les has consistently taught me a great deal.

In the field of criminology (and criminal justice), Les is a true pioneer. He has developed a social systems perspective on the study of crime and deviance. His book *Social Deviance* is a classic. I owe whatever integration has been achieved of my own research on crime control to a vision that Les has shared with me. That debt is reflected in the many citations to Les's ideas and work that appear in this book.

Above all, Les represents uncompromising commitment to free scientific inquiry as a keystone of his larger commitment to humanity. Les's friendship, example, and guidance remain precious to me. Now that we work in different places, I continue to seek his counsel on issues that perplex me, and he never fails to help me clarify my thinking. It is as a small token of my appreciation that I dedicate this book to him.

I also owe a great deal to the support, encouragement, and intellectual exchange that I enjoy with my colleagues in Forensic Studies at Indiana University. I have continually been refreshed and enlightened by Bob Borkenstein, Jim Miller, Barton Parks, John Ramirez, Myke Spicker, Vic Streib, Hill Trubitt, and Cathy Widom. Particularly as we have begun to teach and write together, Phil Parnell has done me a major service by opening the richness of anthropological literature to my view and sharing his thorough understanding of it with me.

Thanks in large measure to Ellen Dwyer, a demanding though sympathetic critic, I have been introduced to the work of historians on crime—notably that of Tom Duesterberg, Barbara Hanawalt, and Eric Monkkonen—which has forced me to extend my own theoretical horizons.

Special thanks go to Doug Smith for enlightening me about self-report research.

The heart of my support and learning comes from my wife, Jill, my daughter, Kate (who at three months was already busy helping me to type a draft of this book), and my parents, Harold B. and Pauline Pepinsky.

I am very grateful to Donna Littrell and Martha Geter for the help they have given me in preparing the manuscript, and to the many students who have read and commented on the manuscript for their invaluable feedback.

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There are countless other friends and colleagues without whose help I could not have written this book. I hope they forgive my failure to mention them all by name, and accept my thanks as well.

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PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

A History of the Study of Crime

As you begin reading this book, you are entering the field of criminology. Reflect for a moment on what that means. In the scholarly world, a field is not an area where everyone does the same thing, like going door-to-door and asking people questions. Instead, the people working in a scholarly field try to make discoveries in any way they can about a common phenomenon—in this case, about crime. You are embarking on the study of crime, which should bring you surprise and delight (together with some perplexity).

This is probably not your first entry into the field of criminology. These days, it is almost impossible to glance at a newspaper, watch television, listen to radio, or carry on a conversation without learning something new about crime. And it is fair to say that whenever you try to make sense of this new information, you are in the field of criminology.

People have probably been moving in and out of the field of criminology from time immemorial. A decade ago, a task force of an American national crime commission noted: “Virtually every generation since the founding of the Nation and before has felt itself threatened by the spectre of rising crime and violence” (President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, 1967a: 19). Not surprisingly, practically every available criminological study has, implicitly at least, been founded on a concern about controlling crime. Most writers on the subject have