

Juvenile Crime: ADHD or Social Environment

Jeffery Bryan Noggle

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Professor Jennifer Homan Meeks

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Something is going wrong with many juveniles in our society. For some reason, children are committing more crimes that are becoming more violent. Is this due to genetics or how children are raised? What are the reasons for more violent and mass killings committed by our young children against their peers? Or maybe these offenders are just neurologically wired this way, and it will never change.

Is the major contribution to juvenile criminal/violent behavior caused by uncontrolled ADHD due to the lack of medicine or caused by the social environment at home? Although the Swedish study on ADHD medication and Criminality in young adults reputedly shows that inconsistent use of medicines contribute to violence, the equal importance of exposed violent behavior in the home usually contributes more to juvenile violent behavior because of the excess and gradual exposure of the violent social experience overtime.

Argument

Sometimes, juveniles that have ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) for some reason end up in the criminal system at a high rate. The Swedish study performed and reported by Lichenstein (2012) has shown that children with ADHD are much more likely to engage in criminal behavior than those who do not have ADHD but take medicine regularly. Major traits that are seen in people with ADHD are impulsivity or inattentiveness. In children with ADHD, it is plausible to think that their impulsivity to act before thinking leads to violent behavior. When ADHD children are not treated, they may become bored and have nothing to do so this is when the traits lead to criminal behavior. Children are usually known for wanting what they want when they want it, but with a child with ADHD this type of child takes it a step further

and is either unwilling or unable to delay gratification and as noted by Athena (2012), this level of impulsivity may lead a child with ADHD to criminal and possible violent activity and behavior.

It is unthinkable that juveniles are involved in violent crimes; however, in Table 1 shows that an increase of juveniles are coming several types of violent crimes in the United states.

Table 1

Juvenile Violent Crime Statistics

Statistic Verification					
Source: Bureau of Justice					
Date Verified: 4.28.2013					
Year	Murder	Forcible Rape	Robbery	Assault	Total
2008	974	2,505	27,522	42,969	73,970
2007	1,011	2,633	26,324	43,459	73,427
2006	956	2,519	26,092	44,424	73,991
2005	929	2,888	21,515	45,150	70,482
2004	1,065	3,038	18,554	43,611	66,268
2003	783	2,966	17,900	43,150	64,799
2002	806	2,937	18,288	43,879	65,910
2001	957	3,119	18,111	44,815	67,002
2000	806	2,937	18,288	43,879	65,910
1999	919	3,182	18,735	45,080	67,916
1998	1,470	3,769	23,400	51,360	79,999
1997	1,731	3,792	28,069	52,807	86,462
1996	2,172	4,128	39,037	56,894	102,231
1995	2,560	4,190	44,508	64,334	115,592

Note: The table lists juvenile crime rates by crime from 1995-2008. \

The data on Juvenile crime is from the Website Statistic Brain.

Someone with violent behavior is very impulsive and need to satisfy some sort of instant satisfaction and instant gratification. Also the ability to not be able to follow directions could lead to a juvenile with ADHD to commit a violent crime without thinking about the consequences because this is what he/she is born with and not taught.

There are other major contributors to violent behavior than ADHD symptoms that contribute to juvenile violent behavior. Violence in the home such as physical, mental or sexual abuse and neglect can be major influences to criminal behavior as these juveniles become adults. Violence in the home can mean several thing. Physical abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. These are unfortunately the three major abuses in the home environment that contributes to criminal behavior as these juveniles become adults.

However, our prisons are full of what seems to be psychopaths. Athena (2012) states that psychopaths have the same traits as ADHD. Both of these sorts of people have impulse control issues and again as noted before, want what they want now with no patience. Unfortunately this is strong case that ADHD can be signal of psychopathic behavior in children that leads to violent behavior.

Otherwise, there may be a deeper problem than ADHD that causes violent criminal behavior in juveniles? It could be something that children are born with or people that they hang with. As summarized by Nichols (2004 p. 6), the process of violentization is addressed. Children seem to copycat the behavior that they are accustomed to. This is compared to brutalization in the violentization process. Children are very impressionable and if they tend to find a gang to hang with they are going to give in to the pure peer pressure and probably copy

that behavior so that they fit in.

However, violentization, which was coined by the criminologist Lonnie Athens his book why they kill, as mentioned by Nichols (2004 p. 6) is a major argument of why children become aggressive and tend to lead to violent behavior. The four step process is be briefly described.

