

SURVEY OF BOYS ON PSYCHIATRIC REMAND

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THE most complex cases of juvenile delinquency gather together in the remand home for the most complex reasons. One of the principal reasons is to obtain a psychiatric report. This is evidenced by the fact that just over 33 per cent. of the Oxford Remand Home population were referred for psychiatric examination. Such a group, being potentially marginal between mental disorder and delinquency, is of major interest as it could provide clues about the hypothesised underlying relationships between juvenile delinquency and mental disorder (*cf.* M. Roth discussing the borderlands between organic and functional states, 1963). It is also the one occasion when this heterogeneous group is gathered together, and opportunities for study of these boys should be grasped before they are diverted into their different disposal channels.

This paper presents basic statistics on 234 delinquent boys referred for psychiatric examination when on remand. The Oxford Remand Home serves a large number of courts in at least nine counties. The series is consecutive; it represents all boys on remand referred to our service by the courts in the years 1962 and 1963.

In this paper the findings are presented mainly in tabular form. The percentages given are to the nearest unit. We hope, in a subsequent series of papers, to present the findings of our more intensive analyses.

I. REASONS FOR PSYCHIATRIC REFERRAL

All probation officers who attended were questioned about reasons for requesting psychiatric examination. No statistical treatment of these data would be valid. The most common reasons given for referral were as

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follows: (1) boys in whom the question of psychiatric disorder had been raised; (2) virtually all sexual offences; (3) bizarre or unusual offences of a type likely to suggest to laymen some gross perversity of character; (4) boys whose larceny persisted in spite of previous punishment; and (5) often the impetus came from the probation officer who had noted a history of maternal deprivation or some other potential psychological trauma and had advised the court accordingly.

II. AGE

TABLE A

Distribution of Age at Referral		
	Number	Per cent.
10 years	3	1
11 years	12	5
12 years	28	12
13 years	40	17
14 years	66	28
15 years and over	85	36

The distribution of age at referral is shown in Table A. The referral of young children through the remand home was highly unusual. The great majority of the children were in the adolescent range.

TABLE B

Comparison with Essex-Cater's study		
	Essex-Cater 1958	Oxford 1962-63
Per cent. up to 12 years	24	18
Per cent. 13 years and over	76	81

In Table B the Oxford age distribution is compared with Essex-Cater's 1958 study. It will be noted that the percentages are similar.

III. SOCIAL CLASS

TABLE C

Social Class			
	Oxford 1962-63	Essex-Cater 1958	Reworked Oxford
I	3 (1%)	} 3.5%	} 9%
II	16 (7%)		
III	87 (37%)	30%	42%
IV	66 (28%)	38%	31%
V	36 (15%)	28.5%	17%
Life institution Problematic	26 (11%)		
Total	234		

In the above table the social class is that of the family breadwinner. Adoptive children, or children living away from their parents in institutions or children's homes, are not included in the classification. In order to make the Oxford percentages comparable with Essex-Cater's percentages the authors have reworked the percentages (see the third column of Table C) excluding the problematic cases. From this it will be seen that there is a tendency for the Oxford group to deviate more to the upper social class than Essex-Cater's series. The obvious explanation is that it is a selection bias. However, the possibility that there has been a real change in the social class distribution and character of juvenile delinquency cannot be ignored.

IV. FAMILY SIZE

TABLE D

Family Size			
	Oxford	Lewis	Essex-Cater
3 or less children	(83) 35.3%	49.4%	55%
4 or more children	(151) 64.7%	48.4%	45%
Unknown		2.2%	

The data in this series are set out in Table E. It supports the findings of other workers in showing that there is a marked bias towards larger sibships in the families of delinquents. Our figures may be compared with those of Lewis, who showed that 48 per cent. of deprived children came from sibships containing four or more children. The Essex-Cater study showed that 45 per cent. of cases came from similarly large sibships. In this study no less than 64 per cent. of the families contained four or more children.

V. PARENTAL CONSTELLATION

TABLE E

Living with Natural Parents		
	Number	Per cent.
Both parents	156	66
Away from parents	78	34

In Table E the data are given on the unity or otherwise of the boy's parents at the time of remand. It demonstrates a high incidence of broken homes, parental separation, etc. (approximately one-third of the cases).

VI. PARENTAL SEPARATION

In a number of cases the history was judged to be inadequate for a definite decision as to significant separation from parents. Nevertheless, in some 24 per cent. of cases there was a clear history of prolonged separation from one or other parent in the first five years of life, and an additional 9 per cent. in the second five years of life. Another 5 per cent. of boys had been separated from parents in both periods. The magnitude of these separation experiences again emphasises the importance of parental separation. This will be seen by maternal deprivation theorists as yet further evidence in support of their hypotheses about the deleterious consequences of maternal deprivation.

