juvenile delinquency

a problem for the modern world

by William C. Kvaraceus

unesco
Juvenile delinquency
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This book was prepared as part of the Unesco programme of studies on problems of social inadaptation among young people. Problems of this nature, as well as manifestations of juvenile delinquency, are a source of concern and often anxiety to parents, educators, and leaders of youth organizations. It was felt that it might be helpful to them if an attempt were made to examine objectively, and to explain as clearly as possible, the unusual and aggressive behaviour displayed by some of today's youth.

This task was entrusted to Dr. William C. Kvaraceus, who had served as a Unesco specialist on problems of social inadaptation among youth. Dr. Kvaraceus, who has taught at Boston University, is now Professor of Education and Director of Youth Studies at the Lincoln Filene Center for Citizenship and Public Affairs of Tufts University in the United States. His published works include *Juvenile Delinquency and the School* and *The Community and the Delinquent*. The views put forward in the present book, the result of many years of wide experience, are the author's own.

Unesco takes pleasure in acknowledging the co-operation extended by the Section of Social Defence of the United Nations in the preparation of this volume.
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Despite vast technological advances visible in all countries today, the processes for helping children and youth to mature adulthood still challenge the ingenuity of parents and youth workers.

As one observes the painstaking efforts of the professionals—teachers, social workers, judges, psychologists, sociologists, psychiatrists—who seek to find ways and means to prevent and control the wayward behaviour of youth, it becomes apparent that the professionals cannot solve or even control the delinquency problem by themselves. Every citizen and every parent must share the task. And, we must involve youth itself in the solution to what is basically a youth problem.

This book has been prepared for parents, interested citizens, and older youths who want to understand and help those youngsters whose behaviour has brought them to the attention of official authority. It does not list any recipes for the prevention or re-education of the delinquent; but it does point to the need to define and differentiate the delinquent and it reviews a variety of approaches that may be taken in helping different types of youthful offenders. These approaches generally reflect a causative, diagnostic, and rehabilitative orientation.

Two major problems were faced in the preparation of this publication: first, the range in educational and child-welfare resources and programmes existing between the developed and developing countries each with its unique cultural traditions presented differing stages of readiness; second, the paucity of
research and tested practices regarding prevention and control of delinquent behaviour in all parts of the world provided no absolute solutions. Neither problem could be surmounted in this one, brief publication. Hence, there may be references to the need for classes of smaller size when there are many areas of the world where schools do not exist, or calls for diagnostic and clinical resources in areas where case work, psychological, and psychiatric services are not available or accessible. At the same time, this publication reflects the greater abundance of the scientific literature on delinquency as found in the western world and especially in the United States.

This volume also looks to the future, recognizing the incomplete and unvalidated nature of much theory and practice that characterizes current effort to prevent or readjust misbehaviour of youth. All countries need to define more precisely 'the delinquent child'. They need to check the theoretical frames of reference which guide their practices in prevention and control. They need constantly to evaluate and re-evaluate their programmed efforts to help youthful offenders. Otherwise, wasted motion and wasted lives may result when irrelevant or even harmful measures are employed with wayward youth.

It is hoped that this small volume may spark thinking and action of parents and citizens working in close co-operation with child-welfare officials in these directions and in many parts of the world.

In the preparation of this publication I had the research and editorial assistance of Gloria Emerson whose untiring support in gathering, organizing and editing materials has made this a co-operative project.

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What is a juvenile delinquent?

This question makes some people anxious; they grope for an answer and it is often a fierce or angry one. There is no shortage of emphatic emotion and, very often, a feeling seems to exist that the juvenile delinquent behaves as he does for the purpose of annoying, if not menacing, the more civilized and decent people in the world.

This type of indignation so often distracts people that they cannot begin to reflect on what a juvenile delinquent is. For they are too absorbed in citing what he has done. But who is he? Where does he live? What are his crimes? What is his punishment? What is his future?

The answers are elusive, but throughout the world, an increasing number of adults are sensing the urgency of finding out the truth about the young human being who has been so historically labelled. The disturbing realization that world-wide delinquency exists, and shows no signs of tapering off, has touched many thoughtful citizens whether they live in Vienna or Lagos, New York or Calcutta.

There are ways of diverting us from the problem. Indeed, it can always be pointed out that juvenile delinquency is not new to the world. There is even proof of its dating back to 306 B.C., for among the first laws of the Romans there were already special provisions for children who had stolen. The Romans recognized that their responsibility for such crimes was limited. And it can
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also be pointed out that juvenile delinquency is by no means a peculiarity of our generation. And, somewhat defensively, numbers of people can claim that no one country or culture has a monopoly on it.

But such facts are of little consolation. They do not help us to face the problems or measure it or attempt to solve it. While it is probable that in many countries the extent and viciousness of juvenile delinquency has been exaggerated, or exploited, in the press or by certain films, this hardly explains or refutes the proof that delinquency exists today in virtually all countries of the world.

In the United Nations report, *Five-Year Perspective, 1960-1964*, issued by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, there is a reminder: 'In the field of crime and delinquency there is a serious and widespread problem today (but appearing to be particularly acute in some of the most highly developed countries): that of juvenile delinquency. The various services that experts have hoped would be effective in preventing juvenile delinquency have not generally succeeded in doing so, for whatever reason. The question of underlying causes needs to be reviewed from a broad perspective, and new methods evolved to deal with these causes.'

Almost every language in the world now yields a phrase labelling those youngsters of many nations whose behaviour or tastes are different enough to incite suspicion if not alarm. They are the 'teddy boys' in England, the 'nozem' in the Netherlands, the 'raggare' in Sweden, the 'blousons noirs' in France, the 'tsotsis' in South Africa, the 'bodgies' in Australia, the 'halbstarken' in Austria and Germany, the 'tai-pau' in Taiwan, the 'mambo boys' or 'taiyozuku' in Japan, the 'tapkaroschi' in Yugoslavia, the 'vitelloni' in Italy, the 'hooligans' in Poland and the 'stiliagy' in the U.S.S.R.

But it is not our right to assume that every teddy boy or every
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blouson noir is actively engaged in delinquency. These names often mislead people. It is unjust to assume automatically that a youngster who likes rock’n’roll music or bizarre clothing is on his way to becoming a delinquent if he is not one already. Too often the adult world has used the word ‘delinquent’ to express anger or bewilderment at adolescent tastes. In fact many professionals in education and psychology object to the expression ‘juvenile delinquent’, for the public has used it too often and too glibly to describe young people who, in some way, offend us. The second United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders recommended: ‘Without attempting to formulate a standard definition of what should be considered juvenile delinquency in each country, it recommends: (a) that the meaning of the term juvenile delinquency should be restricted as far as possible to violations of the criminal law, and (b) that even for protection, specific offences which would penalize small irregularities or maladjusted behaviour of minors, but for which adults would not be prosecuted, should not be created.’

Here is the wise suggestion that we do not apply the words ‘juvenile delinquent’ without cause and restraint. Not every minor who breaks a rule or who behaves offensively should be considered a delinquent. The behaviour of young people rarely consistently conforms with the standards and expectations that adults have for them.

The second part of this United Nations recommendation also makes the plea that, in each of our societies, we do not extend the laws to such a degree that children who have committed minor offences would be punished, although adults would be exempt.

Variations on a theme

What are the offences and what are the penalties? The differences from country to country only indicate how divided the world is
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on who is a delinquent, who is not, and what should be done about it. A widespread form of delinquency in Cairo is the collection of cigarette butts from the street, an offence which is unknown in other parts of the world. A recent survey in India, conducted in two urban areas, Lucknow and Kampur, indicated that the second most common juvenile offence was vagrancy. A few years ago in Hong Kong, juveniles brought before the magistrate's court reached the startling figure of more than 55,000 and yet over 90 per cent of them had committed only technical breaches of the law such as hawking without a licence. In these cases, the outsider can hardly know if such delinquent acts are not gestures of the abandoned, the ill-fed or the desperate child.

In Kenya, stricter enforcement of the vagrancy and pass regulations some years ago increased the number of juveniles appearing before the Nairobi Central Juvenile Court to more than 3,000 in one year. Available information from Lagos, Nigeria, shows that a delinquent there is primarily an offender against the unwritten laws of the home; disrespect and disobedience are regarded as serious offences.

So we see that the numbers of children cited for delinquent acts can sometimes be misleading unless we are to know the nature of the offences and what particular law they violate, and how they were apprehended and recorded by the authorities.

There is rarely much in common between the boy who collects cigarette butts in a Cairo gutter, the Nigerian who defies his family, the American who uses a switch-blade or the European who commits larceny. The very differences between them are staggering yet all could possibly be defined as delinquents.

It can only be said that delinquents throughout the world are involved in such a wide range of behaviour, from the most trivial to the most serious, that it is scarcely possible to generalize about all types of offences except to point out that they are usually committed by boys in an age-range from 7 to 18, depending on the locale.
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In most countries, the upper age limit under the law for juvenile offenders varies from 16 to 19. In the United States, it differs very much from State to State. In Wyoming, for example, a boy is legally an adult at 19 while a girl is considered a minor until 21. In another State, Connecticut, the upper limit is 16.

The minimum age at which a child is held responsible for his acts and brought before any kind of court again fluctuates from country to country. For example, it is fixed at 7 in the United States, at 9 in Israel, 10 in Great Britain, 12 in Greece, 13 in France and Poland, 14 in Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Norway, Switzerland and Yugoslavia.

And, finally, punishments laid down by the laws and also penal methods vary greatly from country to country.

Corporal punishment was once legally accepted by a large number of countries: today a judge can still order it in Burma, Ceylon, India (with the exception of the Bombay region), Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and Thailand.

Yet even when we take the most cautious attitude towards statistics on delinquency—for its scope and extent cannot be expressed in rows of neat figures—from all corners of the world, the evidence mounts. The offences are varied. They range from stealing, vandalism and property offences, petty extortion and gambling to violent behaviour, rowdiness, truancy, immoral or indecent conduct, drinking and drug addiction.

A taste for violence

In almost every city in the world where delinquency exists, so does the juvenile gang which looms up as a modern social institution. Despite striking national differences, the teen-age gangs are seemingly aimless groups of rootless, restless, unemployed adolescents who most frequently meet on street corners. Some
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gangs—for example, a few in East Los Angeles, California—have committed murder while others do nothing more offensive than mimic or insult passers-by in the street.

But these gangs, innocent or evil, are an important element in the over-all pattern of juvenile delinquency. Looking at delinquency in a world-wide context, one does not often see individual youngsters becoming delinquent each in his own fashion, but rather a number of boys participating in joint activities that derive their meaning and pleasure from a set of common sentiments, loyalties and rules.

Many gangs are tightly organized; some are loosely conceived and drift apart quickly. The majority of these gangs often engage in acts which do not always bring financial gains and to the rest of the world seem almost purposeless in their malice.

In Poland, teen-age gangs have damaged railroad trains and molested passengers for no apparent reason. In Saskatchewan, Canada, groups of boys have entered into private homes (when the owners were away) and mutilated expensive furnishings without attempting to steal a single object. In Chiangmai, Thailand, a band of male minors, with a symbol of a white eagle tattooed on their arms, found their greatest diversion in terrorizing or injuring outsiders at such times as they were not engaged in challenging a rival gang to a war.

In Argentina, gangs of boys have gathered in cafés or bars to insult or humiliate other customers or pedestrians; after this, they have sometimes wrecked a parked car. In the Philippines, reports on teen-age gangs indicate the same urge for vandalism. Several youngsters cruised through the city of Manila in a car and went on a rampage, breaking glass windows of fashionable stores and residences. For several nights this particular gang kept the police of three adjacent cities busy trying to track them down and guess where they might strike next.

Some juvenile delinquents, however, have clearer goals in
'... the juvenile gang which looms up as a modern social institution.'

Photo Dominique Roger
‘The behaviour of young people rarely conforms with the standards and expectations that adults have for them.’

Photo Dominique Roger
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mind. Their satisfactions come from more profitable acts. Racketeering or petty extortion are good examples. A gang in Detroit, Michigan, which was composed of fifteen boys from 13 to 16 years of age, organized a racket in which all the smaller children of the neighbourhood were forced to pay five cents for the insurance of not being molested on the way to and from the local cinema.

A report from India indicates that gangs of young boys and girls have learned to be highly successful smugglers of illicit liquor and drugs. In Israel, a juvenile court judge finds that groups of young people engaged in stealing cars is a ‘striking new feature’ because gang behaviour has been rare.

It should not be assumed, however, that these gangs are always in constant motion and that their numbers, year in and year out, are fixed. In each country, their histories fluctuate somewhat as the lines in a fever chart. A German psychologist, Dr. Curt Bondy, remarked that there seem to be years which are marked by violent outbursts of gang activities and then years of relative tranquillity.

An article in The Observer of 15 July 1962, states: ‘In North London, as the police will tell you, the “gangs” are no more than social gatherings in dance halls and cafés of bored youths from the same area. They have no organization, no accepted leader and no real name, just being referred to as “the mob from Highbury” or “the mob from the Angel”. But the danger is that anyone… can quickly whip up a gang to “turn over” any individual or group which has offended him. Then the iron bars and the knives appear like magic.’

