

## Introduction

In anticipation of the intergroup conflict that characterized the world-wide struggle against European colonials, W. E. B. DuBois observed in 1903 that “the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line,—the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea” (DuBois, 1961:23). Consistent with his prediction, considerations of color and race have shaped the world’s history for much of this century. In the United States where European colonialism took the form of Indian Wars, black chattel slavery, and permanent white homesteading, DuBois’s statement has been particularly prophetic. The dilemma posed by the nation’s *race problem* has left its mark on all aspects of its institutional and social life (Myrdal, 1944).

As the twentieth century draws to a close, there are grim reminders that race still matters in the United States and other parts of the postcolonial world. The black majority in South Africa has only recently achieved the right to vote. Native nonwhite populations in Brazil, Peru, Australia, the United States, New Zealand, and other countries struggle against dominant majorities to maintain their cultural heritages. And in the United States the police beatings of black motorists Rodney King in Los Angeles and Malice Green in Detroit have highlighted the inequality of justice and the persistence of racial bigotry. The color line remains an integral part of American society (Farley and Allen, 1987; Jaynes and Williams, 1989).

On the other hand, only a social analyst with the sleep habits of Rip Van Winkle could fail to observe that many of the most barbarous, inhumane, and globally disruptive events of the century did not always pit the darker and lighter races against each other. Instead, they arose from ethnic and nationality cleavages within populations of similar skin color. Europe witnessed two major interethnic wars, the genocide of millions of Jews and other “outsiders,” and the rise of a cold war militarism that curbed civil liberties and promoted armed struggle for a half-century. This century has also seen Japanese expansionism and imperialism directed at its Asian neighbors, continuing

military conflict between dominant Chinese populations and ethnic minorities within and outside China, and interethnic conflicts in much of Africa.

Indeed, with the seeming collapse of many of the hegemonic nation-states that were erected in response to the cold war or to divide Europe's former African and Asian colonial empires, it appears likely that interethnic struggles will see a worldwide increase. As the twentieth century was characterized by the color line, the twenty-first may be characterized by dividing lines based on ethnic differences. Ongoing interethnic wars and armed conflicts in Northern Ireland, Ethiopia, Sudan, Indonesia, and the former nation of Yugoslavia illustrate the salience of ethnic differences during the late twentieth century. Though underanalyzed by social scientists, intergroup competition and conflict based on ethnic differentiation has been a fact of life throughout human history.

While these global events are often considered peripheral to traditional investigations of crime in society, they are vital for an understanding of the social dynamics that underlie the studies of ethnicity, race, and crime included in this volume. Whether formed as a result of colonialism or the cold war, the multiethnic, multiracial nation-states of the twentieth century are characterized by the existence of a well-acknowledged set of interrelationships among ethnicity, race, the production of criminal law, and the sanctioning of criminal behavior. This collection of essays was designed to explore those interconnections by providing discussions that are grounded not only in the criminological literature but also in the sociological study of intergroup relations. Though most analyses are limited to the United States, the themes explored in this collection arise from and are responsive to the global events described above. The volume fills a relative void in the social science and criminological literatures, since few edited collections or authored works have examined the linkage among ethnicity, race, crime, and the administration of justice.

## VOLUME OVERVIEW

The sixteen chapters in this volume were selected to provide varying approaches to the study of crime and its relationship to ethnicity and race. They are almost equally divided among those that provide historical perspectives and those that explore contemporary phenomena. Though diverse in their approaches, the chapters share a common theme: the author's attempt to explain why some ethnic and racial groups appear to be more likely than others to be sanctioned for involvement in crime.

The volume begins with an effort to outline the major theoretical currents that have guided research and writing on ethnic and racial differences in

the level of crime and punishment in modern societies. To this end, Darnell Hawkins critically reviews the work of eight authors, writing between 1899 and 1970, who have made significant contributions to this area of inquiry. Included in his analysis is a discussion of how the political and social volatility of the question of ethnic and racial differences in the level of involvement in criminal activity has shaped both public and scholarly discourse on the subject. The competing explanations for intergroup differences advocated and criticized by the eight authors included in this review are to be found in various forms in most of the other chapters included in the volume.

Thomas Regulus raises issues similar to those of Hawkins in his review of sociobiological perspectives on ethnic, race, and class differences in the rate of involvement in crime. The growing acceptance of *new* biological determinist views of the etiology of crime and other social behavior is noted. Regulus cites both the seeming potential of sociobiological theory and research findings for devising crime control strategies, and the perhaps greater threat of racial and class bias in the attempted application of research. This chapter makes a particularly valuable contribution to the volume, since most of the other chapters utilize more traditional sociological approaches to the study of crime in society. And as both Regulus and Hawkins note, these traditional approaches have increasingly come to be seen as inappropriate or inadequate as many prominent modern analysts of crime—for example, Wilson and Herrnstein (1985)—begin to link group differences in the rate of involvement in crime to sociobiological factors.

