



# DELINQUENCY IN SOCIETY

A CHILD-CENTERED APPROACH

**ROBERT M. REGOLI and JOHN D. HEWITT**

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# DELINQUENCY IN SOCIETY

## A Child-Centered Approach

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# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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**Robert M. Regoli** is an associate professor in the department of sociology at the University of Colorado. Born in 1950, Professor Regoli was reared in Antioch, California. He received an Associate of Arts degree from Diablo Valley College in 1970 and earned his B.S. degree in psychology (1971), his M.A. in police science and administration (1972), and his Ph.D. in sociology (1975) from Washington State University. Bob has authored or coauthored more than seventy-five research articles on a wide range of topics, including police cynicism, prison guard socialization, discretionary justice, and juvenile delinquency. His current research and writing interests continue to be in the area of juvenile delinquency, and he has recently been appointed to the Advisory Board of the National Task Force for Children's Constitutional Rights.

**John D. Hewitt** is an associate professor in the department of criminology and criminal justice at Northern Arizona University. Professor Hewitt was born in 1945 and grew up in Muncie, Indiana. He received his B.A. in history, with a concentration in Far Eastern studies, from Western Washington State College in 1968, his M.A. degree in sociology from Ball State University (1969), and his Ph.D. in sociology from Washington State University (1975). John has been the author or coauthor of more than thirty books and articles on such topics as judicial sentencing, historical crime trends, victim-offender relationships in homicide, and the treatment of juvenile delinquency in China. His current work focuses on the causes and control of delinquency in Chinese culture.

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To my mother and father, who gave me the  
courage to disobey.

—RMR  
July 1990

To my father, Lester E. Hewitt, who has been a  
role model for me both as a father and as a  
sociologist.

—JDH  
July 1990

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# FOREWORD

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## FREE SPEECH WITH OUR CHILDREN, THE QUINTESSENCE OF PEACE

Once in a while a major publisher like McGraw-Hill dares to publish a radically new text. Occasionally such a text is the author's research vehicle for an inspired, galvanizing thesis. These works are a U.S. tradition. Indeed, U.S. criminology established its distinctive identity in 1924 when Edwin Sutherland published the first edition of his text, *Criminology*. Rarer yet, a publisher gives the authors space to do an exhaustive survey of how the new synthesis emerges from other intellectual and empirical traditions. Sue Titus Reid, for instance, has won considerable attention and respect for her voluminous synthesis of criminology and criminal justice. Here, McGraw-Hill has given Regoli and Hewitt 400,000 words, which have been well and fully used.

The people and the studies found in standard delinquency and juvenile justice texts together are all in this volume, allowed to speak for themselves. Regoli and Hewitt also take us a giant step further. It is a scientific revolution to give children equal space to speak for themselves, not only about themselves, but about the despotism they have to fear and abide by to honor their parents and teachers and other adult figures. Every theory of learning social scientists believe points in one direction: children who learn to respect and abide by the despotism of adults learn how to be despots when they get their own turn at adulthood.

In Denmark it is a crime to lay a hand on one's child. The law requires anyone who sees corporal punishment—even the other parent—

to turn the culprit in. Children enjoy a constitutional right to free choice of schools. Schools receive only state funds, a per capita allotment per pupil. Denmark led the Scandinavian tradition, from infant daycare through universities, of students calling teachers by their first names. When a teacher in a primary or secondary school tries to order students around, the student may reply with a quiet Nazi salute. Danes are very conscious of learning lessons from World War II; during the Nazi occupation they put up remarkably effective nonviolent resistance to the rounding up of Jews.

In Norway on Independence Day, May 17, the parades are full of schoolchildren, some of whom parade all day before the Royal Family at the Oslo Palace. There are no guns. Police officers seldom carry guns. After the parades, the families of the children gather first at school and then in the neighborhood to pitch in and eat and help the children play games, like riding a bicycle once around a course and getting a prize for finishing, or even for participating. On the day of the World Cup Ski Jumping Competition at Holmenkollen outside Oslo, families ski a course together. The army takes souvenir photographs of people crossing the finish line and gives out certificates for finishing different distances. Age-graded medals are given out to people of all ages who fill out cards attesting to how far they have skied, generally as families on weekend outings. Babies get pulled snugly and securely on sleds carefully regulated for safety behind parents on skis.

