DELINQUENCY AS A MECHANISM OF HOMEOSTASIS IN DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY SYSTEMS

Thesis for the Degree of M. S.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
O'NEAL OLIVER WRIGHT
AND
JOHNNIE CALVIN SHOATES
1974

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By

O'Neal Oliver Wright and Johnnie Calvin Shoates

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

DELINQUENCY AS A MECHANISM OF HOMEOSTASIS
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By

O'Neal Oliver Wright and Johnnie Calvin Shoates

This study examined the question: is delinquency a strategy used by the adolescent to adapt to his family, and if it is, what causative factors determine who will use it and when. It was focused on the adaptiveness of the child's behavior as seen in the context of the dysfunctions of his parents' relationship and the consequent degree and particularity of dysfunction of the entire family nexus.

To examine this question, ten boys, ranging in age from thirteen to sixteen, and their families were studied in open-ended, in-depth interviews. These boys were from a divergent range of family environments and social and economic strata.

The interviews were largely unstructured, although some questions from Virginia Satir's and Hess and Handel's interviewing techniques were used. Nathan Ackerman's Guide for Data Leading to Family Diagnosis was also used as a general guide.

The basic technique was to interview or observe the boy and his family together and separately and in as many subgroups of twos and threes as possible, usually in his own home but sometimes in a park or restaurant. Close friends and relatives were also interviewed and provided a great deal of information and insight. While questions were often asked during these interviews, sometimes interactions among the family members became so spontaneous and enlightening that simple observation produced a vast supply of information and insight.

All three interviewers made it a point to spend some time with each member of every family and with every family together, so that there were three intellectual and emotional reactions to all of the personalities and relationships, but all three interviewers (the two officers who are the authors of this study and their female assistant) did not all conduct each interview together.

The basic questions that the interviewers asked theselves before and after an interview was: How does the child behave? Why? How does it make sense in the context of this family?

In each case the boy's delinquency was indeed found to be adaptive; the delinquent behavior either met a need in the nexus and balance of the family relationships or it met an essential need of the boy which was not being met in the family but did not disturb the balance of the family relationships. These essential needs are for

recognition (as a male and as an individual), for security, and for love (caring and approval).

The family balance, or homeostasis, is such that each member has certain interlocking roles with each of the other members so that each regulates and controls all of the others and is himself regulated and controlled by them, reducing tension in the individual and in the group by assuring some degree of predictability and certainty and by assuring each member that some, at least, of his essential physical and emotional needs will be met.

If the balance among the members is precarious, that is, if one member is effectively stronger, or one (or more) is desperate because he experienced the ultimate anxiety: the terror of the loss or lack of love and security and identity, then the number of regulating mechanisms and alternatives in that family will be fewer than in the normal family (non-symptom producing family) and the family structure will be rigid. These families are termed dysfunctional.

Children in these families often have symptoms which are an integral part of the family system: the symptom is produced by pressure from the other members and answers some need (usually anxiety reduction) in those members. It also ensures the child of getting some of his own needs met. These children also exhibit symptoms which are not an integral part of the family system but which do not upset the

family balance and which meet some of their own needs. In this study delinquency was found to be both of these kinds of symptoms, depending on the family and the social situation.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to our children . . .

Cameual,

Kevin, and

Gwendolyn

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We wish to express our gratitude and appreciation to Mr. David Kalinich, Dr. Victor G. Strecher, Professor Louis Radelet, and especially Dr. Robert C. Traojanowicz for the guidance and assistance they provided throughout this research.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Why do young people become delinquents? A great deal of research has been done with minors apprehended and convicted for delinquent acts in the attempt to isolate the most significant causative factors. Those factors could then be focal points in preventative measures aimed at alleviating and eliminating juvenile delinquency. This has indeed been attempted, but with very little success. Recent studies show that only a very small percentage of delinquents are caught and that that small percentage is not representative of the majority of juvenile delinquents in the United States.[1] Therefore, much of the previous research is compromised or even negated.

These same studies have shown that neither delinquents nor their acts can be categorized into typologies. Adolescents from all social strata commit all varieties of crimes. They do not specialize as individuals or as groups in one or more kinds of crime.

Especially significant is that the commonly accepted stereotypes of lower-class, black males, and of gangs, as the chief

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[1] Bill Haney and Martin Gold, "The Juvenile Delinquent Nobody Knows," Psychology Today, September, 1973, p. 49.

perpetrators of juvenile crime have been disproven.[2] The stereotypes themselves are partially responsible for their continued acceptance, somewhat in the same way that an accepted prophecy becomes self-fulfilling. Policemen tend to accept this view and to apprehend and charge a lower-class youth, especially if he is black, for behavior for which they would not charge a middle-class white youth. The courts then find themselves with dockets full of black, lower-class youngsters and researchers find themselves studying these same youngsters, only because they have been isolated and are available. Social workers, who have little occasion to do in-depth interviews with white, middle-class families, often hear of delinquent behavior from the poor families with whom they work. It is not astonishing, therefore, that these mistaken beliefs should be so widely accepted, nor in the light of their invalidity, is it astounding that little progress should be made in preventative programs focused on the wrong phenomena.

If delinquents are not confined to a limited section of society and are usually not caught, how can we realistically study them? Who and what should be examined? Youngsters who have committed more than one punishable offense should be examined. They should be chosen from all social and economic strata in approximate proportion to their

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[2] Ibid.

representation in society as a whole, which means that they should not all be selected from police and court caseloads.

Having surmounted all of the obstacles in locating representative subjects, there yet remains the even larger obstacle of determining what should be examined. Leaving the old theories and alleged facts in limbo as unproven (neither accepted nor rejected) means that the problem must be approached as if it had never been studied before, as if all of its facets were unknowns except the identity of the delinquent and the nature of his acts. An exploratory study must therefore begin with the knowns, with the child himself or with the acts. Because the acts are behaviors resulting from decisions that the child has made, consciously or subconsciously, it seems more logical to begin with the child.

The problem has now narrowed down to: why does any particular child commit delinquent acts? It must be expanded again to: why does any particular human being do any specific thing? Myriad psychological and sociological theories have been propounded to answer this question; boiled down to their essence they resemble the same answer that biologists give when asked why organisms behave the way they do and to the same answer that anthropologists give when asked why societies behave the way they do: the organism, person, or society is adapting to its environment. It is using all of its inherent and learned capabilities in order to meet its needs given the situation as it perceives it.

Dr. R. D. Laing, an eminent British psychiatrist, together with Dr. A. Esterson has written a book called Sanity, Madness, and the Family (1971) which clearly illustrates (in a series of eleven in-depth studies of diagnosed, hospitalized, female schizophrenics and their families) that even the most illogical appearing behavior could be recognized as adaptive if one knew all of the circumstances. In each case at least three psychiatrists had previously labeled the individual's behavior as so inappropriate that it was psychotic. In each case, also, the patient had been seen alone for these diagnoses; other family members had been interviewed, if at all, in separate sessions from the patient.

Dr. Laing and his group have actually studied over two hundred of these families, and in each case have found that the patient's behavior was "socially intelligible" when seen in the context of the original family.[3] The patient adjusted herself to her family. From her array of possible adjustments (determined first of all by her inherent capabilities and emotional strengths and weaknesses, i.e., her limitations and potentials) to any group of human beings who could have comprised her family, she worked out a means for surviving and for having her needs met within the inhibiting, distorted rules and limited

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[3] R. D. Laing and A. Esterson, Sanity, Madness, and the Family, 2nd ed. (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers), 1971, pp. viii, ix, 8-13.

range of nurturing available to her from those persons who actually did make up her family. In other words, she adapted, even though she had to become psychotic to do so.

According to the current literature in family research, everyone adapts himself psychologically to the relationships within his family.[4] It is the family who transmits the basic adaptive techniques

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[4]Nathan W. Ackerman, Treating the Troubled Family (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1966). See also: Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy and Geraldine M. Spark, Invisible Loyalties (Hagerstown, Maryland: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1973); Murray Bowen, "A Family Concept of Schizophrenia," in The Etiology of Schizophrenia, ed. Don D. Jackson (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1960); James L. Framo, "Symptoms from a Family Transactional Viewpoint," in Progress in Group & Family Therapy, ed. C. J. Sager and H. S. Kaplan (New York: Brunner-Mazel, 1972); Jay Haley, "The Family of the Schizophrenic: A Model System," in The Psychosocial Interior of the Family, 2nd ed., ed. Gerald Handel (Chicago: Aldine·Atherton, Inc., 1972); Robert D. Hess and Gerald Handel, "The Family as a Psychosocial Organization," in The Psychosocial Interior of the Family, 2nd ed., ed. Gerald Handel (Chicago: Aldine·Atherton, Inc., 1972); Don D. Jackson and John H. Weakland, "Conjoint Family Therapy," in Changing Families, ed. Jay Haley (New York: Grune & Stratton, Inc., 1971); Ronald D. Laing, "Mystification, Confusion, and Conflict," in Intensive Family Therapy, ed. Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy and James L. Framo (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965); Theodore Lidz and others, "Intrafamilial Environment of the Schizophrenic Patient: The Transmission of Irrationality," in The Psychosocial Interior of the Family, 2nd ed., ed. Gerald Handel (Chicago: Aldine·Atherton, Inc., 1972); Elliot G. Mishler and Nancy E. Waxler, "Family Interaction Processes and Schizophrenia: A Review of Current Theories," in Psychosocial Interior of the Family, 2nd ed., ed. Gerald Handel (Chicago: Aldine Atherton, Inc., 1972); Jurgen Ruesch and Gregory Bateson, Communication: The Social Matrix of Psychiatry (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1951); Virginia Satir, Conjoint Family Therapy, rev. ed. (Palo Alto, California: Science and Behavior Books, Inc., 1967); J. L. Titchener and others, "Family Transaction and Derivation of Individuality," Family Process, 2: 95-120, 1963; Paul Watzlawick, Janet Helmick Beavin, and Don D. Jackson, Pragmatics of Human Communication (New

of the culture to the child,[5] and also, because of his absolute dependency, it ensures that its own unique interpretation of human relationships, and especially the child's place in them, will be indelibly printed on the child's personality. For many years he will accept his position and its limitations unquestioningly. By the time he is old enough to question the validity of his assumptions, most of them will be so ingrained that it will not occur to him to question them. His perception of actual persons and events will be colored or distorted by the interpretations of reality that he received in his earliest childhood.[6]

As his perceptions are distorted, so are his adaptations.[7] If he has received recognition only in the form of material goods, and not in affectionate gestures, he might tend to see affectionate gestures as

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York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1967); Lyman C. Wynne, "Communication Disorders and the Quest for Relatedness in Families of Schizophrenics," The American Journal of Psychoanalysis, 30: 100-114, 1970; Gerald H. Zuk, "Family Therapy," in Changing Families, ed. Jay Haley (New York: Grune & Stratton, Inc., 1971).

[5]Theodore Lidz, The Family and Human Adaptation (New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1963), p. 112.

[6]Nathan W. Ackerman, The Psychodynamics of Family Life (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1958), pp. 188-246.

[7]James L. Titchener, Jules Riskin, and Richard Emerson, "The Family in Psychosomatic Process," in The Psychosocial Interior of the Family, 2nd ed., ed. Gerald Handel (Chicago: Aldine·Atherton, Inc., 1972), p. 403.

superfluous, bothersome, or acquisitive, and the only true affection as a bestowal of gifts. The fact that this bestowal will be as unsatisfying as it was in his early childhood will not cause him to reject it; he is far more likely to think that he has simply not received enough.

Because each human being is unique, each family is unique. No two, three, or more individuals develop exactly the same family relationships as any other family, even though they might be attempting to fulfill exactly the same functions. Therefore, even though behavior might be similar in individuals of the same age and sex, the reasons behind it, i.e., its adaptive significance, might be quite different.

This is true also of delinquent behavior. The fact that very few youngsters who commit delinquent acts go on to become criminals as adults[8] suggests that delinquency is related to the family environment and relationships, for the adolescent's family is still extremely important to him, and he, of course, is an important part of it. By adolescence a child has had time to absorb all of the nuances of the particular rules of relationship which govern his family and to make the force of his interpretation of those rules felt by the others. Though this is an age when children are looking toward a separation from their families of origin, they are yet an integral part of them.[9]

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[8]Ephraim Rosen, Ronald E. Fox, and Ian Gregory, Abnormal Psychology, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Company, 1972); p. 256.

[9]Ackerman, The Psychodynamics of Family Life, op. cit., pp. 87-88; Bowen, op. cit., pp. 366-367; and James L. Framo, "Rationale &

Delinquent behavior and its possible consequences are often so extreme that it is hard to see how the family, usually the most significant aspect of an adolescent's life, could be unrelated to it. On the other hand, taking only a superficial look at many of their families, it is equally hard to see how they could be related to it.[10] Thus, the problem at this point has narrowed down once again: what part do families play in juvenile delinquency? Given a particular situation, does delinquent behavior meet any of the child's emotional needs; is it adaptive?

Techniques of Intensive Family Therapy," in Intensive Family Therapy, ed. Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy and James L. Framo (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965), p. 151.

[10] Ibid., p. 149.

Chapter 2

THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was to learn if delinquency is a strategy used by the adolescent to adapt to his family, and if it is, to look for causative factors determining who will use it and when. This meant that a certain number of delinquent children and their families had to be investigated in such a way that those causative factors could be exposed and understood. Surveys and other research based on superficial examination of large numbers of individuals did not seem appropriate; rather, open-ended, in-depth examination of a limited number of individuals from a divergent range of family environments seemed to be called for. In the end, ten boys and their families became the subjects of the study.

The problem was to discover what patterns usually occur in families that produce delinquents and to learn how these patterns are adaptive in the context of the particular family, i.e., how they help to maintain the balance, and why they are necessary.

Each family is a homeostatic unit which continually regulates itself to maintain its balance within certain subconsciously defined

limits determined largely by the marital relationship, which forms the central mechanism to which all of the other mechanisms adapt.[1] Because each member acts, and is acted upon, to maintain this balance over a long period of time with the same group of people, certain actions, reactions, and counter-reactions tend to be repeated in much the same sequence until they become habitual and therefore familiar. People cling to these familiar patterns even when they are restrictive, destructive, and painful (dysfunctional).[2]

The original intention was to look for specific dysfunctional patterns or regularities, recurring patterns of interaction (including both verbal and non-verbal communication) which would indicate that the relationships were ineffective or emotionally destructive to the child. Midway through the first few cases it was noticed that searching for specific regularities led to Procrustean distortions, and a more open-ended approach was adopted. This led to a focus on the adaptiveness of the child's behavior as seen in the context of the dysfunctions of his parents' relationship and the consequent degree and particularity of dysfunction of the entire family nexus.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 183-190; and Theodore Lidz, Stephen Fleck, and Alice R. Cornelison, Schizophrenia and the Family (New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1965), pp. 147-162.

[2] Don D. Jackson, "The Question of Family Homeostasis," Psychiatric Quarterly Supplement, 31: 79-90, 1957 and Satir, op. cit., pp. 1-7, 27-44.

ANALYSIS AND DEFINITION OF TERMS

As mentioned above, similar behavior is not necessarily the result of similar causative factors, so the analysis of one situation provided no certain directions for the analysis of the next; each boy's situation had to be approached as unique.

The definition of delinquency in this study was borrowed from Haney and Gold: "A delinquent act is one that is illegal, and one the individual knows is illegal when he commits it."[3]

Boys who had actually been apprehended by the police made up only a small proportion of the total number of boys who were approached as possible candidates for the study. The majority were boys whose delinquent activities were known to someone who knew one of the interviewers or knew about the study and suggested their names. They were invited to take part only if they admitted to two or more delinquent acts and if there was some corroborating evidence to show that they actually had done so. The ten boys who make up the population of the case studies all met these conditions and are considered for the purpose of the study to be juvenile delinquents.

An adaptive strategy is any means by which an individual attempts to have his needs met. This statement is so essential to the

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[3]Haney and Gold, op. cit., p. 49.

understanding of the entire report that it must be examined term by term.

An individual's needs are considered in this study to include not only those physical elements: food, water, sleep, and shelter and those psychological elements: love, security, and recognition which all human beings require, but also the form and combination of those elements which the child himself consciously or subconsciously perceives or feels that he must have.

All perceptions are distortions of reality, because all perceptions are selective and because all perceptions have emotional associations. "Perception . . . involves some mediation activity, presumably under the control of the brain, that prepares the organism to respond in a special way."[4]

Perceptions are selective because the brain takes into account those aspects of an object or situation that it has learned to consider important. For instance, in the perception of a table most people would tend to be more aware of its surface than of its legs because they would have used the surfaces of other tables many, many times. People who build, design, or collect tables, however, would tend to be more aware of its structure and aesthetic qualities.

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[4]Howard H. Kendler and Tracy S. Kendler, Basic Psychology: Brief Edition (New York: Meredith Corporation, 1971), p. 62.

Perceptions have emotional associations because human beings are emotional creatures; we do not live, nor do we learn, in emotional vacuums. Therefore perceptions are acquired in conjunction with other stimuli, with pleasant or unpleasant emotional connotations. As a person matures, he acquires numerous weak and strong, overlapping, often conflicting, emotional associations at the same time that he is acquiring practical information and understanding. These, added to the previously established biases and distorted interpretations put on his interpersonal and physical environment by his family, guarantee that all that he experiences will be perceived, understood, and absorbed through the unique filter of his own perceptual and emotional background.[5]

Perceptions and feelings about persons with whom one is in an emotionally charged relationship tend to be especially amorphous and changeable, not easily defined for any one person in a long-term situation. Fortunately for the researcher, they do tend to stabilize into a recognizable range over which they fluctuate, so that they can, in some measure, be identified.[6]

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[5]Hess and Handel, op. cit., p. 10; Theodore Lidz and Stephen Fleck, "Schizophrenia, Human Integration, and the Role of the Family," in The Etiology of Schizophrenia, ed. Don D. Jackson (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1960), pp. 326-328.

[6]Haley, "The Family of the Schizophrenic: A Model System," op. cit., pp. 263-264.

Identifying a person's perceptions and feelings about another person or group of persons with whom he is relating is further complicated by the fact that he usually is not aware of his true feelings himself. Nor does he know why he and his relatives behave the way they do, though he knows enough about them to be able to predict fairly accurately what all of them would do in most situations. This predictive capacity leads him to believe that he understands far more than he does.[7]

In summing up then, it is seen that every person has needs, but the means which he feels will satisfy them is unique, determined by the configuration of his personality and the totality of his previous experiences. This, of course, includes the limiting factor of the number and ways in which his intimate family members, especially his parents, are able and willing to meet those needs.

Referring back to the original statement that an adaptive strategy is any means by which an individual attempts to have his needs met, it becomes obvious that the way in which an individual perceives

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[7]Erving Goffman, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959), pp. 17-76; Lidz and Fleck, "Schizophrenia, Human Integration, and the Role of the Family," op. cit., p. 329; Titchener, Riskin, and Emerson, "The Family in Psychosomatic Process, op. cit., p. 422; Anthony F. C. Wallace and Raymond D. Fogelsom, "The Identity Struggle," in Intensive Family Therapy, ed. Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy and James L. Framo (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965), pp. 380-387.

his needs and the ways which he perceives are available to him to satisfy them will determine the ways in which he will attempt to have them satisfied. Those ways are adaptive strategies. They are adapted to fit the circumstances as he sees them.

The number of ways in which any family could work out the basic problems of living together in this society under any given set of circumstances is so great that no computer could possibly handle all of the intricate factors which influence the final patterns of relationships. Statistics become meaningless when applied to an individual case. To say that broken homes, or the influence of the peer group, or poverty, or mental illness, etc. leads to delinquency is to say that a dislike of bananas causes one to eat a great many apples. A dislike of bananas may be a contributing factor to one's eating a great many apples, but the availability of apples, parental pressure to eat, or not to eat, them, and continual hunger are all likely to be more important factors, especially in combination.

If delinquency is an adaptive strategy in a family, it is probably only one among many adaptive strategies or only one aspect of a larger pattern. The family interacts at a number of different psychological levels, from the most basic, subconscious, gut-level through a variety of more and less conscious subtleties to that most misleading

level, that which is overt.[8] Considering the inherent complexities of family involvement, attempting to decipher the real from the apparent interactions of the family is the core of the problem in this study.

DELIMITATIONS

Family relationships have only begun to be explored in depth in the last decade or two. Though research has certainly been undertaken, no diagnostic measuring instruments have been accepted by professionals in the field as accurate and objective.[9]

Family therapists learn family therapy by working with other family therapists, by reading the current work of other therapists, and by trial and error.[10] Many of them have entered the field by slow degrees, first working with single patients, after training in psychiatry or psychology, and gradually expanding their practices to admit

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[8]James L. Framo, "Systematic Research on Family Dynamics," in Intensive Family Therapy, ed. by Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy and James L. Framo (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965), pp. 451-452.

[9]Henry L. Lennard, "Criteria for the Development of an Inclusive Coding System for Categorizing Family Interaction," in Family Interaction--A Dialogue Between Family Researchers and Family Therapists, ed. James L. Framo (New York: Springer Publishing Company, Inc., 1972), pp. 216-232; Jules Riskin and Elaine E. Faunce, "An Evaluative Review of Family Interaction Research," Family Process, 11: 365-435, 1972.

[10]Jay Haley, "Family Therapy: A Radical Change," in Changing Families, ed. Jay Haley (New York: Grune & Stratton, Inc., 1971), p. 277.

relatives of particular patients who remain enigmatic in spite of their best efforts. Understandably then, a great deal of the work in this field has been done on the families of schizophrenics and of other persons who have desired therapy.

Even if family therapy and research were far more advanced than they are, untrained laymen could not hope to accurately analyze the intricate underlying psychological dynamics of any family on the basis of articles and books written on the subject.

Fortunately, families do reveal a great deal about themselves (sometimes purposely but more often not) so that much can be learned about what is going on in a family without getting into the deep psychological analyses of the psychiatrist or the psychologist.[11] Though a great deal that would be obvious to trained personnel has no doubt gone unrecognized, the three interviewers were able to identify some specific adaptive strategies in all of the ten families which completed the series of interviews (Five other families either could not or would not interact naturally or respond frankly for a sufficient number of sessions to make their relationships clear, so those families have not been included in the case studies in this report).

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[11] Jules Henry, "My Life with the Families of Psychotic Children," in The Psychosocial Interior of the Family, 2nd ed., ed. Gerald Handel (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, Inc., 1972), pp. 33-34; Wallace and Fogelson, op. cit., pp. 366-367.

Though the major delimitation of the study has been a lack of training and of experience, time and the resistance of the families to revealing certain areas of their lives and to having their associates and other relevant persons interviewed has also curtailed the original plan.

Time became a problem as soon as the interviews began. Both of the authors are policemen on swing shifts and different schedules. Initially all of the interviews took place with both officers and the female assistant present, but due to the exigencies of the deadline it later became necessary to conduct many of the interviews with only one or two of the interviewers present. All of the interviews were tape recorded and provide the basis for the entire paper.

The resistance of the families to revealing some kinds of information was as great a stumbling block as was the interviewers' lack of training and was probably caused in part by that lack. Though some of the resistance was deliberate, much of it was either from subconscious defense mechanisms or from a very real lack of understanding about themselves and their relationships.

The barrier encountered most blatantly was the families' refusal to let their associates be interviewed. Because in most of the cases the child's delinquency was either unknown outside the family circle or was not admitted, and because many of these families

consented to be studied only on the condition that everything about them, including the extent of the delinquent problem, be kept confidential, this procedure was not used as fully as it could have been. Only those persons whom the family consented to have interviewed were interviewed, but in many of the cases this included close friends and immediate relatives. Very few school officials, teachers, or other agents were seen.

Chapter 3

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The basic theory from which this study operates is that the child's delinquency is a symptom of dysfunction in the family system. To understand how this can be so it is necessary to understand first, bio-systems and how they function; then, family systems and how they function; and last, deviant behavior and how it is promoted in the family system.

BIO-SYSTEMS AND HOW THEY FUNCTION

> Systems have both a structure and a process. The former may be defined as the arrangement of the system's components in three-dimensional space at a given moment in time. Process may be defined as all change over time; or more precisely, all transmissions among sub-systems within the complex system.
>
> A complex system, in contradistinction to a simple system, is one in which some of the coordination and control functions required for the simple system to operate are taken over by a sub-unit . . . so that aspects of coordination and control become, in part, extrinsic to the ongoing activity process of the simple system (i.e., the family).
>
> Within any complex behavior system, we may conceptualize three types of forces operating on the components of the system; these are (a) forces deriving from

> the components, (b) forces deriving from the system, and (c) forces that have their source in the environment of the system.[1]

The homeostatic system is one in which the components regulate themselves in an equilibrium: a state of balance and constancy. The bio-system, being composed of living organisms in an organic and inorganic environment, has movement and change as inherent properties. It must have the ability to produce new material and activities to meet new problems as they arise and it must also have the ability to eliminate harmful material and activities as they arise and as old properties degenerate in their usefulness. These abilities are subsumed under the terms positive feedback and negative feedback; they are regulating mechanisms which respond to stimuli from within the system (in its components and its operation) and from outside its boundaries.[2] This concept will be illustrated in its application to a familiar bio-system: the eco-system.

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[1] Andrew E. Curry, "The Family Therapy Situation as a System," Family Process, 5: 131-141, 1966, p. 132.

[2] Gregory Bateson, "The Biosocial Integration of Behavior in the Schizophrenic Family," in Exploring the Base for Family Therapy, ed. Nathan W. Ackerman, Frances L. Beatman, and Sanford N. Sherman (New York, New York: Family Service Association of America, 1961), pp. 116-122; Lynn Hoffman, "Deviation-Amplifying Processes in Natural Groups," in Changing Families, ed. Jay Haley (New York: Grune & Stratton, Inc., 1971), pp. 287-288, 303-305; Jackson and Weakland, op. cit., 16-18, 28-30.

In the eco-system, any recognizable group or being is itself part of the larger system and contains within itself smaller systems.[3] Within the individual animal or human being, for instance, there are organ systems composed of tissue systems composed of cellular systems composed of molecular systems, etc. The individual is itself part of an increasingly larger group of systems. If it is a rabbit, it is part of a food and predatory system that fluctuates according to the amount of food available (if more food, more rabbits are reproduced) and the number of predators in the area. If hawks and wolves abound, they will act to keep the population of rabbits down so that there is enough food for all of those born. If too many wolves populate the area, there will not be enough rabbits to maintain the previous rate of births, and the rabbit population will go down. The wolves will not have enough to eat and their population will also go down. The reduction in the number of predators will enable the rabbits to reproduce more rapidly and the number of rabbits will soon reach its former level. The wolves, having enough to eat, will also replenish their population. This, of course, is only one facet of the rabbit-wolf eco-system. Drought,

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[3]Otis Dudley Duncan, "The Ecosystem Concept and the Problem of Air Pollution," in Environment and Cultural Behavior, ed. Andrew P. Vayda (Garden City, New York: The Natural History Press, 1969), pp. 456-466; Yehudi A. Cohen, ed., Man in Adaptation: The Cultural Present (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1968), pp. 3-4.

disease, and human hunters could also affect it, as could genetic change to the better advantage or detriment of either combatant.

The food-predation aspect of the eco-system is only one regulating mechanism; there are many others. Positive feedback is any circumstance or mechanism that promotes the system as it is. This includes the addition of new facets into the system, so long as it maintains the system in essentially the same balance.[4] The mutation of spottedness in jungle rabbits or whiteness in arctic rabbits that are being depleted are examples of additions that contribute to positive feedback. The system is able to maintain itself, for spottedness and whiteness will ensure that some of the rabbits will not be caught and will thus be able to reproduce, so that there will continue to be rabbits to be eaten. The provision of the rabbits is the positive feedback.

Negative feedback is the error correcting mechanism of the system.[5] If jungle rabbits mutated whiteness they would soon be noticed by their predators and wiped out, a self-correcting mechanism, for soon no white rabbits would remain to produce more white rabbits.

Deviation amplification is that process whereby a new circumstance is encouraged to promote itself because it contributes to the

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[4] Hoffman, op. cit., p. 290.

[5] Ibid.

maintenance of the system as it is.[6] Spotted jungle rabbits would increase in proportion to black or brown jungle rabbits.

In human eco-systems many deviation-amplifications that have initially been hailed as beneficial have later been found to be just the contrary. For instance, in many parts of the world where rice is the staple food, better seeds and rice-growing techniques seemed to be a miraculous solution for widespread hunger. This proved not to be the case. Rice is a crop that responds to intensified care by producing more rice per acre, but the intensified care requires large amounts of manpower. Families who initially produced more rice produced more offspring to care for the rice in order to produce more rice to feed more offspring. The over-population that resulted was no benefit to the people, for besides being more overcrowded than before, they had no more to eat.[7]

In this example the rice-increasing techniques enlarged the system but maintained its equilibrium. It did not change its innate character.

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[6] Ibid., pp. 285-309.

[7] Clifton R. Wharton, Jr., "The Green Revolution: Cornucopia or Pandora's Box?," Foreign Affairs, 47: 464-476, 1969.

THE FAMILY AS A SYSTEM

> The family system has a structure of its own, which is largely underground and unconscious; it has its own myths, rituals, rules, and powerful influences. The system remains even when one person leaves it, and it absorbs and accomodates itself to whomever or whatever comes into contact with it; the effect of the community or social class on it is less than we would have thought. The system changes very slowly or not at all. In the study of the family system, emphasis has to be given to transactional wholes rather than to a collection of individual events.[8]

The basic systemic property of the family is that a change in one part of the system is followed by compensatory changes in other parts so that equilibrium is maintained. The family is actually a variety of systems and subsystems which "function at all levels of efficiency from optimum functioning to total dysfunction and failure." They can also "overfunction, which can range from compensated overfunction to decompensated overfunction."[9]

Families are different from any other type of group because they exist out of necessity over a long period of time as a group, and because the personality and outlook of the younger membership is determined in large part by the older members for the very reason that

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[8] Framo, "Systematic Research on Family Dynamics," op. cit., p. 454.

