


Winter 1935

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Recommended Citation

Erdmann Doane Beynon, Crime and Custom of the Hungarians of Detroit, 25 Am. Inst. Crim. L. & Criminology 755 (1934-1935)

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CRIME AND CUSTOM OF THE HUNGARIANS OF DETROIT

ERDMANN DOANE BEYNON

As a factor in criminal causation, residence in a foreign language colony does not appear to have any constant or uniform effect. The importance of this factor varies with the degree of social solidarity possessed by the colony and with the type of background out of which its immigrant members have come. In the case of the Hungarians settled in Detroit, the amount as well as the type of delinquency and crime seems to bear a rather definite relationship to residence within or without the foreign language colony.

I. THE HUNGARIAN SETTLEMENT OF DETROIT

The migration of Hungarian immigrants into the Detroit area began about 1898, the year in which the Michigan Malleable Iron Company commenced production in Delray, at that time a small suburb on the Detroit River about five miles west of the central business district of the city. Hungarian immigrants in Cleveland, South Bend, Toledo and other cities, learning of the high wages and good working conditions offered by this new factory, came to seek employment. As a result of the influx of these new-comers, Delray was gradually abandoned by its old-time residents. The village of Delray was annexed to Detroit in 1904, but the name is still in use to denote the Hungarian colony which has filled the area of the former suburb.

The old municipality of Delray had definite boundaries. The limits of the Hungarian colony of Delray, however, are zonal. They fade off indeterminately into areas that do not belong to the colony. In order to have some basis of comparison between Hungarian crime and delinquency, on the one hand, and the Hungarian colony, on the other, it may be assumed that this colony includes that area extending from the Detroit River north to Fort Street and from Clark Street west to the Rouge River. As thus delimited, the Hungarian colony is at present an integral part of the city of Detroit and is divided among Wards 14, 16, 18, and 20, in each of which the Delray section forms only the southern part. It is therefore not possible to determine from the population statistics published by the Bureau of the Census either the number of Hungarians resident within the colony

or the proportion which these form of the total Hungarian population of Detroit. Consequently, in order to determine this distribution, reliance must be placed upon supplementary sources, especially the Detroit City Census prepared by the Board of Education and the Hungarian family names listed in Polk's *Detroit City Directory*. The results obtained from a study of these two sources harmonize closely. According to the Detroit City Census, the Delray colony had 45.46 per cent of the total Hungarian population of Detroit in 1925. The Hungarian names listed in Polk's *Detroit City Directory* for 1931-32 are distributed as follows:

Within the Delray colony.....	44.27 per cent
Outside the Delray colony.....	55.72 per cent

II. SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE HUNGARIAN COLONY

Background of the Hungarian Immigrants in Detroit. The social organization of the Hungarians of Detroit has been very largely a product of the interplay of three factors:

(a) The earlier life of these immigrants was spent in primary group relationships in a rather homogeneous society. The majority of them were born in communes of smaller size in those sections of Hungary which are least affected by modern industrial civilization. Before their migration to America, their lives had been moulded and controlled by the traditional folk culture.

(b) These immigrants had spent some time in the Hungarian colonies of other American cities prior to their coming to Detroit. Detroit has never been a "port of first entry" to any considerable number of Hungarian immigrants. Usually they have become acculturated, at least partially, to Hungarian-American life prior to their migration to Detroit.

(c) Immigrants from every part of Hungary live in close proximity in the Detroit Hungarian colony. The single exception is the "*Magyar Negyed*" on Medina and Barnes Streets, a settlement made up largely of immigrants from the commune of Sarud (Heves County) and preserving the peculiar customs and, to some extent, the costumes of the home village. Apart from this one settlement, there does not seem to have been any tendency for Hungarian immigrants in Detroit to settle close to those born in the same village or even in the same county. Friendships formed in other Hungarian colonies in America prior to migration to Detroit seem to play as conspicuous a role as do those associated with the immigrant's birthplace in

Hungary. Owing to these new associations formed in America the ties binding *földiek* (persons born, or reared, in the same village) to each other have been greatly weakened.

Hungarian Village Life in an American City. As a result of the interplay of these factors there has developed in Delray the social life of a Hungarian village—not that of any particular village in Hungary, since the cohesion of *földiek* has been broken down—but rather that of a new village, formed in an American city by villagers from every part of Hungary and developing out of the fusion of their divergent folk cultures its own folkways and mores which it imposes upon the members of the group. An expression frequently heard within the colony is: *Delray-ben foly a falusi élet* (Within Delray the village life flows on). On the streets of Delray one hears from everyone he meets the old Hungarian salutation: *Jó napot kívánok* (I wish you a good day). Whenever one goes for a walk, he is accosted by all whom he meets with the words: *Hová mész?* (Where are you going?) Failure to answer this simple question would mark one as an object of suspicion who sought to hide his activities from his neighbors. Any chance conversation, on the street or in the store, is concluded with the words: *Isten veled* (May God be with thee!) Whoever enters a Hungarian home in the colony, whether he be stranger or friend, is greeted with the words: *Isten hozta* (God has brought you).