However limited the information on world-wide juvenile delinquency is, several conclusions have been drawn. None of them is comforting. A United Nations report prepared by the secretariat states: ‘It would seem that in a general way violence is becoming

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more and more a feature of juvenile delinquency. Violence is not necessarily restricted to offences against the person but also occurs in offences against property. The number of homicides and bodily injuries seems to be taking an upward trend in some countries, and the same applies to burglary and breaking and entering. Another manifestation of violence, although often hidden, is typified by the delinquent activities of certain gangs, who, by offering protection, or without offering it, obtain various advantages, services or goods, including food. Finally, violence seems to have increased through the growing number of acts of serious damaging or vandalism, committed in revenge, or for the fun of it, or as expression of a rebellious attitude.

The hidden delinquent

In the past, tabulations on the backgrounds of a cross-section of juvenile delinquents always seemed to indicate that these children were raised in poor living conditions. A second conclusion, stated also in this United Nations report, points out a strong change in this tendency. At present it can no longer be said that juvenile delinquency is confined to a particular socio-economic group. There are numerous and increasing indications that children from the higher-income brackets are becoming delinquents. In France, the expression ‘blousons dorés’ (jackets of gold) is a somewhat sarcastic reference to delinquents from richer families than those of the blousons noirs.

A report about shoplifting in large stores in Belgium makes this point. It stated ‘... these thefts are rarely taken to court but information from other sources shows they are being committed, in the overwhelming majority of cases, by children of about 12; in nine cases out of ten, by boys, often by groups, whose members egg each other on to steal for the fun of it; the thieves come from all classes and nearly always steal objects of little value;
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finally, they come from better homes than other categories of delinquents...

And this accentuates still another aspect of the problem that confronts us. We cannot be concerned only with those children who are labelled as delinquents because they were brought to the attention of law-enforcement agencies. In every country there are also groups such as the young shoplifters in Belgium who, for a number of reasons, are not referred to the police or the authorities. In some cases their families protect them, or the school, or the complainant is reluctant to press charges. But it is these two groups who make up the problem.

The first—the known delinquents—is somewhat similar to that part of a huge iceberg that juts above the water. But the second group of unrecorded, or uncounted, delinquents, is much like the submerged part of the iceberg, hidden beneath the water. In the United States, a recent survey revealed that a relatively large number of teen-age boys admitted that they had committed serious acts of delinquency which had never become a matter of court record. These were the sons of middle- and upper-income families. More and more studies from sources in many parts of the world have pointed out that the number of ‘hidden’ or untabulated delinquents is more substantial than previously guessed and these include a growing percentage of children from financially stable homes. But ‘hidden’ delinquency is a problem in economically deprived groups, too.

Although it may seem that there are many common features, juvenile delinquency presents its own particular characteristics in each region and certainly in each country. And in the midst of often conflicting reports and interpretations of juvenile delinquency, one thing is clear. Each delinquent is unique. This is so even when all his outer actions are similar to those of other delinquents and when little he says or does indicates any degree of originality.
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Before we can truly understand why he is unique—and this is essential if we hope to help him—then the adults' own attitudes towards young offenders must change. If for no other reason, the very spread and intensity of juvenile delinquency must force the adult to examine his own prejudices and reactions to it. Too rarely we ask why and often simply assume that we possess all the answers. It is the exception when any person frankly admits not having an idea of why delinquency exists. Only the specialists, aware of the tremendous gaps and discrepancies in our knowledge of human behaviour, show a degree of humility in trying to analyse and alleviate this complex problem. It is true that some of the specialists have isolated some of the answers for some of the children involved, but not all and not nearly enough. Yet this rarely inhibits the most uninformed person from holding forth. People cannot be criticized for having private opinions about delinquency; they can only be reminded, and warned, that it is a subject that is much more complicated than they suspect.

The so-called ‘causes’

One of the richest collections of twentieth-century myths surrounds the subject of delinquency. Most of these myths are harmful for they lull large numbers of people into believing they know more than they do. Usually, they are over-simplified versions of what causes delinquency.

In many people’s minds, the cause of delinquency can be clearly traced to the cinema. They cite those films which seem to glorify or ‘glamourize’ criminal or delinquent behaviour. It is assumed that youngsters who see such films are virtually infected and that any abnormal behaviour on their part can be blamed on what they saw—and possibly admired—in a cinema. But the most careful and intense scientific research has been unable to
establish the degree of direct influence; indeed, it is almost impos-
sible to be sure there is one.

It can always be pointed out that in the last ten years a few
films, for example Rebel Without A Cause, provoked a wide reaction
from many of the young people who saw it in cities all over the
world. This encourages people who claim that films actively incite
delinquency. And yet, as in the case of this specific film, we are
apt to overlook the fact that the film’s influence may not be very
depth or lasting and that perhaps it most affected or stimulated
adolescents who were already attracted to delinquent behaviour.

There will always be films which capture a brief mood of any
nation; it can scarcely be said that such films create the mood
or the problems which result in certain conflicts.

The very subject of the influence of the cinema on children and
adolescents is one of dispute and constant discussion, but we do
not know very much on the subject. There is little scientific proof
that a film, or many films, can induce a child to become a delin-
quent. The very broad generalization might be made that some
films can have a provocative effect but can rarely be considered
as the causal factor for any type of deviant or criminal behaviour.

No doubt there are numerous films and television programmes
that have exerted a type of harmful influence on certain children.
This influence might even affect the child unconsciously. Many
valid and sensible criticisms have been made of the cinema, tele-
vision programmes and comics, but it is an unscientific and some-
what over-simplified speculation to blame them entirely for delin-
quency. One cannot assume that every delinquent in the world
has been exposed to their influence and so shaped by it.

Many children who are lonely, or unhappy in some way, find
solace by going to the cinema, watching television and reading
comics to an excessive degree. But it might be said that delinquent
behaviour is due to much deeper and often more subtle influences
than the films alone, or a constant diet of television programmes,
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or even a library of lurid comics. This is not to deny the influence they may have on children, which is often unsuitable and unreal; it is only to point out that viewing films or television is not the sole passage to delinquency.

Another myth sustained by numbers of people is that working mothers are responsible for delinquent children. Without attempting to deny the crucial importance of a mother’s relationship with a child, there is again little scientific proof that the effects her absence may have invariably include delinquent behaviour.

In many cases where the mother works, it is possible that children are deprived because she is not at home. But this cannot be held up as a reason for juvenile delinquency when a number of stable, happy families include mothers who hold jobs without damaging results to their children.

It is also widely believed that ‘broken’ homes have caused or increased a good percentage of all juvenile delinquency but here again the available data on the subject does not substantiate this as an over-all explanation.

A child is not apt to benefit when his parents separate for, after his infancy, he needs a father as much as a mother. But the mere physical presence of parents is hardly enough. The so-called ‘broken’ home is not always more destructive to a child’s growth than a home where the parents live together in an emotional atmosphere of tension or unhappiness.

There are always people who point to slum areas as the source of the problem. But research has shown that slum clearance in itself, while highly commendable, is not the over-all answer to preventing or wiping out delinquency. Hot and cold running water, central heating and fresh paint are all desirable, but they do not automatically curtail or prevent delinquency. Neither will a well-equipped playground, for it takes more than a concrete area and sports equipment to bring about a genuine change in the attitudes of a child or adolescent who has delinquent tendencies.
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Some people have reached the cruel conclusion that all juvenile delinquents are stupid, if not retarded, and their lack of intelligence is the reason for their behaviour. There is a scarcity of any reliable scientific information to support the premiss that delinquents are consistently less intelligent than other children or adolescents.

It is true that many youngsters from poor families have scored lower on certain intelligence tests than children with other backgrounds. Educators have pointed out that this may well happen because their reading aptitudes and vocabulary and general cultural knowledge are involved. Very often an intelligence test, which measures all three, depends on intellectual capacities that are especially emphasized in middle-class homes.

The delinquent child is at a disadvantage through no fault and through no deficiency of his own. Many delinquents have turned out to be extremely bright when they are tested according to their own backgrounds.

There is also the myth that delinquents ‘inherit’ certain tendencies that make anti-social behaviour inevitable. Scientists have refuted the ‘bad seed’ theory, for children cannot inherit a ‘wicked’ nature. Because of many factors, they can and do grow up to become unhappy and desperate people but they are not born as predestined delinquents or criminals.

One much publicized theory in Europe about the cause of delinquency has been that children affected by the war conditions of 1939-45 are responsible for the crime wave. But detailed studies in England show that these children, who are now young adults, ‘contribute no more and no less than their share of juvenile delinquency, perhaps because the circumstances of the deprivation called forth a very positive response in the general community’.  

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Each one is different

Once the myths and misunderstandings about delinquency are exposed, the average person begins to perceive that generalizations are useless. Such explanations as slum living, broken homes, films and deprivation fail to provide us with universal and realistic reasons. Sometimes, each of these may be one among many factors that shape a child’s life but no one factor can be accepted as the single over-all reason for the thousands and thousands of delinquent cases.

To begin to understand the problem of delinquency, we must realize, and remember, that delinquents often do the same things for vastly different reasons and to achieve vastly different results. Similar behaviour, which seems identical, may fulfil very different functions for different individuals.

To illustrate these differences—as far as reasons and results go—here are examples of boys each of whom might be considered a juvenile delinquent.

A 15-year-old American, John G., from Los Angeles, California, is one of twelve members of a street gang called the ‘Sharks’. The gang has an inflexible code of values, standards and morals. All the members have sworn allegiance to this peculiar code and, for John G., it is the most serious and important emotional commitment of his life. Last summer, he and four other gang boys stole a car that was parked in the neighbourhood. They abandoned the car, a mile and a half away, the next morning around 4 a.m. When John G. was questioned by a juvenile court, he did not feel anxious to explain why he had done it and there was not the slightest attempt to show he was ‘sorry’. He had previously been in trouble for breaking windows and slashing the roofs of convertible cars with a razor.

His background showed that both parents worked and their combined incomes were meagre. Their apartment was too small
for the five members of the family. John G.'s record in school was dismal and his teachers resented his pose of boredom and contempt. His attitude, in school or outside of it, was spiteful and malicious, yet a psychiatric examination revealed no pronounced emotional disturbances and a normal intelligence.

By conventional standards, John G. might be considered as a disgrace by his law-abiding parents, as a failure by his school and as a threat by his community. And yet there is a telling logic in what he does. All of this delinquent's most offensive acts won the approval and respect of the people he most admires: gang members of the 'Sharks'. Perhaps every future project that John G. embarks on will threaten or clearly violate some rule established by the school, the community or the law, but he will continue to be warmed by the admiration of the 'Sharks'. His conduct is right by the standards of his own street-corner sub-culture, although it happens to be wrong to the outside world.

A 13-year-old English boy, Basil P., comes from a prosperous family in London. Basil does not do well in school, much to the distress of his father who also studied there and achieved a reputation as a student. Basil's most conspicuous difficulty is poor reading; in any subjects requiring much effort in reading he is apt to become distracted or lazy. He might have remained an anonymous or inadequate student, but for the fact that several of his teachers and many of his classmates know that Basil has 'a habit of taking things'.

The child makes no attempt to deny it. For a long period of time he has been pilfering objects from other boys, stealing both valuable and trifling things. Basil does not hoard them but often gives them away to classmates, consciously increasing the risk that the original owner will see his possession and claim it. Once, in London on a holiday, Basil stole three gramophone records from a music store. He says he is 'sorry' he steals, he does not know why he does it and he wishes he could stop. His parents are
horrified, his teachers are annoyed and some of his classmates are contemptuous. A psychiatric examination revealed that on a deep symbolical level the objects Basil stole stand for, or substitute, something unconsciously desired but somehow forbidden or unattainable. It was recommended, and agreed, that he would receive psychiatric help and treatment.

Do we consider this child as an uncounted delinquent? Although Basil was emotionally disturbed, this was not the case with John G. Can every anti-social act be considered a neurotic symptom?

A 17-year-old African, Pierre N., travelled from his home village on the Ivory Coast to try to find a job in the nearest city. He hoped to be employed in a hotel. Pierre N. could read and write, speak two languages and was a bright youngster. In the city, he was caught by a clerk when trying to steal a shirt from a store. To the judge of a court, Pierre explained that his own clothes were shabby, he had no money and he hoped a new shirt would make a better impression when he looked for a job.

Is Pierre a juvenile delinquent? If he had been successful the first time, would he have continued to steal? Does all stealing by young people clearly constitute an act of delinquency?

The considerable differences between these three case histories gives only some indication of the hazards of lumping all adolescent transgressions under the label of juvenile delinquency.

It is not always so easy to decide who is a socialized delinquent, who is an emotionally disturbed child and who commits a single offence motivated by an overt and obvious need. It is meaningless to talk diagnostically of ‘the delinquent’. The pronouncement that a child is a juvenile delinquent is not the same as the clinical diagnosis that a child is an epileptic.

In most cases, a delinquent act may mean a fulfilment of a personal need at the conscious and unconscious level, and this act, usually a violation of what we consider law-abiding behaviour, may be seen as representing a symptom.
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Truancy, a violation of both school and legal precepts, is one example of symptomatic behaviour. In one case, truancy may be regarded as a symptom of the healthy rebellion of a normal adolescent who stays away for one day. In another instance, truancy may be a symptom of a child's genuine inability to face and cope with the fearful realities of daily life.