[9] Murray Bowen, "The Use of Family Theory in Clinical Practice," in Changing Families, ed. Jay Haley (New York: Grune & Stratton, Inc., 1971), p. 166.

they are a part of the group and totally dependent in their formative years on those older members. The bonds of loyalty and interdependence in families exceed that of any other group, including those in mental institutions and prisons (though there is some similarity due to the peculiar nature of the dependency relationships there).[10]

> All relationship systems are conservative. Their logic demands that the members' shared investment of care and concern should serve to balance out all injustices and exploitations. Through both the unchangeability of genetic relatedness and the continuity of obligation accounts, families constitute the most conservative system of all relationships.[11]

Families are homeostatic, self-regulating units. They regulate themselves with a variety of positive and negative feedback devices so that the members' behavior and communication will function in such a way as to maintain the group. Because the group has developed a means of coping with society and with its own needs within the society over a period of time, it will encourage behavior that coincides with that means of coping and discourage behavior that conflicts with it. The members act as "governors" on each others' behavior.[12]

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[10] Hess and Handel, op. cit., pp. 10-13; James L. Framo, ed., Family Interaction--A Dialogue Between Family Researchers and Family Therapists (New York: Springer Publishing Company, Inc., 1972), p. 245; Lidz and Fleck, "Schizophrenia, Human Integration, and the Role of the Family," op. cit., p. 327.

[11] Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark, op. cit., pp. 10-11.

[12] Jay Haley, Strategies of Psychotherapy (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1963), p. 189.

This is by no means so simple and straightforward as it sounds, for much of this governorship is subconscious, though the acts themselves are overt. Ray Birdwhistell, in his work on kinesics, nonverbal communication, has done a great deal of filming of families and their interactions. He has found that people communicate as much by body movement and facial gesture as they do in words, and that family members understand each others' signals even though they are incomprehensible to observers[13] and consciously unnoticed by the family.[14]

Albert E. Scheflen tells of a relevant scene he observed while watching a film of Dr. Laing interviewing a family. The mother engaged Dr. Laing in brief conversation eleven different times, in an obviously flirtatious way. Each time, she withdrew abruptly and sat back, quiet and withdrawn, until the next time, though no member of her family interrupted her or told her to stop and Dr. Laing did not discourage her. Close observation of the film, however, showed that the family did signal her to withdraw. Each time she began to speak her husband quickly but violently shook his foot and then the daughter and grandmother, sitting to each side of her, crossed their legs in such a way that she was blocked by them. In fact their toes almost met in front

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[13] Ray L. Birdwhistell, Kinesics and Context (New York: Ballantine Books, 1970).

[14] Framo, "Systematic Research on Family Dynamics," op. cit., pp. 451-452.

of her legs. This interaction was so brief and abrupt that it easily went unnoticed by all of the persons present. It is unlikely that even the participants were aware of what they did and why.[15]

Families with symptom presenting members have fewer and more rigid patterns of interaction than do normal (non-symptomatic) families. This is because they are more unstable. Any behavior which is outside of that accepted by the family as needed for their continued existence is seen as threatening and is therefore eradicated as quickly as possible.[16]

It would seem that deviant behavior, as defined by the society, would be the most threatening to the family, but this is not the case. Often deviant behavior is seen as necessary to maintain the family's equilibrium.[17]

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[15]Albert E. Scheflen, "Explaining Communicative Behavior: Three Points of View," in Expanding Theory and Practice in Family Therapy, ed. Nathan W. Ackerman and others (New York: Family Service Association of America, 1967), pp. 96-97.

[16]Jay Haley, "Research on Family Pattern: an Instrument Measurement," Family Process, 3: 41-65, 1964; Don D. Jackson, "Differences Between 'Normal' and 'Abnormal' Families," in Expanding Theory & Practice in Family Therapy, ed. Nathan W. Ackerman and others (New York: Family Service Association of America), 1967, pp. 100-101; Satir, op. cit., pp. 35-44.

[17]Maleta J. Boatman and S. A. Szurek, "A Clinical Study of Childhood Schizophrenia," in The Etiology of Schizophrenia, ed. Don D. Jackson (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1960); Framo, "Symptoms from a Family Transactional Viewpoint," op. cit.; Hoffman, op. cit.; Adelaide M. Johnson and S. A. Szurek, "The Genesis of Antisocial Acting

Before going into the particular reasons, it would be well to keep in mind that family systems are multi-level.[18] There are internal psychological systems operating within each of the members. In every family there are also subsystems composed of various combinations of the members (dyads, triads, etc.) up to the number of the total membership. The members and the family itself are also part of other, larger groups up to the number of the total society.[19]

The family as a unit also interacts on many internal levels. They are biological beings who need to be fed, for example. While the act of feeding and being fed in any group or sub-group may overlay and affect other important areas, it is a primary area in itself. Therefore while mother may withhold son's favorite kind of food as a punishment for his withholding sexual affirmation from her in their current covert struggle, her providing him with food and his acceptance of it has formed a pattern of interaction over all of his life and will also be represented in the specific behavior overtly enacted.

Out in Children and Adults," Psychoanalytical Quarterly, 21: 323-343, 1952; Satir, op. cit.; Ezra F. Vogel and Norman W. Bell, "The Emotionally Disturbed Child as the Family Scapegoat," in The Psychosocial Interior of the Family, 2nd ed., ed. Gerald Handel (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, Inc., 1972).

[18] Haley, "The Family of the Schizophrenic: A Model System," op. cit., p. 273; Hoffman, op. cit., pp. 293-295.

[19] Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark, op. cit., pp. 1-17.

Any behavior of any member will have feedback effects on the others on any of several levels at the same time. Some of these will be amplifying effects (positive, or encouraging, feedback) and some will be counteracting effects (negative, or discouraging, feedback); some of it will be new behavior and some (most) of it will not be.

> . . . any feedback . . . may have deviation-amplifying and counteracting effects at the same time, depending on which system one is looking at. Tragic drama is suggestive in regard to this point. What the Greeks called hubris, inadequately translated as overweening pride and somehow linked to the tragic hero's downfall, closely resembles our old friend the positive feedback chain of social power. Once set in motion, this chain is deviation amplifying from the point of view of the hero, whose deviance in relation to his group is increased to the point that he is eventually cast out, brought low, or otherwise destroyed. It is deviation counteracting from the point of view of his society, in that out of the ashes of the hero's downfall supposedly rises a new social peace. An alternative explanation might be that the society uses the aftermath of the debacle to recalibrate the setting for its own equilibrium.[20]

The basic reason that family members exert such force on one another is that subconsciously each believes that only the other members will be able to meet his most basic needs. Each of the parents left his own parental home, his family of origin, with some of his needs unmet and some of his wishes unfulfilled. When he married, each expected his partner to fulfill these unmet needs and

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[20] Hoffman, op. cit., p. 294.

wishes. Each married what he subconsciously believed to be his complement. In a healthy pair of individuals the couple learns to accept the reality of the situation over a reasonable length of time and to adjust themselves to those lacks that they feel that their partner is unable to fulfill.[21]

THE PROMOTION OF DEVIANT BEHAVIOR

In an unhealthy pair of individuals, those who have a serious lack of self-esteem, facing these lacks is too traumatic; they are unable to do it. Instead, they manage to avoid confronting themselves and each other with their feelings of disappointment, loss, anger, and sometimes panic, for fear that the other will be angry and reject, or worse, abandon them. Often the partners are unable to admit their disappointment even to themselves, partly because it entails feeling the emptiness inside themselves, which is very painful, and partly because it raises a spector of their own shortcomings in giving to the other partner.[22]

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[21] Framo, "Rationale & Techniques of Intensive Family Therapy," op. cit., pp. 183-190; Satir, op. cit., pp. 8-10.

[22] Boatman and Szurek, op. cit., p. 409; Framo, "Systematic Research on Family Dynamics," op. cit., pp. 447-449; Lidz, Fleck, and Cornelison, Schizophrenia and the Family, op. cit., pp. 136-142.

Even though they are not recognized as such, the pain and the emptiness are there, and the partners must each deal with them in some way, but each is restricted by the necessity of maintaining the appearance of following the rules that he accepts for his role in life. Sometimes the couple retain the tension created by this dissatisfaction and continual effort to obtain satisfaction between themselves, i.e., in their own relationship, but more often, they bring in one or more of their children. If only one child is focused on, that child will be more harmed than if the tension and its particular distortion are distributed among, or through, all of them.[23]

Children are in an extremely vulnerable position in a family; they are easily and frequently victimized. First, they are available full-time. Second, they are desperately in need of their parents' physical and emotional support and will accept any form and quantity that is offered. Third, they have no basis for judging or rejecting their parents' offerings, so accept them with little or no question as to their worth and base their own perceptions of reality on them. And last, being less important in the emotional scheme of things, they can be more easily sacrificed than can adults.[24]

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[23] Vogel and Bell, op. cit., pp. 426-428.

[24] Ibid., pp. 427-428.

Children are called upon to play many roles in their parents' emotional lives. When the role disturbs the natural growth of the child's emotional life, he will exhibit symptomatic behavior at some point,[25] though this will not be recognized as such if the family needs the behavior to exist in order for it to maintain its own equilibrium and will resist the efforts of the child or of any outside agent to change it. If the child's symptomatic behavior is not contributing to the family's equilibrium directly, but is contributing indirectly by not disturbing it, the family is also unlikely to encourage a change.[26]

One role that the symptomatic child is often found to be playing is that of the scapegoat.[27] There are various reasons and forms of this phenomena, but basically it takes two forms.

In both forms the child is the repository and the focus of the family's tensions and anxieties. The parent(s) project their own feelings of frustration onto the child and perceive him as if he were

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[25]Framo, "Symptoms from a Family Transactional Viewpoint," op. cit.; Vogel and Bell, op. cit.

[26]Framo, "Rationale and Techniques of Intensive Family Therapy," op. cit., pp. 156-157; Muriel James and Dorothy Jongeward, Born to Win (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1971), pp. 101-151; Satir, op. cit.; Fred L. Strodtbeck, "The Family as a Three-Person Group," in The Psychosocial Interior of the Family, 2nd ed., ed. Gerald Handel (Chicago: Aldine·Atherton, Inc., 1972); Vogel and Bell, op. cit.

[27]Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark, op. cit., pp. 258-259; Vogel and Bell, op. cit.

the bad, sick, stupid, weak, etc. person whom they need him to be. The child soon begins to react as if he were what they perceive him to be. For instance, if he is perceived as irrational, his family will tell him that many of his statements do not make sense, that he is not seeing what he thinks he is seeing. At first he will resist, but eventually he will accept their perception of him. He will doubt the evidence of his own senses and will not develop a reliable means of testing reality. Eventually, he will be irrational.[28]

If he is told that all of his motives are bad, even though they were perfectly innocent or simply careless in the beginning, he will eventually perceive himself and his motives as bad. He will not take into account those times when his motives were good, in his basic judgment of himself, and will accept his parents' view.

In the first form of scapegoating, regardless of the particular configuration that it takes, the family needs for the member to remain emotionally part of the family. They will try to keep physical custody of the child until his symptoms become so uncomfortable that it is upsetting the family equilibrium in some way; they will then allow him

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[28]Boatman and Szurek, op. cit., pp. 411-414; Bowen, op. cit., pp. 361-362; Framo, "Rationale and Techniques of Intensive Family Therapy," op. cit., p. 152; Laing, op. cit.; Lidz and others, "Intrafamilial Environment of the Schizophrenic Patient: The Transmission of Irrationality," op. cit.; Vogel and Bell, op. cit., pp. 432-436.

to be physically removed. He remains part of the group, however, and retains his function as repository of anxiety and negativeness.[29]

In the second form the family needs to be rid of the scapegoat. This is the casting out of the evil function. If all of the "badness" in a family can be located in one person, and that person can be eliminated, then the others can feel safe. Naturally the threat of his reentry is always there, or another child will have to become the scapegoat.

The family scapegoat can be better understood if one thinks of it as prejudice focused on a member on the inside instead of on the outside. Prejudice serves a function in a group; it focuses fear and tension on an observable and rejectable source. If no source is readily available for this purpose, or if the amount of fear and tension in a group is particularly intense and needs to be continually alleviated, then it must be focused on a source near at hand. This phenomena is seen in all types of groups, but its most virulent form is in the family, where feelings are the most intense.[30]

Sexual and parenting roles are also foisted onto children in many forms and combinations. Essentially what happens is that the

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[29]Vogel and Bell, op. cit., pp. 438-440.

[30]Erik Erikson, Childhood and Society, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1963), pp. 262-263; Hoffman, op. cit., pp. 297-299; Vogel and Bell, op. cit., pp. 437-440.

parent replaces his or her spouse with one of the children, if he expected his (or her) spouse to play the parent role for him, but the spouse was unable or refused to do so. Sometimes both spouses choose the same child to play the parent role for them and then compete for his attention. This leaves the child in a terrible position, for he must play the parent in order to get any parenting himself, which he can then get in the form of attention or affection but not in guidance, control, or support. In some cases the child is expected to play the parent all of the time for one or both parents; in some cases he is expected to play the parent for one spouse and the child for the other, in which case he is also in the middle of a competition; in other cases he is expected to play the parent only some of the time or in certain situations. He soon learns his cues as to which situations are which, but his resistance to these distortions of the natural form of the family situation takes different modes at different stages of his development.[31]

A more common role than parenting is that of the covert sexual partner. This has so many personal, familial, and societal taboos

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[31]Boatman and Szurek, op. cit., p. 416; Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark, op. cit., pp. 158-163; Framo, "Rationale & Techniques of Intensive Family Therapy," op. cit., p. 152; Salvador Minuchin and others, Families of the Slums (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1967), p. 11; Satir, op. cit., p. 38; Titchener, Riskin, and Emerson, "The Family in Psychosomatic Process," op. cit., p. 419.

attached to it that the child is placed in a very serious dilemma. He is as attracted by the temptations as he is repelled, while the parent, who is even more aware of the taboos, distorts the situation in every way so that neither he nor the child (nor anyone else) will be able to recognize what is actually going on. This rarely reaches the point of actual sexual acts but is common in the emotional sphere. This also presents many possible forms and combinations. For example, if father and daughter combine temporarily or regularly, mother may simply leave the field or may compete with daughter or may form her own compensatory relationship with son.[32]

In any family where these distortions develop the child is the victim initially but later becomes an active part of the system. He learns to act and react in certain ways in order to get his needs met and eventually comes to see these as the only way (for him) to get them met. He will oppose a change as quickly and as stubbornly as his parents.[33]

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[32]Ackerman, The Psychodynamics of Family Life, op. cit., pp. 184-185; Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark, op. cit., pp. 57, 259-260; Framo, "Rationale & Techniques of Intensive Family Therapy," op. cit., pp. 154-155; Lidz and Fleck, "Schizophrenia, Human Integration, and the Role of the Family," op. cit., pp. 337-341; Alexander Lowen, Betrayal of the Body (New York: The Macmillan Company and Collier Books, 1967), pp. 198-200.

[33]Minuchin and others, op. cit., pp. 221-229; Strodtbeck, op. cit., p. 87; Lyman C. Wynne, "The Study of Intrafamilial Alignments and Splits in Exploratory Family Therapy," in Exploring the Base for Family Therapy, ed. Nathan W. Ackerman and others (New York: Family Service Association of America, 1961), pp. 112-113.

What are some of the things that happen that create these distorted perceptions and expectations?

One of the critical areas is in ego differentiation or boundary identity. Families who produce symptomatic offspring suffer from some degree of confusion as to 'Who I am,' as to 'Where do I stop,' and as to 'Where do you begin.' Their boundaries between the Self and the Other are more or less confused, depending on how pathological they are. Mother is really not sure in her subconscious mind whether she is Daughter, Son, Father, or Mother. And she is probably confused about the boundary between herself and her own parents and siblings. She is especially confused and apprehensive about the boundary between herself and her husband, and she will use some technique to keep him at a distance for her own emotional safety (though she might be berating him for his standoffishness at the same time). People tend to marry partners who have similar degrees of firmness in their ego boundaries so that each of the marital pair will be equally concerned to maintain a distance. They will be afraid of the appearance of difference, however, so this will create an additional strain on a difficult situation.[34]

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[34]Anonymous, "Toward the Differentiation of a Self in One's Own Family," in Family Interaction--A Dialogue Between Family Researchers and Family Therapists, ed. James L. Framo (New York: Springer Publishing Company, Inc., 1972), pp. 117-165; Bowen, op. cit., pp. 352-370; Erik Erikson, Identity, Youth, and Crisis (New York: W. W. Norton &

Parents who are unsure of their own ego boundaries are even more unsure of the differentiation between themselves and their children. Because of this unsureness, they will tend to see the child as feeling as they do themselves, which will confuse him and create the same unsureness in him. "I know you feel that way because I do," heard over and over will make the child unsure of what he does feel. He will grow used to feeling his parent's feeling and will grow up unable to differentiate between himself and others.

There are many other ways in which family members distort their perceptions of themselves and of others. Lyman Wynne discusses an interesting mechanism called trading of dissociation:

> Each person sees himself as having a specific limited difficulty which he feels derives from another family member and which he announces can only be alleviated by the other family member. While the claims appear to have some basis in fact, the person about whom they are made does not recognize the possibility that he himself makes any contribution to the problem. However, this other family member may be highly perceptive about corresponding difficulties which are

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Company, Inc., 1968), pp. 208-212; Framo, "Rationale & Techniques of Intensive Family Therapy," op. cit., pp. 152-154; Harold F. Searles, "The Contributions of Family Treatment to the Psychotherapy of Schizophrenia," in Intensive Family Therapy, ed. Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy and James L. Framo (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965), pp. 467-469; John H. Weakland, "The 'Double Bind' Hypothesis of Schizophrenia and Three-Party Interaction," in The Etiology of Schizophrenia, ed. Don D. Jackson (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1960), pp. 382-387; Lyman C. Wynne and others, "Pseudo-Mutuality in the Family Relations of Schizophrenics," in The Psychosocial Interior of the Family, 2nd ed., ed. Gerald Handel (Chicago: Aldine·Atherton, Inc., 1972), pp. 444-459.

> similarly unacknowledged (dissociated) by the first, or another, family member. Thus, there is an intricate network of perceptions about others and dissociations about oneself in which each person "locates" the totality of a particular quality or feeling in another family member. Each person perceives one or more of the others in a starkly negative, pre-ambivalent light and experiences himself in a similar but reciprocal fashion, with the same abhorred quality in himself held dissociated out of his awareness. What is distinctive about this pattern, and therapeutically difficult, is the trading of dissociations: the fixed view that each person has of the other is unconsciously exchanged for a fixed view of himself held by the other.[35]

Virginia Satir and Paul Watzlawick are two members of a group of researchers from Palo Alto, California, who propound various concepts of dysfunction in communication technique in families that distort reality. The use of these techniques reveals the perceptual distortion. That is to say, when a person's speech is askew, one can be very sure that his thinking is askew, also. The conversational dysfunctions are actually interactional dysfunctions.

The first of these concepts of dysfunction in interaction as revealed in the conversation is the unclear and incomplete message. This is a message which does not clearly indicate <u>who</u> says <u>what</u> to <u>whom</u> in <u>what context</u>. "A message from one person to another can be formalized into the following statement: I (source) am communicating

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[35]Lyman C. Wynne, "Some Indications and Contraindications for Exploratory Family Therapy," in <u>Intensive Family Therapy</u>, ed. Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy and James L. Framo (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965), p. 298.

(message) to you (receiver) in this context.[35] When any of these elements is not clearly indicated, the sender of the message is able to deny responsibility for the message. The receiver can also evade responsibility either because he actually does not understand the message or does not understand that it was directed to him or because he subconsciously would prefer to pretend that he does not understand it.[37]

The next concept is that of the incongruent message, which is one that has conflicting meanings. The conflict can be between different levels of the speaker's own communication: the literal conflicting with the metacommunicative message (the message which is conveyed by the speaker's tone, look, inflection, gesture, etc. about himself, the receiver, and/or the message), or the conflict can be on the same level (either literal or metacommunicative) but inappropriate to the context of the speaker's own, or the previous speaker's, message.[38]

The third concept, that of the disqualifying message, is more dysfunctional because it has contradictory meanings; one message denies

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[36]Haley, "The Family of the Schizophrenic: A Model System," op. cit., p. 266.

[37]Satir, op. cit., pp. 84-90.

[38]Don D. Jackson, Jules Riskin, and Virginia Satir, "A Method of Analysis of a Family Interview," Archives of General Psychiatry, 5: 321-339; Satir, op. cit., pp. 82-90; Paul Watzlawick, An Anthology of Human Communication (Palo Alto, California: Science and Behavior Books, 1963), pp. 18-34.

or refutes the other message, but its indirectness protects the sender from bearing the responsibility for that denial. Messages can be disqualified in many ways, including responding by silence, evasion, indirection, generalization, tangentialization, contradictory implication, interruption, change of subject, introduction of contradictory facet of subject (often humorously), switching from literal to metaphorical meaning or vice versa, and stating the contradiction in the midst of other verbiage in such a way that it is difficult to isolate or to respond to in the context of the situation.[39] Any contradiction is a disqualification, but it is dysfunctional if it is sent in such a way that the receiver cannot directly respond to it. The most serious disqualifications are those contradictions which are contained in the same communication, i.e., when one implicitly denies the behavior, statement, or feeling which he is explicitly manifesting.[40]

R. D. Laing refers to all of these distortions in communication as mystification. Following is an excerpt from "Mystification, Confusion, and Conflict":

> By mystification I mean both the act of mystifying and the state of being mystified. That is, I am using the term both in an active and in a passive sense.

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[39] Watzlawick, op. cit., pp. 18-34.

[40] Haley, "The Family of the Schizophrenic: A Model System," op. cit., pp. 258-263; Jackson, Riskin, and Satir, op. cit., p. 323; Weakland, op. cit., pp. 376-379.

To mystify, in the active sense, is to befuddle, cloud, obscure, mask whatever is going on, whether this be experience, action, or process, or whatever is the "issue." It induces confusion in the sense that there is failure to see what is "really" being experienced, or being done, or going on, and failure to distinguish or discriminate the actual issues. This entails the substitution of false for true constructions of what is being experienced, being done (praxis), or going on (process), and the substitution of false issues for the actual issues.

The state of mystification, mystification in a passive sense, is possibly, though not necessarily, a feeling of being muddled or confused. The act of mystification, by definition, tends to induce, if not neutralized by counteraction, a state of mystification or confusion, not necessarily felt as such. It may or may not induce secondary conflicts, and these may or may not be recognized as such by the persons involved. The feeling of confusion and the experience of conflict have to be distinguished from mystification, either as act or state. Although one of the functions of mystification is to avoid authenic conflict, it is quite common for open conflict to occur in mystifying and mystified families. The masking effect of mystification may not avoid conflict, although it will cloud over what the conflict is about.

This effect may be enhanced if the seal is placed on mystification by mystifying the act of perceiving mystification for what it is, e.g., by turning the perception of mystification into the issue of this being a bad or mad thing to do.

Thus, the mystified person (or persons) is by definition confused, but may or may not feel confused. If we detect mystification, we are alerted to the presence of a conflict of some kind that is being evaded. The mystified person, in so far as he has been mystified, is unable to see the authentic conflict, but may or may not experience intra- or interpersonal conflict of an inauthentic kind. He may experience false peace, false calm, or inauthentic conflict and confusion over false issues.[41]

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[41] Laing, op. cit., pp. 344-345.

One of the most important concepts for understanding how and why a child can be induced to take part in and can be seriously affected by the distorting techniques of communication in his family is the double bind concept, one originally postulated by Bateson, Jackson, Haley, and Weakland in "Toward a Theory of Schizophrenia."[42] A double bind situation is one in which:

> one person is receiving from one other person two related but conflicting messages, of different levels, where escape is not feasible and response is important, but where there are certain major difficulties in the way of detecting and commenting on the inconsistency . . . . If we now consider the mother and father in relation to a child as the particular three-party situation, . . . it is evident that most of the factors listed for the two-party situation can occur equally well in this three-party case. Clearly, parents can, on a given matter, give conflicting messages to a child. Clearly, it is important for the child, who is in an over-all or collective sense more dependent on both parents than on one, to deal with the conflicting behavioral influences resulting by dealing with the inconsistency of these messages. But, equally clearly, one or both parents may also be giving messages that conceal, deny, or inhibit exploration of the inconsistency . . .
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> It is less obvious at first--but especially striking when perceived--that even those obscuring factors that would seem inherent in the two-person situation may easily have parallels or equivalents in the three-person situation. Comparison and confrontation of possibly contradictory messages from one sender are difficult because the message cannot readily be separated. It may be equally difficult with two senders because the messages are too much separated--by person, by time, by different style of

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[42] Gregory Bateson, Don D. Jackson, Jay Haley, and John Weakland, "Toward a Theory of Schizophrenia," Behavioral Sciences, 1: 251-264, 1956.

> phrasing. And they still may differ in level: "When the double bind is inflicted not by one individual but by two . . . one parent may negate at a more abstract level the injunctions of the other" (1).[43]

When this occurs in a family, the child feels that he must do what both messages demand, but because they contradict each other, he is unable to do so, and because one message is covert and often denied overtly, he cannot even comment on the discrepancy or ask for further guidance. This means that in order to respond at all he must distort his own perception of the situation to match or to complement that of either or both parents (or other persons in fundamental roles in relation to him). Even then the parent can call him to account for not responding to either or both messages (if he chooses to do nothing rather than choose between his two conflicting messages, which is also a choice).

Because these interactions are part of the internal homeostatic balance of the family, the child learns to respond in the expected ways from his earliest infancy and learns also how to put the other members of his family in double binds. Thus a family can live for years in a state in which only the covert messages are expected to be complied with, but in which no one will admit to or take responsibility for

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[43]Weakland, op. cit., p. 379; reference (1) is ibid., p. 254.

those messages, and in which the various members will meet with some form of disapproval or punishment for complying with them.

To the degree that double binding is inherent in the family homeostasis the group can be considered pathologic, for double binding creates a pathology in the child (as well as reinforcing it in the parent) by forcing him to a life of falsity and pretense and acceptance of punishment that is not deserved. He is taught not to recognize what he is aware of and to pretend to recognize what is not there.[44]

Armed with an understanding of all of these techniques of distortion, it becomes easier to see how families are able to bend reality to fit their perceived or subconscious needs. If mother and father and big brother all tell little sister that she does not hate her father for beating her, she may come to believe that she deserved it and to suppress her feelings of hatred. The feelings have not been dealt with, however, and will come out in some form. She may turn against all other authority figures and act up in school; she may turn against herself; she may become physically ill; she may exhibit a violent antipathy for her brother or for all other males; she will choose a path that is allowed in her family even at the cost of psychosis to

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[44] Bateson, Jackson, Haley, and Weakland, op. cit.; Jackson and Weakland, "Conjoint Family Therapy," op. cit.; Satir, op. cit., pp. 36-37; Watzlawick, op. cit.; Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson, Pragmatics of Human Communication, op. cit., pp. 212-219; Weakland, op. cit.

herself. When she finds a path that is allowed, it might not be overtly acknowledged that it is allowed, but it will not be blocked for her. If it meets a need in her family she will even be rewarded for it even if on the conscious level all agree that it is unacceptable. This is done by covert rewards and, of course, adds to her mystification (First she is told that she does not feel what she does feel and then she is rewarded for doing what she is told that she should not do).[45]

Another aspect of this hypothetical example is the guilt engendered in each member of the family. The father feels guilty for beating her; the mother and brother feel guilty for collaborating in the beating; all three feel guilty for deceiving her; and she feels guilty for hating her father and for whatever problem she causes in relieving her hatred and rage. Their guilt provides her with a lever for controlling them, which she does, but which also adds to her load of guilt. It is this interlocking load of guilt that Boszormenyi-Nagy suggests is the bond which holds the family together (in conjunction with the comepnsating expectations that the members have of each other).[46]

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[45] Satir, op. cit., pp. 37-44.

[46] Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark, op. cit., pp. 137-140.

From the systemic point of view the development of compensatory attitudes and behavior is a deviation amplification. They are encouraged by positive feedback from the family system in the form of direct or secondary rewards (reinforcement) or to a lesser degree by being accepted (in that they are not discouraged, they are given tacit approval). Castings in different directions than those deemed acceptable by the family will be met with negative feedback in the form of disapproval, direct or indirect punishment, or ostracism.[47]

The outstanding characteristic in the dysfunctional family is that negative and positive feedback are not correlated to reality. What would be negative feedback to a normal family, such as signs of extreme withdrawal or aggression and would signal the members to take action in some appropriate way, would be ignored by the dysfunctional family. True positive and negative feedback signals do not operate in these families; they have their own interpretation of what is positive and what is negative. Their cues do not match reality and neither do their reactions.

Delinquency is only one of the possible behaviors that can be termed deviant. Because it is anti-social and affects others outside of the family group it is more easily recognized and focused on than

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[47]Framo, "Rationale & Techniques of Intensive Family Therapy," op. cit., p. 151.

many other covertly deviant behaviors encouraged by the family. The particular form of the delinquency is enmeshed in a web of other behaviors, all of which are attempts to cope with the position and role the child has in the nexus of his family.[48] The particulars of his behavior are, of course, determined by a number of factors. To analyze these one must be able to integrate individual, descriptive, and dynamic concepts with such relational system dimensions as:

(1) functional interaction patterns,
(2) drive-object relatedness,
(3) consanguinity,
(4) interpersonal pathology,
(5) interlocking unconscious mechanisms of individuals,
(6) encounter aspects of ontic dialogue, and
(7) multigenerational accounts of justice.

> A boy's delinquent actions, for example, may be viewed as motivated by several individual and familial factors. On an individual level he may be seen as striving to satisfy his needs for instinctual (sexual, aggressive) gratification (2), assert himself toward his father (2,6), become equal to his peers (1), etc. On a multiperson level the delinquent boy may vicariously satisfy his parents' unconscious tendencies for delinquency (5), e.g., he may be expected in wishful fantasy to repay all of his parents' suffered losses through punishing society (7), he may loyally bind his parents together through making them into a collusive disciplinary team (1); he may unwittingly provide his family with an excuse for badly needed controlling intervention on the part of society

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[48] Bateson, Jackson, Haley, and Weakland, op. cit.; Boatman and Szurek, op. cit., p. 390; Flora Coughlin and Herbert C. Wimberger, "Group Family Therapy," Family Process, 7: 37-50, 1968; Framo, "Rationale & Techniques of Intensive Family Therapy," op. cit., p. 151; Framo, "Symptoms from a Family Transactional Viewpoint," op. cit., pp. 25-171.

through its authorities (1,2,7). On an even broader scale, he may test the parenting capacity of society as a whole and provide covert dependence and gratification to all members (3).[49]

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[49] Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark, op. cit., pp. 10-11.

