

Reactions_to_juvenile_Cases.edited.edited.docx

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Reactions to juvenile Cases

Different states in the United States have acknowledged that juveniles who commit criminal offenses are minors. Children are deemed less culpable and possess a considerable capability of successful rehabilitation. Even though youth crime rates have decreased since the mid-1990s, mass hysteria and political posturing about the issue have increased. The systemic causes of child poverty, social discrimination, and the perils innate in teenage decision-making processes that add to juvenile crime are usually ignored. This paper discusses two criminal behaviors among teens using criminal behavior theories to help understand why the juveniles committed the offenses.

The first case involves Kent versus the United States. Morris Kent, 16, was accused of breaking, burglary, and sexual assault in 1961 (Woods, 2017). He provided detailed statements during two days of interrogation without the presence of a lawyer. By the second day, his mother had contacted a lawyer, who promptly filed motions seeking access to the adolescent court's documents and contesting the judge's intention to move jurisdiction to adult criminal court. According to a psychiatric examination, Morris was diagnosed with a mental disorder, and his advocate opined that the adolescent could be reformed (Woods, 2017). The juvenile court rejected these arguments and immediately agreed to waive judicial power without holding proceedings or issuing written findings and conclusions. Morris contested the waiver once more in adult criminal court, but this time it was rejected. He was convicted of theft and burglary and convicted to 30 to 90 years in jail (he was later cleared of two rape charges due to insanity). He appealed the judicial waiver to the United States apex court, which ruled that it was insufficient.

The majority of theories of crime apply to delinquent behavior. Nonetheless, it appears that there is no specific theory that explains juvenile delinquency all over and at all times. The

anomie theory best explains Morris Kent's criminal conduct as a teenager. Robert Merton developed the anomie hypothesis in the 1940s. According to Merton's concept, delinquency happens because young people lack the means of making themselves feel good (Esmaeil et al., 2016). Their objectives are unachievable through lawful means, so they resort to illegal means of achieving them. That is why Kent, an adolescent at the time of the incident, committed the juvenile crime. He could not earn cash, so he stole from his nearest neighbors and committed sexual abuse since he was a teen who should not engage in sexual conduct at a young age.

The second case involves a teenager called Dominique Lang, an accomplice to the murder of a toddler in Georgia. He pleaded guilty in a plea deal with the prosecution team, which allowed him to be released from incarceration. The prosecution decided to drop a felony manslaughter charge against Dominique Lang, 17, in connection with the death of Antonio Santiago. The murder occurred on March 21, 2013, when the child was just 13 months old. He was shot in the head while strapped on a stroller. Lang and De'Marquise Elkins allegedly attempted to rob the victim's mother on a sidewalk away from her home in coastal Brunswick. According to the prosecutor, Lang entered a guilty plea of intent to commit aggravated burglary. Lang was sentenced to 8 years on community supervision after a Superior State judge gave him credit for the two years he did serve in prison. Lang assisted investigators in the arrest and conviction of De'Marquise Elkins, who was found guilty of the child's death and shooting and injuring the victim's mother (BYNUM, 2019). Elkins was sentenced to life imprisonment without parole eligibility. Lang gave testimony against Elkins during his court case.

Lang and De'Marquise's criminal behavior is best explained using the subculture theory of juvenile delinquency. The idea was advanced by Albert Cohen, who contends that juveniles who fail to meet the social ideals pursue justification in a subculture (Ahsan, 2018). Other

adolescents who do not satisfy societal expectations make up the subculture team. These factions then behave socially unacceptable ways and fight against socially recommended guidelines (Ahsan, 2018). According to Cohen, delinquency is a societal result. Youths commit crimes like theft since it is not a social norm for them, and they do it to conform to their subculture. Though Lang was not responsible for the shooting, he was part of the criminal group. As an accomplice, he participated in the crime because of peer pressure and the need to be part of a juvenile network.

In my view, the juvenile courts and the juvenile corrections have been inadequate in punishing minor offenders accused and convicted of juvenile crimes. Binder and Hjalmarsson (2017) suggest that though there is a reduced rate of recidivism among teenage offenders who are incarcerated or undergo probation. However, much needs to be done. When comparing youth behavior intervention initiatives to programs in different fields, such as adult counseling, it is evident that the consequences of the juvenile delinquency initiatives are much narrower. There are likely underlying reasons why these repercussions are always minor. Young offenders are frequently uncooperative victims. As per Bindler and Hjalmarsson (2017), they may be reluctant to compromise or fail to acknowledge that a distinctive life path is a viable option for them. Furthermore, even if the learning or therapeutic interventions program is entirely productive, the environment in which it is delivered may contain harmful or stigmatizing components.

Nevertheless, legislation should change to influence the punishment or rehabilitation of juvenile offenders. For instance, murder should not be a crime that is overlooked due to a person's young age. A teenager who commits murder should not be given an option of parole. They should serve a jail sentence since life is lost. An individual who takes another person's life should not be allowed to enjoy freedom. However, an exception should be on those mentally

challenged juveniles because they may not know what they did. Crimes bordering on robbery with violence, attempted murder, and sexual assault should also see the culprits serve a jail term. The law should change such that petty crime, like pickpocketing, should see the juveniles do a probation sentence. The victims of robbery with violence, rape, and families whose loved ones are murdered by the juvenile offenders seek justice. In my opinion, they want to see the perpetrators of these crimes in jail. That is why they will support any legislative change championing the maximum sentences to the offenders, even if it means the culprits being incarcerated. Regrettably, this change in legislation will be targeting juveniles who engage in serious crimes like rape, murder, and attempted murder. It will also target neighborhoods involved in gang activities and disadvantaged populations because they are prone to juvenile crimes.

Juvenile crimes happen for different reasons, and no single theory best explains juvenile delinquency. At the same time, the existing juvenile justice system and the intervention programs are not solid, judging by the increasing rates of crime among teenagers. Rehabilitation programs that focus on behavior change are successful, but much needs to be done. More importantly, underlying issues are driving delinquent conduct among the youth. Some are caused by social problems like lack of economic empowerment, drug use, or peer pressure. These are the issues that policymakers should address to limit the number of adolescents who pass through the justice system.

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