The Media, Delinquency & the Role of the Forensic Social Worker in the 21st century

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Objectives

- To discuss how Generation Y (Millenials) respond to authority
- To expand on pop culture and music’s influence on behaviors and delinquency
- To expand on the role of Forensic Social Workers in working with the 21st century adolescents (Millenials)
Webinar Outline

- **Who are the Millennials (Generation Y)**
  - How they learn
  - How they think
  - How they respond to authority

- **An Overview of Pop Culture and the Social Worker’s Role**
  - High culture versus popular culture
  - Jane Addams to the Internet – A Social Work practitioner in the 21st century

- **Music/Media’s Influence on Adolescence**
  - Generational perspectives on music’s influence on adolescence
  - Music and delinquency

- **Forensic Social Workers in Juvenile Justice**
  - The need for Forensic Social Workers in the criminal justice system
  - The shifting roles of Juvenile Court Counselors (Probation Officers) to Forensic Social Workers
Who are the Millennials?
Based on your general knowledge, what is your perception of Generation Y? More importantly, how has working with this population impacted your Social Work approaches?
Generation Y, commonly referred to as the Millennials, are those persons born during the mid 1980s to the new millennium. Their DNA, of sorts, is entirely fused in TECHNOLOGY..... Texting, IPODS, GOOGLE, E-Books and Facebook....
How They Learn

- When looking at Generation Y, the research has suggested that this generation’s connection to learning and civil involvement is not as engaging as with prior generations.
- Disengaged civically or academically, can have counterproductive outcomes to constructive behaviors within society.
According to Dr. Mark Taylor (2005) the following characteristics are associated with this generation:

- Consumer orientation
- Entertainment orientation
- ENTITLEMENT
- Negotiation
- Value-Free
- INSTANT GRATIFICATION

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Dr. Taylor (2010) further identifies the following to engage today’s students:
- Improve students’ future orientation
- Identify class goals
- Improve student understanding of class expectations
- Move content learning out of class (service learning/field trips, etc.)
- Create the necessity of preparing for and attending class
- Increase classroom learning activity and engagement

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What are learning communities?

According to a paper published by Kilpatrick, Barrett & Jones (2003), the authors expand on two elements that are critical in establishing a successful learning community:

“The first focuses on the human element of communities, and the profits that accrue from building on the synergies of individuals in common locations or with common interests as they work towards sharing understandings, skills and knowledge for shared purposes. The second is focused on curricular structures (i.e. an inanimate structure) as the means to developing 'deeper' learning of (implied) pre-determined curricular content.”
In a study conducted by Lord, Coston and Monell (2010), it was surmised that despite associated deficiencies, transfer students were extremely successful with supportive learning community communities.
Compared to other generational thinking patterns, Generation Y is heavily influenced by:

- Media exposure
- Music
- Peer influence
• Delinquents often find themselves in situations where they lose “hope”. Similar to adult offenders, they have no positive outlooks to pursue; resorting back to criminality or deviant behavior.

• According to K. te Riele (2011), the philosophy of hope has been a concept or theoretical framework utilized throughout various youth studies and education. In clinical settings, client desperation, is common among young people who have been adjudicated through the juvenile justice system.
Sense of Hope

- If they “think” they can’t make it, do well in school, avoid negative peers, or refrain from criminality, then any interventive approach would produce unfavorable results.
- As forensic social workers, our role is critical in revitalizing such hope in young people. The foundations of our field are based on such concepts.
How They Respond to Authority

- Adolescent rebellion is not uncommon for any generation. Evidence of teen rebellion has been seen from the 1950s Rock and Roll era, 1960s Motown revolution, 1970s Disco era, to the 1980s and beyond Rap era.

- Developmental explanations from Newman & Newman to Piaget characterize adolescence as a period when young people are transitioning out of their parents care. During this state they’re developing their own perspectives on how they view themselves, peers and the greater society.
How They Respond to Authority (cont.)

- By nature, juveniles are inquisitive and question authority.
- Challenges arise when authoritative figures are unable to communicate in a receptive manner.
An Overview of Pop Culture and the Social Worker’s Role
Dr. Debra Smith (Monell, 2012) noted the following:

- “High Culture - something less inclusive and more exclusive. Tied to the elite with regard to social, economical and educational capacity, high culture became a social marker for the arts, museums, opera, private education and the like. Yet economic impact in the late 2000’s questioned the practicality of high culture.”

- In relation to adolescents, particularly with delinquent behaviors, their exposure to what is considered fashionable or in, can create a mindset of rationalizing delinquent (criminal) behaviors.
Popular Culture –

- “Class differentiation is a primary reason we have definitions for high culture and for popular culture, its cheaper, more widely available stepbrother. Scholars far and wide have pondered the differences between culture of the masses and culture of the elite.”

- In looking at adolescence, from both perspectives; their willingness to obtain acceptance from both cultures, becomes an area that contributes to behaviors that can be detrimental to the adolescent or the greater society.
Jane Addams to the Internet:
A Social Work Practitioner in the 21st Century
21st Century Social Work Practices

- Long is the day that the social worker conducts a home visit with a pad, clipboard, taking notes to process later in locked case files.
- Today, you have social workers using iPads, smartphones, laptops with case management programs or apps to capture therapy sessions or process payments.
- For the technologically savvy social worker, you now see the Internet used to conduct therapy or provide supportive services for clients in need.
What Professionals are Saying in the Field

- Nancy Smyth, PhD, LCSW - “Apps that are designed to be references can be very helpful to social workers. They allow you to quickly look up information or terminology.”

