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DO PROBLEM CHILDREN BECOME DELIN- QUENTS AND CRIMINALS?¹

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In the spring of last year, a survey was concluded by the author in an effort to determine what had become of a group of 116 adult persons who were all considered to be problem children in the Berkeley, California, public schools from two to fifteen years ago.²

Innumerable statements from criminological works could be quoted to the effect that, ". . . the delinquent is a potential criminal just as the problem child is a potential delinquent"³—or that "The problem child of today is the criminal of tomorrow."⁴ The prevalent implication among sociologists that the problem children of today are our future delinquents and criminals might seem reasonable enough. Its factual validity, however, can only be established by specific research in follow-up studies of problem children.

It has been the purpose of this study to follow up part of the later adolescent and adult life of a small group of problem children, and determine, in so far as possible, what percentage became delinquents and criminals.

The problem children studied in this survey were considered as "problems" because they were children who "could not be satisfactorily managed in the regular school classroom."⁵

The concept "juvenile delinquency" does not lend itself to a ready and strict definition. Without going into detail as to its various ramifications, a juvenile delinquent has been considered here as a person under the age of twenty-one who is apprehended or referred to a public agency for the violation of any local, state, or federal law.

¹ Based on "A Study of 116 Berkeley Problem Children," M.A. thesis, University of California, May, 1935.

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² Jan. 1920-Dec. 1932, inclusive.

³ J. Michael and M. J. Adler, "An Institute of Criminology and of Criminal Justice," N. Y., 1932, p. 253.

⁴ Fred E. Haynes, "Criminology," New York, 1930, p. 161.

⁵ Definition proposed by Dr. Virgil E. Dickson, director of the Bureau of Research and Guidance of the Berkeley public schools, the agency to which the problem children considered here were referred from the schools for adjustment.

The Bureau of Research and Guidance of the Berkeley public schools began to function actively some sixteen years ago for the purpose of studying and adjusting the serious cases of child maladjustment reported to it by teachers, principals, and counselors. For many years the Bureau has cooperated with the police, health, and welfare departments of the city in a voluntary and most commendable organization known as the Coordinating Council of Berkeley.⁶ One of the main functions of this council is to "promote the physical, moral, and mental welfare of the children of the community." Whenever a behavior problem is discovered by the school authorities, it immediately becomes the object of discussion and study for the purpose of discovering changes in treatment, in laws, in institutions, or in environment which would make possible a more satisfactory adjustment of the problem⁷

As part of its record-keeping system, the Bureau of Research and Guidance maintains two case-history files of the problem children referred to it for adjustment. One, the active case file, contains the case-histories of problem children in any of the public schools who are undergoing some form of treatment. The other file, the "non-active," contains the cases of problem children of the public schools which have been closed because of satisfactory adjustment of the problems, the graduation from school or leaving school by the child, the change of residence, or the lack of cooperation of the family with the Bureau.

The group of 116 problem children under consideration in this study was selected from the "non-active" or "closed" case files in the Bureau of Research and Guidance. Regardless of the particular problem involved, the only consideration in the selection of the 116 cases was the age (in 1934) factor. From the "non-active" case file were selected the case-histories of all males twenty-one years old or older by December 31, 1934, and all females eighteen years old or older at the same date. Since the active case file in the Bureau contained the records of children attending school, it was necessary to turn to the non-active file in order to select a group over adult age limits. Setting up this arbitrary age qualification permitted of a study and follow-up of a group of persons who were

⁶ August Vollmer, "Coordinated Effort to Prevent Crime," *Jour. Crim. Law*, August, 1928, p. 196.

⁷ The problem may have been essentially a home or police problem, but it had been found to invariably reflect itself in the child's school behavior and thus referred to the Bureau as a problem of the child in school.

all problem children from two to fifteen years ago, but who were at the same time adults when the investigation began.

Throughout the alphabet, 1650 case-histories in the non-active case file were examined for the age requirements as previously defined. Of the 1650 cases, 252 were found to be over the necessary age limits. In turn, of this number, twenty cases were eliminated from consideration because of the complete lack of any pertinent information. Of the 232 remaining cases, half (116) were eliminated by selecting every other case, leaving an initial group of 116 cases of problem children for study and follow-up.

The final elimination of 116 cases was necessary from the standpoint of available time for the study. It is conceivable that a study of 232 or more cases would yield more information than a study of 116 cases, and would enable one to formulate conclusions which could more readily meet the test of universal applicability. However, it was believed that even a study of a smaller group might result in certain interesting and valuable information pertinent to the general inquiry.

