JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

A Systems Approach

Curt R. Bartol / Anne M. Bartol

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PRENTICE HALL, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 07632

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Bartol, Curt R.
Juvenile delinquency : a systems approach / Curt R. Bartol, Anne M. Bartol.
p. cm.
Bibliography: p.
Includes index.
ISBN 0-13-514431-0
1. Juvenile delinquency. 2. Juvenile delinquency--United States. 3. Social systems. I. Bartol, Anne M. II. Title.
HV9069.B35 1989
364.3'6'0973--dc19 88-28948
CIP

Editorial/production supervision
and interior design: *Carol L. Atkins*
Cover design: *Joel Mitnick Design, Inc.*
Manufacturing buyer: *Robert Anderson*

A Division of Simon & Schuster
Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 07632

Printed in the United States of America
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN 0-13-514431-0

Prentice-Hall International (UK) Limited, *London*
Prentice-Hall of Australia Pty. Limited, *Sydney*
Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., *Toronto*
Prentice-Hall Hispanoamericana, S.A., *Mexico*
Prentice-Hall of India Private Limited, *New Delhi*
Prentice-Hall of Japan, Inc., *Tokyo*
Simon & Schuster Asia Pte. Ltd., *Singapore*
Editora Prentice-Hall do Brasil, Ltda., *Rio de Janeiro*

Preface

This book is the result of a combined 25 years of college and university teaching. It is primarily directed at upper-level undergraduate students taking a first course in juvenile delinquency. The material is intended to be challenging, balanced, and accurate. Much of the text has been carefully read and critiqued by students majoring in criminal justice, psychology, sociology, or history.

We have not followed either of the two dominant approaches to organizing a juvenile delinquency text. We eschew not only the format in which theories and their various versions are presented sequentially, but also the topical approach which deals with such areas as delinquency and family, peers, and school. The voluminous research literature defies efforts to tame it into the strict theoretical structure demanded by the first approach. The second approach, though seemingly offering more organization, often becomes detached from necessary theoretical moorings. Instead, we have used a social systems approach—to be explained shortly—to coordinate the rich and complicated study of juvenile delinquency.

Five key words or concepts best characterize the book. They are

1. history
2. interdisciplinary approach
3. social systems
4. theory
5. research

To appreciate fully contemporary thought about juvenile delinquency, one must have a solid sense of history. Students of crime and delinquency sometimes consider classical theories hardly relevant to current problems. However, if we approach theories of delinquency as reflections of different versions of social and cultural phenomena constructed at different times and in different places, we will be less inclined to dismiss them as dated or misguided versions and will be more willing to seek the meaning, lessons, and wisdom potentially inherent in each.

Our position in this book is that there are many "right" but conflicting theories or explanations of delinquency, even within the same era. They are "right" given the time and context within which they were developed and debated. It is instructive to follow not only the theories themselves but also judicial, legislative, and other developments along an historical course. This allows us to assess both the relative merits of what has been tried and what is being tried now and to speculate about future effective and creative approaches to the problem of delinquency.

The term "interdisciplinary" often brings a mixture of reactions from professionals and scholars in the field of crime and delinquency. Some are convinced it is foolhardy to even attempt to bring different disciplines under the same roof; others may feel the idea has merit, but is unattainable. Nonetheless, we have tried to present classical and contemporary literature from the two major fields of sociology and psychology, along with a smattering of anthropology. We have tried to coordinate the extensive theory and research into a coherent structure that will allow the student to see how each of these disciplines fits into the overall study of delinquency. The structure we have found most useful is social systems theory.

Social systems theory—the theoretical framework for this text—allows us to examine the vast amount of theoretical and empirical work in juvenile delinquency with some thematic orientation. Social systems theory facilitates a synthesis of what we know across disciplines and viewpoints. To understand delinquency, we must study not only delinquents themselves but also their families, peers, schools, neighborhoods, communities, and cultures. A social systems approach enables us to do this with organization.