- Joseph R. Gianesin, PhD - “In [a clinician] going to a client’s home, the client can show their clinician the prescriptions they are taking, and they can be quickly looked up on a smartphone. If a client is experiencing side effects of a particular drug, this is an easy way to figure out why.”
Music/Media’s Influence on Adolescence
Generational Perspectives on Music’s Influence

In “Delinquency, Pop Culture and Generation Y”, several professionals in the field of music and media were interviewed to provide their perspectives.
“It is my position that they should be responsible for what is being recorded and sold. The first, representing the choice of music, and the second, quality of music. Knowing that music can influence adolescent behaviors, producers and executives should be more cognizant of that and be gatekeepers to what is released. In looking at quality music, genres like Jazz, R&B, and Soul continue to lose its appeal; particularly towards young people.”
“True musicianship is a thing of the past because of the influx of technology and its availability of tools used to create music. Today, if it goes with the theme of the period, record companies will promote it; despite its quality in content and sound. In years past, if your demo, or recording was not liked by music executives, they kicked it back. Today, the bar is quite low for the quality music expected.”
“I definitely feel that music can influence behaviors. On the contrary, it's not just music, but all aspects of entertainment. The music industry to some is the largest genre that crosses all demographics, classes, and countries. Unfortunately what you find is that the music executives push the negative styles because it sells. As we continue to look at media outlets and how they influence the various generations; though music can have an influence, you continue to see other outlets and examples of violence.”
“I listen to all types of music and I do listen to Hip-Hop, but not the extreme stuff. Despite the negative statements or descriptions you hear in rap music, I don’t let it affect me. I do like it and get mad but like I said, I don’t let it affect me. I mean, I won’t let a guy call me the “B” word, nor do I use it to describe my female friends. But you do see girls who don’t have a problem with it and use it like a normal part of their vocabulary.”
In asking the interviewee about “sexting” which is major problem for this generation, she expanded on her experiences with her peers.

“I know girls who text pictures to their boyfriends. Honestly, we don’t even think about it like older folks do. I mean they have laws for that stuff now. That is crazy. Now unfortunately, boys do take those pictures they receive from their girls and send them out, but my female friends still do it. I find that boys tend to send those kinds of pictures just as much as the girls do. I couldn’t say if it will continue or not. I guess if the laws get tougher, it may, who knows.”
Music and Delinquency

Despite the various genres of music that have been in existence, rap music continues to have a great impact on adolescence.

According to University of Texas at Arlington Professor Dr. Bing, “No genre of music has been so controversial, so vilified, so uplifting to its community, and so influential as hip-hop has been in the last 30 years.”
North and Hargreaves (2007) conducted a study of 2532 participants in the United Kingdom. The study, which ranged in race and ethnicity, showed significant patterns of music listening and criminal acts.

Out of a 15 item scale (types of music), three types of music were significant in criminal behaviors among their listeners.
The results showed the highest as being
- *dj music (67.2%),*
- *dance/house music (56.9%),*
- *and indie music (54.8%).*

In addition to their choice in music, the researchers found that this demographic showed the widest range of drug usage.
Music and Delinquency (cont.)

- Though evidence has suggested that music can contribute to criminal behaviors, clearly, it is not the sole culprit. Research has presented various correlations to various media outlets and aggressive behaviors.
- According to Hopf, Huber, and Weiß (2008), the relevance of media influence is confirmed by remarkable interrelations between consumption of media violence, students’ violence, and delinquency.
Despite research that suggests how rap music or other media outlets can have a negative impact on adolescence, Dr. Lester Spence in his book, *Stare In the Darkness*, offers some interesting research as it pertains to hip hop music and its influence on black political impressions.

Similar to other influential representatives of our society, “rap mcs, like other black cultural workers, both accommodate and criticize mainstream norms and values.” He further adds that “rap consumption and exposure influences black youth attitudes.”
Forensic Social Workers in the Juvenile Justice System
“Forensic social work is the application of social work to questions and issues relating to law and legal systems. This specialty of our profession goes far beyond clinics and psychiatric hospitals for criminal defendants being evaluated and treated on issues of competency and responsibility.”

(NOFSW Website, 2012)
“Even as the first Penitentiary in the United States (Walnut Street Jail) was established in 1790, social workers were at the cusp of ensuring that these offenders at the time were not being mistreated and receiving their proper punishments with humane constraints” (Maschi & Killian, 2011).
In the state of North Carolina, the need to hire more Social Workers for criminal justice environments continues to be a priority.

As we are seeing an increased need of offenders who suffer from mental health illnesses, social workers, to include forensic social workers are in high demand.

In the NC Central Prison, a new facility specializing in mental health issues has been one of the innovative methods to incorporate forensic social workers in the penal system.

Forensic Social Workers, similar to Forensic Psychologists, are representative in most criminal justice environments. They serve in clinical capacities to practitioners and as analysts.
The last ten years have shown various shifts in the way the system responds to the needs of juveniles in their custody.

As most states have done away with the term Juvenile Probation Officers and transitioned to Juvenile Counselors, agencies continue to establish a more rehabilitative tone in working with juveniles, despite adjudication status.
Current recruitment practices focus on applicants with social work credentials and licensure on both the BSW and MSW levels. Collaborative relationships and ancillary services have also created a parallel focus.
Final Thoughts

- Social Work has become more technological in practice than in years past.
- Forensic Social Work continues to grow as a specialized discipline in the criminal justice and intelligence communities.
- Forensic Social Workers are becoming more prevalent in juvenile justice programs nationwide.
- Clinical practices with adolescents continue to evolve to address their learning styles and patterns.
Thank you for your time.....

- Q & A
References


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“Enter to Learn, Depart to Serve”