JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH

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STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Reading this chapter will help you achieve the following objectives:

1. Define and explain specific sociological concepts and theories of deviant and delinquent conduct under the major categories of Labeling Theory and Radical/Conflict Theory.

2. Apply these sociological theories of human behavior to explaining juvenile delinquency.

3. Perceive how Labeling and Radical/Conflict theories offer insights into increasing delinquency by racial and ethnic minorities and females.

4. Understand the role of the media in labeling and defining delinquents and delinquency.

5. Summarize the contributions and limitations of the various sociological theories of deviance and delinquency discussed in this chapter.

INTRODUCTION

Much of our discussion in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 was on testing and refining causal theories of delinquency. Later in the text, you will see how some of these theoretical constructs and concepts have become the foundations of prevention and treatment programs for antisocial deviance and juvenile delinquency. Now, in this chapter, we turn our attention to Labeling and Radical/Conflict theories. Their approach to juvenile delinquency is quite different than the previous theories in that they investigate the processes through which society defines what constitutes delinquency and being a delinquent. In other words, all the previous theories discussed have somewhat taken for granted the definitions of juvenile delinquent and have focused upon the acts and the actors. In this chapter, we look at theories that focus on the audience—those who determine what constitutes delinquent behavior and decide who is a juvenile delinquent.

LABELING THEORIES

One of the most popular sociological explanations of juvenile delinquency and other forms of deviance is based on how society perceives, judges, and reacts to the actor and his or her behavior in question. You may find it helpful to review the concepts of status and role defined and explained in Chapter 1 as an appropriate preface to our explanation of Interactionist Theory—or Labeling Theory, as this formulation is commonly known.

The fundamental sociological principles of social status (relative social positions) and roles (expectations that accompany statuses) comprise the foundation for the Labeling Theory of deviant and delinquent behavior. For, a deviant role can be assigned by society to some persons who, in the judgment of society, seem to warrant such a negative label. Labeling Theory concentrates less on deviant acts themselves and instead focuses on the actor and the audience and their perceptions of each other (Gibbs, 1966). Howard Becker (1973) described labeling as an interactive process, whereby social groups make rules and then label the actions that violate the rules as deviance and the actors who violate the rules as deviants.

For example, if a person becomes known as an alcoholic, prostitute, liar, cheater, juvenile delinquent, or by any other negative label or reputation, the social status or prestige position of that individual is ranked accordingly. Conversely, people can also be given positive labels, such as gifted and talented, honest, hard working, or good person. With each label goes a new role and set of social expectations. The person is expected to behave in harmony with the social role assignment. In other words, labeling is a public declaration of one's social identity—of what society perceives and expects the individual to be and do. Thus, in one sense, societal labeling is being publicly "branded." It is extremely difficult to escape the label—whether rightly or wrongly applied—because it not only imputes a social identity, but also leads to a redefinition of the relationship and expectations between the person labeled and the other members of the society. Labeling Theory contends that the causal explanation for much juvenile delinquency, as well as a large share of the responsibility, can be traced to society itself.

Early Contributions to Labeling Theory

Labeling Theory has its roots in some of the early ideas of social psychologists Charles Horton Cooley and W. I. Thomas. Cooley ([1902] 1964), in his classic concept of the **Looking-Glass Self**, observed that *an individual's self-evaluation and self-identity are a reflection of one's perception of other people's reactions to his or her conduct.* Broadly applied to adolescent behavior, juveniles use those with whom they interact, like a mirror that reflects back an image (a social identity), which is then internalized as part of the youths' self-concept. If juveniles perceive that others view them as delinquent, they are very likely to accept that label.

