

Juvenile Delinquency: What are the Factors? Focus on Dauphin County, PA

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Introduction:

- This study focused on trying to determine what were the main causes of juvenile delinquency, specifically in Dauphin County, PA. The data collected was analyzed to determine the main causes of juvenile delinquency. This study is important because it describes what is causing these juveniles to get involved in a life of crime. It also demonstrates that these factors that cause juvenile delinquency can be controlled; they are reversible or controllable.

Methodology:

- This study was a qualitative based study that focused on trying to find the factors that lead to juvenile delinquency in Dauphin County, Pennsylvania. The two main methods of data collection that were used were two materials-based, or unobtrusive-based research, and one one-hour long oral interview with a juvenile probation officer. 15 news articles were collected on "dauphin.crimewatchpa.com". One of them is depicted in data #2. This website offered multiple articles on juveniles committing crimes in Dauphin County. 10 Police reports were analyzed from the Dauphin County Sheriffs Department, located in Harrisburg, PA. Pictures were not allowed to be taken of the reports due to legal reasons, so notes were taken on each report. One of those reports is depicted in data #1. In data #3, some notes taken during the interview with the probation officer are depicted.

Theory:

- The main theory that this study is based off is a theory derived by a sociologist named Robert K. Merton. In 1938 Merton wrote this theory which he entitled "Social Theory and Social Structure". One of the main parts of this theory is what he describes as "Anomie Theory", also known as "Strain Theory". The basic idea of this "Anomie Theory" is that most people strive to adhere to the cultural norms/goals that society puts upon them. A state of "anomie" is brought upon the individuals or groups of people who cannot achieve these norms/goals. "Anomie", according to Merton, means "a social response, or adaptation, due to a disjuncture between socially approved means and culturally accepted goals. Anomie is a strain placed upon people to behave in ways that are not conducive to societal stability" (1938). A 'strain' arises when accepted norms conflict with reality resulting in 'anomie-strain'.

2. Report Number 2:

- Age: 17
- Sex: Male
- Race: Hispanic
- Location: Harrisburg
- Family Life: Both parents present
- School Presence: not attending school, possibly in a gang
- Friends Involved: 3 other hispanic males with him
- Crime Committed: Armed robbery of a gas station. These four men robbed a convenience store around 1 am and it was all caught on camera. A few days later the police were able to identify all of the men involved and arrested them. The other 3 men with him were all 18 years or older, so they all were seen as an adult in the court of law while this kid was only 17 and seen as a juvenile.



Data #1

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STEELTON BOROUGH POLICE DEPARTMENT
Interim Chief William Shaub
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Steelton, PA 17113
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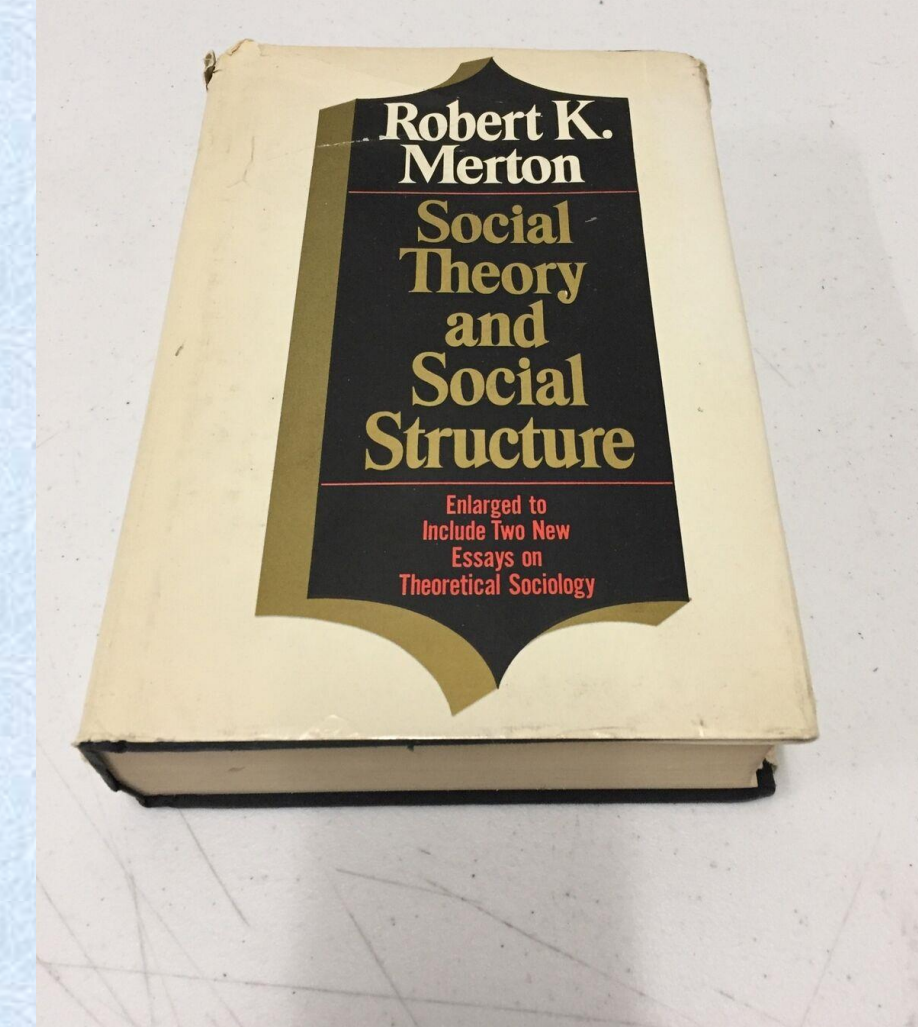
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JUVENILE, JUVENILE

