Super Predator Essay, Research Paper

The Super PredatorDescription:A study into the causes and proposals for the growing number of Juvenile Psychopaths known as the Super Predators. What is the “super predator”? He or she are young hypercriminals who are committing acts of violence of unprecedented coldness and brutality. This newest phenomena in the world of crime is perhaps the most dangerous challenge facing society and law enforcement ever. While psychopaths are not new, this breed of super criminal exceeds the scope of psychopathic behavior. They are younger, more brutal, and completely unafraid of the law. While current research on the super predator is scarce, I will attempt to give an indication as to the reasons a child could become just such a monster. Violent teenage criminals are increasingly vicious. John DiIulio, Professor of Politics and Public Affairs at Princeton University, says that “The difference between the juvenile criminals of the 1950s and those of the 1970s and early 1980s was the difference between the Sharks and the Jets of West Side Story and the Bloods and the Crips. It is not inconceivable that the demographic surge of the next ten years will bring with it young criminals who make the Bloods and the Crips look tame.” (10) They are what Professor DiIulio and others call urban “super predators”; young people, often from broken homes or so-called dysfunctional families, who commit murder, rape, robbery, kidnapping, and other violent acts. These emotionally damaged young people, often are the products of sexual or physical abuse. They live in an aimless and violent present; have no sense of the past and no hope for the future; they commit unspeakably brutal crimes against other people, often to gratify wha!tever urges or desires drive them at the moment and their utter lack of remorse is shocking.(9) Studies reveal that the major cause of violent crime is not poverty but family breakdown – specifically, the absence of a father in the household. Today, right now, one-fourth of all the children in the United States are living in fatherless homes – this adds up to 19 million children without fathers. Compared to children in two parent family homes, these children will be twice as likely to drop out of school, twice as likely to have children out of wedlock, and they stand more than three times the chance of ending up in poverty, and almost ten times more likely to commit violent crime and ending up in jail. (1) The Heritage Foundation – a Conservative think tank- reported that the rise in violent crime over the past 30 years runs directly parallel to the rise in fatherless families. In every state in our country, according to the Heritage foundation, the rate for juvenile crime “is closely linked to the percentage of children raised in single-parent families. And while it has long been thought that poverty is the primary cause of crime, the facts simply do not support this view. Teenage criminal behavior has its roots in habitual deprivation of parental love and affection going back to early infancy, according to the Heritage Foundation.A father’s attention to his son has enormous positive effects on a boy’s emotional and social development. But a boy abandoned by his father in deprived of a deep sense of personal security, In a well-functioning family,” he continued, “the very presence of the father embodies authority” and this paternal authority “is critical to the prevention of psychopathology and delinquency.” (2)On top of the problem of single parent homes, is the problem of the children whose behavioral problems are linked to their mothers’ crack use during pregnancy. These children are reaching their teenage years and this is “a potentially very aggressive population,” according to Sheldon Greenberg, director of Johns Hopkins University’s Police Executive Leadership Program. What’s more, drug use has more than doubled among 12- to 17-year-olds since 1991. “The overwhelming common factor that can be isolated in determining whether young people will be criminal in their behavior is moral poverty,” Greenberg says. (3)According to the recently published “Body Count: Moral Poverty . . . and How to Win America’ s War Against Crime and Drugs,” a new generation of “super-predators, ” untouched by any moral inclinations, will hit America’s streets in the next decade. John DiIulio, the Brookings Institute fellow who co-wrote the book with William Bennett and John Walters, calls it a “multi variate phenomenon, ” meaning that child abuse, the high number of available high-tech guns, alcoholism and many other factors feed the problem. University of Pennsylvania professor Mavin Wolfgang says, “6 percent to 7 percent of the boys in an age group will be chronic offenders, meaning they are arrested five or more times before the age of 18.” If that holds true, because there will be 500,000 more boys ages 14 to 17 in the year 2000 than there were in 1995, there will be at least 30,000 more youth criminals on the streets. Between 1990 and 2010, there will be 4.5 million more boys, yielding 270,000 young !criminals. “The big destruction happens early,” Heritage Foundation fellow Pat Fagan says. “By the age of 4 or 5, the kid is really warped. Psychologists can predict by the age of 6 who’ll be the super-predators.” According to Fagan: Child abuse and alcohol ruin these children. But the groundwork was laid three decades ago with the widespread adoption of birth control, which made the sexual revolution possible. It altered people’s dedication to their children and altered a fundamental orientation of society. Sexual morality got unanchored in the 1960s, followed by the legalization of abortion. “Abortion is a very definite rejection of the child. So is out-of- wedlock