The decline or increase in the number of problem children referred for adjustment in any one year to the Bureau of Research and Guidance of the Berkeley public schools, and the estimated downward trend over the whole reference period of thirteen years (Jan. 1920-Dec. 1932), had to take into account a multiplicity of complex factors; such as the short period of years, the method of selecting the cases for study, the possible bad home supervision of the child at any one time, variation in the type of teaching and curricula of the particular school referring a child, a marked enthusiasm and efficiency of the teachers, principals, and counselors in recognizing and reporting a problem child, or, on the other hand, a definite apathy and lack of efficiency, and better cooperation on the part of certain teachers due to a keener comprehension of the purposes of the Bureau of Research and Guidance. The point is that no one factor could be held responsible for the greater or less reference of problem children from the schools to the Bureau in any one year.

The distribution of sex (63 males and 53 females) and races (white, negro and yellow) among the problem children was found to be proportionate to the distribution among the general public school population of Berkeley in 1924 and 1930. Therefore, neither of the sexes or any of the represented races had contributed (as far as this group is concerned) more than their share of problem children to the Bureau.

It could not be concluded that a school drawing its pupils from a so-called "good" neighborhood would invariably refer fewer problem children to the Bureau for adjustment than a school drawing its pupils from a relatively poorer neighborhood. It was found that a great many causative factors influenced the reference of more or fewer problem children from any one school among the represented eleven grammar schools, four junior high schools and one high school. In addition to the causative influencing factors already mentioned, should be included such elements as changing economic conditions and status of the families in each of the various school neighborhoods, changing personnel in each of the schools, personal biases of the teachers against certain types of behavior problems evidenced by the children, home cooperation, and practical factors of tact and discretion on the part of officials in the school system.

The average age of the 116 problem children at the time of reference for the adjustment of their problems was between thirteen and fourteen years (mean, 14.5 years; median, 13 years). The range was found to be from eight to twenty-one years inclusive. It was estimated that more than a third (35.3%) of the children had evidenced some behavior disorder when between the ages of eight and thirteen, thus pointing to the necessity of particular care and alertness in observing the pre-adolescent grammar school child.

The average adult age of the group (by Dec. 31, 1934) was found to be between twenty-two and twenty-three years (mean, 23.1 years; median, 22 years). At the time the follow-up investigation began, more than half of the group (55.1%) were under twenty-three years of age, and over a fourth (25.7%) between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-two. Although a few studies have indicated that persons who do not get into difficulties with the law up to twenty-one years of age are not likely to do so later, this point has yet to be definitely established. Until our criminal justice administration is able to produce more reliable statistical information on recidivism among different age groups under twenty-one, the comparative youth of the group studied here would imply that those who did not become delinquents and criminals, as well as those who did, might still begin, or continue to do so in the future.

The table below indicates the distribution of the twelve main "problems" among the 116 children—or the reasons for reference indicated in the case-histories by the teachers, principals, and counselors.

It is noticed that mental retardation (27.9%) and persistent ly-

ing (12.8%) were the main problems of the children. Aside from mental retardation, the boy's outstanding difficulties were stealing and incorrigibility, and the girl's main problems those of sex difficulty, persistent lying and emotional instability. It was estimated that almost two-thirds of the children were referred to the Bureau for more than one problem, and many had as many as four and five separate problems mentioned at the time of reference. Thus the problems were overlapping and complex. There were many causative factors operating to influence the reference of certain of the twelve main problems more or less than others—factors (including all those previously indicated) such as different home environments producing different and more frequent types of problems, and the personal training, experience, and prejudices of the various individuals recognizing and reporting the problem children.

TABLE I

FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE OF SPECIFIC PROBLEMS AMONG 116
 PROBLEM CHILDREN AT TIME OF REFERENCE TO THE BUREAU
 OF RESEARCH AND GUIDANCE FOR ADJUSTMENT.
 JAN. 1920-DEC. 1932, INCLUSIVE.