The second part of the volume contains six articles, all of which provide historical perspectives on crime and crime control in the United States. Chapters by Joan McCord, M. Craig Brown and Barbara D. Warner, and Eric Monkkonen explore issues of ethnic differences in crime and punishment that emerged with the immigration of Europeans to America during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Monkkonen's work is significant because it is one of only a few studies, either historical or contemporary, that move beyond a simple black-white dichotomy to compare crime rates and punishment of African-Americans to those of specific white ethnic/nationality groups. Though hampered by data availability constraints, Monkkonen finds that New York City experienced a relatively high rate of fatal interpersonal aggression between 1800 and 1874. However, he finds that African-Americans were not significantly more likely than recently arrived white immigrants to be involved in such violence. Given current perceptions of black criminality, his study illustrates the value of longitudinal investigations and intergroup comparisons based on disaggregated ethnic/racial data.

McCord, Brown and Warner also have an interest in examining the crime patterns of white ethnics in America's large cities during the last cen-

tury. Their goal is to offer an explanation for the reportedly high rates of crime found among these groups during that period. Both chapters raise doubts regarding traditional accounts of the relationship among nationality, ethnicity, immigrant status and crime in the United States. McCord does so by suggesting that there has been misspecification of how crime is related to immigration, ethnicity, and religion. She argues that the failure of earlier analysts to control for the economic condition of various groups led to unwarranted views of the importance of cultural difference or other ethnic traits as contributors to criminality. Brown and Warner propose that the politics of law enforcement and interethnic competition must be factored into the study of crime etiology in turn-of-the-century America. In support of conflict perspectives, they find that the police were used by dominant ethnic groups to target ethnic subordinates and that such targeting was a major cause of the imbalance in arrests and other indices of criminality.

The theme of crime and criminality as indices of intergroup competition, inequality, and social control is further developed in the chapters by E. M. Beck and Stewart Tolnay and Martha Myers. Both sets of authors seek to account for patterns of crime and punishment (both formal and informal) in the post-Civil War south. Like Brown and Warner, Beck and Tolnay use a "threat" hypothesis and a model of economic competition to explain variations in rates of social control. For Beck and Tolnay, such control is measured by lynch mob activity directed toward African Americans between 1882 and 1930. Myers turns her attention to the treatment of blacks within both the formal and informal criminal justice systems of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century south. In an examination of the punishment of rape offenders, she argues that the specter of black criminality was an integral feature of race relations during this period. Like Beck and Tolnay, Myers finds that shifts in local economic conditions affected the rate and severity of formally administered punishment.

The nine chapters in the concluding section of the volume all examine late twentieth-century patterns of crime and social control. The first six of these explore in various ways the question of the disproportionate presence of African Americans among those processed through the American criminal justice system. The authors are not unanimous in their conclusions regarding the causes of such disproportionality.

The chapter by Gary LaFree is both a call for future researchers to face more squarely the existence of racial differences in the rate of reported crime in the United States and a useful analysis of post-World War II crime rate patterns. Many may challenge the accuracy of LaFree's view that the link between race and crime has been ignored. For example, arguments and questions not unlike those posed by LaFree can be found in the works of the authors reviewed by Hawkins in the introduction to this volume. Like these

earlier analysts, LaFree notes the sizable racial gap in the arrest rates for serious crime in the United States. He concludes on the basis of a review of recent literature that neither deterrence, social disorganization, nor economic distress perspectives fully explain postwar rates and trends. He proposes that the absence of a viable explanation argues for a bringing to the fore the relationship between race and crime. Although there is arguably some basis for LaFree's contention that neither of the three aforementioned perspectives fully explains the black-white crime rate gap, some may question the extent to which the data he reports fully support his conclusions.

Robert Crutchfield and Dorothy Lockwood and her colleagues respond to LaFree's call for attentiveness to and explanations for the connection between race and reported crime. Crutchfield uses the National Longitudinal Surveys of Youth Labor Market Experience to examine the relationship among race/ethnicity, access to work, and involvement in crime. While Crutchfield finds no single overriding correlate or cause of racial differences in the rate of involvement in crime among youth today, he takes exception to LaFree's seeming conclusion that economic factors are not important. Like the authors who conducted the historical studies included in this volume, Crutchfield argues that a complete understanding of race and crime must include a consideration of the importance of the distribution of jobs, and labor and market inequalities. He suggests that both crime and urban unrest are the result of economic disadvantage, isolation, and marginality.

Dorothy Lockwood, Anne Pottieger, and James Inciardi probe the issues raised by LaFree and Crutchfield through an examination of crack cocaine-related crime and consumption in Miami, Florida, between 1987 and 1991. Responding partly to media accounts of crack use and related crime as primarily a problem for African-Americans, the researchers find that the relationships among crime, crack use, and ethnicity are complex. Patterns of involvement in use/crime were found to vary by age, gender, and treatment status, as well as ethnicity. In the same way that McCord suggested that prior researchers failed to consider the socioeconomic conditions under which new immigrants to the United States were forced to live during the last century, Lockwood, Pottieger, and Inciardi argue that the media have failed to consider the significance of such conditions when proposing a link between race and crack cocaine.