births, as well as divorce,” he says. “The [predators] everyone’ s afraid of were abused kids. There’s sexual abuse and alcohol, and just the general decline in the cultural knowledge of what love is. ” In 1950, for every 100 children born, he says, 12 had divorced parents or were born out of wedlock. In 1992, that number had quadrupled to 60 children for every 100 born. Throw abortion into the mix, and the number shoots up to 92 per 100. (4)John Dilulio asserts that “each generation of crime-prone boys has been about three times as dangerous as the one before it.” And, he argues, the downhill slide into utter moral bankruptcy is about to speed up because each generation of youth criminals is growing up in more extreme conditions of “moral poverty” than the one before it. Mr. Dilulio defines moral poverty as “growing up surrounded by deviant, delinquent, and criminal adults in abusive, violence-ridden, fatherless, Godless, and jobless settings.”The “super-predator”, as told to a Washington press gathering by DiIulio, is a breed of criminal so dangerous that even the older inmates working their way through life sentences complain that their youthful counterparts are out of control. He describes these teen criminals as “radically present-oriented”. Because their time horizon may be as short as the next guard’s shift, they have no capacity to defer gratification for the sake of the future. When these “super- predators” were asked by DiIulio or other inmates if they would commit their crimes again, most answer, “Why not?” DiIulio also says, they are “radically self-regarding incapable of feeling joy or pain at the joy or pain of others.” (7)According to Dilulio, today’s juvenile super-predators are driven by two profound developmental defects. They are radically present-oriented, perceiving no relationship between action and reaction–reward or punishment–and they are radically self-regarding. Nothing is sacred to them. They live only for what brings them pleasure and a sense of power, placing “zero value on the lives of their victims.” Ultimately, concludes Mr. Dilulio, only a return to religion will restore to youth the sense of personal responsibility that leads to moral behavior. He cites a growing body of scientific evidence from a variety of academic disciplines that indicates that churches ameliorate or cure many severe socioeconomic ills. “Let [the liberal elite] argue church-state issues…all the way to the next funeral of an innocent kid caught in the crossfire,” he says. “Our guiding principle should be, `Build churches, not jails’–or we will reap the whirlwind of our own moral bankruptcy.” (5)DiIulio’s “super predators” are born of abject “moral poverty,” which he defines as: The poverty of being without loving, capable, responsible adults who teach you right from wrong. It is the poverty of being without parents, guardians, relatives, friends, teachers, coaches, clergy and others who habituate you to feel joy at others’ joy, pain at others’ pain, happiness when you do right, remorse when you do wrong. It is the poverty of growing up in the virtual absence of people who teach these lessons by their own everyday example, and who insist that you follow suit and behave accordingly. In the extreme, it is the poverty of growing up surrounded by deviant, delinquent, and criminal adults in chaotic, dysfunctional, fatherless, Godless, and jobless settings where drug abuse and child abuse are twins, and self-respecting young men literally aspire to get away with murder. Scholars who study drugs and crime are only now beginning to realize the social consequences of raising so many children in abject moral poverty. The need to rebuild and resurrect the civil society (families, churches, community groups) of high-crime, drug-plagued urban neighborhoods is not an intellectual or research hypothesis that requires testing. It’s a moral and social imperative that requires doing – and doing now. (9)It can be assumed -quite logically- by the lay person that the “super predator” is actually a young psychopath or psychotic. While these terms have become largely interchangeable, thanks in large part to Hollywood, there are distinct differences between the psychopath, the psychotic, and the Super Predator.British Columbia Psychologist Robert Hare, has done some ground breaking research into the study of psychopaths and has found that psychopaths tend to underutilize regions of the brain that integrate memories and emotions. These findings helped support long held theories that the destructive nature of psychopaths were neurobiological in nature. But, aside from the neurobiological aspects of psychopathic behavior: The psychopath knows right from wrong; they are quite often charming, glib and impulsive individuals. They often brag about grandiose life ambitions, but often lack the skills or the discipline to achieve their goals. Psychopaths are easily bored and crave immediate gratification. It has been found that psychopaths, quite often, have very high intelligence quotients. When caught in a lie, the psychopath will shift blame, or switch topics with no apparent embarrassment. They do not form deep or meaningful relationships, and often end up hurting people who get close t!o them. While they are intellectually aware of societies rules, they feel no guilt when they break them. (8)While many of the aspects described above fit the profile of the “Super Predator”, there are some important differences. The “super predator” are almost completely without ambition, they are often of below average intelligence, and they do not recognize -intellectually or otherwise- any rules of society. While psychopaths and the “super-predator” both share the inability to feel emotion, the psychopath can feign it to achieve a result, the “super predator” seems completely incapable of even that. More interestingly, the “super predator” is remarkably candid. They will more often than not, admit not only to their crimes, but as to the why, and as to the fact that they did nothing wrong and would do it again. Psychopathy does not always -in fact quite the contrary- manifest itself in criminality. In fact, a psychopath could be a highly functioning and highly successful individual in society. In contrast, the “super predator” lacks the intelligence or the “masking capabilities” of the psychopath to achieve success outside of the criminal world. (9)