Chapter 4

DESIGN OF THE INVESTIGATION

The writers of this study are two black police officers who work primarily with juveniles. When they decided to focus on the family of the juvenile delinquent and his place in it as the primary interest of an original, in-depth study, both agreed that they would need an assistant to balance out their own biases and preconceptions and to promote confidences from their white and female subjects. For these reasons they chose a white, female student in the social sciences who was willing to take some time out of her own studies to be a paid interviewer.

The three conferred on methods and selection of subjects in the spring of 1973 and began a search for suitable instruments for testing (later dropped). The original plan had been to use the officers' own cases for study, but this was vetoed by the Detroit Police Department, because it violated the boys' rights to confidentiality. Therefore other sources were necessary.

When Haney and Gold's study on widespread but unofficial (unreported and/or unapprehended) delinquency among adolescents was

brought to the officers' attention, it was decided to attempt to find twenty cases of definite juvenile delinquency in which the boys represented a spectrum of social, economic, ethnic, and familial circumstances in any way possible. What happened was that various official and unofficial sources reported some fifty-two alleged cases of juveniles who were delinquent. These people were asked to inform the families of this investigation and to request that they allow themselves to become subjects for study.

In thirteen cases the families said definitely, "no." In another sixteen cases the families agreed initially but changed their minds after the first few interviews. Eight others who had agreed to be studied proved not to have a child who was considered delinquent. From the remaining fifteen cases, five were dropped after six to eight sessions when the family's trust could not be gained sufficiently for any insight to be provided by talking with them and they could not be induced to interact spontaneously among themselves.

This reduced the number of cases (population of the study) to ten boys and their families. Interviewing began in August of 1973 and terminated in January of 1974. The total number of interviewing hours for each family ranged from thirty to forty and was divided into twelve to eighteen separate occasions lasting generally from two to four hours each.

The appointments were kept flexible and arranged according to the wishes of the individual family members as nearly as possible.

The general design for the investigation itself has remained the same throughout, but the specific techniques changed considerably. The general design was to do in-depth interviews of families with delinquent children in order to learn if the child's delinquent behavior was an adaptation to relationships and pressures in the family, but the original plan included specific tasks for the family as a group and a minute analyzation of communicative patterns.

This was soon found to be not feasible, first, because the interviewers did not have the skill to be able to induce the families to follow the directions in the tasks properly so that the interactions were not natural; and second, the tasks provided less information and understanding than did the free discussions with the families as a whole and with separate members and subgroups of it.

Therefore the first technique was dropped after the first few weeks of interviews and much of the technique used by Dr. R. D. Laing in his research with schizophrenic women in England (referred to in an earlier section) was adopted with the addition of some structured questions from Virginia Satir's and Hess and Handel's interviewing techniques, a Guide for Data Leading to Family Diagnosis developed by Nathan Ackerman, and a sentence completion tests adapted by Hess and

Handel from Rohde's Sentence Completion Test (all of these are reprinted in the Appendix) when these seemed necessary.

Dr. Laing's technique was to interview the patient and her family together and separately and in as many subgroups of twos and threes as possible, on the theory that each person behaves and feels differently depending upon whom he is currently relating to. Therefore the totality of the understanding of the person is far greater using this technique because of the variety of views of his interactions, as well as the greater divulging of information, than it would have been using either method alone (interviewing or observing only separately or only in the family group). Dr. Laing and his group tried to answer the question: "To what extent is the experience and behavior of that person, who has already begun a career as a diagnosed 'schizophrenic' patient, intelligible in the light of the praxis and process of his or her family nexus?"[1] without using psychoanalytic methods but by describing the families phenomenologically.

Dr. Laing's interviews were all conducted in an office setting, but the interviews and observations in this study all took place in the child's home, in a friend's or relative's home, or in some public place like a park or a restaurant.

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[1]Laing and Esterson, Sanity, Madness, and the Family, op. cit., p. 27.

Another difference in method was to make the meetings as informal and unstructured as possible, a technique which gradually evolved throughout the weeks and months of interviewing because it was found that this produced a richer, more natural response and interaction than did the structured interview. Often questions were asked but sometimes interactions among the family members became so spontaneous and enlightening that simple observation (and a quiet receding into the background) produced a vast supply of information and insight. It also happened that one or two leading questions started a train of thought in a single individual that was richly rewarding.

Interviews were conducted at all hours of the day and on all days of the week. At first all three interviewers went to every interview together, but as time became more pressing this was altered first to two and finally to one interviewer going alone on some occasions. As the families became accustomed to the interviewers they sometimes called and said, "Why don't you come over right now? Harry is here." or "I'm alone, and I'd like some company." or "Could you do me a favor? I need . . . ."

It also happened that some persons were more open with one or another of the interviewers. This was especially so in the more troubled families; the child or parent would form an attachment to, or would feel more trusting toward, a man over a woman or vice versa

or would respond better to one's personality. This person would then always try to be available to talk to that individual, even if it meant rearranging his schedule in some way.

All three interviewers made it a point to spend some time with each member of every family and with every family together, so that there would be three, instead of only one or two, intellectual and emotional (and even intuitional) reactions to all of the personalities and relationships. There would also be three funds of information which could be added together and compared.

The first task for the interviewers in each case was to place the family in time and space. This meant getting a feeling for the atmosphere of the home, learning the socio-economic position, finding out how and with whom they lived from day to day, getting a general idea of who was in the family, how they were related to each other, and what they were like. After these initial introductory questions, which were extended until the family felt comfortable, a family history was taken. This was generally a brief outline at first, but over the weeks of interviews with family members, relatives, and friends, it would be greatly fleshed out. Much of the discussion of current situations and issues led to explanations and discussions of past issues. When it was time to reduce the tremendous amounts of information on the family to a case study on paper, it became apparent to all of the interviewers that

only a detailed, chronological resume of the past could explain and define the current situation.

Usually during the first or second interview some incongruency in the family would become apparent. This might be a discrepancy between overt and meta messages (such as an avowal of extreme affection uttered in flat or negative tones and repeated at regular intervals), a strong bond between two persons who claimed to be at extreme odds with one another, a family behavior pattern at variance with the professed ideals and attitudes, or a seemingly cooperative, contented group all of whose faces and bodies were tight with tension. No matter how seemingly insignificant, or how general, the discrepancy, it always turned out to be a basic clue to understanding the family. Like detectives following leads the interviewers learned to investigate these discrepancies from every possible angle. Some of them are mentioned specifically in the case studies, but they are not related as they were unraveled (though this was one of the methods of reporting considered), because there was often a morass of real and false information to wade through and noting all of this would have taken up too much space.

The interviewers met regularly throughout each of the studies to listen to the accumulated tape recordings and to discuss their various impressions and problems. Whenever a case became amorphous and confusing, the interviewers had an additional conference on it and

asked themselves and each other: How does the child behave? Why? How does it make sense in the context of this family? The answers were not always there but asking the questions, along with a discussion of the incongruencies and the information (and intuition) that was accumulating in explanation of them, gave the members of the group perspective and direction.

When the cases were terminated the members had a conference on each family and noted the pertinent details of the parents' background, the courtship and marital history, the events that have occurred and the relationships that have evolved since the child's birth, and the basic situation and relationships that exist today in the family. When all were agreed on these points, then the child's behavior and adaptive strategies were discussed and a consensus reached and noted in both general and specific terms.

In the final report the names of the families were changed, as were those of the individual members. The names were chosen to approximate as nearly as possible in formality or ethnicity those of the real individual. The actual ethnicity, but not race, and many of the minor circumstances were also changed as much as possible in order to protect the families' anonymity.

THE CASE STUDIES

Chapter 5

THE JABLONSKIS

Peter's delinquent behavior includes a number of hostile acts; he has assaulted teachers, classmates, younger children, and the younger members of his family, and, as a member of various loosely-knit groups, he has attacked other teen-agers and three elderly men. He has also stolen merchandise from stores and from private property in the local vicinity. At school he is known as a trouble-maker and has frequently been suspended for disrupting the classroom and for breaking various general school rules.

The family, composed of six children and two parents, lives in a large, well-kept house in a typical middle-class neighborhood in one of Detroit's eastern suburbs. Mr. Jablonski, aged forty-six, is a plumber for a local building contractor and earns extra money occasionally doing home plumbing repairs for friends. Mrs. Jablonski, aged thirty-two, is active in some child-oriented and community projects but does not work outside the home.

Peter is the only child of Mrs. Jablonski's first marriage. Stan, nineteen, Cathy, eighteen, and the twins, Shirley and Shawn,

thirteen and a half, are children of Mr. Jablonski's first marriage. Karen, nine, is the only child of this marriage. The oldest boy, Stan, left to join the Air Force soon after this series of interviews began.

Aged fourteen, Peter is a tall, slim, restless youth. The initial impression he tried to convey was that of an independent, tough kid who did not care what we thought of him; yet he was careful to convey an exaggerated distain. He looked sullen, bored, and irritated by turns in the first few sessions that we held with him and his family, and interspersed his conversation liberally with, "So what!" and "Forget it" in an impatient voice.

The most noticeable contrast in this family is the difference between Mrs. Jablonski's appearance of warmth and personal magnetism and the alternating hostility and passivity of the rest of the family. Mrs. Jablonski is extremely attractive, but this is not the basis of her charisma. She has an unusual mixture of sensuality and childish appeal. While the sensuality seems to be barely leashed and is apparent in her movements and gestures, her relationships are enacted on a different overt level; she appears open and friendly in the way that happy children do. Her approach to guests is one of exaggerated hospitality, a constant offering of refreshment and attention to physical comfort.

Mr. Jablonski was withdrawn to an extreme degree when in the family group and during many other interviews alone with him and with one or more of the others. He was willing to talk freely on a few occasions but only on a few subjects. For the most part he said either "I don't know," or "I haven't thought about it."

None of the children had much to say during the first few family interviews but did engage in brief hostile interchanges with each other occasionally, all of which their mother speedily brought to a halt. The bitterness in this family was apparent from the beginning, but in the group the children were non-committal as to its causes.

Before going into the history of this family and the information gained in interviews with individuals, sub-groups, and other relatives and friends, it is worth mentioning another incongruity of this home that was immediately apparent. This was the coldness in the atmosphere. The home was not only so clean as to be anti-septic, but the total effect of its rooms and furnishings was one of impersonality. This in spite of the fact that Mrs. Jablonski spent a great deal of her time and energy in cleaning and decorating and the fact that no less than seven persons were living there at any time during this series of interviews.

THE FAMILY HISTORY

Mrs. Jablonski's history threw a little light on the apparent paradoxes in her character. Her mother abandoned her and her older sister when she was only four years old. The three of them had been staying with an aunt while the father served aboard a ship in the Navy. Two years before he got out of the Navy the mother left the girls with the aunt, who had to work full time and was unable to care for them. The aunt put them in a Catholic orphanage connected to a convent, one run with rigid rules and little affection.

The father was discharged from the Navy two years later but was found to have tuberculosis and had to be confined to a sanatarium for the next three years. After his release from the sanatarium it was another two years before he was financially able to take the girls out of the children's home and establish them in an apartment with him.

The aunt and uncle had visited the girls frequently in the home until the aunt died, shortly after the father's release from the sanatarium. The father also visited them frequently after that time. Mrs. Jablonski stated that both her father and her aunt expressed extreme guilt feelings over their placement in the home, especially when she and her sister pleaded to be taken out, which they frequently did. But she felt then, and feels still, that it would have been possible to

have removed them sooner if her relatives had not found it more convenient to have them taken care of by others.

Her mother has never been heard from since, but Mrs. Jablonski and her sister have discussed her whereabouts so often that their two alternate fantasized versions of her life and her reasons for leaving them sound as if they were known to be actual fact. In one version the mother is living a tragic life and is totally exonerated, and in the other she has the dimensions of an evil witch with no reason except total selfishness given for her abandonment of her two children.

Mrs. Jablonski was eleven when her father brought her home. Her sister was fifteen and kept house for him and the younger child for the next two and a half years, when she left to get married. Mrs. Jablonski then took over in the housekeeping role, and from certain aspects of her story, it seems that she also assumed a wife-type relationship with her father. They avoided physical intimacy of any sort, even touching hands, with such ferocious care that it is safe to assume that a deep fear of mutual attraction was constantly present. This would account in part for Mrs. Jablonski's strong emanation of barely suppressed sensuality. Her father was a deeply religious Catholic but did not attend church regularly, though he felt himself to be close friends with the parish priest.

When Mrs. Jablonski was seventeen her father suddenly married the woman next door (a recent divorcee). The suddenness of the marriage led Mrs. Jablonski to suspect that the relationship was one of long duration but kept hidden from her for some obscure religious motive or because the woman was not yet divorced and the betrothed couple felt that she might be indiscreet or to avoid the unpleasantness of her jealousy.

Though Mrs. Jablonski had been fond of this neighbor until this time (for the neighbor had been very motherly toward her), after the marriage she hated the woman and has never forgiven them for what she thinks of as a betrayal.

Shortly after her father's marriage Mrs. Jablonski married a friend of his, who was twenty years her senior, and gave birth to Peter some ten months later. When Peter was a year old she left her husband, got a job as a receptionist, and lived alone with him until he was four, when hse married Mr. Jablonski.

Mr. Jablonski's father left his mother when he was six years old, and he was raised by his mother and her sister. He had no other relatives. The two women were in intense competition for his affection until the aunt married, when he was fourteen. She still lived nearby, however, and encouraged him to come and tell her all of his troubles, especially those in relation to his mother. His mother focused all of

her interest on him and on his health; she spoke very poor English and so was unable to communicate with her neighbors. It is unlikely that she would have been interested in them in any case, for she had had few friends when they lived in Hamtramck with his father where a large proportion of the population spoke Polish, her native language.

Mr. Jablonski was in a very difficult position in his relationship with his mother. While she waited on him and babied him in many ways inappropriate for a young boy, she also expected him to fill his father's shoes as a mate for her and was too inclined toward physical intimacy. This did not approach actual physical incest, but she was very free about allowing him to see her in various states of undress, and she was also very unrestrained about hugging, kissing, and touching him.

In another dimension she seemed to expect him to parent her. She told him all of her troubles and expected him to shoulder far more of the household responsibilities than he was able to undertake.

The day he was eighteen he secretly joined the Army and thus was able to get away from her, though in his account of this, the secrecy is rationalized.

While in Hawaii he met an Irish Catholic girl and married her. They moved back to Detroit after he left the Army and had five children. The youngest, a baby girl, died with her mother in a car accident

when the twins were two. He married the present Mrs. Jablonski a year and a half later.

Though there are few surface similarities between the Jablonski's and their previous spouses, closer questioning brings some similarities in the relationships to light. Mrs. Jablonski's first husband was older than she by a great many years, was impervious to her indications of her needs, and in effect, rejected her. He was a successful businessman who married her for her youth and looks but was annoyed when she approached him for love or attention. Well-educated himself, he treated her as inferior because of her lack of education as well as her youth. Thus she found a father-figure who would be sure to reject her. This is the situation in this marriage also. Mr. Jablonski, though professing to love his wife when questioned directly, cannot understand why she should want any signs of overt affection. He sees her claims as suffocating, once again the overly-possessive mother-figure. His first wife, who had been clinging (which the present Mrs. Jablonski is not), had a pronounced whine in her voice and a constant complaint of "If you loved me, you would . . . ."

THE DELINQUENT'S POSITION IN THE FAMILY

Though this marriage is unsatisfactory to both partners, Peter is the real victim. Mr. Jablonski actively dislikes him, and when

pressed, admitted that he had never cared for him. In the early years Mrs. Jablonski tried to keep Peter out of his stepfather's way as much as possible, but gradually Peter became the focus of most of their arguments. He became the battlefield so that neither would have to confront the real issues and conflicts that existed in their relationship.

At this point it is difficult to tell just when Peter began to actually do all of the things that Mr. Jablonski accuses him of. Both partners were afraid to discuss their marital difficulties when both were present, but after the initial sessions, Mrs. Jablonski freely admitted her dissatisfactions with her husband. When both were present their difficulties always came back to Peter and all of the trouble that he caused.

Added to these problems, Peter was severely rejected by all of his stepbrothers and sisters. Even his little half-sister barely tolerates him, though she says that "Sometimes he is nice to me." From his first days in their family, the other children told him openly, "We don't want you; you don't belong here." Mrs. Jablonski "bent over backwards so they couldn't say that I favored my own," which included not interfering when the other children hit him. He was particularly abused by the older boy, Stan, who still dislikes him and sees him as the worst problem in the family.

Though Peter has been the worst victim of her policy of non-interfering in children's problems, all of the children have suffered to some degree. Mr. and Mrs. Jablonski see fighting in children as natural and as the arena where they learn to cope with the world. They cannot seem to distinguish between squabbles and bitter, hurtful ego-struggles. The worse it is the tougher it makes them is the basis of her argument (which her husband tacitly acquieses in). It has done just the opposite.

These children are all bitter, hostile, and distrustful. They accept betrayal as a natural fact of life and act surprised that someone might give or expect kindness or trusting. This is in direct contrast to Mrs. Jablonski's word picture of her family. Based on her accounts of their family life alone, one would get the impression that this is a loving, happy, helpful family except for Mr. Jablonski's reticence and "stubbornness" and Peter's trouble-making.

One facet of their lives which came to light during the investigation was that Mrs. Jablonski, though extremely controllative of her children while they are in her presence, really expects them to act up when they are away from her. And of course, they do.

Surprisingly, though, all of these children are very passive when they are not acting up. They seem to feel helpless to control their environment except when they are acting upon it in some

aggressive way. The contrast between their passivity and the amount of hostility and rage apparent in their voices when they allow themselves to express their feelings about people and events important to them is tragic.

Although Mrs. Jablonski talks about loving and giving, she seems not only unable to do either but also unable to expect either. Thus the coldness in the house is a reflection of her true feelings and the true lack of warm emotion which is there. One of the possible reasons for the children's extreme bitterness might be that though their mother's surface warmth and magnetism seems to promise warmth and loving (which it did to the observers also), there is actually very little forthcoming, a fundamental betrayal. Turning to their father is useless, as he would be the first to admit. He likes them "if only they would leave me alone."

Peter's situation is even more extreme than that of the other children. When Mrs. Jablonski married for the second time she was already attached to the children, for the first Mrs. Jablonski had had a sister working in the same office with her, and the two young women had become close friends. After the accident, Mrs. Jablonski had often accompanied her friend, the children's aunt, to help take care of them. It is possible that she married Mr. Jablonski to provide the four children with the mother that they had lost (that she identified with

them and became her own lost mother by becoming a mother to them). In any case, she determined to make a career of mothering. She not only cleans fervetly and spends much of her time providing for the children's physical needs, but she also heads any group in which they show an interest. While she was devoting all of this attention to mothering the orphan children, she orphaned her own child, for he was pushed into the background except when he became so troublesome that he had to be dealt with.

Thus the only avenue open to Peter to receive any attention at all in this family is through aggression and trouble-making. Any other effort on his part is unrecognized. If he is quiet he is alternately abused and ignored. He had to learn to fight just to keep from being overwhelmed in the first place, though the actual characteristics of his personality and those of the other children (as they had been when the group first became a family) remained blurred even at the end of all the interviews. The problem of individuality is particularly severe in this family because their identities seem diffused. The central character is, of course, the mother, and all of the children are recognized only in her terms, i.e., only the specific characteristics of their personalities that the mother recognizes (whether actually there or not) are recognized by the other family members. She is herself unclear where her own ego boundaries end and where theirs begin

(including that of her husband), and this confusion is passed on to them. What seems to determine who is what is based on the mother's needs rather than on the person's own characteristics.

An interesting sidelight in this connection was the relationship between Mrs. Jablonski and her sister and between her and each of her friends. In each case Mrs. Jablonski was the center of attention, regardless of the number of persons present, and was, indeed, the only forceful personality in any of her relationships. Her sister and each of her friends revolved about her like dancers, but in any instance of disagreement between any one of them and her, Mrs. Jablonski held firm to her own point of view until the other person gave way. The observers were able to watch the dissolution of one of her friendships over the course of the interviews. In the beginning, the other woman, who had been recently divorced, had been very dependent upon Mrs. Jablonski for emotional support. Almost every time an observer arrived at her home this woman would be there. After a while, however, the woman's child entered kindergarten and she got a job, one which gave her more responsibility and a greater sense of self-confidence than she had ever had before. As her self-confidence increased, her dependence upon and willingness to defer to Mrs. Jablonski decreased, as did the length and frequency of her visits. She gradually dropped out of the picture altogether. According to Mrs. Jablonski and her sister this is

a frequent pattern in her relationships, but neither woman understands what is actually happening.

The children, of course, cannot drop out of the picture. The only avenue open to them is to submerge their opinions, needs, and characteristics to hers. She is always the star in any drama and they are the supporting cast. Mr. Jablonski has worked out his own means for resisting the very real force of her personality (probably the force of her needs and her detemination to have them met). He simply will not respond in any way. His passivity is as determined as her assaults upon it.

THE DELINQUENT'S ADAPTATION

Peter, as stated before, is in the very worst position of all. He has been deserted by his own father (who lives and works in another city in Michigan but has never bothered to come and see him since his mother's remarriage), absolutely rejected by his stepfather, and forced to play a minor role in his mother's life except when he becomes the scapegoat in her struggles with the stepfather. Worse, none of the other children except the youngest sister recognize him as a brother, though his mother uses the term "your brother" to refer to him when speaking to the other children in front of him (increasing his actual

felt distance from them). Each of the others has got brothers and sisters to diffuse their difficulties and to offer some emotional support. With all of the hostility and bitterness, the others still feel that they are part of the group. Peter does not. Instead, he feels the full force of their rejection of him, their contempt and hatred. They feel that he pushed his way into their group without their consent. It occurred to the observers to wonder if much of the hostility and resentment that the children feel toward their stepmother (which they cannot openly voice) is focused on Peter.

Peter's trouble-making and aggression are accepted by the other children where friendliness would be scorned. This does not mean that they do not counter-attack him, and in fact, the older ones usually initiate the attacks themselves. Rather, they will give him recognition as a troublemaker because that is how they want to see him. If he actually does do things about which they can complain, then they have a guilt-free opening to reject him and punish him. The physical abuse and insults are easier for Peter to bear than being ignored would be.

This is how he has adapted himself inside of the family. He commits antisocial acts outside the family partly to relieve the tension of all of the pent-up rage and hurt inside of him and partly because it is the only way that he knows to achieve recognition. He, more than any of the others, could not believe that we might really be

interested in him as a person and was constantly testing us (by being obnoxious, hostile, rude, etc. to see how much we would accept).

On the other hand, when he was relaxed he was easy to talk to and ready to discuss aspects of his life at length. Of the six, only the youngest child, Karen, showed an equal ability to carry on an animated, continual conversation away from the mother. Thus all aspects of their personalities have not been subjugated to their mother. It is possible that she is very supportive when alone with those two children to whom she gave birth.

Chapter 6

THE GRANGERS

David came to our attention because of a severe beating that he had perpetrated on a younger boy. A friend of the family who had heard of this study, and who liked the boy and was shocked and dismayed by the violence of his attack, introduced us to the family in hopes that the family would be brought to see that the child needed help. Previous to this time he had been involved in a series of petty thefts: shoplifting and stealing tires, bokes, and other loose objects. He had only been caught once, but he had been let off because he was so young.

At the beginning of this investigation David was thirteen, a thin, extremely tense boy. His bodily movements were abrupt, rough and jerky; his face was tight with tension; and his eyes, light blue in color, were opaque, wide and dry with anxiety. His voice was remarkable, also, for its shrill, tight quality. It seemed almost as if he had to force it past a constriction in his throat. The piercing, grating quality of his voice was extremely irritating, especially if he was frustrated in any way. As time passed and the observers were present when he burst into tears on a few occasions, it became apparent that

the upsetting quality in his voice was not so much the physical sound of it, but the pain underlying, and near the surface, of it.

It did not take a great deal of digging to get at the reasons for David's extreme pain.

David's parents were divorced. His mother, aged thirty-eight, had married Mr. Granger, forty, an appliance repairman for Sears, some five years previously. The older daughter, Linda, was fifteen and there was a little boy, Neil, aged four, a child of this marriage.

The family lived in a small, three-bedroom older home on a lower income street of one of the older downriver suburbs. The house and yard were neat and clean, though the former was cluttered with knick knacks and photographs.

All of the family members spoke freely though the mother had a tendency to outtalk the others by going into unnecessary and irrelevant detail in an inappropriately dramatic manner about her own actions and conversation, both to the observers and to friends and relatives who dropped in during the interviews, even when the friend turned out to be the merest acquaintance. This tendency to assume that the minutiae of her life was of absorbing interest to others was one of the first indications of her immaturity, for her chatter forcibly reminded all of the interviewers of a friendly three year old. Interestingly enough, she was also impressively intelligent. She was able to grasp complicated

concepts easily but was able to rationalize her own wishes just as easily. How does one describe an intelligent, precocious three year old who also happens to be a mother? Like all three year olds she was almost totally self-centered, though she could be, and often was, extremely generous and warm to her children, her friends, and her other relatives.

Her husband, Mr. Granger, was also very friendly to the observers but was alternately indifferent or irritated with Mrs. Granger and with his stepchildren, though he was very affectionate toward his own little boy. While Mrs. Granger was quite attractive, though a little overweight, Mr. Granger was singularly homely. He was short for a man, pudgy, and bland-looking. His total aspect was babyish, in his behavior as well as his looks, but this was not compensated by any high degree of intelligence.

The daughter, Linda, was extremely attractive and like her mother, very intelligent. Unfortunately, neither of her parents was prepared to cope with her so that she had an excessive amount of freedom for a girl so young. She was usually dressed in clothes that were short and too tight, highly suggestive in fact, and she wore far too much make-up. Her clothes and hours were the subjects of repeated arguments in the home, but no constructive action was taken so that no change was made during the months of the investigation. Apart from her

family Linda was very friendly; she was open with the female interviewer about all of the details of her life at home, at school, and with her girl and boyfriends. After the first interview, however, she tended to be seductive toward the male interviewers.

THE FAMILY HISTORY

Mrs. Granger was born in a lower-income section of Chicago and lived there until her first marriage. Her mother died the day after she was born and she was raised by an alcoholic father and an unstable grandmother (her mother's mother). Three times during her childhood and adolescence her grandmother went into a severe depression and was hospitalized. Mrs. Granger was then sent to live with one or another of three sets of aunts and uncles, none of whom really wanted her, though they were friendly enough when she was not constrained to live with them.

The father and grandmother fought a great deal but lived together until a year or so after Mrs. Granger married. Her father never remarried.

The reasons for Mrs. Granger's extreme immaturity lie in her childhood; she was fixated at an early stage of development because she was extremely frustrated in all of the most basic areas of emotional

growth: love, security, and recognition. Her father was often gone and when home was likely to be drunk. She was often ignored, even more often disparaged and berated, and was frequently left alone after she was eight years old. She was also expected to do an inordinate amount of housework for a child. By her teen years she was doing all of it. The last time that her grandmother was hospitalized, in her thirteenth year, she was left at home to care for her father, which meant that she was alone most of the time.

Mrs. Granger tried to gloss over the negative parts of her childhood. Even while she was talking about being shifted from relative to relative and being left alone, she tried to convey the impression that actually her father and her grandmother had loved her very much and that she had had a nice childhood.

Mrs. Granger married her first husband, Mr. Olafsen, a year after she graduated from high school. He was stationed at the naval base in Chicago at that time, but after his stint was up they moved to the Detroit area to be near his family.

Mr. Olafsen's parents had come to America from Sweden, where two of their older children had been born. This whole family is tightly knit by strong bonds though not bonds of affection, but because few members of the family were interviewed, it was difficult to get a clear picture of the specifics of the family ties. The closest

analogy would be that all of the members seem still to be striving toward completion of relationships which were not satisfied in their youth. Emotional problems abound. One brother is an alcoholic, another wet his bed until he was twenty-three (four of the offspring wet their beds through childhood, including David's father), one of the sisters is obese, the other sister is severely masochistic, and Mr. Olafsen is extremely immature and irresponsible. Except for him all of the sisters and brothers and the parents live within a few miles of each other.

Mr. Olafsen was the youngest of the boys but had one sister younger than himself. He was excessively attached to his mother and cried to be allowed to sleep in her bed until he was almost twelve. She let him in frequently, but when he wet he received a beating from his father. Mr. Olafsen was the favorite of her children. She helped him to avoid as much responsibility as possible and shielded him from punishments from his father, the school, and later from irate officials when he got into various minor kinds of trouble.

Mr. Olafsen was therefore as immature and as emotionally troubled as his young wife when they married. At first they managed fairly well, because Mrs. Olafsen had been taught to keep house and to manage on a tight budget, and the Navy kept Mr. Olafsen in order. By the time they returned to Michigan, Linda had been born, but this had

not created any serious problems. They were still able to maintain the illusion of two children playing house.

Soon after their return Mrs. Olafsen became pregnant with David. Free from the restrictions and discipline of the Navy, Mr. Olafsen was gone for increasing amounts of time. He was unreliable about giving money to his wife and resented her asking for it. He also resented the demands that the children put on Mrs. Olafsen's time after David's birth, and he hated their noise and messiness. Even when they were quite small he punished them excessively with spankings or long periods of time alone and often yelled at them unnecessarily.

Because he was gone so much and was so overtly adored by their mother, both children looked upon him as someone special, someone above the mundane details of everyday life, and they were thrilled with any affection or attention he showed them. They were also afraid of him, of course.

Mrs. Olafsen played the martyr to her husband during the whole of their marriage. She put up with all of his mistreatment with little complaint, and when she did complain she was easily silenced by his yelling, sulking, or sometimes, lovemaking. She became very attached to his family and remained in the position of in-law to them even after she remarried.

Mr. Olafsen walked off on the family when David was four years old. He, his mother, and his six-year old sister walked into a cold house one spring day after a doctor appointment to find that the gas and electricity had been turned off because of unpaid bills and that their father had gone. He brought some money for food once in the next two months and after that he disappeared. Within a year the family lost the small house they had been buying, because the bank would not accept partial payment of the arrears from the welfare department.