No one can lay out a plan for people in the United States to become as charitable and attentive to children as Danes and Norwegians. Nor have Norwegians and Danes eliminated vio-

lence and delinquency in their midst. City dwellers still lock their doors there. But I think it is safe to say that there is less violence, crime, and delinquency there than here. The crucial point is that there would be no less violence there than here if not adults had learned to make peace with their own children. It is Regoli and Hewitt's genius to see that making peace with our children quintessentially means listening to our children, and responding to the world as they experience it instead of according to blind vision as to what our children need and require.

Unresponsiveness—a failure on any side of an interaction to listen to and answer others in their own terms—is the source of our violent impulses. “Non-shareable problems,” in Donald Cressey's terms, lead us to become delinquent or intolerant of adolescent experimentation, which gives rise to suspicion, mistrust, and violence among sharer and nonsharer alike—the “dynamics of exclusion” Edwin Lemert uses to describe the onset of paranoia. Our instincts don't tell us what to do, but they do give rise to alarm when information is not freely shared in our families and among our nations. Human survival for a single generation, let alone for hundreds of thousands of generations, rests on our capacity to share and pool what we learn and feel about a changing world. People who cannot speak freely learn to fight. People who dictate without listening continue to fight. People who speak freely among others who speak freely talk instead of fighting. When they encounter conflict, peacemakers take the time to hash it out and create an accommodation. In Nils Christie's terms, when people share ownership of their own disputes, they exercise restraint about inflicting pain on one another.

Justice Hugo Black of the U.S. Supreme Court became famous for saying that the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution means exactly what it says: Congress shall make *no* law abridging freedom of speech. The virtues and

vices of the Constitution and its interpretation aside, Black's principle captures precisely what nonviolence entails: to listen and respond to those who are affected by what you do, you have to hear people out, especially when they're hurt and angry. You have to let them speak freely in a forum where you can and will hear them. You have to take turns speaking and listening. If you are truly listening, you have to be prepared to change course. In lawyers' language, peace means granting others standing to be heard by you in their terms, granting complainants jurisdiction to be heard by you in their own terms.

It is well accepted in science and in common sense that a child's early years with adults are crucial to the form of that child's adulthood, and to how generations of adults behave successively. Regoli and Hewitt proceed from this axiom to give students of delinquency and juvenile justice unprecedented opportunity to listen to our children. Regoli and Hewitt have gone out of their way to encourage children to speak freely and powerfully without fear of re-creation. This book is capable of teaching readers how to hear children, so that readers can go on listening and make peace rather than war with youngsters.

This plainly written, clearly organized text is destined to become a research classic. Not only will it enlighten and contribute to the wisdom of the many criminal justice students who year after year aspire “to work with children,” but if scholars of delinquency and juvenile justice also read and digest Regoli and Hewitt's data, research in these fields will be much the richer for it. And policymakers who learn from the book to listen to children will be able to give us a world where children are allowed to speak more freely.

It is a rare pleasure to see this book appear.

Hal Pepinsky  
*Criminal Justice*  
Indiana University



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# PREFACE

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*Delinquency in Society* is an *interactive* text. From the book's cover to the final pages, every effort has been made to involve the reader in the discussion. Our goal in this text has been to present a story about children and the delinquency they are involved with. The text is written in down-to-earth language with as little sociological (or other discipline) jargon as is possible. In those instances where jargon is used, the terms are defined in simple-to-understand language. We have written the book in this way to create a text that is in every sense of the term "user-friendly." We also go one step further. The reader is invited to explore a multitude of issues more fully by taking advantage of the names and addresses provided for agencies and organizations that specialize in children's issues. All of these organizations and agencies provide useful information free of any charge. We urge every student of delinquency to take advantage of this unique opportunity and write to these organizations and agencies. We also hope that students will write for the *Action for Children* publication and have their name placed on the UNICEF mailing list. A subscription to *Action for Children* is free of charge. (The address is given in the Research Guide for Chapter 6.)

