

## INSTRUCTOR'S RESOURCE MANUAL—CHAPTER TWO DIMENSIONS OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

### CHAPTER OVERVIEW/SUMMARY

This chapter focuses on the challenging task of measuring the magnitude of juvenile delinquency in the United States in response to such questions: Approximately how many people under age 18 are directly involved in crime each year? What kinds of crime are most common among American young people? How do such variables as gender, race, ethnicity, and place of residence affect the kinds of juvenile offenses that are committed? What are the trends in juvenile delinquency? Is it increasing or decreasing?

Evolving from these concerns, two continuous national data-gathering programs were instituted.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation collects, summarizes, analyzes, and reports arrest data from a network of city, county, and state law enforcement agencies and compiles this information in its annual Uniform Crime Reports. The second official source is the National Center of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the Department of Justice which collects and summarizes data on case dispositions. The annual reports on Juvenile Court Statistics also identify and summarize those court dispositions by type of offense and a limited number of demographic variables.

Other sources of systematically collected data on juvenile delinquency include self-report studies and victimization surveys.

All of these data-gathering programs suffer from serious methodological limitations regarding validity and reliability. In spite of these shortcomings, however, the accumulation and combination of all these data on delinquent behavior over a long period of time present a clear and consistent conclusion that American young people generally account for a disproportionately large amount of criminal activity.

### STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Understand the role of the media as a source of delinquency information.
2. Define various kinds of crime according to the common classification and criteria used throughout the United States.
3. Identify sources of the data and statistical information on juvenile delinquency in the United States.
4. Explain various data-collecting techniques that are used and the strengths and weaknesses of each methodology.
5. Understand how unreliable and/or invalid data or data-gathering procedures can lead to questionable findings and conclusions regarding the magnitude of juvenile delinquency.
6. Trace the general dimensions of the delinquency problem with official FBI and juvenile court statistics on the incidence and trends of juvenile crime in various offense categories.
7. Conceptualize, analyze, and critique a composite Delinquent Profile based on arrest statistics and on a summary of many characteristics of the “average”

juvenile delinquent.

8. Explain why the amount and kind of juvenile delinquency vary, according to age, sex, race, place of residence, and other characteristics of offenders.

## LECTURE OUTLINE

### I. INTRODUCTION (p. 29)

Various sources of information may be consulted regarding the extent of juvenile delinquency in the United States. In 1930, a voluntary program for the collecting of crime statistics was initiated by both international and national organizations. In 1974, juvenile delinquency was identified as a critical national concern. In order for us to obtain the most valuable information about juvenile delinquency, we should be acquainted with these sources in terms of their strengths and weaknesses.

The weaknesses should not prevent us from using these sources, but should make us aware that our analysis of the problem of juvenile delinquency will not be perfect. Nevertheless, the various sources of information will provide valuable insights into the reality of the problem.

### II. THE MEDIA AS A SOURCE OF DELINQUENCY (MIS)INFORMATION (pp. 30-31)

The media tend to focus on youth crime in a very sensational way. In addition, young people have unprecedented access to social media technology, and record and share their exploits with others. Much of what we read and hear on the news is selective reporting designed to get attention. The public is fascinated with nonconformity. However, despite the media portrayal, the vast majority of juvenile arrests are for nonviolent crimes, and most youths are not delinquent. Still, delinquency and youth crime are significant social problems.

### III. JUVENILE DELINQUENCY DATA (pp. 31-32)

Statistical data are collected in order to provide current insights into juvenile delinquency. It is important we analyze these data in a proper manner. The methods and procedures used to collect and analyze data determine their accuracy and usefulness.

Your text advocates that two factors be considered when analyzing such data.

- A. Validity. A measure has validity when it measures whatever it is supposed to measure, and accurately reflects factual evidence. Factors such as random sampling, the survey design, the subjects, and others can affect the validity of a study.
- B. Reliability. A measure has reliability when it yields the same results upon repetition of the measuring procedure or replication by other investigators. In order to make a fair comparison of the findings from two studies, the conditions, methodology, and subjects must be as identical as possible. To be reliable, an instrument can be relied upon to produce similar results when used by different researchers.