A casual friend took them in temporarily in return for Mrs. Olafsen's promise to keep house for her. Later they were able to move into a flat in a dilapidated old house because the rent was low enough to meet the limits of the ADC requirement.

During the first year after her husband's desertion, Mrs. Olafsen went into virtual seclusion. Although she kept her house clean, she spent most of her time on the couch sleeping and kept the children on the porch or outside. In the warm weather concerned neighbors often sent them home long after dark.

During this time both children became the victims of bullying and teasing from children in the neighborhood, from which their mother did not protect them in any way. Both children tried to attach themselves to various adult neighbors but with little long-term success. According to two women from this neighborhood both children whined

and cried a great deal and tried to cling to their mother, who pushed them away.

Toward the end of this year, just before they left their home, Mrs. Olafsen became involved with a married man, Mr. Clark, who said that he wanted to marry her. Mr. Clark was part black and part Indian but denied that he was black; therefore there was never any discussion as to how interracial problems would be met (particularly as they affected her children). As months went by, however, he began to be evasive on the subject of marriage and saw increasing obstacles to getting a divorce and leaving his children.

This situation was building to crisis proportions when Mrs. Olafsen met another man who asked her to marry him immediately (though he had been dating a friend of hers). Because Mr. Clark, whom the children had come to look upon as a father (their mother gave him full paternal privileges concerning them, including the right to punish them), was still hedging, she ran off and married this man, Mr. Pierson. The children hardly knew him and did not know about the marriage until after the ceremony.

While David became very attached to this new man, Linda resented him and kept hoping for a reunion with Mr. Clark. By this time the family had moved to the flat from their temporary quarters with Mrs. Granger's friend (who, unknown to her beforehand, was an alcoholic).

The marriage lasted three months, just long enough to establish a tenuous stability into the children's lives. But Mr. Pierson, besides being so immature and irresponsible that he could not handle a long-term commitment to a woman or a job, was totally unfit for the position of father. Though he appeared definite and authoritative, he was actually a die-hard compensating for deep feelings of inadequacy. He alternately ignored the children and severely punished them, either with a beating or with some form of humiliation. The ultimate punishment, and the one involved in the divorce proceedings, was when he forced David to suck the urine out of his sheets after he had wet the bed one night.

After this break-up a series of men drifted into and out of Mrs. Granger's and the children's lives. Many had sexual relations with her and those men were allowed paternal privileges toward the children, including spanking and isolation from their mother. During these months Mrs. Granger "played house"; she played at family life with anyone who came along.

When David was seven Mrs. Granger entered what looked like a permanent relationship. She and Mr. Jones, an Indian from a reservation in New York, planned to get married. She and the children went to the reservation to meet his family and to see the house that they would live in. When they returned Mrs. Granger found that she was

pregnant; Mr. Jones professed to be delighted. He had been living on her welfare checks (until one of the neighbors reported them) but often went in search of work though he never seemed to find any. She later learned that he was actually drinking with friends and had not been near the employment center. After a series of physical difficulties, she miscarried. About this time she learned that Mr. Jones was seeing another woman on his frequent trips to New York and the relationship disintegrated.

Shortly before this final break, David was sent to live with an aunt and uncle for some six months because he became so nervous and destructive that Mrs. Granger felt that he needed a man's influence. During these months, his real father, Mr. Olafsen, dropped back into their lives. He was all abjection and apology and claimed that he had never stopped loving them all. He stayed for two weeks, lavished money on all of them, and promised to take them all to California within a few months. All three were ecstatic. After Mr. Olafsen returned to California it was the same story again, however, no calls and no letters. Shortly after David returned home from his aunt's he was struck by a car. Mrs. Granger called his father in California but he was indifferent. When she said, "Don't you care that your son is seriously hurt?" he said, "Not really."

Mrs. Granger could give no clear reason why she brought David home again. He had been content at his relatives', had calmed down considerably, and had even ceased wetting the bed for the first time in his life. As soon as he returned home the nerves, tantrums, and bedwetting all began again.

Shortly after David's accident, from which he completely recovered, Mrs. Granger began seeing Mr. Granger, who lived in the same building with them. Mr. Granger, unlike all of her other relationships, was persistent, and eventually they were married. He seemed at that time to like her children, to be steady and reliable, and to really care for her.

After the birth of their little boy this relationship had steadily deteriorated. Mr. Granger saw David as a threat to his own child both physically and emotionally. He also resented the attention that Mrs. Granger gave to either of her own children, but especially to David. Added to this resentment was the animosity created by David's rages and trouble-making. In the early years, while David was still a little boy, Mr. Granger had attempted to control his behavior with rewards and punishments. Now, though he complains about David continually, he actually does nothing to help or to control the boy or to improve the situation.

THE DELINQUENT'S POSITION IN THE FAMILY

In this family David is as much one of the parents as he is one of the children. There is no consistent parenting from any of the four older members of the family and there never has been, so far as David and Linda are concerned. They have lived through a series of shifts in the casting of who plays father but the same person has played mother all along. She has never been mother, however. She has been biggest, most demanding child. When she is playing at being mother, the children are expected to act like loving, well-brought up children. At other times they are expected to be invisible, because she cannot meet their needs and does not want them to face her with this. At other times they are expected to be parents to her. This is usually during one of the many times when, "Mom doesn't feel well right now. She can't. . . ." or when she has any kind of a problem. Then they all sit down together so that she can tell them about it, but what she expects and demands is that they will bear a large share of the burden and abnegate their roles as demanding children.

Therefore, though Mrs. Granger has the appearance of mother and speaks as though she were mother, in actuality she provides little that it is the function of mother to provide. Though she cooks and cleans house on schedule, she does not relate to any of her children in a supportive way. Though all three interviewers received the same

impression from this woman, it was difficult to isolate in objective terms exactly how she fails to be supportive, for there were occasions when her speech seemed to be supportive. The consensus was that she was role-playing in the most obvious sense of the word. She knew that a mother should say upon certain occasions and she said what was appropriate, but they were just words.

This put her children in the awkward position of responding both to her spoken messages and to her underlying messages; i.e., they were in a continual double bind. The spoken messages held out promises of caring and of emotional support and expectations of child-like behavior on their part, while the shallowness and the exaggeration told them just as clearly (in the light of their knowledge of her) that this was pretend, that they were not expected to take or receive emotional support, but to give it. This double binding is the key to understanding David's pain and his rage.

With a mother who is just a baby herself but who is intelligent enough to perceive what it is she is supposed to be doing and to put on a good act of doing it when it does not conflict with her own immediate needs and with a series of fathers promising warmth and strength but delivering punishment, humiliation, and abandonment at unpredictable times, David has never known the security of certainty, of predictability.

While he clings in some ways to his sister (they have always been emotionally dependent upon one another) as one certainty in his life and one source of warmth, at the same time he regards her as his greatest rival (which she was until his little half-brother was born). Not only have the two always competed violently for their mother's attention and affection, but also they have been in competition for the role of her mainstay. During David's sojourn with his aunt and uncle, Linda pushed ahead of him in this respect; the two found that life alone together was peaceful and much more serene than when David was present. Mrs. Granger leaned heavily on Linda then to be the mother.

Now Linda is turning more and more to boys and young men to meet her emotional needs. She is currently overwhelmed by their attraction to her and, as might be expected, is showing no judgment whatsoever. Because of her unstable emotional history she has no criteria with which to judge another human being or a relationship. Her excitement and preoccupation with this area of her life has lessened her rivalry with her brother but has also lessened her importance to him as an emotional support.

Mrs. Granger's marriage to Mr. Granger is a continual rivalry over who gets to be baby and who has to be parent. Mrs. Granger is willing to uphold the woman's role so far as the traditional tasks are

concerned, and Mr. Granger is a steady worker who provides a regular income for the family. They fight mainly over her children, but the actual battle seems to be: "Listen to me. Pay attention to me. Show me that I am important and that you will take care of me." Neither wins, and neither pays much attention to the other, although Mrs. Granger talks at Mr. Granger a good deal, even following him from room to room to enable herself to keep talking. Mr. Granger manages to hear very little of what she says. When he is really cornered for a response he often mumbles his reply.

The birth of his little brother put David at an even greater disadvantage. First, it gave him a male rival for his mother in a different way than those grown men who continually supplanted him as her husbands and lovers. He had been moving into and out of the role of the chief male-consort in her life for years. This new little male got some mothering at the same time that David was expected to give up even what little he had been getting. Mrs. Granger is able to love and care for small babies and toddlers until they begin to assert themselves. Then she begins to demand a great show of affection with a diminishing amount of caring on her side. This is much easier to obtain from a very small child who is so dependent that he will do almost anything to have his needs met.

THE DELINQUENT'S ADAPTATION

David's assumption has not been to the current family constellation alone; it has been to the continual shifts in family membership as well. David is a boy who is so terrified by life and so enraged by his own losses and abandonments that his life is a daily battle to suppress those fears and to dissipate his rage. Under these traumatic circumstances it is understandable that he is very, very immature. He has been arrested in a very early stage of emotional development and it is unlikely that he will progress beyond this stage without in-depth psychological help, which he is unlikely to get.

He is caught in more of a psychological crunch now than at any previous time, for he is torn between his need for his mother and the slim possibility of emotional support from her and his need to live up to his friends' conception of adolescent masculinity and the possibility of emotional support from them (providing he behaves according to their expectations). Unfortunately, but perhaps naturally, all of his friends are as troubled as he is (a normal child would be repulsed by his tears and irrational rages).

David is unable to cope with even the slightest opposition to his wishes. He nags, pleads, cries, and flies into a violent rage when he does not get his own way. Like many immature parents, Mr. Granger gives in to him on small matters like food and privileges but withholds

what he is really seeking: recognition and support. Like the donkey with the carrot suspended in front of it, he just keeps going, trying to reach the carrot. The few nibbles and the wafts of carrot smell that he gets occasionally are enough to see that he doesn't quit entirely, but the continual hunger and frustration drive him nearly to distraction.

He has adapted by turning all of his energies to meeting his emotional needs. School and other possible forms of achievement sanctified by adults have no meaning for him. The stealing and shoplifting are forms of daring to impress his friends, but the really significant behavioral adaptations, in terms of his family, are his efforts to suppress his rages and to go along with whatever specific pretenses his mother is involved in at the moment, and his efforts to direct his rages away from his mother (at whom they are basically directed) and onto objects and persons which she will find acceptable. These include everyone except herself.

As a young child David frequently attacked his sister with his fists, destroyed his own toys and hers, and screamed abuse at Mrs. Granger's male companions until they hit him. Even when he knew for a certainty that the punishment would be painful, he forged ahead. He is not a masochist, however; he has had enough recognition or approval to accept himself as a person and does not normally seek

self-punishment. It seems to be that his high drive state makes the need to relieve himself more important than the punishment. This could also possibly be accounted for by the fact that Mrs. Granger did not stir herself to punish him when his activities did not interfere with her in any way and many of the punishments that she did use were mild. It was the males in his life who dealt out corporal punishment, and males were often not in the home during his early years.

If he continues to adapt in the ways that he has currently worked out for himself, his crimes against society are more likely to be acts of violence and senseless destruction than they are to be thefts, for his acts of violence are not premeditated. They occur when some instance of stress triggers his already overstrained self-control.

Chapter 7

THE TRENTS

Matthew has run away twice in the last year. Before that he was never in any trouble and committed no delinquent acts.

Matthew's father died four years ago. His mother remarried one year ago, at which time his new step-father moved into their home, a large well-kept and well-furnished house on a pleasant street in Detroit.

The family is black and consists of Matthew, aged sixteen, Barry, aged fifteen, Camellia, aged six, and Alicia, aged four, all of whom are full brothers and sisters, and Mr. Trent and his wife, who are both in their late thirties or early forties. Mr. and Mrs. Trent work in the same factory, she on the day shift and he on the night shift.

Matthew is an attractive boy, a little thin but average in height. He was cooperative and friendly to the interviewers, but remote from the rest of the family in the first few group interviews.

All of the children were polite and cooperative but there was an edge of tension and controlledness about them when they were in a group with both parents that was not there when they were alone.

Mrs. Trent is a very matter-of-fact, definite woman who tinges many of her comments with a wry or sarcastic edge, although anxiety broke through her defense of cool calmness often enough to reveal the overt self-assurance as fairly shallow. She is almost as tall as her husband, attractive, but more female than feminine.

Mr. Trent is a little overweight, neither tall nor short, and talks a great deal. His opinions, however, have not changed much in the last fifteen years. Not so intelligent as his wife, he is much warmer, more open and friendly.

THE FAMILY HISTORY

Born on a small farm in Alabama, Mrs. Trent was the second of nine children, five boys and four girls. Her mother was a very domineering woman, strict and quick to punish her children if they didn't obey her. While she usually hit them immediately with whatever was handy, sometimes she sent them for a belt and gave them a real strapping. The worst of these punishments was that they were administered anywhere in the house or yard, no matter who was there. The children's feelings and dignity were less important to her than the discipline.

Her father, while also rigid in his ideas of child-raising, left much of the discipline to his wife. In other aspects of their domestic life he had some say but was not too concerned unless something interfered with hiw own comfort or plans. All of the children were expected to help both in the house and on the farm.

When she was eleven the family moved to Detroit, where her father got a job at one of the auto factories. While this eased the financial worries, it was a big emotional wrench. Her father always missed his land and resneted the necessity for moving north. Some of this resentment he focused on the children and on his wife (he blamed her for having so many of them).

Mrs. Trent also resented her parents for having so many children. There never seemed to be enough money to buy the necessities, much less extras, and her mother's time was always tied up with caring for the newest baby or in controlling the whole brood. Though they lived in a fairly large old house, it was very crowded and there was no opportunity for privacy or solitude.

She quit high school when she was sixteen and got a job in a small factory. Though she had to give part of her salary to her mother, having a large sum of spending money for the first time in her life was a tremendous thrill. She met her first husband, a big, easy-going man, when she was seventeen and married him when she was

eighteen, partly because she loved him and partly to get away from the noise and the crowded conditions of her home.

Matthew was born when she was nineteen and Barry when she was twenty. At first she was happy, but being tied down with two babies seemed increasingly boring and restrictive to her, too much like her life at home, and she began to resent her husband's freedom and to nag him to take her and the boys with him when he went out.

This led to some friction, which improved when the younger son, Barry, entered school. For a few years they got along fairly well, and then she got pregnant for Camellia, and shortly after, Alicia. She became irritable and discontented and tried to get him to help her with the work, which he did occasionally, but grudgingly. Neither of them had wanted more children and each blamed the other for carelessness.

Just before Camellia's birth they moved to a larger house (the one they now occupy), which was more expensive and increased the pressure on their finances. Her husband, who drove for a large trucking firm, began to work longer hours to pay the bills, but he also began to drink fairly heavily. They fought more and more frequently. When Alicia was a year old, Mrs. Trent got the job that she still holds (against her husband's wishes) in a factory.

Shortly afterwards her husband broke his arm. He was out of work for a while but went back, saying that he could manage even with

his arm in a cast. But he couldn't control his truck and it crashed and turned over, killing him. Mrs. Trent says that he killed himself, because he must have known that he couldn't handle that truck, but this is not necessarily so. She is bitter about it, almost as if he did it to spite her, knowing that she would then have to carry the responsibility of the children alone.

She began working the evening shift so that the boys could take care of the little girls and she wouldn't have to pay a babysitter. She placed a lot of work as well as responsibility on both of the boys and they did very well. They were pleased to be accorded what they thought of as adult status and, though they missed their father, all felt secretly relieved that the tension and fighting of the past few years were over.

Mrs. Trent began dating about six months after her husband's death. She had met Mr. Trent when she was transferred to a section of the plant where he was a supervisor. He taught her how to operate the machines. At first they didn't get along very well, but after her husband died he was sympathetic and interested in her problems. They dated for quite a while before they decided to marry.

Matthew was especially resentful when Mrs. Trent began dating. When she began going out with Mr. Trent, though, all of the children liked him and he liked them. It was this that finally made her decide

to marry him. Unfortunately, she didn't tell the children that they were going to be married but just went to City Hall. A cousin told Barry, but he did not tell his brother.

Mr. Trent was the third of five brothers born to a longshoreman and his wife in Houston, Texas. His mother was the dominant figure in the home; the father was soft-spoken and gentle, not a doormat but willing to let his wife run the household and make most of the decisions.

The mother was a strict disciplinarian and often told the boys, "Don't bother tattlin' to me. If he done it once he'll do it again, and I'll catch him at it." Which she usually did. She also expected to be obeyed on the spot with no dawdling or excuses. Her punishment was a cuff across the mouth or a whipping with a belt. Mr. Trent, not surprisingly, much preferred his father. He tells about these experiences with a rueful laugh and claims to be grateful for the discipline, which he probably is in some measure, but the resentment that he built up then has never been handled and is apt to slip out at unexpected times.

His mother's family owned a large property in Louisiana which he and his brothers were sent to work on every summer. They went to various aunts and uncles or to their grandparents, depending on who needed them. His parents remained alone in Houston, which added to

their relationship, but which created more resentment in their children. The boys missed their parents and felt rejected by being sent away. They did not like the hard work, either, or the separation from the water (the Gulf of Mexico was quite near their home).

Mr. Trent quit school in the tenth grade and got a job in Houston. Over the next several years he moved from city to city and from job to job until he came to Detroit, where he liked the money that he could earn in the factories so well that he stayed.

When he was twenty-six he married a girl who was only eighteen, a waitress in a small restaurant. They both wanted children very badly but after six years still did not have any. They were both examined for infertility and it was learned that the problem was his. When he would not consent to a birth through artificial insemination but wanted to adopt a child, they entered into a bitter and unresolvable conflict, which ended in a divorce. This was five years ago (his former wife has remarried and now has two children).

Mr. Trent found that he no longer liked the single life but was afraid to marry for fear that the same thing would happen again. When he began dating his wife and became attached to her children, it seemed like a very good arrangement, for she has no desire for any more of them.

THE DELINQUENT'S POSITION IN THE FAMILY

Though Mrs. Trent is dominating and controllative, she is also very indulgent, especially regarding money and other meterial items and about hours. During the years that she was a widow she felt guilty about all the work that she was giving the boys and tried to make up for it with other things. She also turned to them for emotional support, especially to Matthew, who is not only older but also more intelligent and resourceful than Barry.

At the age of thirteen, the beginning of puberty, this is a very powerful stimulation to a young boy. He began to see himself as her husband and found this enough reward to make up even for the amount of housework (which he dislikes) that he had to do. The sexual aspects (subconscious and unrecognized as such) to this relationship are significant in that they were not repressed, redirected, or avoided to the degree that they would have been in a more normal situation. There are always sexual feelings between a child and its parent of the opposite sex, but these are usually handled by ploys such as arguments (full-scale battles sometimes) and avoidance. Matthew's mother depended upon him in many ways that a wife would depend upon her husband. He was not only expected to be a father to the smaller children, to do the traditional male tasks in the home (like putting up screens and fixing broken doorknobs), and to relieve her of many of a woman's traditional

tasks (like washing the clothes), but also he was expected to be understanding of her needs, to listen to her problems, and to be protective of her.

Matthew did not win a complete victory over his brother in vying for the husband's role with his mother. Barry is physically quite a bit larger than Matthew, though not so tall as he is, and is also much more placid and easy-going (one of the most likeable of all of the youngsters in all of the families). When Mrs. Trent ran up against resistance in one of the boys, she turned to the other one, which had the immediate effect of bringing the recalcitrant one into line. By playing on their competitiveness with each other she kept the home running smoothly and to her satisfaction until her marriage to Mr. Trent.

Matthew was not able to accept being moved out of the husband's role and placed back in the son's role exclusively, not only under his mother (which he had been at the same time that he had been playing husband) but also under his stepfather, his winning rival. He ran away the first time after being "whipped" (their word) by Mr. Trent for smoking marihuana. He went to Montgomery, Alabama, with his father's brother but returned on his own some weeks later with another uncle.

This episode was an attempt to establish his identity as an adult by proving that he could take care of himself, and it was a

message to both parents that he could not tolerate the situation in its present form. Nothing changed, however, and the next time his step-father struck him he ran away again, this time to a friend's home nearby.

The intolerable part of this situation to Matthew was not only having to put up with a step-father and being expected to obey him, but also that his mother, instead of understanding the situation and trying to help him maintain his dignity and self-esteem in this difficult time, was making it worse by disparaging him and his efforts at independence and manhood. She was sarcastic and made fun of him to the members of his family and to outsiders.

She also contradicted him when he tried to tell her or anyone else how he felt and what his motives were for some of his behavior. She then told him and the other person how he "really" felt or why or what he "really" did. This frustrated and angered him so much that one day he stood up during an interview with an observer and the two of them and said, "Alright, Mom, you think you know all about it. You don't need me. You tell 'em all about me." and he left the house. The mother was speaking for the son and therefore not recognizing him as an individual with feelings and ideas different from her own. She did this for all four of her children, but so far Barry has not reacted openly and the little girls are too young to say much about it.

Mrs. Trent has a reduced capacity to differentiate between herself and others, especially those in a close emotional relationship with her. This is because she was not herself sufficiently differentiated in her family of origin so that she did not form a clear, fundamental concept of the boundaries of her own Self. This is true also of her husband.

When she is in a stressful situation she is unable to recognize and focus on, and thus to cope with, the anxiety produced in herself, so she projects it onto other persons, especially onto those in close emotional relationships to her. She then attempts to cope with "their problem," which she can safely be dissociated from at the same time that she is taking on the responsibility of resolving it.

If the other person tries to tell her that she is mistaken, that the situation is not as she perceives it because thus and so did not happen the way she said it did or because he does not feel the way she says he does, her anxiety is evoked again. Her need to get rid of or to suppress this anxiety is the drive that makes her try to force her view onto the other person. If he cannot be convinced, she is in danger of having to face reality herself.

The uncertainty of the boundaries of her Self makes it easier to fuse those boundaries with the boundaries of an equally uncertain Other, husband or children (whose boundaries she herself has helped to

maintain in uncertainty because she was unable to recognize, and thus to validate, them). The uncertainty of the boundaries also cause problems in themselves because they create anxiety, sometimes almost to the point of panic, in that they cause her to feel as if her Self is always in danger of being totally encompassed by fusion with any other Self that she allows to come into close enough emotional contact with her; therefore, she must always maintain a certain emotional distance between herself (her Self) and everyone else (other Selves or Others).

This means that she is projecting all sorts of ideas and feelings onto others and is able to perceive them as owning those ideas and feelings largely because she cannot discriminate between what is in her and what is in others.[1]

THE DELINQUENT'S ADAPTATION

Matthew's position was that he was being forced out of the husband's role (the passive husband) which he had accepted and found ego gratification in (though it was risky in its sexual overtones) and being forced into a child's role that he was now too old for, but which was less threatening to Mrs. Trent and her new husband than recognizing

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[1] Anonymous, "Toward the Differentiation of a Self in One's Own Family," op. cit., pp. 117-125; Nathaniel Branden, The Disowned Self (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), pp. 70-106.

him as a near-adult male with male prerogatives and privileges would have been. He was also in a highly competitive struggle with his younger brother, not only for his mother, but also for the role of big brother. It was difficult for him to acknowledge and to live with the fact that this younger brother was stronger than he was and could always settle any disputes by simply wrestling him to the floor.

Matthew was very sensitive about his masculinity and age, partly because of Barry. His best friend, James, was smaller than he was but had a great deal of influence over him (which he did not recognize). While Matthew was highly-strung, apt to be impulsive and to count on his intelligence to get him out of situations that his emotions got him into, his friend James was more apt to try to think a plan through first. In many ways James was like both Barry and Mrs. Trent.

The Trent family has very loose connections with the mother's family, some of whom live in the vicinity, and almost never see or talk to any of Mr. Trent's family. While Mr. Trent has friends and goes out occasionally by himself, Mrs. Trent has no friends except people she knows casually at work and at church (which she insists that they all attend regularly). She has no wish to socialize with these people at any other time. This insulation has made her more hostile and suspicious of the motives of others because it prevents her from getting a

feedback of real motives through interaction with the wider world, and it has also increased the pressure on her children, and now on her husband, to meet all of her emotional needs.

This insulation and the hostile motives that she projects from herself and attributes to others have made it possible for her to blame others for Matthew's running away rather than to concentrate on the situation at home. At no time did it occur to her that if James and his mother (a friendly woman whom Matthew has become attached to) were the sole reason that Matthew ran away, he would have run away before he did, because the friendship is of long standing. James did not go with Matthew when he ran away the first time, but Matthew went to his house first when he returned. When he left the second time, actually at his mother's instigation, he went to James' house. Mrs. Trent then accused James and his mother of encouraging him to leave home, a position that she maintained even when Matthew, Barry, and her husband tried to dissuade her.

Though the overt situation that caused Matthew to run away both times were punishments from his step-father, the emotional relationships in his home were such that he would have had to break away from his mother in the near future or he would have risked a stabilization of the unhealthy situation as it then existed; Matthew as her covert mate, always in subjection to her and on the receiving end of her

criticism and sarcasm, but occasionally rewarded by some recognition of him as her mate and by some affection and approval. This situation could have existed until he married, if he transferred the relationship to another woman, or could have gone on with his wife in secondary position to his mother (as his wife).

The upheaval brought about by his mother's remarriage and the transfer of her wife-needs onto her husband and away from Matthew have actually been better for him than a continuation of the previous situation. For Matthew, however, it has been very painful. He sees himself as having all of the drawbacks of the old situation, plus a few increased disadvantages (more disparagement and criticism), and some new ones (being subjugated to the new male).

He has tried to cope with the whole situation by proclaiming his adulthood and readiness to leave the nest. If the pressure on him had not been so intense and degrading to his ego, he would have been able to stick to his original plan (developed when his mother remarried): to join the Navy on his seventeenth birthday. Being an intelligent, energetic person and about average in maturity for his years, this would have been a very good plan. The Navy would have provided him with the masculine identity and approval that he needed and would have provided a secure, controlled environment that would have given

him a few years to grow up and find himself before he was thrust into the world of adulthood.

He will be seventeen in June, a year and one half from the date that he first ran away. He would still like to join the Navy then and will do so if he can manage to live with his parents and remain in school until then (their conditions for signing his release).

Chapter 8

THE ADAMS

Billy has had a few encounters with the police and is at a point where one more arraignment will mean detention in a juvenile home. Much of his delinquent activity, however, is not a matter of record. The list of these activities includes: breaking and entering, other forms of theft, drinking, assault, running away, and drug abuse.

There are three children in Billy's family: Scott, aged seventeen, Billy, aged sixteen, and Paula, aged fourteen. His father is a lawyer for a large corporation in Detroit and his mother is a counselor at a social services center and is working on a Master's degree from Oakland University in the social sciences.

They live in an upper-middle class neighborhood in one of Detroit's more prestigious suburbs, but their house and yard show signs of neglect and deterioration. Though by no means filthy, the house is usually cluttered and messy and somewhat dirty.

Billy is a friendly boy with a weak but attractive face and a wiry build. Though revealing some pronounced anxiety in an abruptness or awkwardness in his movements and a rigidity of his musculature and

in tension lines in his face, he was perfectly willing to talk to any of the interviewers about himself and his family, including his delinquent behavior and his feelings about it. When ill at ease he tends to be something of a braggart and to judge people and activities in terms of "fun" or "no fun."

Both parents tried to convey the impression of being educated, liberal, very "with it" from the first interview. They were eager to discuss race relations, politics, social reform, and even psychology, but they were both noticeably defensive when the subject was brought back to their own personal lives.

Mr. Adams is a pleasant-spoken, attractive man of early middle-age. He is highly intelligent, well-read, and given to thought and consideration in his opinions, almost to the point of diffidence. He tends to let his wife do mot of the talking when she is present, though what at first seemed acquiescence in her views later became apparent as reluctance for a confrontation. His efforts at correcting the children's often boisterous, and sometimes rude, behavior seemed excessively mild and were rarely heeded by them.

Mrs. Adams is a petite, vivacious woman who is actually forty, looks thirty, and dresses like twenty. Because she expressed so many sensible ideas about family relationships and children's essential psychological needs during the first few interviews (while the children

were on their best behavior), the observers were thrown into some confusion as to the causes of Billy's problem. Even the condition of the home argued for a casualness about material circumstances and a valuation of people and their feelings. She spoke a great deal about freedom to grow and the necessity of independence and seemed very interested in various new theories of human behavior. Four-letter words were somewhat self-consciously interspersed in her conversation, as if to give emphasis to her liberality.

During the first few visits the children spoke only when asked direct questions by the interviewers or by their parents. Each of them looked at both parents before answering and chose their words carefully.

While both of the younger children became quite friendly and open with the interviewers as time went by, Scott remained very reserved. Wearing an air of authority far advanced for his years, he seemed at the same time to convey a sense of responsibility and understanding with a sense of emptiness and bitterness. He tends toward the conservative, being narrow and inflexible in his opinions. All questions for him are polarized; either it's this or it's that; either it's black or it's white.

Contrasted to the extreme attractiveness of the other members of the family, Paula is quite plain. She is not precisely homely, but

her face is distorted with anxiety, her hair and clothing look unkept, and her movements are more those of a boy than of a girl. At first she had little to say, but as time went on she showed herself to be intelligent and very much interested in her family's problems as well as the social issues discussed at such length in their home. Because she was often interrupted and contradicted when she voiced her opinions in the family circle (at which times she subsided quietly), it was surprising to find that she was not in such agreement with any of the others as had seemed at first but had actually formed quite solid, well-founded ideas of her own. Her timidity and lack of femininity were one of the initial clues to an incongruency between Mrs. Adams' professed attitudes on child-raising and the actual situation in the home.

Another surprising fact which came to light during the early days of this investigation was that friends who were referred to frequently and who were labeled as closest and dearest had all been recently acquired. None of these friendships seemed to date from more than a year previous to the beginning of the study.

THE FAMILY HISTORY

Both Mr. and Mrs. Adams were born in Philadelphia and lived near each other throughout their childhoods. They were both in the

same parish in their Catholic neighborhoods but were only slightly acquainted for many years.

Mr. Adams was the only boy in a clannish Irish family. He had one older sister and one younger sister, but he was the pride of the household, and all ambition from his dominant mother and passive father centered upon him. The family was extremely religious and rigid in following the rules of the Church and the mores of their working class social group (largely located in that neighborhood).

