



Understanding Crime Data (Study Guides)

Clive Coleman

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- * What are the main ways of acquiring numerical information about crime and offenders?
- * How can we understand this information and avoid the various pitfalls of interpretation?
- * What does the evidence tell us about the relationships between offending and age, sex, race, class, unemployment, and trends in crime over the years?

This clear and practical text breathes life into an essential subject that students have at times found uninspiring. It provides a guide to crime data for those with little background in the subject and at the same time, it will provide a source of reference for more experienced researchers. The authors have, for example, minimized as far as possible the presentation of detailed figures and complicated tables, but they have not avoided some of the more difficult issues that arise in interpreting and using such data.

Understanding Crime Data begins by locating the study and use of crime data within the theoretical and historical development of criminology, a subject that has long been haunted by the dark figure of hidden crime and offenders. Readers are guided through the development, limitations and uses of the three main sources of numerical crime data, and selected key issues in the interpretation of crime data are examined.

The characteristics of offenders are discussed with reference to the key variables of age, sex, race and class, and the difficulties involved in interpreting long and short term trends in the crime rate are highlighted. The authors assess what crime data can tell us about the relationships between crime and unemployment, and they conclude the book with their personal evaluation and prognosis of the field.

Understanding Crime Data is a well structured text for students of criminology, and it includes annotated further reading, lists of basic concepts, and a glossary for ease of reference. It will also have considerable appeal to professionals in criminal justice, probation and social work.

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