The Development of Juvenile Delinquency

Juvenile delinquency does not develop as a result of one miscue or incorrect decision on the part of a juvenile—several factors are involved. Gender, familial relationships, peer pressure, and school life affect children and the choices they make. Individuals and concepts from the aforementioned group influence juveniles, but one group tends to outweigh the others in terms of values, norms, and behavior in which juveniles prefer to engage.

In effectively dealing with or eliminating delinquent behaviors, programs must be all-encompassing to make any headway with the juvenile offender. Programs must be successful in working with the juvenile to identify problem areas and provide means of coping with or eliminating the problem.

Gender
Several studies demonstrate that more males than females are detained for committing delinquent acts, and an even greater percentage of males are adjudicated delinquent. Many juveniles are emancipated and remanded or transferred into the adult system and death row, though many opponents argue against this practice. Males outnumber females in this category, as well.

Males commit a higher percentage of delinquent acts than females, and more males are held in detention facilities than females. Many researchers agree that children learn what they live—socialization has a tremendous effect on juvenile behavior. There is no universal explanation, much less one that distinguishes between genders.

Family
Familial influence on delinquency can be either positive or negative. Family members can instill values and morals in juveniles that provide a firm foundation, resulting in minimal delinquent behaviors. Contrarily, families can also negatively influence juveniles. The family is the first source of communication and learning for juveniles. Families may not be held responsible for a child's personality and behavior, but they are a great influence. If the family life is violent or there is a history of criminal activity, there is a chance that this behavior will exhibit itself in the children.

Peers
The people with which children interact on a regular basis are a source of great influence. Sometimes, children can withstand peer pressure and adhere to values and norms that were instilled in them to avoid delinquent behavior while others cannot. Many children fall victim to peer pressure and may engage in delinquent behavior. Not all peer relationships are negative, as many friends try to help each other stay out of trouble while others are seeking or initiating trouble.

Schools
Schools are filled with students who are representative of the communities around them. School officials act as teachers, counselors, advocates, providers, and police officers. Due to the recent rise in crime rates at or near schools, many districts have moved to more technologically advanced methods of monitoring students and teachers.

Teachers and school administrative staff attempt to be a positive influence for students. There are occasions, however, when the school must expel or suspend one student for the benefit of others. Unfortunately, because children spend the bulk of their time at school, school grounds have been the scenes of extremely violent attacks. It is not fair to blame the schools; delinquency stems from any number of influences.