Delinquency as the Failure of Adults and the Village to Exercise Their Moral Strength

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Abstract

This paper examines multiple relationships among several concepts to determine common causes to delinquency and to suggest intelligence-based alternative to resolve this public health hazard. Juvenile crime has become a public health hazard because the regularity, brutality and impunity by which juveniles commit their crimes these days is indescribable and their state of mind is "unplaced". Delinquency may be defined as the behavior consequent to the failure of adults and the village to exercise their moral superiority and integrity to produce behavior that conforms to standards set as norms with some degree of consistency in a society to which legal sanctions are leveled (Obinyan, E. 2011). Adult's moral superiority may be defined as the ability to recognize the differences between acceptable and unacceptable behavior….Adult's moral integrity may be defined as the ability of individual adults to refrain from unacceptable behavior and to communicate to youths through example, conventional acceptable behavior (Obinyan, 2011).

Village moral superiority entails the ability of each group, community or the society at large to establish norms that are consistent with cultural values. Village moral integrity entails the ability of the village as a whole to uphold, reinforce, and consistently demonstrate and communicate the sanctity of these cultural norms. Moral strength, therefore is the combined effect of the village and adult's moral superiority and integrity (Obinyan). Children and youth social contexts are important contributors of problem behavior (Dishion, Forgatch, VanRyzin, & Winter, 2012; Dodge, 1983). In deviant peer groups, it is common for youth to engage in deviancy training wherein deviant behaviors are reinforced such that discussion of rule-breaking behavior is linked with a positive consequence (e.g., affirmation; Dishion, Spracklen, Andrews, & Patterson, 1996). Youth association with deviant peers is associated with many problematic outcomes (e.g., drug use, violence; Dishion, Eddy, Haas, Li, & Spracklen, 1997; Dision, Capaldi, Spracklen, & Li, 1995; Dishion & Patterson, 2006).

Delinquency results when there is a relative absence of adult and village action, such as lack of moral integrity and respect for societal norms, a breakdown of unofficial social control and adult and the village inability to agree on the definition of what behavior may be regarded as delinquent. This is why delinquency may be seen as a function of the type of relationships between adults and the village, and their perception of and attitude toward delinquency. For a particular person however, the definition of delinquency may depend greatly upon their cultural background and the inability of the adult and the village to properly use their moral superiority and integrity to impact on all members of their communities. In most cases, the relative weakness of adult and village moral strength should account for the delinquent behavior. When delinquent recidivism becomes a problem and a continuation of delinquent behavior is consistent and intensifies, we would expect that the steam or vitality of adult and village moral strength (moral superiority and integrity) has been let out.

Moral Supervision of Primary Groups and Moral Strength

Since the primary group is the first interaction for developing consistent conventional behavior, it is crucial for the primary group to exercise their moral strength over children within and outside their group. The child within the primary group may develop delinquent personal values in the absence of moral strength. Peers will not contaminate the child if the village is exerting its moral strength on all youths.

Establishing moral control is an important part of socialization within and outside of the primary group. The primary group must be able to survive when there are disruptions that may emerge due to economic or financial deprivation. Several factors can contribute to destabilize the effect of moral strength within a group. Economic deprivation for example, may dismantle the foundation laid by adults and the village's moral strength. This may be triggered by feelings of helplessness, instability, and dismay especially when the pattern of the quality of life as they know it is threatened.

The effectiveness of the moral strength, and the effect of it on members of the various groups, become weak and loses its grip on member's consciousness. Morality loses its control over members of the group, "since economic dependency appears to have marked disintegrative effects upon group unity and control and the child's acceptance of social control, adolescents from these family units could be expected to meet their needs more often through delinquent activity than members of families who are not similarly deprived" (Albert J. Reiss, Jr. 1996).

Norms and rules, although regarded as building blocks of personal control and as support for character development, may not be enough for maintenance of personal control within or between groups when threatened by a specific social problem. The importance of moral strength is that it fastens and cements norms and rules for personal control and character development. It must be the responsibility of adults and the village to emphasize "social bonding" to the youths in the community. This social bonding as explained by Travis Hirshi (1969) in his concept of social bond, may be the missing link in the development of various youth programs today. Hirshi suggested that youths with close bonds to social groups and institutions (e.g. family, school, and church) are less likely to have tolerance for delinquent behavior. The value of social bonds is that it help establish important and respectable relationships. The establishment of these relationships or bonds is accomplished through attachment (emotional),

commitment (investment), involvement (participation), and belief (acceptance of moral values, laws, norms and rules).