Problem (Reason for Reference)	Total Occurrence		Male		Female	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Mental Retardation (a)	63	27.9	35	28.7	28	26.9
Persistent Lying	29	12.8	15	12.3	14	13.5
Emotional Instability (b)	26	11.5	13	10.7	13	12.5
Incorrigibility (c)	24	10.6	17	13.9	7	6.7
Stealing (d)	23	10.2	17	13.9	6	5.8
Truancy	20	8.9	11	9.0	9	8.7
Sex Difficulty (e)	16	7.1	1	.8	15	14.4
School Retardation (f)	10	4.4	7	5.7	3	2.9
Cheating	5	2.2	2	1.7	3	2.9
Marked Cruelty	4	1.8	2	1.7	2	1.9
Extreme Reticence	3	1.3	1	.8	2	1.9
Obscene Language	3	1.3	1	.8	2	1.9
Total Freq. of Occur.	226	100.0	122	100.0	104	100.0

(a) By mental retardation is meant not only a low I.Q. but also the inability to do regular class work (retarded at least two school years).

(b) This classification has been considered by the Bureau to include temper outbreaks, impertinence, fighting, bullying, teasing, and sulkiness.

(c) Particularly uncontrollable and constantly playing minor tricks.

(d) Stealing at school or outside of school.

(e) All heterosexual and homosexual activity; masturbation.

(f) At least two years retarded in school. School retardation did not necessarily mean mental retardation. Six of the ten school-retarded children in the group had an I.Q. over 100, and one had an I.Q. of 118. School retardation might be due to such factors as poor physical health, poor home environment, or unadjusted school life.

Uniformly utilizing the Stanford Revision of the Binet-Simon Intelligence Test, it was found that, at the time of reference, the average intelligence quotient of the problem children was—mean, 79.8; median, 79. The highest I.Q. was 123, and the lowest was 30. With Terman's classification of intelligence as a basis,⁸ it was found that only 3.7% of the group showed an intelligence above "normal." Not quite a fourth (23.4%) of the group evidenced a "normal" intelligence, and almost three-fourths (72.9%) were below "normal" in intelligence. A third of the children (32.7%) showed an I.Q. below 70—or, according to Terman, were "definitely feeble-minded." It must be emphasized, however, that this preponderant distribution of the I.Q.'s in the lower brackets, as well as the low average intelligence was greatly influenced by the policy of the Bureau of Research and Guidance from 1919 to 1927, to lay special emphasis on mental retardation and a low I.Q. as a special problem to be particularly recognized and reported. In this connection, it was found, as might be expected, that among the children where mental retardation was a problem (54.3%), the average I.Q. was 68; while among those who were not so affected, the average I.Q. was 96.

Follow-up investigation for later delinquent conduct on the part of the problem children resulted in the securing of information on 93 (80.2%) of 116 cases. Of these 93 for which there was information, 86 or 92.5% showed delinquent and criminal records during the eight-year average follow-up period. In seven cases (7.5%) there was no record of misconduct. By sex, this delinquent conduct was found in 92.5% of the boys and 91.9% of the girls. It must be pointed out that half of the group (50.6%) already had delinquent records prior to reference to the Bureau as "problems," while 41.9% began their delinquent careers after reference. In both instances, however, the delinquency continued on after reference; in most cases up until one to three years prior to the conclusion of the investigation.

The principal factor in judging delinquency and criminality was the fact of having been apprehended for the violation of some law by official police, detention, court, prosecution, or probation agencies. There were 164 (34%) arrests for serious offenses and 318 (66%) arrests for minor offenses.⁹

Table II indicates the distribution of all offenses among the 86 problem children who were found to have post-reference¹⁰ delinquency and criminal records:

⁸ Lewis M. Terman, *Measurement of Intelligence*, Boston, 1916, pp. 66-79.

⁹ Arbitrary distinction between felonies and misdemeanors in the state of California; all but four cases were arrests in this state.

¹⁰ Includes pre-reference arrests of 50.6% of the group; but this number also

TABLE II

ALL OFFENSES¹¹ FOR WHICH 86 PROBLEM CHILDREN WHO WERE DELINQUENT WERE APPREHENDED PRIOR TO AND AFTER REFERENCE TO THE BUREAU AS PROBLEM CHILDREN. (EIGHT-YEAR AVERAGE POST-REFERENCE PERIOD.)