Validity and reliability clearly are related, and both are enhanced if survey questions are structured so that the subjects can readily understand them and elicit informative, straightforward answers. These principles are useful in evaluating data on juvenile delinquency.

#### IV. OFFICIAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION REGARDING JUVENILE DELINQUENCY (pp. 32-43)

Students interested in securing information about the extent of juvenile delinquency should consult two official federal sources of information concerning the matter. One is provided by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the other is provided by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

A. The FBI Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) are very popular in terms of being used by researchers and the media when commenting on criminal activity. They provide important insights into the extent and types of changes in matters relating to criminal activities committed by juveniles.

The first eight UCR categories are: murder, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson. The first four types of these crimes are referred to as violent crimes, directed against a person. The last of these four are referred to as property crimes, directed against property. All eight are referred to as Index Offenses.

Since 1930, the FBI has been compiling arrest data on crime and delinquency from a network of local and state law enforcement agencies. Each year, the FBI summarizes data into the *Uniform Crime Report*. This report can be used to separate juvenile delinquency from adult crime. A major strength of the report is that it uses standardized definitions of the main kinds of crime that are used by all law enforcement agencies.

B. Juvenile arrests for specific offenses: The UCR considers a juvenile to be a person under the age of 18. Using UCR data, we can determine the percentage of violent and nonviolent crimes committed by juveniles.

C. Status Offenses: A large proportion of law violations committed by youth are status offenses; those offenses only applicable to juveniles. The widespread application of status offense laws prior to 1965 led to the incarceration of a huge number of children and youths. Since the 1960s, society has become more sensitive to juvenile rights. There is growing support for the idea that these offenses should be removed from the juvenile justice system.

D. Male and Female Involvement in Juvenile Delinquency: Each year, male juveniles are arrested, on average, between two and three times more often than females. This difference is consistent across societies. The only exception to this trend is female arrests for prostitution. One theory uses parental socialization to explain these gender differences in juvenile crime.

E. The Racial and Ethnic Factors in Juvenile Delinquency: Racial group applies to those minorities, and corresponding majorities, that are classified according to obvious physical

differences, such as skin color, facial features, and hair texture. Arrest statistics also vary by ethnicity, minority groups that are differentiated from the dominant group on the basis of cultural rather than physical differences. Each year, white youths are more likely than black youths to be arrested for property crimes. However, black youths account for a high proportion of arrests for violent crimes (most of which are perpetrated against other black individuals).

F. Place of Residence and Arrest Statistics: Arrests have been highest in the large cities, and lowest in rural areas. Urban and suburban youth are arrested for very similar crimes.

G. Juvenile Court Statistics: The National Juvenile Court Statistical Reporting Program was initiated in 1929 by a division of the Department of Labor. These reports furnished an index of the general nature and extent of the kinds of problems brought before the juvenile courts. In 1975, the system was transferred to the Department of Justice.

H. Methodology: Law enforcement officers are the primary source of referral of juveniles to the court system. Some cases, deemed less serious, are diverted away from the court system. National estimates of juvenile delinquency have traditionally been based on both types of cases. Since 1985, reports on juvenile court activities have been based only on the cases that go to court, and status offenses.

I. Findings: Annually, juvenile courts process about 1.6 million cases of juvenile delinquency. The large majority of cases involve males. Status offenses by girls account for 40% of all status offenses. White youths are involved in nearly two-thirds of all delinquency cases.

#### V. THE COMPOSITE DELINQUENT PROFILE: TYPICAL OR STEROTYPICAL? (pp. 43-47)

When we combine findings from multiple sources, it is possible to develop a composite picture of the “typical” delinquent. This composite delinquent is male, between 15 and 18 years of age, and most likely to be white and have prior offenses. Composite pictures portray an oversimplified and distorted image of the juvenile delinquency problem.

A. Limitations of Official Delinquency Data: Arrest statistics are available for almost all cities, but there are problems associated with using these data. First, the number of arrests is a questionable index of crime. Law enforcement officers may also be more rigorous in policing minority neighborhoods. Another limitation of arrest data is that they do not address unseen delinquency.

B. The Dark Figure of Crime and Delinquency: Many violent and even more property crimes go unreported. These incidents are referred to as the dark figure of crime and delinquency.

