

School Shooters, Bullies, and Snowflakes



My Parents! Luckily, I was born at a time before they were likely to be fined or put in jail for my chronic truancy, occasional fistcuffs, smart mouth, etc...

Let's consider Ethan Crumbley, the Michigan student who was recently convicted of murdering four classmates at his high school when he was fifteen. Shortly after being sentenced to life in prison, both of his parents were also convicted of manslaughter for... well, it's not exactly clear what for. Seems to depend on who you ask.

Here's my two cents: prosecutors shouldn't get to have their cake and eat it, too. By trying Ethan as an adult murderer, the prosecutor implicitly

claimed Ethan was all grown up and fully culpable for his actions (although, just imagine if this 15 year old hadn't shot anyone but instead had had sex... he wouldn't be an adult then, would he? If his case had involved ejaculations rather than assassinations, then he'd just be a psychologically under-developed "child victim" whose "innocence" had been compromised, but that's another story). So, however morally dubious the pigs' cruel, idiotic position is, that's the play they made: A fifteen-year-old killer gets no pass or sympathy for being young. Fine. But if that's how the persecutors want it, then LEAVE HIS PARENTS ALONE. You can't have it both ways, assholes. Either he is a fully responsible adult deserving of a murder conviction and life sentence, OR his parents bear responsibility because he was a dependent youth who couldn't or wouldn't have done what he did if not for their involvement. Pick a lane.

Aside from the typically disgusting games played by cops/prosecutor scumbags, I'm troubled by another aspect of this case, i.e. the apparent lack of interest as to WHY Ethan thought it might be a good idea to shoot up his classmates. I don't know what led him to this, but I haven't heard the question asked, other than by a few people fishing for possible organic causes of psychosis. Has no one wondered — or cared — whether this young man who did such violent damage was himself bullied or otherwise marginalized and disregarded? No popular coverage that I know of has dwelt on that. In fact, in the 3 academic journals I found that even mentioned his name (EBSCO, April 9th, 2024), only one even touched on the issue, citing a study that mentions being bullied as one of the "signs" we are supposed to watch for to identify potential school shooters before they strike. Somehow that concern strikes me as callous, as if people weren't particularly interested in the plight of youth who are driven to kill, except insofar as awareness of their suffering may help us stop THEM from



doing something drastic. Do we even care what was done to them first?

Obviously I suspect that Ethan was socially marginalized, ostracized, or otherwise bullied, and I think that matters, BUT... another side to the coin is how the "bullying card" is often wildly overplayed as well. I'm not talking about Ethan now, I have no idea what did or didn't happen to him, but more broadly it just sometimes seems you can't say even a mildly unsettling thing lately without being labelled a "bully" by someone, while no one else bats an eyelash at the outlandishness of the accusation. Plenty of comedians and other public figures get "cancelled" after expressing controversial thoughts, but I have a much closer-to-home example: a young relative of mine was recently punished for an alleged incident of "cyber-bullying". No one hesitated to slap such an ugly label on her, but the slightest investigation reveals this "bullying" as nothing but a middle school girl merely stating her (very reasonable) opinion that a male classmate was a jerk for mistreating one of her friends. So, the "bullying" was really just the calling out of a bully on behalf of a friend, and in any event, she has a right to voice her opinion about the character of another as long as she sticks to the facts that support it. That's not bullying... it's normal human communication about normal human existence, yet every day countless kids suffer this very real reverse bullying by the zero-tolerance-minded morons in positions of power over them. Thankfully, my young relative resisted and rejected the attack on her character (as opposed to accepting and internalizing it), and for the most part, her family supported her. But not every accused kid will be so lucky; some may even find themselves in the initial phases of the so-called School-to-Prison-Pipeline based on bullying accusations rooted in our increasing eagerness to punish others for any perceived offence.

As I see it, we all need to be a bit better and more decent to each other (a shift that could go far in preventing future Ethan Crumbley-type tragedies), but we also need to be a lot more thick-skinned and tolerant of some coarseness or unvarnished honesty from others, too. Can we try not being so damn quick to take offence, even when offence isn't intended? Such cultural oversensitivity seems to be cultivating easily-upset kids who risk becoming self-righteous, hyper-vigilant adults, the future cops and prosecutors and overbearing teachers with their heads on a swivel for the slightest whiff of presumed impropriety. Can we try not to inflate the ranks of authoritarian assholes who create far more damage in society than the rare unfortunate like Ethan Crumbley. Can't we all just get along?