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These comments concerning delinquency of American youths of Mexican origin were prepared with the cooperation of Doctors Lydia Sicher, Harwell Scarbrough, and Mr. Manuel Aguilar, Consul of Mexico, who read them to the Los Angeles jury which was investigating this problem to which Los Angeles newspapers had been giving extensive publicity. Some individuals put the blame for the existing situation on poor parental control, others on lack of religion, others on desire for recognition, others on racial discrimination, or poverty, or fifth column activities. Some even stated that it was of biological or racial origin. (Statistics prepared later by the Los Angeles County Probation Department brought out that there had been no increase of admissions to Juvenile Hall of Youths of Mexican Extraction, although there had been a general increase in the first part of 1942 over the corresponding part of 1941. The intensity of raiding and fights between neighborhood groups had increased, and the types of offenses of individual delinquents had become more serious.)

This material is based on the points of view of Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology, especially the chapter on "Crime and Delinquency" in "What Life Should Mean to You."

Crime and Delinquency in General. Crime and delinquency, as well as cases of problem children, hypochondriacs, neurotics, psychotics, suicides, drunkards, sexual perverts, and most cases of marital incompatibility, demonstrate a faulty approach to the problems of life. Such badly adjusted persons fail to develop sufficient social interest and also fail to cooperate and contribute to their fellowmen. None of us are examples of perfect cooperation or have perfection in social feeling; but the failure of delinquents is a more severe degree of the common failure which occurs in many of us to some degree or other.

We all wish to overcome difficulties. John Dewey called this tendency a striving for security; others have called it the striving for self-preservation; Alfred Adler spoke of a goal of superiority, to feel strong, superior, complete. It is a struggle to rise from an inferior position to a superior position. It begins in our earliest childhood and continues to the end of our lives. The more inferior we feel, the more intense will be our desire for a superior position. What distinguishes problem children, from whom present or future delinquents come, is the direction this striving takes and the methods used to attain security or superiority, according to their particular and erroneous interpretations of the values of life. If we realize that a delinquent or a problem child takes his course because he has not understood the demands of society and of cooperation in a community, we will not be surprised by his anti-social behavior.

Human beings are not born delinquents, but become so because the development of their character has been directed by a mistaken goal of superiority or security. The methods used to attain such a goal, therefore, must be adequate for the particular purpose. The goal of a delinquent is to be superior in a manner which he privately and personally chooses. He wants satisfaction or security or superiority as judged by his private, selfish attitude, i.e., by his character developed without community feeling. Some individuals want to be leaders; but if they are discouraged in the possibilities of becoming leaders in the community, they will welcome the opportunity of leadership in a group, even though it be a vicious one. Other individuals will enter a gang to earn the admiration of their fellow members or for the feeling of heroism which gang membership engenders. Other delinquents gain satisfaction in expressing their rebellion toward the community, which they feel has not treated them fairly.

A child who feels, justly or not, that his parents have not dealt with him fairly may become a problem child and commit all kinds of acts to make the parents suffer. He thus protests against or takes revenge for the slight he thinks he has received. Each case is an individual problem, and each delinquent may have arrived at his status through different errors in judgment, depending on his own and individual interpretation of his environment; but all have in common a development of character which lacks a friendly and cooperative spirit toward their fellowmen and which also lacks desire to contribute their share to the community.

Among the types of children found in delinquent groups, the following can be cited:

(1) Pampered and spoiled children, who may come from parents of wealthy, poor, or moderate means. Accustomed to having everything given them, their every wish fulfilled, and finding life one continuous demonstration of sympathy and admiration, they soon develop a dominant attitude of being the center of attraction, being first in everything, gaining admiration and friendship without making any contribution. As they mature they continue to domineer and to demand recognition and will seek it by any means, fair or foul. When they do not get what they want from their environment, they feel betrayed and become hostile and rebellious or become a problem in some other way. They have not learned cooperation or the spirit of contribution to the community.

(2) Neglected children, who have not felt friendliness or received cooperation in their world. Such children do not trust their relatives, much less strangers. Expecting to find enemies and hostility in school and in the community, they treat their fellowmen with hostility. Neglected children often develop an overpowering desire to be appreciated and loved or to be the center of attraction or powerful or important. They will do anything to attain their goals. Many gang members and sex perverts come from this group.

