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child seeks recognition and status in a separate "societal group" the excitement and suspense provoking standards of which *allow* and *reward* aggressions against the former and substitutions for affect-deprivations.

In terms of the formulae previously cited, the primary ratio may then be thought of as the affect-distortion ratio, and the secondary as the distortion-reinforcement ratio. And it is readily seen that any approach to delinquency must be concerned with both. The *M* factor of ratio one, and the *A.L.* factor of two, are, for the most part, unmodifiable; the inadequacies of environment of ratio two, however, can and must be directly altered to achieve a permanent lowering of delinquency rates. But this in itself is hardly enough. The latter attack will, in terms of criterion (a), surely reduce delinquencies but, in approach, must remain partial. Any practically complete psycho-social treatment of delinquency must sooner or later come directly to grips with the *F* factor of ratio one: the distortion of affect-liaison and affect-security (long years of understanding love, attention, and respect in the home) as basic relationships between parent and child, and as basic foundations in the matter of both deviant and acceptable behavior.

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## A SOCIAL WORKER LOOKS AT JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

ROTHE HILGER

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It sounded like the usual case when the police officer began telling the court that he had arrested the fourteen year old boy, standing in front of the judge, for larceny, but it became evident that it was not the ordinary type of case when he related that he had arrested the young offender for stealing women's underwear from the clothes line of the neighbors. He also told the court that when he went to the boy's home he found stored in the attic great bundles of underwear which the boy had stolen in the past months.

At another time the court was baffled by the story of an eighteen year old boy who was charged with setting fires. The evidence showed that the young man, who was a volunteer fireman in a small community, would go to some outlying section of the community, set a fire, and then race back to the fire station so he could have the opportunity of driving the fire truck when the alarm was turned in. Another problem was presented to the court when a warehouse used for storage of large bales of scrap wool and materials was being broken into repeatedly. Facts presented in court told the story of how boys, or groups of boys, would go into this warehouse and use it for a play house. They would swing from a long rope, which hung

from the ceiling, and jump in the bales of wool and cloth.

Still another incident which presented itself to the community as a problem in delinquency, but which never became officially recognized as such because it was handled by the community without resort to the police or the courts, was the case in which a number of boys, living in a community adjacent to a powder manufacturing company, were constantly harrassing the company by playing with the many fire plugs which surrounded the plant. The boys would unscrew the caps from the plugs and fill up the hollow portion of the plugs with rocks, sticks, glass or any other debris which they could find, and then tamp it down into the plug hard enough so that it was impossible to flush it out.

These four cases of so called juvenile delinquency are samples picked at random from a large number of delinquency cases occurring in various communities. Looking at these cases and others as a whole, there seem to be several major characteristics which present themselves in relation to the problem of delinquency. First, the problem is not only one of urban communities, but it is concentrated largely in certain sections of the community. Second, in dealing with these problems of juvenile delinquency there is no single causative factor. To study the problem of juvenile delinquency and its causes is to study economics, psychology, sociology and psychiatry and the inter-relationship of these disciplines. Third, contrary to popular opinion, delinquency is not associated with economic depression, rather it increases in inflationary times and diminishes with economic recession. This correlation seems to be due to the fact that young people's desires for possessions are stimulated as the general community becomes inflationary in its spending. Also the family remains more at home when money for recreation becomes less available, thereby providing more family life and its attendant supervision.

#### THE CHILD'S ATTITUDE OF HOSTILITY

Certainly one of the major elements present in most cases of juvenile delinquency is an expression of hostility. An analysis of cases brought before one juvenile court in a year's time indicated that more than 87% of the cases studied showed a direct expression of hostility or aggression in which the delinquent expressed his hostility by destruction of property, hurting another individual, larceny from other individuals, etc. In a study of many of these cases it was evident that the hostility shown by the delinquent was closely related to his early childhood experiences.