## A "NEW" THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

This text introduces a "new" theory about delinquency causation. In Chapter 6 we develop the theory of differential oppression. This is our own original idea about why children become

involved in delinquency. We believe that how children are treated begins with their appearance. It is their appearance, as small persons, that makes them special. "Special" means that they differ from others, thus, they can be treated differently, and they are. From this vantage point, our orientation emphasizes the oppression and exploitation children suffer worldwide, with special attention devoted to the condition of children in the United States. However, so as not to interrupt the flow of the writing, our remarks about children in other countries are confined to what is presented in a special series of boxed inserts called "Focus on Children." The content of many of these boxed inserts will introduce the reader to a wide range of issues that children from around the world confront on a daily basis.

## THE BOOK'S ORGANIZATION

The text is organized into four sections. Each section begins with a short introduction in which previously discussed material is integrated with what will be discussed. It is important that students read these introductions as they help to set the stage for what will follow in the chapters by identifying and explaining the common thread that integrates the chapters. Section 1 (Chapters 1–2) introduces the problem of juvenile delinquency; in Section 2 (Chapters 3–6) old and new theories of delinquency are explored; Section 3 (Chapters 7–10) examines delinquency theories within the context of the family, school, and

peer groups in everyday life as well as the problem of drug use and delinquency; and in Section 4 (Chapters 11–15) we explain how the juvenile justice system responds to children identified as delinquent and offer specific recommendations for change.

## TWELVE SIGNIFICANT PEDAGOGICAL AIDS

*Delinquency in Society* contains no less than a dozen pedagogical aids.

1. *Chapter outlines* Each chapter begins with an easy-to-follow outline of the major topics that will be discussed. Immediately, students are alerted to the central issues of the chapter as well as the order in which they are presented.
2. *Subheadings* There has been a liberal use of subheadings in each chapter. We believe subheadings are important to the chapter and that they serve at least two purposes. First, they help make reading easier to complete. Second, they assist the student in his or her understanding and comprehension of the many ideas included in each chapter.
3. *Focus on Children series* Throughout this book readers will find short boxed inserts that focus on a wide range of issues related to children. Instructors will find the material in the boxed inserts a valuable tool for generating class discussion. Students will find the *Focus on Children* series to be both interesting and thought-provoking as they will reveal many ideas not previously considered.
4. *Theory in a Nutshell series* Together, we have more than thirty years of experience teaching about juvenile delinquency. One discovery we have made during that time is that many students have trouble understanding theoretical explanations of delinquency. It almost is as if the word “theory” scares students. To make theories manageable and understandable, we have created a feature called *Theory in a Nutshell*. There is a nutshell for each of the major theorists (over twenty in all) discussed in Section 2 (Chapters 3–6). The nutshells are not intended as a substitute for reading about the theory in the chapter. Rather, the nutshells should serve already informed students by providing them with a concise summary of a theory’s key points.
5. *Focus on Law series* Supreme Court cases that focus on juvenile rights are discussed in Chapter 12 and Chapter 13. As these cases are presented, a great deal of information is covered and a good many fine points and matters are considered. Some students may find portions of this discussion difficult to follow. To assist students in understanding the essence of each of the Supreme Court cases discussed, a special feature called *Focus on Law* has been created. This series follows the same format as that developed for the *Theory in a Nutshell* series discussed above. By first reading the text and then the *Focus on Law* box, students may acquire a fuller appreciation of the decision the Court reached and why.
6. *Chapter summaries* Each chapter concludes with a summary of the most important topics and issues. The summaries give the student an opportunity to review the chapter’s content in brief form.
7. *Discussion questions* Discussion questions have been added at the end of each chapter. These questions were selected from hundreds that were reviewed. Each one was pretested for its ability to stimulate classroom discussion.
8. *Class activities* There is a saying: “The world is the sociologist’s laboratory.” We strongly believe that, and therefore we

have developed for each chapter, three class activities. The class activities are ideas to involve students in the learning process outside of the traditional reading and writing of notes from a professor's lectures. Some of these activities may work best in the classroom setting, while others will direct students to take their inquiries out of the class and into the campus, their homes, or the larger community.

