Editors' Preface to Macmillan Studies in Economics

The rapid growth of academic literature in the field of economics has posed serious problems for both students and teachers of the subject. The latter find it difficult to keep pace with more than few areas of the subject so that an inevitable trend towards specialism emerges. The student quickly loses perspective as the maze of theories and models grows, particularly at a time when so much reappraisal of the established paradigms is taking place.

The aim of the 'Macmillan Studies in Economics' is to offer students, and perhaps some teachers as well, short, reasonably critical overviews of developments in selected areas of economics, particularly those in which current controversies are to be found. As far as possible the titles have been selected to form an integrated whole, although inevitably whole areas have been neglected as being unsuited to the style, format and length of the titles in the series.

In some cases the volumes are rather more like essays than surveys. In most cases, however, the aim is to survey the salient literature in a critical fashion. The level of understanding required to read the volumes varies with the complexity of the subject, but they have been generally written to suit the second- and third-year undergraduate seeking to place his reading of the detailed literature in an over-all context. They are *not* textbooks. Instead they seek to give the kind of perspective that might well be lost by reading longer textbooks on their own, or by reading articles in journals. In particular, they should be most suited to pre-examination revision periods. They are not intended to substitute for the essential reading and assimilation of the original works that they seek to survey and assess.

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The Economics of Crime

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R.W.A.

Introduction

This book is concerned with the economics of crime prevention. It is doubtful whether the potential criminal will find in it much that is to his private advantage. In the parlance of historians, it is a secondary work the main objective of which is exposition of the literature. In one or two places, however, an attempt is made to extend the two basic models – those of Ehrlich [1] and Becker [2] – in certain rather obvious ways, notably in Chapters 5 and 6. A low ceiling has been placed on the level of mathematical sophistication expected of the reader: there is nothing beyond partial differentiation – not even Lagrangean multipliers.

It should be noted that, throughout, the conceptual framework of welfare economics is applied. The objective is to identify policies which will produce potential Pareto improvements. Individuals, even those who break laws, are assumed to be the best judges of their own welfare. In the absence of any statement to the contrary it should be assumed that all parties' costs and benefits are being counted and are being given the subjective valuations of the parties themselves so far as that is possible. Though laymen, criminologists, sociologists and others are fond of drawing a distinction between economic and non-economic crimes, this is not an easy task and one that we shall not attempt. On the contrary, it is useful to have money values for 'non-economic' crimes to ensure their commensurability with 'economic' crimes and the commensurability of both with the inputs of crime-prevention resources which can, on the whole, readily be expressed in money terms.