Criminal Law and Criminology: Survey of Recent Books

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CriminAl L AW AND CRIMINOLOGY: A SURVEY OF RECENT BOOKS

JULIET M. CASPER*

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT


On August 17, 1996, Mumia Abu-Jamal is scheduled to die. Convicted of first degree murder, Abu-Jamal insists that he is innocent, and his team of attorneys have found evidence to support his claim. Leonard Weinglass, chief counsel for the defense, chronicles Abu-Jamal’s fight to leave death row by publishing the legal documents submitted to the Pennsylvania court and by providing background information about the crime, Abu-Jamal, and Judge Albert F. Sabo.


The editors have gathered together eighteen essays that discuss the justification for punishment and or capital punishment. The punishment of the innocent and erroneous convictions, the crusade for and against the death penalty, and the arbitrary application of capital punishment are some of the issues covered in this work. Contrasting theories and views are presented.

Child Abuse—United States—Prevention


Child abuse is no longer viewed as just a problem of the poor, thanks to the media. But, media attention has focused on sensational conduct and the big social spectacle trials. Such attention has done little to sensitize the public to the real problem that exists. The authors, all social workers, demonstrate that the public child welfare system, with insufficient funding and coordination, is failing to remedy the problem. They advocate a public safety approach to the issue and introduce the concept of a Children’s Authority, a local entity that would oversee child welfare investigation, enforcement, placement services, prevention and education, family support services, and research and development.

Crime in Mass Media—United States


This work “explores the common ground between cultural and criminal practices in contemporary social life.” The first part of the work discusses the role of the media in portraying culture and crime with essays on random drug violence, serial killers, and surveillance. The second part focuses on subculture, style, and crime. Neo-Nazi skinheads, gangs, bikers, and taggers make up some of the subcultures discussed. The editors believe that theories of criminology must consider the role of the media, language, symbolism, and style.

Criminal Justice, Administration of—Philosophy


Despite the debates and arguments, the theories and concepts, a single moral problem surrounding punishment still exists: how to justify the deliberate infliction of pain and
deprivation which is inherent in any punishment. Tackling this moral dilemma, Fatic divides his work into three parts: theories, politics, and realities. He proposes a restorative crime-handling theory with trust as the central characteristic of the justice system. There is no distinction between criminal and civil law under his system.

**Criminals—United States—Case Studies**


Fleisher's goal in this book is to describe the human dimensions of criminals, specifically the social and cultural processes that lead street people to crime and keep them in a cycle of criminal activity. By employing participant-observation methods, he has been able to collect real data from real people on the street. Drug dealers, cocaine and heroin addicts, alcoholics, gang members, burglars and beggars are just some of the Seattle street people interviewed. Fleisher discovers that all of the street people he encountered came from dysfunctional families, and that jail or prison was often viewed as a welcomed break from life on the street. Prevention, in the form of child protection from parental abuse, is Fleisher's solution to street crime.

**Criminology—Philosophy**


Consisting of fifteen original essays by twenty-two authors, this work unites theory with policy. The social scientist authors have been asked to practically apply their theories and knowledge, so graduate students can evaluate what works in reality. The essays discuss such topics as neighborhood-based networks, behavioral strategies, shaming, repressive crime control, white collar crimes, and organized crime.
Deviant Behavior


One simple theory cannot adequately explain or predict criminal or deviant behavior. Tittle integrates a number of theories in the creation of his control balance theory. His theory relies upon a control ratio which takes into account a variety of variables, such as social class, power, and the centrality of control.

Habeas Corpus—United States—States—Statistics


This report examines the habeas corpus petitions filed in eighteen federal district courts located in Alabama, California, Florida, Indiana, Louisiana, Missouri, New York, Pennsylvania, and Texas. Petitions from these nine states comprise about half of the total petitions filed each year. The statistics compiled include the number and type of issues raised in the petition, the most serious offense and the sentence imposed at conviction, the manner of disposition, reasons for dismissal of habeas corpus issues, and the length of time for the review process.

Homicide—Massachusetts—Boston


In May of 1992 twenty-four year old Kristin Lardner was shot three times in the head by an ex-boyfriend, against whom she had obtained a restraining order. This book, written by her father, chronicles the events surrounding her murder and critiques the criminal justice system that continues to fail victims of stalking and domestic abuse. The book expands upon a Pulitzer Prize winning article Lardner wrote for the Washington Post.
**Juvenile Delinquency—United States**


The editor, whose son is currently on death row in Tennessee, has gathered together writings by death row inmates, family members, journalists, criminologists, and legal experts. The writings focus on the effects of juvenile crime on victims, perpetrators, and families. While case studies and case profiles dominate the work, the editor does provide some suggestions for the prevention of youth violence, including a discussion of a number of programs currently in existence.

**Offenses Against the Environment—United States**


The research in the area of environmental crimes is scant, despite the increased media exposure and police attention to such crimes. This work brings together eleven essays which represent the leading research in the field. A broad historical overview of the problem is followed by an analysis of the effectiveness of the EPA's Office of Criminal Investigation, a case study of a specific environmental crimes problem, and a handful of philosophical and theoretical essays.


Seven attorneys from the Washington, D.C., law firm Venable, Baetjer, Howard, and Civiletti have compiled a “how to” guide for attorneys handling environmental crimes cases. Criminal environmental law combines the history-driven criminal law with the technically complex environmental law. The first sixty pages of this book consist of a discussion of the basic concepts, the historical development, the knowledge element, investigation of an environmental crime, and the ramifications of a conviction. The rest of the book reprints statutes, policy documents, and sample forms and pleadings.
PRISON PSYCHOLOGY


The first edition of this book was published in 1987. Written for use in criminal justice, sociology, and psychology courses, the second edition updates the statistical information and includes the latest research on prisons. The author also develops more fully the coping, criminality, and correction concepts discussed in the first edition. First person accounts of prison life are emphasized. While pain seems to be the central feature of prison life, the author believes prisons can be decent, humane institutions, and he offers a reform proposal.

PRISONS—UNITED STATES—OVERCROWDING

WAYNE N. WELSH, COUNTIES IN COURT: JAIL OVERCROWDING AND COURT-ORDERED REFORM (PHILADELPHIA: TEMPLE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1995) 265 PP.

Criminal justice is primarily a local affair, but in 1993, "forty states had at least one state prison under a court order or consent decree to limit population or improve general conditions of confinement." Unanticipated and often unwanted intervention by courts has resulted in massive organizational change on the local level where jails are administered. With little money to operate, jails are being asked to provide the same confinement conditions ordered in the better funded state and federal prisons. Welsh presents a five stage model for the evaluation of court-ordered jail reform.