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## Why Juveniles Commit Crimes

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## Preface

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This unit explains how we recognize criminal behavior in juveniles. It defines juveniles and delinquency. It describes “juveniles” and “delinquency” as they relate to the history of criminal behavior. The unit explores the nature and the extent of juvenile delinquency, as well as how family relationships are involved in the process, and offers a few theories in regard to the family influence factor and its causes.

Being a juvenile in any one’s life is part of the stage of development. The behavior patterns of juveniles are influenced in part by what goes on in the environment in which they live. Every stage of development has transitions. Family members, friends, and peers all influence these times of transition for the juvenile. It is sometimes accompanied by a desire for material things, fashion, peer pressure, cash and more. At times, the demands of wants and needs are intensified by a society that consists of high mobility, social change, and is materialistic. Also, social changes can create anxiety and disillusionment for adolescents and thus they commit delinquent acts. Obviously, human beings tend to develop in different stages until they become adults. One of these stages is the adolescent stage. When humans are in the adolescent stage, they are considered juveniles. When a juvenile does something wrong, contrary to the laws or norms of the society, such as acts of vandalism, theft, drug related activity, arson or other anti-social behavior, he/she is then considered a juvenile delinquent.

Many other factors need to be considered before a juvenile act becomes a delinquent act. The “norms” of one society may differ significantly from another society. What could be considered delinquency in Africa or Asia might not be delinquent behavior in the United States. Laws, legal or cultural norms, belief systems, traditions all play a determining role in various aspects of our lives. These factors allow society to create ideals and expectations for their citizens.

All juvenile delinquent behaviors are influenced not only by what goes on in the environment in which juveniles live, but also by what they observe in adults, what they listen to, learn from peer groups, parents, relatives, and society at large. Juvenile delinquency is not an inherent human condition, but rather is learned through association, imitation, observation, pressure, needs, wants, influence and desires.

## Introduction

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Juvenile delinquent behavior is one of the most important issues we face as a nation in this new millennium. Despite the social awareness, juvenile delinquency is on the rise; case in point the tragic killing that occurred at Columbine High School in Colorado. This gives much cause for concern. Juvenile crime is increasingly more sophisticated and its participants are becoming younger. Gun violence has spread out from urban centers into suburbia. Drug and alcohol use among adolescents has reached epidemic proportions.

How can we solve the problem of adolescent delinquent behavior? Many times the punishment for juvenile delinquency does not fit the crime. The issues surrounding juvenile delinquency today may well hinge on our understanding of how a teenager who commits crime thinks and behaves. How do we recognize

criminal behavior in juveniles? It is possible that biological factors play a role in the criminal behavior of a juvenile offender. How can we even defend the theory of pure mind and physical body shape of adolescence to determine the factor that leads to delinquent behavior? How can we analyze the cause that relates to the delinquent act? It is likely, but no empirical data supports the belief that juveniles have biological inheritance that causes their delinquency. However, one may argue the fact that as adolescents go through stages of development, their physical shape tends to resemble that of other juvenile delinquents who, perhaps, have similar physical characteristics, and who might have been committing juvenile crimes. As a result, we tend to assume the probability that the next juvenile with the same physical shape will also be a juvenile delinquent. Although this is a possibility, it is an unlikely one. The quotation from Julius Caesar embodies a very old belief:

Let me have men about me that are fat; sleek-headed men, and such as sleep o' nights. Yond' Cassius has a lean and hungry look. He thinks too much; Such men are dangerous.

Julius Caesar  
Act 1, Scene II

This quotation antedates Shakespeare by at least 3,500 years. It is found in Egyptian writings, in Homer's epics, in the Hippocratic and Galenic doctrines of medicine, and in the bible.

@1H:What is a juvenile delinquent? As I began to examine adolescent criminal behavior, I found that there was no formal definition of adolescent behavior, in part because the word "delinquent" was derived from a legal term to associate bad behavior being conducted by juveniles. In the real legal meaning, a delinquent is an adolescent who is being officially processed by the juvenile court and judged by the court to be a delinquent. A delinquent is anyone who has broken a criminal law, while a status offender is a juvenile who has violated a law applicable to juveniles only. However, whether it is a status or a criminal law violation, juveniles are subject to juvenile court jurisdiction once they break the laws applied to the status (kinds, degrees) of their offenses.