AUGUST 25, 2014

ARREST DETAILS			OFFENDER DETAILS		
Arrest	Disposition	Location	Media	General	Description
<p>On 08/21/2014 at approximately 2:30pm, Steelton Police received a report from a concerned neighbor in the 1st block of South 4th Street area that several juveniles were observed leaving a residence where they did not belong. Police arrived in the area and the juveniles took off running. More police officers were dispatched and the juveniles were eventually rounded up. As a result of the investigation THREE JUVENILES were arrested for Burglary and will face prosecution with the Dauphin County Juvenile Authorities.</p> <p>Arrest Date: Thursday, August 21, 2014 - 12:00am</p> <p>Reference ID: C14-0004851</p> <p>Charges: Burglary</p> <p>Source: Steelton Borough Police Department</p>					

Data #2



- How would you define Juvenile Delinquency?
 - Young kids, aged 12-18, going around in our communities and disrupting the peace, for their own self gain
 - Committing acts of violence and disruption because they see that as the right thing to do
- What trends are you seeing in regards to juveniles committing crimes?
 - Lots of small thefts and burglaries for food and/or electronics
 - Disorderly conduct in small groups
 - Causing trouble in schools
 - Stolen cars
- What are the ages that you see kids engaging in crime?
 - Most of them are from 16-18 years old
 - Then anywhere from 12-15 years of age
 - This is where you see the bigger groups of delinquents engaging in crimes together
- What do you believe are the reasons why juveniles are committing crimes?
 - The groups that they surround themselves in
 - The need for necessities like food or transportation
 - Peer pressure
 - Very impulsive
 - Domestic relationships are flawed
 - A lot of it has to do with the media portrayals of what is right and wrong
 - These kids are seeing the media and what is considered "cool" and acting "cool"
 - They feel the need to be seen in the public eye
 - They want to have their presence known to the community they live in
 - Lack of proper education from schools
 - These kids don't want to go to school so they skip with their friends and go wherever
 - Schools aren't making sure that the kids stay there throughout the day
 - No guidelines in place to ensure this
 - Kids don't see the importance of school

Data #3

Results:

- After analyzing all the data, It was concluded that 4 themes cause juvenile delinquency in Dauphin County, PA. These themes were discovered through repetition of crimes in all the data sets and consistent motives for each crime.
 - Those four are:
 - Crime by Comity**
 - School Attendance/Influence**
 - Family Life Factors**
 - Socioeconomic Factors**
- Crime by Comity - Juveniles commit crimes with one another because they feel as though it is the "cool" thing to do, and they want to experience that thrill of adrenaline that rushes over them when they know they have just committed a crime. They also don't want to be the "odd" one out of their friend group by not committing the crime with everyone else (peer pressure).
 - School Attendance/Influence - If juveniles were in school, they would have less time to be susceptible to gang life, and they would be educated on what crimes can do to you and they'd be educated as to how to properly behave and act in society.
 - Family Life Factors – If a juvenile doesn't have a healthy relationship with their parents or siblings, then that can cause a strain in their lives. And that strain can ultimately lead to a life of crime and to a life of anger and behavioral issues. Stress caused by lack of a parental figure can lead juveniles to substance abuse and lack of proper behavior in society.
 - Socioeconomic Factors - A lot of these juveniles are living in situations where they cannot provide financially for themselves and for their families, so they resort to the last possible option and that is to commit crimes. These juveniles also commit crimes for their own personal pleasure.

Sources:

"Arrest: Juvenile, Juvenile." *CRIMEWATCH*, <https://dauphin.crimewatchpa.com/steeltonpd/3728/arrests/juvenile-juvenile-11>. Blackstone, Amy. *Unobtrusive Data Collected by You*, 2012, https://saylordotorg.github.io/text_principles-of-sociological-inquiry-qualitative-and-quantitative-methods/s14-03-unobtrusive-data-collected-by-.html. Merton, Robert King. *Social Theory and Social Structure; toward the Codification of Theory and Research*. Free Press, 1938.