Theory and research, the essentials of science, are also the hallmarks of criminology. Most students of crime and delinquency would not disagree with this statement. It is crucial, therefore, that anyone carefully educated about delinquency understand the nature of the scientific enterprise, including its strengths and limitations, frustrations and excitements, and mysteries and complexities. We have devoted an early chapter to science to set the tone for the remainder of the book.

The book does not attempt a comprehensive treatment of juvenile justice. Our primary goal is to stimulate and cultivate an interest in and understanding of delinquent behavior. How this understanding is to be applied involves complex administrative and legal strategies and policies that we believe are best left to a separate text. This is not to say that juvenile justice is ignored. Chapters 3 and 12 cover the history of juvenile justice and recent developments relating to the prevention and control of delinquency.

Finally, there is no separate chapter on female delinquency for two main reasons. First, such a chapter would not fit into the social systems structure of the text. Instead, sex as a structure variable is considered as a subsection of Chapter 10, as are age and social class. Second, research on female delinquency is incorporated throughout the book. We believe it is important for authors to cease treating the burgeoning literature on

female crime and delinquency as an afterthought and begin integrating it into the criminological literature as a matter of course. We have attempted to do this throughout the text.

Many individuals contributed to various aspects of the book. We would especially like to thank the anonymous reviewers and Professor George T. Bergen who offered invaluable advice and commentary. Special thanks are also due the enthusiastic and knowledgable students who read and commented upon various drafts. They are: Kate Barber, Richard Curtiss, Diane Fitzgerald, Cindy Lack, Gina Menagh, Virginia Philo, Paul-André Richard, Jane Roies, and Wendy Swanson. Finally, the Prentice Hall staff has offered encouragement, patience, and competent support throughout all phases of the book, especially editors Paul Corey and Matt McNearney and production editor Carol L. Atkins.

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Anne M. Bartol

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Defining and Measuring Delinquency

CHAPTER 1

Near the brink of the twentieth century, the French social psychologist Gabriel Tarde and the American developmental psychologist James Mark Baldwin separately published their theories of imitation. Apparently, neither man was aware of the other's work, although Tarde's ideas were published five years earlier than Baldwin's. They reached a similar conclusion: All human behavior can be explained by an imitation process. Their perspectives, however, were dissimilar. Tarde, more a sociologist than a psychologist, studied sociological phenomena associated with crowds, crazes, fads, fashions, customs, and crime. Baldwin relied on "individual psychology," studying the mental development of the child, primarily that of his own two daughters. The idea of imitation as the root of behavior did not originate with Baldwin or Tarde. Philosophers David Hume, Walter Bagehot, and the psychologist William James, among others, had alluded to it previously. Tarde and Baldwin, however, formulated and developed their theories more clearly and systematically than anyone had before.

Tarde, who published his theory in *Les Lois de l'Imitation* (1890) and *Les Lois Sociales* (1898), asserted that all activities of human societies are, in one way or another, outcomes of the process of imitation. Society itself is, in effect, the end product of imitation: Its members copy each others' behavior, attitudes, and emotions. This process occurs selectively rather than automatically, since individuals imitate only those they respect or otherwise find worthy of emulation. Imitation also can occur as a group pro-

cess. Tarde was so convinced of the "truth" of his observations that he considered his theoretical formulation another basic "law" of the universe. He proclaimed that there were three separate laws of imitation, and that they were to sociology ". . . what the laws of habit and heredity are to biology, the laws of gravitation to astronomy, and of vibration to physics" (Tarde, 1890, p. 18).

The essence of his three laws is as follows:

1. Humans imitate one another in direct proportion to the amount of close contact they have with one another; the more they see or interact with one another, the more likely they are to imitate.
2. The superior are imitated by the inferior. People who are in positions of royalty, power, or authority, or who are deeply respected, are far more likely to be imitated than peasants or those who are powerless. This holds for groups as well as individuals. Fad-setting cities (e.g., Paris), are more likely to be imitated than rural towns.
3. When two mutually exclusive fashions compete, an "average" of the two occurs.

