

Should juveniles be
punished for
committing crimes
criminology essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Juvenile should they be sentenced to life in prison. Each year children as young as 13 are sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. According to American Civil Liberty Union or (ACLU), 2570 children are sentenced as juveniles to life in prison without parole. Even though children at the age of 13 know right from wrong, Juveniles should not be tried as adults because children do not have the moral and cognitive capabilities as adult. Moreover, often children that commit crimes come from broken homes.

Generally, juveniles should be punished for their wrong doings; however, as many people have pointed out, the goal of incarceration should be rehabilitation. When children are sentenced as adults, they most often go to adult prisons. About one of every 10 juvenile offenders goes to adult prisons but they are more prone to sexual exploitation, suicide, recidivism, and physical assault. You want a child to learn their lessons, be punished and never recommit. Juvenile sentencing and juvenile prisons are more beneficial in promising that a juvenile will stop committing crimes. A Florida study showed that “ teens that went to adult prison recommitted at a rate of 30% while those teens who went to the juvenile system was 19%. 10% may not seem a huge discrepancy but it will be beneficial in the long run when these juveniles become adults and there are 10% less criminals on the street”.

(Talbot, Margaret)

Since children brains are not fully developed until age 25, they should not be incarcerated to life in prison. According to researchers from the National Institute of Mental Health, “ the frontal lobe, that controls impulse control, does not develop until around 17 years of age”. So how could one think that

<https://assignbuster.com/should-juveniles-be-punished-for-committing-crimes-criminology-essay/>

a 13 year old could think rationally? Children are not adults, they do not think like adults, they do not act like adults, and they sure do not need to be put into prison like adults. A child can still be turned around in most cases; an adult is less likely to be turned around. A child still needs training and discipline. I feel children can be rehabilitated, if they do not end of in an adult prison. For example, Lionel Tate, age 12 killed a 6-year-old girl while mimicking a wrestling move he saw on television is serving a life sentence in prison. After serving 3 years in an adult prison, his conviction was overturned and he was released on “ one year house arrest and 10 years’ probation” (Goodnough, Abby). At that point, the damage was already done. He spent time in an adult prison with hard-core criminals. Because of that when freed he was not able to adjust to society, causing him to get into trouble. Given a chance in a juvenile rehabilitation center, I believe the outcome would have differed.

In general, children that often commit crimes are products of their environment. Like, Sara Kruzan who came from an abusive home and with no father. She met a man who showered her with gifts and showed her attention, naturally she saw him as a father figure. Only later, to find he was preparing her for prostitution so at 16 years old she killed her pimp. She was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. Sara’s case is cause for concern. She should not have been sentenced to life in prison without parole; she instead should have been tried as a juvenile (Segura, Liliana).

Of course, some will say that if a person rather child or adult does the crime they should do the time. Some might even say that punishing children with <https://assignbuster.com/should-juveniles-be-punished-for-committing-crimes-criminology-essay/>

harsh penalties like life in prison could deter other children from committing crimes. Children today are clever and learn things rapidly at an early age, so they know what could happen if they cause harm. Some children mature faster than others and have the capabilities to know, for example, what is going to happen if I cause harm. Alternatively, parents lack the skills to teach their children right from wrong because some are childlike themselves. For the most part, though, not all children have the mindset when comes to peer pressure. In addition, they do not have the capabilities to adequately handle emotions to understand repercussions of their actions. For this reason, it makes trying a child as an adult cruel and unusual punishment. It should be based on a case-by case determination to send them to prison for life.

According to Paul farmer, he said it best that “ children must be held accountable” but not for the rest of their life:

These are serious crimes and both young men must be held accountable. The question before the court is whether they should be held accountable in a way that takes into consideration their immaturity, lack of judgment, vulnerability to peer pressure, and – perhaps most important – their capacity for redemption, growth, and change. If the court strikes down life without parole for juveniles as unconstitutional, no offender would have an automatic right to parole release. Juvenile offenders would simply be given the opportunity to appear before a parole board and make the case that they have changed and deserve another chance.

Article 37 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children must not be subjected to torture, inhuman or degrading treatment

or punishments, including capital punishment or life imprisonment without the possibility of release. Only two nations in the world have not ratified this convention: Somalia and the United States. It is noteworthy that sentences of life without parole for juveniles were uncommon in the United States before the 1990s, a period of fear about a potential rise in juvenile crime that was based on data later proven false.

There are those who argue that international laws and norms should have no bearing on how the United States decides to dispense justice. But having treated thousands of children all over the world, I can say with confidence that American children are not more vicious, less human, or less deserving of mercy and compassion than children in any other country. Every other nation in the world finds ways to hold young people accountable for their actions without sentencing them to languish in prison until they die. The United States must do the same for its children.

All things considered, adult prisons would be wasted on children. Children should not be locked up for life. Instead of spending money to keep these juvenile locked up, it could be used on better detention programs to help rehabilitate juvenile offenders. It is clear that sentencing a juvenile to life in prison would have dire consequences on both the child and society. Most children that are growing into adulthood are able to learn from mistakes but locking them up with hard-core criminals will again make them a product of that environment.