

AU professor authors chapter in 'International Handbook of Violence Research'

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Dr. David Kowalewski, emeritus professor of political science in the College of Liberal Arts & Science at Alfred University, is the author of a chapter on "Vigilantism," part of the International Handbook of Violence Research, edited by Wilhelm Heitmeyer and John Hagan and published by Kluwer Academic Publishers, The Netherlands. Kowalewski is one of 81 contributors from 10 countries whose work is included in the Handbook. Vigilantism, Kowalewski writes, "refers to the activities of private citizens, or government employees acting off-duty in their private capacity, designed to suppress deviance by other citizens. By deviance is meant the beliefs and behaviors of citizens which differ significantly from the established social norms of the community." Three types of activities motivate vigilantes to take action, according to Kowalewski. Some are motivated by criminal acts, such as drug-dealers in their neighborhoods. Others react to cultural differences, for example, taking action against a "hippie commune" that locates nearby. Others act out of political conviction, and Kowalewski cites labor strikes as an example. He notes that vigilantes may act alone, such as Bernard Goetz, the New York "subway killer" who shot several would-be muggers, and others act as community groups. An example of group vigilantes are the white South African "commandos" who organized to combat threats to their property by black African cattle-raiders.