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Foreword to the Fourth Edition

It now has been eleven years since the publication of the third edition of *Theoretical Criminology*. The reasons for the long delay in publishing a fourth edition are interesting from the point of view of what this edition seeks to accomplish.

I first started working on a fourth edition in 1990, but that effort ground to a halt when I was about one-third done. The increasingly complex and interrelated nature of criminology theory had made it difficult for me to divide the field into a sequence of neat little boxes (chapters), as is required in a textbook. I eventually became dissatisfied with my proposed organization of the material but was unable to reconceptualize it at that point. In addition, I had eliminated too much of the older material so that I could present recent work more completely while maintaining the approximate size of the book. I eventually realized that the very completeness of my presentations, as well as the loss of the older material, would make the book less accessible and less useful to its readers.

This book's major contribution to the field of criminology has been that it provides a coherent, accurate, and accessible overview of theories in their historic and social context. I had lost the thread of this major contribution, so I abandoned my attempted revision and decided to come back to it later when I had a better sense of what I was doing.

At that same time, I was working on two issues related to the role of theory in criminology. In the process of working on successive editions of this book, I became convinced that criminology was failing to make scientific progress. For example, in each successive edition, I threw out