(3) Children of domineering parents. When a child or youth has a domineering or overly severe parent, he may become rebellious and hostile. Sometimes on account of fear he will not openly revolt against his parents, but in protest he will become disobedient, wet his bed, become immoral (especially if his father is a clergyman), or a lawbreaker (particularly if his father is a policeman or judge). The more they are punished the worse they become. When they rebel against their parents, they readily rebel against society.

(4) Children of parents who are partial. If a brother or sister is given undue attention, a child may develop a dominating desire to be first in popularity or in business, or a power in some group or institution. In attaining this goal, or in protest, he may become a problem child and future potential delinquent. Frequently a tragedy occurs when the crown prince feels that he has been dethroned, that he has been pushed aside and is not loved any more because of the arrival of another child. He develops various tricks to regain the center of attention or power.

(5) Children with body or organ defects. The mind of such an individual may be entirely self-centered and fail to develop a friendly or cooperative spirit. Children with physical defects feel in a greater degree their inadequacy, and strive so intensely for security and superiority that they become nervous, neurotic, or problem children.

(6) Orphans, ugly, illegitimate, or unwanted children, and those subjected to racial prejudice. Such children feel insecure and often fail to develop proper social attitudes.

(7) Children who fail in school. Discouragement and reproach may lead such children to do poor work. If they do not become adjusted through assistance and guidance, they do not learn cooperation and may find compensation in delinquency.

(8) Poor children. Poverty, with accompanying social prejudice, produces envy and an intense desire to acquire luxuries. Poverty may help produce an inferiority complex with its consequent overweening desire for recognition, security, or prestige, especially in a culture where material possessions are given undue importance.

Of course, not all problem children will become delinquents, but most delinquents come from among problem children or from feeble-minded ones. There seems to be a special aggressiveness in some delinquents, a will to do, sometimes an erratic doing for doing's sake.

To adjust these children is a difficult task. Those who become delinquent in a circumstantial or chance way easily see their mistake, and so do not continue their abnormal behavior.

Those who are delinquent from faulty character development will not be changed by punishment; their character traits, their goals, and their methods of attaining them, must be changed. Under the present organization of society, there is neither the time nor the money to change the characters of all these individuals by psychotherapy.

The foregoing outline applies to the psychology of delinquency in any city, country, or race. The youths of Mexican descent with whom this study is especially concerned come particularly from those groups classified as pampered, poverty-stricken, and neglected.

Second Generation Problem. The second generation problem occurs when a sizeable group of poor immigrants settles in a community in which they stand out. Children in such foreign groups are subjected to the conflicts of different cultures, languages, traditions, environment, family ties, systems of education, and racial prejudices. As a result a certain percentage develop faulty character traits which finally may bring about delinquency, as these influences are superimposed on those causing delinquency in general.

Problems of this type have existed at times in the larger American cities. A few years ago there was a clear-cut case among a group of Russians in Los Angeles, the Mollikans in the district of Fourth and Gless Streets. At that time Juvenile Hall was crowded with delinquents belonging to the second generation of these Russians. The authorities had no trouble with the adult first generation, and in the third generation the trouble disappeared.

The characters and personalities of the adults of such groups born abroad are already formed and set, so that their hostile environment does not affect them very much. They may suffer, but their personalities will not be easily warped. On the other hand, the second-generation children of these groups are in a very different situation, being at a formative age when their personalities can still be twisted. Racial prejudices are felt even before they experience them. They hear their parents talk of discrimination, of differences in social customs, in dress and appearance. Later they sense racial prejudice in the comic papers, on the radio, and in the movies. When they attempt to play with children of other racial extraction, they find outspoken prejudice. When they go to school they are on guard for any sign of prejudice, and they feel it all the more. Some rebuffs or lack of friendly demonstrations due to their own distant or bitter personalities are erroneously interpreted by them as due to the prejudice of others (projection), making their future adjustment all the more difficult. The children see the discrepancies in the standards of their parents and in those of the community. Some of these children feel ashamed of their parents and of their nationality, lose respect for them, and cease to obey or cooperate. One can imagine what tension and state of conflict can occur in this second generation and why

it produces so many problem children.

