



AFFECT AND COGNITION IN CRIMINAL DECISION MAKING

EDITED BY JEAN-LOUIS VAN GELDER,
HENK ELFFERS, DANIELLE REYNALD
AND DANIEL NAGIN

Crime Science Series

Affect and Cognition in Criminal Decision Making

Research and theorizing on criminal decision making has not kept pace with recent developments in other domains of human decision making. Whereas criminal decision making theory is still largely dominated by cognitive approaches and rational choice-based models, psychologists, behavioural economists and neuroscientists have found affect (i.e., emotions, moods) and visceral factors such as sexual arousal and drug craving to play a fundamental role in human decision processes.

This book presents alternative approaches that examine the influence of affect on criminal decisions. In doing so, it generalizes extant cognitive theories of criminal decision making by incorporating affect into the decision process. In two conceptual and ten empirical chapters it is carefully argued how affect influences criminal decisions alongside rational and cognitive considerations. The empirical studies use a wide variety of methods ranging from interviews and observations to experimental approaches and questionnaires, and treat crimes as diverse as robbery, pilfering, and sex offences. It will be of interest to criminologists, psychologists, judgment and decision making researchers, behavioural economists and sociologists alike.

Jean-Louis Van Gelder holds a PhD in law and another one in psychology, and currently works as a researcher at the Netherlands Institute for the Study of Crime and Law Enforcement (NSCR). His research interests focus on criminal decision making where he applies insights from social psychology and social cognition to study the interplay of affect and cognition on criminal decisions. Other research interests include personality and crime and informality in developing countries.

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Crime science series

Edited by Richard Wortley, UCL

Crime science is a new way of thinking about and responding to the problem of crime in society. The distinctive nature of crime science is captured in the name.

First, crime science is about crime. Instead of the usual focus in criminology on the characteristics of the criminal offender, crime science is concerned with the characteristics of the criminal event. The analysis shifts from the distant causes of criminality – biological makeup, upbringing, social disadvantage and the like – to the near causes of crime. Crime scientists are interested in why, where, when and how particular crimes occur. They examine trends and patterns in crime in order to devise immediate and practical strategies to disrupt these patterns.

Second, crime science is about science. Many traditional responses to crime control are unsystematic, reactive, and populist, too often based on untested assumptions about what works. In contrast crime science advocates an evidence-based, problem-solving approach to crime control. Adopting the scientific method, crime scientists collect data on crime, generate hypotheses about observed crime trends, devise interventions to respond to crime problems, and test the adequacy of those interventions.

Crime science is utilitarian in its orientation and multidisciplinary in its foundations. Crime scientists actively engage with front-line criminal justice practitioners to reduce crime by making it more difficult for individuals to offend, and making it more likely that they will be detected if they do offend. To achieve these objectives, crime science draws on disciplines from both the social and physical sciences, including criminology, sociology, psychology, geography, economics, architecture, industrial design, epidemiology, computer science, mathematics, engineering, and biology.

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Affect and Cognition in Criminal Decision Making

**Edited by Jean-Louis Van Gelder,
Henk Elffers, Danielle Reynald and
Daniel Nagin**

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Terrorists (Praeger, 2006) and *Situational Prevention of Organised Crimes* (Willan, 2010). In 2011, his colleagues and former students published a festschrift in his honor (*The Reasoning Criminologist*, Routledge.) His current research focus is wildlife crime.

Henk Elffers graduated in mathematical statistics at the University of Amsterdam and gained his PhD in Psychology of Law at Erasmus University Rotterdam with a thesis on income tax evasion. He has held various research appointments in Amsterdam (mathematics), Utrecht (geography), Rotterdam (methodology of empirical law research) and Antwerp (law and psychology). He is presently Senior Researcher at the Netherlands Institute for the Study of Crime and Law Enforcement NSCR (Leiden) and Professor of empirical research into criminal law enforcement at VU University Amsterdam. He is interested in spatial aspects of crime, rational choice theory of rule compliance, the role of guardians in preventing crime, and the relationship between judges and the general public.