9. *Research guides* The research guide presented at the end of each chapter is intended to identify some of the more interesting and useful works in the areas focused on in that chapter. The guide will be most useful for students who may be doing papers or talks on a specific topic.
10. *Appendix and Glossary* Two useful sections have been added at the end of the book. The appendix contains selected amendments from the U.S. Constitution that bear on delinquency. It is followed by an extended glossary of commonly used terms and concepts.
11. *Bibliography* At the end of the book, our references are presented. Students will find them to be among the most current and comprehensive listings of references available anywhere. In writing this book we reviewed approximately 1,000 other works. The bibliography provides students with many interesting sources of information should they be writing a term paper or researching a topic included in the text.
12. *Photographs* There is a saying that "a picture is worth a thousand words." Too often, however, photographs in textbooks seem as though they are an afterthought. This is not the case with the photographs in *Delinquency in Society*. We have taken care to include only photographs that help to illustrate our story about children and delinquency.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Writing *Delinquency in Society* has been enjoyable. That may be hard for some people to believe, but the two of us have worked very well together and through this project further enhanced our longtime friendship. The book also was fun for us because we are telling a story about a subject that is of interest to us. It is a story we believe raises concerns, sometimes depresses, and yet eventually provides a note of optimism regarding the possibilities for positive change.

Many people helped with the project; undoubtedly, we will fail to mention all of them here by name, for which we apologize. A special thanks must first go to Bert Lummus and Phil Butcher of McGraw-Hill. At different times these men were our editors, and both of them pushed and encouraged us throughout the project to make this book the best it could possibly be. Our very special thanks are also extended to the many people at McGraw-Hill who worked with us on this project and spent countless hours sharing with us their professional advice and wisdom about the publication process. We were blessed with the good fortune of working with Bernadette Boylan. Her genius, compassion, and patience will always be fondly remembered. We also are grateful to both Kathy Bendo and Kathy Blake. Kathy Bendo worked patiently and diligently with us in the selection of those photographs that best tell our story of juvenile delinquency. Kathy Blake helped us through several rough moments, was always available when one of us just needed to talk about the book, and she managed the always difficult and sometimes thankless task of producing the instructor's manual that accompanies *Delinquency in Society*. We also are very appreciative of the excellent copyediting that was done on the manuscript by a person who remains to us, anonymous. We very much enjoyed reacting to the thoughtful and penetrating questions that were raised,

and hope we were able to answer some of them satisfactorily.

Three colleagues of Bob's at the University of Colorado supported the project in many ways sometimes unknown to them. George Rivera allowed himself to be engaged in an exchange of ideas about children and child-rearing practices. His special insights are scattered throughout the text. George is a good friend, and that friendship is highly valued. Jim Downton helped to spark and facilitate Bob's creativity. Jim always cared and made it easy for Bob to take a step closer to the edge. Jim also unselfishly read chapters and always provided meaningful and useful insights. Rick Rogers offered both critical and insightful reactions on topics the authors were not so well informed of. He also provided Bob with much needed companionship and support in the often vacant hallway of the basement of the Ketchum Building on the campus of the University of Colorado.

Special thanks also go to Hal Pepinsky, Larry Koch, and Eric Hickey. Each of these colleagues provided assistance and encouragement along the way. Jeff Schrink, a long-time friend of both authors, never lost faith in our ability to produce a respectable manuscript. In return, Jeff has prepared an equally thoughtful test manual.

Appreciation also is extended to our colleagues who either prepared or provided us with the information for some of the boxes in the *Focus on Children* series. Listed alphabetically, the contributions of Bob Bohm, Walt Doraz, Del Elliott, Alex Hunter, Bob Hunter, Dan Partrich, and Steve Schoenthaler are gratefully recognized.

Other colleagues who were selected by Phil Butcher to review the manuscript helped us to improve the book in ways that cannot be put into words. We are deeply grateful to Roy L. Austin, Pennsylvania State University; Margaret Farnworth, Sam Houston State University;

Mark S. Hamm, Indiana State University; Vincent J. Hoffman, Michigan State University; Lloyd W. Klemke, Oregon State University; Richard Lawrence, St. Cloud State University; Cynthia Robbins, University of Delaware; Ralph A. Weisheit, Illinois State University; and those referees who elected to remain anonymous. We hope we have satisfactorily addressed some of the concerns each of you raised.