Perhaps our own realization of how very little we know about the nature and cause of these symptoms can encourage us to look at the problem of delinquency with new curiosity and new compassion, and with an open mind.
Chapter two

Why delinquency exists

The young delinquent, who has inspired so many myths about the causes of his behaviour, has also provoked a mythology on how to 'cure' delinquency. People reason that 'fresh air and sunshine', 'a good sound beating' or an 'honest day's work' will turn the delinquent from a hostile and destructive person into a normal, balanced human being. And there are frequent warnings from well-meaning people that delinquents are being coddled and pampered by psychologists and psychiatrists when what is really needed is prompt and firm punishment.

A large segment of people look upon all delinquents—or even teen-agers who look suspiciously as though they might be delinquent—as potential criminals who must be repressed or punished before they have a chance to prove it. This attitude is illustrated by a newspaper report with the headline 'Judge Imposes Road Gang Term for Back Talk':

‘W., N.D. (UP). A “smart alecky” youth who wore pegged trousers and a flattop haircut began six months on a road gang today for talking back to the wrong judge. M. J., 20, of M., was fined $25 and costs in Judge E.R.’s superior court for reckless operation of an automobile. But he just didn’t leave well enough alone.

“I understand how it was, with your pegged trousers and flattop haircut”, R. said in assessing the fine. “You go on like this and I predict in five years, you’ll be in prison.”

‘When J. walked over to pay his fine, he overheard Probation
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Officer S. told the judge how much trouble the "smart alecky" young offender had been. "I just want you to know I'm not a thief", interrupted J. to the judge. The judge's voice boomed to the court clerk: "Change that judgement to six months on the roads'."

This anecdote clearly points out the hostility that many adults—even those in responsible professional roles—rather proudly display towards those young people who impress them as troublemakers.

Not even the most sympathetic person can deny that very often the actions of delinquents are harmful and often revolting to other people and to community life. Many law-abiding citizens feel justified in condemning the behaviour of juvenile delinquents and pressing loudly for stronger punishment. They could explain their own attitudes on the ground that they themselves undergo frustrations for the sake of the community, and society at large, whereas the juvenile delinquent recklessly gratifies his desires to the discomfort of other people.

But adults who reason this way are apt to ignore the fact that for them life is much more rewarding and pleasant if they do obey the laws and that in the long run the delinquent himself suffers more—much more—by his anti-social behaviour than society does. Shocked and impatient adults who protest that delinquents are being coddled, often recommend what they consider the no-nonsense method: a beating.

Some delinquents may be impervious to a beating, others may be embittered and enraged. Inflicting pain will sometimes frighten a child and it may often subdue him for a little while. But it rarely makes any human being wiser about himself or the world around him. The delinquent must learn to face the natural consequences of what he does and to realize that he must accept a personal responsibility for his life. But threats will not accomplish this and neither will bribes or beatings.

Sometimes punishment confirms delinquency. It can have a
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compelling psychological effect on the child who comes to believe that he deserves it and, so, must also justify it. The eighteenth-century philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, wrote: ‘Soon I had received so many beatings that I grew less sensitive to them; in the end they seemed to me a sort of retribution for my thefts, which authorized me to go on stealing. Instead of looking back and thinking of my punishment, I looked forward and contemplated vengeance. I reckoned that to be beaten like a rogue justified my being one. I found that thieving and being beaten belonged together and were in a sense a single stage, and that if I fulfilled my share in the bargain by doing my part I could leave the responsibility for the rest to my master. In this assurance I began to thieve with an easier conscience than before, saying to myself, “Well, what will happen? I shall be beaten? All right, that’s what I was made for”.

In a recent incident in London, a magistrate acquitted a teacher of assaulting a 13-year-old boy. The child had received a severe caning and his father had accused the teacher of brutality. The magistrate decided that the teacher had good reasons to cane the boy, who was constantly stealing and had been placed on probation by a juvenile court.

The boy could have been sent back to the juvenile court where, in all probability, he would have then been referred to an institution. The school preferred to ‘give him a chance’ and used the cane as a form of leniency.

‘I have no doubt it was a hard beating’, the magistrate said. ‘I don’t suppose he liked it, but unless it is something that leaves a mark it is useless.’

There has always been a theory that if young people are kept off street corners and drained of their surplus energy this will distract them from delinquency. It is assumed that they will be too busy or too tired to be ‘bad’. It has been argued that delinquency may often result when children do not find a positive outlet for their
energies; it has even been suggested that boredom, or even the fear of it, motivates a number of delinquent street gangs. It is most tempting, then, for the alerted community to think in terms of a bigger, better playground and equipment as the ultimate preventive act. But several specialists have pointed out that delinquency in itself may constitute a very satisfying form of recreation and that it is difficult for the community to substitute an equally thrilling but more conventional form of diversion. Here again, a broader and more profound programme of prevention, which might include summer camping trips, local sports tournaments or more athletic instruction, might be put into effect and carefully evaluated for the results.

There is also a wide belief that work camps will have a fast therapeutic effect on all delinquent boys. Numerous people seem to feel that delinquent tendencies will simply evaporate once a youngster is given 'an honest job' in the fresh air. Work camps, simply by removing a delinquent from his environment, can often effect a change but not necessarily a permanent or a profound one.

Nothing is more discouraging about the problem of juvenile delinquency, aside from the tragic results to the children involved, than the lack of clear and immediate solutions. Understandably, most people whose lives are affected by it (even slightly) want a sure-fire and immediate plan of action. And they are all too often the people who clutch at the belief that juvenile delinquency has a single cause and, therefore, a single solution. This is never true.

Solving a problem of any complexity means first defining the problem, examining it and then considering the different theories about the possible causes and nature of the problem. If two patients have a similar pain, no doctor can assume that the same diagnosis can be applied to both cases. While the pain may be similar, he must investigate the source and cause before he tries to alleviate it.

It is much the same when trying to understand the problems of delinquents. The most practical approach is to consider and
test the theories that already exist in order to find out what makes the norm-violators behave as they do.

But theories are often tiresome abstracts and are confusing to the average person who may feel suspicious of ideas when he wants instant, foolproof advice. In the case of juvenile delinquency there is a wealth of theories, an almost overwhelming abundance. None claims to be foolproof or to provide the ultimate answer. But each one, if we have the patience to absorb it, can contribute to a more profound understanding and a wider view of the entire problem.

Many theories

We must accept the fact that delinquent behaviour, which stems from so many combinations of factors, cannot be treated or controlled until several scientifically-evolved theories about the individual offender have been checked. The boy must be considered apart from his conspirators. His life at home, his problems at school, his relationship with his parents, his own self-image and his personality must all be carefully revealed and evaluated. Even this sort of meticulous and expensive research does not provide the answers or solve the question of how to help. It can always provide, however, much more insight as to why a child chooses—often unconsciously—to be a juvenile delinquent.

But what are the theories? What do the world’s specialists on human behaviour feel?

In the psychoanalytical field, there are many theories. One theory says that delinquency, as with any other form of defiant behaviour, results from severe frustrations suffered by a growing child. Another theory is that juvenile delinquency is an expression of rebellion—and clearly not a rebellion for something but against something. A bewildered parent may ask, ‘A rebellion against what?’ Here again, the answer depends on the individual child
'Hot and cold running water, central heating and fresh paint... do not automatically curtail or prevent delinquency.'  

Photo Dominique Roger
‘The child whose parents do not love him as a person feels betrayed or abandoned by them.’

Photo Unesco / David Seymour
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who may be striking out against what he feels, unconsciously, is an unwarranted lack of love on the part of his parents. In other cases the answer may be found in situations which seem threatening or, simply, in the terrible doubts of the child about himself.

It must be understood that these are condensed explanations of what are, in fact, very complicated theories and it can never be assumed that every anti-social child is trying to get revenge, or be compensated, for not being loved. If it were suggested to a juvenile delinquent with a long record of offences that he acts the way he does because of hidden feelings that he cannot ‘identify’ himself, the idea would seem preposterous, if not ridiculous, to him. For he does not really know himself, or his own inner crises, or what has made him the person he has become.

Another theory suggests that juvenile delinquency is perhaps the failure of a young male to be able to identify himself with what is professionally referred to as a ‘male authority figure’. This naturally means the child’s father, the dominating and consistent male influence in his life. If there is no father, if he is rarely at home or even if he is a dim or withdrawn figure in the child’s life, a small boy may pay a very subtle but serious penalty. He may come to feel a very deep insecurity about his own image of himself as a man. This may seem a precocious worry to adults but it is a valid one for the child. And this worry will have a strong influence on the child.

In some families, the child does not lack a ‘male authority figure’—there is a father and an assertive one. But what happens when the mother derides the father and constantly reminds the child of his faults? The woman’s derision can be subtle or as outright as saying ‘Your father is a no good so-and-so’. No matter how she expresses it, the child comes to understand that to be loved and accepted he must somehow be different from the man who is his father—the one man it is most natural for him to idealize. It is more than possible that a youngster in this situation
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will have the same fears about himself as the child who lacks a father.

Psychologists and psychoanalysts have attached great importance to the mother-child relationship. There is a widely accepted theory that maternal deprivation is a major factor in a child's becoming delinquent. But in a recent study by Dr. Robert G. Andry,¹ there is interesting evidence that the boy's relationship with his father may have just as crucial a bearing on his personality. Following a study during which he tested eighty delinquents Dr. Andry came to this conclusion: 'Juvenile delinquency among boys might, therefore, be regarded in one way as a battleground where relationships are often fought out primarily between members of the same sex, that is, between a boy and his father or between a boy and figures of authority in society. This interpretation of delinquent acts is, however, relevant only when the boy and his mother enjoy at least some measure of a harmonious relationship.'

Dr. Andry points out that it is understandable that a growing child 'who has not been grossly deprived of his mother's affection' feels entitled to receive at least an equal amount of affection from his father. If paternal affection is lacking, the structure of the family changes often for the worst. Under such circumstances it might be found, for instance, that the mother may try to compensate and to protect unduly the child from the non-loving father. 'A child who perceives his father in a negative way over a period of years', said Dr. Andry, 'might gradually not only develop hostility towards the father but may also at a given time begin to project such hostility beyond the family scene on to the world at large.' He feels that some delinquent acts would seem to be meaningful if interpreted in this light. His own study revealed that delinquent boys have weaker, less satisfactory relationships with their fathers than with their mothers.

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In a study of eighth-grade pupils done by Yasushi Watabe for the Scientific Police Research Institute of Japan, a confirming conclusion was also drawn: it was that inter-relations between problem or delinquent children and their fathers were remarkably weaker than those of 'normal' youngsters.

But what does the word 'weaker' tell us? Only that the relationship is far from ideal: the trouble affecting some delinquents may be that their fathers are too aggressive, whereas with other delinquents it may be that their fathers were distressingly non-aggressive. In short, delinquents experience, in general, inadequate and tense emotional relationships with their fathers as well as with their mothers.

In the broadest sense any adolescent who is unsure of himself can appease his worries—or will try to—by being aggressive. Here is where one of the rare positive statements about all delinquent behaviour can be made: it is remarkably aggressive. Aggression, however, is not a simple act and it may be acted out in a variety of ways. Aggression may be verbal, it may consist of destructive acts, it may be sexual. Aggression may be directed towards one's self, towards the world, or both.

A very simple illustration of how some boys dispel their doubts about their own masculinity by extremely aggressive behaviour—stealing of cars—is contained in a report from Sweden on automobile thefts: 'Even though girls are rarely active car thieves, they nevertheless play an important part in many cases. A phrase often heard...is: "If you've got a car, you'll get a girl". At the same time one is struck by the extreme inadequacy of this category of car thieves in their dealings with girls. A great many of them cannot dance, even though they are at the "dancing age". This means they not only lack the skill to dance, but that they have no way with girls and are completely without confidence in their own manliness.'

Not all aggressive behaviour, of course, means stealing or acts
of destruction. Aggressiveness can take the form of normal and healthy attitudes towards frustrations or doubts if it is channelled constructively. The competitive student, the energetic salesman, and the brave soldier are all aggressive but highly acceptable and pleasing people to us. The juvenile delinquent, whose aggressions frighten us and hurt him, is not acceptable or pleasing. One type of aggressive behaviour has several basic causes; one of the causes is insecurity in inter-personal relationships, another is anxiety from feeling inadequate in fulfilling the goals and standards set up by powerful people in the child’s life. For a child, the most powerful people in the world are normally his parents.

A deep questioning in the child’s mind about his own value as a human being can cripple him so that he is almost unable to make any honest or lasting attachments with other people. For if his parents have not loved and accepted and admitted him, how can a child believe that someone else will? There is always the suspicion that he cannot achieve, or afford to risk, another relationship. It is this sort of fear that sometimes leads a child into anti-social behaviour. Sometimes these frustrations, in preventing a child from ever being able to achieve a trusting, give-and-take relationship with other human beings, assert themselves by mental or physical illness, more often in delinquent or criminal behaviour, according to some theories.

