This book represents the most rigorous, social-scientific study to date demonstrating that neither urban environments themselves nor the change in modern societies from predominantly rural to urban "causes" crime. Focusing on Germany between 1871 and 1914, the period of its industrial revolution and emergence as a world power, this volume explores crime patterns, criminal justice institutions and practices, and popular and elite attitudes toward crime, criminals, and criminal justice authorities.

Criticizing as largely conservative and elitist in origin the notions that cities cause crime, the book demonstrates that the real roots of crime in German society are to be found in a mix of economic hardship, ethnic bias, and political repression – conditions that conscious political decisions, law, and legal officials either can help overcome or indeed can make even worse. In examining how the crime drama was played out in Imperial Germany, the book credits German law, judges, police, and populace for their technical expertise, high intellectual level, and orderly nature. It also indicts them for launching Germany on a dangerous path that would allow German judges and police in the mid–twentieth century to claim that they were acting only in the well–respected tradition of legal positivism.
Urbanization and Crime
For my mother,
Frances Elizabeth Barrett Johnson
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It is fitting that I finish this book in one of Germany’s greatest cities on a day of joy and celebration. For, despite some recent concerns about the re-emergence of German nationalism, attacks on foreigners, and even rising rates of urban crime, I have always enjoyed myself fully and felt quite secure and very much at home in German cities. Their sensible organization, clean streets, ample parks, good transportation systems, and bountiful amusements have proven many times over, to this American at least, that cities can be wonderful places in which to live and work. My feeling of well-being in the German metropolis has resulted even more directly from the friendship, support, and hospitality shown to me and my family by many German people over the years, especially by our closest German friends, Rolf and Asja Hamacher, Karl-Heinz Reuband, Helmut and Lucia (Lambertini) Thome, and the Antoine family. Also receiving my gratitude in this regard are several colleagues and associates, such as Ralph Ponemere, Harald Rohlinger, Willi Schröder, and Christiane Wever, at the Center for Historical Social Research and the Central Archive for Empirical Social Research of the University of Cologne, where much of this book has been written.

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