The legal definition for status offender is for those under the age of 18 years. California, for example, has a statute that falls under what is called the "Welfare and Institution Code." Sections 601 and 602 of this code summarize the state's legal definitions of juveniles and delinquents to be:

Any person under the age of 18 years who persistently or habitually refuses to obey the reasonable and proper orders or directions. Any person who is a habitual truant from school within the meaning of the law of the state.

Although the interpretations differ from state to state, the premise is the same. There is no uniform definition, and it is easier for juveniles to be arrested and be labeled a delinquent. The court considers juveniles to be dangerous when their behavior patterns violate the law within the jurisdiction of the juvenile court.

Sociologists have had a tendency to base their findings on statistics without a concern for how the label "delinquency" gets applied to those children in trouble. Sociologist Paul W. Tappan believes that juvenile

delinquents can be recognized by analyzing their behaviors. He identified juvenile behaviors by looking into their norms and why they change and become delinquent

Despite the statistical data on juvenile behavior, there seems to be serious shortcomings in the validity of the analysis and understanding of juvenile crime. There are limitations in the “unknown relationship” between the number of crimes actually committed, the number of those reported to the police, and the number of those so reported actually recorded and reported by the police.

Defining who is a delinquent and who is not is a matter of norms and culture of the society in which we live. What may be deemed a delinquent act in Africa may well be acceptable behavior in another part of the world. Juveniles acquire culture and behavior through relationships with other people and conform strictly to the rules by listening, observing, and imitating. In the course of socialization, the child (juvenile) learns rules and what to expect and accepts those behaviors as standard rules in order to function. Knowing the rules allows a child to determine what he/she will do in a given situation. Knowing the norms makes a child select a right way to do things or the wrong way, if he/she chooses to. Juvenile delinquents deviate from some of the rules to such a degree that society takes action against them. We do not have universal conformity for how we behave. There are differences in values, attitudes, and life experiences. Family, school, peer groups each has its own values, born of its own experiences.

Erikson states that there are eight stages of development in the life of every individual, and if handled well, will produce:

Trust instead of mistrust. A child who has comfort and warmth of being held closely and securely will learn to trust the world, others and self. This would be a healthy personality that is not delinquency prone.<sup>2</sup>

An important aspect of the socialization process and an insulator to delinquency is the quality and process of interaction between parent and child. If communication breaks down at any point, it could lead toward delinquent behavior.

## **How does juvenile behavior become delinquent? And when?**

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For the past few years, broken homes, a child’s family position, and family size have been the subjects of considerable study in the crime and delinquency field. In 1950, there were 40.5 million children living in homes containing both a father and a mother, and 4.1 million children living in broken homes. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 1970 there were 7.6 million minors (under eighteen years of age) growing up without one or both parents. In 1960, one of every four black families was headed by a woman who was divorced, separated from her husband, or abandoned. In 1972, almost one out of every three black families was without a father, compared to one in ten for whites. In this new millennium, the syndrome is no longer confined to low-income families or black families. Today’s middle class increasingly resembles the low-income family of the early 1960’s. With the increase in such patterns as divorces (in 1996, one in every three marriages ended in divorce), separations and working mothers, children are increasingly being entrusted to daycare centers, neighbors, home alone and the television. Child-rearing patterns have, thus, undergone drastic changes. In an article on this issue, Sandra Pesmen notes that there are “more and more young

children with working mothers than ever before.”<sup>3</sup> Many welfare-supported women with too many children in too many rooms have taken in neighbors’ children to supplement their income. At times these nannies have abused the children under their care. In 1999, a Chicago woman was recorded on a video camera beating a child under her care. Sometimes the result is more overcrowding, less supervision, and less effective socialization with children. There are instances when children who return home to empty houses have to await the return of their parents. Tendency is that the children are probably home alone, and as a result, creates an “emotional vacuum,” where children grow up without any values or goals.