W. I. Thomas (1931) contributed the concept of **Definition of the Situation**, which essentially means that *when people define a situation as real, it becomes real in its consequences.* This concept further illuminated the process whereby certain acts are socially defined as deviant or delinquent and the juvenile who commits an act so defined becomes labeled as "delinquent." This is similar to Robert Merton's idea of the **Self-fulfilling Prophecy** as a catalyst for eliciting future behavior of the prescribed kind. According to Merton (1957), *when the members of a social group define a person or event in a certain way, they may in fact shape future circumstances and activities so that the anticipated and projected behavior comes to pass.*

Tannenbaum's Concept of "Tagging"

In 1938, with the publication of *Crime and Community* by Frank Tannenbaum, an innovative application of the labeling perspective was made to criminology. Tannenbaum emphasized the treatment of the offender that makes a habitual criminal out of the accidental or occasional one. Thus, the greater evil lies in the societal treatment, not in the original act. Tannenbaum (1938) called this demonization process *tagging* and pointed out that people usually start out by viewing a youth's behavior as bad and then gradually begin to view the youth as bad. Consequently, the process of defining a youth as delinquent involves tagging an individual in a way that creates the very behavior that is trying to be eliminated.

The process of **tagging** led to Tannenbaum's (1938:8, 20) somber conclusion: "The adult criminal is usually the delinquent child grown up. . . . *The person becomes the thing he [sic] is described as being.*"

of how people's perceptions and their treatment by others are shaped by names. For example, studies have shown that an individual's name has strong impact on his or her self-concept, self-satisfaction, and potential for narcissism (Twenge and Manis, 1998; Twenge 2009). Additional research has shown that names may be directly related to discrimination in assigning grades in school, in renting and selling real estate, and in hiring and promotion practices (Cross, et al., 1990; Bertrand and Mullainathan, 2004; Fryer and Levitt, 2004; Carpusor and Loges, 2006; King, et al., 2006). With names affecting everything from grades in school to likelihood of delinquency and crime, to adult employment and socioeconomic status, perhaps we must conclude that a rose by any other name (label) indeed might not smell as sweet.

Contributions of Labeling Theory

A significant contribution of the labeling approach to juvenile delinquency is its analytical division of nonconforming behavior into primary and secondary deviance. Of equal importance is its focus on the societal perception and reaction to the initial deviant act and the subsequent revision in self-concept that enables the actor to continue into a more stable pattern of deviant behavior. As Matza (1969:89, 164, 196) pointed out:

> We see how the effort of society to remedy or control deviance ironically becomes a factor in producing deviance. This paradoxical development runs against common sense, which usually sees social control efforts as an effective response rather than a cause of deviant behavior.

Wide application of the labeling perspective has been made in critiques of law enforcement procedures and the juvenile justice system. Piliavin and Briar (1964) contended that many dispositions made by police officers in cases of suspected juvenile offenders are based on intuitive character assessments, which in turn are founded on the youth's group affiliations, age, sex, race, grooming, dress, and demeanor rather than the type of offense committed. The labeling process that occurs during police/juvenile encounters on the streets is further discussed in Chapter 12, and Chapter 13 discusses how it carries over into juvenile courts.

Similarly, Cicourel (1968) used a labeling approach to show differential treatment between lower- and middle-class families in the administration of justice. He indicated that ad hoc interpretations and imputations of character, family life, and future possibilities—often retained in official and unofficial files by schools, police departments, and courts—not only negatively and unfairly label some youths, but also predestine them for future litigation.

More specific research investigations of the "pre-delinquent label" have uncovered several differential racial and gender effects. Adams, Johnson, and Evans (1998) found that negative, informal labels have a greater delinquency-causing impact among black than among white youths. Jeffrey Victor (2004) found that girls who have a supportive emotional bond with their mothers or a grandmother were less likely to develop low self-esteem and were insulated from the delinquency effects of derogatory stereotyping. Research shows that some labels have an enduring quality shaping perceptions, not only of individuals, but of themes and stereotypes that can be quite resilient over time (DeVenanzi, 2007).