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Job Van Der Schalk is a lecturer at the School of Psychology, Cardiff University. His research focuses on emotions as a social phenomenon, investigating displays of emotions, how people recognize and respond to others' emotions, and how others' emotions influence behaviour. He received his MSc and PhD in psychology at the University of Amsterdam and worked as a Research Associate at Cardiff University before becoming a lecturer there.

Jean-Louis Van Gelder works as a researcher at the Netherlands Institute for the Study of Crime and Law Enforcement (NSCR). His research interests include criminal decision making in which he applies insights from social psychology and social cognition to study the interplay of affect and cognition on criminal

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Richard Wortley is Director of the Jill Dando Institute for Security and Crime Science, University College London. His research interests centre on the role that immediate environments play in criminal behaviour and the implications this has for situational crime prevention. Books include *Situational Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse* (co-edited with Stephen Smallbone, Criminal Justice Press/Willow Tree Press, 2006), *Preventing Child Sexual Abuse* (co-written with Stephen Smallbone and William Marshall, Willan, 2008), *Psychological Criminology* (Routledge, 2011) and *Internet Child Pornography* (with Stephen Smallbone, Praeger, 2012). He has been involved in research projects on topics that include official misconduct in prison, whistleblowing in the public sector, child sexual abuse, the investigation of internet child exploitation, and intimate partner homicide.

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Babet Zevenbergen studied Criminology at the VU University Amsterdam. She started her professional career at the Netherlands Institute for the Study of Crime and Law Enforcement (NSCR) by analyzing qualitative in-depth interviews with street robbers in Amsterdam which resulted in her highly valued Master's thesis. Since then, she has carried out extensive research on several topics within the field of (violent) street crime and specialized in working with deviant youth.

Preface

On a warm September day in 2009 in Ljubljana, Slovenia, two of the editors of this volume jointly presented a paper entitled ‘Ratio or Affect in Criminal Decision Making’ at the annual European Society of Criminology Conference, in which they crossed swords on how to deal with affect in criminal decision making. Elffers, who has a background in mathematics, argued within the criminological tradition of Cornish and Clarke’s *Reasoning Criminal*, and held that the standard rational choice model is very well able to incorporate emotions. Van Gelder, who is trained as a psychologist, contended that emotions cannot be accommodated by straightforward cost–benefit analyses in this tradition. It was this confrontation between modern psychological theory and traditional criminological views that led to the idea of organizing an international workshop on the matter. The idea was pitched to Dan Nagin, who had already argued several years earlier in his Sutherland Address that the interaction between cognition and emotion is critical to understanding crime, and Danielle Reynald, who was also willing to join forces in the endeavour. We subsequently invited a number of leading criminologists to participate in the project. To our delight, almost all of them responded enthusiastically to our invitation.

In Spring 2011 the Netherlands Institute for the Study of Crime and Law Enforcement (NSCR) in Amsterdam organized a two-day workshop at the Oud Poelgeest manor in the town of Oegstgeest, the Netherlands. The manor was a fitting location not least because it had once been the home of the eminent Dutch scientist and physician Herman Boerhaave (1668–1738), whose dissertation (1689) dealt with the relation between mind and body *De distinctione mentis a corpore*. Workshop participants had been asked to reflect on the question whether, and if so how, affect could be incorporated within a rational choice model. Perhaps it was Boerhaave’s spirit that inspired the participants, each of whom proposed an empirical study or theoretical piece, to present and defend their ideas in front of an audience of fellow scientists. Discussions on these tentative ideas and plans were at times heated but always constructive, and most participants agreed to pursue their intentions and execute their proposed investigation in the year following the workshop.

Precisely one year later, we reconvened in Oud Poelgeest for a second workshop during which participants presented their results and explained how their

study sheds light on the affect and cognition question. Authors used the input they got during the second workshop to strengthen their papers, after which a formal peer review process followed.

We as editors believe that this intensive two-workshops-plus-peer-review format has resulted in a set of highly interesting and strong papers. We are delighted with the end result and hope that *Affect and Cognition in Criminal Decision Making* will inspire crime researchers to start addressing the interplay of affect and cognition in their work.

Jean-Louis Van Gelder, Henk Elffers, Danielle Reynald and Daniel Nagin
Amsterdam, 1 May 2013