A STUDY OF SOME ASPECTS OF PSYCHO-SOCIAL PATHTHLOLOGY
OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY*

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Juvenile delinquency may be defined briefly and precisely as that action of the child which is an infraction of the standards expressed by the laws of the community. It is behaviour of the child that gets into trouble with the law. In other words, it is a social deviant behaviour of a child of juvenile age, the definition of which may vary from state to state.

Considering the statistics of the children’s out-patient clinic in hospitals, it becomes evident that delinquency per se is rarely a problem for which medical help is sought by the parents. However, the statistical reports of the Central Bureau of Correctional Services, Department of Social Welfare, Government of India, reveal that the incidence of juvenile delinquency is on the increase.

One of the reasons why the parents do not bring children to the outpatient department for their delinquent behaviour is a tendency, at least in the middle and upper class parents, to cover up such behaviour of their children. The occasional stealing, lying or community escapades while troublesome is viewed as “wild oats” or reminiscent of the parents own “normal” youth.

Various research workers in this field have listed different causes of delinquency, as given below:

i. defective discipline.
ii. general emotional instability or specific emotional impulses generating or generated by the so-called complexes of sex or aggression.
iii. a family history of vice or crime.
iv. defective family relationships such as the absence of a parent or the presence of the undesired influences operating out-side the home, such as, bad street companions.
v. intellectual difficulties, such as, backwardness or dullness.
vi. detrimental interests, such as, undue passion for adventure or acquisitiveness, wandering.
vii. either excess or lack of facilities for recreation and amusement.
viii. poverty and its concomitants.
ix. physical infirmity or weakness.

The main purpose of this study was to assess and describe the pattern and nature of the family background and the parents’ behaviour characteristics which may be of pathological significance in determining the delinquent behaviour of the children. It has also attempted to compare the intellectual grade on Progressive Matrices Test to their educational achievements. This would probably be helpful both for the correction of individual delinquent behaviour as well as to prevent the occurrence of such behaviour in the community.

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Received on December, 1970.
Only one girl of 10 years was admitted to this institute and she was excluded in the present study.

**Age.** 6 boys were aged 9 years or below. 10 boys (33.3%) belonged to the 10-12-year-age group, another 10 boys were aged between 13-15 years, and 4 (13.3%) were aged 16 years or more. The maximum age was 17 years, minimum age was 8 years and the average age was 12.5 years. These figures show that the highest incidence of delinquency occurs between 10-15 years, i.e. pre-or early adolescent period. Anna Freud describes this period of development thus: "Aggressive impulses are intensified to the point of complete unruliness, hunger becomes voracity and the naughtiness of the latency period turns into the criminal behaviour of adolescence..........

**Schooling.** 5 (16.6%) boys had never gone to school. 12 (40%) had studied up to the 4th standard or less. 13 (43.3%) had ceased studies at some stage between the 5th and 9th standards. More than 70% of the boys were literate in the sense that they had undergone schooling for 3 years or more and knew reading and writing and simple arithmetic. However, most of these boys found schooling to be boredom and were disinterested. They clowned in the classroom, ridiculed or threatened other students and were complained against to the teachers by their school mates. They would come to the school irregularly without doing their home work and played non-school games. Their academic achievements were lower than their intellectual grade on the Progressive Matrices Test.

Harry Bakwin found "prolonged schooling as a contributory factor" for delinquency in the boys, for school is a big bore to them. They were unwilling and unable to profit by book learning and had a disrupting influence on school activities.

**Intellectual grade.** Although a single test result is not a sufficient indicator to rely upon, the Progressive Matrices Test result does give some measure of the general intellectual functioning level. 8 (26.6%) had secured I or II grade on the Progressive Matrices Test indicating that they were definitely above average or even superior intellectually. 12 (40.3%) boys got III or IV grade indicating that they were average or nearly average intellectually. And the rest 10 (33.3%) got IV or less than that grade, which was definitely below average and made them intellectual dullards.

The study group as a whole seemed to be of a slightly lower average intellect though the difference was not very significant. This point cannot be further discussed as it is a single test result. However, during the test it was observed that they had a poor span of attention and were hasty in their judgement.

Studies by other workers have yielded the same conclusion that in general, anti-social behaviour is relatively independent of intelligence. Others find that intellect in the delinquent tends to be direct and concrete rather than a symbolic and abstract expression and lacks a methodical approach to problems.

**Sources of referrals to the court.** 11 (36.8%) were arrested by the police and