Edwin Schur emerged as another outspoken proponent of the labeling perspective on delinquency. In his book *Radical Non-intervention* (1973), he asserted that we must rethink the delinquency problem—a topic we explore in detail in Chapter 16. The label of delinquency has been so overused and so widely applied that it covers everything from talking back to parents and truancy, to forcible rape and first-degree murder. As Schur pointed out, both the terms *juvenile* and *delinquent* are ascribed statuses. That is to say, they are labels assigned to some youths by the society in which they live. Schur insisted that so-called delinquents are neither internally nor externally different from nondelinquents except for the fact that they have been officially processed by the justice system and so labeled.

A less radical labeling viewpoint of criminal and juvenile justice procedures has been set forth by David Kauzlarich (2009). He asserted that criminologists and legal authorities have long attempted to distinguish between those acts of **mala in se**—*considered inherently evil* (such as murder and rape) and **mala prohibita**—*those considered evil only because they are prohibited* (such as gambling and alcohol consumption by minors). The labeling approach provides valuable insights into the latter category, as a vast number of the acts committed by juveniles that come to be labeled as delinquent clearly fall under it. The wide variety of acts that become treated as status offenses for juveniles are not considered evil in and of themselves but merely have been labeled as inappropriate behavior for juveniles.

Additional support for the labeling argument has been derived from the research of David Ward and Charles Tittle (1993:60) whose findings suggest that "sanctioning and labeling of norm violators significantly affects the likelihood that an offender will develop a deviant identity and that such identities significantly affect the likelihood of recidivism." However, they caution that the traditional labeling process is just one of several ways that recurring deviance may be produced. Moreover, labeling may be more relevant in explaining minor acts of deviance and delinquency than for major offenses.

Ordinarily, the labeling explanation of crime and delinquency focuses almost exclusively on the negative effects impacting the offender. A growing body of literature has analyzed the modified self-identity and subsequent patterns of secondary deviance emerging from initial social assessments of deviants and their primary misconduct. J. Scott Kenny (2002) extended this interactive labeling process to include the victims of crime. His unique approach focused on the consequences of differential societal reactions of sympathy offered by friends, family, and community to victims suffering the loss of a loved one through murder. Similar to findings from studies on social labeling of criminal deviants, Kenny found that primary and secondary deviance, modification of personal identification, and role accommodation "each have their conceptual counterpart in the experience of victims" (Kenny, 2002:235).

Criticisms and Limitations of Labeling Theory

The reviews of Labeling Theory are mixed and sometimes contradictory. The weaknesses cited by critics are diametric opposites to the strengths referred to by proponents. For example, much has been made of Labeling Theory's focus on societal reaction as a key factor in producing deviance (e.g., Becker, 1973; Erikson, 1964). In

BOX 6.2

GLOBAL FOCUS ON DELINQUENCY: British "Hooligans":
Labeling, Social Class, and Delinquency in Great Britain

One of the most disparaging and stigmatizing labels in the United Kingdom is that of *hooligan*. First used by the British press during the latter part of the Victorian era, the term is still widely used by royalty; Members of Parliament; police officers; judges; and members of the upper, middle, and working class to refer to rowdy youths, youth gangs, vandals, and other juvenile delinquents and young criminals (Schwarz, 1996). Today, *hooliganism* is most associated with rowdy, young football (soccer) fans who paint their faces and bodies in team colors, drink heavily, yell and spit at opposing players and fans, and often wreak havoc on pubs and neighborhoods near stadiums and underground stops after matches (Frosdick and Marsh, 2005).

Augusto De Venanzi (2008:203) contends that the hooligan label developed out of a strong need for middle-class Victorians to label and stigmatize what "they perceived to be a declining aristocracy and a degenerated working-class." Over a period of time, the term came to refer to a "criminal class" that was routinely vilified and denigrated by "proper" Victorian society and the press. As the label became popularized, the media attached it to almost any criminal act, and anytime adolescent boys or young men were seen in groups on the streets, it was assumed that they were hooligans up to no good. As most street crimes became attributed to hooligans, a "moral panic" was created that allowed the aristocracy and police to exert more social control over the working class through social, legislative, and judicial means.