Mr. Adams, though dominated by his mother in company with the rest of the household, felt little resentment toward her, for his wishes and ideas coincided pretty much with hers. Rather than feeling confined by her domination, he interpreted it as concern and saw her as a bulwark of strength. He appreciated the amount of time, effort, and money (which was scarce though his father worked steadily) she sacrified so that he could have and do the things that were important to him like clothes, sports equipment, and spending money. He accepted as natural that his sisters should also do without so that he might put up a good appearance.

During his youth he was popular with both adults and children. He did very well in school, excelled in sports, and was an altar boy for a number of years. This pattern continued throughout high school and college, both of which were located in and near his local parish.

The focus of his social life continued to be the family, the church, and the local Irish group whom he had known all of his life.

Mrs. Adams' childhood was totally different from her husband's. Her father, a skilled mechanic, changed jobs frequently and was often out of work because he was an alcoholic. Her mother was a weak, complaining woman who attempted to control her seven children by making them feel guilty and by scaring them with threats of Hell and the parish priest. She rarely enforced her own rules but expected the nuns at the school to see that her children behaved properly. The effect of this expectation was that the children were disciplined and punished in school but had almost total freedom after school hours. The oldest sister, a controllative, finicky individual, spent most of her time at home reading, but Mrs. Adams and her younger sister spent most of their time on the streets with their brothers, who were even less restricted.

As a young girl Mrs. Adams had been extremely pious and in awe of the nuns, whom she tried to emulate. She was ashamed of her parents and her home and did not bring children home from school. She also felt a constant chafing from their poverty, for she was not able to have anything that the other children took for granted. The nuns often contributed the school uniforms to her family.

By junior high she became rebellious, flouted many of the conventions and mores of the neighborhood, and became part of a local group of young toughs. By high school this group took on the semblance of a gang, though the membership was somewhat fluid. All during these years she was alternately contemptuous of, and jealous of, the "nice girls."

During her senior year she decided to do an about-face and to attempt to change her ways and her reputation. This was not successful and the year was very lonely for her.

Two years after her graduation, while working in a local supermarket, she once again became acquainted with Mr. Adams, who represented the epitome of respectability to her. They began dating off and on, and gradually he drew her into his own group, who were older than she was for the most part but who tentatively accepted her. After a while they both broke off relationships with others and began to date steadily.

Within a year she was pregnant. His mother had objected to their relationship from the start because of her reputation and the low status of her parents and had prophesied that what did happen, would happen. This was the first time that he defied her in any major conflict, but he was adamant and remained loyal even after he learned

that she was pregnant. They were married the summer after his graduation from the local university.

Instead of going to work, however, Mr. Adams entered graduate school on a fellowship and then switched to law school where he remained for some years. They lived on loans, grants, and money from odd jobs that they both took on weekends and vacations.

Soon after Scott's birth Mrs. Adams found that she was pregnant with Billy and two years later, with Paula.

During these years they lived in a government project along with a number of other young married couples from the same area in the same circumstances. These young people formed a cohesive group which for Mr. Adams took the place of the old neighborhood group, though they continued to see some of the old group on their frequent visits to his family. Mrs. Adams usually visited her own family alone through her own choice.

Mrs. Adams devoted herself to being a model wife and mother in the traditional sense, but in that atmosphere of educated liberal Catholicism it is not surprising that she was also very concerned with child development, creativity, self-expression, etc., all of which were the "in" concerns in the fifties on college campuses.

When he completed law school, Mr. Adams began to work in a local law firm and they continued to see their friends in the project,

though they were able to move out and to get a small flat in their old parish.

Two years later Mr. Adams received an offer from his present firm and they moved to Detroit, away from all of their old ties for the first time in either of their lives. The job proved to be very demanding for the first two years and took up much of Mr. Adams' time. Mrs. Adams, tied down with small children and feeling out of step with the other mothers in their modern sub-division (working-class), who seemed uninteresting and shallow to her, sank deeper and deeper into a depression. She lost interest in her children, became disillusioned with her husband for not being able to solve her problems, and lost faith in her religion.

Then, in the year that Paula entered kindergarten, Mrs. Adams decided, with her husband's encouragement, to go back to school and to work toward a college degree. This had results unforeseen by either of them, for Mrs. Adams transferred all of the energy that had previously been focused on her roles as wife and mother, and all of her interest and allegiance, to the role of college student.

The marriage has disintegrated steadily for the past ten years, though both spouses have entered therapy intermittently. The basic difficulty is that neither knew the other when they were married; the person each thought he had married was an illusion. She thought that

he was a pillar of strength, an authoritarian, omniscient, awesome creature who had accidently fallen in love with her. He thought that she was the embodiment of the poor little match-girl who only needed rescuing to blossom into the ideal of traditional American wifehood.

Both were able to maintain these illusions so long as they remained in the old environment. There Mr. Adams, who is actually quite a passive person, could seem strong and authoritarian because all of his decisions (unbeknownst to either of them) were actually made for him by his mother, his church, and his social group. Within such a structured existence there are actually very few choices which have not already been made. One can follow the group and its strictures and can be emotionally dependent to a large extent upon the persons in the group and upon its inherent structure and can seem very independent at the same time. So long as he was able to maintain this illusion for her, she was able to feel safe and secure and was willing to pay for this security by waiting on him, by putting his needs first, and by administering to his ego in every way.

When he was faced with the realization that he was the sole emotional support for the whole family and had no source of emotional support for himself, the facade crumbled. He became more and more openly indecisive and troubled and tried to lean on her. She, feeling totally inadequate all along, felt not only disillusioned but profoundly betrayed.

The more that he tried to lean on her and to shift some of the family responsibility and decisions onto her, the more she backed off and threw herself into her new role as student. Eventually (when it became popular), she grew her hair long and wore it hanging down, adopted jeans as a daily costume, and entered a group of hippie-types from the school. During these years she tried pot and other drugs, had a few affairs, and tried as much as possible to live like a single, college student. Her present mode of dress and speech is a modified version of those extremes.

The children, after Paula entered second grade, were left for long periods of time without either parent or even a babysitter. Scott was ten at that time and was expected to take care of both of the younger children until one parent or the other returned home. As Mr. Adams was constrained to work a great deal of overtime then, and Mrs. Adams coupled a part-time job with her classes, this was often into the evening hours.

About this time the family moved into the home which they now occupy, which placed a further financial strain upon a budget already strained almost to the breaking point. This, in fact, is one of the major sources of strain for both partners, for neither is capable of handling money. Though Mr. Adams makes a substantial salary and Mrs. Adams has worked off and on over the past few years, they are always

in debt. And while each admits his own culpability in this area, each lays the greater responsibility for their indebtedness on the other.

THE DELINQUENT'S POSITION IN THE FAMILY

Billy is in a can't-win position in this family. When his mother rejected the wife-mother role, a series of changes occurred in the family relationships. First, the mother turned to the boys to fulfill her needs for a mate. Scott, being older and of a more dependable personality, was naturally chosen for the role of chief consort with Billy being thrust into the position of substitute when Scott was absent and of second-in-line alternating with child when Scott was present.

Second, at this time Mrs. Adams' underlying fear and resentment of males also became more apparent in her relationships with her sons. She not only decreased her direction and guidance of them, she also began to allow them to overrule her wishes in regard to themselves and to speak to her with a marked lack of respect. This was true also of Paula, but to a much lesser degree. This situation exists virtually unchanged today.

Third, the adults both thrust a monumental parenting role upon Scott, both as regards themselves and as regards the younger children,

for neither of them felt capable of assuming that role. They have also tried from then until now to force each other into the parent role.

Fourth and last, for some years now Mr. Adams has assumed something of a mother role toward the younger children in that he is warm and emotionally supportive of them. He has, however, abdicated the father role, and has provided little guidance, direction, or authority, and almost no discipline. The children are as careless and contemptuous of him in their speech as they are of their mother.

For Billy this means that he is a secondary spouse to his mother and has no chance to oust his brother in that role, but that he still must handle the strong sexual feelings that this generates without any of the secondary rewards accruing to Scott. Billing is also unable to release the full vent of his hostility upon Scott, because he is still very dependent upon him for parenting (for stability, authority, and direction).

To summarize Billy's relationships in his family, we must conclude that his mother is his mother-lover-sister (or equal), his father is his father-mother, his brother is his brother-father-mother, and only his sister is a sister. In regards to the latter, however, both boys have always been allowed to treat her pretty much according to their whims so that she is regarded by them as inferior, someone to care for but not about.

Billy had been subjected to a series of traumatic changes before the current relationships stabilized in the fragile balance that is now maintained in the family. First, he was moved from an environment where everybody and every place was totally familiar to a place where everything was strange, and neither he nor his parents knew anyone. None of his old friends or his relatives, whom he had seen a great deal, was available at all.

Next, his mother, who had lavished attention and affection on him up to this time, did not even want to talk to him anymore and allowed his brother to abuse him.

Then, his father, who had been the mainstay of the family and who had always been firm and certain and strong, suddenly collapsed into uncertainty and indecision.

Added to this uncertainty in the relationships which had been the most important to him was an increasing tension. His father began to stay away from home more and more and his mother began to nag his father when he was home.

Then his mother also began to stay away and left him at first with babysitters and soon just with his brother and sister. As he gradually lost her as a mother, he lost his father as a father, gained his brother as a father, and gained his father as a mother. All of his basic securities have been stripped from him, but some have been reapplied in patches like poor quality bandages.

THE DELINQUENT'S ADAPTATION

Billy has had none of his basic needs for security, recognition, or affection met adequately since he was six years old. In the amorphous and illusionary relationships in his home he has learned to adapt in three ways: to acommodate to each change as it comes about while getting as much affection, recognition, and security out of it as he can; to copy his brother Scott and to attempt the same means of gratification that Scott uses; and to escape from feeling and thinking as much as possible.

The paradox of his life is that he has not only been made overly dependent by the neglect which his mother rationalizes would make him independent, but also that he (as well as his brother and sister) has had no freedom because all of his energies have been tied up in seeking security; and for the same reason, he has been unable to grow and mature.

The accommodations to change have been basically an increase in dependency. Billing has no feeling of self-reliance at all. He willingly attaches himself to anyone who offers even the illusion of stability, but this pattern began in his home. From the time that the family moved to Detroit Billy has been a hangar-on, a clinger, at first only to members of his family, but in adolescence he has turned to other boys to meet his needs. He has generally been attracted to boys

who act tough and belligerant, especially to authority figures. Billy has never committed a crime by himself; he takes things to be part of the group, not because he wants them. He often gives them away and sometimes even throws them away.

There is another, broader, more complex reason for Billy's acts of theft which also explains the acts of violence he has taken part in. This is that crimes against persons, either as individuals or as groups, help to dissipate the rage and frustration Billy feels toward his family, authority figures, and life in general.

Billy's second means of adaptation has been to try to copy his brother, not to be like him but to do what he does in coping with life. Having an entirely different personality and set of abilities, however, has doomed these endeavors to failure. Where Scott's defenses have led him to erect a facade of invulnerability and to accept a position of responsibility and authority (which he is not really capable of handling but which he does his best to maintain), Billy's defenses are to win approval and to ingratiate himself with anyone who remotely looks like he could meet his needs. It is obviously impossible for him to be supportive of another when he is looking toward that other to be supportive of him; therefore his distorted interpretation of Scott's strength of character is to maintain an illustion of "toughness."

Another problem with this means of adapting is that it has pushed him further into his brother's shadow. He is almost a non-entity in his family until he gets into trouble. None of his family were able to describe him easily, though they were able to acribe definite characteristics to each other member of the family. One phrase that cropped up frequently in regard to him, however, was that he was "not as bright as the others" and "slow to learn." He has therefore been stigmatized for years with an undeserved label which he himself has always accepted. This is sad because both his parents said that he "had been a smart little boy; I don't know what happened to him." What seems to have happened is that he did poorly in school during those years of upheaval in his family (which is quite common in children during trauma) when he was still quite young, and instead of helping him to catch up when his life became relatively more stable, his family and teachers accepted him as slow and treated him accordingly.

A familiar side effect of the family's nonrecognition of a child's real character and abilities and their acceptance of some of his misbehavior as representative of the total child is that the child realizes that he is expected, and therefore allowed, to misbehave and therefore does so. When Scott got into some trouble in his early teens for stealing car parts, his parents were so disappointed in, and angry

at, him that he never attempted to break the law again. Their "understanding" when Billy breaks the law is as good as permission to do so.

Billy's third means of adapting to his family environment has always been some form of escape. When he was younger he attached himself to friends' and neighbors' families and spent as much time with them as possible. When home he dived into the television set like it was a swimming pool and immersed himself as long as possible, sometimes from the minute he got in the door until he fell asleep (someone would wake him enough to send him to bed). In his very early teens he discovered alcohol, some of which he stole from his parents' supplies and some of which he and his friends stole from other parents and from stores. Later someone introduced him to marihuana and in the past year he has tried even harder drugs.

Billy has also run away from home twice, both times with older boys. In each instance the other boy decided to go home when his funds ran out, so Billy came home, too.

Billy's chief characteristic is his lack of force: he is indefinite and indecisive. Though he is creative and has done some artistic (but pallid) watercolor pictures, neither he nor his family gave any recognition to this ability. His main interest is in flying; he would like to be an airline pilot, for he sees flying as a means of escape and feels that as a pilot he would be looked up to. He

joined the Civil Air Patrol but quit after a few weeks, for he does not stick to anything for long and has no feeling of responsibility for or to anyone.

Billy considers himself to be always in the wrong and is easily impressed by any show of strength or toughness. Using the current teenage slang almost exclusively, he will do anything to be one of the group, any group.

Sometimes he says he doesn't know how to do anything, but at other times he reveals illusions of achieving unrealistically grand heights. In reality his intermittent strivings to be himself, coupled with his more frequent imitations of Scott, prevent him from sticking to any one thing long enough to be successful.

Chapter 9

THE CAROLS

Maurice has committed only a few delinquent acts, all in the category of destruction of property and vandalism. He broke twelve windows out of the local school, poured gasoline on a neighbor's lawn and salt on another neighbor's flower beds, and put water in the gas tank in his school bus. Suspended innumerable times from school for acting up in class and insubordination, he is now being asked to leave the private school he has been attending.

Maurice's family, which is black, lives in a low-income, integrated neighborhood on Detroit's west side. Their house is small but well furnished and very neat. His parents are divorced, and he lives with his mother and two younger sisters; his father lives in another city in Michigan but visits occasionally, and off and on one, two, or all of the children go to stay with him.

Maurice, aged thirteen, is a chubby, indolent boy who is respectful and friendly but at the same time wary of strangers. He tends to see people in terms of what they can do for him, principally for what they can give him (especially money), but is also acceptant

of friendship when it is not accompanied by gifts but by attention. His pudgy, attractive face seems babyish and diffused at first, but with better acquaintance it is seen to be a superficial appearance of willingness to please that actually masks a very determined personality. He is emotionally very volatile and immature for thirteen years old, being easily moved to boredom, impatience, and tears.

Mrs. Carol is a registered nurse who takes only private duty cases so that she can be free to pursue her other interests. She takes classes at Wayne State University in psychology and also does some volunteer work with young female delinquents. Money is a problem but not so much so that Mrs. Carol is tempted to increase her working hours. Mr. Carol sends support checks occasionally, not regularly, but often enough to stave off economic disaster. Mrs. Carol calls him for financial aid when the children are really in need, and he is usually cooperative at those times.

Mrs. Carol is a short, heavy woman who, while cordial and trying to convey the impression of jollity and intelligent good humor, is very defensive. A deep hostility, which seemed at first to be only a characteristic of her defensiveness in situations in which she was at a disadvantage, became increasingly apparent as a significant aspect of her personality. She was very controllative with her children and bitter toward her husband, her father, and men in general. At the

same time, she indicated her interest in having a relationship with a man, though she was not interested in another marriage.

Jeannette, aged eleven, is a serious, studious girl with a lovely, quiet sense of humor. She is able to appreciate the subtle ridiculousnesses of many situations that a less astute or sensitive child would miss. Jeannette is more mature than either her mother or her brother and seems better able to handle the psychological difficulties in their family. Certainly she has more insight and understands them better than any of the others.

Patricia is a very anxious child and clings to both her sister and her mother. She was very reluctant to talk at any time and expressed almost no opinions of her own.

THE FAMILY HISTORY

Mrs. Carol was the second of eight children, five girls and three boys. Her father was a domineering, inflexible man who rejected her from her earliest years. Her mother, a docile but opinionated woman, tried to protect her from her father while she was very young, but after her defenses hardened into hostile aggressiveness and she became obese, felt that she was then strong enough to defend herself and added her own nagging to the criticism and disparagement that she received from him.

The family has always lived in Detroit, where all eight children graduated from high school. The father, a factory worker, was ambitious for his sons; he supported them and paid for their education for as long as they remained in college (one graduated and the others dropped out after one and two years) but would not pay for Mrs. Carol's tuition because "it would be a waste of money. You'll only get married anyway." She had always wanted an education, however, and paid her own way through college and nursing school, but she is still very bitter about it.

Taking their cue from their father, her brothers and sisters always ostracized her; after a while she pretended that she didn't care about them anyway. The more left out she felt, the more she ate, and the more they made fun of her, which led to her eating even more. By the time she reached high school she was very heavy and felt that this was the reason that she had no friends. It is more likely that it was because she had developed such a prickly wall of defense against being hurt that no one, boy or girl, wanted to go up against it. Then too, once a youngster has a reputation for being difficult and consequently, unpopular, the others don't want their names linked to hers.

During college Mrs. Carol had trouble again at first with making friends because she was giving out negative signals to everyone as usual. Fortunately, one of her supervisors understood her problem

and was able to help her to some extent, though she still doesn't really understand or accept the fact that her real problem is with herself: she accepts her parents', her siblings', and her childhood comparisons' valuation of her as a contemptuous object of derision and ridicule, and though she has learned to cover this with a thin veneer of sophistication and a large defense of pretended disregard and distain, her own negative valuation of herself comes through now and came through then. Thus, she was able to attract only people who needed others with a low self-esteem and a mixture of masochism and great distance-maintenance mechanisms, which, of course, assured her that no one was going to really care for her. And this is exactly what happened.

When she was twenty-one she met her husband, a very insecure individual who was always attracted to girls who had little choice in boyfriends. He was the first boy she had ever dated, and she was so convinced that he loved her that she soon had sexual relations with him. She became pregnant with Maurice within three months, just as the romance was beginning to cool off. He was very reluctant to marry her, but her father (being glad, as she said, to get rid of her) insisted and threatened the young man that he would make trouble with his parents and would take him to court, so he married her.

Mr. Carol was the younger of two boys born on a small but successful farm in Michigan. His parents always favored the older boy, who was a cheerful, capable person, while Mr. Carol was inarticulate and unsure of himself. He was raised by a strict, but reasonable and understanding, father and an indulgent, but often sickly, mother and was always jealous of his brother.

It was understood that the older boy would inherit the farm and that the younger boy would go to college because he did better in school. Actually, both brothers wanted the farm.

When Mr. Carol first met his wife, he was feeling particularly inadequate because a girl whom he had really liked had just broken off with him for someone else. He met Mrs. Carol frequently at a friend's house and eventually realized that she was very much attracted to him; their frist date was an impulse for both of them; he had no idea at that time that she had never dated before because she pretended that she was very experienced.

He had dropped out of school before their marriage, but she continued and graduated before Maurice was born. The marriage was a disaster from the beginning, for each resented the other. Mrs. Carol was determined, however, that she would be a "good wife," and to this end (and also from a subconscious desire to live up to her father's conception of a good wife and, hopefully, to win his approval) she

was careful to have the house spotlessly clean and the meals cooked well and on time regardless of imminent exams or her own tiredness.

Mr. Carol was irritable and demanding with her but very loving with the children, though he took no part in their physical care and would not allow her to leave any of them with him when she went anywhere, even shopping, until after their divorce.

Their second child, Jeannette, born almost two years after Maurice, was found to have a serious heart defect. She was in and out of the hospital a great deal her first five years, but surgery was finally decided against. She must have her heart massaged regularly even now and may have to have a pacemaker when she grows older.

Mr. Carol was very concerned about Jeannette and made the greatest effort toward their marriage during her first two years, but after Patricia was born he began going out with other women and was home less and less. Mrs. Carol asked him to leave for good when Patricia was five.

When he had been gone for about six months his brother developed a telescoping bowel and died on the operating table. Mr. Carol then went home to his parents' farm to take his brother's place, and he is still there. The children often spend weekends with him there and sometimes a week or ten days in the summer. Both of the older children love to go, but Patricia is afraid to leave her mother.

After Mr. Carol left, Mrs. Carol's youngest sister came to stay with her to watch the children and to help keep the house while she worked. This aunt stayed until last year, when she left and got married; now the children are usually left alone at night when their mother works (she usually works from midnight until eight in the morning). All of them object to this and say that they are afraid, but she tells them that they "aren't really," they "just want some attention."

THE DELINQUENT'S POSITION IN THE FAMILY

This family is in constant overt and covert battle, with the chief antagonists being Maurice and the mother. Jeannette switches allegiance depending on the situation, but is usually allied with Maurice. Patricia usually weighs in with her mother but joins Jeannette when Mrs. Carol is particularly hostile and offensive.

The root of the problem is Mrs. Carol's deep feeling of inadequacy which makes her feel insecure and unable to cope with a world she perceives as threatening. It began when she was only a small child and truly defenseless. When her father showed his rejection of her with coldness and disparagement, she had to defend herself against the pain, and she also had to incorporate the experience in some way that could prevent its happening again, which meant that she had to identify

the perpetrators of the pain. When extreme pain occurs at an early age, the victim is not capable of identifying the individual(s) responsible and guarding against them alone. He generalizes and guards against everyone.

As more and more of his experiences are negative, he comes to see himself as not deserving warmth, recognition, or approval, but he also becomes more and more lonely, frustrated, and angry because he is not receiving them. The anger and its hurt trigger a defensive hostility in him, an "I'll attack first since war is inevitable" kind of ploy. This hostility is also a bastion for his pride because he believes that his negativity persuades everyone else that he doesn't care, a Pyrrhic victory at best.

One of the serious consequences of this vicious cycle's beginning in early childhood is that the child does not learn to relate to others because he does not learn to trust. In adulthood the person doesn't remember what caused the distrust and fear of others so that he cannot put the incidents or relationships of that time in perspective and dismiss them. The fear is still just as strong as it was then, only now he attaches it to different persons and objects; he focuses his generalized distrust on particular persons and rationalizes reasons to himself why those persons cannot be trusted.

He is particularly defensive of his own spouse and children because he cannot avoid being emotionally involved with them. He transfers many of his childhood emotional associations onto them and perceives them as if they had the qualities or characteristics of the person(s) from his childhood. Adults displace many feelings about their parents, especially, onto their spouses because there are many similarities in the relationship, and they also displace feelings about parents, siblings, and intimate friends onto their children.[1]

Mrs. Carol is a particularly hostile, defensive person who has lived a life of self-fulfilling prophecy, currently referred to in psychological terms as the life "script."[2] She is so sure that no one could love her and so terrified that she might let herself love someone who won't love her, that she stated emphatically that she didn't love her children. As her story unfolded, however, she revealed that she had loved them until a minor incident in which they had all wanted to

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[1]Eric Berne, What Do You Say After You Say Hello? (New York: Bantam Books, 1972); Branden, op. cit.; Karen Horney, The Neurotic Personality of Our Time (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1937); Karen Horney, Our Inner Conflicts (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1945); James and Jongeward, op. cit., pp. 223-247; Lowen, op. cit.; Alexander Lowen, Depression and the Body (Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, Inc., 1973); Abraham H. Maslow, The Farther Reaches of Human Nature (New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1971), pp. 25-40; Theodore M. Newcomb, Social Psychology (New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1950), pp. 107-145, 298-407; Carl R. Rogers, On Becoming a Person, Sentry Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961), pp. 107-124.

[2]Berne, op. cit.; James and Jongeward, op. cit., pp. 68-96.

stay and play at their grandmother's rather than go home with her. A helpful relative had told her, "See, you care too much about those kids. They don't care about you." From then on she felt differently about them. She became afraid that they wouldn't love her, so she decided not to love them first.

She was actually very concerned about them in many ways, but she wasn't warm toward them. The conflict that she decried between and among them was actually engendered first by her, for none of the children would voluntarily cut off their basic source of emotional support.

Other of her defense mechanisms provide the battlegrounds, the troops, and the weapons. These are her extreme controllativeness, her attempts to find security and recognition in the outside world, and her rigidity.

She is controllative so that nothing in her environment can hurt her; so long as she determines every facet of it, she can feel secure that nothing unpredictable can spring up and get her. To this end she insists upon having her own way in everything, and no amount of reasoning can sway her from her stands (because they are all based on feeling, not on reasoning or objective reality).

Before the start of this series of interviews, she had become interested in a fundamentalist religious group that was against almost every form of recreation and practiced vegetarianism. This group has

its own school to which the Carol children rode a special bus for a long distance each day. The children were not particularly enthused about any aspect of this religion but were especially disgusted with the no-meat, no-movies restrictions. They had no choice, however, and were made to follow every rule and restriction that the group practiced.

Because the children are still so young, Mrs. Carol can still control them with physical punishment and by withholding permission and money for privileges, which she frequently does. She gives them as little autonomy as she possibly can.

THE DELINQUENT'S ADAPTATION

Maurice cannot fight the strangling controllativeness on his autonomy and growing ego by battling with his mother outright. She would be sure to win each encounter then, for she still has the greater force and power, and he still needs her. What he has developed is a method of passive resistance to circumvent her. The fact that he is also circumventing himself is less important to him than keeping her from winning.

For instance, a teacher invited him to her home for the weekend, and Maurice really wanted to go, but his mother gave him a list of chores that had to be done first (during the week).

There are a number of different facets to this situation. First, the chores were to be done while she was gone, but he (and his sisters) resent the amount of time that she spends away from home. Second, she would not be gone to work but to her classes and volunteer work. Third, Maurice feels unmasculine about doing housework, particularly when she tries to force him to do it by remote control (not being there physically but using a threat or bribe). He can accept it better when she is there because then he can consider it a punishment rather than something he does as a matter of course. Fourth, he felt that if he did the chores he would be capitulating his ego to his mother and losing his own identity. Therefore, he did not tell her that he wouldn't do them (direct and unacceptable opposition), he simply did not do them and took the chance that she would let him go anyway. She did not, but for him going was less important than giving in. And fifth, Mrs. Carol felt that she would win either way. If he did the chores, she would have forced him to comply with her, and if he did not do them, she would have kept him home, also a compliance to her will.

Until Mr. Carol left Maurice had been involved in a great many activities, especially sports, and had spent much of his time with other boys at local parks and recreation areas. Gradually over the past four years, however, he has dropped one activity after another, for his mother has made each instance that he expresses an interest or

desire to do something into a conflict of wills. From a sturdy, active, affectionate child he has become a chubby, apathetic boy, discontented and feeling sorry for himself.

He has little self-confidence and would rather not try something than take a chance on failing; his mother mocks his failures and brings them up long after the incident is over. Her animosity did not surface, or at least did not show itself very intensely, until after the incident at the grandmother's (shortly after the father left) so that what spirit he had developed before that time has now been concentrated on his determination to save himself. Because his mother is so virulently repressive of any open expression of his resentment toward her, he expresses his anger toward other authority figures who are unreasonable or unfair in any way. In each of the instances when he destroyed property or was rude to a teacher, he felt that the owner or custodian of the property, or the teacher, had been unfair to him. Next year, when he is fourteen, he plans to ask the court to let him live with his father. If the court allows this, his delinquent activities will probably stop.

Chapter 10

THE WILSONS

School authorities have labeled Benny incorrigible because of his acting up and his extreme rudeness to his teachers. His other offenses are truancy, property destruction, and stealing various small items from stores and businesses. So far he has not been caught by the police.

Currently the composition of Benny's household includes, besides himself, his father, two of his sisters, and a third sister's illegitimate son. His home, small, older, and scrupulously clean, is on a quiet, tree-lined street in a mixed-income, white, residential neighborhood, which includes both working and professional class families. Mr. Wilson, aged fifty-four, works on the assembly lines at one of the large auto companies.

Benny's oldest sister, Sarah, aged twenty-seven, plays the mother role for the rest of the family. The other sister living at home is Cathy, who is seventeen. Jimmie, two and a half, is the son of another sister, Mary, aged twenty-two, who is living in a commune in California.

Aged fifteen, Benny is small for his age, and homely except when he smiles, when there is something very appealing about him. He is immature both in his appearance and in his actions; he was very interested in the interviews and wanted to be included as an adult in the discussions, yet his reactions were those of a young child. He was easily bored, often flippant at inappropriate times, and was occasionally driven to tears.

Benny's parents separated when he was eight after years of fighting and tension. Mrs. Wilson, thinking that her husband would not leave and would stop her from leaving, waited until he was at work one day and took all four children on a bus to Miami. The children did not know where they were going until after they got on the bus. The little group had very little money and had little to eat after a picnic basket of food ran out. They arrived in Miami tired and hungry, to stay with one of Mrs. Wilson's friends in a small motel room.

A year later, claiming to be too ill to care for them any longer, she sent them all back to their father. At this time she is still living in another state; she has moved to San Diego, California with another friend.

Upon their return home, Sarah, then twenty-one, assumed full responsibility for the mother role and guarded her position jealously from her sisters (then only sixteen and eleven).

There is an atmosphere of tension and suspicion in this household that is almost palpable. As a group, all of the family members are reluctant to discuss any but the most impersonal topics, whereas any one of them alone could be led to divulge quite a bit. This information was augmented by interviews with a grandmother, aunts, and cousins. It also happened that Mrs. Wilson came to Detroit during the course of the interviews so that the observers were able to have some long discussions with her. She, in contrast to the other adults of the family, was quite voluble. Benny and his sister Cathy were also quite talkative but only when interviewed alone or with each other.

The adults in this family have no social contacts except for Mr. Wilson's relatives, whom they visit occasionally. They spend their free time watching television, even in the summer, and do not mix with the neighbors.

There is a pronounced emphasis on "everyone minding his own business" in their conversation, which, considering the paucity of their social lives, led to some speculation among the interviewers as to what business of theirs "everyone" would be interested in. As the weeks went by, it became apparent that the Wilsons, singularly and as a group, are self-centered to an extremely irrational degree; they see every action and comment that touches them in the most tangential way as centered upon themselves. They perceive themselves in the way that

very young children do, as the center of the world, and often do so in the face of the most obvious evidence to the contrary. It is highly possible that these people are paranoic.