At birth a child not only has none of the social characteristics of a human being, but psychologists observe that in the first few weeks of life the infant responds to such noises as the crumpling of paper or the rattle of a spoon on a dish more readily than to the human voice. Early, however, he not only becomes cognizant of the

adults about him but also learns to play a role in relation to them. He promptly discovers that by crying he can get attention and satisfaction from these persons in his environment; when he is wet, they change his clothes; when he cries with hunger, they bring him food. This role quickly establishes a psychological pattern in the infant. He develops an attitude of self-centeredness and begins to feel that the world operates for his benefit. This attitude of individualism has led one psychologist to state that if a child had the strength of an adult he would be the world's most dangerous criminal. In other words, the infant does not respect the rights, property, possessions or pleasures of others. His own needs and interests come first above all other considerations.

However, as the child grows up he is made aware of the necessity of repressing or otherwise dispensing with some of his own wishes in order to fit into the pattern of behavior required by his associates. Consequently, growing up comes to mean giving up. That this process makes the child hostile and aggressive is logical. Stepping out of the spotlight is difficult at any age but especially so for the young child.

#### GIVING UP WHILE GROWING UP REQUIRES COMPENSATIONS

Of most significance, however, is not the fact that the child develops hostility but that the hostility is handled by surrounding adults in such a manner that it subsides and does not persist into later life. If the child receives adequate satisfactions from the grown persons who are providing the discipline, he can give up his selfish demands with greater ease and without developing attitudes of hostility at the same time. On the other hand, if the growth process means continual giving up by the child without adequate return of satisfactions or compensations, a serious pattern of hostility and aggressiveness may result. Love and affection are the most adequate forms of gratification, although material compensations may frequently be sufficient to neutralize the hostility.

This view regarding the emotional development of a child can contribute much to our understanding of the problem of juvenile delinquency, since delinquency in practically every case is the result of the young person expressing hostility, aggression, or retribution towards the persons representing the authority of the community. This partly explains the concentration of delinquency in certain areas of our urban communities. In these areas, called slum areas, a large majority of the children are deprived of material benefits as well as emotional satisfaction. They are required to give up selfish individualistic wishes without any form of gratification in return. A commentary on this is that certain cultural groups of children, such as Jewish and Chinese, frequently live within high delinquency

areas in cities and at the same time do not contribute proportionately to the current delinquency rate. Family solidarity and unity in their culture are pronounced, and the child has compensating emotional satisfactions for giving up this selfish individualistic interest.

#### OTHER CAUSATIVE FACTORS

While we may feel that this aspect of child development and child training may have major bearing on the dynamics of juvenile delinquency, there are, nevertheless, other significant factors which enter the picture as positive influences. Many of these factors represent very normal development in the individual, and given sufficient or adequate economic surroundings, the child would be able to carry out his needs without becoming involved in delinquency. Such a case is the one described above in which the boys were constantly being brought into court for breaking into the warehouse and playing among the bales of wool. These were very normal boys expressing normal interests, and had there been an opportunity for them to have participated in a well-organized community resource, such as the Y.M.C.A. or a boys' club, they would have been swinging on ropes in gymnasiums or diving in swimming pools, while at the same time obtaining satisfaction for the identical motive which in another instance caused them to be classified as juvenile delinquents.

In many cases the causative factors in the delinquency are not easily defined. This is particularly true in the so-called cases of neurotic delinquency. In fact, one psychiatrist has said that all delinquency can be divided between practical delinquency on the one hand and neurotic delinquency, or acts which meet some unconscious or neurotic need in the individual on the other hand. Such a case indeed is the one described above in which the boy was brought into court for the larceny of women's underwear from the clothes lines. The understanding of such delinquent acts lies primarily in the realm of the psychoanalyst or psychiatrist or those professions best equipped to help the individual understand his unconscious motivations and needs. Just as there is no single discipline which explains the causes of delinquency, there is no single professional group which can provide all of the treatment necessary in the variety of individuals involved in delinquency. Indeed, many times we even confuse ourselves by the term "juvenile delinquency" because we tend to imply that we are confronted with a single type of problem, whereas the delinquency is only an overt symptom, and the causes may be numerous and complex. The common denominator—that these individuals are out of step with society—hardly justifies treating them categorically. Asking the question, "How do you treat juvenile delinquency?" is comparable to saying "How do

you treat sick people?". The answer to both questions should be similar to the answer we give regarding sickness, that is "It depends upon what type of illness the individual has."