Steven Humphries (1997) pointed out that public perception that hooligans were unemployed youths who roamed the streets wreaking havoc and committing street crimes was not accurate as many young men who were labeled as hooligans were actually gainfully employed in a wide range of semi-skilled and unskilled jobs in factories and mines. Nevertheless, the label *hooligan* took on such a powerful meaning that it not only shaped attitudes toward individuals tagged with it, but legitimated the ruling class's efforts to exert even more formal and informal social control over the entire working class and underclass.

How does the creation and application of the "hooligan" label in the United Kingdom exemplify tenets of Labeling Theory? How could you apply Radical/Conflict theories to explain its uses?

Sources

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achieve certain culturally approved objectives. There is a general consensus that these objectives are money, material possessions, and other symbols of economic success. Greenberg added that the precise nature of these success goals depends upon one's place in a rigidly structured and age-graded life course. Adolescents, for example, are subjected to uncompromising peer pressure to conform to certain prescribed codes of appearance and behavior. At the same time, pressures from older generations and larger society in the form of laws requiring school attendance and minimum-age work

regulations restrict the opportunities of teenagers in the job market and lock them into their unfulfilling age-status roles. Based upon this situation, Greenberg identified several sources of potential frustration among adolescents in a capitalistic society that can motivate many to delinquent conduct:

Lack of Money. Most prominent among adolescent frustrations can be the lack of money by the poor to participate socially, or at least symbolically, with more affluent teenage members of the youth subculture. The absence of funds for popular clothing, cosmetics, recorded music, and automobiles may lead to shoplifting, burglary, automobile theft, or perhaps dealing illegal drugs in order to get these items. These pressures may be negligible for youths fortunate enough to have parents who are sympathetic and economically able to fulfill the needs and desires characteristic of their children's age and status position in society. On the other hand, Greenberg argued, less affluent, minority, and lower-class youths may feel compelled by their economically disadvantaged situation to engage in juvenile delinquency.

Lack of Respect. A second source of adolescent frustration is failure to achieve respect in school. A weak academic performance or aptitude coupled with stigma imposed by teachers and classmates may be interpreted by a youngster as valid appraisals of his or her worth as a person and ultimate chances for success. Such a demoralized youth, according to Greenberg, is a prime prospect for antisocial and delinquent behavior. Such negative school experiences are more commonly found among members of the underclass.

Lack of Employment. A third source of economically determined juvenile misconduct is the inability of huge numbers of lower-class youths (and sometimes middle-class youths) to find gainful employment. Greenberg suggested that unemployed and underemployed males are especially vulnerable to anxiety regarding their "manhood" and are likely to feel a critical inadequacy in fulfilling social expectations associated with the adult male role. This frustration may lead to an overemphasis on toughness and lead to aggressive acts, including fighting, assault, rape, and even homicide.