The “super predator” is not psychotic. Psychotics are largely out of touch with reality. They suffer from delusions, hallucinations, or other disordered states. They are often found not guilty of crimes they commit by reason of insanity. (8) Today, especially in the inner cities, children, in the age ranges of 5 to 9 yrs of age, are all to often left to their own devices. They spend much of their time hanging out on the streets or soaking up violent TV shows and violent rap music, they have easy access to guns and drugs, and can be extremely dangerous. By the year 2005 they will be teenagers–a group that tends to be, in the view of Northeastern University criminologist James Alan Fox, “temporary sociopaths…. impulsive and immature.”There are currently 39 million children under 10 in the U.S., more than at any time since the 1950s. “This is the calm before the crime storm,” says Fox. “So long as we fool ourselves in thinking that we’re winning the war against crime, we may be blind sided by this bloodbath of teenage violence that is lurking in the future.” Nearly all the factors that contribute to youth crime -single-parent households, child abuse, deteriorating inner-city schools – are getting worse. At the same time, government is becoming less, not more, interested in spending money to help break the cycle of poverty and crime. (6)Some Statistics On The Rise Of Juvenile Crime.\*The number of juvenile murderers tripled between 1984 and 1994. \*Youthful murderers using guns increased four-fold over the same period. \*Juvenile gang killings have nearly quadrupled between 1980 and 1992. \*In 1994, eight in ten juvenile murderers used a firearm, up from five in ten in 1983. \*The number of juveniles murdered increased 82 percent between 1984 and 1994.\*The nationwide juvenile arrest rate for violent crimes increased 50 percent between 1988 and 1994.Source: U.S. Dept. Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency More Statistics\*Over the next ten years, the population of 14 to 17 year olds will grow 23 percent, and the current generation of juveniles has already brought us the worst juvenile crime rates in recorded history. \*Since 1965, the juvenile arrest rate has more than tripled, and over the last ten years the homicide rate has more than doubled among 14 to 17 year olds. \*During the 1980s, the white juvenile crime rate grew twice as fast as the black juvenile crime rate, and from 1983 to 1992, the arrest rate for murder grew 166 percent among blacks, but also grew 94 percent among whites. The increasing juvenile murder rate coincides with an increase in “stranger murders,” suggesting juvenile predators are less discriminating in their targets.\*While in the past most murders occurred between family members and friends, the FBI recently reported that 53 percent of homicides are committed by strangers. \*”Stranger murders” are now four times as common as killings by family members. \*Perpetrators of stranger murders have a better than 80 percent chance of not being punished.Source: Andrew Peyton Thomas (Assistant Attorney General for Arizona), Local police, prosecutors, and inner-city preachers know that the kids doing the violent crimes are more impulsively violent and remorseless than ever. For instance, Philadelphia District Attorney Lynne Abraham who sits on the Council on Crime in America, speaks of the frightening reality of elementary school kids who pack guns instead of lunches. Likewise, Dan Coburn, a former Superior Court Justice and Public Defender in New Jersey, recently wrote that “This new wrote horde from hell kills, maims, and terrorizes merely to become known, or for no reason at all. These teens have no fear of dying and no concept of living.”Even maximum-security prisoners agree. When asked by Diiulio what was triggering the explosion of violence among today’s young street criminals, a group of long- and life-term New Jersey prisoners did not voice the conventional explanations such as economic poverty or joblessness. Instead, these hardened men cited the absence of people – family, adults, teachers, preachers, coaches- who would care enough about young males to nurture and discipline them. In the vacuum, drug dealers and “gansta rappers” serve as role models. “I was a bad-ass street gladiator,” one convicted murderer said, “but these kids are stone-cold predators.” (10)Even more shocking than the sheer volume of violent juvenile crime is the brutality of the crime committed for trivial motives: a pair of sneakers, a jacket, a real or imagined insult, a momentary cheap thrill. For example: A 59-year-old man out on a morning stroll in Lake Tahoe was fatally shot four times by teenagers “looking for someone to scare.” The police say the four teenagers – just 15 and 16 years old – were “thrill shooting.” A 12-year-old and two other youths were charged with kidnapping a 57-year-old man and taking a joy ride in his Toyota. As the man pleaded for his life, the juveniles shot him to death. A 14-year-old boy was murdered while trying to reclaim a $2,500 stereo system he had received from his grandfather. Five juveniles, ranging in age from 15 through 17 years, were charged with the crime.