



Juvenile Delinquency

Theory, Practice & Law

Fourth Edition

**Larry J. Siegel
Joseph J. Senna**

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**FOURTH
EDITION**

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

Theory, Practice and Law

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Preface

Writing a juvenile delinquency text is a very complex task. It involves aspects of law, theory, policy, and practice. The sources that must be used range from *Nutrition Today* to the *Supreme Court Reporter*. A delinquency text contains references from hundreds of books, articles, government documents, and research reports. A great array of academic material is needed to present a thorough analysis of the problems facing youth in modern society.

Despite the difficulty of the task, we get a great deal of satisfaction from updating this book. One reason is that we both teach juvenile delinquency, juvenile justice, and juvenile law courses. Developing and updating this text has allowed us to keep up with the newest literature in the field. We try our best to assemble recent data, read and summarize important journal articles, and keep up with legal cases.

We also enjoy preparing the text because it gives us insight into a rapidly changing field of study. When the first edition of *Juvenile Delinquency* was published, it was commonly accepted that delinquents were a “product of their environment,” so their behavior could be redirected by providing them with legitimate educational and job opportunities. Treatment programs featured group counseling and contact with sensitive, caring adults who provided proper role models. Now, more than a decade since the first edition was published, both policy and theory reflect a different view of the onset of delinquency and its subsequent control. Research has been developed that indicates that a great deal of youth crime is committed by hard-core chronic offenders. Some well-known and influential scholars now view delinquency as a developmental process influenced by biosocial and mental factors. Continuing concern about serious juvenile crime, predatory gangs, and chronic juvenile offenders has prompted policymakers to make the juvenile justice system more punitive. The transfer of serious cases to the adult court is commonplace, and the Supreme Court has upheld the use of the death penalty for children over the age of 16. There is growing concern about the place of children in society—their education, family life, drug use, and social welfare. Many kids are drug dependent, a growing number of teenage girls are becoming mothers, and the significantly high school drop-out rate has not abated.

Because of this new focus, a tension has developed among delinquency experts: Should the study of delinquency focus on the rights of children, their needs, care, and treatment, or should emphasis be placed on devising crime control strategies that identify serious delinquent offenders and provide mechanisms to control and punish their illegal activities? Are delinquents “at-risk” children who society has failed, or are they serious criminal “predators”?

This debate takes on great importance because juvenile delinquency is a critical social problem. More than a million and a half youths are arrested each year, and more than a million go to court. Over ninety thousand youths are incarcerated in the juvenile correctional system, a number that is increasing every day. More than ten thousand youths each year are waived to the adult court for treatment, which can include imprisonment and the death penalty. Yet, we are still not sure how to prevent delinquency or to rehabilitate known delinquents. It is extremely frustrating that after almost one hundred years of effort, we are still uncertain of "what works."

For these reasons, we believe that the study of delinquency is one of the most critical forms of social inquiry. We have updated our text to reflect changes in law, theory, and practice that have occurred since the third edition was published. Our emphasis is on contemporary issues, but we include significant historical information as well. And as always, we have attempted to be as objective and balanced as possible in our presentation of existing knowledge on delinquent behavior and youth crime.

The major features of the text are described next.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the fourth edition are:

1. To be as objective as possible, presenting the many diverse views and perspectives that characterize the study of juvenile delinquency and reflect its interdisciplinary nature.
2. To contain a balance of theory, law, policy, and practice. It is essential that a text on delinquency not solely be a theory book without presenting the juvenile justice system or contain sections on current policies without examining legal issues and cases.
3. To be as thorough and up-to-date as possible. We have attempted to include the most current data and information available.
4. To make the study of delinquency interesting as well as informative. We want to make readers as interested as possible in the study of delinquency so that they will pursue it on an undergraduate or graduate level.