VII. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL AND FAMILY DATA

The instability of the homes from which this sample was drawn is illustrated by the following statistics:

1. Only 23 per cent. of the boys were judged to be living in stable homes.
2. 25 per cent. were living in overcrowded conditions.
3. 16 per cent. were known to be illegitimate at birth.
4. 26 per cent. had been fostered away from their mothers on at least one occasion.
5. In 27 per cent. of cases either the mother or father or both had a clear history of psychiatric disorder. This figure is likely to be an underestimate since the parents were often reluctant to reveal their own medical histories.

These data may again simply reflect the court's tendencies to refer for medical opinion children from bad or broken homes.

VIII. FAMILY DELINQUENCY

It was not easy to assess the criminogenic influences of the home and the neighbourhood, but undoubtedly the presence of a known criminal or other delinquent within the family is an important factor in the development of a delinquent proclivity (see Ferguson). Unfortunately we were not able to discover the incidence of criminality in the parents, but 26 per cent. of the boys had older delinquent siblings; in addition, 19 per cent. had unstable siblings who were reported as suffering from psychiatric disorder.

IX. THE BOYS—THEIR INTELLIGENCE AND EDUCATION

TABLE F

Intelligence Tests				
I.Q.	Wechsler Oxford			I.Q.
	Verbal	Performance	Full Scale	Essex-Cater
Under 69	(13) 6%	(7) 3%	(12) 6%	15%
70-89	(84) 40%	(51) 24%	(61) 28%	31%
90-119	(108) 51%	(136) 64%	(129) 61%	48%
120+	(7) 3%	(18) 9%	(10) 5%	5.5%
Total	212	212	212	

212 boys were given both scales of the Wechsler. Table F provides some fascinating

statistics. It is well known that delinquents perform better on non-verbal than on verbal tests. This trend is again noted. 9 per cent. of the boys proved to be of superior intellect on the performance scale of the Wechsler, while only 3 per cent. proved to be of superior intellect on the verbal scale; 54 per cent. of the boys proved to have I.Q.s of over 90 on the verbal scale, while 73 per cent. had I.Q.s over 90 on the performance scale. If the I.Q.s are dichotomised above and below 90 on the verbal and performance scales of the Wechsler, it is found that the distribution of I.Q.s on these scales is significantly different ($\chi^2=15.4$ for one degree of freedom $-p<.001$). It would seem highly dangerous, therefore, to assume that the delinquent's score on a verbal I.Q. test is a good indication of his intellectual potential; this is particularly germane in the assessment of subnormality. When comparing these figures with Essex-Cater's figures it will be seen that his percentage of boys with I.Q.s above and below 90 are essentially similar to the Oxford group on the verbal sub-scale of the Wechsler.

In those cases in which information was available about the academic progress of the boys no less than 79 per cent. were adjudged to be, to some degree, educationally retarded—this in spite of 66 per cent. of the boys having a full-scale I.Q. above 90, and 73 per cent. a performance-scale I.Q. above 90. Ferguson in his Glasgow study also found that poor educational progress correlated highly with delinquency. This phenomenon must have many determinants, but in the main is probably compounded of truancy and socio-cultural factors.

X. TRUANCY

In approximately 75 per cent. of the children there was a history of school non-attendance. Ten were school phobics and the rest were considered truants; 152 of the boys truanted regularly, fourteen truanted occasionally, and forty-six hardly ever truanted. The other twelve denied ever truanting and though we had no reliable confirmation of this in all probability we would have been informed if their truancy was of any significance.

XI. PSYCHIATRIC DIAGNOSES

Table G sets out the psychiatric diagnoses of the 234 boys referred. It will be seen that

TABLE G
Distribution of the 234 Boys according to their Mental State

A. Primary condition	
(a) No psychiatric problems	84—ordinary delinquents
(b) Major psychiatric conditions:	
Schizophrenia	0
Endogenous depression	1
Significant organic features	5
Subnormal—E.S.N.	18
(c) Other psychiatric conditions:	
Neurotic	21
Reactive emotional disturbance	80
(d) Character disorders:	
pre-psychopathic	16
Affectionless	9
	234
B. Secondary complications	
(a) Poverty of affection not amounting to affectionless	35
(b) Reactive depression	5

some 36 per cent. (84 boys) were adjudged to show no evidence of mental disturbance. This may be contrasted with the Essex-Cater series in which 50 per cent. were judged to be stable. It must be remembered that this group was, by the nature of the referral, *prima facie* a group in which every child might have been expected to show disturbance.