The need for love

Almost every professional person who has studied and tried to analyse human behaviour agrees that children who feel they are not loved or wanted can be very severely damaged by such deprivation—real or imaginary. This also applies to children who sense that their parents’ love is not really consistent and depends on too many things. If a 6-year-old is constantly told that if he is ‘good’ he will be loved, is it unreasonable of that child to feel that
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this love is a conditional thing? Feeling a lack of love, or feeling that love is a promised reward, not a genuine and steady emotion, the child may develop an overpowering fear. This fear may express itself in aggressive behaviour based on anxiety—and a long cycle begins.

We speak so glibly of 'love' and tend to use the word in so many banal ways that it is often difficult to re-experience a child's need for it. Every love relationship involves a risk and the possibility of failure. The adult who is disappointed or rejected can sometimes repair his emotions and recover. The child cannot. It must be recognized that there are some parents who do not love their children and many others who really cannot because of their own emotional disabilities and confusion. The child whose parents do not love him as a person feels betrayed or abandoned by them.

Maladjusted children and adolescents are usually those youngsters who have suffered from these feelings. The courage to love and trust others fails them. Dr. Lucien Bovet, a consultant in mental health to WHO, has written: '... all the measures, advice, detention, psychotherapy, or any other procedure applied to a delinquent have a common aim; this primary aim is to foster the growth in the delinquent of stable, secure, emotional relationships with some person who gains his confidence. By whatever paths, in fact, the delinquent arrives at delinquency, we find in the factors leading to crime a common denominator in the following vicious circle: insecurity, anxiety, aggression, guilt, and insecurity. In the same way, the common denominator of therapy is security re-discovered.' And security re-discovered often means helping the child to be able to enter into trusting and affectionate relationships. It is a long, fragile process and yet, without a capacity for affection, no contentment or adjustment will ever be possible.

Sometimes even genuine love is not enough. In the case of a family where the mother is the head of the house, the provider
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and the voice of authority, a rebellion might occur. Young boys wishing to become young men must break from this world of feminine rule, even if it means defying the mother, and assert themselves as males. When there is no man around the house on a permanent basis, this becomes difficult. The boy is under a peculiar sort of stress. It is possible that because of this stress he will try to take on attributes which will symbolize to him, and to the world, an unassailable masculinity. There are a number of activities and even possessions which symbolize clear-cut and irreproachable masculinity. For example, there is ability in combat, ownership of a car or a motorcycle, techniques in violence or sadism or even a vocabulary. There are forms of dress. One has only to think of the much-publicized American juvenile delinquent who owns a motorcycle and wears a black leather jacket and blue jeans.

In an article analysing juvenile delinquency in Poland, A. Z. Jordan has written: 'The first commandment of hooliganism enjoins the delinquent to force the submission of others but never to submit himself. A fellow who cannot hold his liquor, who gets thrashed in a fight, who becomes sentimental over a girl, or shows any emotion in any response, or who uses a "big word" in all seriousness (i.e., speaks in the conventional language of adult authority without the proper sarcasm), is said to have "chickened out". He believes in physical fitness and lives by brute force. He despises sentimentality; to him life is ideally the indulgence of instinct.' This description can include many juvenile delinquents, not just those of one country.

Adolescence is a complex period. Few adults are very sympathetic, considering that they, too, went through the same process of growing up and often failed, in less conspicuous ways, to achieve their own maturity. It is hard to remember, after so many years, the helplessness a child often feels. An Australian specialist has wisely written that adolescence '... is often a period of tur-
bulent emotion and a time when love, tolerance and imagination were never more in demand yet never harder wholly to accept’.

An English psychoanalyst, Dr. Derek Miller, has said: ‘Adolescence is a period of inadaptation. All adolescents are disturbed.’ This is a controversial opinion but, in most societies, it is accepted and understood that adolescence is the period when a youngster forms his own identity, usually by a meaningful conflict with his parents or the older generation. It has been said that adolescence is a period of healthy hostility on the part of the youngster who, confronting adult standards and traditions, is discovering himself.

The juvenile delinquent is not an exception to this. Dr. Miller has pointed out that, more than most youngsters, the delinquent has fiercer problems regarding his own identity, his anxiety is greater and his hostility is stronger. Delinquent behaviour may even provide a solution for him.

Why is this the solution? We can only be reminded that human beings respond to their problems, known and unknown, in highly original ways. One way is delinquency.

A search for identity

Nothing in this world causes as much concern to the adolescent as the question of his own identity: how he sees himself and how he feels the rest of the world sees him. He is struggling for ‘ego mastery’. An American psychoanalyst, Dr. Erik H. Erikson, has written: ‘Identity consciousness means preoccupation between the self-image or images and one’s appearance in the eyes of others. The vanity and sensitivity of adolescents belong here and also the apparent callousness to suggestions and their lack of shame in the face of criticism . . . Adolescents, at one time or another, for longer or shorter periods, and with varying intensity, suddenly decide to try and be exactly what some significant people
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do not want them to be... Young people, in extreme conditions, may, in the end, find a greater sense of identity in being withdrawn or in being delinquent than in anything else society has to offer them.'

Even a negative identity—and more than one habitual delinquent child has described himself as 'plain mean'—can be satisfying. It can also be an expression of rebellion on the part of the youngsters. Furthermore a youngster may feel it is better to have a negative self than no self at all. For a negative identity serves to push off—if not entirely eradicate—some of the doubts and confusion about himself and how the world sees him.

Whether or not we accept the viewpoint—and it is not exclusively a psychoanalytical theory—that the child's relationships with his parents may eventually result in the kind of aggressions that we have labelled as delinquency, there is little to be gained by denouncing the faulty or inadequate family.

Parents who have failed their children are often persons who have failed themselves and do not know it. In many instances, particularly in certain milieux where there is a higher degree of 'broken' homes, parents have not consciously decided to ignore or abuse their children. Sometimes they are too busy trying to make a living, sometimes they are helpless and cannot exert the right control and very often they are ignorant of what they might achieve as parents because no experience or relationship in their own childhood gives them a good example or even a measurement.

It has been said that parents in a slum area do not experience as many pleasures as easily as people in a more prosperous stratum. They often have almost nothing to share with their children except meals. But, as a psychiatrist from a hospital in New York City once said in referring to families in slum areas, 'After all, who are these parents in "bad" homes? Poor, unhappy people themselves.'

But it should not be concluded that the most deficient parents are always among those who live in wretched buildings or in
newly erected standardized housing projects for low-income groups. Juvenile delinquency appears to have increased in middle-class homes as well and these are, for the most part, richer, often calmer and more controlled. There has been a growing belief that parents of both groups have much less control or influence over their children than other generations of parents.

The inference is not that parents care less about their children or are too lazy or indifferent to give them direction and discipline. One possible reason for the growing lack of control is that many adults realize they can no longer serve as the hero models for their children. A man born forty years ago, for example, has already seen undreamed-of changes in his world; his son's future will yield even more. The father's experiences and judgement—and even his ideals—may not be as meaningful and crucial as they would be in more stable or predictable times. If children can no longer look to their parents as up-to-date models, no one knows it better than the adults.

Young people usually want and need parental models either to imitate or reject. When the parents are passive, it is impossible for the children to emulate them or rebel against them. Few children might actively complain about the increasing tolerance and permissiveness of their parents but their behaviour often reflects their own inner confusion. The possessive, domineering mother or the tyrannical father are scarcely preferable, but one of the difficulties undoubtedly affecting youngsters today is that their parents can no longer provide emotional yardsticks and ideals for a future that is more unpredictable than ever before. When there are no clear boundaries in a child's life, when the 'rules' are never defined, when neither his father nor his mother represent certain values and certain commitments to life, it becomes harder for the child to discover a true image of himself and to set limits of behaviour.

The inspector of Copenhagen's Child Welfare Directorate,
N. H. Vilien, has written: 'The parents have totally failed to offer their children and adolescents any kind of guidance suitable to their future existence. One could illustrate this by saying that adolescents are in no better position than a human being from a primitive community who suddenly finds himself transplanted into a highly industrialized society. It is easy to imagine the state of helplessness he would experience when, quite unprepared, he would be faced with the innumerable possibilities of choice.' Mr. Vilien also emphasized that children and young people must be given the opportunity to experience the feeling of being 'somebody' who counts, or of playing a 'role', of being of importance.

Regardless of his nationality or his background, a child may turn desperately to delinquency as an answer to his problems. But delinquency is not the inevitable behaviour for an unhappy child seeking some form of reassurance. The same child may relieve his own fears and anxieties through neurotic behaviour. And although neurotic behaviour and juvenile delinquency sometimes overlap, they are not identical and not synonymous.

Juvenile delinquency in any form cannot be diagnosed simply and solely as psychological maladjustment arising from family disruptions. However, this can be one of the many complex factors which influence a child.

One of the hopeful, and yet one of the puzzling, aspects of trying to understand and help the juvenile delinquent are the many theories about the forces that propel children. Not all of what the specialists say may relieve us; some theories are overlapping while other theories contradict each other. It is as though we were being led to many windows and given a choice of many views, each different and each revealing only one angle. But only by seeing the problem of delinquency from these different angles can we hope to discover what we might never have noticed.

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The teacher, the judge in a juvenile court, the anthropologist, the sociologist, the psychologist, the social worker can all lead us to different windows and ask us to look out.

The outside world

We have considered the interior forces that may shape a child so crucially at the beginning of his life, but there is also the outside world which begins to intrude upon his thoughts and feelings when he is very young. The family may be the centre of gravity for a child but he is never immune to the world around him. There are many social and environmental factors that touch upon a child’s life and leave a deep imprint.

Sociologists, for example, stress that delinquent behaviour must always be considered in the light of the social and cultural environment of the individual child. This is a point we should not forget to take into consideration.

For example, a young person who grows up in a deprived area learns certain kinds of behaviour as naturally and normally as the middle-class boy learns exactly the opposite. It has even been suggested that the child of the slums has a ‘tradition’ to follow. A middle-class child might be taught to fear poor marks in school, fighting, cursing, and being rude to his teacher. But the slum child, conversely, might fear doing well in school and being friendly with his teacher, for this would set him apart from the other children and possibly evoke their anger or ridicule. He may even have been taught at home that school is a waste of time.

The middle-class child is often taught, and put under pressure, to divert all his ambitions into getting good marks and if he has strong aggressions he will often sublimate them in achieving the goals his parents and society hold dear. The slum child, all too often, learns that the best way to express his aggressions is with his fists, for he has a completely different frame of reference.
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It cannot be assumed that all deprived areas are jungles of violence or that a child cannot survive life in this sort of neighbourhood without giving and taking many beatings. What is clearly shown in many scientific research projects is that while deprived areas are never the one and only cause for delinquency, they can provide a different set of traditions which are unfamiliar to outsiders. The values a child learns from the social structure surrounding him direct his behaviour and no matter how dangerous these values are, they almost constitute a legacy. The child may eventually replace or reject these values, but he can rarely ignore them. Many children who are exposed to values which almost encourage delinquency do not automatically become delinquents. Others prove more vulnerable.

The community is the first world a child confronts. As he grows older, he may clearly see the boundaries. The child who lives in an underprivileged neighbourhood may often resent the limits that he feels society has imposed. Because of his background and the limitations of his life, he may become aggressive because he is frustrated. 'Frustration aggressions', from the sociologist's point of view, can mean being deprived of legitimate means to achieve desired goals.

This may be illustrated through hundreds of case histories. One example could be the boy who knows he will never make enough money to buy the car he wants. It may mean the child who knows that it is impossible for him to attend college—he may not even set this up as a goal but what he resents is knowing and feeling that it is a totally unrealistic ambition. It may apply to a young Puerto Rican immigrant in New York City, a West Indian in London, an Algerian in Paris, who would like to achieve some particular personal dream and is blocked from even working towards it by a world which seems to exclude and repress him. These are frustrations that society creates and they can often be as disturbing as the frustrations that are emotionally aroused.
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by a lack of inner security. Both types of frustrations, which so often lead to an explosion, can result in behaviour that is defiant and destructive.

Anxieties of adolescence

Sociologists and anthropologists, as well as many other people, have clearly defined the difficulty which adolescents in a changing society—especially male adolescents—must face in making the transition from behaving as a child to behaving as an adult. In modern life, but depending very much on the particular culture, the child is supposed to become emancipated from his parents’ power. But the exact time, the manner and the nature of such emancipation remains increasingly uncertain and may become a source of anger or dispute within the family.

In old India, China, Japan or Ireland, for example, the authority of the parent, for better or for worse, continued until death. The end of a child’s adolescence did not mean a change in this authority. There was little conflict: parents made all the decisions during their lifetime and children abided by them.

Some primitive societies provide for the transition from childhood to adulthood by puberty rites. Once an adolescent in such a culture has undergone this ceremony he is entitled to assume the status of manhood. His life has been divided for him. Before the rite, he was a child, after it, a man. Perhaps the child remains emotionally confused but he has a far clearer idea of what is expected of him.

Today, even in societies that once specified the moment of manhood very precisely, there is no such distinct passage. The role of the adolescent is ambiguous and confused. The stem, often, of the storm and stress in growing up can be found in each culture’s definition of childhood, adulthood or manhood. In many parts of the world, the definition of manhood has become less and less
clear. The old images of a man as a warrior and protector, the sole provider of food and shelter, and the infallible father, have become blurred.