Hirshi's position is that youths who are attached, committed, involved, and believe in societal moral values (adults and the village moral superiority and integrity) and laws, norms, and rules are least likely to be delinquent. Unfavorable moral ideas are risks that may persist in certain communities. This morally risky environment in conjunction with other dysfunctions, are contributory negative sources for delinquency.

Communities with favorable moral strength will develop good character and personal control of its' members.

The Village and Institutional Checks and Balances and Moral Strength

Most people's primary source of socialization is the family unit. However, the fundamental source of individual control is derived from the community or village social control and institutional checks and balances. The village is the community. Institutional checks and balances manifest themselves in the methods by which the different social agencies behave. These agencies (e.g. churches, schools, families, media and law enforcement) must play their role as members of the village. The churches, the schools, the family and adults in the village, must stress the moral strength of the village. The different methods each social agency uses to accomplish the communication of the value of moral strength to their members must check and balance.

Some   Social scientists have suggested that delinquent behavior will be more pronounced in certain areas of the village. These areas are characterized by factors known to be correlated with crime rates. It is our contention that moral strength can subdue neighborhood social risks (factors correlated with crime rates). Adults and the village who exercise their moral strength will have a profound impact on the character and personal control of individual members of their group. Such a community will actually have less delinquency. The consistency of moral strength over time will determine the overall behavior of youths in any community

SOCIAL CONTROL AND MORAL STRENGTH

The traditional social control methodology is not enough. It is argued here that delinquency can be controlled by moral strength. That moral strength must be exerted through all available social institutions including schools, churches, media, work, the streets, Internet, and law enforcement. Adults' moral superiority and integrity must be present at all times and the village at large must exercise its moral superiority and integrity to curtail youth misconduct and produce behavior that is in conformity with conventional norms.

Traps and Moral Strength

There are however several impediments or social ills that may thwart the strength of moral power within and outside the community or village. Let us look at these social problems carefully but briefly. These factors we believe are partly responsible for adults and the village inability to exercise their moral strength.

It seems clear to us that we have uprooted from the public schools for example probably the most powerful pacifying agent and replaced it with inadequate educational bureaucracy, guns, controlled substances, sex, violence, prisons, and greed. Religion and moral strength maybe more powerful than these social problems that are today rendering us powerless over them. There is evidence to this proposition.

A study is recommended of those people who has been saved from the grip of past mistakes or any of the social problems that is fast destroying the family units or the society at large today. One will not be surprised to find that a majority of the participants will affirm that they found religion as their saving grace. They will ascertain that they found something [moral strength, religion and GOD] more powerful than any disruptive agent on earth. It is a pity that our leaders are unable to see beyond their personal aggrandizement, greed and power. The truth is that because of the nature of the capitalist system of the society and the fact that the social problems are becoming a crucial part of our culture, it may be very difficult for moral strength to dominate. We live in an addicted society, a society that is addicted to dope, sex, guns, prisons, violence, and greed. Now let's look at these factors that are competing with moral strength in one piece. The truth as we know it is that "dope" for example is an economic giant, so are the guns, sex, prisons, and violence market. They all are contributors to social and political decay of morality in the society.

The disorganization and dysfunction of social institutions and the physical and moral pollution of our youths can be traced to these untreated societal ailments. When for example, we place hungry, angry, and abused children in public school classrooms without the most powerful pacifying agent, the consequences are immeasurable. The problem does not lie with the poisoned stock [our youth], but with those who by doing nothing or saying nothing contributes to the delinquency of juveniles. The policy makers who are unwilling to make necessary but drastic changes, the teachers who sell dope from their classrooms, and in fact adults and the village that are addicted, afraid to challenge the status quo, ignorant or naïve about these issues are equally responsible for the delinquency of our youths.

