

Preface

The latter part of the 20th century saw a tremendous burgeoning of information about the causes, course, and consequences of delinquent careers. During this period, our knowledge about the epidemiology of delinquency and crime, risk and protective factors for this type of behavior, etiological theories, and life-course consequences of adolescent deviance expanded exponentially. All of these topics were examined from multidisciplinary perspectives and the rate at which our knowledge base expanded was revolutionary.

Although many research approaches contributed to this increased understanding of delinquency, no approach was more central than the one based on longitudinal research designs. Longitudinal studies vary considerably in size and orientation, but they all trace the development of delinquent and criminal careers over time. Doing so allowed them to address a host of new issues and to reexamine a host of old ones with new rigor and precision. Their empirical findings have led to new theoretical perspectives and to new policies for prevention and treatment.

In this volume, the principal scientists from seven contemporary longitudinal studies of delinquency pause for a moment to reflect upon and to take stock of their empirical results. Our basic objective is to summarize major findings, both within each of these longitudinal studies and across them, so that common themes can be identified.

The seven studies include the three projects of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Program of Research on the Causes and Correlates of Delinquency. These studies are the Denver Youth Survey, the Pittsburgh Youth Study, and the Rochester Youth Development Study. The Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development, the Houston Longitudinal Study, the Montreal Longitudinal and Experimental Study, and the Seattle Social Development Project are also represented. There are, obviously, many other excellent longitudinal studies that are not represented in this volume, but the ones that are included are among the better known and represent a substantial portion of the theoretical, temporal, and geographical diversity of the full set of longitudinal studies. We hope that a volume summarizing the major results of these seven studies will yield a starting point for the even more general enterprise of synthesizing and

reconciling the empirical results from the full range of contemporary longitudinal studies of delinquency.

Longitudinal panel studies by design are major undertakings typically involving the efforts of a number of scholars and support staff and requiring substantial financial backing. Being responsible for such an enterprise along with the production of the quality and quantity of information represented in this volume is a most labor-intensive task. So we are especially grateful to the contributing authors for taking the time to write such thoughtful summaries of the products of their labors.

The research reviewed here could not have been conducted if the various funding agencies had not had the foresight to provide support for these projects and to continue to provide money for data collection and analyses over the many years that the studies have been ongoing. The initial funding for the three projects that served to stimulate interest in producing this compendium was provided by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. However, the seven projects included in this volume have been sponsored by a multitude of agencies and foundations. We are sure that all of the contributing authors would join us in thanking these agencies and the people who work in them for the confidence they have displayed in us.

Projects of this size and complexity require the efforts of more than just the principal and co-principal investigators. The research reviewed in these chapters is a result of the work of many collaborators, support staff, field workers, and research assistants whose names may not appear on the byline of these chapters. In many ways though, this compendium is a tribute to their efforts.

The editors of this volume would like to especially thank our co-workers on the Rochester Youth Development Study who have contributed to its production. Alan Lizotte, Carolyn Smith, and Pam Porter have been involved in all phases of the Rochester Study and their contributions to this volume exceed their work on our chapter. We would especially like to thank Patricia Lambrecht for her editorial assistance in making seven somewhat different chapters appear as a coherent whole.

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