

# CLEMENS BARTOLLAS

## JUVENILE DELINQUENCY





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# JUVENILE DELINQUENCY



*To Phil Caldabaugh and Dick Jones  
Two individuals who made a difference  
in the life of a young boy*

# FOREWORD

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We know it from no less notable philosophers than Socrates and Aristotle that some of the youth in the ancient Greece of their time loathed work, were disobedient and disrespectful to others, engaged in crime, vandalism and deviant conduct and frustrated their parents and teachers. This litany, that the young are a major pain to a decent and sober society is almost as old as recorded history.

Through four or more millenia all sorts of explanations have been offered for this phenomenon of delinquency. In loose chronological order, disruptive, deviant and delinquent youth were thought to be evil (in a religious and moral sense), defective biologically, impaired intellectually, sick psychologically and much more recently as the products of sociocultural forces especially poverty, family breakdown and abuse and weakened community controls. There has never been a shortage of seemingly plausible reasons for that often stormy and violent period in the life cycle called adolescence. Nor, indeed, has there been any shortage of recommended panaceas. The prevailing interventions have invariably "fit" the status of children in the society. When children were disvalued and a burden economically, treatment was harsh and even cruel. When children were thought the wave of the future, as during the dreadful plagues and wars that swept over Europe over and over again, their treatment improved dramatically. Western society has never quite come to terms with its young. They hover somewhere between the products of original sin and pure innocents and closer to one pole or another depending on the social terrain. Nevertheless, it is safe to argue that all social interventions have gone beyond punishment, beyond psychological insight, beyond behavior modification and focused on three variables: work, education and discipline. Chief Justice Burger in a speech delivered in June, 1984 called for a full work week for all prisoners (including juveniles, I presume) as a necessary element in their rehabilitation. The speech was greeted with enthusiasm in all quarters and hailed as a novel idea. In fact, such pleas are recurrent. Once again, the youth population has become a burden on the economic system and, one way or another, youth must be engaged in other ways than full labor market participation. Little wonder, then, that crime in America is disproportionately youth crime. A very significant percentage of the crimes based by arrest involve juveniles; a majority or close to it, depending on year, of the property arrests are of those under 18.

In an attempt to reduce youth crime, the usual reaction has been to get tougher with juvenile predators by increasing the penalties and reducing the correctional alternatives such as probation and community care. On the other end of the delinquency spectrum, status offenders, (non-criminals by adult statutes) who are school truants, incorrigibles and runaways have been virtually eliminated from the juvenile justice system to make more room for the serious and dangerous delinquents. Pressured by the public, on the one side, and the reformers, on the other, the juvenile



system is in shambles. The emergent system will most likely manage delinquent juveniles as a junior version of adult criminals emphasizing due process, harm, intent and punishment.

All of these observations and more, much more, are part of a superlative textbook, *Juvenile Delinquency*. Professor Bartollas, whose knowledge of the subject extends beyond the academic to experience as a wing director (administrator) at a maximum security juvenile facility, has written a carefully researched volume on the subject, free of jargon and of personal preferences and prejudices. It is historically accurate, insightful and, at times, profound. It leaves the reader with the uncomfortable feeling that there are no very simple techniques for dealing with an age old problem deeply embedded in history and modern cultural forms. Conversely, delinquency cannot be accepted as a *rite of passage* in the life cycle. Too many juveniles do too much harm to simply accept delinquency as an undesirable by-product of an inequitable social structure. Furthermore, far too many delinquents progress into adult criminal careers.

In this lively and readable book, Professor Bartollas has marshalled an impressive array of material which is important and current in framing social policy in combating delinquency. The standard sources and studies and ideological positions and disputes are all there. In fact, I have not seen a more comprehensive treatment of intervention techniques—personal, group and community—in any text. At least two other elements set this book apart. First, there are the insets—vignettes which offer a sense of immediacy and intimacy into the perceptions of the actors whether offender, victim or societal representative in one or another branch of juvenile justice. Second, and wholly unique, are the interviews with criminal justice scholars and practitioners—men and women who have invested their lives in processing, treating or incapacitating delinquents. Anyone who thinks that such people become inured and insensitive to the unrelieved misery of processing or even studying delinquents should read their interview statements very carefully. These interviewees, all major figures in the field, present the issues and options which daily confront them with understanding, feeling and a sense of optimism.

Professor Bartollas has done us all a service—those who teach no less than those who learn. This textbook is a job well done.