Offense	Total Arrests		Male		Female	
	No.	Per.	No.	Per.	No.	Per.
Larceny—theft (except auto theft) (a)	90	18.8	78	20.0	12	12.9
Burglary—breaking and entering	41	8.5	41	10.5	..	...
Robbery (b)	11	2.3	11	2.8	..	...
Auto Theft	8	1.7	8	2.1	..	...
Aggravated Assault (c)	3	.6	3	.8	..	...
Rape	3	.6	3	.8	..	...
Criminal Homicide (d)	1	2.	1	.3	..	...
Incorrigible and disorderly (e)	76	15.9	43	11.0	33	35.4
Malicious Mischief (f)	61	12.7	58	14.9	3	3.2
Violations of mun, police reg. (g)	48	10.0	46	11.9	2	2.2
Sex offenses (excluding rape) (h)	33	6.8	8	2.1	25	26.9
Disturbing the peace (i)	32	6.6	27	6.9	5	5.4
Traffic and liquor violations (j)	32	6.6	32	8.2	..	...
Violation of probation and parole (k)	16	3.3	13	3.3	3	3.2
Attempted suicide	5	1.0	2	.5	3	3.2
Passing fictitious checks—forgery	4	.8	2	.5	2	2.2
Assault and battery (l)	2	.4	2	.5	..	...
Failure to provide (m)	2	.4	1	.3	1	1.1
Extortion	1	.2	1	.3	..	...
Miscellaneous (n)	9	1.9	5	1.3	4	4.3
Unknown (o)	4	.8	4	1.0	..	...
Total	482	100.0	389	100.0	93	100.0

- (a) Includes all thefts (except auto) attempted larceny, selling stolen goods.
- (b) Includes holdups.
- (c) Assault with intent to kill, assault with deadly weapons.
- (d) One case of manslaughter.
- (e) Juvenile Court Law of Calif., 3966 Gen. Laws. Includes running away from home, habitual truancy, fighting, unmanageable, etc.
- (f) Includes vagrancy, gambling, malicious trespass, prowling, throwing missiles, disturbance through excessive noise, damaging and mutilating property; constantly annoying conduct.
- (g) Includes bootlegging, loitering, shooting firearms in city, miscellaneous public nuisance, drinking in street, investigation for suspicion of a crime, committing prohibited acts without a license, quarantine violation.
- (h) Includes indecent exposure, lewd and immoral conduct, promiscuous sexuality, prostitution, homosexuality.
- (i) Includes drunkenness, profanity, annoying women and children, cruelty to animals.
- (j) Mostly serious violations of Calif. Veh. Act—speeding, a few minor municipal traffic violations (parking violations, no license, no muffler); violation of state and federal liquor laws.
- (k) This constitutes a distinct offense in addition to the actual offenses. The latter have been distributed in the table (where known).
- (l) Includes also threats to kill; carrying concealed weapons.
- (m) Includes abandoning wife and minor child.
- (n) Includes certification of insanity; reports for epileptic seizures; fugitive from justice; failure to appear in court; deserting navy.
- (o) Includes those cases of violation of probation or parole where the actual offense was unknown.

showed post-reference delinquent conduct together with those who began their delinquencies after reference to the Bureau.

¹¹ The first seven offenses constitute the classification adopted by the Uniform

It may be observed that the boys' main offenses were larceny and malicious mischief. The girls were arrested mainly for incorrigibility and sex offenses. Of the whole group, larceny (including auto theft) burglary, and robbery—crimes against property—constituted almost a third (31.3%) of all the various offenses. The relatively high percentage of arrests for incorrigibility and disorderliness may have been due to a disposition on the part of police agencies to apprehend juvenile offenders for the least violation; or perhaps to the lack of cleverness on the part of these juveniles in escaping actual arrest. In total, the 86 delinquents committed 482 offenses for which they were apprehended; the 52 boys being responsible for 389 offenses and the 34 girls for 93.

Since 50.6% of the problem children who showed delinquent conduct already had records prior to reference to the Bureau as "problems," it means that half of the group were already delinquent by the time they were, on the average, thirteen years old—this being the average age of the children at the time of reference to the Bureau.

The extent of delinquent conduct among the group may be seen in the fact that more than half of the group (54.5%) were arrested more than twice, and over a fourth (26.6%) were arrested more than five times. The average (median) number of arrests for the boys was four, for the girls, two, and for the whole group, three.

In relation to the number of arrests, it was found that almost half (46.5%) of the 86 delinquents were not only arrested, but also committed offenses often enough or serious enough to have been referred to the Juvenile Court of Alameda County. By sex, this was true in 40.4% of the boys and in 55.9% of the girls. The latter relatively high percentage may be explained on the ground that most of the girls' juvenile court contacts were for frequent sex offenses of one kind or another. This suggests the difficult problem of adequate treatment for the mentally retarded adolescent girl.¹² It was also estimated that over one-third (37.5%) of the group who contacted the juvenile court did so more than three times.

