



The Roots of Violent Crime in America

From the Gilded Age through the Great Depression

BARRY LATZER

The Roots of Violent Crime in America is criminologist Barry Latzer's comprehensive analysis of crimes of violence—including murder, assault, and rape—in the United States from the 1880s through the 1930s. Combining the theoretical perspectives and methodological rigor of criminology with a synthesis of historical scholarship as well as original research and analysis, Latzer challenges conventional thinking about violent crime of this era.

While scholars have traditionally cast American cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as dreadful places, Latzer suggests that despite overcrowding and poverty, U.S. cities enjoyed low rates of violent crime, especially when compared to rural areas. The rural South and the thinly populated West both suffered much higher levels of brutal crime than the metropolises of the East and Midwest. Latzer deemphasizes racism and bigotry as causes of violence during this period, noting that while many social groups confronted significant levels of discrimination and abuse, only some engaged in high levels of violent crime. Cultural predispositions and subcultures of violence, he posits, led some groups to participate more frequently in violent activity than others. He also argues that the prohibition on alcohol in the 1920s did not drive up rates of violent crime. Though the bootlegger wars contributed considerably to the murder rate in some of America's largest municipalities, Prohibition also eliminated saloons, which served as hubs of vice, corruption, and lawlessness.

The Roots of Violent Crime in America stands as a sweeping reevaluation of the causes of crimes of violence in the United States between the Gilded Age and World War II, compelling readers to rethink enduring assumptions on this contentious topic.

For over three and a half decades, **BARRY LATZER** served as professor of criminal justice at John Jay College, CUNY, where he was a member of the graduate faculty. He has written five books and nearly ninety scholarly articles and research reports.

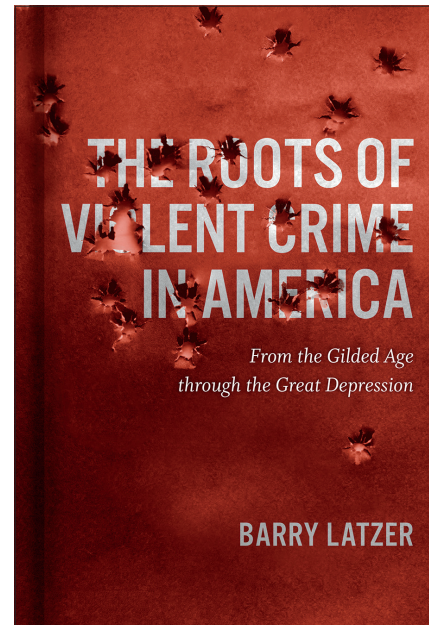
PRAISE FOR BARRY LATZER:

"Barry Latzer is to be commended for developing an exhaustively researched yet eminently readable account that should be mandatory reading for any scholar of crime and violence in the United States."

—Samuel Bieler, former research associate for justice policy at the Urban Institute

"Latzer convincingly cuts through the prejudices, passions, and politics surrounding both popular and scholarly explanations of this controversial subject. A magnificent achievement."

—Roger Lane, author of *Murder in America*



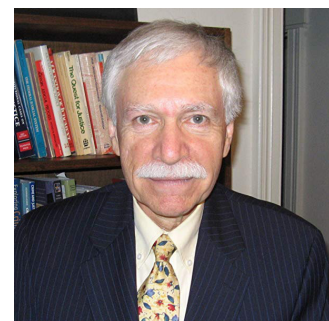
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