It seems that the adults and the village are so addicted and may have internalized the contemporary material circumstances of the present that they have lost completely sight of the most important acquisition of life, our children. We do not want to give up our "dope", sex, violence, gun, and prison industries for selfish reasons. They are economically profitable, recreational, and exciting. Guns for example are lucrative commodity and may aid the drug and violence market, and so is the sex industry. We must open more prisons to accommodate the spoils of these industries and also the juveniles we have been grooming in preparation for adult institutions. THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS DELIBERATELY PROPAGATED "TRAPS" IN THE VARIOUS COMMUNITIES IN ORDER TO ATTAIN THEIR ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL GOALS. Unfortunately all youths from all edges of society have become trapped in this funk. A juvenile who is stained or polluted by this criminal culture and therefore unable to be reached by moral strength may follow any of the following routes or a combination of them to self-destruction. Those who are bio-chemically or neurologically afflicted may make a different journey.

A. Sex $\Rightarrow$ birth of child $\Rightarrow$ child support $\Rightarrow$ inadequate job $\Rightarrow$ selling drugs $\Rightarrow$ prison or death.

B. Drugs $\Rightarrow$ drug use $\Rightarrow$ lose yourself $\Rightarrow$ violence $\Rightarrow$ crime $\Rightarrow$ prison/death $\Rightarrow$ family dysfunction.

C. Violence $\Rightarrow$ prison $\Rightarrow$ child abuse $\Rightarrow$ spousal abuse $\Rightarrow$ death.

D. Prison ⇒ mentally abusive environment ⇒ becomes a hardened criminal ⇒ loses family ⇒ violence ⇒ death.
E. Guns ⇒ violence ⇒ prisons.
F. Greed ⇒ white collar crime ⇒ robbery (street crime) ⇒ drugs ⇒ guns ⇒ violence ⇒ prison ⇒ death.

However, a 15yr old boy for example who follows the "A" route may be seduced by the sex industry and impregnate another 15yr old girl who decides to go through with the pregnancy and keep the baby. For some reason the two kids cannot get along and the young lady decides to pursue child support through the courts. Because of inadequate job and the pressure to pay child support the young man becomes restless, agitated, resentful, aggressive, and miserable. He drops out of school and "hangs out" among similarly afflicted crowd. A drug trafficker approaches and sells him the idea of making five times as much compare to the minimum wage at the local fast food restaurant. The young mind accepts the offer and begins his life of crime. What follows is either imprisonment or death on the streets and the impact on both of their families cannot be measured by any statistical computation.

Generally, we are in a state of moral funk, chaos and decline. Western civilization and morality is continuing to drown far deeper than one can imagine, so more resources, especially money must be spent on behavior control to at the least reasonably police those who usually are able to police themselves. In an effort to curtail on a sustainable basis, it is therefore necessary and pertinent to encourage the use of moral strength. In response to questions about TV, violence and popular culture, Lajos Csaszi [1999], quoted Elias constructively. "According to Elias, society's control and repression of violence for example, what is more its feeling of distaste and revulsion toward the phenomenon, can be regarded as one of the most important results of the civilizing process. --- far more violence was permitted in wrestling and boxing; for instance, the breaking of bones and strangling in classical antiquity than would be imaginable in sports today" However, different societies at different developmental stages have resisted violence in sports with norms to protect society.

The problem today is that violence in sports is glorified and valorous. Furthermore, the youths of our society are heavily exposed to violence through several medium. The effect on our youths is devastating. We cannot afford to continue to breed a generation of violent people. In a similar response to a familiar problem, Ericsson [1991], argued that " the maintenance of moral sensitivity and loyalty toward public values fulfills an integrative function in modern societies and this includes the nourishment of collective emotions as well as the satisfaction of a desire for the sight of vengeance." The adults and the village are accountable to the success of moral strength in the fight against delinquency.

The value of a cultural phase may change, but most remains relatively stable during any one person's lifetime. So socially shared and intensely felt values are a fundamental part of our lives in the United States. In an annual survey of first year college students attitudes, a commonly used criteria of the values of the united states focusing on a plethora of issues, beliefs, and life goals; for example, respondents are asked if various values were important to them [i.e. being well-off, promoting racial understanding, controlling delinquency, etc.] Austin et al., [1997] reported that "over the past 30yrs, entering first year college students in the united states have become concerned with becoming well-off financially and less concerned with

developing " a meaningful philosophy of life". In other words there has been significant movement in attitude away from those issues that promotes moral values and moral strength.