### **The result of being delinquent as a juvenile.**

The result of being a juvenile delinquent is the increasing incidence of runaways, teenage suicides, teenage parenthood, and a series of unhappy marriages and divorces. In this new millennium, children seem to be getting less nurturing and support from within their family. Instead, children are spending more and more time in front of televisions, computers, and surfing the Internet in order to ascertain where to buy guns and homemade bombs of which contribute to the delinquency problem.<sup>4</sup> However, we cannot always place the blame on parents; at times children just want to listen to their peers and follow their advice. If we look into other variables, such as age, sex, type of offense, and quality of single parent-child relationship, we could reach a conclusion that it is not necessarily the parent who is at fault. We cannot correlate one factor to determine why juveniles commit crimes. I researched juvenile behavior dealing exclusively with girls, and I found that girls tend to be juvenile delinquents when they lose emotional touch with their family or someone close to them. Most girls are arrested for incorrigibility, running away, gang involvement, and sex offenses; while most boys are arrested for vandalism, theft, assault, rape, drugs and some major offenses.

## **The Nature and Extent of Juvenile Delinquency**

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It is very hard to define juvenile delinquency in terms of deviance from conduct norms because norms vary from state to state, city to city, and neighborhood to neighborhood. The attitudes and actions of parents exercise an important influence on whether a child is found to be incorrigible and disobedient or compliant and receptive to the learning experience. The policies of the police and the attitudes in the community can influence the notion of what delinquency is. Juveniles today are handled differently and separately from adults in almost every phase of the criminal justice system.

Like most of American criminal practice, the juvenile justice system derives from the Common Law of England. The English Common Law in regard to criminal responsibility is based on three assumptions concerning age: first, a person under the age of seven is presumed to be incapable of forming criminal intent; second, from the age of eight to fourteen, an offender is not held responsible unless the state can prove that he/she can clearly distinguish between right and wrong. The main concern is for the welfare of the child and the legal procedures that might hamper the court in its beneficial actions are either circumvented or ignored. There are two concepts under the Common Law: the presumption that children under a certain age are not responsible for their actions, and the conviction that a certain category of children is in need of protection.

When the age requirements were raised to sixteen and eighteen, the concepts of juvenile delinquency became known. In 1899, America started to give attention to a juvenile court system. The first juvenile court was established in that year in Chicago. Subsequently, the mixing of juvenile offenders and adult felons, which had taken place for centuries, was looked upon as repugnant in America.

In 1966, the case of *Miranda v. Arizona* introduced a turbulent period for the criminal justice system. Police officials were very much opposed to the rules that require them to advise an accused of his Constitutional rights because they felt that this practice handicapped them. The Supreme Court ruled that once the police held a person in custody, and before interrogation, the accused had to be advised that:

1. He/she has the right to remain silent,
2. Anything he says may be used against him in a court of law,
3. He has the right to speak to any attorney and to have his attorney present during questioning. If he desires counsel and cannot provide his own, one will be provided him without charge before questioning.

This right is necessary. If a suspect is being advised of his/her rights, and does not elect to remain silent and does not request counsel, he/she would be regarded as having voluntarily consented to interrogation.

By the following year, the justice system also received a major jolt in the State of Arizona with a case, *In Re Gault*. This case focused on several of the rights incorporated in the Fourteenth Amendment's "due process" clause.<sup>5</sup> Gerald Gault, fifteen years old, was sentenced to confinement for the remainder of his minority (six years) for an offense (lewd and indecent phone calls). The maximum penalty for an adult in such a case would have been only two months.

During the course of his hearings, Mr. Gault was deprived of most of the privileges that various court decisions had granted his adult counterparts. His appeal was heard by the United States Supreme Court on the issues of: notice of the charge, right to counsel, right to confrontation and cross-examination, privilege against self-incrimination, right to transcript of the proceedings, and right to appellate review. Gault was entitled to those rights at the time and it was these rights that reshaped the direction of the juvenile justice system and replaced the concept of *parens patriae* with due process. It seems that juvenile justice will continue to follow the ideals of *parens patriae*, but with the Supreme Court watching to see that the rights of young citizens are not abused.