Another irrational area of their communication is their interaction with each other, especially that between Sarah and any of the younger children. She not only does not respond to what they have said, but she also often denies that she said what she has been recorded as having said. The observers did not confront her on this, but it happened so frequently that a great deal of tact had to be used in order not to be drawn in as judge in these interchanges. An example of one of their interchanges follows:

B: "Could I have a piece of cake, Sarah?"

S: "We're going to have pot roast for dinner."

B: "You said that I could have a piece of cake as soon as you were done frosting it."

S: "No, I didn't. I said you could have it after dinner." (She had said that he could have it when it was frosted.)

All of the family members contradicted each other on almost every piece of information that was obtained so that putting their history into chronological order was difficult, but even more difficult was sorting out the true state of affairs in this family. It is probable that some of the supposed factual matter is false and that some of the supposed false material that has been omitted is true.

Before attempting to delve into the family history, another peculiarity of this family that was immediately apparent should be mentioned. This is the fact that all three of the offspring have the same facial and bodily distortion but to different degrees. (The other sister also has this distortion, but there were no recent pictures of her so that the degree could not be ascertained.) It is the most pronounced in Sarah, who is tall but very thin. Upon first looking at Sarah one has the impression that she is crippled with a spinal disorder; her body is slightly twisted and bowed; it leans toward her right side. Her face is also quite pinched, but far more on one side than on the other. She looks as if she had been permanently frozen while squinting at the sun, which was to one side of her.

Benny and Cathy are also pinched looking and somewhat twisted, Benny more than Cathy. A casual glance at him leaves one with that impression of crippledness, while a glance at Cathy leaves one with the impression of tension but not of total distortion.

Alexander Lowen in his books Betrayal of the Body[1] and Language of the Body[2] explains these distortions as the result of the body's reaction to extreme psychological pain. When the individual feels a

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[1] Lowen, op. cit.

[2] Alexander Lowen, Language of the Body (New York: Collier Books, 1958).

painful psychological stimulus he holds his breath and stiffens himself against it. The muscles of the body contract much as they do against a painful physical stimulus. If the pain continues or is repeated frequently, the individual (including the young child) attempts to rid himself of it or to lessen it by not feeling it. He does this by holding his breath again and again until it becomes automatic. Certain muscles in his body are contracted so often that they stay contracted and become numb. The individual is not aware of his shallow breathing and contracted muscles (the latter because he cannot feel them). The significant condition in this operation is the lack of oxygen in the area that is cut off. Little feeling can occur where there is a short supply of oxygen in the bloodstream, the muscle cells, and the nerves.

The interviewers observed some form of facial and bodily distortion in every member of every family where there was psychological pain (trauma); the degree of distortion was directly related to the degree of pain that the individual had suffered or was suffering. When the body was not so obviously contorted as was the case with the members of the Wilson family, it was rigid and "jerky" in its movements (the movements were not smoothly sequential as is normal, but abrupt, with small, inappropriate hesitations). The degree of rigidity was also directly proportional to the degree of pain that had been suffered. This is quite logical when one considers how an individual would look

if he tried to pick up a newspaper or a forkful of food when his body was rigid with fear.

The Wilson children are also pale and anemic-looking, although they eat a substantial, balanced diet. Their faces have a sickly, fish-like color.

THE FAMILY HISTORY

Mrs. Wilson's father, a cold, taciturn individual, was an alcoholic and beat her mother, her sister, and her until he left when she was twelve years old. Her mother was severely diabetic and was an invalid for years before she died, some three months after Mrs. Wilson's graduation from high school.

Before her father left, the family had lived in a small house near where the Wilsons live now. After he left they moved to a project on the outskirts of Detroit. Mrs. Wilson had one older sister who married and moved back to the old neighborhood within six months of their move to the project, largely to escape nursing her invalid mother.

Mrs. Wilson's mother was affectionate but weak and unreasonable. She often refused to take her insulin and claimed that she would pray instead, which naturally terrified her daughters. The older

sister had borne a great deal of the weight of the family until her marriage and had been both sister and mother to Mrs. Wilson.

This was the one subject upon which Mrs. Wilson would not elaborate so that the details of her early years are sparse. She was meek and mousy-looking throughout high school and saw herself as inadequate and inferior. She accepted the role of nurse to her mother unquestioningly, for her mother controlled her with a very convincing martyr act. It is only from hindsight that she resents the unnecessary work and worry of her mother's unreasonableness.

After her mother's death she went to live with her sister, where she became reacquainted with Mr. Wilson (who had dated her sister some years previously). Mrs. Wilson found that she had exchanged one form of nursing for another, for she was expected to be continually available to care for her sister's three young children and was not permitted to go out to work. While she accepted this at first, gradually, as she began seeing more of Mr. Wilson, she began to resent the encroachment of her freedom.

About the time that her sister and brother-in-law began to make plans to move to California, and of course, to take her with them, she learned that she was pregnant. This being 1946, both she and her sister were horrified. She married Mr. Wilson the next month and Sarah was born six months later. Her sister remained in Michigan to be with

her for this event but moved to Los Angeles soon after. There was little contact between them for the next twenty years, including only one visit and sporadic cards and letters.

Mr. Wilson was the second of four children; he had one older brother and a younger sister and brother. His father, a Southern minister's son, was a quiet, stern man, an unreasonable disciplinarian given to quoting excerpts from the Bible as the authority for his distorted, rigid views. While all of the children were afraid of their father and hated him, they yet have adopted much of his thinking and rigidity. All of them adhere to the fundamentalist religious views, even those who do not attend church; they believe that the man should be unquestioningly dominant in the home and that a woman exists only to bear children and to please her husband.

Mr. Wilson's mother, a sensible but uneducated woman, was the real source of strength in the home, but this was not apparent to her children because she always supported her husband's decisions and would not take sides against him. The irony in this situation was that, while the husband disparaged women in general and insisted that his wife "keep her place," he was yet actually very dependent upon her, not only emotionally, but also upon her judgment. Much of the effort in their married life was spent in keeping this fact from surfacing so that neither of them would have to face it. She made many of the major

family decisions and always handled crises but managed in such a way that it seemed as if he were doing the thinking.

Mr. Wilson's family did not recognize individuality. All of the sons were treated exactly alike, received the same affection, attention, and discipline, and were expected to behave in the stereotype of the religious, working-class young male. Some rough-housing was tolerated, hours were lenient as they grew older, but no questioning of their parents or the family values was allowed. Deviation was unthinkable, but intelligence being somewhat lacking in these offspring, all four accepted this situation and suppressed their resentment.

Mr. Wilson, like his father, is essentially a rigid, dependent personality masquerading in the guise of masculine authority. He has also found that silence hides ignorance and that platitudes and cliches (instead of Bible quotations) substitute for thinking and decision making.

He was attracted to Mrs. Wilson because she was younger, ignorant, unsure of herself, and very ready to be dominated. He needed someone whom he could feel superior to, someone apparently very inferior herself, for he was still quite dependent upon his family. Although he had served his time in the Army and had been working from

the time of his discharge, he was still living at home and submitting to his parents' decrees.

His family regarded Mrs. Wilson as beneath them because she and her mother had lived on government welfare and because she chattered nervously when she was with them. Their definite, inflexible opinions on every subject continually overset her, for she had few opinions of her own and tended to question everything. When it was discovered that she was pregnant, both of them came under family censure. During all of their married life both of them and all of their children came under constant criticism from his family; he because he was not a skilled trade as his brothers were, because he had had to get married, because he could not make his wife over into their mold, and because of the difference of their children from the other grandchildren; and she because she could never accept her husband's and his family's strictures on the behavior of the proper wife and mother (although she tried to live according to them), and because of the basic instability of her personality, which evidenced itself in flightiness and a high, shrill, nervous laugh.

The couple were never happy with each other. Mr. Wilson tried to mold his wife in the image of his sister (who conformed to the outward rules of the family without the compensation of the mother's intelligence and strength of character) and attempted to lean on her

emotionally. She, seeing him as the strong, reliable father she had been looking for, attempted to lean even more heavily on him and depended on him to make every decision for her. She was willing to pay for this support by devoting every waking moment to housework (which he was fanatic about) and to any other whim that he might have. She was unable to be what he wanted her to be, however, and he was unable to be what she wanted him to be.

Trouble deepened after Sarah's birth, for she was a sickly, whiny baby. During the year after her birth Mr. Wilson began to drink and to storm out of their apartment after every disagreement. Mrs. Wilson was ill off and on for the next few years from after-effects of Sarah's birth and was unable to conceive, but when Sarah was five, Mary was born. Another five years whent by before Cathy's birth. As each successive girl was born, Mr. Wilson was more and more disappointed and blamed his wife. In a desperate attempt to get a son, she became pregnant three times in the next two years, miscarrying twice, but finally producing Benny, another weak, sickly child.

Mr. Wilson's brothers, openly contemptuous of all of the girls born in a row, laughed and joked when the only boy was so puny, which made Mr. Wilson secretly ashamed but openly belligerent.

The family moved into the small house which they now occupy (two blocks from his parents' home) shortly after Sarah's birth.

Mr. Wilson was fond of his children but did not want to be bothered with them. He felt that not only their physical care but also their play time was a woman's province. He was no more interested in them as individuals than his father had been in him.

When Benny was six, the first of three major changes occurred in his life. His mother, who up to that time had been following her husband's regimen for the dutiful wife, which was to devote herself exclusively to him and to the house and children, with no life of her own, very little pleasure, and a great deal of abuse, suddenly rebelled. She began to scream and yell about her complaints (before this she had nagged and had made sneaky little comments but had always backed down when he had lost his temper), and the household's tension erupted violently into the open. She entered into a close friendship (which he had always discouraged) with another woman who encouraged her to change her appearance. Because she was never allowed to have money to spend on herself, she began, unbeknownst to him, to clean house for one of the neighbors while the children were at school. With this money she bought new clothes (chosen by her friend), make up, and hair dye.

At first she was afraid to wear the clothes or to change her hair, but when she got the courage, she took most of her old clothes and gave them to the Salvation Army (on the day that the friend dyed

her hair). Mr. Wilson came home to the accomplished fact and beat her severely. She not only persisted in her new role, however, but she also began an affair. One of her in-laws heard about this and told her husband, which led to another beating. This time she called the police and he was picked up.

The in-laws nagged her almost as much as her husband did and also ridiculed him for his lack of control over her. The home was riled by constant screaming and bickering and some physical abuse until the day that she took the children and left.

The year that they spent in Miami was the second major, and traumatic, change for Benny. The mother got one job after another as a bar maid and moved them all over the city. Most of the time they had little money, and what they did have she mismanaged so badly that they hardly had enough to eat. They never had time to really make friends and had to change schools frequently.

Men were another problem in Benny's life. Mrs. Wilson often allowed men to spend the night with her in the small flats and motel rooms they lived in so that Benny and the girls were even more crowded than usual. She also allowed them to correct and to punish the younger children.

The year holds frightening memories for all of the children. They were often left alone with no money and no food and no way of

contacting their mother, if she was out drinking with friends or was with a man.

At the end of the year she met a man who wanted her to move in with him but without her children, so she told them that she was sick and called their father, who sent bus fare for all of them.

Sarah had been surrogate mother for so long that it seemed natural that she should continue in this role. She had been loaded with responsibility from the time that Mrs. Wilson became pregnant with Cathy, and had had an even greater amount imposed on her when, her intelligence being in the very low normal range, she was taken out of school in the ninth grade. Sarah had been given the responsibility for much of the care of Cathy and Benny from the times of their birth and, during the year away from Michigan, she was almost totally responsible for them. Mrs. Wilson felt very guilty about this at the time, not for Sarah's sake but for the children's. To compensate, she spoiled them when she was with them and left the less pleasant aspects of child-care to Sarah when she could.

A great deal of animosity between the two of them built up over the years, culminating in Mrs. Wilson's breaking up of Sarah's one serious romance. Mrs. Wilson claims that she did it because the man was married, but Sarah has since decided that it was because she needed a free cook and babysitter. Some efforts were made by both Mrs. Wilson

and Sarah to place some of Sarah's responsibilities onto Mary, but this was never successful. Having been relegated to the little sister role and not being allowed to assume any responsibility at all prior to this time, Mary had no sense of responsibility and would walk out and leave the children alone and the work undone regardless of the threat of punishment.

The thir dmajor change, for Benny, was the return to his old home without his mother and the stabilization of the new group. Having Sarah alone in the mother role was an entirely different situation from having her as chief babysitter under his real mother, for Sarah is a very cold person. She is almost totally self-centered and is more damaged psychologically than either of her parents. There is a repulsive feeling about her of unnaturalness, the feeling that the untrained person has with psychotic persons. (A psychologist who wishes to remain anonymous listened to some of the tape recordings of her conversations and concluded that she is probably psychotic, i.e., out of touch with reality.)

Sarah considers herself to be her father's spouse and the younger children's mother, but she does not state this directly. Instead, she talks about herself and about them as if she were the wife and mother; she refers to the children as "my kids" and assumes a wifely attitude toward her father. She has very strong feelings toward

her father, and there is even reason to believe that there might be or might have been incest between them, but there is little warmth toward Benny or Cathy, only possessiveness and controllativeness.

This situation did not spring up overnight but has gradually evolved over the past six years. At first there was some confusion as to Sarah's power over the others, but Mr. Wilson then made it clear that he expected her to fill her mother's shoes. Mary rebelled constantly and never accepted that situation, so Sarah made her life so miserable with nagging and tattling that she left before she turned eighteen. She has been back twice since then, leaving her son the second time.

THE DELINQUENT'S POSITION IN THE FAMILY

Benny feels betrayed by both of his parents. From the time of his return home he has been completely dominated by Sarah, but Mary's rebellion and his own increasing size have given him the courage to resist her more and more openly. Both he and Cathy are afraid of her, but they are vague about their reasons for this. They say that she will hit them but that isn't as frightening as it once was. They also say that she will tell their father on them. This did not seem to be very important until they revealed that she will not tell him the

actual truth, but her own version of it, and that he will believe her over them. She will also make up stories about them if they displease her. The children are both aware of Sarah's irrationality but feel helpless in the face of it. One of the defenses that they have erected to cope with this, as well as with other difficult areas of their lives, has been to lie about almost everything. This has become so much a part of their lives that they lie to everyone now about unimportant as well as important matters. There is some question as to whether or not these children are also bordering on psychosis. They do not have a strong grasp on the difference between what is real and what is unreal.

Benny is very upset about Sarah's relationship with his father and strongly suspects them of incest. Even without that, he thinks that she has "some hold over" his father. Three possibilities suggest themselves, any or all of which could be true. The first is that Mr. Wilson simply feels guilty for using up her youth to raise his children. The second is that he realizes that Sarah is incapable of caring for herself so far as employment or marriage are concerned, and he might be subconsciously afraid that she would be institutionalized if she were pushed into the world. The third is that he might have had sexual relations with her at some time and that she is holding this over his head. Whatever the true reasons are, this relationship is certainly at the crux of the strangeness in this home.

The relatives play a large part in Benny's family life, partly of support and affection, but mainly of criticism and censure. Mr. Wilson and the children are still regarded by the rest of the family as stupid, lacking in determination, and not nearly up to family standards. Mr. Wilson is very dependent upon his relatives and is greatly influenced by their views, but as no one of them really understands the causes for Benny's getting into trouble or the girls' promiscuity (Cathy is already started in that direction), they have no constructive suggestions and are of more hindrance than of help to him. It is difficult to judge whether or not the amount of trouble that the relatives cause is offset by the emotional support and the contact with the outside world that they being to the children, especially Sarah. Even though they are themselves unrealistic in their rigidity and lack of comprehension of people and emotions, they are yet all much more in touch with reality than are the Wilsons.

Benny sees his mother every year or so for a brief time and receives cards and letters from her frequently. Sarah now hates her mother passionately and sees her as the family's chief enemy, but Benny and Cathy still feel some affection for her. Mr. Wilson shares Sarah's views to some extent, but a message came through to the observers after a while that he is still bound to his ex-wife emotionally. It is even possible that he would be interested in a reconciliation if it were not for Sarah.

THE DELINQUENT'S ADAPTATION

Benny cares more about his father and his father's opinion of him than he does about anyone or anything else in the world. He is absolutely panic-stricken if he thinks that his father might be angry at him. Benny's father seems to be fond of him but regards him as a small child and not as a nearly grown young man. This could be because of his marked immaturity, but it was noticeable that any signs of maturity (in judgment or behavior) or autonomy that he exhibited were ignored or interpreted as foolish. The only behavior that merits any attention and acceptance is that appropriate to a small child. Both Mr. Wilson and Sarah are attempting to maintain the situation as much as possible as it has been for the past few years and are thus resisting the children's growing up. Having children to raise is a justification for Sarah and her father to remain together in the relationship they now have.

There is some evidence to support this theory. Both Benny and Cathy, as well as the grandmother (who is a frequent visitor) and an aunt, described a slackening of the controls when Mary first left her baby. Recently she has mentioned in letters that she will be back to get him soon, and the control are back on. These include unreasonably restrictive hours, daily supervision appropriate to eight year olds, restrictions on who their friends can be (though this is easily

circumvented because none can be brought into the house), totally inappropriate limitations on where they can spend their free time (they are told to "go out and play" but only on their own street), and directions and guidance for the most minute details of their personal lives. Neither teenager is allowed to make any decisions for himself on matters of his personal life or on matters pertaining to the home, yet they are both criticized constantly for lack of judgment and immaturity.

This situation is definitely double binding. They are constrained to make a decision by someone of prime importance to them, but either way they decide, whether they follow the overt instructions and make a decision on their own or follow the covert instructions and do not, they are certain to be disparaged and possibly even more substantially punished.

Benny has accommodated to this family's demands that he remain a child so that Sarah and Mr. Wilson can remain parents; he is still their little boy. He has had almost no opportunity to do otherwise. If he had been brighter and had not fallen so far behind in school during the year that he lived with his mother in Miami, and if his family did not exhibit such a lack of respect for teachers, it is possible that a teacher could have compensated for the lack of opportunity to make decisions at home by giving him some to make at school. Instead, he has simply fallen further and further behind and now is not

even at the level of a competent third-grader. To compensate for his feelings of inadequacy and to prevent having to acknowledge them, he makes so much trouble at school that his academic record goes almost unnoticed by his classmates. He shows off and clowns, back-talks in ways that are shocking to his classmates (and therefore gratifying to him), and skips more classes than he attends.

Benny's immaturity and dependency (he is easily led by other boys) are what lead him into trouble, but they are also what have kept him out of a lot of trouble, because the boys who get into the most trouble don't respect him. They think that he acts like a baby and don't want him around. For this reason he associates mostly with much younger boys (eleven and twelve year olds) and which much older boys in the neighborhood who find him friendly and amusing. As he gradually breaks free from Sarah and his attachment to his father, however, it is almost certain that he will commit more serious crimes. This is because he needs to assert himself in some way and because this is the way he has chosen. He has closed the door on a high school education as much as they have closed the door on him, but he is the one who will suffer from it. It is hard to imagine Benny being able to hold down even the easiest job because he has no sense of responsibility at all. He was unwilling to complete even two weeks of a paper route and fell through on every yard care job that was offered to him. Benny will

work for only two reasons: either because he is afraid of punishment or because someone whom he likes and whose approval he wants is working with him. Any task requiring self-discipline is "stupid" to him, and he will quit as soon as the initial impetus has worn off.

Because he lives in an atmosphere of irrationality and has learned or been forced to be irrational himself, reasoning with him is fruitless. He is totally bound up in the family dynamics and only a change within those dynamics, or a breaking away from them in an attachment to someone else (where he would be bound to get into a similar situation), will produce a change in him. At this point he is resisting the role cut out for him but, in larger measure, he is accepting it. He will go on being "Benny, that little devil" for the foreseeable future.

Chapter 11

THE PRAGUES

Ronnie's delinquent behavior generally revolves around theft of some sort, usually shoplifting, purse snatching, breaking and entering, and stealing of auto parts, but he and a group of his friends have also stolen cars. He has had seventeen contacts with the police, was placed in detention (the Youth Home) once, and is currently on probation for the second time.

Ronnie's parents are divorced and his father lives in another state. Ronnie lives with his mother, his sisters: Sharma, aged nineteen, and Cynthia, aged seventeen, and his younger brother, Richard, aged fourteen. Many other relatives are living in the vicinity and visit frequently.

The family has been living on ADE for the past eight years, although the mother is now considering taking training for some type of job. She cannot decide what she would be interested in doing, however, and so far has made only tentative moves in this direction.

They live in an old house in an all-black, lower-income section of Detroit. The house looks closed up and empty from the outside; the

porch is sagging, paint is peeling off everywhere, and the curtains are always closed. Inside, the living room has the same eerie, unpeopled look. The pieces of furniture look at odds with each other and unbalanced, although most of it is fairly new. It is always startling to enter that living room; it doesn't seem to belong to anyone, and no one seems to belong in it. The rest of the house is fairly ordinary but has a formality in its furnishings and effect that seemed out of keeping with the number of people living in such a small space.

In the beginning of this series of interviews the family was conspicuously defensive and careful in their speech and behavior. Although they were polite, they were guarded. It was weeks before any spontaneous interactions were observed or any but the most factual, impersonal material divulged.

Ronnie is fifteen, tall, slim, and sullen with strangers. At first he spoke very little and his answers to questions were evasive. As he became more accustomed to the interviewers and became attached to one of the officers, however, he became quite voluble. His family claims that he talks incessantly when they are alone, but this, of course, was never observed. With persons he trusts Ronnie is alert and sensitive, with a tentative reaching out and testing. Although he is always somewhat tense, in this mood his movements are athletically graceful. When he is suddenly faced with an unfamiliar situation,

however, the change in his features and bearing is startling; he becomes dull, apathetic, morose, and hostile.

Mrs. Prague is a tall woman, languid but not bad-looking, although her face is set with discontent and tension. She was very reluctant to discuss any aspect of her life or of the children's lives, even Ronnie's, except for Ronnie's delinquency. This she blamed on his friends and on the fact that he did not like school. When she was asked what alternatives Ronnie had, she thought that he really did not have any and that it was inevitable that he would commit more and more crimes. Asked if she was surprised the first time that he was caught stealing, she said, "No, not really."

The first few sessions with this family were decidedly frustrating. Something was obviously wrong, but nobody was giving anything away. Even a Sentence Completion Test, administered in desperation, revealed only fragments of the problem but not the outlines. Although Mrs. Prague tried to appear unconcerned and even indifferent to the children in many respects, they seemed more dependent upon her than is typical for their ages. All four spent much of their time at home physically near her. Also, although she complained about them as being her only problem, she had no other interests and rarely left the house.

A major obstacle was that Mrs. Prague had blocked out all memory of her childhood until the age of twelve. That was a fairly

definite sign that she had suffered some form of trauma but there was little clue to the specifics of it. She allowed herself to express no strong negative feeling toward anyone except her ex-husband or about any situation from her past.

The answers to what she was blocking out came from a sister, Anna, who was three years older than she and who had been with her through all of that period in her life. Anna provided enough insight into her problems to enable the interviewers to define directions and incongruencies to explore. All of the intricate unhealthy patterns of relationships were not discovered in this family (nor in any of the others), but enough was learned to provide some understanding of the situation that Ronnie has to adapt himself to.

THE FAMILY HISTORY

Mrs. Prague was the eighth of nine children born to a poor Mississippi share cropper and his wife. When she was two years old, her mother died giving birth to another baby, who lived. She, Anna, another sister, and the baby were sent to live with an aunt who lived on the other side of the state. The aunt was a meek, submissive person, absolutely dominated by her husband, a crude, brutal man. This man took a strong dislike to Mrs. Prague and punished her

frequently and severely. The aunt was afraid to protest and the sisters were too small to help her.

When Mrs. Prague was three, a little more than a year after they had been sent there, the uncle burned her hand purposely as a punishment. It was a bad burn and slow to heal. One day while it was still raw and open, he beat the hand right on the burn as another punishment. The little girl fainted from the agony. Her sisters were so horrified that the oldest wrote to their father telling him the whole story. Their father, equally horrified, came to get them as soon as he got the letter.

At home, a sixteen year old sister (the oldest girl) had undertaken the mother role, and Mrs. Prague became very attached to her. When she was nine, the sister left, saying that she had carried the responsibility for enough years and that it was someone else's turn. Mrs. Prague was grief-stricken and barely spoke for weeks afterward. The next oldest girl was only fifteen, but she did her best to run the house for the next few years until she, too, left.

The father was an undemonstrative, religious man. He seldom spoke to the children except to tell them what to do or to break up a fight, but he came home every night and spent all of the time and money that he had on his family.

Poverty was a daily, grinding part of their lives, though. They never had quite enough to eat and handed clothes down until they were literally in shreds. As some of the older children grew up and moved to the large cities, they began sending money home, so Mrs. Prague had decent clothes to wear when she went to high school and enough to eat, but this money was not regular, nor was it enough to provide real security.

When she was sixteen Mrs. Prague quit high school and moved to St. Louis, Missouri, where she stayed with a sister and got a job. She met Mr. Prague the following year. She was not strongly attracted to him, but he was very much attracted to her and eventually they began dating steadily. She got pregnant but refused to marry him at first; her sisters talked her into it.

Mr. Prague's family had always lived in St. Louis where his father worked for the Civil Service. His homelife had not been one of hardship and poverty like his wife's, but it has been one of turmoil and animosity. His mother was so attrached to her own mother that she was continually torn between her loyalty to her and her loyalty to her husband. This conflict went on for eight years, with neither side winning for long, when his little sister developed polio and was permanently crippled. The grandmother blamed the father for taking the

children to a carnival (against her advice) when the little girl had just recovered from the chicken pox and was run down.

For the rest of his life the father bore this burden of guilt and blamed himself as much as the grandmother and the mother did. The grandmother then had control of the home, which was to be centered around the disabled daughter. The father and son were peripheral members of the household, the father escaping as much as possible to a corner bar (which gave them added fuel against him) and the son manipulated by the grandmother to take second place with his weak mother. Until the accident he had been his mother's favorite, but the grandmother had favored the sister and had not cared for him.

The mother had had no sisters or brothers, but the father had a large family, many of whom lived in the same city. Mr. Prague was very attached to an aunt and uncle who lived nearby, and he moved in with them when he was sixteen. He had been allowed to drop out of school to get a job, but it soon became apparent that his grandmother was going to keep most of his wages, so he left. His father, standing up against the grandmother for once, would not let them make him return.

When he met Mrs. Prague, he was working two jobs, driving a bus in the daytime and bartending in the evenings on the weekends. He had plenty of money and showered her with gifts; he also played the big spender when they were with friends, which she found very impressive.

After they were married he still showered her with gifts but resented it if she asked for money for food or bills. When she was no longer able to work, money became a serious problem. She had to flatter and make up to him to get any, because when she simply asked for it, he often refused to give her any or didn't give her enough. She grew to hate him as she felt more and more that she had to pay for financial security with sexual favors, which seemed so often to result in another baby.

Fortunately, she lived near enough to two of her sisters that she could get help with the children when they were babies; her husband would not help at all, although he was fond of them and played with them as they grew older.

When Richard, her youngest child, was two, her favorite sister, Anna, moved to Detroit where two of her older sisters (including the one who had played the mother role for her when she was small) had already relocated. Two years later Mrs. Prague left her husband and brought the girls to Detroit, where she moved in with Anna. Another sister cared for the two boys in St. Louis. Six months later she went back to St. Louis and brought the boys back to Anna's also. They all stayed with Anna for a few months and then moved into "a dirty, ratty old place" nearby. They lived there for two years and then moved into the house they live in now.

THE DELINQUENT'S POSITION IN THE FAMILY

Mrs. Prague blocked out her memories of her childhood because they were so painful, but they still exist in her subconscious and have affected her whole life. She is still terrified and views everyone, but especially strangers, with deep distrust. She was abandoned by both of the mothers in her life, her real mother by her death and her sister by her leaving. In a state of bewilderment and grief at the loss of her mother, she was sent to a woman who would not protect her from the most extreme of physical cruelty.

Even without the brutality of her uncle and the ultimate shock to her physical and emotional system of the severe pain of the burning and beating of her hand, she would have had difficulty in coping with the lacks and strains in her life. But that, coming right after the loss of her mother and at such an early age, created a deep, unlabeled terror in her which any uncertainty and insecurity in her life taps into. Because the cause of the terror has been repressed and forgotten, the terror itself still exists in all of the potent horror that the original experiences (abandonment, followed by severe, continual, and unpredictable pain) evoked, plus the fact that it now has the added dimension of being unidentified for what it really is.

The abandonments of her early life created a need in her for a relationship in which she cannot be abandoned, but they also, in

conjunction with the brutality she suffered, caused her to erect defense mechanisms so that she will never again consciously feel hurt to the degree that she did then; she is so tremendously vulnerable that she cnanot let herself feel her vulnerability. She also has a need for mothering that can never be filled, a void so great that no amount of reassurance and emotional support would ever be enough, but the very lack that caused her to have the need is also the reason that she cannot give love herself. Loving makes you vulnerable. Also, you have to learn how to love; even monkeys who have not received love in infancy are unable to love in adulthood.

Her father was not able to provide the mothering that she needed; he was too inhibited to begin with and was also unable to differentiate among his children. He did not recognize them as nine separate persons with nine separate personalities, but saw them as big or little, boy or girl; therefore, she could not feel that he loved her, the person who was herself, but only that he loved "his child," a somebody in a group of somebodies.

The continual uncertainty and actual hunger of poverty during her early years added to the strains on a system already coping with tremendous difficulties, but the desertion (to her) of her sister was devastating. The fact that there was another sister to take over, that the sisters and brothers were supportive of each other emotionally, and

that each was willing to share the small quantity of food and the large amount of work gave her the emotional stability that she does possess.[1]

There was an underlying complementarity in the Prague's marriage. She needed a man who would not control her (he was probably afraid of women), but who would provide her with financial security, while he needed a woman who would be in control. But she could not marry someone who would really be able to love her because that would mean she would be obligated to love also, something she is not able to do, especially in the case of a man, for she both hates and fears men.[2]

Mrs. Prague has created, and continues to foster, the dependency in her children so that she can be secure that they will never abandon her (in so far as it is subconsciously purposeful). It is likely that some or all of them will retain these bonds with their mother even after they reach adulthood, because her hold on them is not so openly restrictive as to promote rebellion but is quite strong.