There was no case of schizophrenia in the series: one youth was suspected of being an incipient schizophrenic but the florid illness had not declared itself; one suffered from a moderate degree of endogenous depression; five showed mild transient depressions which were thought to be reactive to removal from their home.

Eighty of the boys suffered from emotional disturbances reactive to their environment of a degree such that had their crimes not brought them to notice they would nevertheless have required medical attention. Twenty-one of the boys suffered from one or other variety of the neurotic disorders commonly seen among adults.

It is at times difficult to differentiate precisely between psychopathic patterns of behaviour and those patterns seen in "affectionless" characters in Bowlby's sense. Overlapping between the two groups occurs. Diagnostically sixteen children were placed in the pre-psychopathic group and nine were

classified as primarily affectionless. Another thirty-five boys who fell into other diagnostic categories showed to a minor degree impairment of the ability to make affectionate relationships.

Analysis of the difference between the two major groups, *i.e.*, those boys who are relatively stable and those with some psychiatric disorder, will be the subject of a later paper.

In forty-one cases the possibility of brain damage was raised. In only five of these cases was cortical impairment considered to be the principal abnormal condition present. Only five of the boys had a history of convulsions or fits and this is almost certainly no greater than that to be expected in a random sample of the population at this age.

In a number of cases the principal condition was considered to be subnormality or educational subnormality with a previous head injury or epilepsy being a contributory condition or the main complication; for this reason these two groups have been "lumped" together.

XII. HEWITT AND JENKINS CLASSIFICATION

Table H sets out the boys' behavioural patterns classified according to Lewis's (1954) modification of the Hewitt and Jenkins classification. Hewitt and Jenkins undertook multiple correlation statistical analysis of forty-five traits obtained from 500 case records of problem children. This analysis revealed three clusters of inter-correlated traits of the children's behaviour:

- (a) unsocialised aggressive—basically mean treatment of others;
- (b) socialised delinquency—the child accepts the mores and codes of the group and becomes socialised within the delinquent group; and
- (c) over-inhibited behaviour—the child shows a tendency towards introversion.

In a similar manner these authors obtained three social and behavioural patterns:

- (a) parental negligence and exposure to bad company;
- (b) parental rejection—basically parental lack of affection; and
- (c) parental repression—basically harsh and repressive upbringing.

In her study, Lewis decided that the Hewitt and Jenkins classification had a much more

objective basis than others, and so adapted it without serious modification for the purpose of her inquiry. She added five additional categories to the three Hewitt and Jenkins categories of the children's behavioural patterns:

- (1) normal children;
- (2) mixed patterns—children who showed a combination of the three main patterns which prevented their being placed in any one; and
- (3) slight manifestations of the three main patterns. The abnormal behaviour of these children was so transient that Lewis felt they could not justly be classified into one of the three major patterns. She has dealt with them as being "intermediate between the normal and decidedly abnormal."

TABLE H

Patterns of Behaviour		
Normal	5	2%
Unsocialised aggressive	23	10%
Socialised delinquent	49	21%
Over-inhibited neurotic	48	21%
Slightly "unsocialised aggressive"	24	10%
Slightly "socialised delinquent"	36	15%
Slightly "over-inhibited neurotic"	41	18%
Mixed	8	3%

Patterns of Behaviour

The main patterns of the boys' behaviour are indicated in the table above. This table indicates how varied the boys' patterns of behaviour were and, taken in conjunction with the previous table, show what a heterogeneous group "delinquency" is.

XIII. THE NATURE OF THE OFFENCES

There were fifteen sexual offenders in this group. This probably represents a larger proportion than that in the general population of offenders since sex offenders are more likely to be referred for medical opinion.

There were twenty-eight boys who were charged with threatened violence or actual violence but this underestimates the number of boys with hostile and seriously aggressive

patterns of behaviour. This problem has been discussed elsewhere (Kolvin *et al.*, 1967).

A comparatively small number, twelve, were charged with malicious mischief or wilful damage.

The main bulk of the offences were simple larceny accounting for 169 cases. Breach of one of the motoring laws accounted for eleven cases. Sixteen boys were brought before the court as being beyond the control of their parents. Fourteen children were charged with contravening the Education Act: a substantial proportion of the latter were found to be suffering from the so-called school phobia syndrome and to be in need of medical treatment.