The disposition of the 482 offenses was known in 361 (74.9%) cases and unknown in 121 (25.1%) cases. Of the known dispositions, the most frequent was that of probation, occurring in 141

Crime Reports of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and are listed together for the purpose of future comparison.

¹² Over a fourth of the girls showed mental retardation as a problem and almost three-fourths (72.9%) had an I.Q. under 90.

(39.1%) cases. Then followed release and discharge, 122 (33.8%), institutional commitment, 80 (22.1%), fine or restitution, 7 (1.9%) and other dispositions 11 (3.1%). The relative greater frequency of probation is explained on the ground that this was the most frequent remedy utilized by the Juvenile Court of Alameda County and the Berkeley Police Department in handling juveniles. In all but three out of 141 dispositions was the probation of these two agencies.

An analysis of the intelligence quotients of the 86 problem children who became delinquents resulted in the following findings: Two thirds (66.3%) of the group, constituting a similar percentage (65.6%) of arrests, were below "normal" in intelligence. Almost a third (30.0%), constituting 29.4% of the arrests, had a "normal" intelligence. Only 3.7% of the group, constituting 5.0% of the arrests were above "normal" in their intelligence—according to Terman's classification—and a fourth (25.0%) of the group, constituting 10.0% of the arrests were "feebleminded." Not only was there a similarity between the distribution of these intelligence quotients and the distribution of arrests, but a similarity of distribution was also found between the intelligence quotients of the delinquents on the basis of their post-reference delinquent conduct, and the problem children on the basis of their problems. Of course, no great divergence could be expected here, since the 86 delinquents were such a large portion of the group of 116 problem children.

It has already been observed that the problem children were referred to the Bureau of Research and Guidance for adjustment from January, 1920, to December, 1932, inclusive. This would imply that the children referred, for instance, fifteen years ago (since Dec. 31, 1934) had thirteen years more opportunity in which to become delinquent than those referred two years ago. In attempting to find the relationship between the post-reference delinquent conduct of the problem children and the increasing opportunity to become delinquent due to increasing periods of time since reference, it was estimated that 38.3% of the 86 problem children who became delinquent were referred to the Bureau from two to eight years ago. During this seven year period, this number constituted 26.5% of all the arrests, and averaged (mean) three arrests each. On the other hand, it was estimated that 61.7% of the delinquents were referred to the Bureau from nine to fifteen years ago, inclusive. During this similar seven year period, this number constituted 73.5% of all arrests, and averaged 5.2 arrests

each. Although each successive increasing year in point of time, did not necessarily mean a corresponding increase in the number of arrests yet, taken as a whole, the group that was referred at a more distant date had a higher average of arrests than the group referred at a more recent date. However, it must be mentioned that the group which was referred at a more distant date (from nine to fifteen years ago) happened to contain almost twice as many delinquents as the group which was referred from two to eight years ago. Consequently, this has probably influenced the total as well as the average number of arrests.

While the children who were referred, for instance, five or more years ago may have had more opportunities to commit delinquencies after reference to the Bureau than those who were referred two years ago, yet so many factors may have entered the situation during the course of time, that there was no specific proportionate relationship found between the opportunity to commit and the actual commitment of an offense. However, the fact that a greater opportunity to become delinquent (from the standpoint of time) existed more for some of the children than for others, should be considered in judging the extent of post-reference delinquency found among the problem children.

Professor S. Glueck, in discussing the comparison of adult and juvenile offenses, has stated, "It is difficult to compare the first offense which these youths ("1000 Juvenile Delinquents") committed as adults with those which resulted in appearance in the Boston Juvenile Court and examination by the Judge Baker Foundation; because such juvenile offenses, as being a 'stubborn child,' 'running away from home,' 'truancy' and the like are obviously inapplicable to adult violators."¹³

If it is difficult to compare juvenile offenses with adult violations, it is probably much more difficult to compare behavior traits of problem children and their later delinquencies and criminality.

The twelve main problems listed in Table I were those utilized by the Berkeley school department through the Bureau of Research and Guidance, and had nothing especially in common with regular classified offenses of police agencies apprehending juvenile and adult offenders. The latter presumably involved an objective violation of some constituted law, while most of the behavior traits of the problem children were more or less subjectively recognized.