Schwendingers' Instrumental Theory

Radical/Conflict theories in the Marxist tradition contend that a person's status position in the social-class structure is the key factor in explaining illegal behavior. Capitalism, according to Marx and those who espouse this theoretical approach, generates competitiveness, acquisitiveness, and the exploitation of others, and reinforces the division and mutual antipathy of the "have" and "have not" social classes. Each member of society is assigned membership somewhere in the stratified social-class system based upon his or her success in controlling and/or accumulating the profits and products of economic endeavors. Thus, Radical/Conflict theorists argue, the stage is set for all kinds of illegal behavior resulting from the alienation of many lower-class individuals and groups. Official arrest and court statistics seem to confirm that crime and delinquency are largely lower-class phenomena. On the other hand, Radical/Conflict theorists suggest that a capitalistic system, which encourages
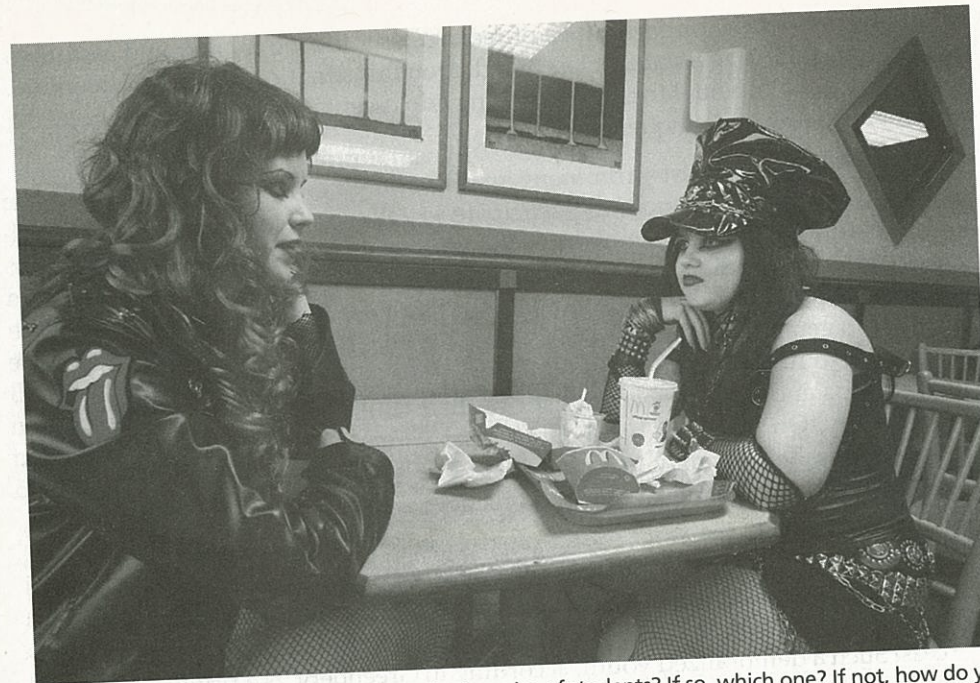
Do these girls fit one of the Schwendingers' categories of students? If so, which one? If not, how do you think their dress reflects their social status? Would you view them more as conformists or deviants?

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a certain amount of surplus labor and unemployment, together with the legal system and law enforcement, is organized to ensure such an outcome.

Herman Schwendinger and Julia Schwendinger (1985) extended these basic premises from the Marxist conflict perspective in developing their own innovative theory. While affirming that delinquency still can be explained by a youth's social-class status, the Schwendingers (1985:3) added that significant amounts of "criminality can be found among youths in all stations of life." As noted in Chapter 2, self-report support this contention, by indicating that middle-class youths are about equally involved in delinquent conduct as members of the lower class.

To this, the Schwendingers added their main theoretical insight: Parents' social class is not the most important variable in determining the delinquency potential for adolescents. Rather, the youths' relative status position among other teenagers is the best predictor of delinquency. Herman and Julia identified several relatively exclusive, stratified status formations—or distinctive social networks formed by the youths themselves—which roughly correspond with some of the more traditional social classes. These stratified formations of youth tend to be based upon common values, interests, and activities, and separate members of one social network from other youth groupings. The Schwendingers outlined the following prominent social networks among American youths:

1. *Socialites*, which may be referred to as "elites," "frats," "soshes," or "preppies" that are generally composed of upper middle class, college-bound youths.

2. *Greasers*, also called "hoods," "homeboys," "thugs," or "hodads." This group is largely composed of lower-class and minority youths.
3. *Intellectuals*, members of this group are often called "brains," "bookworms," or "nerds."

Not all youths neatly fit into one or another of these categories. There can be considerable overlap of individuals who comfortably interact with more than one group. There likely will be some individuals who do not readily identify with any of these social strata or networks in a given school or community. There is also considerable crossover based on a blurring of socioeconomic background. For example, athletes may be identified as "jocks," and those interested in skateboards may be known as "skaters" regardless of the socioeconomic status of their families. Nevertheless, in spite of such irregularities, the Schwendingers posited that virtually all youths find some specific clique with which they can identify.