XIV. MOTIVES FOR DELINQUENCY

The motives for delinquency have been classified by Healy and Bronner (1936). In

TABLE I

Motives of Delinquency <i>Ex Gibbens (Healy and Bronner)</i>			
		Gibbens Borstal	Oxford Remand Juveniles
		Main	Main
1.	Escape or flight from a complex situation	48 24%	98 43%
2.	Substitute or compensatory satisfaction (thrill, special recognition, notoriety)	58 29%	24 10%
3.	To bolster ego wounded by feelings of inadequacy or inferiority to others; recognition and status; to prove himself	60 30%	41 17%
4.	Revenge attitude, conscious or unconscious, towards parents and others	10 5%	18 8%
5.	To gain a maximum of satisfaction by exhibition of hostility and antagonism to authority	18 9%	33 14%
6.	Response to instinctual urges; sex, independence, and emancipation	6 3%	14 6%
7.	Seeking punishment in response to unconscious sense of guilt	0 0%	1 ½%

this study each case was classified under one main motive. This must not conceal the fact that motivation was probably often mixed and that the ascription of motivation, like much else in this area, is an inference on the part of the physician diagnosing the case.

In Table I the main motive in our boys is compared with Borstal boys described by Gibbens (1963). The most striking feature is that 43 per cent. of remand delinquents' main motives were considered to be a flight from a complex situation, whereas only 24 per cent. of the Borstal boys were assessed as such. Another obvious difference is that 29 per cent. of the Borstal boys were looking for compensatory satisfactions as such, and in addition 30 per cent. of the Borstal boys were trying either to bolster their ego, to prove themselves in some way or other, whereas in only 17 per cent. of the remand delinquents was this considered to be the main motivation. Another way of expressing this is by saying that a Borstal boy tends mainly to seek thrill, recognition or status through his delinquent behaviour, whereas of all the motives ascribed to juveniles on remand, the escape motive seems to be the most important. Maturation may well account for this difference in motivation.

TABLE J

	Type of Stealing Rich's Classification (1956)			
	Oxford		Gibbens—Borstal	
Marauding	58	33%	52	27%
Proving	40	22%	35	18%
Comforting	36	20%	45	23%
Secondary	43	25%	61	31%

Table J compares our series with that of Gibbens' Borstal boys and shows no significant differences between the types of stealing. Close examination shows that there might be a slight trend for younger Oxford boys to commit fewer secondary offences but the difference was not statistically significant.

XV. COURT DECISIONS

Table K shows the methods of disposal adopted by the courts. The main methods of

TABLE K

Court Disposal		
Probation, supervision and associated measures		141
Fit Person Order and associated measures		35
Approved School		31
Miscellaneous (Discharge, fine or psychiatric treatment only—detention or attendance centre and associated measures)		14
Adjourned <i>sine die</i>		1
Total		234

disposal were probation or supervision orders with or without treatment. Fit Person Orders were made in thirty-five cases: thirty-one boys were sent to approved schools. There were twenty-seven other boys who were given miscellaneous types of sentence.

An attempt was made to assess the degree of agreement between the psychiatrist and the court. In 79 per cent. of cases there was a general agreement between the court and the psychiatrist, but in 21 per cent. of cases the current disposal did not follow the psychiatrist's recommendation. The 79 per cent. acceptance rate will be examined more closely in a subsequent paper.

XVI. DISCUSSION

This paper, which is first of a series, sets out the main facts about the delinquents whom we have studied. The social background of these children follows a familiar pattern. It was rare to find a father or breadwinner in the Registrar General social class I or II; the reason for this is evident from our own clinical experience. We see quite large numbers of compulsive thieves coming from the middle and upper social classes of the general population referred to our out-patient clinics by their general practitioners and not by the courts. Roughly one-fifth of all children referred to our service are found to have committed some act of larceny. In a study of adoptive children (Humphrey, M., *et. al.*, 1963) referred for psychiatric advice, which was carried out at the same time as the present study was being made, it was found that among eighty adoptive children thirty showed the phenomenon of persistent stealing. In this latter study, the children were divided into two groups—those that were adopted late and those that were adopted

early. Among late adoptions more than half had persistent stealing as an outstanding feature of their behaviour. Very few of the young thieves referred to psychiatric outpatient clinics in fact ever came to the notice of the courts. In general the chances of a thief being brought before the courts and remanded for psychiatric advice diminishes as the breadwinner rises in the social scale.

This vulnerability of exposure to court appearances of delinquents in the lower social classes could be in part an index of the poorer social skills which their parents have in protecting them from court experiences. Nevertheless, in comparison with earlier studies, the distinct bias towards children coming from higher social classes suggests the possibility of a real change of social class distribution of delinquency.

Our figures clearly show that family size is closely associated with membership of the present series. This can be regarded in a number of ways. It may be that it is simply a reflection of the general fecklessness of parents. Another possibility is that the overcrowding induced by the presence of many siblings may increase aggression, increase the tendency to leave the home range young, increase the tendency to join a gang and raise the general level of exploratory behaviour.