Another point to be considered is that in the cases of the prob-

¹³ S. Glueck, *1000 Juvenile Delinquents*, Cambridge, 1934, pp. 115-6.

lem children studied here, the twelve problems were all overlapping, many children being referred for four and five "problems" at one time. Assuming for a moment, that in one case, a relationship between the behavior trait of "cheating" and the offense of "larceny" could be established, yet where "sex difficulty" and "truancy," etc., were also problems in that case, how could one be positive that the causal relationship was not between "truancy" and "larceny" instead of between "cheating" and "larceny"—or between any other existing trait and the offense? To further complicate the situation, not only were the "problems" overlapping in each child, but the various offenses were likewise so—most of the delinquents having individually committed more than one offense.

It may also be recalled that half of the problem children already had delinquent records prior to reference as "problems." Therefore, under the circumstances, it would be very questionable whether a valid cause and effect relationship could be established in these cases between the "problems" and the delinquencies.

For these reasons, it would seem that as far as this study is concerned, no valid and conclusive causal relationship could be established between the "problems" of the children and their delinquent conduct. The establishment of such a relationship is most important if prognosis and prediction of future delinquent conduct is to be made on the basis of early behavior patterns. To accomplish this, however, it would be necessary to concentrate on a few behavior traits at a time, and with a large number of cases, conduct a detailed follow-up study of the resulting delinquency, if any, of these traits. If, in a large number of instances, a certain "problem" or behavior pattern was found to result invariably in certain types of delinquency or crime, this might furnish a needed clue for further research on the relationship of early behavior patterns and later delinquent conduct. But this necessitates a different methodology than utilized in this survey, where the primary purpose has been to find out, in a general way, if, and to what extent, a group of problem children became delinquent.

Conclusions

As far as this study is concerned, it was found that 92.5 per cent of a small group of children who were "problems" in the Berkeley public schools some eight years ago, have since become delinquents and criminals. Half of the group (50.6%), had already

commenced their delinquent careers in their pre-adolescent stage of growth.

Other studies have pointed out that delinquency and crime may have its roots in early life maladjustments—that delinquent juveniles and adult criminals have in very many cases shown the “danger signals” of their future misconduct in early behavior problems. In this study, an attempt has been made to approach the matter from the other side. Do young children with behavior problems become delinquents and criminals? Assuming that it was necessary to establish this point first, and that it has been established (for the group in this study), then it becomes essential to determine what relationship or association, if any, exists between the “problems” and the later delinquent conduct. The prediction of future delinquency on the basis of existing specific patterns of behavior problems, demands a thorough knowledge of this relationship. Granted that not all delinquents show the danger signals of their later misconduct, yet a good number of them do. For these, a proper system of diagnosis and prediction, and proper treatment on the basis of this prediction, might forestall future delinquency and criminality.

To carry on the detailed follow-up research already indicated, to organize a proper system of diagnosis, prediction, treatment, and adjustment on the basis of the results of this necessary research—all these things require the financial and the moral support of the administration of criminal justice in this country. This implies a needed change in the present emphasis on punitive and reformative justice. Rather must the emphasis be placed on the preventive and formative functions of criminal justice administration. As Dr. Bernard Glueck has indicated, “Just as long as a community will judge the efficiency of its police officers, its prosecuting attorneys, and its judiciary by the volume of crime they are able to detect and punish, rather than by the extent to which they succeed in preventing crime, an unnecessarily large number of what might be termed provoked crimes must be the result.”¹⁴

The preceding discussion begins to assume special significance when it is seen that studies made in other parts of the country have pointed out the extent to which problem children exist in the school population. Bearing in mind that it has yet to be established if so called “problems” are real maladjustments, or merely the normal expression of a growing child, a study made in 1931 of the

¹⁴ B. Glueck, “A study of 608 Admissions to Sing Sing Prison,” *Mental Hygiene*, Jan., 1918, p. 87.

problem children rate in the schools of Decatur, Peoria, and Racine, by Dr. H. D. Williams, found that the problem children averaged 2.6% of the total school population at these places. In 1932, Dr. Williams also found that in ten Mid-western cities, with a total school population of 55,995, the percentage of problem children in the schools was 2.4% of the total. The year after this, it was found that of the total school population in twenty-six towns of New York state (26,009 pupils), 2.1% were problem children.¹⁵ Even a seemingly small percentage as two or three, runs up into the hundreds and thousands in these large school populations and warrants serious consideration.