It is reasonable to argue that the relatively high proportion of adult felons who were processed through the juvenile treatment and training institutions as youths may decrease sharply as alternatives to formal processing, institutionalization, and labeling are developed for juveniles. Recognition of this problem, and the development of alternatives, will reduce the burden that juvenile delinquents place on the adult correctional system.

Some writers have attributed the "delinquency problem" to factors such as parent-youth conflict, the modern conditions of family life, and the lack of sustained primary relationships. Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin write that the problem may be regarded as a symptom of strain caused by the gap between culturally prescribed aspirations (e.g. monetary success) and socially structured avenues designed to achieve goals.

Perhaps everyone wants to be successful, but social differences create problems. David Matza believes that delinquency is a version of teenage culture. It seems that some writers have based their theories on what juvenile delinquents do without a concern for how the label of delinquency comes to be applied to troublesome youth.

Sociologists have provided significant information about the social context of delinquency, the economic inequalities which facilitate illegal behavior, and subcultural behavior. However, we know very little about the social processes by which formal organizations define persons as “delinquent.” If we cannot understand the routine activities, customs and self-images of delinquents, we will not be able to understand the ways in which certain types of youthful behavior come to be viewed as delinquent. David Matza, too, agrees that delinquency cannot be explained. He stresses the fact that delinquent behavior is a rule-breaking behavior performed by juveniles who are aware that they are violating the law.<sup>6</sup>

## Family Influence

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We cannot always place the blame on parents. But the structure within the family household could determine the extent of delinquency manifested by a juvenile. Family relationships, duties, responsibilities and privileges, and the amount of control exercised over children all play roles in forming character and influencing behavior. The attitudes and actions of parents can create an important influence in the lives of children. Families in crisis will most likely affect the behavior of juveniles. If one member of a family becomes sick, schizophrenic, or alcoholic, a child may react based on the family’s structural problems. Psychologist Eric Berman gives a cogent description of a family in crisis and the effect on a child.<sup>7</sup> In an article adapted from his book, *Scapegoat*, Berman tells how an eight-year-old boy’s personal problems and subsequent behavior resulted from an effort to repress the family’s basic problem:

During the year, Roscoe’s father had been sick with a heart condition and now was on the brink of death. Open heart surgery was his only hope, and the doctors Gave him a few months to live.

Despite the tragic implications of these circumstances and the fact that the child’s father could die at any time, the family never talked about his condition or their own future. When crisis occurs in a family, children have no power or choice other than to suffer the consequences. But when they do try to fight back, it is likely to land them in the courts or in a setting for emotionally disturbed children.

The family is, therefore, an important factor in the forces that determine delinquency. The family determines a child’s class, structure, and development, and the nourishing process is vital to formation of a child’s development. Family exerts the most influence on a human being. Any severe disturbance in one or both parents can produce a devastating negative impact on a juvenile.

The family influence on roles and norms which juveniles follow comes through the socialization process that the individual experiences as part of the family culture. We could assume that children or juveniles would conform strictly to the rules taught in the family setting. However, that does not always work out. Adolescents and even adults deviate from rules. The single parent family setting could still prepare the child for family roles, but it was less effective in preparing children for their adult roles in society and the community. In most cases, a one-parent family, whether the result of divorce, desertion or death, consists of a mother and children living together. The mother often finds it difficult to provide sustenance and guidance, and the absence of a father leaves the male children without an adult male role model. Absence of family as a unit could affect childhood and how children socialize. Where the family fails, other socializing agencies will take on an increasing role in a child's life.

Sometimes families have a tendency to contribute to delinquent behavior. Conflict between parents who are demonstrating opposing ideas or a parental pattern of "Don't do as I do; but do as I say," may indirectly teach lessons that were completely opposite those intended. This form of indirect learning by observing negative parental role models is a factor that causes delinquency. Several studies explain the considerable impact of a negative parental role.

1. Robins (1966) did a follow-up study of white children referred to a psychiatric clinic for "anti-social behavior." The percentages of fathers displaying a variety of problem behaviors thought to be associated with criminality included: excessive drinking 36%; poor work habits 21%; non-support or neglect 26%; physical cruelty 20%. In addition, 48% of the mothers and 23% of the fathers were psychologically disturbed or mentally handicapped.