A very special thanks to Betty Brandenburg, Kathy Downs, Tom McGrath, Suzanne Sergott, Linda Thorton, and Jane Wood. We also extend our gratitude and appreciation to those adults, parents, and children who provided much of the data for the book. We truly wish many of the incidents we observed and stories we were told had not occurred. But as they did, our hope is that the data have been used wisely.

Writing a book can take its toll on a family; we hope that this one has not been too heavy. It is all too easy for authors to become preoccupied with writing and become neglectful of and less attentive to other responsibilities. Both of us tried not to have our families suffer from our work. To the extent they did, we ask them to accept our apology. Each of our children—Adam, Andrea, Eben, and Sara—has played a major role in the project. After all, their ages span childhood. Whenever we became curious about one or another aspect of young people and their lives we needed only to look into the worlds of those already close to us—worlds in which we participated.

Our spouses, Avis and Debbie, supported us in many ways. While their patience, understanding, and giving at times may have seemed taken for granted, they were not. While writing this book, their support has meant everything. Without that support, *Delinquency in Society* would not have been possible.

Robert M. Regoli  
John D. Hewitt

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# CONTENTS

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Foreword	xv	The Extent and Nature of Delinquency	40
Preface	xvii	Is Crime Widespread?	40
		Is Delinquency Increasing?	41
		What Proportion of Crime Is Committed by Juveniles?	45
		The Cost of Crime	46
		Summary	48
		Discussion Questions	48
		Class Activities	49
		Research Guide	49
SECTION 1	1		
CHAPTER 1		SECTION 2	51
Defining Delinquency	5	CHAPTER 3	
Early Prohibitions of Juvenile Behavior	6	Biological and Psychological Theories	55
Early Legal Codes	6	What Theories Are	55
The Middle Ages	6	Scholars and Theories	55
The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries	6	Ordinary Citizens and Theories	57
Delinquency in America: 1700 to 1900	7	Explaining Delinquent Behavior	57
The American Colonies	9	The Demonological School	57
The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries	10	The Classical School	58
The Juvenile Court and Legal Definitions of Delinquency	13	The Positive School	58
Recent Views on Status Offenses	15	The Critical School	60
Popular Definitions of Delinquency	17	Biological Theories of Crime and Delinquency	61
Images of Juvenile Delinquency in the Media	18	Lombroso and Positivism	61
Literature	18	General Inferiority	63
Movies	20	Physique, Temperament, and Behavior	64
Television	21	Genetics and Crime	65
So, What Is Juvenile Delinquency?	21	Chromosomal Abnormalities	67
Summary	21	Blood Chemistry and Crime	67
Discussion Questions	22	Human Nature and Crime	68
Class Activities	23	Concluding Remarks	69
Research Guide	23	Psychological Theories of Crime and Delinquency	70
CHAPTER 2		Freudian Psychoanalytic Theory	70
Measuring Delinquency	25	Psychoanalytic Theory and Delinquent Behavior	72
Official and Unofficial Measures of Delinquency	26		
The Uniform Crime Reports	27		
The Juvenile Court Statistics	31		
The <i>National Crime Survey</i>	31		
Self-Report Delinquency Studies	36		