James Mark Baldwin published his theory of imitation in *The Mental Development in the Child and the Race* (1894) and *Social and Ethical Interpretations in Mental Measurement* (1897). Initially a firm believer of Darwin's concept of evolution, Baldwin apparently altered his thoughts about human instincts and evolutionary theory shortly after the birth in 1893 of his first child, Helen. After observing her early development, Helen's father posited that " . . . the prime and essential method of his [the child's] learning is by imitative absorption of the actions, thoughts, expressions of other persons" (Baldwin, 1897, p. 581). Therefore, children develop intellectually and morally by *imitating* the thoughts and actions of significant others around them. This flew in the face of Darwinian theory, which contended that development unfolded according to the laws of nature. The Darwinians gave little credit to the role played by others or the social environment. A parent's efforts to enrich a child's environment could not overcome the genetic determinants of moral and intellectual development. Moral development, for example, depended upon a time sequence programmed into the child's biological makeup; when the time came, the child "naturally" acquired the necessary moral reasoning. "Timing" was determined solely by the child's ancestry. Similarly, environmental enrichment could do little to change a genetically determined level of intelligence.

For reasons which will be discussed shortly, the theory of imitation did not reappear in sociological or psychological literature until nearly fifty years later. Baldwin, considered one of the most eminent psychologists of his time (Broughton, 1981), abruptly left academe and the United States for Mexico in 1909; shortly thereafter he moved to Paris, where he lived until his death in 1934. Only recently have we learned that he was forced to resign his position at Johns Hopkins University and was blackballed by the psychological "establishment" after being caught in a police raid on a Baltimore brothel. We will return to Baldwin's work later in the book, since he laid some of the

foundation both for Jean Piaget's cognitive development theory and for contemporary social learning theory.

At this juncture, the reader may be thinking that the preceding paragraphs are an unusual way to begin a text on delinquency. A major objective of this text is to cultivate in readers a patience to see the world from multiple perspectives and to provide the necessary concepts with which to refine these perspectives. This will require an examination of history and an appreciation of science, theoretical development, and the philosophies of human nature held by individuals and social groups at any one time. Perspectives on behavior, including delinquent behavior, are strongly influenced by the political, economic, and social climates and by the dominant thinking of the time. Even in a pluralistic society, it is possible to identify social moods or trends which bear heavily on explanations of behavior.

When Baldwin and Tarde proposed their separate theories, Darwinism and biological determinism dominated American and European perspectives of human nature and society. Interestingly, sociologists as well as psychologists adhered to this view. Biological determinism argued that behavior was determined largely by heredity and instincts. Furthermore, mental development was believed to be limited, controlled, and modified by a series of instinctive impulses which are relatively fixed in the individual through a process of evolution by natural selection. Against this backdrop, the ''radical'' ideas of Baldwin and Tarde were not well received. The sociologist Charles A. Ellwood (1901) took Baldwin's theory of imitation to task, implying that it was sacrilegious to question mainstream thought about evolution and human instincts. Ellwood scolded Baldwin for theorizing about some ''absolute gulf between man and the animal world.'' This violated the doctrine of development ''which since Darwin has been the major premise of all scientific thought about man'' (Ellwood, 1901, p. 728). Humans, Ellwood said, represent but a small gradient of development in the evolutionary chain along which all living creatures are positioned. Any imitation that occurs, he argued, actually is a feature of animal instinct, nothing else. ''Accordingly, we find Professor Baldwin, almost alone among eminent modern psychologists, refusing to recognize the importance of the innate or instinctive in mental development'' (Ellwood, 1901, p. 733). Interestingly, in spite of Ellwood's assertions, Darwin's theory was losing popularity among *biologists* around the turn of the century because they were unable to identify any biological mechanism which could support it satisfactorily.

The traditional Darwinian view espoused by Ellwood and other social scientists was devastating to any notion of equality among human beings, since it allowed for the possibility that some races or ethnic groups were less developed than others. Note Ellwood's comments:

> . . . the negro child, even when reared in a white family under the most favorable conditions, fails to take on the mental and moral characteristics of the Caucasian race. His mental attitudes toward persons and things, toward organized society, toward life, and toward religion never become quite the same as those of the white. (p. 735) [Similarly,] . . . the ''instinctive criminal'' and the ''hereditary pauper'' are such, not because of the contagion