

BOOK REVIEW

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A Review of *Fundamentals of Criminal Investigation*

REFERENCE: O'Hara, C. E., with O'Hara, G. L., *Fundamentals of Criminal Investigation*, 5th ed., Charles C Thomas, Springfield, Ill., 1980, 898 pages, \$26.75.

Perhaps one measure of a book's value to a particular discipline is reflected by the number of editions the publisher releases, as this is a reflection of demand for the text. On this measure there can be little doubt that O'Hara's text has proved successful since five editions have been released since its original publication in 1956, and almost 200 000 copies have been sold. There are, however, other measures of performance that also guide us in assessing a textbook's contribution to the particular discipline in question. For example, the seminal nature of the book, the book's propensity for stimulating further research, and the frequency for bibliographic citation in other scholarly monographs, articles, and books are but a few examples of these measures of performance.

One of the more salient observations of O'Hara's fifth edition is its striking similarity to its fourth edition and, for that matter, all previous editions. In the four-year period between the 1976 fourth edition and the present fifth edition, only 40 pages were added to the textbook; virtually all material remained intact in the sense that no new chapters were added. This point is of particular significance, as during this same four-year period major contributions to the literature on criminal investigation were released by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, the Police Foundation, the Rand Corporation, the Police Executive Research Forum, and others. Yet nowhere in this revised fifth edition is any acknowledgment made of some rather significant and major research studies affecting the entire approach to the subject of criminal investigation. There is no mention made of the proliferation of mathematical models for probability and optimal decision-making in selecting cases for criminal investigation. In short, a vast body of research that seriously challenges the traditional approach to criminal investigation is completely ignored. This omission seriously erodes the scholarly value of O'Hara's text, as it simply does not reflect contemporary research trends in this important field. However, this phenomenon is not unique to O'Hara's text; if one seriously examines most criminal investigation texts, there are precious few differences since Hans Gross's *Criminal Investigation* was first translated from German into English in 1896.

There are, perhaps, only a handful of police departments in this country that do not presently have at least one copy of one of the five editions of O'Hara's text, yet therein lies a double-edged sword. For on the one hand, it certainly illustrates the vast acceptance by practitioners of O'Hara's text; yet on the other hand, it indicates how serious this omission of

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contemporary research challenging the traditional method of conducting criminal investigations really is: it precludes a wonderful opportunity few authors are ever privileged to receive, namely that of significantly altering or modifying contemporary operational practices in a particular discipline or field.

In essence, O'Hara's failure to include or revise his traditional approach to reflect the application of mathematical models to criminal investigation would have to be faulted from a scholarly research point of view. This edition was a unique opportunity for the O'Haras to make a substantial revision to the text consistent with contemporary research; such a revision would have permitted their text to be more compatible with current trends that have emerged only in the past four years and therefore would have enriched the value of their work. The choice not to do so will, in time, qualify this text for a place on the "over the hill" shelf of one's library.

Despite this criticism, one suspects police organizations and police training academies will continue to use this text, if for no other reason than its apparent value in detailing basic fundamentals of the criminal investigation process, which, by the way, it does well. As for academic institutions, one sees decreasing use of this text except periodically as a reference source because, ideally, the educator desires a text that will specify in some detail mathematical and statistical models applicable to the criminal investigation process, in other words, how the criminal investigative process may be improved through the application of the scientific method and by the use of probability theory and other economic and statistical forecasting strategies. Ideally, the development and application of these quantitative models will enhance optimal decision-making, case selection, and the cost- and manpower-effectiveness of the criminal investigative process. In short, the field is ripe for a "new" criminal investigation text incorporating much of the recent research that has seriously challenged the utility of traditional criminal investigative procedures.