The moral foundation laid down by our forefathers should serve as a potent lesson. In Ayn Rand Institute[1999], men learn from each other, they build on the work of their predecessors, they achieve by cooperation feats that would be impossible on a desert island. But all such social relationships require the exercise of the human faculty of cognition; they depend on the solitary individual, solitary in the primary, inner sense of the term, the sense of a man facing reality firsthand, seeking not to crucify himself on the cross off others or to accept their word as an act of faith, but to understand, to connect, to know. In his essay, John A Calhoun [2000], tells us that "entire neighborhoods and entire cities and counties have now subscribed to the belief that crime or juvenile delinquency is a community wide problem whose solution rests with the community.

Prevention and control have to include the involvement of all social agencies. Sanctions alone cannot quell over the onslaught of social problems. Public policies does not necessarily get us up any time of the day, our core beliefs do. It is important to uplift our personal commitment by rekindling it and embracing it based on our deepest principles. We must speak the truth about social problems with clear and unambiguous terminologies. Use words that quicken and move human spirit to do well, and act with moral strength without fear or favor. Jesus began his journey with moral strength and king jr. began with passionate moral commitment not with policy. Crime control policies are needed as much as moral strength is vitally important.

SOCIETY'S ADDICTION AND MORAL STRENGTH

The society at large is addicted. This addiction is grounded in the material circumstances of the present and our cultural values. Culture is defined by Shaeffer and Lamm [1998], as the totality of learned, socially transmitted behavior. It includes the ideas, values, customs, artifacts[as well as sailboats, comic books ,TV, birth control devices, etc] of groups of people. Therefore patriotic attachment to the flag is an aspect of the culture, so is our attachment to sex, dope, guns, prisons, violence, and greed; the factors that competes with moral strength. There is no doubt that for moral strength to be more effective for personal control, the family institutions must again lead the way. Karol L. Kumpfer [1999] in the examination of the institution of the family stated that "family is the basic institutional unit of society primarily responsible for child rearing functions. Families are responsible for providing physical necessities, emotional support, learning opportunities, moral guidance, and building self-esteem and resilience". This should not be a difficult process. The human being is a moral agent who possesses both physical and mental or spiritual attributes.

We must take a page from Michael Braswell's "The lost art of relationships", It is his position that we cannot give to others attitudes and values we do not have. Furthermore adults and the village who have reached a place of discipline in their own life and with a sense of discipline involves one who has internalized his or her personal and professional values. These values Braswell tells us are forged and tested through a lifetime of experiences, come from a wellspring deep within the core of the person's being. So we just cannot give to our youths the values or morality that we cannot afford. We must first heal, cleanse

ourselves and morally modify our personal values so we may have the moral strength to transmit and spread to our children.

In conclusion, this paper has examined multiple relationships among several concept to determine common causes of delinquency and have tried to suggest intelligence-based alternatives to resolve this public health hazard. In attempting to define juvenile crime which we believe has become too regular and brutal, we state that its occurrence may be attributable t the failure of adults and the village to exercise their moral superiority and integrity to produce behavior that conforms to the standards set as norms with some degree of consistency in a society to which legal sanctions are leveled. We have discussed the moral superiority which entails the ability of each group or community or a society to establish norms that are consistent with cultural values. We argue that the failure of the village to hold and maintain its moral integrity, like the ability to uphold, reinforce and consistently demonstrate and communicate the sanctity of these cultural norms is what leads to and results in behavior breakdowns. Delinquency, we argue so results when there is a relative absence of adults and village action such as lack of moral integrity and respect for societal norms.

So, based on a general knowledge of human nature or probability, man must have moral support, the adults and the village must therefore appeal to the character of our youths by rejecting physical force and exerting moral strength that do not cost a dime. All the communities' s social institutions must emphasize moral strength, proper behavior, the difference between good and bad disposition, the principles of right and wrong, stress the sense of duty and right conduct, and the idea that we all are morally obligated to the society at large.

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