“Violentization” is analogues to “Socializations”, is a statement coined by Lonnie Athens’ wash quoted by Nichols (2004). This is basically stating that people not only children become who they are though social experiences. Some of these negative or positive are something that is very difficult for the person to forget. This process is also basically stating that violent crimes or behavior is not something that just happens overnight, it develops gradually over a period of time through excess exposure. This process was developed over a matter of time from Athens as reported by Nichols (2004 p. 6) by talking to criminal’s prison.

Athens’ theory has described distinct stages of violentization, which are crucial to developing a violent personality. This process describes all humans, but for this paper the reader just need to think about juveniles.

Unfortunately brutalization is the first step mention by Rhodes (2004, p. 6) and has three steps: Violent Subjugation, and Personal horrification. All three of these are very personal. It is a strong argument when a juvenile is being beat into submission and the father figure continue to beat the child. Therefore, that juvenile would be horrified and a sense of rage would be a first thought. Even worse, because of the horrified raged the juvenile retaliates or gets revenge which would turn into violent behavior. Just as equal, it would be difficult for a juvenile to witness a love one being beaten like a sister or mother as this also would be traumatic and the juvenile would want to jump in but because of the existing violence would be afraid to intervene and

because of this would do nothing and then would feel a bit of remorse and hatred towards the violent person

The next step in the violentization process is when a person become purposely violent after time from being provoked. So therefore, when juveniles that are at home all day watching a parent get abused or maybe themselves start feeling lonely, depressed, and even feel upset with the aggressor it has a negative effect on them. So when a juvenile gets picked on all day at school it starts to upset the child. In result the juvenile becomes aggressive and starts to show violent behavior.

Furthermore, violent performances are basically crossing the line from violent resolution and intention to actual action as. While juveniles are witnessing violence at home and school there is usually rage and anger building up it and is not surprising that a child may feel powerless. With all the bullying going in it may not be shocking that a juvenile resorts to the only thing he know. This could be the reason that there are younger adult's committing violent crimes.

It is unfortunate that kids cannot be kids and have to worry about the environment that they live in and not knowing any better to succumb to the pressures of family.

Also, if a juvenile is around close friends or family member suffering from abuse this could be very personally traumatizing for that person. What is s juvenile to do when a father or brother is teaching that person that it is ok to protect yourself with violence if you are threatened by others? This type of encouragement is negative, however when a young child is impressionable it is easy to go down the wrong path.

Another contributor that can be used to support the argument of that criminal behavior starts at home is sexual abuse. Several people have been writing about the “Cycle of violence or the “intergenerational transmission of violence” over several years as submitted by Widom (1996). It is just very obvious that sexual abuse and neglect usually is a major factor to juvenile criminal behavior. It is very often difficult for these abused children not to feel neglected and want to act out in some sort of behavior, most likely negative behavior which often leads to jail time from serious crimes. A child who grows up while being sexually abused over their life needs to vent somewhere. They become lonely and getting away and doing resorting to violent and aggressive behavior is a lot easier to deal with than being at home knowing that a family member is probably going to be sexually abused once at home.

Summary

To summarize the argument, it is a combination of several things that contribute the violent behavior in juveniles. Children are going to be children and always have behavior issues, this is why it is very important to teach children how we would like to see them act. Just because the Swedish study states that children with ADHD are likely to be aggressive and to commit violent crimes, this is not the only contribute to juvenile violent behavior. On the other side of the argument, juveniles are like sponges, they are very impressionable and they are going to do what they are taught at home. Juvenile also fold under peer pressure and are likely to impress their friends to gain popularity. The biggest effect on juveniles is the possible physical abuse at home cause if I child is beat at home this seems to cause the child to give up and what else should be done. It is easier to just be in trouble, go to jail and not worry about things at home as they probably think it is easier to deal with.

Are there more factors?

It would not be out of the question to also think that, the type of abuse the child has witnessed or personally experienced to think that that is the type of crime that would be committed by that particular juvenile. I have also read that children who have been sexually abused have grown up to be prostitutes or committed that same sexual abuse to their child. Another think to think about is if a child witness a father physically abusing the mother that child would very easily physically abuse his or her spouse or girlfriend constantly get into fight with peers at school. So based on this paper there are a variety of factors that usually combine to cause juveniles to create a violent crime.

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