Compared to the three chapters discussed above, the following two chapters in this section by William Chambliss and Coramae Richey Mann are more solidly grounded in the arguments of the conflict perspective. Their explanations for contemporary racial differences in the rate of reported crime closely resemble the historical accounts of Brown and Warner, Beck and Tolnay, and Martha Myers. Chambliss, whose earlier writings helped establish the credibility of conflict-oriented views of crime and justice, here tackles the

problem of the disproportionate imprisonment of persons of African ancestry in the United States today. To explain extant levels of racial disproportionality, he argues that between 1964 and 1990 the activities of a collection of diverse social and political interest groups created a “moral panic” about crime in the United States. These interests included conservative legislators, law enforcement agencies, the media, and social scientists. In the same way that Brown and Warner attributed the disproportionate arrest of certain white ethnic groups during the turn of the century to the politics of social control, Chambliss traces the politics and ideology of racially motivated policing in modern America. He provides a thoroughly documented and persuasive account of the effects of this *moral panic* and attendant overpolicing and overincarceration on poor African-American communities.

Coramae Mann builds upon and extends many of the arguments made by Chambliss. Her focus is on an examination of how socioeconomic inequality has contributed to the generation and persistence of *moral panics* aimed at the social control of all peoples of color in the United States. In addition to arguing that unequal social control is a *cause* of racial differences in rates of reported crime, Mann links *institutionalized racism* to crime through her discussion of its role in fostering those criminogenic social conditions often mentioned by traditional, positivistic analysts of the etiology of crime. That is, she sees a comparatively high rate of black crime as an “understandable” consequence of the substandard living conditions and consequent pathology created by racism. Her discussion echoes arguments made by Bonger (1916) who explored the social misery that contributes to the criminality of the poor. For Mann, higher rates of crime among peoples of color in the United States are a social reality that stems from both their economic misery and their greater risk of social control.

Theodore Chiricos and Charles Crawford provide an interesting test of the hypotheses proposed by both Chambliss and Mann. Sharing Chambliss’s concern for the high rates of imprisonment experienced by African-Americans, Chiricos and Crawford assess the evidence of racial bias in the decision to incarcerate. Their evidence consists of thirty-eight studies of race and imprisonment conducted since 1975. They conclude that after controlling for prior record and crime seriousness, blacks are disadvantaged at the point of in/out decisions. Bias is amplified for studies conducted in the south, in places where blacks comprise a significant percentage of the population, in rural areas, and in places with significant unemployment.

In her discussion of minority injustice in the United States, Coramae Mann cited the plight of Native Americans. This theme is explored further in the chapter written by Zoann Snyder-Joy. She provides an informative sketch of the effects of European colonialism on American Indian self-determination and confronts many of the classic questions now associated with the study of

ethnicity, race, and crime. After noting the disproportionate representation of Indians among those arrested for crime in the United States, she ponders the extent to which systematic discrimination, higher criminality, or other influences account for the Indian-white difference.

The final two chapters explore the interrelationship among ethnicity, race, and crime through the study of two western European societies—Germany and France. These analyses raise questions very similar to those raised in the study of the experiences of white ethnics in the United States during the last century and of nonwhites in the country today. Since World War II both Germany and France have seen increases in ethnic and racial diversity as their governments have allowed and sometimes encouraged the immigration of workers. As recent events in these countries have shown, animosity against the foreign-born has become more evident. Roland Chilton, Raymond Teske, and Harald Arnold note interesting parallels and differences between Germany and the United States in the response of government to the rising crime rates of ethnic and racial minorities. Their discussion of the effects of subordinate group status on involvement in crime and punishment for it is supportive of conflict theories of social control. And, like Mann, they note the effects of economic and political disadvantage on the production of crime among ethnic minorities in Germany.

Pamela Irving Jackson's depiction of the mobilization of law enforcement in France in response to minority threat mirrors Brown and Warner's findings regarding the policing of immigrant populations at the turn of the century in the United States. Her assertion that economic competition was the basis for social control efforts is also similar to arguments made by Beck and Tolnay and Myers about antiblack violence in the American south. Like Chilton, Teske, and Arnold, Jackson notes the parallels between the treatment of African Americans and European racial/ethnic minorities. She observes that, as in the United States, criminal justice agencies in France are increasingly expected to handle the problems of inner city disorganization resulting from the growth of minority populations in a stagnant economy. I was particularly impressed by the author's ability to place issues of crime and punishment within the larger political and social contexts from which they emerge.

Considered as a group, the papers prepared for this volume make a valuable contribution to the efforts of social scientists to understand the effects of ethnic/racial diversity and conflict on crime and social control. Much remains to be studied. Much remains to be learned. The recent controversy at the National Institutes of Health surrounding the question of racial differences in the rate of involvement in interpersonal violence illustrates the sensitivity and volatility of discussions of ethnicity, race, and crime. Many of the issues raised in this volume have the potential to evoke similar controversy

and concern. As during the past, the public and scholarly discourse on the subject of ethnicity, race, and crime itself can be used to justify ethnocentrism, bigotry, and discriminatory policies and practices. Such discourse can also lead to the eradication of myth, pseudo-science, and stereotypes, a goal shared by all contributors to this volume.

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