They hear at school about democracy, equality, freedom, and opportunities for all, but they experience hostility and prejudice. Soon they realize that they are not accepted, that their opportunities are not equal. Losing hope of any success through constructive channels, they seek it by other means. If they are not accepted by the community, at least they can have the friendship and respect of neighborhood groups or of fellow delinquents. When the influences which cause delinquencies in general are superimposed on the second-generation situation, the problems confronting the individual can easily produce maladjustment and lead to psychopathy or neurosis.

When a second-generation youth is mistreated or abused by a law enforcement officer, he generalizes from this experience, deciding that all law enforcement agents have the same attitude toward his group or race. Such experiences contribute to the development of pugnaciousness, hostility, and rebellion. Such attitudes of second-generation children are similar to those of neglected children, who generally either are hostile or have a compelling desire for appreciation, possessions, recognition, power, love, or friendship. When children are so affected, they no longer respect or cooperate with their parents, the community, or the forces of the law.

The problems of the second generation are similar in any locality with any nationality. Delinquency is greater among youths of Mexican extraction born in Los Angeles than among those born in Mexico. This is essentially, I believe, a second-generation problem. Racial prejudice is greater toward the second generation of Mexicans than toward those of European extraction, rendering their problems more acute. The second-generation problem in the case of those of Mexican descent will not disappear as readily in the third generation because of color prejudice, even though they acquire the language and customs of the locality. Their color prevents their economic adjustment, as many jobs are closed to them.

War and Delinquency. Past experience has shown that war brings on an increase of delinquency in youths. The increase in delinquency since the war is not a local but a national phenomenon. In wartime many parents are forced to stay away from home for longer intervals so that they cannot guide, control, and take care of their children as they have been accustomed. In England the upset and disunited homes seemed to have brought on more problems and anxiety among youths than the bombings themselves. Another cause of greater degree of anxiety or nervous tension in wartime is the insecurity and danger to their relatives and to themselves. This nervous tension will not easily upset a normal individual, who will experience fear, but will not run from it or try to allay it by neurotic tricks or delinquent behavior. The more maladjusted a person is, the more bizarre may be his behavior. In

normal life many individuals go about their daily life apparently well adjusted while everything goes favorably. But, when they are confronted with a difficult situation or one they cannot solve, their faulty attitude or their latent neurosis becomes evident. The same thing occurs in wartime. When the environment presents difficulties and their security is definitely threatened, such individuals will try to solve their problems and to get personal security by methods in accord with their characters, their goals and styles of life.

Suggestions, Immediate and Long Range. Delinquency is, of course, a complex problem, the complete study of which requires the cooperation of psychologists, sociologists, probation officers, and police officers. Fortunately, here in Los Angeles we have many prominent individuals, authorities in their fields, who, no doubt, will lend their valuable assistance. But time for action is passing, special acute, urgent circumstances of the moment contribute to make the need for a remedy to this situation an immediate challenge to every one to make suggestions and to cooperate with the law agencies to eradicate this evil. The problem requires not only immediate action, but also a long range program, both of which may be outlined somewhat as follows:

Immediate.

(1) Apprehend and prosecute the vicious gang leaders to protect society. The younger gang members who have no serious character defects should be put in care of probation officers, who should try to adjust their characters.

(2) Avoid giving publicity to gang activities, as that only makes members feel more important and satisfies their desire for recognition; such publicity also serves as a recruiting medium to enlarge the group.

(3) Avoid mass arrests and booking or jailing on mere suspicion, thus diminishing the chances of creating a feeling of persecution through false arrests of innocent youths.

(4) Initiate a campaign to convince these young people of the necessity of training themselves for work in high schools and trade schools. Once they are trained, they should be given hope and opportunity for advancement and not be restricted to manual labor or semiskilled positions.

(5) Encourage playground activities and athletic competitions among these young people with close supervision and with publicity given to outstanding accomplishment. Their desire for recognition or admiration can be satisfied in this more wholesome way. This has proved to be an effective inducement for community cooperation in young people. Playgrounds without proper supervision or leadership are of very little value.