Simon Dinitz  
Ohio State University

# FOREWORD

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# PREFACE

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Juvenile delinquency—crimes committed by young people—constitutes approximately one-half of property crimes and one-fourth of crimes against persons in the United States by recent estimates. The high incidence of juvenile crime and the fact that these crimes are committed by young persons make the study of juvenile delinquency vital to any understanding of American society today.

This book examines juvenile delinquency from a sociological perspective, as most recent writings on the problem have. The book also examines the effectiveness of the way in which juvenile delinquency is controlled by the justice system, examines recent legislation and court rulings on the rights of youthful offenders, looks at the rights of adolescents in general, and assesses legal efforts to correct their antisocial behavior. Yet, this book was written primarily because the author believes that juvenile delinquency must be examined in other contexts as well.

First, instead of viewing delinquency in terms of only one context, such as that of the legal or justice system, this book examines delinquency in broader terms, the sociocultural, legal, political, economic, and historical contexts. All these contexts impinge upon present efforts to prevent and control delinquency and upon future attempts to describe the delinquent accurately. Second, because the individual delinquent sometimes is lost in the descriptions of his or her behavior, this book gives more attention to the experiences of delinquents and to the influence of these experiences in interpreting meaning, affecting interactions with others, and making decisions for or against crime. Third, this book emphasizes delinquency prevention. Although many writings have deemphasized prevention programs and strategies, perhaps because past efforts have proved so ineffective, this author believes technologies being developed today will result in more effective prevention interventions tomorrow. Fourth, the book examines treatment of juvenile delinquents more extensively than is typically done in texts on delinquency. Certainly, as anyone familiar with juvenile corrections is aware, correctional treatment today has more critics than advocates, again because past programs have proved ineffective. This text examines the technologies needed to improve correctional treatment in both community and institutional settings.

Two particular features of this volume are the sections on social policy and the interviews with authoritative spokespersons. Social policy is emphasized and each chapter ends with a section on the policy needed to improve the response of society to the delinquent in terms of the material presented in that chapter. Although much is discouraging about the handling of delinquents by society to date, the text attempts to outline strategies needed on the societal, community, and individual levels to help juveniles realize more of their potentials and, therefore, avoid involvement in crime. Finally, the interviews with spokespersons after each chapter should stimulate readers and help them integrate the materials in the chapter.

The design of this volume arose from the author's personal experiences with juvenile delinquents and the questions about American delinquency that resulted: What is the wider context in which delinquency takes place? What causes delinquency? What do we know about delinquents? How are the family, the experiences of adolescents, and the school related to delinquency? How does the delinquent see himself or herself? What can be done to control juvenile delinquency? What can be done to treat delinquency?

The outline of this book moves from statistics on juvenile crime to the causes of delinquency and then to control, prevention, and treatment of delinquency. The book is divided into six units: the measurement of delinquency, the causes of delinquency, social institutions and their impact upon delinquency, the male and female delinquent, the control of delinquency, and the prevention and treatment of delinquency. The first unit measures the nature and extent of delinquency through examining the available official and unofficial statistics. The second unit explains delinquency in five ways: (1) juveniles have free will and choose to become involved in delinquency; (2) juveniles are driven by biological and psychological factors to become delinquent; (3) juveniles are driven by social structural factors to become delinquent; (4) juveniles become delinquent through the process of interaction with others; and (5) juveniles become delinquent because they are economically exploited by powerful groups in society. The third unit examines the relationship between delinquency and problems in the family, such as child abuse, the growing pains and experiences of adolescents, and experiences in the school. The fourth unit focuses on the individual delinquent and considers such matters as the types of youthful offenders and the meaning delinquency has for these youths. The fifth unit discusses the control of delinquency. Chapters are included on an overview of the justice process, on police-juvenile relations, on the juvenile court, on community-based corrections, and on long-term institutions. The final unit considers delinquency prevention and treatment. The book closes with a summary and recommendations for policy.

A study of delinquency in American society is a blend of both theory and research, of the views of both soft-liners and hard-liners, of the concerns of victims and the justification of youths, of both treatment and punishment, of both disillusionment about past failures and increased motivation to find more effective answers. *Juvenile Delinquency* has been designed to give the student a thorough overview of juvenile delinquency by explaining what is documented about the problem and by examining delinquency in the wider context of those forces impinging on the individual adolescent and in the immediate context of the interaction of the adolescent with society.

**Clemens Bartollas**



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C.B.

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