PREFACE

Criminal justice is one of the fastest-growing majors in colleges and universities nationwide. Although many texts have been developed for courses such as Introduction to Criminal Justice, most of these are textbooks. With most textbooks, the "facts" about criminal justice are transmitted to students but often in the absence of a larger framework of understanding or a paradigm within which to situate these facts. This can pose a challenge, especially for the many professors who teach criminal justice courses within sociology departments where an important goal in any course, regardless of topic, is to transmit a sociological perspective to the students. Despite the fact that most sociology departments offer introductory criminal justice courses, we are unaware of any text or reader currently on the market that explicitly seeks to promote a sociological understanding of criminal justice for students.

In response to this need, we have created this volume, *Introduction to Criminal Justice: A Sociological Perspective*. The goal of this text is to approach the theories, organization, and practices of criminal justice from a sociological perspective so that students can simultaneously develop expertise in criminal justice *and* understand how issues related to the police, courts, and corrections are informed by larger sociological principles and concepts such as power, institutions, race, ethnicity, gender, social class, discretion, inequality, social control, and so forth. The goal is to deemphasize basic criminal justice facts and emphasize sociological issues in criminal justice that require more extensive discussion. In this volume, students will learn the foundational concepts of criminal justice (the what), but, more importantly, they will gain a greater understanding of its functions, processes, and outcomes (the why).

We have selected a reader format because articles and excerpts allow students to truly see sociology in action in criminal justice, and to understand how researchers identify sociological questions about criminal justice issues, gather data to study those questions, and report findings in the context of the broader research literature. Our desire is to expose students to the wide and varying sociological research on criminal justice. As a result, the readings vary along several dimensions. Some are classic pieces while others are contempo-

rary. Some are theoretical while others are empirical. And some present a quantitative re-search approach while others present a qualitative research approach. In the end, students are exposed to some of the best thinking and research on crime and its control produced by scholars with different theoretical and ideological orientations and diverse ideas on the best ways to prevent and control crime in our society. We have edited the readings to make them more accessible to students who are not yet familiar with the subject matter or the statistical methods used in empirical studies. Of course, the critical substance and message of each piece is maintained.

The volume is organized into five substantive parts, in line with what is typically cov-ered in criminal justice courses: (1) foundational issues of justice, (2) policing, (3) courts, (4) corrections, and (5) crime control in the 21st century. Along with carefully selected readings, each section contains an introductory discussion intended to guide students through the readings and present the material in its broader sociological context. These in-troductions are fairly lengthy, as they are meant to be effective complements to the chapter entries.

We offer this collection as a testimonial to the vibrancy of criminal justice research. Our sense is that there has never been a better time to study criminal justice, and we hope the issues discussed in each section of the volume—issues related to justice, policing, courts, corrections, and crime control in the 21st century—ignite an interest in gaining a greater understanding of our criminal justice system. Above all else, we hope that you find the readings enjoyable, enlightening, and thought-provoking.