The theoretical formulation developed by Herman and Julia Schwendinger to explain juvenile delinquency is called **Instrumental Theory**. This theory describes misbehavior as motivated by calculated and selfish designs upon the victims—not dissimilar from the rationalizations of the "greedy bourgeoisie" described by Karl Marx. The delinquent has a utilitarian attitude regarding the illegal act as well as of the victim as a "legitimate" object of exploitation ("What is in it for me?") (Carey and McAnany, 1984:138).

Moreover, the Schwendingers' instrumental theory conceptualized delinquency as importantly linked to a youth's social network, contending that members of some stratum formations are more likely to become delinquent than others and that delinquent conduct manifested by members of one stratum or social network may vary significantly from the kind of delinquency most common in other groups. For example, youths with economically deprived backgrounds are not only more likely to become involved with the network identified as "greasers," but are apt to participate in theft, burglaries, and perhaps violence (especially if they join a gang). On the other hand, middle-class youths who are identified as "socialites," while perhaps equally delinquent, are more likely to engage in truancy, vandalism, shoplifting, and less violent forms of law violation. These ideas are consistent with Chambliss' study of Saints and Roughnecks discussed in Box 6.1. Thus, in another sense, membership in a particular stratum or subgroup has an "instrumental" function—serving as a vehicle for a social identity and enhancing opportunity and motivation for various specialized activities—even juvenile delinquency. Youths identified as "intellectuals," regardless of their parents' social class, are less likely to become involved in serious illegal behavior.

Contributions of Radical/Conflict Theories

In our study of various theoretical perspectives and approaches that explain human behavior, we must be cautious that some viewpoints are not summarily rejected simply because personal biases and preferences interfere with objective considerations. Radical criminology is in danger of such a fate because it is philosophically linked with **Marxist Conflict Theory** and boldly calls for revolutionary revision of the political and economic institutions that are assumed to define crime and delinquency in support of upper-class domination of the underclass. The United States has a long

MAKING DECISIONS FOR DELINQUENCY: RATIONAL CHOICE THEORY

One of the most interesting and popular theoretical developments in juvenile delinquency is credited to Derick Cornish and Ronald Clarke (1986) and others, and begins with the premise that delinquent acts do not spontaneously and emotionally occur in a cognitive vacuum. Rational Choice Theory (in contrast to psychologist Walsh's conclusion in Box 7.1: "Thinking is not what is going on here.") takes the position that youths usually access a less emotional and more logical decision-making process that weighs the potential benefits and costs *before* acting on the delinquent impulse and opportunity.

Felson (1986:121) argued that in order to understand criminal opportunity, we need to know the decisions made "by offenders, targets, and guardians as well as the situations of physical convergence that result from these decisions." He notes that human choice enters at many steps in the process. Choice theorists indicate that law-violating behavior occurs when an offender decides to take a chance violating the law after considering his or her own personal situation (need for money, learning experiences, personal values, need for peer approval) and situational factors (how well the target is protected, whether people are at home, etc.) (Cornish and Clarke, 1986). The decision to commit a crime or enter into a delinquent lifestyle is a matter of personal decision making (Kennedy and Baron, 1993:105).

This explanatory insight supplied by Rational Choice Theory strikingly parallels the position of the Classical School of Criminological Thought back in the 18th century (see Chapter 3). The idea that criminal and delinquent behavior is based on a cognitive selection process by offenders is a contemporary resurgence of the thoughts of the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham and the Italian jurist Cesare Beccaria over 200 years ago. "Both Bentham and Beccaria referred to the process as hedonism, or the choice of behavior that would maximize an individual's pleasure and minimize personal pain" (Clinard and Meier, 2011:73). According to Rational Choice Theory, offenders make conscious decisions about whether to engage in criminal or delinquent behaviors and what tactics to use to commit the offense. These decisions are primarily couched in economic terms as to whether the reward from the act outweighs the effort and potential consequences, although rewards can also include excitement and social status (Williams and McShane, 2010; Matsueda, et al., 2006). Again, similar to the original classical position, the contention of Rational Choice Theorists that criminal behavior generally rests on a foundation of preliminary thought and evaluation tends to impute responsibility and accountability more directly and fully to the offender. In this way, some proponents may downplay the importance of biological, psychological, and sociological determinants of crime and delinquency. Rational Choice Theory also implies that potential punishment becomes part of the calculation as to whether to commit delinquency or refrain from it.

