

Lab, Steven P (1997) Crime Prevention: Approaches, Practices and Evaluation (Third Edition), Anderson Publishing Company, Cincinnati, OH. ISBN 1-58360-509-6

The first chapter of this book provides a good summary presentation of the issues associated with the measurement of crime and fear of crime. Lab deals extensively with the nexus between perceived levels of crime, victimisation, and various measures of crime in the second chapter. These relationships lead to his definition of crime prevention as: 'any action designed to reduce the actual level of crime and/or the perceived fear of crime' (p 19). He then invokes the public health-based primary, secondary, and tertiary model of crime prevention, following earlier crime prevention writers. A table is provided (p 21) that gives the reader a quick overview of how various forms of crime prevention fit into these prevention phases.

Section I (Chapters 3 - 8) covers a range of primary ('stop it before it starts') crime prevention techniques: crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED); neighbourhood crime prevention; general deterrence strategies, and social crime approaches. Mixed in with these are issues of crime displacement, the role of mass media in crime prevention (and their role in the perception of crime), and theoretical underpinnings of these approaches. Examples of types of prevention programs that fit into the categories are offered along with a summary of available evaluation information on the effectiveness of these programs.

Section II (Chapters 9 - 13) addresses secondary crime prevention programs. The section begins with a discussion of the problems of prediction of continued offending. Lab employs a concept of secondary prevention more akin to that of 'selected intervention' (Tolan & Guerra 1994), focusing on risk rather than actual criminal behaviour. This is a very important topic, especially from the perception of injustice some may feel at being targeted without having committed any criminal act. Lab then offers chapters dealing with situational crime prevention, community policing, drugs and crime, and schools and crime prevention. Again Lab describes prevention programs in each of these areas and an overview of available evaluation studies.

In Section III (Chapters 14 - 16) Lab discusses tertiary crime prevention approaches. These focus on stopping the development of criminal careers among already identified offenders. In this section he outlines specific deterrence and incapacitation, home confinement, electronic monitoring, and rehabilitation programs. The rationale behind each approach, and the existing evaluations of each are presented.

Finally, Chapter 17 seeks to summarise where the field is and where it might be headed. Steven Lab has produced a valuable introductory text to the broad field of crime prevention in this third edition. He covers the key points in the debates over crime prevention along with the theoretical assumptions upon which they are based. This is done in a manner that allows the beginning reader in this area of study to understand the basic components of the programs, as well as why these programs should work. Combining this with the available evaluation on these programs at the time of writing also should allow the reader to examine critically why the programs did or did not work as expected. In short, I would recommend Lab's text as an introduction to the field of crime prevention, though it would require supplementing in some key areas.

First, several key texts in the areas of juvenile delinquency and violence prevention have been published since the time this edition was released. A number of bulletins from government agencies around the world have also appeared in the past several years. Many of these are available on-line and free, so they could be utilised with this text to fill-in the gaps and expand the students' or independent readers' knowledge of the field.

Next, there is relatively little Australian content in the text. Students and readers employing the text would want to examine materials from the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) and the National Crime Prevention (NCP) office. For example, the Pathways to Prevention (NCP 1999) publication provides a detailed overview of developmental criminology approaches to youth crime prevention, as well as a catalogue of programs throughout Australia targeting youth crime and its prevention. In addition, several state agencies (e.g. NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research) have produced documentation about, and evaluations of, various crime prevention efforts around Australia. There are also several recent articles about crime prevention in Australia that have appeared in academic journals (e.g. Indermaur 1999). Supplementing the text with local materials would be necessary to bring crime prevention work 'home' to Australian readers.

Finally, while the presentation of materials in the Lab text is logical, it does not allow the reader to pick out easily a particular prevention area. For example, there are no sections dedicated to the prevention of intimate partner violence or sexual assault. Rather, these are embedded within the general section and chapter topics. Furthermore, the reader who wondered about the state of the art in delinquency prevention would not be able to find that information summarised in this text.

These concerns aside, Steven Lab has provided one of the most comprehensive introductory texts in the field of crime prevention. With supplements, as outlined above, this text could easily form the foundation for a crime prevention course. As a stand-alone text it will provide the reader with the basics of crime prevention and directions in which to look for more information. Given the volume of crime and violence prevention programs in criminal justice and public health areas, and the number that are finally receiving quality evaluation efforts, a fourth edition that addresses many of the shortcomings outlined here probably won't be far behind this review.

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