We do not always agree on what 'masculinity' means, so it is inevitable that many children, groping towards manhood, reflect our confusion. There can be many contradictions in young boys' lives. They are expected to act 'manfully' and display a number of expected virile characteristics. And yet a male adolescent who may have reached sexual maturity must deny himself any sort of outlet. He knows that any sexual indulgences on his part could possibly result in frightening consequences with his family and the disapproval of society. This is not a universal dilemma, to be sure. It varies, depending on the child's family, milieu and culture and yet it is a valid example of one problem an adolescent may often have to resolve by himself in whatever way he can.

There are many ambivalences in the daily life of the adolescent. Too often there is a confusing discrepancy between what adults instruct him to do and what the youngster himself sees them do. In one instance, he may be punished or threatened for telling a lie; at the same time he is very much aware that his parents practise small deceits themselves, and sometimes triumphantly, as in the case of evading taxes or traffic fines. To the child, therefore, it may often seem that there is no real right and wrong, only a great difference in what adults can get away with and children cannot.

Other sociologists, anthropologists and educators have traced many complex problems in human behaviour to intense industrialization and the resulting growth of big cities or urbanization. There is a frightening freedom for people who live in big cities, divorced from the traditional values and familiar standards that shaped their lives. Very often, they are anonymous and alone, cut off from the familiar smaller society from which they came.

The word 'anomie', a condition first defined by the French sociologist Emile Durkheim, means simply 'without norms' and
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refers to the breakdown in the traditional order, to the default in ‘norms’ and regulations based on past authority. It has also been interpreted as meaning the particular dilemma which occurs when people feel there ought to be guidance and it is lacking or when the individual must cope with conflicting expectations that are impossible to fulfil all at once. Very often people who move to a big city, and even those who have lived there for a long time, find themselves living in a curious limbo. Sometimes, newcomers to a city neighbourhood discover they are in the midst of a confusing, formless new culture which requires that they change radically or else stick together and risk being identified as an unwelcomed minority open to hostility or even attack. The young are particularly vulnerable to anomie and in many instances the juvenile gang is a comfort, a solution and an escape. The gang at least offers a sense of ‘belonging’ and a set of meaningful values when nothing else does.

Aside from anomie, it has been pointed out very often that an industrialized society, for all its obvious benefits, brings hazards into our lives that we often do not suspect or recognize. Sociologists have remarked very often on the type of work that absorbs years of men’s lives when their entire working day consists only of pressing buttons and pulling levers or switches. The assembly line, or even a miniature version of it, hardly offers a man a sense of joy or fulfilment in his work. He has no commitment, no sense of achievement, no pride in craftsmanship and no sense of social purpose. A farmer, a cabinet maker or a tailor need not envy him.

For a young boy who can look forward only to many years of this sort of monotony, delinquency can often serve as the best and most exciting sort of protest against a dreary and unacceptable future. The child who feels this way might not even believe that an education could prepare him for a more genuine or meaningful life. But traditional formal education has become meaningless and abstract to many pupils throughout the world.
A sociologist defines this feeling when he states: 1 ‘Now with formal learning for nearly everyone the relation between schooling and future work is at best a very indirect one, and at worst, completely incomprehensible. What do algebra, history and ancient languages have to do with labour on the assembly line, salesmanship or the duties of a housewife?’

Some children understand that schooling can develop them in many ways that will help them in their future employment but other youngsters cannot find any meaningful link.

The creation of cities may often make life more bearable for many people in some ways while depriving them in different respects. A very stark example of what may happen when people are suddenly deprived of their traditions is brought out in a report from South Africa that states: ‘An important factor in producing “criminal behaviour” is culture conflict. This discontinuity is seen in the movements of hundreds of thousands of Bantus from the veld, the native reserves, and even other parts of Africa to the cities, where a new set of physical and personal associations surround the individuals. There is a breakdown in primary controls that follows detrivalization with the introduction of cash economy, accelerated mobility, personal anonymity and leisure-time pursuits. Unaccustomed to making complex decisions, the African is seen guilty of some infractions in the maze of legal superstructure.’

When normal values and traditions break down, and cannot be so easily replaced, let alone retained, it is often the adolescents who feel the most stress. It has been said that the social problem of one generation is a psychological problem for the next. In Japan, 2 the taiyozuku are not the children of refugees or the very young. Barlay, ‘Sociological Observations on Modern Juvenile Delinquency’, in: Recht der Jugend, Darmstadt, March 1960.
Why delinquency exists

poor, they have not been physically displaced or asked to make
the drastic adjustments that must face many Africans. But
their behaviour shows how much they, too, are victims of change.
Children of the wealthy upper-class echelon, they frequently
find little meaning in life and no purpose except for their short-
lived, impulsive and often malicious pleasures. Much as their
European or American counterparts, they live for the moment.

One possible factor in their behaviour is the history of Japan
since the end of the Second World War. Here is a country that has
absorbed such a mélange of Western ideas and influences with
so much speed that the revered and stable concepts of behaviour
have been threatened and, in many families, discarded even if
not willingly. Because there has been an unusual upheaval in
Japan—and an upheaval of a very complex nature—the conse-
quences might well include the phenomena of juvenile delinquency
in a country where it was little known before. In the case of
societies undergoing modernization, it is often the rate—the
degree of acceleration—of these changes much more than the
changes themselves that must be considered.

There are many conclusions to be drawn from understanding
and appreciating the viewpoints of the specialists on the subject
of juvenile delinquency. One conclusion must always be remem-
bered: delinquency is not one type of behaviour exclusively, but
rather a range of many types. There is not one cause for it but
rather a sequence of interlocking factors in the child’s life that can
result in delinquency. Different factors sometimes can result in
the same type of delinquent behaviour; on the other hand, different
kinds of delinquent behaviour are often caused by the same factors.
Chapter three

What a community can do

When a French social worker was recently asked what he considered the most valuable attitude in working with juvenile delinquents, he replied: 'The ability to accept failure—and still go right ahead.' We should not delude ourselves that there are any short, swift or easy solutions. Delinquent behaviour is not a twenty-four hour malady that affects a child as a virus does. The preceding chapter has pointed out how complex, and how deeply set, some of the motivations towards juvenile delinquency can be. Since a child does not become delinquent on the spur of the moment but as the result of a long and intricate series of reactions, any realistic plan to help that child will not be an easy one. Any person, or any community, who hopes to change a specific delinquency problem must accept the fact that it is a long and thoughtful process, often one of discouragement and delay. It is expensive in terms of money, time and effort. It need hardly be pointed out, however, that the results of delinquency are twice as costly.

From all our knowledge of delinquents and delinquency, there is no reassuring evidence of a formula or recipe for prevention. What emerges clearly, from many studies and reports and surveys, is that delinquent behaviour must be the concern of the entire community, not just dismissed as a problem to be handled by local schools, churches, police courts or professional agencies. It should be recognized as their problem by the citizens of a community even when their own children are not remotely involved. But in many big cities in the world, the very word community is a
mockery and without true meaning. Most urban centres are not communities in any real sense of the word. Therefore, in just such an instance, a beginning must be made at the very level where delinquency occurs—on the block, in a neighbourhood, in a district. The very lack of a community, a word which implies a mutual association of interest, must be changed.

Why is it so important that the community itself should become so deeply involved in preventing and controlling delinquency? The answer is this: not even the most perceptive or skilled outsider can achieve as much as the people of a community who, together, want to improve it. There is much common sense in the axiom that the better the community is, in all ways, the less is the probability of any form of delinquency. Perhaps only the people who live in a community can honestly assess its strength, know its shortcomings and make the necessary improvements. The health needs, the housing problems, the school situation, the physical resources and the recreational facilities of any community are all local factors that can influence delinquency. These are rarely the sole causes but depending on whether they are poor or better than adequate, here are the elements that can aggravate or deter delinquent tendencies. Although it is a myth that, for example, delinquency is a direct result of slum living, it can be said that a child has a better chance of not being delinquent if his family have decent living quarters and can escape the strain and depression of living in crowded, grim rooms.

**Prevention and treatment**

A handful of people who live in the same neighbourhood can scarcely launch a successful programme of prevention. They must enlist as many private citizens as possible, of all groups and all professions, to try and obtain the broadest and most sincere support for the programme. Professionals will always be needed
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to provide sound and scientific help but no programme of prevention can succeed if it is only inspired and directed by them. The impetus must come from the community and it can only come when delinquency represents a problem that matters very much to many people. Not only adults should be included, but young people, even delinquents themselves, in every way possible, at every step.

It is fatuous to advise any community interested in delinquency to be 'practical' about a programme of prevention. Obviously people intend to be practical. Sometimes an excess of emotion prevents them. A sentimental, pseudo-maternal attitude can be just as defeating as a harsh and punitive reaction. Delinquents, after all, should not be regarded as a strange and separate species of mankind. Even the most incorrigible delinquent cannot be delinquent every minute of the day: there are moments when he eats and talks and thinks and sleeps like any boy of his age. If we can see delinquents calmly and with a certain objective detachment, as young human beings who need help (no matter how much they resist or discourage that help), then a promising posture has been achieved.

Unfortunately, the most honest and earnest attempts to curtail delinquency may fail without two essentials: funds and facts. Any operation should have as its foundation a validated theoretical frame of reference about the causal factors of delinquency. The community should have available facts on the local youth situation and there must be individual facts on the individual child who shows a tendency towards delinquency or who has already broken a law.

Lacking these three separate sets of facts and operating on a tiny budget, community efforts at delinquency control and prevention might falter. Such measures as curfews, restricting movie attendance or closing a dance-hall, are irrelevant to the real problem and, for the most part, accomplish little.
Plunging ahead with a plan—any plan just for the sake of motion—can be a clumsy beginning. A community must know its own weaknesses and characteristics before it hopes to be able to understand the delinquent. The community must create its own programmes based on its own problems, not faithfully copy someone else's blueprints. Any plan of action must have reasonable, practical objectives. The first step is acknowledging that facts, many different kinds of facts, are needed and then obtaining them. The second step is the realization that a strong programme of public understanding and support does not develop incidentally or accidentally. Effective community education can only come through systematic study, planning and organization of all, or a major part, of the community members.

There is no one act of prevention but there are many changes that a community can achieve which might result in prevention. In speaking of prevention—an attractive word but an elusive one—there are, basically, two major possibilities. One is to attempt to deal with all particular environmental conditions that are believed to contribute to delinquency, and the second possibility is to attempt to provide specific preventive services to individuals or groups of children, such as psychiatric treatment, tutoring or casework. It has been claimed that delinquency might be reduced by improving all aspects of life that bear on the personality development of children and by extending and improving all services provided to children.

We know that there are many forces which crucially affect the growth, the development and the ultimate behaviour of the child. Among these are the home, the school, the church and church organizations, health and welfare groups and recreation organizations for young people.
What a community can do

The role of the schools

One of the most crucial forces, if we consider only the number of years during which it exerts an influence over the child, is the school. The school cannot solve the problem of delinquency alone or even attempt to prevent it single-handed. However, its role should always be considered crucial in a well-planned community programme. Our expectations of what a school can accomplish with children should be based on mature reasoning, not wishful fantasies. Exactly how much can be accomplished within a classroom often depends, too, on the kind of support a community chooses to provide.

It has been stated that children entering school between 5 and 7 years of age provide the greatest opportunity for early prevention of delinquency. But even at later ages they can be reached and often helped. The teacher, who is a trained observer, is in a position to observe and evaluate the child. Presumably, after seeing the child for a long period of time, the teacher can detect evidence or incipient signs of personal or social problems that are affecting the child and, ideally, offer the pupil some form of help and relief. The help may come from various sources and when it does, it is always to be hoped that the school will start a cumulative record on the particular pupil that can always be referred to if needed in the future.

Together with the home, the school provides the basic learning experience for all children. Admittedly the school cannot ever completely compensate for the lack of a decent home or wise and loving parents. But it can do much to make the child aware of his own basic values and teach him how to develop them. Through his attendance at a good school it is hoped that a youngster will develop into a resourceful and capable being.

This is precisely what does not happen in the case of the juvenile delinquent. The records of many schools show, to the point of
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monotony, that these youngsters establish habits of failure and inferiority in their school years. Therefore, the question that must concern the community and the school is: why do children fail? It is by no means a simple question to answer. The reasons for a child's failure are not always easily revealed and they will vary with each pupil. The classroom teacher often faces real limitations in trying to discover them. He is not always able to visit the child's home, he is not a psychologist, a health specialist or a case worker. And, above all, he has an obligation to all his pupils, not just the conspicuously poor ones, and his time is limited.

In these circumstances, both the community and the school should realize that, ideally, specialized professional personnel are needed to reinforce and augment the assistance a teacher can give to a pupil. Through the timely and skilful use of auxiliary services, the school can often help a child from becoming a failure. The visiting teacher who can establish a close contact with a child's parents, the school social worker, the school adjustment counsellor or the psychiatric social worker are all trained to evaluate and relieve the pressures that often contribute to a child's defeat in the classroom.

