

Topic: What are some of the methods being used by the Juvenile Justice System to deal with troubled youth? Are they effective?

Juvenile Justice is more rhetoric than anything else. Our society has always been, and continues to be neglected, demeaning, and frequently violent. We see a more permissive treatment of delinquency in the middle to upper-class adolescents who are less likely to enter the juvenile justice system.

Since the 1960's the juvenile court, as well as its rehabilitative *parens patriae* (the state as parent philosophy), has confronted massive criticism from all sides. From both liberals and conservatives looking to reduce the scope of the juvenile courts responsibilities, we see the conservatives wanting to send the violating youth to adult court. Liberals recommend divesting the juvenile court of its jurisdiction over *status offenders* (juveniles who engage in behaviors for which adults would not be arrested).

There are also those who believe that the adult court could do a much better job than the juvenile court. The fact is that the juvenile justice system will experience major changes in the next few years. Some of these changes will be helpful to the youth, but this critical question has yet to be answered.

The following are some generalizations about how the juvenile justice system works at dealing with troubled youth. The youth behavior is malleable. Rehabilitation is usually a viable goal. Youth have more protection because they are in families and are dependants. Limitations exist on public access information. There seems to be a significant number of youth who are diverted away from the juvenile justice system and into alternative programs such as attention homes, forestry camps, kinship social structure, mental health placements, ranches, training schools, etc(1978).

There are four devastating critiques of juvenile institutionalization. First, we see that some of the staff members do not care about the youth. Second, we see claims that the needed programs are scarce or not available to the youth. Third, there are those youths who learn more about a life of crime while in the system. Fourth, we see these facilities as being temporary or correctional. The differences between these two categories is the absence of correctional programs and the short length of the temporary attempt at rehabilitation (Clemens Bartollas, Stuart J. Miller).

How the times have changed; these are some changes in how public school teachers viewed their top disciplinary problems in 1940-vs-1990.

<u>1940</u>	<u>1990</u>
Talking out of turn	Drug Abuse
Chewing Gum	Alcohol Abuse
Making Noise	Pregnancy
Running in the halls	Suicide
Cutting in line	Rape
Dress Code Violations	Robbery
Littering	Assaults

The families and local communities could see this drastic change in the wayward juveniles. In order to respond to this problem the public believed that the answer was to move away from the family and the community efforts of control and go with formal departments of police, courts and correctional agencies. In spite of some initial efforts by the police to set up delinquency prevention programs and reformers, complaining that the

police were too often brutal and corrupt was about the time that the courts stepped in and organized guidelines for detention, interrogation, confession, and other problems from the past. What we now have is a decision based on what is best for the children and how can we be effective in solving these wide ranges of problems (1984).

The overreach of the definition for delinquency and the failure to specify the degrees of offenses highlights the profound discrepancy between formal declarations of liberty and justice. This tells us a great deal about our modern American approach to controlling, regulating, and treating juvenile delinquency. As a result, much youthful misbehavior have been overlooked by police or ignored by judges. In practice, police exercise discretion in softening the harshness of our laws. This approach seems to focus on the offender not the delinquency of the youth.(1988)

An upsurge in crime and violence in juvenile delinquency has attracted much attention and concern in recent years. The traditional approach toward the treatment of offenders through counseling and psycho-social rehabilitation, have in repeated studies been found to be useless or counter- productive.

These methods assume anti-social behavior to be the origin of violent crime. We have considered different ideas of what to do with juvenile delinquents. Thinking about the shifts in juvenile justice policies, we become inspired by a fresh appreciation of this system, which can bend for a time. What we would like to see is a new direction of approaches to prevent and control juvenile crime.

The process of change has a rhythmic character. There is a reaction and retrenchment, which occurs on both sides; the new and the old. These ideas are tested for their relevance to our deep-seated beliefs and values. It is time, then, to take a fresh look at the

challenges and opportunities the next wave of reform must deal with when the current reaction has run its course.

Appendices

Clemens Bartollas. Miller J. Stuart. *Juvenile Justice in America. Third Edition. Prentice Hall inc. 2001, 1998, 1994.*

See p. Cromwell. Jr. et al. *Introduction to Juvenile Delinquency: text and readings. 1978.*

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