C. Juvenile Court Statistics: One of the biggest issues with Juvenile court statistics is that many states fail to report. There are also varied definitions of offenses. Longitudinal

comparison of local systems is difficult because boundary lines and population sizes change over time.

## VI. UNOFFICIAL SOURCES OF DELINQUENCY INFORMATION (pp. 47-53)

- A. Self-Report Studies: Some researchers have drawn on samples of various populations and have directly inquired through survey questionnaires about their respondents' previous delinquent behavior. This approach is designed to reveal and measure undetected and unreported instances of juvenile delinquency. Self-report studies clearly show that delinquent behavior is far more common than is indicated by official data. Self-report surveys can be expensive and time consuming, and the absence of an ongoing national unbiased sample presents a virtually insurmountable methodological problem.
- B. Victimization Studies: Another useful source of juvenile delinquency information is the victimization surveys conducted by the United States Department of Justice and a number of private researchers. These studies focus on victims and their recollections of the crimes, the circumstances, and the offenders. Some of the variables included are the approximate age, sex, race, and other demographic characteristics of assailants and victims, the relationship between victim and offender, the types of crimes, and the circumstances surrounding the crime.

The major limitation of the victimization data collected by the National Crime Surveys is that the victims are the only source of information. A second criticism of victimization surveys centers on the long list of serious crimes that are excluded. For example, murder, kidnapping, forgery, driving under the influence of drugs, and status offenses are seldom included on victim questionnaires.

## VII. THE MAGNITUDE AND TRENDS OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY (pp.53-55)

Despite a ten-year decline in the number of juvenile arrests (1998-2007), it is premature to declare the resolution of this serious social problem. In addition, short-term, statistical reversals have occurred in the past and often turned out to be temporary anomalies before prevailing demographic, economic, and social factors returned arrest data to the more dominant and longitudinal pattern and direction. Nevertheless, the present reduction in juvenile arrests is a very positive and hopeful development that warrants national commitment to continue the trend.

### RECOMMENDED CLASS EXERCISES

1. Consult your campus police department to determine official and unofficial policy regarding juvenile delinquency at your particular educational institution.
2. Analyze various sources of information to determine any changes in your state regarding the extent of juvenile delinquency. What could account for these various types of changes?
3. As a possible future parent, what action would you take to lessen the chances that your child would get involved in juvenile delinquency?

4. What actions are being taken in your community to reduce juvenile delinquency activity?
5. Consult at least three individuals from different age groups and ask each one how they would react to a specific act of juvenile delinquency. Is there a difference? If so, how would you explain that difference?

#### A PERSONAL WORD FOR THE FELLOW INSTRUCTOR

An analytical look at the delinquency tables can excite some interesting observations from the students based on their recent adolescent experiences.

1. Why do youth commit a disproportionately larger number of vehicle thefts, even though the judges are generally very hard on car thieves? (The police and the courts think that the car theft is a “gateway” crime to further delinquency). For the youth, car theft is essential for getting away and also for commission of other offenses.
2. Why do the youth commit so many arson offenses? What kind of fun do they get out of it?  
Adults seem to have a purpose in arson (revenge, destruction of some evidence against them, etc., a profit motive).
3. Why disproportionately do more girls run away from home, despite their limitations and risks?
4. Why do the Asian American youth have a much lower representation in delinquent population?
5. Why are more offenses against the person committed by the non-white population?
6. What are some of the advantages that you see in the victimization reports?

TEST BANK—CHAPTER TWO  
DIMENSIONS OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

EXAM QUESTIONS

I. MULTIPLE CHOICE

1. In 1930, a voluntary national program for the collection of crime statistics was initiated by the \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. International Association of Chiefs of Police
  - b. United States Federal Bureau of Investigation
  - c. a and b\* (p. 29)
  - d. the Commerce Department
  
2. In 1974, the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice and Goals identified juvenile delinquency as a critical, high priority, national concern. What did it suggest that the highest attention must be given to?
  - a. funding educational opportunities
  - b. hiring new police officers
  - c. training new police officers
  - d. preventing juvenile delinquency\* (p. 29)
  
3. With regard to the media's portrayal of juvenile delinquency, which of the following statements is NOT true?
  - a. Only a small number of youths are delinquent.
  - b. Most juvenile delinquents commit serious crimes. \* (P. 30)
  - c. The vast majority of juvenile arrests are for property crimes, vandalism, and status offenses.
  - d. Only 7 to 10 percent of delinquents are chronic offenders.
  
