



Juvenile Delinquency *in a* **Diverse Society**

Kristin A. Bates // Richelle S. Swan





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PREFACE

My husband and I joke a lot about our sons. One of our sons is easily influenced by the threat of punishment. He will pretty much do anything to not receive a time-out. He is our gentle giant. Our other son is unconcerned by punishment, and we refer to him as our mafia don. I have a sneaking suspicion we may be bailing him out of juvie one day. Or he will become the next Zen Master—it could go either way. I love to watch these two kids and wonder what their futures will hold. Will they be into theater? And sports? Will they love school, like I did? Or rather spend all day outside talking each other into jumping off the roof of the house like my husband and his brother did? Will we hit a rough patch where they won't want to talk to us? Will they come out the other side of their teenage years happy and healthy, with a strong dose of empathy for their fellow citizens?

One of the things I wonder most about my kids is whether they will engage in delinquency—or actually, more to the point, whether they will be caught and end up in the juvenile justice system. As you will see (and as you know, if you have ever been a teenager), almost everyone engages in some form of juvenile delinquency, or status offense, or ends up being a victim of it. The reasons for this are many, but two of the largest are that, first, the term *juvenile delinquency* (in addition to *status offense*) covers such a large array of behaviors and, second, we are constantly redefining behaviors that in the past were not considered delinquency and making them so. As the mother of two amazing boys, this scares the heck out of me and at the same time makes me certain that the study of juvenile delinquency and our societal responses to it is one of the most important academic endeavors a sociologist, a criminologist, or you, an undergraduate student, faces. I have taught juvenile delinquency for almost two decades. I never tire of the opportunity to explore this topic with undergraduates, but I have always wished that there were a text more dedicated to diversity that made central discussions of race, class, gender, and sexuality issues (or, in many instances, an acknowledgement of the lack of research in these areas). Enter my colleague and friend, Richelle Swan.

The two of us wrote this book. And throughout the text you will see examples and stories that come from our lives and scenarios based on the lives of others. At times, we have written these in the first person—some are from Kristin, some from Richelle—but all illustrate the importance of a critical understanding of juvenile delinquency in a diverse society. So why did we write this book? While teaching juvenile delinquency we have observed several things: (1) Most books take a mainstream approach to juvenile delinquency and fail to emphasize the social diversity that explains varying experiences and behavior; (2) many students have never been introduced to a systematic critical approach to evaluating social behavior and social institutions such as juvenile delinquency and the juvenile justice system; (3) students learn more from real-world examples (of both delinquency and public policy) than they do from purely theoretical discussions; and (4) after taking a juvenile delinquency course, students are often more inspired to “do more” or “get involved” than they are at the end of almost any other course in the area of criminology.

This textbook is written from a critical perspective. It offers several innovative features that set it apart from other textbooks on the market. First, it offers a systematic critical understanding of juvenile delinquency, focusing on issues of race, class, and gender. Second, it substantively links theories of delinquency, not only to existing public policies but to existing community programs that focus on a critical response to juvenile delinquency and social control. And, finally, it guides you, the student, to explore the diversity in your own community and what this means for juvenile delinquency and social control where you live.

SPECIAL TOOLS FOR LEARNING

Our goals are made evident in each chapter and throughout the text through a variety of specific learning features:

- **Juvenile Delinquency Vignette:** Each chapter opens with a vignette that illustrates the concepts of the chapter from a diverse or critical perspective. These vignettes are used throughout the chapters to illustrate chapter concepts.
- **In the News:** One of the most successful parts of our juvenile delinquency courses is making the concepts of juvenile delinquency come alive to students by linking them to current events. Each chapter offers an example of a current event (in box format) that links a main concept from that chapter to a “real world” example.
- **From the Classroom to the Community:** This box will focus on how social science can influence/shape public policy and community experiences. We will highlight examples of collaborative learning and community action and/or specific public policies addressing juveniles and juvenile delinquency.
- **A Focus on Research:** Each chapter highlights an influential piece of research that focuses on the experiences of a diverse population with juvenile delinquency and/or social control. For example, we focus on research on foster children, runaways, LGBTQ youth, youth of color, poor youth, and girls (among other diverse populations).
- **Eye on Diversity Exercise:** While each chapter will have woven throughout its main text a sociological discussion of the relationship between a diverse society and juvenile delinquency, each chapter will also end with a very specific class exercise or service learning example that can be used as either a starting point for class discussion or a class activity/assignment.
- **Discussion Questions:** Each chapter additionally has a set of thought-provoking questions that can be used as the basis of in-class or online discussions. These questions draw upon material from the entire chapter and serve as good review tools.

ANCILLARIES AND TECHNOLOGY

Instructor Teaching Site

A password-protected site, available at www.sagepub.com/bates, features resources that have been designed to help instructors plan and teach their courses. These resources include an extensive test bank, chapter-specific PowerPoint presentations, lecture notes, sample syllabi for semester and quarter courses, SAGE journal articles with accompanying review questions, author podcasts, video links, and web resources.

Student Study Site

The open-access study site is available at www.sagepub.com/bates. This site includes mobile-friendly eFlashcards and web quizzes, SAGE journal articles with accompanying review questions, author podcasts, video links, and web resources.

In the end, what we wanted to write was a text that sparks your critical sociological imaginations; that helps you understand our diverse society and the connections between individual experiences, social institutions, and power; and that helps you see there are important questions (and continuing questions) about how we define and how we respond to juvenile delinquency. But, most importantly, we hope this text inspires you to wonder about the future of the children around you and inspires you to act for those children. As you will see, there is a lot to do.

However this text inspires you, we wish you the best in your explorations.

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THINKING ABOUT JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN A DIVERSE SOCIETY

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

- Consider the special case of the juvenile
- Explain the difference between juvenile delinquency and status offenses
- Examine the conceptions of juvenile delinquency and how they affect our definition of the concept and our responses to juvenile and institutional behavior
- Understand the social context in which juveniles are living and its effect on the well-being of children