The fact that 92.5% of the problem children showed delinquent conduct after their reference as problems, and the fact that half of the group began their delinquencies prior to reference, should not impute a failure on the part of the Bureau of Research and Guidance of the Berkeley Public Schools in its adjustment work.

In the first place, it was not until 1928 that the adjustment process, in the treatment of problem children, took the form of expert, individual clinical and medical guidance and advice, visiting teachers and school counselors, detailed case history study and follow-up, and psychiatric study of each case. Previous to this time, the adjustment process, in its slow stages of growth, had confined itself mainly to laying special emphasis on mental retardation, and consequently, to referring the "problem" children to special classes. Of the problem children analyzed in this study, two-thirds (66.5%) were referred to the Bureau for adjustment prior to 1928.

Secondly, as already indicated, more than half of the group were already delinquent before they were referred to the Bureau, and two-thirds of the group had an intelligence below normal; while more than a third were "feebleminded." Add to these factors the invariably poor environments from which these children came—the large families, where destitution and poverty were prevalent, and where conditions were such as to foster poor physical health—it may be questioned whether the best adjustment process would not have great difficulty in adjusting and preventing delinquency among such "raw materials" from such environments.

Third, since the beginning of 1931, a change in the school administration and policies has limited the adjustment procedure of the Bureau of Research and Guidance. On this point, Professor

¹⁵ All these studies may be found in the report of the "Big Brother and Big Sister Federation of New York," 1933.

August Vollmer, who as Chief of Police of Berkeley some years ago, was a pioneer in the whole coordinating child-adjustment work, has made this statement: "In 1931, the new school administrator ordered that the work of the school visiting teachers, the persons who carried out the recommendations of the Coordinating Council, should be curtailed. In addition, the important follow-up work of the psychological research unit was stopped. The salary of the school psychiatrist was cut, and the voluntary work of the examining physician was interrupted. In short, the labors of the few preceding years received a serious set-back in the follow-up and adjustment process." Therefore, the children of the group who were referred a few years prior to 1931 had their regular adjustment process cut, and those referred in 1931 and 1932 were also handicapped.

Finally, the fact that many of the children already had delinquent records before reference to the Bureau presents many difficult problems which might thwart even the best of motives. Since some delinquents may not show any strange traits before the actual overt behavior occurs in the form of delinquent conduct, it is not always possible to discover or recognize these traits before delinquency. This may or may not have been true of the group who were delinquent prior to reference. On the other hand, even where the traits did exist, it may have been impossible to recognize them and report them clearly due to inadequate psychological training on the part of the teachers of the public school system, or due to unsatisfactory methods of diagnosis and systematic reporting. These are not lacks or faults of the Bureau of Research and Guidance, but are due to the present general lack of enough valid information and knowledge on the whole question of adequate treatment and adjustment of behavior problems in children.

For all these reasons, it cannot be concluded that the Bureau has failed in its work, or that it should cease its activity. On the contrary, it is urged, as a result of this study, that the resources of the Bureau, and agencies similar to it, be put to the effort of conducting research in the line suggested—to attempt to find the specific relationship, if any, between the behavior patterns of the child and his later delinquent conduct—and in the manner outlined in the preceding pages of this study.

The findings, results and conclusions of this study are not final. The small size of the group must always be kept in mind. In order to get a truer perspective of the relationship of problems and de-

linquency, it would be necessary to conduct a follow-up study, over a long period of years, of a group of problem children who were not adjusted in any manner whatsoever. In addition to this, a similar follow-up study would have to be made of children from the same school who were presumably "average." The follow-up results of these two studies would then have to be compared with those of a group (as in this study) where some adjustment of the problems took place. Only by such a three-fold experimental follow-up study can really valid conclusions be made as to whether problem children become delinquent; and if they do, what, if any, is the significance of this finding. On such a small number of cases as were considered in this study, the final conclusion cannot be made that problem children invariably become delinquents and criminals. Nevertheless, the results are provocative and should warrant further investigation.

Should the results of this brief study be subsequently duplicated by further researches, it must be reiterated that from the viewpoint of the student of public administration, too much emphasis has been placed on penal reform, on police and on judicial reform, and too little on the study and care of early personality traits—on the preventive aspects of crime control. Further research and study is essential in a determination of the manifold ramifications of these behavior problems. Only by the full support of our criminal justice administration may this much needed research be able to convince the taxpayer and the public administrator that "an ounce of formation is worth a ton of reformation."