

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-47017-9 - Urbanization and Crime: Germany 1871-1914

Eric A. Johnson

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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.

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# *Urbanization and Crime*

GERMANY 1871–1914

ERIC A. JOHNSON

*Central Michigan University*





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For my mother,  
Frances Elizabeth Barrett Johnson

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## *Preface*

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 Ponemereo, 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.

Many scholars and friends from other countries have done much to influence my thinking and improve my scholarship. Richard Evans of the University of London and Konrad Jarausch of the University of North Carolina have been inspirational in their exemplary work on German social history and have been particularly supportive of my own efforts over the past decade. I am also grateful to Pieter Spierenburg of the University of Rotterdam and Jan Sundin of the University of Linköping, from whom I have learned much on the subject of criminal justice history. My colleagues at Central Michigan University also merit my sincere thanks. Their generous and continued support of my research efforts, including their willingness to shoulder many teaching and administrative burdens during my several lengthy absences, as well as their helpful criticism of my work in departmen-

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tal seminars, have done much to make this book possible. In particular, I wish to thank Tom Benjamin, Charles Ebel, John Haeger, Dave Macleod, Steve Scherer, and Jim Schmiechen. Many other people from other universities have read individual chapters or the entire manuscript along the way and also deserve my thanks. Tony DiIorio of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and Steve Hochstadt of Bates College long ago made important suggestions on the earliest drafts. Volker Berghahn of Brown University and Vernon Lidtke of Johns Hopkins University read the entire manuscript. Their painstaking and always constructive suggestions and advice not only helped me provide needed focus to this study but also alerted me to many mistakes I would otherwise have made. The book is a much better one for their efforts, although whatever mistakes and weaknesses that may remain are to be charged completely to my account.

A special word of appreciation also goes to Frank Smith of Cambridge University Press. He has been a very kind, responsive, and understanding editor.

Finally, five people, very close to me, have my deepest gratitude. John C. Johnson, my father, inspired me with an interest in scholarship and in German society. A downed American pilot and prisoner of war in Stalag Luft I, and later professor of physics, he had an enthusiastic intellectual curiosity and heartfelt fair-mindedness that have always been my foremost examples. Were he still alive, I know he would be happy to see this book finally in print. Signe Haas, my sister, shared his legacy and loss with me, and I am happy to share with her my joy over the publication of this book. Mary Johnson, my wife, has been by my side during the many years of this book's development and has patiently and lovingly supported me through thick and thin. She has thought and read through this book with me more times than either of us cares to remember. Benjamin Johnson, my son, let me use his bedroom to write much of the book and provided me with a kind of extra inspiration that perhaps only parents can understand. Frances Johnson, my mother, receives my deepest and final thanks. Without her love and nourishment I would never have written any book. This book is dedicated to her.

Cologne, Rosenmontag, February 14, 1994