#### THE APPROACH OF SOCIAL AGENCIES

In view of the fact that the practice of social work has drawn so heavily upon all of the social sciences for much of its material and many of its concepts, it cannot claim any uniqueness in the understanding and treatment of juvenile delinquency. However, because of the very nature of social work practice and because of its close relationship to families and children in hazardous emotional and economic situations, it is in closer contact with the major problems of juvenile delinquency than any of the other professions. In general, social agencies can be divided into case work agencies, which work primarily with individuals, and group work agencies, which work predominantly with groups of individuals. Although social case work agencies may number many delinquents among its clients, few of them exist to work only with juvenile delinquency. However, a great deal of the work of some of the case work agencies is aimed at preventing juvenile delinquency, either through direct placement of children in supervised foster homes, institutions, schools, or by bringing about better relationships between parents and child by working with the child in his own home and helping the parent deal with the child in such manner that hostilities and tensions are lessened.

#### MAKING THE GROUP SPIRIT A SOCIAL ASSET

The social group work agencies deal with far larger numbers of children than do the case work agencies. The primary benefit of a group work program is that it gives an opportunity for the child or adolescent to belong to a group and to develop a feeling of worthwhileness which he may not have in his own family group or in a limited neighborhood group. For this reason those community agencies which are the most successful with juvenile delinquents or other young people in groups are those which are the most successful in importing to the individual a feeling of possessiveness in regard to the program in which the child is participating. This point of view was used with the group of boys who were preying upon the powder company by constantly filling up the fire plugs. The powder company employed a young man and gave him the job of coping with the boys' hostility. The worker handled the problem very simply by inviting the boys of the community to come to the powder company and become members of a junior fire brigade which was being organized under the sponsorship of the company's fire department. On the first day of their visit to the plant the boys were taken for a ride on the fire engine. When they returned to the fire house, they were given small assignments of polishing the truck, rolling up hose, and filling water fire extinguishers. The next visit

to the fire station was devoted to several other interesting tasks around the fire house, and the boys were also given a brief talk regarding fire prevention, the cost of fires in the community, and the danger of a general fire in relation to the houses of the community. The net result of the whole process was that the company never again had to dig up a fire plug and dump out stones and debris. The company had followed the simple principle of giving the boys a sense of possessiveness in relation to the control of fires in the community.

A similar experience is related by a boys' club in an upstate New York community. A small group of five or six boys were re-appearing in the juvenile court, and each time it was a repetition of small petty delinquencies in which the kids were involved in destructiveness and other mischief in the community. A social worker, who was employed by the juvenile court, took it upon himself to work with this small group of boys. He went down into their neighborhood and sat down on a curb stone with them one afternoon and talked about organizing a club. The boys said, "All right, what shall we call the club?" The answer was that the club should be called by any name that the boys themselves chose. Each question that the boys asked about membership, dues, club discipline, and so forth was answered by the worker in the same vein, that is, that the club belonged to the boys and they, themselves, must take responsibility for the answers to these questions. The long term result was the the club membership grew to nearly two hundred, and in nearly two years time only two boys out of the group were again involved in any kind of delinquency. Furthermore, the boys built a club house themselves. Even though it was located in a neighborhood where there had been a high rate of destructiveness, and even though this club house was never locked, it never suffered a loss or destruction of any property.

Unfortunately, the children in need of the services of the community resources seldom get them until the deprivations and warping influences have wrought major damage. Of course, intelligent and affectionate care in the family gives the child the security and stability that makes delinquency unnecessary, but until all families can supply these satisfactions there will be children who will need the services of agencies outside the home.

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#### MARTINDALE-HUBBELL CHANGES DUE

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