In one country, a Commissioner of Education has outlined a broad four-point programme through which many schools can help meet the problems of juvenile offenders:

1. Maintain classes of small size so that teachers can reach the pupils as individuals.
2. Train and procure teachers who have demonstrated their abilities to work constructively with children.
3. Provide specialized staff members to help the teacher in meeting special problems within the school and make available clinical services (including medical, psychological and social services) for those children needing care beyond the scope of the school's responsibility.

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4. Gain support of parents and unify the efforts of parents and school personnel in planning and supporting school programmes that aim to meet the delinquency problem.

And yet, admirable as these suggestions are, there is hardly a headmaster or school inspector who will find them remarkably original. They do not need to be reminded that overcrowded classrooms often provide a handicap to both the teacher and the pupils. Few schools would refuse the services of nurse, a social worker or a psychologist if their budget permitted it. Pointing out the weaknesses of the schools rarely tells us how to cure them. Money is the needed commodity and, in many cities of the world, the very lack of classrooms, books and desks—as well as trained teachers—creates problems of the utmost urgency.

But the four-point programme proposed by this one Commissioner of Education can be a valid reminder of what to aim for. It is not enough for one city or one community to feel satisfied because there is an ample number of primary or secondary schools. The very existence of school buildings and an adequate number of teachers means little. The only criterion is the progress of the pupils.

*A wider range of learning*

Many educators have expressed the opinion that far too many schools adhere too rigidly to a curriculum that has no significance or value for some pupils. After all, they have pointed out, good schools begin with youngsters who are already quite different from each other and enable each to develop according to his talents. The school programme which provides only a narrow, one-track academic curriculum that squeezes out everyone but the students aiming for higher education is denying equal opportunity to all youngsters by such exclusive focus on traditional academic objectives and prestige.

In a report issued by the United Nations Consultative Group
'The values a child learns from the social structure surrounding him direct his behaviour... they almost constitute a legacy.'

*Photo Dominique Roger*
'Depending on the nature of the offence, a delinquent may be put in custody of a detention centre until his hearing in court comes up. Many detention centres... resemble gaols.'

Photo Unesco / David Seymour
Vast differences exist not only between nations but often there are extreme variations between courts in the same country or province.

Photo USIS
‘It is not enough for the community to hope to find them jobs—any jobs—just to keep them out of trouble.’

Photo Unesco / David Seymour
What a community can do

on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, it is stated: 'In view of the wide range of individual capacities, interests and talents found in the school population, school personnel need to promote a more comprehensive and varied school offering that provides more adequately for differential needs of the learners and of society.'

Pupils should be encouraged to work for their own potential rather than continually be forced to compete with the brightest child in class. Schools must differ in order to serve different needs, abilities and talents, and any effective school curriculum must be planned to fit the general and special social and economic needs of the local school community.

If we agree that the child who might become a good mechanic is not to be considered a human being inferior to the child with an interest in medicine then we must also acknowledge that a single school should accommodate and benefit both of them. Pouring all students into a single academic mould causes many children who might be vulnerable to delinquency to come a good deal closer to it. What can, and should be, considered by the authorities and the community is the establishment of different types of school experiences for children who cannot benefit by a standard academic education or those children who, for any number of reasons, cannot hold their own in the regular classroom.

Some large cities have attempted to diminish their delinquency problems, among others, by establishing separate vocational or technical high schools, and through work-study programmes. The programmes of these schools are realistically connected both to the employment situation and to the requirements of the apprentice system in various trades. In his book Slums and Suburbs, Dr. James B. Conant writes among his observations on educational problems in America: 'In my view, there should be a school which offers significant vocational programmes for boys within easy reach of every family in the city. Ideally these schools should be
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so located that one or more should be in the area where demand for practical courses is at the highest.

'An excellent example of a successful location of a new vocational high school is the Dunbar Vocational High School in Chicago. Located in a bad slum area now under redevelopment, this school and its programme are especially tailored to the vocational aims of the students. Hardly a window has been broken since Dunbar was first opened (and vandalism in schools is a major problem in many slum areas). I discovered in the course of a visit there that almost all the pupils were Negroes. They were learning trades as diverse as shoe repairing, bricklaying, carpentry, cabinet making, auto mechanics, and airplane mechanics. Motivation is good and the students take obvious pride in their work. The academic side of the programme is conducted on a high level—high enough so that if a graduate decides he wishes to attend college he may do so.'

Every community will not need or be able to establish a vocational high school. But there are other possibilities. Some schools have adopted the system of an optional period during the week: there is a class in vocational training for those who elect it, other pupils can study foreign languages or take remedial reading courses. In other places, schools and local industries have developed co-operative work-study programmes for selected youngsters.

In trying to relate the problems of delinquents with their problems at school, other educators have asserted that an inability to read is frequently a strong factor in their failure. Certainly the child who cannot read adequately will only be confronted with such a rapid succession of tensions and frustrations in any classroom that it is not surprising if school becomes a place to be feared or despised. Vandalism of school property is a protest; escape is the only solution. Such a pupil may resort to truancy or drop out when he reaches the legal age. All too often his school does not, or cannot, attempt to discover why he was never able
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to read. Sometimes it may be due to poor eyesight, more often it is a result of a rare exposure to any reading matter at all outside the classroom or a combination of emotionalized attitudes towards reading.

If a teacher cannot determine the reasons—and these reasons may often be found in his home—then a visiting teacher or school counsellor may need to be brought in. No answer will be found without checking, very completely, the child’s background, his health, his intelligence and his own personal problems. If the school curriculum is a realistic one, there will be remedial help available but first the child must want to improve. If a pupil has been humiliated too often, he may never make the necessary effort. The school that expels a child, or fails him year after year, is more or less urging that student to get out when he is least prepared to build his own life. If the school must reject a pupil, then every effort should be made to find what other help can be offered to that child by other community agencies and organizations.

Policies of promotion, grading, discipline and handling truancy often need to be drastically revised. Teachers should also be encouraged to take child study courses; the community should be equally encouraged to acquaint the teacher with any community agencies, organizations and resources that might be of use in solving problems at the classroom level.

But it must be pointed out that in many cities of the world the problem of juvenile delinquency and the role of the school is eclipsed by more desperate considerations. It is not always a question of improving schools for some countries, but of creating them. One can hardly suggest to a teacher in Saigon or Karachi or Lomé that every school needs a school worker when they are faced with a drastic shortage of textbooks. There can only be a bitter humour in the suggestions that a teacher should know a child’s emotional problems when many teachers in Asia and Africa
face a classroom each morning knowing that some children are sick and ill-fed.

And yet, even acknowledging the urgent need for schools and teachers in more than half the countries of the world, the ultimate goal of any nation—privileged or poor—should not be just to erase these shortages. In many countries struggling to reduce the rate of illiteracy, there exist schools that are barely effective. It is sufficiently tragic that each year more than three million children are deprived of the right to education but it is no less depressing to learn that many schools fail to make their pupils feel that education is a personal and interesting experience. These schools work hard but the return from their work, if not the quality, is inadequate. While there are many children of the world who covet an education, it can hardly be denied that there is also an imposing number who want to escape it. And a high degree of these children who dread school become involved in some expression of delinquency.

In Turkey the delinquency rate is relatively low compared with more economically developed countries. There is statistical evidence that it will increase as the country’s economic development progresses. In this instance the schools could do much to prevent the spiralling of delinquency if they carefully appraise their effectiveness now. A Turkish psychologist1 has pointed out that a high percentage of secondary school pupils fail each year (although they are permitted to take the examinations again before the failure is irrevocable).

A report on juvenile delinquency published in Israel2 confirms the tendency of the juvenile delinquent to drop out of school or to attend it irregularly. In a Commission’s report3 it was stated

1. Ibrahim Yurt, Test ve Arastirma Buroso, Ankara.
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that four different sets of factors are responsible for irregular school attendance. The first reason was defects in the educational set-up (overcrowded classes, studying in two shifts, ill-adapted curricula). The second reason was personality factors in the child itself (discrepancy between age and grade of the pupil, psychological disturbances, mental retardation). Personality factors in the parents, such as lack of understanding and a hostile attitude towards the school, lack of control over the child, were cited as the third reason. The final reason given was factors in the wider environment such as the strong contrast between the economic and cultural status at home and the numerous stimuli, such as the cinema, offered by the external environment.

Any school will make its maximum contribution to delinquency prevention and control by becoming a better school. It cannot achieve this alone. Ideally the school should have some link with the health, welfare and recreation agencies that exist in a community. For even if a teacher is aware that a child is ill or needs glasses, she cannot provide medicine and a pair of glasses if the family fails to do so. If a teacher is aware that a child is disturbed or damaged by emotional problems, she can only recommend a source of help. If a youngster has no place to go and nothing to do except loiter on a street corner, the most concerned and conscientious teacher cannot create a better world for him after he leaves the class without help from the outside.

When no health, welfare or recreation agencies exist in a community, the school can hardly duplicate their services. At best, it can point out and articulate the need for them to a local or national government. And, hopefully, the school can try to stimulate the parents of the pupils and the community as a whole into becoming more aware of these needs even if they themselves cannot fulfil them.
Help for the family

Many of the disturbances seen in delinquent children stem from within the changing patterns of family life which, in turn, are only reflections of deeper shiftings in society. The problem of making a general improvement in family life appears so vast and intangible at first that many people seem confused as to what to do about it. As we want all children to be healthy, so we equally desire that their parents be kind, mature and loving. It is rarely the reality. Our best hope, in terms of controlling delinquency, is to consider two steps. The first is to try to aid parents in becoming wiser and more effective beings themselves; the second is to try to develop in young people the habits, skills, understandings and attitudes that will make them better parents for the next generation. This can partially be accomplished by the school, the church, and youth organizations working together.

Delinquents, for a variety of reasons, frequently do not have an accepting or reassuring relationship with their parents. They can rarely discuss any problems with an older member of the household. They are not encouraged to share their own lives or emotions with their families and this, in itself, is a damaging restriction for a child. Any education programme or any counselling that the community makes available to parents, providing it is wisely presented, can often be a turning point.

Many things can be meant by parent education. It is not always helpful to tell a mother outright to be a better mother but, sometimes, by relieving her of economic or health worries she is freer to love and consider her children. It can be said, in very broad terms, that parent education involves not only awareness of the behaviour of children but an awareness and understanding of the total processes of homemaking and family living and of self.

Most parents are understandably shocked and disturbed when
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confronted with an offence committed by one of their children. It may be impossible for them to acknowledge, even privately, that the child's anti-social behaviour can possibly be due to mistakes they have made in educating or raising the youngster concerned. Sometimes they are genuinely puzzled by the child's acts and, in other cases, there are frantic attempts to place the blame elsewhere.

G. Mik, a psychiatrist in Groningen, Netherlands, points out that parents may often have aggressive and defensive feelings when approached by authorities or professional youth workers because of their children's acts. He wrote:¹ 'A moralist approach by a probation officer may at first seem imposing and successful, but at bottom it does not resolve the problems, and except in special cases it creates only superficial relations and temporary solutions. Once a relationship has been established and the parents' confidence has been gained, a period of laborious and careful work commences. The parents must learn to see that their delinquent children are not good-for-nothing, not simply bad, but children with problems and a great inner need. This is often difficult, for the admission of it means taking part of the responsibility for this need upon themselves. They must also learn to see that punishment is simply meaningless and should realize that their child's sense of desolation can only be deepened by it (which does not mean of course that the children should never be punished or that in some cases measures of control are not necessary).'

In many instances, the parents of the children most exposed to delinquency have very little concept of what it means to be a member of a community and belong to an organization. They may react suspiciously or scornfully to any invitation or resent the visit of an outsider wishing to advise them on their family problems. Some studies have pointed out that the lower a person's

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income, status and education, the less likely is their membership in any community group. Very often, hostility can be overcome if the parents in a lower-class neighbourhood are contacted, not with a reproachful or condescending attitude by others, but with an invitation to contribute something to the life of the community. The larger the number of adults from all backgrounds that one community can interest in belonging to some type of stable and enduring organization—either church, fraternal service, recreational, patriotic or political—the easier it will be to reach them as parents and possibly direct them. When the community is more integrated, when people feel they share projects and problems, there is often a chance that children are among the first to benefit.

Any projects or outings—even the most minor ones—that involve both parents and children do much to strengthen the family and the community.

Some city communities have established neighbourhood centres where informal educational activities are conducted. These activities include parent discussion groups. Through these neighbourhood centres, people of all backgrounds who have a natural ability for different kinds of leadership can be found and involved in committee and recreational work.

The basic premiss of any education programme is that citizens should be educated to help themselves.

Whether a community decides to place the strongest emphasis on changing environmental conditions believed to be conducive to delinquency (poor housing or overcrowded schools) or in providing specific services for children in order to develop healthier personalities, there are no predictable rewards unless a truly co-operative programme is worked out.

Consider the example of New York State where it became apparent that the removal of certain slum areas could accomplish very little in preventing delinquency just by shifting families to
'There should be a school which offers significant vocational programmes for boys within easy reach of every family in the city.'

Photo Unesco / P. Almasy
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bigger, brighter and nicer quarters. Unless the families from the slum areas are prepared and educated to live in their new homes, there may be no change for the better. And when the people who are already residents of the neighbourhood where newcomers arrive are not prepared to receive and welcome them, there can be misunderstandings and conflicts. This is particularly true when a racial minority moves into public housing. We often forget that people must sometimes be taught how to take advantage of changes in their lives.