2. Robins, West, and Herjanic (1975) studied black children. They found that convicted parents tended to have convicted children and, as juveniles, to have had similar rates and types of offenses. They cited the example of Nathaniel Abrahams, a young black boy who has experienced many disappointments from his parents. Nathaniel rebelled and began to commit crimes at the age of eleven. He killed, robbed and flashed guns to intimidate. He was later arrested and charged with adult crime.

Children are exposed to neighborhood modeling influences, at times favorable to criminal attitudes and behaviors. It is also impossible to separate out bad genes from either parental examples of criminal behavior or inadequate parenting which is likely to connect with childhood delinquency. But when a child rebels for his/her own personal reason or feeling, which may be unknown, that could become a mystery.

## **Family Factor that Causes Delinquency**

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Discipline is another interrelated part of family relationships that affects delinquency. Disturbed family relations play a very important role in the problem of delinquency. In an investigation of high-delinquency areas in New York City, Craig and Glick found three factors related to increased likelihood of delinquency: 1) careless or inadequate supervision by the mother or surrogate mother; 2) erratic or overly strict discipline;



and 3) lack of cohesiveness of the family unit.

Sheldon and Glueck found that 4.1 percent of fathers were found to use sound discipline practices; 26.7 percent, fair; and 69.3 percent, unsound. The types of discipline practices were described as follows:8

Sound - Consistent and firm control but not so strict as to arouse fear and antagonism.

Fair - Control which is indefinite: sometimes strict, sometimes lax.

Unsound - Extremely lax or extremely rigid control by the parents, which, on the one hand, gives unrestrained freedom of action and, on the other hand, restricts to the point of rebellion.

Consistency and persistence in discipline are needed if controls are to be adequately internalized into a youth's personality. Situations, and appropriate methods of discipline to deal with a child, must occur regularly enough to let the child develop concepts of conduct and be able to distinguish suitable and unsuitable responses. Travis Hirschi was quoted in *Causes of Delinquency* by Haskel & Yablonsky. He cited an example of what may occur if the parent of a delinquent child were to be of a lower class. He states that, even if the father is committing criminal acts, he may not publicize the fact to his children. The father operates to foster obedience to a system of norms to which he himself may not conform. It sounds like a firm control but it may not be strict enough to make a child want to conform to rules or norms. Travis Hirschi argues that parents may not necessarily transmit delinquent values. However, Sykes and Matza state that even though the family of the delinquent may agree with society that delinquency is wrong, the family may tolerate or even encourage the commission of certain offenses, though not others, for example, drug offenses a high crime, big money societal issue of the '90s. Or consider the example of a parent with an alcohol problem who is setting an example that many children would follow.

It is also important to understand that the intimacy with which parents communicate is strongly related to the commission of delinquent acts. The idea is whether the parent is psychologically present when temptation to commit a crime appears. If, in the situation of temptation, the child gives no thought to parental reaction, the child would tend to commit the act. Children who perceive that their parents are unaware of their whereabouts are likely to do what they want, all of which suggests that the focus of communication can affect the likelihood that the child can recall his parents when and if a situation of potential delinquent behavior arises, or he/she may ignore it if he/she chooses to.

## Juvenile Court

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The juvenile courts still hold broad powers over children. These powers include the right to depart from legal procedures established for criminal courts and to deny to children and their parents privileges normally accorded defendants in civil courts. The juvenile court may, for example, consider evidence that would be inadmissible in both criminal and civil courts. The justification offered for this vast delegation of power over children is that it is essential if the court is to determine how best to rehabilitate the child and how to provide adequate care for him. According to the standards suggested by the United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare, if a juvenile court is to become fully effective, it must have the following:

1) a judge and a staff identified with and capable of carrying out a non-punitive and individualized service.

2) Sufficient facilities must be available in the court and the community to ensure:

a) that the dispositions of the court are based on the best available knowledge of the needs of the child,

b) that the child, if he needs care and treatment, receives these through facilities adapted to his/her needs and from persons properly qualified and empowered to give them,

c) That the community receives adequate protection.