Organized Groups Within the Hungarian Colony. These may be divided according to their purpose, as follows:

- Sick Benefit and Insurance Societies;
- Social Clubs;
- Athletic Clubs;
- Altar Societies;
- Singing Clubs, or *Dalárdák*;
- Dramatic Clubs.

Practically every Hungarian of Detroit who has not broken away entirely from the people of his own nationality is connected in some way with one or more of these societies or clubs. Dr. Charles Földy, formerly editor of the *Detroiti Ujság*, affirms: "These clubs make up the varied life of our colony. If a man isolates himself from all of them, he is not a member of the Hungarian colony any longer." Virtually every club and society includes in addition to its actual membership a large periphery of *pártolók* (adherents).

The social control exercised in Hungary by the village group has been taken over largely among the Detroit Hungarians by these

societies. Hungarian churches and radical associations alike have difficulty in holding their people, unless the people are linked together in a society. The society becomes the center of the social life of its members. When memberships clash, the individual or family chooses one or other as the dominant social control. In order to make their appeal to different groups of individuals, certain organizations foster more than one club. Thus the Socialist Labor Party has four: a sick benefit society, a social club, a singing club, and a dramatic club. The management is the same for all four, the membership is only partially the same, and the periphery is almost entirely different.

Practically all the churches, societies and clubs in the Hungarian colony are represented in the Federation of Hungarian Churches and Societies (*A Detroiti Magyar Egyházak és Egyletek Nagybizottsága*). Each society is given representation and also assessed taxes on the basis of its membership. The weekly meetings of the federation show an effort to reproduce the meetings of the Hungarian Parliament in Budapest. The delegates of the different societies are seated according to their conservative or radical tendencies, those from the Hungarian Town and Country Club being on the president's extreme right and those from the Communist societies being on his extreme left. The heated discussions at the meetings of the federation fill the front pages of both Detroit Hungarian weekly papers and form the principal topic of conversation for a great many of the members of the colony.

Informal Groups Within the Hungarian Colony. One of the most persistent of Hungarian groups is that of the *Sogorok* and *Komák*. A *Sogor* is, properly speaking, a brother-in-law. To this class, however, there belong a brother's wife and children, a sister's husband and children, a brother-in-law's wife, a sister-in-law's husband, the parents and other near relatives of both brother-in-law and sister-in-law, and also certain other persons whose relationship to the family seems uncertain. The entire group is known as the *Sogorság*.

A *Koma* is the godparent of one's children. Since different godparents are usually selected for each child in a family and since the parents themselves serve as godparents to the children of other families, the *Komaság* comes to include a group of considerable size.

The entire group of *Sogorok* and *Komák* must be invited to banquets held in Hungarian homes on the following ceremonial occasions: weddings, baptisms, Name Days (*Névnapok*—the days of the saints after whom the members of the family were named: these days were observed rather than the actual birthdays), and Pig Kill-

ings (*Disznótorok*). Even though there might be personal antipathy between the host and some of his *Sogorok* and *Komák*, personal feelings had to be disregarded on these ceremonial occasions. At these banquets ceremonial speeches are recited by persons specially qualified for this function.

This group cohesion shows itself most significantly at a funeral. The primary interest of the family of the deceased is in the *Bucsuztatás*, very carefully prepared by them in advance for the use of the officiating clergyman, in the following traditional form:

"My deceased husband, Michael Módi, born in the Commune of Gyulaj, County of Tolna, aged 44 years, now takes farewell from his beloved wife and children and from his *Sogorok*: Peter Juhász and family, John Rádi and family, Menhert Berkó and family, Joseph Berkó and family, and from the entire *Sogorság*. Also he takes farewell from Nicholas Császár and family and from the entire *Komaság*."

One of the most serious difficulties possible in a Hungarian church even in Detroit would be a mistake in the *bucsuztatás*. There is a proper order in which these names must be read. To reverse or to change that order would be insulting. At a *disznótor* the guests are seated according to the same order in which their names would appear in the *bucsuztatás*. The *Sogorok* sit nearest to the host: beyond them sit the *Komák*: beyond these again must be seated other good friends of the host. One who stands in the relation of *sogor* or *koma* to the host is not addressed during the banquet by his own name, but only by his ceremonial title, *sogor* or *koma*, as the case may be.

The otherwise strong tie of this group relationship is somewhat weakened by its overlapping. The same people may stand in this same relation to many different families. This diffusion of group loyalties prevents any fixed cohesion among the members of a group.

Traces of this informal group cohesion linger in spite of assimilation to American life. Even though they may be intermarried with people of other nationalities and speak English only in their homes, the second and third generations of Hungarian immigrants still feel in most cases the tie that binds them to their *sogorok* and *komák*.

Cultural Isolation of the Hungarian Colony. To some of the older immigrants the social life of Delray is virtually "their entire world." Cases are by no means exceptional in which persons have spent from 15 to 20 years in the Delray colony without travelling once to the center of Detroit. In the following extreme statement by Mrs. Petrovics, expression is given to the feelings of a number of the older Hungarian settlers who have never moved out of the colony:

"Why should I learn this funny English language, when I do not have to? It's a shame that they will not give citizenship papers to decent people unless they know English. Here in Delray the Hungarian language is all I need to know. None of my neighbors know how to talk English. If these American people want to talk to us so badly, why don't they learn our language?"

