

A Primer on Crime and Delinquency Theory

A Primer on Crime and Delinquency Theory

FOURTH EDITION

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*Dedicated to Bob's mom and dad, Elizabeth and Jack Bohm,
and Brenda's husband Ron and their remarkable daughter Hailey*

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Preface

The primary purpose for writing this book has not changed since the first edition: to provide both undergraduate and graduate students with a relatively brief but comprehensive exposition of crime and delinquency theories. The book should prove useful either as a primary text (with instructor supplements) or as a supplement to other texts, anthologies, or collections of journal articles.

As noted in the first three editions of this book, although many fine criminological texts are on the market, none of them precisely provides the material in a manner that we believe students of crime and delinquency theory ought to receive. For example, some texts contain much more material than can ever be covered satisfactorily within the time constraints of an academic semester or quarter. Consequently, instructors are forced to ignore some theories or offer a superficial rendering of some of the theories that they do present. With this relatively slim volume, instructors need not worry about such time constraints but still can be confident that they are presenting a reasonably comprehensive description. Some texts focus only on one or another theoretical perspective and thus ignore the rich multidisciplinary nature of crime and delinquency theory. For example, many criminological texts present only sociological theories, or, when other theories are examined, they are given short shrift. This text, though brief, is comprehensive and multidisciplinary in its scope.

Few of the available criminological texts provide an adequate introduction to theory. For example, conspicuously missing from these texts are discussions of the critically important issues of the philosophical assumptions on which all theories are based, and how theories can be evaluated in relation to each other. This book rectifies each of those omissions. Also, although other texts present descriptions of the theories, few of them identify the policy implications that are either explicit or implicit in all theories. A major feature of this book is the description of the policy implications of the theories. Other texts fail to present results of empirical tests of a theory or to otherwise comment on the em-

pirical validity of a theory. For many theories, particularly positivist theories, this book does both. Perhaps most importantly, very few of the available texts incorporate a comprehensive critique of the theories. Again, a principal feature of this book is a thorough critique of most of the theories.

In sum, the first three editions of *A Primer on Crime and Delinquency* provided in a very manageable format (1) an introduction to theory with a special focus on the philosophical assumptions of theories, and how the theories can be evaluated in relation to each other, (2) descriptions of philosophical and social scientific crime and delinquency theories, (3) the presentation of the policy implications of each of the theories, (4) results of empirical tests of a theory or comments about a theory's empirical validity (added in the third edition), and (5) a comprehensive critique of most of the theories. In addition, the second edition added study questions to the end of each chapter. Study questions are included in this edition and are intended to promote class discussion and also can be used for examination purposes.

This fourth edition of *A Primer on Crime and Delinquency Theory* has remained faithful to the previous three editions in both intent and organization. However, its content has been increased, though it remains a relatively thin volume. New material has been added to several chapters to clarify or expand explanations in the first three editions, include material omitted, or describe developments since the third edition was completed about five years ago. In addition, numerous subheadings have been added to the chapters to help the reader better navigate the material. This addition has reduced the density of the material in the first three editions.

Following is a list of some of the fourth edition's new or expanded topics or issues (with the chapter in which the addition is found in parentheses):

- Changed title of section on Testing Theories to Evaluating Theories and revised section for greater clarity (Chapter 1)
- Added new criticisms of classical theory, regarding social contract, free will, and deterrence (Chapter 2)
- Added new problems with twin studies (Chapter 4)
- Added new material on epigenetic factors and their influence on gene activity (Chapter 4)
- Added new material on the effects of hormones on antisocial behavior (Chapter 4)
- Added new material on impulsivity and criminality (Chapter 5)
- Added new material on corporate tax loopholes (Chapter 8)
- Added new material on developments in feminist criminology (Chapter 8)
- Added a new section on green or environmental criminology (Chapter 8)

- Added a new section on rural criminology (Chapter 8)
- Added a new section on convict criminology (Chapter 8)
- Added a new section on queer criminology (Chapter 8)
- Added new material on Hagan's power-control theory (Chapter 9)
- Added new material on Agnew's general theory of crime and delinquency and his unified criminology (Chapter 9)

Another change to *A Primer on Crime and Delinquency Theory* is a new publisher: Carolina Academic Press. We are excited about this new affiliation with CAP and look forward to a long and productive relationship.

In sum, our hope is that students who read this book come to appreciate the diversity of crime and delinquency theories as well as the policy implications, empirical evidence, and problems associated with each of them. As mentioned in the preface to the first three editions of this book, ultimately, we hope that the knowledge gained by studying this relatively thin volume will lead to the significant reduction in the harm and suffering experienced by both crime victims and offenders and to the improvement of everyone's quality of life.

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