Psychopathy	73	Conflict Theories	132
IQ and Delinquency	75	Thorsten Sellin	133
Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	77	George Vold	134
Theories of Aggression	77	Austin Turk	135
Concluding Remarks	79	Karl Marx and Frederick Engels	136
Summary	80	William Bonger	137
Discussion Questions	81	Research on Contemporary Conflict	
Class Activities	81	Theories	139
Research Guide	81	Evaluation of Conflict Theory	144
		Concluding Remarks	145
		Summary	145
		Discussion Questions	147
		Class Activities	147
		Research Guide	148
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>			
<b>Sociological Theories: The Chicago School and Anomie</b>	85		
The Chicago School	85		
Immigration and Ethnic Problems	86		
Sociologists of the Chicago School	86	<b>CHAPTER 6</b>	
Frederick Thrasher	87	<b>The Theory of Differential Oppression</b>	151
Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay	88	The Status of Children	152
Edwin Sutherland	93	Status and the Bible	152
Walter Miller	96	Status and Oppression	152
Concluding Remarks	98	Needs of Children	153
Anomie Theories	99	A Continuum of Oppression	154
Emile Durkheim	99	The Theory of Differential Oppression	155
Robert K. Merton	100	The Fear and Resentment of Children	157
Albert Cohen	103	Preconceptions about Children	158
Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin	106	Oppression of Children	163
Concluding Remarks	109	Individual Oppression	164
Summary	109	Collective Oppression	165
Discussion Questions	110	Institutional Oppression	166
Class Activities	110	Oppression and Delinquency	167
Research Guide	111	Abuse of Children	167
		Abuse, Neglect, and Delinquency	169
		Abuse, Neglect, and Violent Behavior	169
		Physical Punishment and Delinquency	173
		Summary	173
		Discussion Questions	175
		Class Activities	175
		Research Guide	175
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>			
<b>Sociological Theories: Social Control, Labeling, and Conflict</b>	113		
Social Control Theories	114	<b>SECTION 3</b>	177
F. Ivan Nye	114		
David Matza	116		
Travis Hirschi	118		
Concluding Remarks	122		
Labeling Theories	123		
Frank Tannenbaum	123		
Edwin Lemert	124	<b>CHAPTER 7</b>	
Howard Becker	126	<b>Family and Delinquency</b>	181
Edwin Schur	127	The Family in a Democratic Society	181
Evaluation of Labeling Theory	129	The Alarmist View	183
Concluding Remarks	132	The Reassuring View	185

Single-Parent Families, Broken Homes, and Delinquency	186	CHAPTER 9	
Teenage Pregnancy	186	Schools and Delinquency	239
The Broken Home and Delinquency	189	Parental Involvement in the Schools	241
Working Mothers and Delinquency	192	The Coalition of Oppressors	241
Latchkey Children	192	Polarizing Students and Teachers	242
Hagan's Power-Control Theory	193	School-Related Violence	242
Parenting Skills	194	Violence against Students	243
Parental Attachment	197	Violence Committed by Students	244
Physical Abuse and Neglect	197	Reducing School Violence	247
Spanking Children	198	School Dropouts	249
Typology of Abusers	199	Delinquency Dropouts	250
Running Away	203	Student Rights	251
Family, Social Class, and Delinquency	204	Rules of Conduct	251
Summary	205	Searches and Seizers	253
Discussion Questions	207	Censorship	254
Class Activities	207	Expulsion and Suspension of Students	255
Research Guide	207	Schools in Decline	255
		Transience	255
		Scholarship	255
		Grade Inflation	257
		Teacher Inadequacies	258
		Urban Schools	260
CHAPTER 8		Schools and Delinquency: Three Theories	261
Adolescence, Peers, and		Loss of Teacher Authority	261
Delinquency	211	Regimentation and Revenge	262
Adolescence	211	Tracking	263
Biological View	211	Research on Schools and Delinquency	264
Psychological View	212	Summary	267
Sociocultural View	212	Discussion Questions	267
Historical View	212	Class Activities	268
Peer Groups	213	Research Guide	268
Youth Subculture or Generation Gap?	216		
Peer Pressure: The Alarmist View	216	CHAPTER 10	
Peer Pressure: The Reassuring View	217	Drugs, Youth, and Delinquency	271
Peers and Group Delinquency	218	The Present Drug Crisis	272
Stradom Formations	218	Drug Use and Control in Historical	
Delinquent Modalities	219	Perspective	273
Gangs	219	Racism and Early Drug Legislation	273
Characteristics of Gangs	220	The 1960s: Tripping Out and Vietnam	276
Extent of Gangs	223	Cocaine, Crack, and Violence in the 1980s	277
Gang Violence	223	Related Drug Use	278
Gangs and Law Enforcement	226	Adolescent Drug Use Today	280
Female Delinquency	228	Measuring Adolescent Drug Use	280
The Nature and Extent of Female		Drug Use among High School Seniors	281
Delinquency	228	Prevalence of Current Adolescent Drug Use	283
Child Prostitution	229	Changes in Adolescent Attitudes toward	
Female Gang Delinquency	231	Drugs	285
Are Girls Catching Up?	233	Causes of Adolescent Drug Use	286
Summary	235	Double Failure by the Individual	286
Discussion Questions	236		
Class Activities	236		
Research Guide	237		