Béla Toth had been raised outside the Hungarian colony. When he was about fifteen years old, his parents moved back into the colony. His later delinquency and crime was partly explained as due to the maladjustment arising out of his lack of knowledge of the Hungarian language:

"I am always ashamed to meet people. The boys around here all laugh at me because I cannot talk Hungarian. That is why I bummed around with Armenian boys and others."

Finding himself maladjusted in relation to the Hungarian group, he sought intimate associations with persons of other nationalities living on the periphery of the Hungarian colony.

Socially Approved and Socially Disapproved Groups. There is a significant difference between the organization of the socially approved groups within the colony and that of the socially disapproved gangs on the periphery. To the first class belong those boys who on Christmas Day dress as the shepherds of Bethlehem and go from house to house, presenting in archaic language the traditional "Bethlehem Play." Similarly on Easter Monday many such groups roam the streets of Delray, as they perform the ceremony of the *locsolódás*, thus maintaining in Detroit an ancestral Hungarian custom. Entering the houses in which the girls live, they rush from room to room in search of the girls in order that they may sprinkle them with water or perfume. The sprinkling is accompanied by the recital of several stanzas of old folk poetry. Either the girls themselves or their parents pay the boys with Easter eggs, cake or money for their trouble and thank them for the visit.

In spite of their anti-social activities, certain coal-stealing gangs receive a sort of social approval in the Hungarian colony. The theft of fuel is, under certain conditions, a thing approved by the mores of the Hungarian peasantry.

On the contrary, the socially disapproved gangs are seldom limited to boys of Hungarian nationality. Their activity runs counter to the folkways and mores of the Hungarian people, in which naturally they have no common interest. Consequently, a mixed group

in a baseball club frequently turns to anti-social activities, since its composite character emancipates it from group control.

The social organization of the colony is such that a stabilizing influence is exerted upon those Hungarians who are not emancipated from the social control of their group. Apart from certain forms of illicit activity sanctioned by the group itself, the influence of the colony tends to prevent delinquency and crime.

III. JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

During the period from January 1, 1927, to March 11, 1932, the complaints filed against Hungarian boys in Wayne County Juvenile Court numbered 462 and involved 380 boys.

The spatial distribution of these juvenile delinquents is very significant, if compared with that of the total Hungarian population. Of the 380 Hungarian boys against whom complaints were filed, 364 boys resided in that area from which the names in the *Detroit City Directory* were taken. Within this area (*i. e.*, the city of Detroit and eight adjacent municipalities), the Hungarian colony of Delray contributed 140 juvenile delinquents, while the remaining 224 boys resided outside the colony.

The following table shows how this distribution of juvenile delinquents compares with that of the total population.

TABLE 1
DISTRIBUTION OF HUNGARIAN JUVENILE DELINQUENTS AND OF THE TOTAL
HUNGARIAN POPULATION, OF DETROIT (BY PERCENTAGE)

	<i>Total Hungarian Population</i>	<i>Hungarian Juvenile Delinquents</i>
Colony of Delray.....	44.27%	38.46%
Outside the Colony.....	55.72%	61.53%

Various factors are involved in the lesser ratio of juvenile delinquency among the Hungarians living within the colony than among those outside. It is true that members of a foreign language colony are somewhat less apt to file complaints against the children of their countrymen than are the Americans who have trouble with the children of "foreigners." The difference however is not significant in the case of Hungarians. Of the 175 complaints filed against boys in the colony, eight, or 4.57 per cent, were filed by the offended party. Of the 266 complaints against boys outside the colony, eighteen, or 6.76 per cent, were filed by the offended party.

The principal factor in the lesser ratio of juvenile delinquency within the colony appears to be the social solidarity which serves as a protection against the anti-social conduct rather than against the punishment for such conduct. A stabilizing influence is exerted upon the boys who grow up, surrounded by the culture of their own group.

The effect of this community solidarity within the colony can best be studied, if a comparison be made between the nucleus¹ of the Hungarian colony and the rest of Wayne County in respect to the various classes of offenses committed by Hungarian boys.

TABLE 2

DISTRIBUTION OF OFFENSES CHARGED AGAINST HUNGARIAN BOYS, BY CLASSES OF OFFENSES, ACCORDING TO RESIDENCE WITHIN OR OUTSIDE THE NUCLEUS OF THE HUNGARIAN COLONY

Class of Offenses	Nucleus of Colony		Rest of Wayne County	
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage
Railroad Larceny and other railroad offenses	38	43.28%	50	56.81%
Larceny (non-railroad)	41	29.49%	98	70.50%
Breaking and Entering.....	22	20.00%	88	80.00%
Robbery and Assault.....	3	25.00%	9	75.00%
Truancy and Incurability.....	16	25.00%	48	75.00%
Habitual Nuisance and Malicious Destruction of Property.....	11	31.42%	24	68.57%
Sex Offenses	0	0.00%	7	100.00%
Miscellaneous, including speeding, forgery, violation of prohibition law	1	6.25%	15	93.75%
Total	133	28.78%	329	71.21%

Coal Stealing. The fact that 43.28 per cent of the cases of railroad larceny involved boys living in the Hungarian colony is very significant. Complaints against boys within the colony had a considerably higher ratio for this class of offenses than for any other class. In the case of the theft of fuel, the Hungarian culture encourages rather than prevents delinquency and crime.