An association between parental separation and delinquent behaviour with a high psychiatric contamination is again noted (*cf.* Bowlby, J., 1946).

In this series the relatively low verbal I.Q. went along with poor academic attainment and poor school attendance. The well-known "delinquents gap" between performance and verbal I.Q. is often explained by attributing it to "linguistic deprivation experienced in their social background" (Bernstein, 1960-61). Bernstein goes on to raise the question of "the relationship between potential and developed intelligence and education." Though it seems perhaps most reasonable to attribute this pattern largely to social influence and poor school attendance, does this necessarily account wholly for the phenomena described? An alternative possibility is that delinquent boys represent those in whom biological exploratory behaviour is maintained at a high level. The foundations for many of those operations which underlie "performance intelligence" are laid down through exploratory behaviour. It

might be that the "delinquent gap phenomenon" is determined both by an increase in performance up to maximum potential in addition to linguistic deprivation. Admittedly this hypothesis is highly speculative.

The 234 boys in this survey represent the most obvious problematic cases of some 700 boys on remand.

The earlier findings of O'Neil and Robins (1958, 1959), in their thirty years' St. Louis follow-up of children seen at the Child Guidance Clinic, of a very high rate of schizophrenia as adults (10 per cent.), was not borne out by Robins' (1966) subsequent complete analysis of the data (5 per cent.). Nevertheless, this is still significantly above the rate expected in the general population. In addition, as children, some 74 per cent. of the schizophrenics had been referred to the child psychiatric clinic for antisocial behaviour. In the Oxford group of 234 juvenile delinquents on psychiatric remand 150 were assessed as significantly psychiatrically disturbed. The risk of schizophrenia in this group should, therefore, theoretically be high. For this reason this group was carefully scrutinised at the time of psychiatric assessment, but in only one case was there suspicion of schizophrenia. Clearly this group merits, at least, a ten-year follow-up study, especially as the St. Louis schizophrenics mainly revealed themselves in their mid-twenties.

Ten of the boys brought to court for persistent truancy proved to be suffering from phobic anxiety. It is extremely important that this group of phobically ill boys are not missed and that they are handled psychiatrically and not punitively.

SUMMARY

1. Basic data are presented on 234 juvenile delinquents remanded in custody for psychiatric opinion.
2. Reasons for referral were:
 - (a) the boys' behaviour was found to be inexplicable by the court's officers;
 - (b) the question of emotional disorder had been raised;
 - (c) because social workers had found evidence of a psychologically disturbed upbringing; and

(d) because the delinquent had committed unusual or atypical offences, sex offences, etc.

3. Though this series had slightly more boys drawn from families of social classes I and II than the Essex-Cater series, there was gross under-representation of these classes as compared with the general population. It is suggested that the vulnerability of exposure to court of delinquents coming from lower social classes could in part be explained by the poorer social skills which their parents had in protecting them from court experiences. Nevertheless, the possibility of a real change in the social-class distribution of delinquency cannot be ignored.

4. Family size was substantially larger in this series than in the Essex-Cater series.

5. Separation experiences, fostering and overcrowding were common in the home background.

6. Relatively few boys below the age of twelve were referred to the remand home.

7. There was a marked and highly significant difference between performance and verbal scores on the Wechsler, with a significant depression of the latter. Possible explanations for this difference are discussed. In addition, the authors counsel caution in the use of only verbal tests of I.Q. in the ascertainment of subnormality in children coming from working-class communities.

8. Educational retardation was virtually uniform throughout the series.

9. Larceny was the commonest offence.

10. The major motive (using Healy and Bronner's classification) ascribed to this juvenile delinquent group was an escape from

a complex situation; whereas in Gibbens' older Borstal group the main motivations were thrill-seeking and achieving status.

11. Ten children suffered from phobic paroxysmal panic attacks on leaving home for school. Unfortunately, these were not recognised as such, and they found their way into juvenile courts rather than psychiatric clinics.

12. Violent offenders numbered twenty-eight, but this underestimates the total number of violent and hostile boys.

13. Sexual offenders numbered fifteen. There was reason to suppose that most sexual offenders were in fact referred for medical opinion.

14. Sixty-four per cent. of the boys were regarded as basically unstable—the absence of schizophrenia in a population with a high risk of schizophrenia is noted. It is suggested that a ten-year follow-up study is merited.

15. The most usual method of disposal was supervision; 13 per cent. of the boys were committed to approved schools.

16. The medical advice proffered to the courts was accepted in 79 per cent. of the cases.

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References: These will be appended in a subsequent paper.