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[1]Berne, op. cit.; Brandon, op. cit.; Horney, The Neurotic Personality of Our Time, op. cit.; Horney, Our Inner Conflicts, op. cit.; James and Jongeward, op. cit., pp. 127-159, 223-247, 263-271; Lowen, Betrayal of the Body, op. cit.; Alexander Lowen, Depression and the Body (Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, Inc., 1973); Maslow, op. cit., pp. 25-40; Newcomb, op. cit., pp. 107-145, 298-407; Rogers, op. cit., pp. 107-124; Rosen, Fox, and Gregory, op. cit.

[2]Elsbeth Herzstein Couch, Joint and Family Interviews (New York: Family Service Association of America, 1969), pp. 18-35, 127-151; L. S. Kubie, "Psychoanalysis and Marriage: Practical and Theoretical Issues," in Neurotic Interaction in Marriage, ed. V. W. Eisenstein (New York: Basic Books, 1956).

Part of what seems to happen is that she has led them to feel that they must have her love and support in order to survive, but they never quite get it. It is almost there but elusive. Also, because her self-esteem is so low, she is unable to give them any self-esteem.

Ronnie is in a particularly difficult position. Not only is he overly dependent on his mother, but he is also the oldest boy. Being the third of four children, he is younger than both his sisters and not very much older than his brother, Richard, so that his natural inclination to assume a dominant male role is continually frustrated. His mother and sisters laugh about these efforts, while Richard, of course, is not about to be dominated by a brother hardly older or bigger than he is. The only concession that Mrs. Prague makes to Ronnie's maleness is that she expects him to act up in school and to get into trouble of one sort or another outside of the home. In the home he is undifferentiated from the other children (just as she was undifferentiated as a youngster) except that she is more distant to both of the boys than she is to the girls. Two significant answers on Ronnie's Sentence Completion Test were:

Women are: "Everything."

Men are: "Nothing."

Mrs. Prague has transferred her feelings about her father, her uncle, and her husband to Ronnie, and at different times treats him as

if he were one of those three. She has displaced the real Ronnie in her subconscious with her images of other important men in her life and acts toward him as if he were one of them. A child in a situation like this has no alternative but to react as he is expected to react, which in turn reinforces the parent's internal image and gives him grounds to treat the child in that manner. When the child resists or does not react in the expected way, the undesired behavior is ignored and more pressure is applied to produce that behavior. Ronnie is expected to be unreliable and to cause problems for his mother. The fact that he actually is very concerned about her and would like to help her she refuses to recognize. She will not accept his help and turns to her brothers to do things in the house that he could do for her.

Mrs. Prague has no respect for Ronnie and she does not encourage the others to have respect for him. When he talks to them (his mother and his siblings), they often do not answer and claim not to even listen, which causes him to talk even more, raising his voice until they are all forced to listen. The mother disparages this continual talking but cannot see that he would not feel compelled to talk so much if only she would listen and recognize him.

THE DELINQUENT'S ADAPTATION

Ronnie is a Mr. Nobody in his family. His continual talking and occasional bouts of hostility are simply efforts to be recognized. His delinquency serves two purposes. It enables him to feel like a male and a definite person outside of the home and it fulfills his mother's subconscious needs and expectations inside the home.

By accommodating her needs in this way he establishes at least some contact with her; if he cannot be recognized as Ronnie, at least he can be recognized as the erring male. He receives some attention in this way but does not essentially disturb the family balance, which allows for this behavior.

His basic adaptation is to be dependent upon her. Any major deviation from this dependence is so threatening to her that it provokes a threat of the ultimate punishment: total abandonment. There are two forms of this threat for Tonnie. The first was the actual physical threat of being sent to the father or of being sent to a detention home. These threats are difficult for the outsider to connect with the actual independent act or speech because they do not directly follow it nor are they mentioned in connection with it. The threats are uttered in conjunction with some act of misbehavior which was recently committed or which might possibly be committed in the future.

A less obvious but no less threatening means of signaling the imminence of abandonment is a subtle but complete rejection, a closing out of the child from the source of all of the security he knows. This Mrs. Prague does with a tightening of her face, a total increase in tension, and a slight turning away from the child. Once this maneuver was recognized, it was observed that each of the children reacted to it in much the same manner: they immediately dropped the subject and became very placating to their mother until she looked them full in the face again.

Having a large number of aunts, uncles, and cousins whom he interacts with quite often and who offer emotional support and recognition, Ronnie is not as totally affected by the unhealthy relationship with his mother as he would be if his family were alone in the city. All of the Pragues associate almost exclusively with their relatives, so there are no close friends who would lessen the effects on him of a closed system. It is almost certain that these relatives will provide the impetus for Ronnie to leave home at some future time and establish a relationship with a girl.

Ronnie is contemptuous toward authority and fears, but does not respect, authority figures. In the outside world he is arrogant, defiant, destructive, and sometimes vicious, but at the same time he feels that everybody thinks he is crazy. He is intelligent enough

that when he goes to school regularly he can get by without studying, but his attendance is so poor that his marks are erratic.

Vain and careful about his appearance, he dresses like a "cool dude" and runs around with a group of "cool dudes," mostly his own cousins, who all get into trouble frequently, each trying to outdo the other in toughness and daring. In spite of this appearance of toughness, Ronnie is a follower, not a confronter. He tries to be like his friends when he is with them, but at home he is different. There his basic lack of self-esteem asserts itself in dependency and passive resistance, especially at those times when his mother thwarts his efforts to assume responsibility and to develop his autonomy.

Ronnie's only successful accomplishments to date are criminal in nature. He has two opposing ambitions: to please his mother and to be a "cool dude." His problem is that he cannot please his mother and that the "cooler" he becomes the more trouble he gets into with the police.

Chapter 12

THE TINOS

Alex has been removed from two junior high schools for bad behavior and for refusal to follow school rules. He has also stolen various small items like bike parts and school supplies and has been stopped for trespassing and loitering and has also done some experimenting with drugs.

The family is of Greek descent on both sides. The parents are divorced and the father lives in another state; the mother and all five children live in the home. They live in a small, well-kept house in an integrated neighborhood in the eastern section of Detroit. Mrs. Tinos had been on ADC until shortly before the study began but had then acquired a clerical position in an office. Hampered by lack of a car and a driver's license, she was forced to take two buses in order to reach her place of employment, a time-consuming ordeal.

Almost fourteen, Alex is the third son. The other children are Gene, aged seventeen, Gregory, aged fifteen, Susan, aged twelve, and Jerry, aged eight.

Alex is a good-looking, healthy teenager. He was friendly and cooperative, eager but not anxious to talk to us. All of the children except Jerry, who is abnormally shy, were at ease and friendly toward all three interviewers.

Mrs. Tinos is a good-natured, sensible woman, worried about bringing her children up alone in a "rough neighborhood," but accepting it without self-pity or rancour. She disliked being on welfare and tried through various social and employment agencies to find a job near her home when Jerry began school. Most of the positions for which she qualified, however, had been too far away or had not been on the bus lines.

The only incongruency that appeared in this family was that it was so normal and healthy; there did not seem to be any reason for Alex to be misbehaving in school to such an extreme. After weeks of investigating them, the same conclusion was reached: they were normal and healthy. The reason for Alex's misbehavior lay partly in the family constellation, however, as well as in various circumstances of his social environment.

THE FAMILY HISTORY

Mrs. Tinos was the elder of two sisters born to first-generation immigrants from Greece. Her parents were affectionate

toward each other and toward their daughters. Although the Greek tradition of absolute male dominance was observed, the family members were tolerant and considerate toward each other.

Mrs. Tinos was particularly attached to her father, who treated her in some respects as if she had been a son. He often took her with him to help and to keep him company in the grocery store in which he worked. They also spent a lot of their free time together, and, as she grew older, he took her to various Greek social functions.

Because her parents married late in life, they are now quite old, but her father still works in the same place, and they have no desire to combine households.

Quite proficient in typing and shorthand after her graduation from high school, she worked for some years (still living with her parents) before she married. She met her husband, also a second-generation Greek, at a social club through mutual friends. Until then she had had only brief, casual emotional relationships with men, but she fell passionately in love with Mr. Tinos, a big, good-natured man who (from hindsight) was much like her father in superficial respects. They married three months after they met and moved into a small apartment near her parents' home. She continued in her job until Gene was born, two years later.

Mr. Tinos was the second oldest of four children, three boys and a girl. His parents had immigrated to America and had come to Detroit shortly after the birth of their first child, a son. Some of their relatives and neighbors from Greece had already come to this area so that they did not feel totally alone, but the first few years were a desperate struggle against poverty. The mother was constrained to quit working (in a small shop) each time another child was born until she was through nursing and able to leave it. The couple worked opposite shifts because they were unable to repay the neighbors for child-care in either money or similar favors.

The financial situation began to improve by the time that Mr. Tinos was eight years old, for his father then got a better-paying position in a factory, and his mother was soon able to quit work altogether. The easing of the financial burden eased tension and anxiety in both parents so that life was smooth for the next four years, when his father died suddenly in an accident in the factory. Mr. Tinos was twelve years old.

His mother went out to work again but was not able to earn enough money to keep the family together. After two years of continual poverty, she sent her eldest son to live with a friend nearby, to help in his store while he learned the trade of shopkeeping himself.

Mr. Tinos she sent to her brother in Chicago, while the younger children she took with her and moved into a friend's house.

This was a devastating blow to young Mr. Tinos, for not only did he feel horribly lonely, and abandoned and rejected, but also he disliked his uncle (a bachelor) at first. He lived there for four years, however, and then returned to Detroit to live with his mother, who remarried at that time. Finding after a time that he could not get along with his stepfather, he joined the Navy.

After his discharge he returned to Detroit and moved into an apartment with a friend. At this time he began working for a small sign painting company but over the years changed jobs frequently. When he met Mrs. Tinos, he was a truck driver.

The marriage had few apparent problems in the early years; the young couple enjoyed each other and continued to have an active social life. Even after Gene's birth and Mrs. Tinos' quitting her job, the situation between them remained much the same. When Susan followed Gregory and Alex in quick succession, however, the family began to feel the financial and emotional burden. Mr. Tinos felt increasingly incapable of handling the responsibility and began drinking heavily, leaving Mrs. Tinos alone more and more frequently and addint even more of a strain to their budget. They had moved from a small flat to a large one to a small house by this time, each move further away from the old neighborhood and the emotional support of friends and relatives.

Between drinking bouts Mr. Tinos remained as warm and loving as he had always been, both to Mrs. Tinos and to the children, but he refused to discuss his problems or in any way to face unpleasant issues. Mrs. Tinos spent her life dodging creditors and scraping and pinching so that they would have enough to eat and would not lose their home.

The situation worsened year by year. Mr. Tinos lost his job, got another one, and lost that, too. He drank more and more heavily and worked less and less. Mrs. Tinos began to take money from his pockets before he had a chance to spend it on liquor. At first he did not realize this, but one night he caught her at it and hit her. Jerry was about two years old at this time.

Over the next few years he became increasingly violent, breaking furniture and sometimes hitting or pushing her when he was drunk. When he was sober he was always sorry, but those times became more and more rare. When Mrs. Tinos could bear no more, she told him not to come home again and locked the doors on him. He got drunk that night and broke the front door down, humiliating them so badly that the children would not play outside for days afterwards.

As usual he was contrite the next day but told her that neither he nor she was leaving. She had made up her mind to be rid of him, however, and knew that, though he promised to get a job and straighten out, it wouldn't last. Which it didn't.

He came home a week later so drunk that he collapsed on the couch in a stupor. She found some money in his pocket and then and there conceived and executed a plan for getting rid of him. She called a taxi, left the younger children with a neighbor, and with the driver's and the boys' help, hauled her husband into the back seat and took him to the bus station. There she bought a ticket on the next bus leaving the depot, which happened to be to Seattle, Washington, and put him on it. She kept the few dollars left over to get herself and the boys home.

He woke up the next day on his way to a strange city with no money in his pocket, a splitting headache, and nothing to do but think for two whole days. When he got to Seattle someone directed him to the Salvation Army where he was able to eat and sleep until he could get a job. The experience shocked him so that he was able to quit drinking (to excess) and get and hold a job. It is probably that it was actually the removal of the load of responsibility that had overwhelmed him in the first place, in such a way that he could blame it on Mrs. Tinos instead of on himself (so that he didn't have to bear the burden of guilt for desertion), that enabled him to quit drinking. Neither party wanted to continue the marriage, so Mrs. Tinos arranged a divorce through Legal Aid and put herself and the children on ADC.

All of their lives have been smoother and easier since then. Though money is scarce it is at least regular, and Mrs. Tinos is a good manager. Gene, who was fourteen at the time, got a morning paper route and did so well at it that the manager asked Gregory to take one the following year, and later, Alex. All three of them still have their routes and have increased the size of them so that they are able to contribute money to the household and still have spending money.

THE DELINQUENT'S POSITION IN THE FAMILY

Being the third son in a close sequence of three sons and without the comepnsation of being the youngest child in the family is the crux of Alex's family problem. A brief description of each of them will make his particular dilemma a little clearer, but this position is always difficult unless the other boys are either much older or are so passive and bland, while the third son (or daughter) is so outstanding in some way, that he simply outshadows them. This is not the case in Alex's family. None of the boys is passive or bland so there is a great deal of competition among them.

Gene is a tall, thin boy, not as strong physically or in personality as either of the other two, but he occupies the position of oldest, which gives him an inherent advantage over them. Gene tends

to be a worrier and to fuss about doing things right or peoperly. He sees himself as taking over for his father, which he might have been able to do if he had had more self-assurance or if he had been a few years older than Gregory. As it is, the more that he insists that they should listen to him because he is the oldest the more resentful and scoffing they become.

Gene is not popular with the boys at school; he is what the others term "out of it" or "square." He is a satisfaction to his mother, however, and she wishes that the other two were more like him. This is a source of jealousy and friction among them, for, while they all want their mother's approval, neither of the others wants to be "square" like Gene. The more that Mrs. Tinos praises Gene (whom she does not actually favor over the others) the more the other two join in league against him. He is hurt and resentful that Alex chooses to follow and admire Gregory over himself. He also feels left out and makes matters worse by trying to push his way into their relationship and their group of friends rather than making friends of his own. Occasionally he learns of some secret of theirs which he tells his mother, and this also aggravates the situation.

Gregory was the most impressive member of the family but would be impressive in any group of young people. He is very mature for his age and very perceptive. He has a deep, clear understanding of himself

and of his family, of each of the personalities and their problems and relationships.

He is also a very sensitive person, which may be why he is so perceptive. He grasps the nuances of a situation without lengthy explanation and is able to fit them into perspective to broaden his understanding of the whole. While he is quieter than the other boys, it is noticeable that all of the members of his family, including his mother, listen to him.

Gregory is a little thin for his age and of about average height. Until two years ago he considered himself to be small and weak and either ran from a fight or put up a slight resistance until he could get away. Two years ago he suddenly decided that he was no smaller than anyone else, waded into his next fight like a mother bear, and developed a reputation for himself as a tough fighter. He still doesn't look for fights but gets a certain satisfaction out of those that are inevitable and out of his reputation.

This new dimension greatly increased his brothers' and sister's respect for him, especially Alex, for toughness is almost a necessity in their neighborhood. In Gregory the toughness is not a facade as it is for most boys; it is not a hard exterior, a shell of bravado covering quivering jelly but is representative of real strength of character. Gregory is not afraid of being gentle, of helping his mother or his

sister, of taking care of his little brother, or of showing his concern and affection for all of them.

Gregory's basic difference with his mother at this point in his life centers around his ambition to be a rock star (the pinnacle of ambition for his age and social group). Typical of him, he has saved his money and bought a guitar to practice on and is looking into other ways to further his plans. Unfortunately, his mother is not able to see that this idea is not likely to last very long; instead of admiring his persistance and determination, she focuses on the issue of the length of his hair (not really extreme) and sees it as a sign of his imminent deterioration.

For an otherwise very sensible person, Mrs. Tinos is surprisingly dense when it comes to the subject of the importance to a child of his friends' respect and admiration. She cannot see that Gregory is actually handling his situation far better than Gene is. Gregory follows the codes and mores of his sex and age group but feels free to go his own way even if it should conflict with their way; he is liked and respected by his contemporaries. Gene bucks the system at every turn so gets none of the good and a lot of the bad out of it.

Alex has a more out-going type of personality and is built on bigger lines than either of his brothers. He looks like a good potential ball-player, but during the time of the interviews he was tested

at school and found to have an IQ of 172. At this point that tremendous IQ is being wasted; Alex is scornful of every facet of school: the personnel, the material, and the rules. The most important thing in his life right now is proving his masculinity and until he gets that settled to his own satisfaction, he will not make any great effort in any other direction.

For him this means equaling or topping Gregory as a tough guy or proving that he is "with it" and winning Gregory's admiration. This is complicated by the fact that Gregory is not only two years older than he is but is also mature for his age, while Alex is average or a little immature for his age. He tends to be self-centered and vain and tends not to see the broader perspective or long-range consequences of his behavior. He wants what he wants right now and cannot be bothered with adult values, although he would certainly like to be considered an adult.

While both of his brothers are certainly competitive with him, they also accept him pretty much as he is. There is a normal amount of complaining and friction among all of the children, but there is no significant pattern detrimental to Alex.

Mrs. Tinos seems to love all three of her older boys equally. It is possible that she favors Susan or Jerry, but if so, it was not obvious. Susan is a quiet young girl, probably more so than she would

be if she did not have three older brothers. She indicated that she always lost if she fought with them on their own terms, which until recently has meant physically, so she tries to get her mother to settle serious differences and otherwise attempts to avoid open conflicts with them. There is some feeling of repression with her, but she is intelligent, fits in well with her social group, and is fairly content with her life, so she seems basically emotionally healthy.

All four of the older children are very responsible and cooperative about supporting their mother emotionally and about holding up their end of the work. Even Alex, who sloughs off at school, is good about work at home and on his paper route.

The children talk to their father on the telephone off and on (he is still in Seattle) and all except Gene miss him but are glad that he is gone. Gene feels betrayed by his father for the way he changed and for the way he treated him and his mother. The memory seems fresher for him. Jerry doesn't remember him at all.

This is a close-knit, supportive family; the traumatic experiences of the last few years with their father and then his absence have had less effect upon them than it might have had if it were not for this circumstance, which is probably due to the mother's self-respect and strength of character and stability.

THE DELINQUENT'S ADAPTATION

Alex has adapted to his role as the third son by trying to out-tough the tough guys. Fortunately, his biggest hero, his brother Gregory, is a tough buy with some sense and he doesn't admire jail-birds, punks, or junkies. If he did, it is likely that Alex would turn into one or the other or all three. But Gregory admires tough guys who are also rock stars, so Alex wants to be a tough rock star.

In the family Alex is often the one who starts the fights, but if he gets out of hand, Gregory is able to stop him. Gene is almost, but not quite, afraid of him. It could happen that in a few more years Alex will be definitely stronger than Gene, but Bene might have moved out of the home by that time, as he is already seventeen. If not, Alex will almost certainly turn the tables on Gene for all of the years that he was littlest brother and will bully him unmercifully.

So far Alex has kept his stealing and other misbehavior to minor offenses. His stealing, experimenting with drugs, and acting up in school are mainly to impress the other boys, and the girls, with how "cool" he is. He has not gone very far with these things because Gregory doesn't, but if he does not find another direction before Gregory leaves home (like sports or scholarship), it is likely that he will get into much deeper trouble. With his personality and brains

he is a natural leader and could easily find a group of boys to follow him into whatever he planned.

Though it is possible that his disappointment in his father is connected with his problems (if he associates school authorities and/or all authorities with his image of the father as weakling, betrayer, and deserter, he could be getting his revenge on his father through them or could simply be venting his rage), Alex does not seem to feel that strongly about his father, and there were no signs of deep-rooted rage in him.

The consensus of this group was that Alex simply needs some way to prove himself as a male. If he were living in suburbia, he would probably choose sports or good marks or a fast car. He would want to be a "big wheel" at school, but it is unlikely that he would join the particular kind of crowd that he is in now. Circumstances play a larger part in the specific behavior that he exhibits than does his family, although being the third son, to an extrovert like Alex, is certainly a factor in his fierce competitiveness. He might not try so hard in the social world if he were a star in his family world, but he has to share the limelight there with from one to four others in any direction in which he makes an effort.

Chapter 13

THE PORTERS

Michael's delinquent behavior is more serious than that of any of the other cases, although we did not know how serious it was when we first contacted the family. Michael had been reported to the police for cruelty to animals after he beat a little dog with a heavy stick while the dog was tied to a post. Later in our interviews with his family and the neighbors, we learned that he had also set two fires and had attacked a little girl and had attempted to rape her. Her older brother caught him and beat him so badly that he was sent to the hospital for a month. The child's family felt that this was enough punishment and did not report the incident. It is also possible that they were afraid for their own son if the matter should come to official attention.

The family, three children and both parents, lives in a white, working-class neighborhood in Detroit where the father is assistant manager in a large dry cleaners. The house is in a poor state of repair and is so carelessly kept as to be unhealthy: food sits uncovered on the stove for long periods of time and is then reheated and eaten;

dirty dishes sit in dishwater for two and three days running and are then rinsed and used; washclothes are used to mop the bathroom floor and are then used on the children's faces, etc.

The parents are in their early forties. Mr. Porter is a heavy, blonde, masculine man with exaggerated sideburns and a mustache. Mrs. Porter is somewhat blousy-looking but extremely thin; her hair is straggly and her clothes ill-fitting. Michael is the eldest child still at home, followed by Janet, aged thirteen, and Danny, aged eight. An older sister, Beth Anne, aged eighteen, is married and leaves in a nearby suburb.

Michael is fifteen and very tall for his age. Like his mother he is very thin, though he bears the stamp of his father's looks. He is so withdrawn that it is easy to forget that he is in the room, though when attention is focused on him he twists and squirms uneasily, as if to escape even the force of your eyes. At his most relaxed his body was stooped and hunched from psychological pain and his movements were awkward and inept. He was very reluctant to enter into any discussions or to answer questions or even to remain in the room with an observer, but toward the end of the interview period he began to make tentative bids of friendship toward one of the interviewers.

Mrs. Porter, on the other hand, was so childishly unreserved and open that it was difficult to keep track of all of the persons in

her conversation at first, for she referred to all of her relatives and acquaintances by their first names with no qualifying word or phrase attached.

Mrs. Porter has no secrets. There is nothing about anyone, including herself, that she will not tell to almost anyone who will listen. She needs to have people around her, and the continual commotion in her home attests to this fact. She also tends to feel that anyone who is in any way friendly to her is a bosom-buddy and treats all of her friends and acquaintances as if they had been intimate friends for years. She felt quite free, therefore, to walk off in the middle of an interview (for instance to collect the mail and then to remain chatting to the mailman) while the interviewer talked to whichever of her relatives or friends who happened to be handy. Furthermore, though she herself did not hesitate to tear her friends up in the interest of truth, it did not seem to occur to her that any of them might have some negative things to say about her and her family. Because of this fortunate blind spot, the interviewers were able to learn a great deal about this family and its inner workings that would have been difficult to learn from conversations with the members of the nuclear family alone.

Mr. Porter was sometimes friendly and sometimes abrupt and rude. There were occasions when he barely nodded his head at the

interviewer present, did not greet his wife or children at all, and walked past everyone present into another room where he sat alone watching television or reading. On other occasions (alone and in a group with his wife and/or one of the children) he was friendly and talkative in a superficial manner; that is, he was friendly but reluctant to discuss personal or emotional matters. He preferred to dismiss them with one or two brief statements and to change the subject.

The children were whiny and badly behaved when their parents were present but friendly and pleasant when alone with the observers. The two younger children were eager for attention and quite willing to talk about themselves. Michael, while not rude, was uncomfortable and, as mentioned before, reluctant to discuss anything. Beth Anne was alternately superficial and breezily optimistic and tearful and bitter but was always ready to talk to any of the interviewers alone or to take a position in any sub-group of the family.

THE FAMILY HISTORY

Mr. Porter was the eldest of ten children of two parents who, though they stayed married, had little in common besides the children. The father, a factory worker, vied continually with his wife for dominance in their relationship in a determined but neither bitter nor hostile contest.

Although rigid and narrow in their attitudes, the parents were in many ways surprisingly over-indulgent. They allowed their children to come and go as they pleased, to eat what they felt like it, and to use a casualness and informality of speech with them that should have been confined to their friends. None of the children were epxected to do much in the way of chores, even picking up after themselves or watching the smaller children, yet neither of the parents is of the martyr type. Parenthood satisfied needs in both of them to be important to somebody, and they were both afraid to relinquish any of their responsibility to their children for fear that they might also lose some of that importance. They created the idea in most of their children that the child's (all adults now) needs could only be met by his parents, i.e., a bond of dependency that has not always been broken by marriage.

In all of the marital pairs of these offspring whom the observers were able to interview or were able to gain sufficient information about to form an opinion, the offspring either still remained in that dependent position in relation to his parents and had a spouse who was willing, or unable not to, go along with being in a secondary position to them or had found a spouse to whom he or she could relate as the dependent partner.

Mr. Porter, as the eldest of this brood, held a special position. His mother favored him and insisted that he be regarded as the "top dog" by the younger children, but there were no responsibilities attached to this position. He was not expected to take anyone else's feelings or rights into account but was allowed to exert his own will on the others as far as group pressure would allow. Because he was basically good-natured (though determined) and because the rules in the home were so lax, and often non-existent, the others were not regimented or continually forced to give in to him so that they individually and collectively were able to set limits on how far his ability to exert his rights could go. He took a great deal of advantage of his position, however, in regard to a few of his less-determined sisters and brothers.

He has been searching all of his adult life for another situation where he can be "top dog" to a supportive and admiring group where he doesn't have to take any responsibility for anyone else's rights. He is still very dependent emotionally on his parents and sees them often.

Mrs. Porter was the second child and only daughter of a construction worker and his hypochondriacal wife. While Mrs. Porter was her father's favorite, her brother was her mother's favorite; and

neither parent could see much good in their unfavorite child but could see little bad in their favorite.

The children were brought into the marital relationship because neither spouse could get much emotional satisfaction from the other. The father drank, had outbursts of violent temper (although he was usually warm and cheerful), and occasionally hit his wife in the heat of battle, all of which he justified as being because of the mother's incessant nagging and complaining.

The mother was (and still is) a double-binder. She was always exhorting her husband and her daughter, and to a lesser extent, her son, to do something, the exact details of which were either vague or confusing. She would change her directions in the middle of a sentence and go off on a tangent or would give two or more conflicting instructions at the same time so that her target never knew exactly what it was she wanted him to do but was in no doubt that if he didn't do it he was going to get a full dose of her recriminations (a justification for her not to provide emotional support and to maintain an emotional distance between them). For the child this was a calssic double bind. He was being given contradictory messages, felt that it was vitally important that he respond to both or all of the messages, could not escape, but was unable to respond to the messages.

The family stayed in a precarious sort of emotional balance, in that the father-daughter and the mother-son combinations each managed to get some of their own needs met but were in continual conflict with the other pair, until Mrs. Porter was nine years old. Then her father died suddenly of a heart attack, and she was left alone, without her only emotional support, to cope with her mother.

Within the year her mother remarried, a man whom she had known in her own childhood. While he was fond of Mrs. Porter and soon got into almost the same stalemate with his wife that her own father had been in, the two never formed an alliance against her. She was thus at her mother's mercy until she quit school at sixteen and left home.

She still has not resolved the conflict created in her between her hatred of her mother for her lack of approval and the need for that approval. She is still as dependent upon her mother, as hooked into her emotional system, as her husband is in his parents' emotional system.

Their marriage has been in precarious balance from its beginning. Mr. Porter has always expected her to cater to him and to acknowledge his rights to do whatever pleases him but has always resisted giving her any emotional support in return. He has also made it clear that his time is hiw own but that she had better be home when he gets there and that she can expect only the minimum percentage of

his paycheck for food, bills, and other household expenses because it's his money and he needs to enjoy himself. When he does; he goes out almost every night in the week to play cards, football, baseball, or basketball, and is familiar with most of the night spots in the Detroit area. But none of these activities includes Mrs. Porter, who hardly ever got out when the children were small until she got a job as a bar maid at a small lounge. This job did not last very long, however, for Mr. Porter expected her to contribute her paycheck toward food and bills and gave her that much less out of his own. Her tips were enough to enable her to pay a babysitter during this time so that she did get out sometimes then. The job temporarily increased her feelings of self-esteem and confidence, partly because it gave her some independence and partly because it gave her an opportunity to meet some men who not only were attracted to her sexually, but who also liked her as a person. This increase in her self-confidence also gave the marriage a boost, for it enhanced her attractiveness to her husband. None of these changes lasted for long.

The obvious selfishness of Mr. Porter's demands and neglict have continually triggered off anxiety that Mrs. Porter experienced originally in her childhood, plust new anxiety caused by her continual insecurity and the unpredictability of her current life, and the added

responsibility of four children whom she has had to deal with alone most of the time.

One aspect of this situation that is not immediately apparent is that Mr. Porter's treatment of his wife also meets some of her needs. Although she wants people around her all of the time, she has no really deep relationship with any one of them. And although she professes to feel only hurt and angry at her husband's leaving her alone night after night, it also enables her to maintain a great emotional distance from him while at the same time being considered by all of her friends and relatives as the injured party.

THE DELINQUENT'S POSITION IN THE FAMILY

Mrs. Porter's communication is even more confusing than that of her mother, for she lacks not only her mother's intelligence but also the rigid structure of her life. Her mother's life, including both time and objects, is organized and scheduled down to the last detail. While Mrs. Porter had been able to glean some understanding of what was really expected of her by the structure in her mother's life, which provided a consistency in her contradictory admonitions and instructions, her own children are continually in a state of flux, because no overt portion of their lives is structured or consistent. The only

consistency is that they must meet their mother's emotional needs, but these are also inconsistent; they depend on the specific stress in her marital relationship, the ways and amounts that she is having her needs met by others, and any chance good fortune or stressful interaction that comes her way.

Michael is the scapegoat in this family. His mother chose him (subconsciously) partially because he is the oldest male child, partially because he resembles his father, and partially because she had already chosen her older daughter to be in the parental role to her, and he was the next available child.

