

## BOOK REVIEW

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### *A Review of Explaining Criminal Behavior*

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**REFERENCE:** Buikhuisen, W. and Mednick, S. A., Eds., *Explaining Criminal Behavior*, E. J. Brill, Leiden, The Netherlands, 1988, soft cover. 260 pp.

*Explaining Criminal Behavior* grew out of a symposium of "Explaining Crime: Interdisciplinary Approaches" that took place at the Criminological Institute of Leiden (The Netherlands) in 1986. The chapters that make up this book are organized into four general sections: "Theories of Delinquency," "Precursors of Delinquency and Crime," "Mental Illness and Crime," and "Studies of Deterrence." The authors and editors bring to this subject a common interest in and emphasis on interdisciplinary approaches to the study of antisocial behavior and criminality.

Each of these sections includes chapters that present comprehensive reviews of the current literature in the field. Much of the value of this book lies in the considered explication and critique of current theories related to the causes of delinquency and antisocial behavior. Because many of the authors represented in this collection have made significant contributions to the research in these areas, their thoughtful analyses of the strengths and weaknesses of the research they survey lend authority to their call for further research.

This book is particularly valuable as a general introduction and overview of recent attempts to bring the lessons of sociology, learning theory, psychology, biology, and genetics to bear on the study of delinquency and criminal behavior. As might be expected, some chapters in the book are stronger than others. T. Hirschi and M. Gottfredson's "Towards a General Theory of Crime," and W. Buikhuisen's "General Deterrence: A Field Experiment" are among the best, while the section on "Mental Illness and Crime" is the smallest and arguably the weakest.

Because these authors are primarily concerned, in this book, with describing possible causes of delinquency and criminal behavior, the treatment implications are kept at a minimum, which somewhat limits the interest and usefulness of this book for clinicians. The section on deterrence, however, includes a valuable discussion of some of the principles of deterrence that could have important public policy implications.

This work provides an accessible account of recent research and current theories that attempt to explain criminal behavior and points out the need for further research. The authors' insistence on the necessity of bringing the fields of sociology, learning theory, psychology, biology, and genetics to bear on the study of criminal behavior makes this a particularly worthwhile text.

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