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Crime prevention: approaches, practices, and evaluations

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BOOK REVIEW

Crime prevention: approaches, practices, and evaluations, 9th edition, by Steven P. Lab, New York, Routledge, 2016, 452 pp., £49.99 (Paperback), £175.00 (Hardback), ISBN 9780323357722

Now in its ninth edition, Steven Lab's *Crime Prevention: Approaches, Practices, and Evaluations* offers a wide-ranging overview of approaches to preventing crime. As Lab notes in the preface to this edition, the field of crime prevention is a rapidly developing area. This book provides an up-to-date and accessible book for students and others interested in crime prevention. Lab is largely successful in offering what one would want from an undergraduate textbook, namely clear writing, comprehensive coverage, well organised chapters, and good use of tables and figures to illustrate key findings and ideas.

Lab favours the tripartite public health model for classifying approaches to crime prevention, and organises the book along these lines. Part I of the book focuses on primary crime prevention approaches, Part II examines secondary approaches to crime prevention, and Part III is devoted to tertiary crime prevention efforts. Before these three approaches are discussed in detail, Lab provides three useful chapters that engage with some of the broader issues broached in more detail in the remainder of the book. Chapter 1 orients readers to the broad topic of crime and fear of crime in society, Chapter 2 provides an historical sketch of crime prevention efforts, defines crime prevention, and discusses various crime prevention typologies, and Chapter 3 offers a review of approaches to evaluating crime prevention initiatives.

In the first part of the book, six chapters cover a wide-range of 'primary' approaches to crime prevention. There are standalone chapters on environmental crime prevention and neighbourhood crime prevention. These are followed by a useful chapter providing an in-depth overview of one of the key questions related to situational crime prevention efforts: whether crime reduced in one environment or neighbourhood, will be displaced to other geographical locales. This chapter also offers a good summary of some of the key theoretical approaches to situational crime prevention, including routine activities theory, rational choice theory, and crime pattern theory. Other chapters in this first section of the book focus on the mass media and crime prevention, developmental crime prevention and, consistent with the inclusive approach to defining crime prevention favoured by Lab, the role of general deterrence. These chapters offer generally good overviews of the different approaches although, given the growing importance of developmental and life course criminology, there was an missed opportunity to provide a richer discussion of the theoretical bases for developmental crime prevention approaches.

Part two of the book shifts attention to secondary crime prevention initiatives. After a chapter that provides a broad orientation to some of the key concepts, there are chapters on situational crime prevention, partnerships for crime prevention (focussing on community policing), drugs, crime, and crime prevention, and school-based crime prevention. There is inevitably some repetition, as situational crime prevention theories are reprised from Chapter 6, but the broad mix of approaches keeps the reader engaged. A chapter devoted specifically to drugs, crime, and crime prevention also offers a good opportunity to explore in more depth an important topic, and the coverage here is excellent, although again, there was a missed opportunity to also include a brief discussion of how changes in the law, specifically as it relates to drug matters, might impact on the relationship between drugs and crime.

In the final part of the book, two chapters review tertiary approaches to crime prevention. The first explores the role of specific deterrence and incapacitation in preventing crime and the second examines rehabilitation. The chapter on specific deterrence and incapacitation is excellent, especially given the ongoing debates about the effectiveness of punishment in reducing offending vs. the familiar calls for harsher penalties from some quarters of society. The chapter on rehabilitation, however,

lacked detail. The decision to include topics, such as intensive supervision and restorative justice in this chapter, which are not strictly ‘rehabilitation’, meant less attention was focussed on exploring the rich and detailed literature on models of offender rehabilitation, such as the risk-need model, or the good lives model, as well as other approaches to offender reintegration that are at the forefront of efforts to reduce recidivism.

In sum, readers who are interested in an authoritative and up to date textbook on crime prevention will benefit from Lab’s *Crime Prevention: Approaches, Practices, and Evaluations*. Inevitably, given the breadth of topics covered, some issues are given more thorough treatment than others. I had the sense that despite some good coverage of the wider issues relating to crime prevention, a detailed consideration of the ‘big picture’ is missing. That is, we are not clear what the ‘best’ approaches to preventing crime are and how they flow logically from our best understanding of the causes of crime. The book, although very clearly written and well organised, could also have been supplemented with more explicitly pedagogical features, such as discussion questions, activities, information boxes, and the like. Nonetheless, these relatively minor quibbles aside, the ninth edition of this book remains one of the leading contenders in the field for students, academics, and policy-makers alike.

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