(6) Encourage through all possible means, with the co-operation of civic leaders, the formation of Boy Scout troops, Y.M.C.A. groups, and boys' clubs, with supervised activities and athletic tournaments, so that their striving for recognition or superiority can be channeled into these lines. Proper leadership is important.

(7) Discuss with the children their social problems, and awaken their sense of social responsibility, trying to bring about their adjustment and make them realize how erroneous is their private interpretation of life and society.

Long Range.

(1) Legal means should be devised to try to stop segregation, and skillful propaganda promulgated to combat racial prejudice, thus gaining the confidence of parents and youths, making them a part of the community and thereby avoiding situations which tend to produce warped characters.

(2) Law enforcement agencies should be trained to avoid mishandling of juveniles. Psychologists and psychiatrists should be procured, as well as an adequate number of probation officers and juvenile officers, all well trained in the psychology and adjustment of delinquents.

(3) Society should avoid presenting a direct challenge to problem children or to the poor and destitute. Unnecessary menaces are unjust punishments by parents or law enforcement officers, which fail to reform the delinquent. Only comprehensive understanding and sound guidance will bring results.

(4) Understanding of human nature, now limited to an exceedingly small number of individuals, should be extended to all who work with children. The establishment of child guidance clinics would not only help children, but would also help parents, teachers, and probation officers to understand the individual problems and needs in each case.

(5) School teachers should be trained to correct faulty character development and to indicate to children constructive channels in their striving for prestige, recognition, or leadership. The school, as a prolonged arm of the family, should give more emphasis to the teaching of social responsibility, spirit of cooperation, and interest in fellowmen. High school and university teachers of psychology should teach the understanding of human nature so that students would know and understand themselves, as well as know how to apply this knowledge to everyday life.

(6) Churchmen of all creeds, if they all had a deeper psychological insight into early character development, could help in a greater degree by teaching parents of young children to develop characters with social feeling, a spirit of friendliness, and cooperation with their fellowmen.

(7) Physicians have a responsibility and a duty to improve their knowledge of human psychology, as otherwise they cannot help many of their patients. They have the opportunity to impress upon every new mother the fact that a child is not born with a formed character, but that one can be molded and that she can help the child make the proper interpretations of his environment.

(8) Parents, in particular, should learn human psychology in order to bring up children with proper attitudes toward society. The groups just mentioned have to be pioneers so that they can teach parents to bring up children with a sense of social responsibility. If parents do not understand human nature, they cannot recognize faults at their incipiency; and, even when so recognized, they do not have techniques to correct faulty attitudes or to develop social feeling in children.

(9) Parents should be approached through night schools, religious organizations, labor unions, social clubs, service clubs, and through the Parent-Teacher Associations, which could plan specific programs to attract parents who do not speak the English language.

(10) An improvement of the social status of minority groups would be a big help in lessening delinquency, crime, alcoholism, drug addiction, and sex perversions. This improvement could be made possible by the widespread existence of social feeling, i.e., an interest in one's fellowmen, a spirit of cooperation, and a willingness to contribute one's share to society.

Alfred Adler says about delinquency:

"...the security of mankind and the attainment of its highest destiny requires that the child be made into a "fellow man," a co-worker, one who feels himself to be part of the whole, one who feels at home on the crust of this earth.....Mankind would profit enormously by traveling the road proposed by Individual Psychology. ...It seems to me a most important result of Individual Psychological findings that they have made possible the determination of the psychic structure of a child who is a potential delinquent and is in danger of heading for a career of crime.....We must not keep to ourselves the findings that we have thoroughly tested and found sound; we must not bury them. We are under the obligation to disseminate them and challenge the world by subjecting them to further proof. It can be foreseen that as a result of this increased understanding of Individual Psychology the one-sided view held by the hereditarians, the environmental theory, the endocrine gland theory and the Freudian sexual theory of crime would be subject to a severe test of their values." ("The Prevention of Delinquency," by Alfred Adler, International Journal of Individual Psychology, Third Quarter, 1935.