Little scientific data exists to show exactly what preventive procedures have been effective. If we think of prevention as referring ‘both to the forestalling of delinquent behaviour and also to the reduction in its frequency and seriousness’ then there are only meagre signals to guide us in certain directions. The very concept of delinquency prevention is still a vague, experimental one.

A report issued by the United Nations Consultative Group on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders emphasizes: ‘It would be pointless to think of applying a programme of prevention without first making sure that: the venture will receive continuing financial support; there is sufficient trained personnel; means are available for checking the efficacy of the action; the public is informed of the reasons for the action, with a view to enlisting the co-operation of the community as a whole.’

The opportunity exists for a community to make sure that some type of evaluation procedure is available in any preventive programme. It usually means additional expense, for careful and scientific records cannot be kept on a casual basis by volunteers but, without these records, it cannot be ascertained how powerful a preventive plan of action is. The major reason why we are unable to prevent delinquency more assertively is that we are not sure, even now, of how to predict which children will become delinquents and why. For the last ten years, increasing attention
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has been paid to many international studies which have attempted to find a predictive instrument. The detection of future delinquents would greatly simplify the problem of prevention. At this point we can only surmise that certain factors are aligned with delinquency, and may even aggravate it, but they are not sole, exclusive causes.

Delinquency can never be prevented very effectively without much more knowledge of its causes and a more accurate measurement of the success of various forms of treatment. It now seems internationally recognized that fresh and imaginative research in this field is as essential as in the fields of science and technology.

*Asking why it happened*

Where possible, the research that is conducted and the ameliorative projects devised should provide means for their evaluation that are as objective as possible. Scientific evidence, where possible, should be compelling, but it is not if the criteria and methods for assessment, measurement and evaluation are not clear and rigorous. The research work of individuals and institutes should be continuously verified by current evidence.

When habits of delinquency are formed, it demands all our understanding, support and patience to change them. As in the case of prevention, the control and the rehabilitation of a juvenile delinquent often begins with the community.

In highly industrialized countries, many communities have a number of services established for the benefit of all children and all youth. There are schools, churches, health centres and clinics, family service agencies, social services, playground and recreational facilities. In some countries, notably the prosperous ones, there may be specialized resources where 'problem' youngsters can be helped. These would include juvenile courts and their
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probation services, juvenile police divisions, child guidance clinics, detention centres, special classes for the mentally retarded, counselling services, visiting teachers and group therapy services. In larger cities and metropolitan areas there may be many separate agencies and organizations to aid children and adolescents, delinquent and non-delinquent. In smaller communities and rural areas, these services may simply mean a minister, priest or rabbi, a doctor, a judge and policemen.

These existing facilities are rarely the result of any prior overall community planning and forethought. All too often, they operate as separate little islands, weakening their value by the very distances between them. It is one of the most urgent responsibilities of any community programme that attempts to prevent, let alone control, delinquency to know what these resources are, how they function, how they can be improved, when needed and in what manner they can most efficiently work together. It is defeating, for example, for a social caseworker to try to help a delinquent when his teacher, the policeman on the corner and the people in the neighbourhood counteract her efforts, when the poverty of the family compounds the problem, and when she cannot procure for the child the treatment he may need. There should be a continuity and a high degree of co-ordination among the services offered by a community, a close co-operation between private and government agencies if their existence is to make sense. No hope exists for the delinquent unless guidance personnel, psychologists, psychiatrists and psychiatric social workers are easily and quickly accessible to the individual child through the school and the community. This sounds like an utopian goal but it is not so often the expense that deters us as the lack of a clear realization of what is needed, what is available, how to obtain it.
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**Punishment or probation**

Depending on the nature of the offence, a delinquent is often put in custody of a detention centre until his hearing in court comes up. This may be days or weeks. Many detention centres begin the punishment, for they resemble gaols and the 'detained' are given an all too clear understanding of prison life. Other juvenile delinquents throughout the world are even confined in a local gaol and their cases are reviewed in the same courtroom where criminals stand and are sentenced. The exceptionally lucky delinquent may be referred to a court which has a number of services at its disposal: a decent and well-staffed detention centre, clinical resources for child study, a highly-qualified professional probation staff and an effective liaison with other child welfare agencies. But it is a question of contrasts. Vast differences exist not only between nations but often there are extreme variations between courts in the same country or province.

The establishment of special juvenile courts with trained judges and special legislation and practices is encouraging; many experiences and research studies have proved the value of handling the juvenile delinquent in special courts and special institutions. In the last fifty years probation and juvenile courts have spread to many European countries, and have come to be among the most important measures of treatment and rehabilitation of the juvenile delinquent. Probation has been defined as 'a method of dealing with specially selected offenders... it consists of the conditional suspension of punishment while the offender is placed under personal supervision and is given individual guidance and “treatment”.'

Just exactly what constitutes 'the personal supervision and guidance and treatment' varies as much as the definition of a juvenile delinquent in each country.

Probationary supervision, in one form or another, has been
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widely adopted in many countries. Reports seem to indicate that, although no clear results can be measured statistically, it is an effective measure in terms of prevention and control.

One of the values of probation is that it advocates re-educating the delinquent rather than punishing him. It implies that in the opinion of a magistrate, or some other judicial authority concerned, no future delinquent behaviour is to be expected if preventive supervision is provided.

From a United Nations report, 'The Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency in Selected European Countries', we learn that many countries which are short of funds must depend on volunteer workers as probation officers, with varying results.

The report from Greece, where the service is run entirely by volunteers who have organized semi-official children’s aid societies, indicates that the probation system, although not yet applied by the courts, has done much. Lack of funds has had one curiously good effect. It is stated that as probation officers usually have no facilities for receiving people in their offices, they make regular visits to the probationer’s home. As a result, these officers not only are in close touch with the child but with families and the neighbourhood. Personal and frequent communication, and the influence of probation officers, is deemed of the greatest importance.

Any probation staff usually has two main tasks. First, it must gather together and carefully evaluate all relevant information concerning the young offender and his background, for the court needs this information to try to understand the meaning of the child’s conduct. Second, probation workers must be able to offer guidance and supervision during the probationary period, using whatever treatment techniques they, and the community, can offer. Since the judge of a juvenile court is dependent on the probation worker for providing adequate data on the delinquent and carrying out a treatment programme, it does not seem an exaggeration to say that these people must be specially qualified.
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In most cases it is the judge himself who determines how long the probation period should be. Dr. Derek Miller, in pointing out the flaws in the probation system, writes: ‘If a probation officer is to help a human being become more mature, the time this takes cannot be determined by the courts.’ In his opinion, it is extremely unlikely that a decision by a magistrate that a boy or girl should have a given term of probation can possibly have a rational basis for the individual. Perhaps even the wisest judge cannot predict whether five weeks, five months of five years is the right and reasonable amount of time for a youngster to be put on probation.

In some countries, mainly the Scandinavian ones, administrative bodies, such as a child welfare board, have assumed, in place of the juvenile or adult courts, the functions of sentencing and treatment. The application of probation by juvenile courts or these administrative bodies differs so sharply from country to country that no definite conclusions can be drawn on which method is the most beneficial.

What the community can do when it is interested in a delinquency programme is to find out how juvenile delinquents are treated in court, which courts receive them, how qualified are the probation officers and what agencies exist to help. When a probation worker is overworked it may be taken for granted that the youngsters who most need his attention will be deprived of a very crucial source of help. It has been suggested that no single probation officer be assigned to more than fifty youngsters in one year.

In its conclusions, the United Nations report mentioned previously points out that ‘there seems to be no doubt that the generally satisfactory probationary supervision requires professional officers. Only persons endowed with the necessary personal qualifications and training, both theoretical and practical, can give this important preventive measure the necessary stability and effectiveness.’
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But the same report acknowledges the value of volunteers, not so much as probation officers, but as people who can assist the latter by providing a crucial link with the life of the community through voluntary organizations and youth clubs. There is still much scope for the voluntary worker, but it is more hopeful when a trained and more experienced person assumes the role of a probation worker.

In some countries probation services include supervision of the youngster after release from an institution; this is termed ‘after-care’ or ‘parole’.

The police

Sometimes possible methods of prevention, control and even rehabilitation tend to overlap—an effective technique can often touch on all three aspects of delinquency. This is true, for example, when we consider the functions of the police. Working with juveniles is an important aspect of police work but it is only one small part of a complex, broader job. Police chiefs have often been heard to protest that many youth workers act and talk as though the police had no duties or responsibilities except to juveniles. And yet the importance of the police in a community with delinquency can hardly be over-stated since they often represent the first official contact between the young offender and the law. The policeman or juvenile officer is the one who must frequently decide whether to let the child off with a reprimand or to refer him to a juvenile court or some other agency set up to deal with such children. The police also supervise the areas where youth gather to play—public dance-halls, movie houses, public parks, street corners. How much the policeman understands about delinquency can clearly be measured in his attitude towards them, which should be neither too vengeful nor, of course, too nonchalant.

Normally, a community has little control over the calibre of a
single policeman assigned to it; at best, it can only demand more policemen if the district is particularly dangerous. But it is not entirely out of the question for a citizens' committee to petition for a policeman who has been especially trained to work with juveniles, or the creation of a juvenile aid bureau in the police department.

In other countries the evolution of the work of the police has given rise to more definite forms of action of a preventive nature. In Denmark, the Copenhagen police runs four leisure-time clubs for boys in the 10 to 16 age group who come from poor quarters of the city and have no adequate supervision in their homes. The police have also organized and maintained a club for young people over 18 years of age. All these clubs are devoted to sports and gymnastics.

In Liverpool, since 1949, there has been developed a city police programme known as the Liverpool City Police Juvenile Liaison Scheme. Its object is to deal with youngsters under 17 years of age who manifest some behaviour disorders or who have already committed petty offences. The children are referred to the Juvenile Liaison Officer through normal police channels. The police officials try, after an interview with a child, to secure the co-operation of the individual family and school. Then they often contact appropriate statutory and voluntary services such as youth clubs, probation officers, school welfare organizations, family service units, in order to provide suitable help and reinforcement.

The liaison officer visits the child and parents frequently. He tries to advise and assist them in various ways. What is most significant about the Liverpool plan is that it improves the relations between the police and the public in general. Police officers are presented not merely as formidable law-enforcing agents, but in the rather rare role of protectors of children and advisers to parents. It is claimed that this special operation was a contri-
buting factor in diminishing the figures of juvenile delinquency in Liverpool, a city with the unhappy distinction of once having the highest delinquency rate in England.

Another police training programme that concentrates not only on deterring delinquency but coping with it and helping the delinquent personally, is provided by the Delinquency Control Institutes at the University of Southern California, United States of America. These institutes are supported by grants from a variety of organizations interested in juveniles and in public welfare. Attendance at these institutes is on a free scholarship basis and police officers from any part of the United States can apply. The training programme lasts twelve weeks and the course provides the officers with an excellent background for work with children in their own community. They return to their jobs with an increased ability to understand the reasons behind delinquent behaviour, to use the various treatment agencies most effectively, to participate in a community-wide programme of delinquency prevention, to understand the laws with which they must work, to carry on a positive public relations programme and to work for a better public safety record.

Police officers who regard juvenile delinquents, or children disposed towards delinquent behaviour, as future criminal types and who feel that the juvenile court, the probation office and the child guidance clinic are just foolish ways of coddling the delinquent are often a block to more effective prevention and control of delinquency. Unless their attitudes are overcome—and this is never an easy achievement—the police can sometimes create more problems than they are able to solve in the handling of young offenders. This is never more true than when the delinquents are handled roughly and with a vindictive approach.

Very often a separate division or bureau in the police department, specially for juvenile aid, can accomplish much. A juvenile aid bureau generally handles all the cases of youngsters who
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are picked up either by the regular police force or by a juvenile squad. The bureau staff interviews the youngster and complainant, notifies the child's family, makes the required arrangements for detention whenever necessary, files the required legal forms for the juvenile court, maintains contact with the child's school or with other social agencies, such as the probation offices or community clinic.

The staff may also carry on research concerning any local youth problems; they can also assume a good share of the responsibility for enforcing child labour laws, supervising children in street trades and checking on those local danger spots which often foster delinquent behaviour. This is not to suggest that if a policeman is posted in a dance-hall, for example, there will never be delinquency in the neighbourhood. The presence of an officer can only ensure that it won't happen then on that particular spot. But a perceptive policeman can often warn or advise the community about these places and help to find a solution. As we have pointed out earlier, closing a dance-hall or limiting attendance at the cinema will not discourage a delinquent for very long; if one area is forbidden he is resourceful enough to find another.

When a community faces the problem of controlling or preventing juvenile delinquency, it must consider very carefully what can realistically be offered the young persons it hopes to help. Very often, the community can offer little or nothing.

Here is an example that illustrates such a situation. If there are a number of boys who have left school in one particular neighbourhood with a high incidence of delinquency most people would hope that they would find jobs instead of loitering on street corners. But it is not enough for the community to hope to find them jobs—any jobs—just to keep them out of trouble. What has to be done, in many cases, is to make youngsters who are vulnerable to delinquent behaviour more employable in addition to
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creating new employment opportunities for them and telling them of existing ones.