This cultural trait can be understood only by reference to the system of land tenure in Hungary. The *Urbarium* of Maria Theresa, in 1764, laid down the relative rights and obligations of the peasant and his feudal lord.² This Magna Charta of the Hungarian peasantry was partly a formal recognition of established customs, partly

¹An area, consisting of 25 streets and parts of streets in the center of the colony. The Hungarian churches, clubs, printing offices and principal stores are located within this nucleus.

²John Paget: *Hungary and Transylvania*. London, 1839. Vol. I, p. 295 ff.

a grant of new rights. An entire peasant's fief consisted of a house and garden-ground, to the extent of one acre, along with a certain amount of arable land, pasture and meadow. "The peasant might cut wood for building and firing . . . on the property of his landlord without payment." As a result of this provision no problem regarding the peasant's supply of fuel could arise until the Emancipation of the Serfs in 1848. Through that emancipation the feudal lords lost their ownership of the village with its adjoining arable land, pasture and meadow, but retained in most cases practically all the forests. The peasants no longer had any right to take fuel out of the landlord's forests. Trespassing on the *tilos* (enclosed property) was forbidden, though the prohibition was not enforced with equal vigor on all estates. In time, a sort of accommodation was reached between the nobility and the peasantry. It was legally recognized that the forest belonged absolutely to the nobleman, and that if the peasant entered it, he was guilty of trespass: if he removed firewood from it, he was guilty of theft. The noble lord, however, graciously condescended to overlook a certain amount of this stealing, provided the peasants stole only dead wood and did not molest the game. In fact the "stealing" became regulated. Thus, as late as 1925, the superintendent of a nobleman's estate in Sopron County issued a proclamation to the peasantry that henceforth the "stealing of firewood in the count's forests would be permitted only on Saturdays."

Hungarian peasants settled in Detroit have transferred to coal stealing from the railroad their old attitude toward the stealing of firewood from a nobleman's estate. The coal is stolen, not from some individual like themselves, but from the property of an impersonal, unknown railroad company which corresponds fairly well in their thinking to the absentee nobleman from whose forests their fathers gathered firewood.

Veszprémi István is the recording steward of a Hungarian church in Detroit. In answer to a question about his fuel for the winter, he said:

"We buy only stolen coal. It costs us \$3.00 a ton, which is less than half what we pay the coal dealer. The boys come and take our orders in the afternoon and then steal the coal at night from the cars on the railway tracks."

"Do you not think it wrong to steal coal or to buy stolen coal?"

"No, of course not. You see, it is this way. Stealing coal is different from other stealing. If I would take five cents of your money, that would be real stealing. You are a man just like me. I know you. I have never

in my life stolen like that. No honest man would. Only the Gypsies steal from other people that way. But coal stealing isn't like that at all. Why, the coal stands there on the railroad tracks, and we never see the man who owns that railroad. It's an estate of some kind, just like the estates in Hungary. Why should not the poor people get their coal from it?"

Another Hungarian immigrant, the treasurer of a church, was praising his son to visitors.

"Béla is surely a good boy. Why, all last winter we only had to buy a half a ton of coal. Béla stole all the rest from the railroad."

The average immigrant cannot understand why his boy should be arrested and punished for stealing coal. Kovács József was lamenting his son's arrest.

"What an unjust country America is! My boy never did anything wrong. He was always an honest boy, would not have stolen a nickel from anyone. Yet the police arrested him when he was merely stealing coal, and they are keeping him in jail for that. What stupid people!"

The Natural History of the Hungarian Delinquent. In undoubtedly the majority of cases the delinquency of Hungarian boys within the colony commences with coal stealing and advances no further, especially if the boy is not arrested. Although a large number of boys may be seen at work any night, stealing coal from the railroads which intersect the Delray colony, comparatively few are arrested for railroad larceny. In the case of those unfortunate boys who are caught, however, the arrest gives a new definition to the situation. Conduct socially approved by their own group has become larceny. They find that they themselves are thieves. The nice distinction made between coal stealing and other forms of theft becomes blurred. Consequently it becomes easier for the boy to progress into other and more serious kinds of delinquency and crime. Those Hungarian boys whose coal-stealing activities escaped the attention of the police seldom pass over into more serious anti-social conduct. The situation has never been defined for them in any manner other than that of the culture of their own group.

The case of Joe Kish, a resident of Bacon Street on the periphery of the colony, may be duplicated many times in the records of the Wayne County Juvenile Court and of the Detroit Recorder's Court.

"On May 11, 1921, Joe, then a boy of 13, was brought before the court on complaint filed by the special officer of the D. T. & I. Railroad that this boy did on April 27, 1921, steal a quantity of coal from the D. T. & I. tracks, the coal being the property of the D. T. & I. Railroad. The boy

was found delinquent on this charge and was placed on probation. On October 3, 1923, when Joe was 15 years old, he was arrested again for stealing coal, this time from the Pennsylvania Railroad. He was again found delinquent and placed on probation.