THE PUNISHMENT RESPONSE: DETERRENCE THEORY

The 18th-century classical position and the neoclassical theme presented in Rational Choice Theory also share the assumption that responsive and vigorous punishment should discourage most offenders from repeating their crimes. At the same time,

proponents believe that rigorous sanctions for law violation will likely inhibit other potential criminals and delinquents from embarking on such a course. This perspective, known as Deterrence Theory, encompasses a spectrum of contemporary "get tough" treatment policies and programs, ranging from the reinstatement of corporal punishment in schools to demands that youths indicted for serious crimes should face adult criminal courts and the possibility of more severe penalties, including capital punishment. The deterrent effects of such uncompromising societal responses are thought to strike directly at the recidivism of chronic offenders and serve as a warning to other possible law violators in the general population. Such a deterrence policy and program have been endorsed by Ernest van den Haag (1975), a professor of jurisprudence at Fordham University, and numerous others.

Deterrence Theorists differentiate between **specific deterrence**, which are *punishments that discourage an individual from committing similar acts in the future,* and **general deterrence**, which *discourages others from committing similar acts.* General deterrence is preferable to specific deterrence—otherwise, every individual criminal or delinquent must be caught and punished in order to deter further crime or delinquency. In order for punishment to have general deterrence value, it must be highly visible and socially recognized.

A ghastly application of swift and severe "punishment to suit the crime" (without other considerations) has been portrayed on public television in a few extremist countries. Convicted thieves are shown suffering brutal amputations and brandings—without anesthetic. "As a device to intimidate political opposition and reduce crime, the mutilations may be tragically effective" (*Time*, 1995:46).

Rational Choice and Deterrence Theories have found current support in the United States among a segment of the public that has become disheartened by the continuing high rates of crime and delinquency and the many failures of rehabilitation. In the face of frightening and highly publicized violence and destruction carried out by occasionally rampaging young people, some people have discounted the validity of flawed inheritance, maladjusted personalities, dysfunctional families, and disadvantaged social circumstances as legitimate causes of such deviance. In other words, an exasperated and vociferous minority has overgeneralized and oversimplified the cause and effect and declared that a strong punishment response from a victimized society is the natural and just reward for rational offenders freely choosing illegal and antisocial behavior.

The emergence of Rational Choice Theory and accompanying Deterrence Theory parallel a "get tough" attitude toward crime and delinquency. While proponents of this perspective add some new insights into the cause and control of crime and delinquency, they also regress some 200-plus years to breathe new life into the assumptions and arguments of the old Classical School of Criminological Thought. Consequently, it comes as no surprise that many of the 18th-century weaknesses of this viewpoint take on new relevancy (Cullen, et al., 2009).

Evaluation of Rational Choice and Deterrence Theories

Continuing research applications of Rational Choice Theory have resulted in mixed and tenuous generality. Part of the popularity of Rational Choice and Deterrence Theories is that they appeal to "common sense," and appear to have a straightforward

STRENGTHENING THE FAMILY

Over the past three decades, perhaps no social institution has been paid more political "lip service" and yet more ignored than the family. We learned in Chapters 5 and 8 that a strong social bond with the family is one of the most effective insulators against delinquent behavior. Also, in Chapter 8, we explored ways in which the family can be involved in delinquency prevention. In this chapter, we emphasize that in addition to the many social, legal, and judicial changes we have suggested, the process of rethinking the problem of delinquency must also involve strategies for strengthening the family.