(10) Profiles In every community, roughly 2 percent of the juvenile offender population is responsible for up to 60 percent of the violent juvenile crime. Only 25 to 35 juveniles in every 100,000 members of the population will engage in criminal activity that matches the Serious Habitual Offender pattern. Based on criteria developed by the Reagan team at the Department of Justice, this means that 0.03 percent to 0.04 percent of all juveniles between 14 and 17 years old will be SHOs. A profile of a Serious Habitual Offender was collected from data collected and analyzed by the Reagan Administration team at the U.S. Department of Justice in the 1980s presents a graphic portrait of the serious habitual offender: The typical SHO is male, 15 years and six months old. He has been arrested 11 to 14 times, exclusive of status offenses, and five times for felonies. He comes from a dysfunctional family; and in 46 percent of cases, at least one of his parents also has an arrest history. He has received long-term and continuing social services from as many as six different community service agencies, including family, youth, mental health, social services, school, juvenile, or police authorities, and continues to drain these resources for years before he is finally incarcerated as a career criminal. The typical SHO’s family history follows a classic pattern of social pathologies: 53 percent of his siblings also have a history of arrest; and in 59 percent of these cases, there is no father figure in the home. The absence of a father is particularly destructive for boys; only 2 percent of SHOs are female. Furthermore, 68 percent of these offenders have committed crimes of violence, 15 percent have a history of committing sex crimes, and 51 percent have a reported missing or runaway record. If a broken family characterized by physical or sexual abuse is an early indicator of criminal behavior, then virtually all of these serious habitual offenders fit this category. These findings are consistent with the Heritage Foundation’s widely reported analysis of the true root causes of violent crime, particularly the crimogenic conditions associated with broken or dysfunctional families. (10) \* SHOs do not consider the crimes they have committed to be all that bad. \* Forty-five percent are gang members, 64 percent associate with other serious habitual offenders, and 75 percent abuse drugs. Recent studies show that illegal drug use among the young is on the rise and a significant majority of all present day SHOs -”super Predators”- use or sell illegal drugs and often become addicted themselves. Illegal drug use and alcohol abuse tend to be regular features of their criminal conduct. Drugs, in particular, are part of the criminal scene of these juvenile offenders, and the use and sale of drugs contributes significantly to a SHO’s other criminal activity. The need to purchase illegal drugs, combined with the warped hedonism of the addict, shapes and drives much of the criminal activity of this class of criminals.Conclusion:Juvenile crime and violence is on the rise. Many criminologists are calling it an epidemic, a ticking time bomb, the calm before the storm and a long descent into night, you choose the cliche’. The reasons for this rise in teen crime seems to have its roots not so much in poverty as it does to poverty of values. Experts like John DiIulio and James Q.Wilson believe that the cure lies in a renaissance of personal responsibility, and a reassertion of responsibility over rights and community over egoism.There is definitely a need for more study on the new breed of teen criminal -”the Super Predator”- But we don’t need yet another library full of jargon-riddled criminology studies to tell us what the Roman sages knew: what society does to children, children will do to society.While most in the education as well as the psychological fields blanch Whenever the terms values, church, responsibility, and family, are bandied about. But the inescapable reality is that since the sixties, when these terms were castigated and relegated to “being quaint”, we have witnessed an incredibly fast and pernicious rise in the types of pathologies that have accompanied the decline of the family structure. While I am by no means a religious zealot, it seems to me that government has been a poor substitute for the family and the church in teaching basic core values. Government certainly has a role to play financially, but the strictures and the applications of any type of largess need to come from Community leaders or clergy members who have a real stake in the community. While it is tragic that there seem to be a large number of “lost youths” mired in a life of crime and violence, the safety of the community, especially the children in the community, should be the primary concern. While I agree with John DiIulio, that we need more churches, I also feel that if more jails need to be built to house young thugs, build them. If children as young as 7, 8, or 9 yrs of age need to be incarcerated like adults, do it. While this may seem harsh, I believe that it is the only way to prevent further decay. With harsher enforcement of laws towards violent minors enforced, attention can be paid to addressing the ills that create the problem; family decay. More attention needs to be paid to the people who actually live in the communities affected. We must deal with this problem of the “super predator” teen thug swiftly and harshly, before it’s too late to save the children in danger of falling in with or becoming victims of crime themselves. BIBLIOGRAPHY1- Ethnic NewsWatch SoftLine Information, Inc., Stamford, CT2- F.R. 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