"On December 22, 1924, when Joe was 16, he was brought before the court on the complaint that he did, on or about November 15, 1924, steal \$30.00 in money from his mother. He found delinquent on this charge and was committed to the Ford Republic. Shortly after his release from this institution, in 1928, he found himself hard pressed for food and clothes. Consequently, he broke into a cigar store, stole \$5.00 in cash and cigars and cigarettes to the value of \$11.50. After selling the cigars and cigarettes at a football field, he bought a pair of pants, a neck tie and socks, and spent the rest of the money for shows and food. He was arrested, tried, convicted and sent to Ionia Reformatory on a sentence of three to fifteen years, of which he served two and one-half years only. Shortly after his release, on February 9, 1931, he broke into a blind pig and confectionary store, and stole cigars, cigarettes and a small amount of money. After his arrest for this offense, he confessed to at least twelve other robberies of a similar nature."

After this boy's arrest for coal stealing, he entered upon other forms of theft, since the situation had now been defined for him. The progress of Hungarian boys in delinquency and crime seems to follow in most cases a rather definite sequence.

I. The theft of coal from cars on the railroad, for the use of the delinquent's own family. This practice is thoroughly approved by the group, since it corresponds to the theft of wood from the manorial forest adjoining the peasant village.

II. The theft of coal for sale to others, the proceeds being turned over usually to the delinquent's own family. This practice is tolerated, if not actually approved, by the group.

III. The theft of other and more valuable articles from railroad property. This loot is usually secured by breaking into box cars. Many arrests take place at this step, owing to the increased value of the things stolen. The railroad police are more likely to overlook the theft of a small amount of coal than that of 250 pounds of copper, or \$50 worth of lubricating dope, two of the items for which Hungarian boys were arrested. This type of theft is no longer approved by the group. The gang element begins to enter in, since the loot must be hidden from the boy's parents.

IV. The theft of money or other articles from the delinquent's home. Ordinarily some external incentive is needed to induce the boy to take this anti-social step. Frequently the members of the gang who helped the boy dispose of the loot from railroad cars incite him to prey upon his own home.

V. Finally the delinquent begins to prey upon the homes of the other members of the social group to which he himself belongs. He is no longer charged with railroad larceny, but with breaking and entering or with

robbery armed. He has fully graduated from juvenile delinquency into adult crime. As a result of behavior of this type he becomes an outcast from the Hungarian group.

The above sequence is not limited to immigrant groups in America, but may be found within the peasant economy in Europe, as Ladislav Reymont's *The Peasants* shows. The simple Polish boy, Kuba, was fervently religious, but was accustomed to steal firewood from the manorial forest. When he poached a deer in order to present it to the village priest, he felt no remorse. His uneasiness became acute when he agreed to steal deer regularly for Yankel, the Jew. At this point he was turning from socially approved to socially disapproved conduct. It was worse to steal than to steal for one's own sake or for that of one's priest. The great emotional crisis came, however, when Yankel persuaded Kuba to steal oats from Boryna, a rich peasant. Kuba cried out: "My father was not a thief: neither am I."

IV. TYPES OF ADULT CRIMINALS

Those Hungarians whose case histories are preserved in the files of the Detroit Recorder's Court may be classified according to certain well-marked types, some of which predominate within the colony and some without. This spatial distribution of types in relation to crime makes possible the classification of Hungarian adult criminals in Detroit on the basis of the effect which the lack of the stabilizing influence of the foreign language colony has upon their social maladjustment.

(A) *Persons Whose Maladjustment Is Not Attributable to Lack of the Stabilizing Influence of the Hungarian Colony.*

The types of criminals belonging to this class are found both within and without the colony. In most cases they are persons who would be maladjusted in any environment. Even if they had remained in the peasant village in Hungary where they were born, they would in all probability have failed even there to adjust in a socially approved manner. Although the lack of the stabilizing influence of the colony is not responsible for the maladjustment in these cases, yet certain types tend to remove themselves as far as possible from the colony: other types tend to remain among their own cultural group. Thus, persons with schizoid tendencies are almost never found in the colony. Their desire "to be somebody" leads them to migrate to

"better American neighborhoods." On the other hand, the Hungarian "witch" and embezzler alike must live within the colony in order to find their prey. The Hungarian chronic alcoholic also is scarcely ever found outside the colony.

1. *Maladjustment Due to Some Personality Defect.*

(a) *The Chronic Alcoholic.* This is one of the most definite types found in the Hungarian colony. At least ten per cent of all the Hungarian cases brought before the Detroit Recorder's Court during the past decade were of this type. The case history in every instance is virtually the same:

"Chronic alcoholic with paranoid trends . . . a drunken, suspicious husband . . . a middle-aged man . . . low intelligence quotient. . . . In spite of attacks of delirium tremens, he refuses to believe that he gets drunk.

"Very demanding in his sex relations. Resorts to brutality, if refused. . . . Uses vile words in addressing his wife. . . . Calls her *kurva*. . . . Insanely jealous of his wife . . . constantly afraid lest she be "speculating"³ regarding him. Hides and watches for other men to visit his wife.

"Constantly afraid lest he be taken to an asylum, jail, or hospital. . . . Always afraid lest his wife put poison in his wine.