SIGNIFICANT FEATURES

Since the first edition of *Juvenile Delinquency* was published, numerous changes have occurred in the study of delinquent behavior, and the fourth edition is updated to incorporate these evolutionary changes in law, theory, public policy, and practice. The book is still divided into six major sections, but some significant structural and content changes have been made:

Part I examines the concept, measurement, trends, and nature of delinquency. Chapter 1 now contains a discussion of the problems faced by adolescents in modern society and the relationship between these problems and delinquent activities. Chapter 2 has been updated and now covers the important topic of children who are abducted and killed by strangers. Chapter 3 reflects the most current trends in juvenile misconduct, including recent information on chronic offenders.

Part II describes the various theoretical models that have been used to explain the cause of delinquency. Chapter 4 contains new information on rational choice theory as well as new material on developmental theory, including Attention Deficit Disorder. Chapter 5 has been reorganized into social disorganization, cultural deviance, and strain theories. While the structure of Chapters 6 and 7 has not been changed, their content has been thoroughly updated. Chapter 8 now compares various theories of female delinquency, including liberal and radical feminist theories.

Part III covers the environmental influences on delinquency. The most important change here has been the development of a new chapter (12) on the relationship between delinquency and substance abuse. Teenage drug abuse has become a growing national concern, and the book's content now reflects this important social problem. In addition, Chapter 10 on gangs has been thoroughly updated with material on the extent of the nation's gang problem and the rise of cross-national gangs. Chapter 9 on family problems contains information from recent research projects on trends in child abuse and the relationship between abuse and delinquency. Chapter 11, which covers educational issues, reflects the Carnegie Commission's national study of the crisis in the nation's schools.

Part IV on juvenile justice advocacy has also been reorganized. Chapter 13 now covers the history of juvenile justice. Chapter 14 is an overview of the juvenile justice system's philosophy and practice, along with its goals and procedures. The third-edition chapter on juvenile courts and the law has been eliminated and the legal material integrated, where appropriate, into the remainder of the text.

Part V on controlling juvenile offenders contains three chapters on the police and court process. We have paid special attention to the problems of minorities in the juvenile justice system, including the disproportionate number of young black men who are placed in detention, waived to the adult court, and incarcerated. The sections on sentencing have been thoroughly updated. There is now a separate section on capital punishment and a discussion of the recent Supreme Court cases that set out the law on the death penalty for minors. There is also a new section on the confidentiality of juvenile court hearings.

The book's final section on juvenile corrections contains two chapters covering community-based (18) and secure (19) correctional facilities. There is a great deal of new information on the use of intermediate sanctions, including electronic monitoring, wilderness probation, and new restitution models. Chapter 19 updates the nature and extent of the juvenile corrections population and includes information on new programs, the current status of the right to treatment, and a new section on the legal rights of incarcerated juveniles.

The text ends with a "Concluding Notes" section that pulls together the most important information and conclusions in the text in an organized manner.

LEARNING TOOLS

In addition to updated information and improved overall quality, this edition contains some distinctive features that should help the reader better understand the field of juvenile delinquency:

1. **Photos, charts, and illustrations.** This text contains more visual material than in the past in order to help students better conceptualize the information.
2. **Chapter Outline.** Each chapter begins with an outline of all subject headings in the chapter. The material is concisely organized for both the student and the instructor.
3. **Chapter Summary.** Each chapter concludes with a summary of the most significant topics, issues, and concepts in the chapter, giving the student the opportunity to concentrate on the chapter's contents.
4. **Key Terms.** Following each chapter summary is a list of key words, phrases, and names contained within the chapter.
5. **Focus On Delinquency.** Every chapter contains Focus On Delinquency features, boxed insets that provide in-depth analysis of important issues of policy, law, and delinquent behavior.
6. **Case in Point.** A new feature in this volume, Case in Points are hypothetical cases geared to the text material that provide a focus for comment and discussion.
7. **Concluding Notes.** This final section reviews some of the most important conclusions that can be reached from the research and evaluation data contained in the text.

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