When we suggest strengthening the family, we are not referring to the hollow political rhetoric of promoting "traditional family values." This popular phrase often serves as a thinly veiled slur toward everything from dual-career couples, to same-sex couples, to single-parent and even poor families, and it urges a return to some mythical idyllic family of the past as portrayed by the media in *Leave It to Beaver* and *Father Knows Best*. Such nostalgia may be comforting, but is hardly practical or desirable. Rather, we suggest that meaningful social changes must be made to accommodate and reinforce the importance of the entire spectrum of families as they exist in today's real world—dual career, single-parent, same-sex, blended, stepfamilies, and others. These changes should include but not be limited to:

- adequate and affordable day care for working couples with children and for single parents;
- paid maternity and paternity leave;
- family leave days for parents of both sexes for children's illnesses, parent–teacher conferences, school functions, sporting events, and so on;
- adequate and affordable health care and health insurance for all families;
- equitable pay for women;
- access to affordable education, job training, and vocational counseling for all;
- educational, counseling, legal, and support services for families that suffer domestic violence;
- support services for families in which a juvenile has broken the law;
- social, moral, financial, and legal accountability of parents for the whereabouts and activities of their minor children.

The family is the primary agent of socialization and the first line of defense against juvenile delinquency. If we are serious in our efforts to reduce and prevent delinquent activities, our efforts must begin with strengthening the family. Some states now hold parents of delinquent children accountable for the actions of their minor children (e.g., truancy, property damage), but few if any provide social, financial, or legal resources to families to deal with these troubled youths. If we are to meaningfully rethink the problem of delinquency, we must provide the resources necessary for families to successfully raise children, and then hold them accountable to do so. This involves rethinking all aspects of society and creating a cooperative effort among all social institutions. In that light, we turn to education.

CHANGING THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Earlier in this chapter we emphasized the importance of providing meaningful social roles for juveniles that give them greater decision-making power, especially in areas which affect their lives. With the possible exception of the family, no social institution more directly influences the lives of young Americans than the educational system. As Richard Lawrence (2007:301) noted, "true delinquency prevention efforts must begin in the family, the schools, and the community." In our opinion, if meaningful social change is to come about in an effort to reduce the problems associated with juvenile delinquency, the schools will need to play a very significant role.

In Chapter 9, we explored the social arena of the school and its relationship to juvenile delinquency. At the end of that chapter, we suggested how the schools might take a more active role in delinquency prevention. Those suggestions included less emphasis on identifying and labeling "pre-delinquents"; reeducating and resocializing parents, teachers, and students to the problems associated with the success–failure philosophy of the schools; a wider range of tolerance of nonserious rule violations by students; and reducing some of the bureaucratization of the educational process.

Substantive changes in the educational process must be accompanied by widespread changes in the attitudes, values, and norms surrounding it. Since the Industrial Revolution, schools have tended to be modeled after the factory. Students entering the system are viewed as "raw materials" to be shaped, formed, and molded into "finished products" upon graduation. The factory model revolutionized education, but not all of its results have been positive. The blue-ribbon panel of experts who produced the study *A Nation at Risk* (U.S. National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) enumerated some of the major problems related to education in America. Even that study, however, did not question the attitudes, values, and norms that provide the foundation for the educational system. Rather, it lamented declining test scores, lack of basic skills, and the failure of the teaching profession to retain the "best and the brightest." While these are significant issues, they do not address the broader scope of the problem. Policies such as "No Child Left Behind" have done far more to promote standardized testing and politicize education than to reform schooling and make education meaningful for youths.

The schools are one of the most important elements in reducing the problems of delinquency, but dramatic changes need to be made in the educational system. For instance, Krisberg and Austin (1978:575) insisted that education must be more broadly defined with an expanded curriculum and a modified idea "about who should be involved in the learning process and where education takes place." They suggested broader community involvement in all aspects of the schools. These and other controversial educational issues must be addressed (Noll, 2011).

Broader community involvement should also include more meaningful participation on the part of juveniles. One of the ways to provide youths with more access to the power structure in education would be to include students on local school boards. This would give them direct input on budget, personnel, and curriculum decisions as well as enhance their identity and status as role models for other youths.

Most colleges and universities allow student participation in campus government. Students serve on committees, have a student government association, and