"A very talkative man, constantly lauding himself and condemning his wife and children. . . . Brutal toward his children, whom he forces to leave home."

Although in certain families chronic alcoholism may be traced back to the fathers and grandfathers who lived in peasant villages in Hungary, yet in most cases there is a precipitating cause which leads the Hungarian immigrant to seek escape through drink: some financial reverse, some prolonged period of unemployment, some marital unhappiness. In one case the husband began to drink to excess as soon as he discovered that a sterilizing operation had been performed upon his wife without his knowledge or consent.

A causative factor in this behavior is undoubtedly the Hungarian peasant attitude that the sole end and purpose of marriage is to give the husband sexual gratification. He is the *Ur*—the lord of the home. Nothing whatever must interfere with his pleasures. If pregnancy and lactation cause his wife to be sexually unresponsive

³*Spekulál*, meaning, "to look around, make inquiries, make schemes, secure some advantage for oneself." Both in Hungary and in America this expression is used frequently by the drunken, suspicious husband, in describing his fear lest his wife harbor some designs against him. This word is almost invariably mentioned in the case histories of these persons.

for a time, then abortion must be practiced. Thus, when a newly married second generation Hungarian woman asked to be excused from sexual relationship for a few days, her husband answered: "What in h--l do you think I married you for anyway?" To a large degree, the immoderate drinking of Hungarian immigrant husbands is due to thwarted sexual desires. The man gets drunk in order that he may have more courage to assert "his rights."

(b) *The Witch*. In spite of the unusual interest aroused by an occurrence of witchcraft within the Hungarian colony, this type is as rare as the drunken, jealous husband is common. Both types are found solely within the colony, but for different reasons. The chronic alcoholic lacks initiative to move away from his own cultural group. The witch's power is lost as soon as she is confronted by persons of a different culture. This fact was given significant demonstration in the case of the "witch of Medina Street," who was reputed to have caused the mysterious death of twelve men, in order to obtain their insurance. No charge could be proven against "Aunt Rose" Veres, so long as Medina Street was populated almost entirely by superstitious peasants from Sarud, in Hungary.

"Medina Street is a little world by itself, away from the turmoil of the big city of which it forms a part, a world completely shaken and terrified by suspicions and hatreds of the brown house where Mrs. Veres lives. The neighbors tell wild tales of the charms she can conjure and of the havoc she has wrought when she 'cast an eye' on some unfortunate. 'She has strange powers,' they explained naively. 'She boasts that she cannot stay in jail, that she knows the magic to get out. We are afraid to catch her eye. She can make our children sick and our husbands lose their jobs.' She knows all kinds of magic."⁴

As a result of this superstitious terror, no Hungarian would dare to testify against "Aunt Rose." Consequently, although eleven men had died mysteriously in "Aunt Rose's" house and she had, in each case, collected the full amount of the dead man's insurance, the State was never able to secure sufficient evidence to convict her. After the death of the twelfth man, Steve Mak, on July 6, 1931, the "witch" was convicted of murder in the first degree, solely as a result of population changes on Medina Street. Some of the Hungarian families had moved away, and colored people had taken their place. At this trial, as at the previous ones, the Hungarian witnesses continued to answer: "I don't know anything about it," "I don't verstek," and "me no talk." Five Negro neighbors—newcomers on the street—gave detailed accounts of the murder.

⁴*Detroit Times*, August 27, 1931.

(c) *Schizoid Tendencies.* The maladjustment of a certain number of Hungarians is due to this personality defect. Thus Mary Kovács, who married a day laborer, lamented her lowly social position:

"The rest of my family are all lawyers and other professional people. I feel inferior because of my husband's work. My father was a noble in Hungary. Here in America, I am the wife of a common laborer. That is why I make my husband go with me to night school every night after he comes home from work. We expect to complete the course and then go to college. I must go to college, for I want my son to be proud of me."

Mary's ambition was accompanied by sexual maladjustment and constant nagging. This in turn led to domestic difficulties and the partial estrangement of Mary's husband, who already has been arrested three times for rape.

Steve Kish was arrested for practicing medicine without a license. His difficulty was due to a similar ambition.

"He wants to be a big man of importance and actually thinks that he is. He claims that his grandfather was of the Hungarian nobility, being a Count. Although not very familiar with English, he reads the Saturday Evening Post, because he thinks that is the correct thing to do. He greatly enjoys telling of his interest in golf. He takes great pleasure in dressing in golf knickers and sweaters and walking about the golf course in a lordly manner. His underlying desire is 'to get ahead and amount to something.' Although his intelligence quotient was only 64 on the Stanford Abbreviated Scale, and he was at that time employed as a factory laborer on the night shift, yet he represented himself as a senior medical student and secured work in a doctor's office. His bluff so impressed the doctor for whom he worked that he introduced him at meetings of the Wayne County Medical Association. The patient frequently attended parties, at which he was introduced as 'Dr. Kish.' He spent the money he earned in the factory buying medical books, but he had difficulty in understanding them."

Helen Nagy was employed as a domestic in a wealthy Grosse Pointe home. Although her intelligence quotient on the Binet Simon Test Abbreviated Form was only 69.79, still she felt an urge to be "a person in society."