4. Data-based findings note that only \_\_\_\_\_ percent of delinquents are chronic and violent offenders.
  - a. 7 to 10\* (p. 30)
  - b. 20
  - c. 35-45
  - d. 50
  
5. A measure has validity when \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. people can understand it
  - b. people agree with it
  - c. people use it
  - d. it in fact measures whatever it is supposed to measure\* (p. 31)
  
6. Which of the following characteristics of an investigation could affect the findings of a research project?
  - a. only the investigator's attitude

- b. only the investigator's questions
  - c. only the presence of the investigator
  - d. the investigator's attitude, questions, or presence\* (p. 32)
7. A measure has reliability when \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. it yields the same results upon repetition of the measuring procedure or repetition by other investigators\* (p. 32)
  - b. it produces results
  - c. the average person believes it
  - d. it has an effect
8. If variables such as race, sex, and social class have been controlled, this means they are \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. not important
  - b. different
  - c. held reasonably constant and similar\* (p. 32)
  - d. not noticed
9. Which of the following collects and summarizes juvenile crime statistics on a national scale into an annual report?
- a. only the Federal Bureau of Investigation
  - b. only the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency
  - c. the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency\* (p. 32)
  - d. none of the above
10. Each year the FBI summarizes data on crime and delinquency into statistical tables and issues a \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. Juvenile Justice Report
  - b. Delinquent Children's Report
  - c. American Crime Report
  - d. Uniform Crime Report\* (p. 33)
11. How many law enforcement agencies that report crime to the FBI use standardized definitions?
- a. none
  - b. a few
  - c. most
  - d. all\* (p. 33)
12. Which of the following is NOT one of the first eight UCR categories?
- a. murder
  - b. forcible rape
  - c. robbery
  - d. none of the above\* (p. 33)



13. Why were the eight categories of crimes chosen as the basis for the Uniform Crime Report Index?
- only because of their seriousness
  - only because of the frequency of occurrence
  - only because of the likelihood of being reported to the police
  - because of their seriousness, frequency of occurrence, and likelihood of being reported to the police\* (p. 33)
14. The eight crime categories that were chosen as the basis for the Uniform Crime Report are referred to as \_\_\_\_\_.
- normative crimes
  - misdemeanors
  - index offenses\* (p. 33)
  - total crimes
15. The first four Index Offenses are referred to as \_\_\_\_\_.
- violent crime \*(p. 35)
  - status offenses
  - property crime
  - juvenile offenses
16. Status laws were based on the state's generally accepted role as \_\_\_\_\_.
- suo nominee
  - sub silentio
  - parens patriae\* (p. 35)
  - sub curia
17. Since the mid-1960s, through a series of landmark decisions from the U.S. Supreme Court, society has \_\_\_\_\_.
- become more sensitive to juveniles' legal rights.\*(p. 36)
  - moved away from seeing juveniles as a separate legal category
  - developed far stronger sanctions for status offenses
  - integrated juvenile law into the adult legal system
18. There is growing support for the idea that the majority of status offenders \_\_\_\_\_.
- should go to jail
  - should be removed from their parents' home
  - should not be arrested \*(p. 36)
  - should be diverted to juvenile group homes
19. Each year, male juveniles are arrested, on average \_\_\_\_\_.
- more than five times as often as female juveniles
  - far less often than female juveniles
  - for more violent crimes than property crimes
  - two and three times more often than female offenders \*(p. 36)