3) Procedures designed to ensure:

a) that each child and his situation are considered individually,

b) that the legal and constitutional rights of both parents and child and those of the community are duly considered and protected.

## Biological Approach of Juvenile Crimes

The biological approach to delinquent behavior has focused more on brain dysfunction and impairment in learning capabilities. Other research has shown abnormal electroencephalogram (EEG) recordings of the brain activity in criminals and delinquents, relating this to violent and aggressive behavior, destructiveness, limited impulse control, and poor social adaptation.

Dysfunctions of the brain have also been linked to such learning disabilities as dyslexia, aphasia and hyperactivity, which researchers contend turn persons toward deviant behavior, rejection and poor educational achievement. Further study has established a relationship between violent criminal behavior and brain tumors, although there is little evidence of a direct causal relationship to know what role, if any, brain disorders play in adolescent delinquency. How can we then understand why adolescents behave the way they do?

Biologically, teenagers go through different development stages. Knowing that to be true, can we assume that the teenage brain is also in a working progress while the rest of the body is developing? And just as a teenager is all legs one day and nose and ears the next, different areas of the brain are still undergoing development of different schedules. This imbalance could tell us why a smart 15 or 16 year old, who does not think twice before stealing a car or vandalizing a house with a friend, can be hugging others one minute and then flying off the handle the next. Therefore, if the analysis and assessment is right, the brain inside a teenager's skull is, in some ways, closer to a child's brain than to an adult's. It is, perhaps, being connected between neurons that affect not only emotional skills but also physical and mental abilities that process. That means that it might be unreasonable of us to expect young teenagers to organize multiple tasks or grasp the concept of abstract ideas since there are developing neural lines that leave a teenager vulnerable to many things.

These changes are not all for the worse. The brain's capacity for growth in adolescence may indicate that troubled teenagers can still learn restraint, judgment, and empathy. Adolescence is a time of tumultuous change in the brain. An adolescent's tendency to leap before looking is added to the fact that teenage is a time for seeking out new experiences, including situations that are dangerous.

There are differing opinions on psychological and biological theories of delinquency that seek to explain delinquent behavior in terms of individual abnormalities. The sociological perspective of delinquency generally regards it as a "normal" response and holds that all persons have the potential and the opportunity to commit delinquent or criminal acts. Travis Hirschi, in his book *Causes of Delinquency*, offers a social control theory with a bonding proposition. This social bond consists of four components: attachment, commitment, involvement and belief. Hirschi states that when individuals do not believe that they should conform to social convention, they are more likely to break the law, and that teenagers are not exceptions to social conventions. Hirschi believes that attachment to others can help prevent delinquent behavior.<sup>10</sup>

Other theorists attribute lower class delinquency, particularly in black adolescents, to thinking that they lack educational opportunities and motivation for learning and, therefore, that they can turn to delinquent behavior. This, however, is an unfounded hypothesis. The educational variables in delinquency formation should not be placed in the context of other determinant factors such as opportunity and learned behavior. Overall, the probability of an adolescent being arrested is much greater when we consider other factors such as lack of parental affection, broken homes, child abuse, sexual abuse and gangs.

The issue of juvenile rights within the juvenile justice system made its impact during the 1960s and 1970s

when a series of landmark decisions by the United States courts led to a shift in the juvenile court system from a philosophy based on the doctrine of *parens patriae* to a new approach in court procedures. This approach is based on a philosophy allowing equal consideration to guaranteeing juveniles their constitutional rights, responding to their need for treatment, guidance, rehabilitation, punishment, and acting in the best interest of the child and the community.

In 1967, the Supreme Court recognized the juvenile's constitutional rights and granted due process that juveniles are entitled to:

the right to counsel,

the right to early written notification of the charge,

the right to confront and cross-examine one's accuser,

the right to remain silent,

protection from self-incrimination.

We might look into how delinquent acts are committed with companions. It is possible that juvenile delinquents have delinquent friends. The indirect evidence regarding the extent to which delinquency and delinquent friends go together could provide proof that relationships between a delinquent child and those with whom he/she associates are significant factors in juvenile delinquency. In some forms of differential association theory, a child may not have had propensities to delinquency prior to his association with delinquents. But it is possible that after a child acquires delinquent friends, he/she learns the values, attitudes and skills conducive to delinquency and, as a result, becomes delinquent him/herself.

