



Book Review of Crime Online¹

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Yvonne Jewkes (Ed.), *Crime Online* Portland, Oregon: Willan Publishing, 2007. ISBN: 978-1-84392-197-4

Yvonne Jewkes', *Crime Online*, attempts to increase understanding of the nature of "cyber crime" and to elevate study of relevant phenomena to a position of prominence within the field of criminology. Deviating from Jewkes' earlier focus on gender, sexuality, and sexual deviance (Jewkes, 2003), *Crime Online* offers a mixed bag of chapters addressing specific topical areas related to cyber crime, including on-line victimization, the social construction and policy implications of Internet crime, the dichotomous nature of cyberspace, the impenetrable anonymity and pseudonymity of the virtual universe, and the challenges of regulation and control. Although at first glance the chapters of the book appear to be somewhat discontinuous, they are in the end held together by recognition of the sheer diversity of activities encompassed within the term "cyber crime" and by the editor's intent to appeal to a general audience. The presentation is aimed explicitly at providing readers with a broad and introductory overview of the emerging field rather than with technical and specialized treatises of greater interest and relevance to those with a high level of expertise.

The term "cyber crime" generally denotes the use of a computer to engage in illegal activity. When committed online, crimes such as theft, vandalism, fraud, extortion, forgery, harassment and stalking extend beyond the usual confines of physical and social space. In the absence of ordinary constraints, the negative impact of cyber crime and those who perpetrate them may well surpass that of their "real world" counterparts. On-line predators, for example, potentially can commit hundreds of crimes against numerous victims quickly, anonymously, and with relative ease. Their risk of detection and punishment also tends to be quite low. As Brenner (Chapter 2) and Moore (Chapter 6) note, law enforcement efforts to control various forms of cyber crime often have been

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stymied by legislative and definitional confusion, jurisdictional issues, inadequate computer forensics and law enforcement integration, and problems associated with the admissibility of computer forensic evidence in court.

With cyber terrorism,” “cyber stalking,” and some of the other emergent forms of crimes discussed by the authors of the book transcending both cyberspace and the “terra firma” universe, the distinction traditionally drawn between virtual crime and real crime no longer seems tenable. Jewkes’ chapter, for example, brings to light the Internet’s role in cases of suicide, governmental imprisonment, and manslaughter. Individual chapters by Yar, Fafinski, Wykes, and Cere tackle the social construction of “new” crimes via the Internet through analysis of topics as diverse and “real” as hooliganism, piracy, moral panics, and the orchestration of individual and group violence. In the final chapter, Aas explores the social interaction between offline and online characteristics of social governance while entertaining the notion that reality is fiction, similar to the movie series *The Matrix*.

Together, these and other chapters included within *Crime Online* contribute to the book’s overall appeal. The breadth of the topics and the insights offered by each of the authors can be expected to generate spirited discussions of social construction processes and the real world implications of virtual crime. Another notable quality of *Crime Online* is its potential to complement any comparative criminal justice or criminology course. Authored by a collection of internationally known scholars from the U.S., Norway, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, the chapters of the book bring to bear a range of cross-cultural perspectives, disciplines, and areas of expertise on one of the most relevant issues in the current age of computers and technological advance.

A problem with all books devoted to computer-related issues is that they are no sooner published than they become obsolete. The authors’ focus on the intersection of virtual reality and the relationship between cause and effect in the terrestrial world ensures continued relevance of *Crime Online*, however. The progressive attributes of the book have made research pertaining to cyber crime accessible and relevant, and the authors do in fact convince the reader that study of cyber crime and cyber criminals belong in mainstream criminology, both now and in the future.

Reference

Jewkes, Y. (2003). *Dot.cons : crime, deviance and identity on the internet*. Cullompton: Willan.