20. There is evidence that the gender difference in juvenile delinquency rates can be attributed to \_\_\_\_\_.
- sexism among law enforcement officials
  - parental socialization \* (p. 37)
  - the fact that female offenders don't get caught nearly as often
  - societal views toward prostitution
21. White youths are much more likely than black youths to be arrested for
- sex crimes
  - assault
  - property crimes\* (p. 38)
  - murder
22. The great majority of violent assaults by African-Americans are committed against
- Hispanics
  - Asians
  - Whites
  - members of their own racial group\* (p. 38).
23. Arrests are highest in \_\_\_\_\_ and lowest in \_\_\_\_\_.
- large cities; rural areas \*(p. 40)
  - rural areas; the Midwest
  - small towns, inner city districts
  - smaller cities; big cities
24. In an informally handled, or non-petitioned case, court intake personnel make a decision to:
- send the juvenile directly to juvenile detention or foster care
  - divert the matter away from the court system \*(p. 41)
  - dismiss the case
  - let the parents handle the case
25. The major limitation of the victimization data collected by the National Crime Surveys is that \_\_\_\_\_.
- victims really do not care to answer the questions
  - victims have never filed any police complaint
  - victims are the only source of information\* (p.53)
  - victims distrust surveys

## II. TRUE FALSE

26. In 1930, a voluntary national program for the collection of crime statistics was initiated by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) and the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation. True or False? (True, p. 29)

27. Much of the juvenile delinquency we hear about on the news is sensationalized. (True, p. 30)
28. Validity and reliability are two precise concepts that will help us understand common problems and errors in research methodology. True or False? (True, p. 31)
29. The FBI's Uniform Crime Reports can be used to separate juvenile delinquency from adult crime. (True, p. 33)
30. Status offenses apply to adults as well as to juveniles. True or False? (False, p. 35)
31. Most juvenile arrests are among female offenders. (False, p. 37)
32. Socialization experiences are changing for women. True or False? (True, p. 37)
33. Black youths are much more likely than white youths to be arrested for property crimes. True or False? (False, p. 38)
34. Urban and suburban youth are very similar in the types of crimes for which they are arrested. (True, p. 40)
35. Very few violent crimes go unreported. True or False? (False, p. 44)

### III. FILL IN THE BLANK

36. In 1930, a voluntary national program for the collection of crime statistics was initiated by the \_\_\_\_\_. (International Association of Chiefs of Police and the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation, p. 29)
37. A measure has \_\_\_\_\_ when it in fact measures whatever it is supposed to measure. (validity, p. 32)
38. A measure has \_\_\_\_\_ when it yields the same results upon repetition of the measuring procedure or replication by other investigators. (reliability, p. 32)
39. Each year the FBI summarizes data into statistical tables and issues a \_\_\_\_\_. (Uniform Crime Report, p. 33)
40. \_\_\_\_\_ crimes are those that are directed against a person. (Violent, p. 35)
41. \_\_\_\_\_ are non-violent crimes directed against property. (Property crimes, p. 35)
42. \_\_\_\_\_ are violations that are applicable only to juveniles. (Status offenses, p. 35)
43. Huck Finn was a \_\_\_\_\_. (status offender, p. 35)

44. The term \_\_\_\_\_ applies to those minorities, and corresponding majorities, that are classified according to obvious physical differences. (racial group, p. 38)
45. There are at least \_\_\_\_\_ races represented in the population of the United States. (four, p. 38)
46. The great majority of violent assaults by African-Americans are committed against \_\_\_\_\_. (members of their own racial group, p. 38)
47. \_\_\_\_\_ are the primary source of referral for young people accused of law-violating behavior. (Law enforcement officers, p. 41)
48. \_\_\_\_\_ clearly show that delinquent behavior is far more common than is indicated by official data. (Self-report studies, p. 49)
49. We need to remind ourselves that the \_\_\_\_\_ of teens in the U.S. are not arrested each year (vast majority, p. 54)
50. Over the past decade, there has been a fairly steady \_\_\_\_\_ trend in the number of juvenile arrests and juvenile court cases in the United States. (downward, p. 54)

#### IV. ESSAY QUESTIONS

51. Contrast the concepts of validity and reliability. Why are these concepts important?
52. Identify and discuss two official and two unofficial sources of delinquency information.
53. Contrast violent crime, property crimes, and status offenses. Are there advantages to a differentiation among these groups?
54. Discuss the racial and ethnic factor in juvenile delinquency.
55. Discuss the limitations of official delinquency data.