One may argue that relationships with peers, especially among delinquents, are sufficiently strong to produce change in attitude and behavioral changes. We need to realize that, in our society, although teenagers strive to fulfill their parents' desires, they also look very often to their peers for approval as well. Consequently, our society still has in its midst a set of teenage societies which focus teenage interests and attitudes on things far removed from adult responsibilities, societies which may develop standards that lead teens away from those goals established by the larger society.

@2H(after1H):Vocabulary The words "child," "youth," and "Youngster are used synonymously and denote a person of juvenile court age. Juvenile court laws define a "child" as any person under the specified age, no matter how mature or sophisticated he may seem. Juvenile jurisdictions in at least two-thirds of the state

include children under 18; the others also include youngsters between the ages of 18 and 21.

Juvenile Term    Adult Term

1. Adjudication: decision by the judge that the Conviction of guilt

child has committed delinquent acts.

1. Adjudicatory hearing: a hearing to determine

Trial

whether the allegations of a petition are supported by the evidence beyond a reasonable doubt or by a preponderance of the evidence.

2. Adjustment: the term refers to matters which are Plea bargaining

settled or brought to a satisfactory state so that parties are agreed without official intervention of the court.

3. After-care: the supervision given to a child

Parole

for a limited period of time after he is released from the training school but still under the control of the school or of the juvenile court.

4. Commitment: a decision by the judge that the Sentence to imprisonment

child should be sent to a training school.

5. Court: the court having jurisdiction over Court of record
- children who are alleged to be or found to be delinquent. Juvenile delinquency procedures should not be used for neglected children or those in need of supervision.
- 
6. Delinquent act: an act that if committed by an Crime
- adult would be called a crime. The term “delinquent acts” does not include such ambiguities and noncrimes as “being ungovernable, “truancy,” “incurability,” and disobedience.
7. Delinquent child: a child who is found Criminal
- to have committed an act that would be considered a crime if committed by an adult.
- 
8. Detention: temporary care of a child Holding in jail
- alleged to be delinquent who requires secure custody in physically restricting facilities pending court disposition or execution of a court order.
- 
9. Dispositional hearing: a hearing held Sentencing hearing
- subsequent to the adjudicatory hearing in order to determine what order of disposition should be made concerning a child adjudicated as delinquent.
- 
10. Hearing: the presentation of evidence to Trial
- the juvenile court judge, his consideration of it, and his decision on disposition of the case.

11. Petition: an application for an order of court

Accusation or indictment

or for some other judicial action. Hence, a “delinquency petition” is an application for the court to act in the matter of a juvenile apprehended for a delinquent act.

12. Probation: the supervision of a delinquent

Probation (with the same meaning)

child after the court hearing but without commitment to a training school.

13. Residential child care facility: a dwelling

Halfway house

other than a detention or shelter care facility, which provides living accommodations, care, treatment, and maintenance for children and youth and is licensed to provide such care. Such facilities include foster family homes, group homes, and halfway houses.

14. Shelter: temporary care of a child in

Jail

physically unrestricting facilities pending court

disposition or execution of a court order for placement. Shelter care is used for dependent and neglected children and minors in need of supervision. Separate shelter care facilities are also used for children apprehended for delinquency who need temporary shelter but not secure detention.

15. Take into custody: the act of the police in

Arrest

securing the physical custody of a child engaged in delinquency; avoids the stigma of the word arrest.

## Lesson Plan

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This unit is designed for ninth through twelfth grade students; however, the teacher would best determine the value. The unit will allow students to understand why juveniles commit crimes. It will enhance their knowledge to be able to reason as to the cause and effect of juvenile offenses. It will provide knowledge with regard to the juvenile justice system, how it works and the effect that it will have upon students once they break the law, as well as the larger consequences as they become adult members of this fast paced society.