"She cried frequently when telling how poorly she was dressed. She had quit school because she wanted more clothes. She bought rings on credit from a fashionable jewelry store. To pay some of her debts, she stole a \$750 diamond ring belonging to her employer, and pawned it. She always reads the society column of the newspapers. She took up the study of the drama and claims (though this was found to be false) that she played the part of the nun in Morris Geste's *The Miracle*. For her week's vaca-

tion last year she went to Chicago and registered at the New Drake Hotel under the name of her employer's daughter, a post-debutante."

Although not requiring an explanation in terms of the Hungarian culture, the following personality defects also have served as major factors in the maladjustment of Hungarians brought before the Detroit Recorder's Court:

- (d) Hypererotic manifestations;
- (e) Borderline defective, unable to stand mental strain;
- (f) Feeble-mindedness.

2. *Maladjustment Due to Economic Pressure.*

Many Hungarian immigrants are unable to adjust in a socially approved manner to severe economic pressure. In the peasant village there was economic security accompanied by a very low standard of living. When economic pressure threatens the higher standard of living to which they have suddenly become accustomed in America, certain immigrants re-act either actively or passively in an anti-social manner. To the former category belong the confidence men, forgers and planners of hold-ups, who appear occasionally among the Detroit Hungarians. Since such persons are able to prey most easily upon the members of their own group, they are usually found within the colony.

A woman with an intelligence quotient of 56 on the Pintner-Patterson Performance Scale was arrested for forgery.

"Elizabeth Nemeth was married and was very happy in her married life. She had five children, only two of whom are now living. Her husband died four years ago, leaving her considerable property. She was very inadequate in her business arrangements and soon squandered her money. She bought a car when she was unemployed and could not even provide food for herself and her children. Since she had no more money, she tried 'hustling' for a time. Then she made out bogus checks and persuaded a man to forge signatures on them."

Dave Toth, who had been a salesman for seven years was arrested for planning a hold-up.

"Dave Toth was not only a successful salesman, but also a fervently religious man. He was known as his 'pastor's right hand.' For several years he had been the district manager for the sale of the religious publications of his denomination. As a result of the depression, his sales fell off and he was unable to live any longer in the manner to which he was accustomed. Accordingly he went and hunted up two bandits with whom he made an agreement about a hold-up. He selected a store for the burg-

lary, brought the bandits to a dark street in the neighborhood, brought them guns, and waited in his car for their return. After the division of the loot from the store, Toth drove the bandits down town and then returned to the church, where he took part in a prayer meeting."

Among Hungarian immigrants the passive reaction to economic pressure usually involves chronic alcoholism and the consequent broken homes.

"Charles Nagy was a good worker and gave his wife most of his wages. He always drank moderately, but never to excess, until he was laid off work six months ago. Since then he has been getting drunk constantly and causing a lot of trouble at home."

3. *Maladjustment Due to Criminalistic Home Environment.*

Even in the simple society of the Hungarian peasant village, there are found occasionally predatory individuals or families who steal from their neighbors. John Horváth was the child of such a family.

"John Horváth, aged 20 years, with an intelligence quotient of 74.47 on the Terman-Revision Binet Scale, was charged with breaking and entering a business place in the night time. This was his third offense. Environmental issues are undoubtedly responsible for his defective emotional development. His mother, Rose, a native of Szatmár County, Hungary, was frequently arrested in Hungary for larceny. After her immigration to America, she became a shop-lifter, and was caught several times while stealing articles from the down town department stores. For many years the family have had no legitimate means of support whatever. John's father has not done a single day's work in almost ten years. Yet the family, in which there are five children, seem always to have plenty of money. When John was ten years old, his mother began teaching him to steal. He took automobile spare tires, head lights, cakes of ice and other articles. John's father and mother distilled moonshine whiskey in large quantities in the basement of the house, and John was sent daily—or rather, nightly—to deliver the liquor to his parents' customers."

4. *Maladjustment Due to Physical Injury.*

In a few cases the major factor in the individual's maladjustment appears to be some physical injury.

"Joe Nemeth, aged 22 years, with an intelligence quotient of 69 on the Stanford Abbreviated Scale, was arrested for breaking and entering. This was his fourth offense. He was of the ne'er-do-well type. He had a head injury caused by a hay fork, when he was eight years old. Some three years ago he had an injury to his foot caused by a train. All the toes on his right foot had to be amputated. There has been a terrific let-down in his interests since this injury. Had he not been emotionally in-

adequate, the loss of his toes would not have caused his anti-social conduct; though he uses this as an excuse for his behavior."

(B) *Persons Whose Maladjustment Is Attributable to the Lack of the Stabilizing Influence of the Hungarian Colony.*

A great many Hungarians, both of the first and of the second generation in America, are emotionally unstable and very suggestible. They are inadequate to meet new situations: they require security in order to maintain proper adjustment to society. Under the conditions of life in a Hungarian peasant village, such people would be well adjusted. Their behavior would harmonize with the expectations of the group. Similarly, the social solidarity of the Delray colony protects these individuals. Being themselves unstable and suggestible, they require the social control exercised by the group within the colony. When such individuals move beyond the colony and come into contact with persons of other cultures, they are apt to re-act to new situations in an anti-social manner.

