

Preface

This book constitutes the fourth iteration of lifestyle theory, which began with publication of *The Criminal Lifestyle* (Sage) in 1990, and continued with publication of *Criminal Belief Systems* (Praeger) in 2002 and *Crime in a Psychological Context* (Sage) in 2012. The hope was and still is that with each new iteration the theory becomes more useful, functional, and integrated; something more than a simple regurgitation of old ideas. This is an outcome that the authors of theories sometimes have a difficult time deciphering. Often it requires feedback from readers and new studies from researchers outside the author's circle of adherents to know if the changes and modifications have actually improved the theory. I leave it to the reader to decide whether this newest iteration advances the lifestyle theory of crime beyond the third iteration.

For what it is worth, I believe that the changes made to lifestyle theory since the publication of *Crime in a Psychological Context* are substantial. It should be noted that I was working as a psychologist for the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) when I wrote the first three iterations of lifestyle theory. Because the third iteration was published around the time I retired from the BOP, all of the new information in this fourth iteration occurred post-retirement. Following my retirement from the

BOP I went from working with adult offenders to teaching full-time at a state university. My interests also changed, from adult expressions of a criminal lifestyle to how a criminal lifestyle develops. Rather than working exclusively with adult data, much of my current research focuses on children and adolescents. The control and moral models of criminal lifestyle development, in fact, are the fruits of this shift in perspective.

A unique aspect of this book is that it attempts to place lifestyle theory within a larger scientific framework, namely, nonlinear dynamical systems theory or chaos. Seven principles from chaos theory are used to explain relationships and processes central to lifestyle theory. The seven principles are initially described in Chap. 1 and various applications to different models and facets of lifestyle theory are presented in subsequent chapters. The secondary title of this book, “Theorizing at the edge of chaos,” is a variant on a phrase coined by mathematician J. Doyne Farmer that is included in the titles of two books written in the early 1990s on applied nonlinear dynamical systems theory—Waldrop’s (1992) “Complexity: The Emerging Science at the Edge of Order and Chaos” and Lewin’s (1992) “Complexity: Life at the edge of chaos.” The current book’s primary title, “Modelling the Criminal Lifestyle” refers to the fact that lifestyle theory is composed of several different but interrelated models.

Whereas the proactive and reactive dimensions of criminal thinking were first introduced in the third iteration of lifestyle theory (Walters 2012), their significance to lifestyle theory is highlighted in this most recent iteration. These overlapping dimensions of criminal thought process (*how* an offender thinks) play an important role in four of the five models of criminal lifestyle theory: the control model of criminal lifestyle development, the moral model of criminal lifestyle development, the lifestyle model of criminal decision-making, and the lifestyle model of change. The two dimensions of criminal thought process are the glue that holds constructs in each of the four models together and are also a means by which these four models can be integrated, although this is an area that requires further study. Newly introduced into this most recent iteration of lifestyle theory is the concept of criminal thought content (*what* an offender thinks). The interplay of criminal thought content and criminal thought process has the potential to further advance our understanding of crime and criminals.

Theoretical integration is an important topic that has just recently received the attention it deserves in the fields of criminology and criminal justice. Up until the last several years the field of criminology has been seriously criticized for its lack of theoretical integration (Agnew 2011; Bernard and Snipes 1996; Ericson and Carriere 1994; Farrington 2003). The lifestyle theory of criminal behavior, by contrast, emphasizes integration. The control and moral models of criminal lifestyle development include constructs from several major theories of crime, to include the general theory of crime (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990), social cognitive theory (Bandura 1986), general strain theory (Agnew 1992), psychopathic personality theories of crime (Hare and Neumann 2008), labeling theory (Becker 1963; Lemert 1951), life-course developmental theory (Moffitt 1993; Sampson and Laub 1993), and differential association and social learning theories (Akers 1998; Sutherland 1947). Methodology is emphasized as a means of achieving greater integration in the form of increased use of mediation and moderation research designs.

Hopefully, the reader finds this newest iteration of lifestyle theory provocative, educational, and interesting. It should be noted that a theory is not judged by any objective criterion of “truth” but by its testability, feasibility, and fruitfulness. First and foremost, a theory should be testable or falsifiable (Popper 1983). The five lifestyle models provide a number of testable hypotheses, some of which have received empirical attention (typically by the author) but most of which have not. A theory should also be feasible for use by practitioners and policy makers. Three chapters in this book, in fact—Chap. 6 on decision-making, Chap. 7 on assessment, and Chap. 8 on intervention—offer an idiographic glimpse into crime that can be useful to persons working in the criminal justice field. Finally, a theory should stimulate research, interest, and application. Lifestyle theory fairs poorly on this criterion because nearly all of the relevant research has been conducted by the author. Hopefully, by expanding the scope of research and diversity of researchers, we can answer some of the more persistent and perplexing questions in criminology and criminal justice.

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Modelling the Criminal Lifestyle

Theorizing at the Edge of Chaos

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2017, XVI, 301 p. 24 illus., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-57770-8