

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY and the HOME

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The purpose of this study is to look into the facts about juvenile delinquency in the City of Manila; the factors and conditions leading to delinquency; and the ways by which delinquency could be minimized or if possible prevented. The study has brought to light the following facts and conditions:

I. THE FACTS

1. There has been a tremendous increase not only in the number of juvenile delinquents since liberation, but also in the percentage of the total crimes committed by young people. Whereas the total number of juvenile delinquents before the war was 1,100 a year for the whole Philippines, the incidence of juvenile delinquency in Manila alone for a period of eight months (May to December, 1945) was 4,061. This figure is about four times as high as the annual figure before Pearl Harbor. Whereas the percentage of juvenile crimes was very small before the war, the figures for 1945 and 1946 reached as high as 24% and no lower than 10% in any one month from May 1945 to October 1946.

2. There are almost five times as many delinquent boys as there are girls.

3. Among the crimes committed by young people, the following arranged according to their seriousness were the most prevalent; crimes against property—*theft, picking pockets, trespassing, and estafa*; crimes against person—*murder, physical injury, homicide, malicious mischief*; crimes against chastity—*va-grancy (pimping), prostitution, rape*

4. The delinquents ranged in age from 9 to 17 years. Almost 3/4 of more than 3,000 cases studied were 15 to 17 years old.

5. Although the majority of the delinquents were in the primary grades,

there were many who did not have any schooling at all.

6. More than one half of all the juvenile delinquents studied were jobless or idle, while the rest were laborers, peddlers, or earned their living as boot-blacks, newsboys, cocheros, waitresses, and conductors.

7. Some districts of the city seem to be unsuitable for the growth of children—Tondo, Sta. Cruz, and Sampaloc.

8. The fact that Sta. Cruz, Tondo, and Sampaloc are the most densely populated districts in the City, and that they were without adequate recreation facilities, seem to indicate that unfavorable conditions in the community are conducive to delinquency.

9. Most of the delinquents plied their trade in the business sections of the City—Quiapo, Sta. Cruz, and Tondo.

10. Juvenile delinquents committed offenses in broad daylight. They were busiest from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

11. A large number of the delinquents were under the care of only one of their parents, either father or mother; while quite a number of them lived with relatives other than their fathers or mothers, or with friends. Either the fathers or the mothers of the majority of the cases booked with the Bureau of Public Welfare were dead; a few were orphans.

12. Most juvenile delinquents came from poor families in congested, low, dark, dirty, poorly-ventilated, and inadequately-lighted homes, without proper sewage facilities or adequate playground space.

13. Our juvenile offenders can still be reformed. This is based from the fact that nearly 95% of all of those cases studied from the Bureau of Public Welfare were first offenders.

II. PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Juvenile delinquency, like adult crime, should be the concern of everyone. It is caused by a child's maladjustment. Hence, society itself is partly to blame for the young people's deviation from the straight and narrow path. It has been found abroad that the harmonious and complete coordination of the home, the school, the church, the police, and all the other agencies is necessary in preventing juvenile delinquency.

The following suggestions are made to help the child live a happy and normal life, and to prevent him from committing delinquent or anti-social acts. Although admittedly far from adequate to solve all the multifarious and perplexing problems, those suggestions are recommended for whatever helpful service they may be able to render the reader and may give an idea of what can be done.

A. Suggestions for Home Improvement

While the home may be considered as a place in which adults live and find happiness, another more important function of it is to provide an environment whereby children may grow and develop wholesome attitudes towards life and prepare them to meet the problems of adult life.

Upon the parents lie the responsibility of fulfilling this important function of the home. It is their duty to rescue the child from helplessness during infancy to the freedom and self-reliance of adult life. The following suggestions are given for the improvement of the home and make family life satisfying, successful and happy to both parents and children:

1. Keep your home and its surroundings livable, attractive, neat, and tidy. A good home need not be a mansion. No matter how small and modest it may be, it could be made comfortable and convenient, so that the children would prefer it to the streets and back alleys. With proper guidance and training, chil-

dren can learn to cooperate in keeping the toilet, the bathroom, the kitchen, the bedrooms, the living room, and the yard clean, neat and tidy. Taught early how to take care of their belongings, given a sense of privacy and independence, and made to feel that they are persons worthy of the respect of their elders, the younger members of the family could learn to discharge their obligations to the group.

2. Start developing the personality of a child at birth. What habits a child forms depends upon his environment. Such virtues as obedience, cleanliness, truthfulness, honesty, and respect for the rights of others, must be inculcated in the children, through precept and example, from the time they are born.

3. We should guide our children in their work and in their play in order to sublimate their anti-social tendencies. The modern trend in parent-child relationship is guidance and direction, neither suppression nor license. Advice should be distinguished from guidance. When with our children we expect them to follow our advice, because we are their parents and what we say is law. When we guide them we help them see all angles of a problem and let them draw their own conclusions.

4. Insure the health and happiness of your family thru adequate and proper nutrition. Remember that the way to a child's heart as well as a man's is through his stomach. One can prepare simple, attractive, and varied meals without incurring much expense.

5. Consider your child's needs and hopes. No matter how busy the mother and the father may be, they should always devote a part of their time and energy to their children. Every night, at least, the parents should be with their children and learn how each one of them spent the day, praise their achievements, warn them against pitfalls, and in every way help them solve their pro-

blems. In this way the family will be preserved as a unit and discipline will be maintained.

6. Respect the privacy of your children. Parents should be true companions, friends, and confidants to their children, from infancy, through adolescence, and up to majority. Otherwise, they may confide in other people and fall under questionable influence.

7. Welcome your children's friends to your home. This would give you a chance to know with whom your children are going and how they get along with their playmates. Your children, in turn, would prefer staying at home to seeking enjoyment away from it.

8. It is not what we say but what we do which impresses a child most. Truthful, honest parents produce truthful, honest children. A parent who continually gives his child examples of rectitude and honesty need never fear to have liars for children. Children of educated parents are often puzzled when they hear their parents lie about the ages of their children in order to evade paying car fare, or when they tell their children to lie about their presence in the home to a collector or an unwanted visitor.

9. Teach your child the sanctity of personal property. The Mosaic commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," would have very little meaning to a child unless we teach him the sanctity of personal property. We should teach the child as early as possible that his clothes and his toys are his very own, but that ownership entails the responsibility of keeping them in order and of preserving them. At the same time, we should respect their property rights, so that they

may, in turn, learn to respect yours and that of other people.

10. The evil effects of the movies and of cheap comics should be counteracted. A great many of our children go to the movies as early as the age of ten or earlier. It would be very difficult to prohibit a child from going to the movies, because all his playmates go there; but the parents should choose the films for their children to see. If possible, they should go with their children. It would even be better if parents and children could get together and discuss the good and bad points of the pictures they have seen. In this way, children would learn which things to admire and to emulate, which to condemn and to shun.

The most popular reading material among children nowadays is the "comics." We cannot prohibit our children from reading them, but we can offer them substitute reading materials. These should, of course, be interesting and within the children's comprehension; otherwise, they would not be able to compete with the comics. The children could be made to see that situation depicted in such comics as Tarzan and Lone Ranger are not true to life and are not worth emulating.

11. Jobs for children should be carefully selected. It is unfortunate that some children have to work for a living and help in the support of the family, because of the high cost of living. These children, however, should, at the same time, have a chance to study. And the parents should see to it that their children get jobs that would not endanger their moral and physical well-being.