My teaching methods will allow students to get involved:

Students will watch movies about juveniles committing crimes,

Students will discuss the impact of juvenile crimes as a group,

Students will be allowed to ask questions, form opinions and ask to make decisions,

Students will take trips to juvenile courts and adult courts,

Students will listen to how a judge decides cases,

Students will take pictures,

Students will visit Juvenile Detention Centers,



Students will read books on juvenile offenders,

Students will have group debates,

Topics on juvenile delinquents will be included in lesson plans.

Students will work in groups to discuss, exchange ideas, give new information and find solutions to one delinquent's problems every time they are grouped.

Students will write essays on juvenile delinquency.

As a teacher, I intend to:

Develop a curriculum that will relate to juvenile crime.

Invite guest speakers who are professionals on juvenile matters, such as lawyers, judges, juvenile detention officers, police and others to share their experiences.

Place posters on the wall that depict a juvenile, the offense committed, and how the juvenile faced consequences.

Include a social studies lesson plan in the curriculum

Form a Delinquency Club. It will function to assist students on a lower grade level to understand delinquent behavior.

Facilitate visits by Grades 9-12 to the 5-8 Grade level, to explain delinquency and its consequences.

Ask students to give a monthly summary of what they have accomplished.

Publish articles on juvenile delinquency in the school newspaper that will elaborate on how and why juveniles can avoid delinquent behavior.

Ask that police officers, juvenile detention officers, and juvenile court to keep us informed of new events that may be supportive to students.

Require that students observe the types of crimes being committed in their neighborhood. Students will inform the class of those crimes and the class will discuss them and offer ideas as to why crime does not pay.

Observe classes, groups, debates, and discussions, offering advice as needed.

Form a debate team for students to discuss the pros and cons of juvenile delinquency.

Engage students in a work force in the court detention center on a part-time basis.

Plan a juvenile court proceeding. Students will participate as judge, juvenile delinquents, lawyers, detention officer, police officer, and decide cases by themselves. In class, students will write a reaction paper and define the role he/she played.

I will expect students to:

Understand their rights under the law.

Know how important those rights are.

Appreciate how important the lawyers, police officers, judges and detention officers are.

Understand the juvenile court proceedings and how it affects their lives.

Learn that knowledge is important.

Improve their writing skills.

Know how to stay away from juvenile crimes/adult crimes and to understand the consequences.

Understand the various forms of juvenile laws and terminology.

Be able to think better and more responsibly.

## Summary

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Why juveniles commit crimes is largely unknown. Take the case of Kayla Rolland, age 6, who was shot in the chest by another 6-year old classmate. The search for solutions to the juvenile crime escalation has been unproductive. It raises fears about parenting and concerns about the difficult life of a little boy.

The boy who killed Kayla was full of hate. He spent much of his time watching violent movies. The boy did

not seem to understand what he had done to his classmate. He was the product of an environment and family that was broken a broken home surrounded by gangs and drugs. The boy who did the killing had seen his uncle's friend with a gun and he found the gun under a pile of blankets in the bedroom.

Raising a child is not easy. It's a full-time job requiring a great deal of attention, and offering no guarantee that the child will become a productive member of society as a mature adult. Children do have the ability to understand that lying, stealing, cheating, and hurting others are wrong behaviors, but how old would a child have to be to know that these actions are morally wrong? The age at which a child reaches the stage of reasoning varies according to how the body develops, how he/she is raised, and how those around the child act. Children sometimes learn to reason by observing the behavior of the people most important to them. However, there is no guarantee. At times, children follow their own dictates.

Needless to say, society, the community, the family, the government and the parents need to work together to understand what children are all about. That is why it takes a whole village to raise a child. In order for children to become conscientious adults, it is essential that:

Communities strive to incorporate youths into community functions,

More positive role models come forward,

The police play a more active role in communities, i.e., speaking at schools and participating in local functions,

Schools and parents discuss the elements of delinquency and crime,

Authorities and community groups acquire a broader knowledge and understanding of juvenile gangs,

More resources be allocated to the prevention of youthful drug and alcohol abuse,

The criminal justice system concentrate more resources on discerning the causes of juvenile crime,

Juveniles and the criminal justice system make a joint effort to address the issues of concern to them.

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## Notes

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