It is not enough to help such a youngster to secure any job because it is unlikely that he will change, despite a weekly pay check. And there is always a strong possibility that his employer will find him lacking, the job may bore him, the salary may be too small and the future too narrow.

The real world of work

Lower-class youngsters are often at a particular disadvantage in their lack of vocational awareness or contacts, or concepts of jobs. The boy whose father has a menial job is seldom in a position to get advice or parental guidance and information about what he might do to advance in the world.

The teenager lacking a high school diploma and without training or any idea of a suitable and stimulating vocation faces the prospect of employment in a dreary and hopeless mood. In an American foundation’s report on school drop-outs and the employment of youth, it was stated that 75 per cent of all youngsters in slum areas of large cities in the United States of America enter the labour market without a high school diploma. What is almost predictable is that very few of these youngsters, with their limited education and training, can ever hope to advance very far beyond the level of the first job.

One possible remedy, especially in poorer neighbourhoods, is a community-organized Youth Jobs Centre, the function of which would be to help the young person enter the world of work. Such a centre could offer guidance and counselling, placement service and help re-direct the youngster to a training programme. The aim should be to make the boy more employable by improving his social, academic and job skills.

Many youngsters who are especially vulnerable to delinquent
behaviour will show very little eagerness or curiosity about their future vocations. They are often inclined to be cynical. It has been suggested that they should be able to get to know adult people who might conceivably serve as models. These might include a fireman, a businessman, a builder or anyone who could inspire the slightest flicker of interest or respect because of his career.

It is not enough simply to show a youngster the bridge he can cross. He must be led and assured that the other side is indeed better. This is true of both the pre-delinquent youngster and the confirmed delinquent. The Youth Jobs Centre, in making the youngster more employable, will need the help of many other people and services. Their most challenging job is to try and break the self-defeating patterns that characterize many adolescents who, despairing of success, seem to dwell on failure and rejection. For failure, at least, is familiar to them.

**Individual treatment for the troubled**

In highly developed countries the community that attempts to cope with the individual problems of the delinquent without having the resources of a child guidance clinic close at hand places some severe, perhaps insuperable, limitations on its programmes. The work of the child guidance clinic is related to the study, diagnosis and treatment of troubled children. The clinic’s general objective is to study the mental, emotional, physical and social needs of disturbed children in an effort to define the factors—personal and environmental—that are causing the child’s difficulties.

Children can be referred to such a clinic by their school, a court, a parent, or a social worker. The staff of the clinic—expert in the fields of psychiatry, psychology and social work—can perform several important functions. It should determine the nature of
the child's difficulty and interpret the situation to those who will co-operate in the treatment programme; it should refer children after diagnosis and study to other community sources of aid; it should furnish psychiatric treatment, or therapy; it should provide consultation service to other community agencies and it should disseminate information concerning the early recognition of symptoms of personality difficulties which may lead to delinquent behaviour. Ideally the basic staff of such a clinic includes a psychiatrist, a psychologist and a psychiatric social worker.

Many specialists on the subject, in recommending the existence of a child guidance clinic, reaffirm the importance of the chief function that such a clinic can perform: the case study of the delinquent, or predelinquent child. The case study method is a dynamic and fluid approach to understanding the unique behaviour of a particular person. This method attempts to take into account all the inner and outer, past and present forces that may have a bearing on the child's maladapted behaviour. A case study is more than a collection of facts on a given individual; it is more than a case history.

In a systematic community programme, case studies can probably be made on three categories of offenders: (a) the children who come within the orbit of the court authorities and who represent officially-handled cases; (b) the youngsters who are in the hands of various agencies dealing with the problems of young people; (c) those children who show signs of potential delinquency or who are clearly surrounded by environmental or social factors that threaten their development and general welfare.

All case studies involve an elaborate inquiry into the home and family of the delinquent but through the case study approach it is hoped to uncover the numerous factors which relate significantly to misbehaviour and which can finally be synthetized and analysed within a scientifically supported frame of reference.

On the basis of such case studies, an hypothesis as to the factors
leading to delinquency is formulated. This may, in turn, permit the planning of individual treatment.

In helping the delinquent, it is not enough to identify him as such and administer quick first-aid treatment hoping to divert or distract him from his old habits. We must first ask why he behaves as he does and then be prepared to offer the child more satisfactory alternatives.

To summarize: where there is a strong will to help the delinquent and when this is tied firmly to a sound knowledge of the meaning and implications of the delinquent act, there will emerge a promising pattern for delinquency control and prevention.

And it is of vital importance—if the measures taken are to have a general preventive effect—that the group of human beings concerned feel themselves identified in an important personal engagement.
New outlooks

Even more than in the past, many well-meaning people speak sorrowfully of the existence of juvenile delinquency. There is nothing juvenile about it, they complain, and furthermore it is not to be countenanced. The suggestion that delinquency also has some useful aspects rather shocks them. But it is worth considering what the positive aspects of juvenile delinquency may be. In a World Health Organization publication, *Trends in Juvenile Delinquency*, Dr. T. C. N. Gibben writes:

‘There is a widespread view that a “good” and “healthy” society should not have any delinquency. No doubt this is ideal; but so long as parents are as unstable and the young as experimental, as they are, it is questionable whether the elimination of delinquency, even if it were possible, is really desirable. There is much to indicate that delinquency is a disorder with a comparatively good prognosis and may represent a valuable safety valve.’ The author also points to a study made among children admitted to an institution in England. It revealed that the delinquents usually recovered satisfactorily, but the neurotic children remained neurotic some years after. And Dr. Gibben writes ‘from the wider aspects of mental health, it can be argued whether the elimination of delinquency in the present state of society would not generate more intractable disorders’.

Dr. Lucien Bovet\(^1\) emphasizes that the term juvenile delinquent

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includes many varied and dissimilar types. He has also stressed that a great number of juveniles, classed as delinquents by the law, do not in fact show any very different psychological traits from other ‘normal’ young people and should not, therefore, be thought of as pathological cases. He writes: ‘These young offenders have the best social prognosis and will often take their place in society as normal, stable individuals after one single criminal act or brief delinquent period.’

This should discourage us from making delinquency into an unending melodrama. Too often those adults who are unknowingly gratified by crime tend to over-react to the slightest movement of a delinquent. For some adults, reading or hearing about delinquency provides a certain emotional release, for others the young delinquent becomes the ideal target for private frustrations or fury. Since he is the wrong-doer, he serves admirably as a figure whom ‘good’ people can hate, criticize or scorn.

Another of the more positive aspects of delinquency is that it can alert society into becoming aware that there is something wrong, either with the child himself, the environment in which he is being nurtured or possibly both. It cannot be said that such an awareness always results in the ‘rescue’ of the child, but it may often lead to help being given. Delinquent behaviour is frequently a signal that the child is attempting to come to grips with his own problems in the best or only way he knows. It can often be said that the child comes face to face with reality through his delinquency. Unfortunately, the solutions he finds clash with adult values and regulations. Delinquency can be useful only if we interpret such behaviour as an indication that help is needed.

**Involving the delinquent**

In the long run only the delinquent can solve the delinquency problem. We can only offer support and new directions to coun-
'No child should be forsaken when he is in danger and most in need of a helping hand.'  

Photo Dominique Roger
teract the pressures that have made him a delinquent. In the past, many agencies working with the delinquent encouraged him to be passive. The professional workers tended to moralize over him, scold him, threaten him, study him, re-locate him and treat him. Today, hopefully, the emphasis in many parts of the world is to encourage the delinquent to play a much more active and decisive role in the solution of his own problems.

This must be done with considerable skill and patience; there are no magic measures to achieve it. Very often he will refuse to co-operate and refuse to help himself. Involving the delinquent can mean a multitude of things. Here is a very simple example of how one community approached it. At the suggestion of a team of professionals, a group of thirty-four delinquents who had previously been gang members were divided into three squads, according to age. Each group had its own jacket, signifying the particular squad. Squad members were encouraged to suggest or consider certain projects for their particular group with an adult adviser. A feeling of mild competition between the three squads was encouraged.

During a two-month period, each squad carried out a certain programme. One squad was busy cleaning up an empty lot to use as a recreational area. Another squad operated a darts booth and a lemonade stand at a neighbourhood fund-raising carnival in order to make enough money for a summer camping trip. The third squad was engaged in repainting a wing of a local hospital; what money they made went into a fund. In each squad, there was strong esprit de corps; individual and group performance was encouraged; special citations were awarded by community groups—such as a Chamber of Commerce—for programmes that genuinely benefited the community as a whole. The leader of each squad had the responsibility of seeing that each project was carried out within a time limit.

The ideal result of such a project is not to make the actual
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community cleaner, brighter or better-painted or to convert every delinquent into a civic-minded prude. It is to show the young delinquents that conformity need not be stifling, that there are other achievements that are more satisfying than delinquent acts; and that they themselves are capable of choosing and reaching socially acceptable goals.

In trying to involve the delinquent in his own re-education, one thing must be remembered. He already knows failure to an exceptional degree; few members of our society face the hard realities of rejection as often as does the young delinquent. Therefore, caution must be taken not to involve him in an adult plan or set up such difficult expectations that he would face still another failure. Under adult guidance, it is the delinquents themselves who might be encouraged, and allowed the widest latitude, in choosing and shaping their own projects. Neither should they be so protected and supervised that they are not permitted to make mistakes in judgement.

Any community might try to inspire interest and youth participation in programmes that could be classified as physical (marching, boxing, judo), recreational, educational-cultural or vocational.

Very often, delinquents themselves can accept the responsibility for other delinquents in a number of ways. In one American junior high school with a high record of delinquent students, a genuine students' government, composed of many of the most troublesome youngsters, was able to achieve a certain law and order where the teachers could not. An executive council of students enforced rules of behaviour in the corridors, at recess and in the 'yard'. Student clubs were formed, attendance and interest were high. Almost unconsciously, student leaders became involved in changing the basic values of their contemporaries and in teaching new 'norms'.

When many adolescents, delinquent or non-delinquent, are
taught or encouraged to relate to the life of the community, they often become better equipped to understand and direct their own lives.

The need for research

One of the most obvious reasons for our concern with juvenile delinquency is the fear of continued adult crime. It has been pointed out in one country that a very large number of men in prison began their criminal careers before they were 13 years of age. Delinquency may be a prelude to a life of crime. Therefore, we must look in two directions at the same time: immediate action and help for today's delinquents and, often forgotten, the long road of research to give us validated methods for detecting and helping minors whose behaviour may lead to delinquency. At the same time we need to learn why certain children bend in the direction of delinquent behaviour.

Such research might seem to exclude the layman. It will be done by professionals and be interpreted by professionals. But this need not discourage any person from doing his own type of research through reading. Too often one's knowledge of delinquency is confined to what one reads hastily in the newspapers or sees in the films where, lamentably, a delinquent appears often as the stereotyped villain in a second-rate plot.

There are many publications within reach of the average reader and the average community. It should not just be the duty of a librarian to try and find out their sources. The United Nations and Unesco are two good sources; another is the World Health Organization. In many countries, informative literature is available from youth agencies and government bureaux.

The delinquents of one country, one city, even one street, are extremely varied and even unique, much like any segment of humanity. Reading a book or a pamphlet will not ensure our
solving their problems. But if the end result is that we are willing to judge them a little less summarily, this is for the better. Reading can awaken us to the possibilities of what ordinary people can do.

A good local library will provide books on psychology and on delinquency and reading about juvenile behaviour can often stir the imagination. This can lead a group of housewives to become aware of the need for a course for young mothers on bringing up children; or to the creation of a marriage counselling clinic or better school programmes. To be sure, such approaches will not have immediate results but they may ultimately help to reduce delinquency.

We must not only encourage long-range research on the part of the behavioural scientists in sociology and psychiatry and education, but also keep ourselves informed, look to the future and do now what we can to reduce delinquency in our city, town, and neighbourhood.

\textit{When children are in danger}

Many parents would agree that nearly every child in the process of growing up occasionally commits acts—sometimes unconsciously and sometimes with a degree of premeditation—which, according to the letter of the law, could be labelled delinquent. But unless the behaviour becomes habitual or characteristic the child is not considered a delinquent.

What the delinquent does is often not childlike but is sometimes close to the action of an adult offender. This makes it harder for us to extend our forgiveness or even our understanding. More likely we wish to see him ‘pay a price’ for his crime and demand that he be isolated from the rest of society. In our eyes, this sort of child has forsaken his childhood and become a criminal.

But even in instances such as this, the dignity and worth of a child or an adolescent should be scrupulously respected. Our
own judgement about his crime is sometimes inflamed by a dra-
matic denunciation in the press. But the delinquent needs neither
our indignation nor our messianic sentimentality. He needs, most
of all, to achieve what so many adults have never attained: the
knowledge of what he is and what, with help, he could become.
Perhaps there will always be delinquents around if adults cannot
change. In order to help them, we must understand our own lives
and our own problems more precisely.
It is worth the effort, for whatever his deficiencies and whatever
his offences, no child should be forsaken when he is in danger and
most in need of a helping hand.