1. *Difficulty through racial intermarriage.* Since marriage with a person of some other nationality involves in most cases both spatial and cultural separation from the Hungarian group, it presents to the Hungarian entering such a union many unexpected problems in social adjustment. Serious maladjustment is apt to arise unless the contracting parties know each other rather well prior to their marriage.

"Mary Molnár, a Hungarian woman, married a Greek man whom she had known only four days. She had been doing housework and had to turn over her wages to her oldest sister, who did not think that she was old enough to take care of herself. Her sister bought her what clothes she thought she needed. Mary did not like being 'bossed' that way. To avoid this situation, she married a Greek man, without knowing anything about him. Like other Hungarian young married women, Mary walks home from shows with young men whom she has met at dances and other places. Her husband, being a Greek, will not understand that this comradeship between the sexes is a Hungarian custom. He accuses her of having intercourse with these other men, but she denies this. (Examiner believes that she tells the truth.) Mary has already had two children since her marriage. She tells her husband that she does not wish to have any more children and that he must be governed accordingly. Hungarians do not want big families, she says. Her husband then accuses her of not loving him. She says that that is true now. She could have loved him in the beginning, if he had given her some companionship or taken her out once in a while. She thinks that if a man married a woman of his own nationality, then they would understand each other better."

2. *Mixed gangs.* Virtually all the predatory gangs to which Hungarian boys and young men belong are mixed, *i. e.*, made up of individuals of different nationalities or races. Nearly half of all the offenses with which Hungarians were charged in the Detroit Recorder's Court during the past decade involved members of such gangs. In almost every instance these persons lived either outside the Hungarian colony altogether, or else on its periphery where they were in contact with persons of other nationalities.

"Edmund S—, an Armenian boy, had been playing cards all afternoon with three Hungarian boys, Victor O—, Béla B—, and Frank K—, all of whom were about 19 years of age. In the evening, as it began to get dark, the caretaker of a warehouse called Edmund and asked him to buy fifteen boxes of hams for \$15. Edmund said: 'Yeah, sure, I guess I'll take 'em.' So he turned over the \$15 to the caretaker and went to hunt the three Hungarian boys with whom he had been playing in the afternoon. They had nothing to do, and had a devil of a time doing it, so they said. They all pitched in and helped Edmund carry the hams from the warehouse to the nearby alley. That night and the next morning Edmund sold all the hams and received \$37 for them. At the examination after Edmund's arrest, he admitted: 'I thought probably the hams were stolen.' Then he said: 'Well, this d—ned detective is always bothering me when anything happens out here. He claims I'm the head of a gang out here, and I get the blame for all of it.'"

The three Hungarian boys involved in the theft of the hams undoubtedly had nothing to do with the planning of the larceny. Edmund asked them to do something. Since they had nothing else to do, they did as he asked them. The same extreme suggestibility is shown in the case of Frank T....., a Hungarian boy of 18, with an intelligence quotient of 54.68 on the Stanford Abbreviated Scale.

"In September, 1928, Frank went to a pool room in Hamtramck, where a gang of Polish boys gave him liquor and got him intoxicated. They told him to put his hand in his pocket and use his finger as a gun. Under these instructions he went with them and 'pulled the job.' . . . In April, 1930, Frank met Stephen . . .⁵ in a pool room. The latter proposed further robberies. He gave the Hungarian boy a 25 caliber automatic and told him to 'stick up a grocery.' He hesitated, and Stephen threatened to shoot him if he did not go through with the job. He then entered the grocery store, flashed his gun and demanded the money."

The same suggestibility is shown in the case of Andy F.....

"Andy met on the street two men whom he had known previously. They proposed holding up a chain store. Andy agreed to help them.

⁵This Polish boy, one time leader of the Hanley Street gang, appears as "Stephen" in Professor A. E. Wood's case study of a Hamtramck delinquent youth.

They entered the store in the morning as the manager was opening it up. Andy cornered the Negro porter, while his companions took the manager to the safe and secured the loot. Then all three ran out of the rear door. The two accomplices were never apprehended. Andy does not even know their names. The police scout car caught Andy in the alley."

Another case is that of Nick F.....

"About 10 p. m. Nick and his wife got home from a show. His wife went into the house. Nick told her that he was going to the corner for awhile. There he met some of the boys who asked him if he wanted to make some easy money. He knew them and asked what he would have to do. 'Only drive a car,' they said. They had a stolen car and asked Nick to drive to Wyandotte where they looked over the saloons. They asked Nick to stop by a certain one, while they went in. In about four or five minutes they came out, jumped in the car and told Nick to 'step on it.' They drove back to Detroit and split the money which amounted to \$395.00."

The above are merely random samples drawn from the case histories of the most numerous class of Hungarian criminals. Had these individuals remained within the colony, they would probably have followed the dictates of custom in the same sheep-like manner in which they followed the criminal suggestions of gang leaders outside the colony. They would have been singing the "song of Bethlehem" at Christmas and sprinkling girls with perfume at Easter instead of breaking and entering houses and stores and committing robbery armed. For Hungarians of the extremely suggestible type the colony is a protection against crime. Without this protection they are apt to come under the influence of persons who will direct them into anti-social activity.