Mrs. Porter has projected all of her husband's and her mother's lack of affection, selfishness, and consequent obtuseness onto this child and directed the full force of the hostility and rage she felt toward them onto him. She sees him as if he were his father but reduced in size and at her mercy. But she has no mercy for him. He is either ignored, humiliated, or berated. Pushed past endurance on one occasion (when she tore him verbally to shreds in front of two of them and four children in a humiliating and degrading way), one of the observers suggested later that Mrs. Porter could ensure his cooperation better using other methods. Mrs. Porter's reply was, "Oh no, he likes being humiliated. He asks for it."

In a tragic way she was right. He does not like it, in fact, he hates it, but he asks for it, not only from her but from others as well. Michael is so used to his role as the stupid, bad, hateful person that he draws coals onto his own head by his antagonistic and stupidly inappropriate remarks and by his clumsy ineptitude, caused both by his inner turmoil and by the rigidity of his musculature, the result of this turmoil and its attendant pain.

Making Michael a scapegoat serves not only to release many of Mrs. Porter's tensions by giving her an unthreatening and punishable person to focus them on, but also to keep the real issues between her and her husband disguised. If they were to come out into the open, she would have to face the fact that she is being used and abused and he would have to face the fact that he is taking but not giving. The bond between them is not strong enough to provide the impetus and the endurance for them to work out an equitable balance. Also, her self-esteem is so low that she would not be able to tolerate real caring and consideration, for this would obligate her to also care (in the deep emotional sense) which she feels incapable of doing; it might rob her of that energy that she feels she needs in order to keep what little self-esteem that she has intact. His self-esteem (real, not overt) is also too low to allow for caring in that way.

Caring also entails a closeness which two persons with such low concepts of self-differentiation would find intolerably threatening. Each would be afraid that the other would engulf him, would force him to subjugate what little Self he had to the needs and directions of the Other. Neither learned to trust in infancy; the distrust with which they view the world and its inhabitants is constantly reinforced because they never find the real caring that they want, but ironically, they could not accept it if they did find it. This is not likely to happen, however, for no one is going to offer it to someone who cannot return it.

Michael's sisters and brothers have all entered into the family collusion to make Michael the scapegoat, though the violence of his eruptions when he finally lets go has frightened them enough so that they are wary and subtle in their moves. All are convinced, however, that "Michael is a bad person and makes everybody mad and afraid." Typical of the confused thinking in this family, three members said essentially the same thing, "Michael should pay attention in school, do what his parents tell him, and stop getting into trouble," but almost in the same breath said, "He can't help it. That's just the way he was born."

Mr. Porter feels no more toward his children than he does toward his wife. He sees them as objects, playthings sometimes, but

not as individuals. He rarely takes any responsibility for their care or discipline and ignores them most of the time.

He has also entered the family collusion to make Michael the bearer of all of the tension and negative feelings in the marital relationship and in the parental and sibling relationships which have resulted. He is as dissatisfied with his wife as she is with him, overtly because of the disorganization, mess, and continual commotion in the home, but internally because she maintains a rigorous emotional distance between them in spite of her catering to his whims and apparent acceptance of his ill-treatment of her. She is unable to accept any real emotional closeness to him and turns to friends, neighbors, and the children, especially the two girls, to meet her emotional needs for affection and recognition. The fact that he is doing the same thing to her does not lessen the hostility he feels toward her. Unable to face his own internal conflicts or those in his marriage, he, like his wife, projects the resultant anxiety and tension onto Michael, where they are safely dissociated from himself and the relationship and can be minimized and controlled.

Also like his wife, he projects his own faults and hers onto Michael. He sees Michael, but not himself, as selfish, uncaring, and irresponsible. He also sees him as unintelligent and confused, which he does not admit to recognizing in his wife.

Each of his parents blames the other for Michael's increasingly anti-social behavior. His mother claims that if he were a better father and had spent more time with him that he would not have "turned out so bad." He claims that it is her fault for not being a better mother. This is a safe field of battle because it avoids their own relationship.

Michael's muscular tension and its consequent inepittude make him a very poor athlete, the one attribute which might have redeemed him for his father and weakened the cycle of emotional interaction which has resulted in his being chosen for, and entering into, the role of scapegoat. As it is, however, his father alternately ignores him or treats him with contempt.

THE DELINQUENT'S ADAPTATION

To sum up Michael's situation: he is the focal point for the extreme anxiety and hostility in his parents' marriage and is perceived by each of his parents as possessing the negative traits that each is afraid to recognize in himself and in the other. Essentially what happened was that his mother focused the hostility she felt toward her husband onto Michael and hated him almost from his infancy. In order to perceive him as the negative character she needed him to be,

she spoke and reacted to him as if he were contemptible. She emphasized any of his misdeeds and ignored his other behavior. Criticism, disparagement, and punishment were almost his only avenues of recognition and validation of self from her (and from his father and siblings) so that he began to behave as she expected and covertly demanded. He developed little sense of self-esteem and a definitely negative identity.

His father, in order to avoid confronting and dealing with the real issues of hostility and tension in his marriage, joined his mother in focusing hostility on Michael. As Michael's bad behavior did increase, each felt justified in his expectations and treatment of him.

Michael is neither contemptible nor worthless. But no one, including Michael, would be able to believe that. His extended family, as well as the neighbors, believe that he is "an awful kid."

The truth is that he is a youngster who has not had enough affection or recognition (as himself) and who has been continually burdened and confused by a mother who not only disqualifies much of what he says but also disqualifies much of what she says herself and who forces him into negative behavior and then punishes him for it.

He is not bad but he is very sick.

Michael has already had several severe bouts of depression in which he took drugs and contemplated suicide. The problem is still in the family, but it is also in Michael now.

He is extremely masochistic; punishment and humiliation still cause him pain, but they also give him relief from the intolerable tension and anxiety of his guilt (his feeling that he should be punished) for his "badness" and from the anxiety engendered by the expectation that he will be punished. It is easier to endure the certainty of the wrath of a whole group crashing down on one's head than to live with the mounting anxiety of the anticipation of an unknown but horrible punishment which will be sure to come eventually.

It is also less frightening to have a negative identity than to have none at all. At least then one can be sure that he does indeed exist, that he is real.

Michael's adaptation to his family has been to accept his mother's unrealistic appraisal of him and to enter into a relationship with her in which he is constantly placating her for offenses which he did not commit as well as for those which he did. He has learned to distort his perceptions of himself, of her, and of all interpersonal interactions in order to live with her double binds. He must accept punishment (her disapproval, criticism, and humiliation) for doing what she has covertly signaled him that he must do in order to get recognition (as a worthless, contemptible bungler) and approval (acceptance of him as this contemptible bungler but still her son) from her.

The rage and frustration engendered by the no-winness of this situation also provide some of the impetus that causes him to perpetrate many of his hostile, and all of his violent, acts.

Chapter 14

THE LA POINTES

Among Marche's more serious offenses are felonious assault (including an attack on his father), property destruction, unlawful discharge of firearms (he shot up his own living room), theft, and drug abuse. Truancy, loitering, and running away are also part of his history.

For the past few years he has been living with an aunt and uncle (who died last year) and three cousins. After his parents were divorced six years ago, he lived for a while with his father, then with his mother for almost a year, when she killed herself, then with his father off and on. His family has always lived near this aunt, Mrs. Gordon; he has spent as much or more time with her as he has with his own parents. He has no brothers or sisters.

Marche is fourteen but is very tall for his age and looks older. At first he was very suspicious and hostile and would not talk to us at all, but eventually his aunt was able to persuade him to cooperate. When one of the interviewers sat down with him one day and explained some of the psychological aspects of his (Marche's) experiences and

feelings to him, he was so relieved (of some unspoken fear) and grateful that the sessions were open and fruitful from then on.

Marche's family is black, but this is not the basis of his problem; in fact, it is less important in his case than in that of any other of the black families. They live in a large, well-kept home in a better residential section of Detroit. Mrs. Gordon is the assistant manager of one of the better women's clothing firms in Detroit, so finances are not a problem. Marche's oldest cousin, Pamela, is twenty-two and married, but lives nearby and spends much of her time in her old home. Her brother, Keith, is twenty, and the youngest girl, Susie, is sixteen.

Mrs. Gordon was a most impressive woman, intelligent, gracious, and very warm. She was firm with Marche, as well as with her own children, and seems to have provided the one haven of stability in his whole life. Her husband had also been a warm, stable person and had welcomed Marche into his home from his earliest years. Comparing their confident, mature offspring to the volatile Marche, one could not help but wonder what his story would have been if only his parents had both died and he had been able to move into his aunt's home permanently when he was a very small child.

THE FAMILY HISTORY

Mrs. La Pointe was the sixth of nine children. For thirteen years she was the youngest of six and was spoiled and catered to. The birth of a little brother when she was thirteen was a terrible shock to her, one from which her sister claims that she never recovered. She was very immature then and until the end of her life, but she was gay and friendly and was always surrounded by friends until her marriage.

Her parents were very religious and quite strict about religious observances and about responsibility (except to Mrs. La Pointe in her younger years), but they were also reasonable and just and very warm and supportive. The family lived in a large home in Atlanta, Georgia, where the father made a good living as the chef in a major restaurant. All of the children finished high school and two of the boys were sent to college.

Mrs. Gordon, three years older than Mrs. La Pointe, married Mr. Gordon soon after she left high school and moved with him to Detroit. When Mrs. La Pointe graduated in her turn, she also came to Detroit, ostensibly to help Mrs. Gordon with her babies and the housework; after she was here a while, however, she decided that she did not like housework or child care and went to work in a cafeteria near their home. There she met Mr. LaPointe and married him soon after.

Mr. La Pointe's parents were also of the upper-class and from a large city: Shreveport, Louisiana, but instead of being warm and caring, they were cold, remote, and extremely formal. Mr. La Pointe was the oldest of three boys. For some reason he was rejected by his family and felt himself to be always an outcast. Mrs. Gordon knew very few details of his background, and he refused to discuss it during the brief interviews he allowed the authors, so nothing more is known about that time in his life.

Mr. La Pointe was eleven years older than his wife. He had been in the Army and had lived in two other cities before he came to Detroit, where he began driving a truck for a small delivery firm. The firm grew and the job was secure so he stayed here.

After their marriage Mrs. La Pointe took a course in hair styling and began working in her basement, because her husband did not like her to work away from home. The two were obsessively attached to each other and could hardly bear to be parted. He stopped by to see her often during the day and went everywhere with her at night. They even clung to each other physically. She often sat in his lap when they were visiting her sister, or he had his arm around her waist, or she was leaning on him; they seemed usually to be touching one another in some way.

The couple tried to conceive a child but learned after a year that Mrs. La Pointe was too anemic and nervous to either conceive or to carry to term. For the next five years she followed a careful regimen for her health planned for her by her doctor and was finally able to conceive and to carry Marche (a family name), who was named after his father but usually called Junior.

They were so thrilled by his birth that they overdid everything. He had far too many chothes and toys and was showered with attention. Mrs. La Pointe was so foolish over him that she would barely allow her sister to hold him when he was an infant, and the cousins, who were six and eight at that time, were never allowed to pick him up.

After Marche was born, Mr. La Pointe insisted that all of the groceries and other supplies be delivered to the house so that his wife would not have to go out at all. She became increasingly bored and allowed more and more women to infringe on her good nature by making hair appointments at all hours of the day and evening. She and her husband began to spend less and less time together and to drift apart, but he seemed satisfied with this so long as she remained in the house. Her sister became alarmed and tried to insist that she cut her working hours down, but she refused. The couple both liked all of the money that was coming in, so nothing was done to improve the situation.

Marche spent his days toddling around the basement while his mother worked.

By the time he was two, Marche began to exhibit violent rages whenever he was crossed in any way. He whined and nagged at his mother, who would stop her work briefly to attend to him but get rid of him as soon as possible. All during his baby and toddler years he broke his toys (and anyone else's) as fast as he got them, but his parents assumed that he was only spoiled and that this was because he was an only child.

Sometime during the early years of his life his mother began drinking secretly. As she felt more and more chafed by her seclusion, she drank more and more, until some of her friends, who were also her customers, noticed and told her sister. Again and again she promised to quit but did not, nor did she limit her working hours. Although she still felt very attached to and dependent upon her husband, her chief pleasure and escape was her liquor.

When Marche was seven, his mother's life reached some crisis, and she collapsed from strain and nervous tension and was hospitalized for a time. This period of rest and removal from her situation finally enabled her to recognize and confront her unhappiness at being confined to her home and her foolishness for allowing her friends to impose on her to such an extent.

She was determined to confront her husband with her resolve to acquire more freedom for herself, but instead of approaching the matter calmly and directly, she asked him for a divorce, never dreaming that he would consent but thinking that this would be a lever to get him to allow her to live a normal life. When he agreed to it, she went into a tailspin that culminated in her suicide.

At first she insisted that Marche live with his father, thinking that that would bring him back to her. But it did not. And Marche did not like living there, so she brought him home (They were living around the corner from her sister at that time). When she realized that she had broken up her marriage for good, she began to go out with anyone who asked her; she would wait until Marche was asleep and then leave, but he often woke up and ran all over the neighborhood looking for her. Many of the neighbors kept him overnight, but some took him to his aunt's house.

His mother also began to drink openly during the day and was often drunk. Then she began to call her sister with false suicide alarms, although sometimes she would wait until someone was in the doorway and then swallow a handful of pills or slash at her wrists. One time she sent her sister and a special police detail all over Belle Isle looking for her. She had told them that she was going to jump off

a bridge, and it was five below zero outside. They found her home in bed some two hours later.

Twice she threatened to kill Marche with her. One time she had him halfway out of a window before someone stopped her. He still remembers that.

Finally, at the end of a year of these frightening episodes, she was found burned beyond recognition in her bed. It is still not known if she took something ahead of time or if, or how much, it was accidental. The Gordons thought that Marche was with her at first, but he was found later with his father.

Mr. La Pointe wanted the Gordons to keep Marche then, but she felt that a boy needed his own father and insisted that he take care of him. She even pushed her brother-in-law into buying and furnishing a house (neither of them wanted to stay at the old house). This plan never worked. Mr. La Pointe never took care of Marche; he was really raising himself. Then he was sent to a military school because his rages and temper tantrums were so disruptive to his class. Three times he sneaked out of that school and found his way back to his aunt's house. All during these years he spent the greater percentage of his time at her house, but she kept sending him back to his father. Because he was not actually living there, he did not really feel like part of the family, so in essence, he had no home. She was his only

security, and he could not understand why she would not keep him. Finally, two years ago, she allowed him to move in permanently on the condition that he attend school, which he hates.

THE DELINQUENT'S POSITION IN THE FAMILY

Mr. La Pointe was persuaded at one time to go with Marche for psychiatric help. Neither liked the experience and would not continue for very long, but it was long enough for the psychiatrist to diagnose the father as paranoid schizophrenic.

> The paranoid schizophrenic manifests autistic or paralogical thinking with delusions of reference, influence, persecution, or grandeur. The delusions are poorly systematized, internally illogical, and changeable over time, and they are accompanied by vivid auditory hallucinations. The patient's life is controlled by his delusions and hallucinations instead of by reality; inevitably his behavior is erratic and his judgment poor.[1]

Neither the Gordons nor Marche, who was found to have an extremely high IQ at this time, understands just what it means to be mentally ill; they were pleased that their own suspicions that he was "crazy" were confirmed, but they still expected him to behave as if he were normal and responsible. Many of their comments concerning him contained the phrase, "he should." Although it was explained to them

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[1] Rosen, Fox, and Gregory, op. cit., p. 227.

that he is doing all that he can now to keep his tenuous hold on the world and cannot possibly do any more and that the responsibility of raising a child alone is far more than he could handle, it is doubtful if those explanations will have a very lasting effect on their conception or expectations of him.

Mr. La Pointe is very, very thin and shorter than Marche. His face is pinched into a sly, anxious expression that gives him something of a weaselish look. He is extremely apprehensive; his eyes continually rove around the room as if he were looking for an attacker, and he jumps at the slightest sound. While he is usually very mild and quiet, occasionally he becomes vicious. He beat Marche cruelly on three separate occasions when Marche was particularly insistent upon having his own way and would not quit nagging. A year ago, however, the situation reversed itself: Marche ran to the kitchen and grabbed a knife during a violent argument and slashed his father before he could grab or hit him. The father ran out of the house and called the police and since that time has been afraid of Marche. He often sleeps in his truck, which he parks in the street in front of the house so that he can make a quick get-away if he sees Marche coming.

Marche hates his father for this fear but takes advantage of it by trying to frighten him into giving him money when he wants it. At the same time Marche wants to love and to be proud of his father, he

also hates him for the fact that he cannot, although he keeps pushing at him in an attempt to make him prove that he really is a man and to make him act like a strong and loving father again. Until his mother's death, his father had seemed very strong and authoritarian to him.

The Gordons look on Marche as something of an oddity at the same time that they love and accept him. He does not really feel that he is part of the family, although he would like to be. He has a feeling of tenuousness, that he is only there because they have to have him and that it is conditional (which is true).

He loves and respects Pamela almost as much as he does his aunt, because she has taken much of the care of him and has been a comfort and support and oasis of stability in many trying times.

Keith has also had a tremendous influence on him. Even though Keith is six years older than his cousin, until recently he had often taken him along with him to recreation areas and to other social and sports events. Keith's friends accept him because he looks much older than he is and because he always behaves according to their rules and customs when he is with them. Now that Keith is beginning to date more often and to be more serious about his girlfriends, however, he has less time for Marche, which leaves him with too much free time to accost his father and to look up his old friends and get into trouble.

Marche and Susie have always been jealous of each other and still do not get along very well.

Marche's most important relationship is to his aunt. He is very dependent upon her and wishes that she would adopt him; he has been heard to refer to her as his mother, but she will not allow him to call her "Mother" or "Mom." Mrs. Gordon loves Marche, but she does not really understand why he behaves the way he does. She knows that it is because of his early home life, yet she still expects him to behave as if none of that had happened. There are both positive and negative effects from this. On the positive side, being treated as if he were normal and being expected to behave himself does keep him more in touch with reality and encourages him to develop the best of his abilities. On the negative side, being expected to think and feel in ways that he cannot think and feel put him in a double bind. He cannot suppress his rage and yet he cannot express it either. There is no safe outlet for the rage, fear, and frustration bottled up in him, and no one close to him understands even that it is there much less that it must be dealt with in some way. It was some relief to him to have some of these aspects defined, explored, and explained not only to him, but also to his family. The effects of this type of "instant therapy" rarely last long, however, so Marche will be caught in this crunch until and unless he gets some professional help.

THE DELINQUENT'S ADAPTATION

Marche was treated as a play object, a doll, during the early years of his life. He was catered to and spoiled but not given the kind of recognition and emotional support that a child needs. His mother was still a child (emotionally) herself and probably in the incipient stages of mental breakdown; his father was also very immature and was insecure to the point of psychosis. The life that Marche led with his parents before their separation had rivers of unreality running through it.

When his parents separated, the fawning attention and catering abruptly ceased. From being constantly under his mother's feet, he was pushed onto his father, who did not want him. When he went back to his mother, everything about her had changed; she was fast losing her hold on reality and dragged him through a terrifying year of neglect, ill-usage, and abandonment. It was during this time that he learned to steal, for he started taking food from super markets if his mother wasn't home or wasn't sober enough to fix something for him.

He acted up in school from his first day of kindergarten. To him it was a crowded, threatening place. He had rarely been with anyone except his parents and his aunt's family or in his own basement with his mother and one or two other women (and sometimes a child or two, but with Mother right there to see that he got his own way). He

had had tantrums at home, and they had proved to relieve his frustration and to bring him some attention, so he tried it at school. Here he found the same rewards, but also some punishment. In the state of frustration and rage that he was in, however, he found the punishment to be worth the rewards. Then, too, his mother often kept him at home if he nagged her long enough.

The year that his parents separated no one really kept track of him, so he missed a great deal of school, and this was true also when he was living with his father after his mother's death. Whenever he stayed with his aunt, however, he had to go to school. This was often enough that he never missed enough school to be kept back; he was intelligent enough to catch up whenever he cared to, and his being a fast and prolific reader has also helped in this area.

Marche has adapted to his frightening, insecure life in recent years by running to his aunt, where he is a-le to get emotional support and a large measure of affection and security. When he is there he rarely erupts into the rages or other bad behavior that are symptoms of his emotional disturbances. When he does launch into something, his aunt or uncle (until recently) or Pamela or Keith, and sometimes all of them, are there to control him and to provide guidance, firmness, and support.

Away from these bulwarks of his life, however, he can be provoked into almost any form of anti-social behavior. Boys his own age like and respect him to some degree, but they are often afraid of him. For his part, he finds them boring and childish and prefers older boys. Most of his friends are from two to four years older than he is and fall into two distinct groups. One group, the boys he became friends with while he lived with his father, have as little supervision as he did then, and they have all been in trouble with the police for theft of one form or anohter; some have also been involved with drugs, and two have been placed in detention homes for assault. The other group, the boys he met through Keith's friends, have mostly stable families, must follow rules, and attend school regularly. Most of the time that Marche is at his aunt's it is these boys whom he goes out with. They have sparked his interest in girls, and he now has a girlfriend, who doesn't know that he is two years younger than she. When he spends time with his father, which he does occasionally, or when he gets depressed or really angry, he looks up the other boys.

Marche has gotten into much of his trouble by himself, however, and often takes things "because I feel like it." He also flies into rages at school and attacks other students, and once, a teacher, for which he was suspended. He is a very disturbed boy. It is only the extreme stability of his aunt's home and his desperate need for her

that keeps him from cracking entirely or from committing an act so vicious that the authorities would have to put him in an institution, either a detention home or a mental institution.

Chapter 15

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to learn if delinquency is a strategy used by the adolescent to adapt to his family, and if it is, to look for causative factors determining who will use it and when. It was focused on the adaptiveness of the child's behavior as seen in the context of the dysfunction of his parents' relationship and the consequent degree and particularity of dysfunction of the entire family nexus.

Ten boys, ranging in age from thirteen to sixteen, and their families were studied. In each case the boy's delinquency was indeed found to be adaptive; the delinquent behavior either met a need in the nexus and balance of the family relationships or it met an essential need of the boy which was not being met in the family but did not disturb the balance of the family relationships. These essential needs are for recognition (as a male and as an individual), for security, and for love (caring and approval).

The family balance, or homeostasis, is such that each member has certain interlocking roles with each of the other members so that

each regulates and controls all of the others and is himself regulated and controlled by them, reducing tension in the individual and in the group by assuring some degree of predictability and certainty and by assuring each member that some, at least, of his essential physical and emotional needs will be met.

Because there is always a debit of unmet needs in every adult from his own family of origin, there is always some tension and anxiety in him, also, and some lack of self-esteem. He chooses a mate who will be a complement to himself, who will meet the most crucial and urgent of his needs in the form that he perceives he needs them to be met, even if that form includes a high degree of negativity, because it initially reduces tension, although in the end it guarantees further suffering and lack of self-esteem. However great or small the amount of anxiety is in each individual adult, there is always some tension involved in the relationship between himself and his spouse in trying to get his own needs met and in trying to meet or to avoid meeting theirs. Reducing this anxiety is a cohesive force that binds the members of the family together.

Each member also has to cope with the outside world, which he sees as threatening to some degree, and he tries to reduce the anxiety of that threat in his family group. But family members are even more threatening in some respects, for their emotional closeness gives them

the capability of encompassing and subjugating the identity of the single member, thereby effectively annihilating him. The family must therefore have regulating mechanisms to protect themselves from themselves, as well as from the rest of the world. If the balance among the members is precarious, that is, if one member is effectively stronger, or one (or more) is desperate because he experienced the ultimate anxiety: the terror of the loss or lack of love and security and identity, then the number of regulating mechanisms and alternatives in that family will be fewer than in the normal family (non-symptom producing families) and the family structure will be rigid.

In these rigid families most of the parents' energy is invested in avoiding the surfacing of their extreme terror, which would mean a feeling and experiencing of it, and in reducing general anxiety and tension. In these couples one individual will usually either try to gain control of all situations in their relationship or will submit some portion of his identity and will to any other, including and especially, his spouse, who seems likely to provide security and thereby reduce their tension. In marriage relationships between persons of low self-esteem and high levels of anxiety, there is a continual strain in this jockeying for security and recognition which neither partner is able to face realistically because that would create further anxiety.

The children of such a marriage are in an even more precarious position. They must get their needs met from two people who are each trying to get as much as possible and to give as little as possible because of their own needs and fears. Therefore, each child has to wedge himself into the marital relationship as best he can. He often finds that he has to accept an unpleasant role for himself in order to get anything at all. Some children learn that by accepting the focus of tension from their parents they get more of their own needs met, thereby reducing their own internal anxiety, than by rejecting that role and letting the rest of the family reduce their corporate and individual anxiety in some other way. Often, of course, the child has no choice.

Families like the above are termed dysfunctional. Children in those families often have symptoms which are an integral part of the family system: the symptom is produced by pressure from the other members and answers some need (usually anxiety reduction) in those members. It also ensures the child of getting some of his own needs met. They also exhibit symptoms which are not an integral part of the family but which do not upset the family balance and which meet some of their own needs. In this study we have found delinquency to be both of these kinds of symptoms, depending on the family and the social situation.

Before going into a review of these families and their sons' adaptations to them, an important male adolescent problem should be explored. This is the fact that our society does not provide a satisfactory place or means for the transition of the male from childhood to adulthood. He is given no particular challenge toward which he can strive, which is uniquely masculine, and to which he can point and say, "There, I've done it. Now count me a man." No matter what his socioeconomic status or ethnic group, he still has the problem, particularly excruciating in the United States but beginning to be evidenced in all of the western industrialized nations.

Adolescents in most societies band together in more and less rigorously defined age-sex groups, but in many of the less industrialized societies these are not expected to bear the weight of their functions to the degree that they are in the western world. There are specific skills that the male youngster must acquire and tasks that he must accomplish, usually under the tutelage of his father or another adult male, before he can gain adult status and the respect of his society. These tasks and skills are inherently masculine: either they require a great amount of physical strength or they have been designated as uniquely male by the society.

The adolescent male group reinforces the feeling of masculine identity among its members and also serves to bolster flagging egos in

every society, but it is only one aspect of a total system to aid in the transition of the young male from childhood to adulthood in non-industrialized societies. In these societies he has a role, a place, and a function. He can begin learning and using essential skills (such as farming or fishing) at an early age so he is not only very useful to his parents and society by the time he is an adolescent, but he also has enough skill to begin to establish his status and thereby to reinforce his internal sense of identity.

In the United States there are few such opportunities or possibilities. Adolescent boys are expected to be involved in their schoolwork, in sports, and sometimes in perfunctory and menial employment, none of which is essentially productive to the society or to the masculine identity of the individual. Therefore, the male adolescent group in this country performs a far greater function in the promotion of that identity than it does in other societies. For boys whose families are not meeting their needs for emotional support and identity, the group becomes crucial.

One cannot say that the peer group causes delinquency then, but one can say that a peer group that values anti-social behavior as a satisfactory means of establishing masculine identity would cause a boy whose needs it is meeting, because they are not being met in his family, to commit delinquent acts if this were a condition of continued

acceptance in the group, and the boy had no other or no better alternative for getting them met. It is important to note that from the boy's point of view anti-social acts usually carry some risk (of apprehension and punishment) and require some degree of skill and courage so that they bear some similarity to masculine tasks in other societies. Although they are not productive, they resemble some aspects of certain puberty rites that require skill and/or courage.

BRIEF SUMMARY: THE BOYS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Peter Jablonski

Peter, fourteen, has committed mostly acts of violence, attacks and assaults on various persons, but has also stolen from stores and from private property and has created problems in school.

His mother and father are divorced and he has lived with her and with a step-father and four step-sisters and brothers for the past ten years. All of his step-relatives reject him.

His mother, while appearing warm and loving, is actually cold and very controllative, and the step-father is passively resistant to her; they are locked in battle but avoid confronting the real issue: that they both want their own needs met but are unable and unwilling to meet each other's deep, unsatisfied needs for love, support, and

recognition. Instead, they have made Peter the scapegoat for most of the tension and hostility of this battle; he is seen as bad by all the members of his family and is not recognized unless he is misbehaving. Therefore, he acts up to meet his family's needs for a safe displacement area but readily available focus for its hostility, to release his own consequent hostility and rage, and to establish an identity.

David Granger

David, thirteen, beat a younger boy severely, which was the most significant of his delinquent acts and the most consequential of his eruptions of violence until this time, but he has also committed some minor acts of theft.

His father, an immature, punitive man whom he feared but admired greatly, left his mother, an extremely childish woman, when he was very young. She then took a series of lovers, many of whom beat and humiliated him, and a husband, whom she promptly divorced, who also beat and humiliated him. She has now married again. This stepfather at first was warm and supportive and tried to provide guidance, but after his own son was born, abnegated the role.

His mother was incapable of providing real love, support, or recognition but gave a superficial, overt performance of doing so, which put David into a double bind. He was overtly expected to play

the child's role but covertly expected to play the parent's role for her, even when she remarried.

David's violent delinquent acts are the result of his attempts to suppress his rage and frustration and to direct it away from his mother when it does erupt. He is under such continual tension and in such emotional pain, however, that any extra stress causes this rage to burst forth in acts of violence. His other delinquent acts are attempts to join the only peer group which will accept him: other troubled boys.

Matthew Trent

Matthew, sixteen, has run away from home twice since his mother remarried.

Between the time of his father's death and that of her remarriage, he had played surrogate husband for her, although he was also dominated, and frequently disparaged, by her. Since her remarriage he has not only been moved into the son's role, but he has also been refused recognition for the maturity and autonomy that he has acquired.

The loss of his previous status accompanied by an increase in disparagement and a subjection to his step-father (the new male) have created an intollerable situation for him which he cannot deal with

except in retreat and escape. His running away is also a statement of his independence and readiness to be on his own.

Billy Adams

Billy, sixteen, has committed many forms of theft and some assaults, has run away, taken drugs, and gotten drunk.

All of these delinquent acts were the result of a dependency created and fostered by the situation in his home. His parents' marriage, based on illusions, crumbled but held together when the couple moved away from their childhood neighborhood. The seemingly authoritative, but actually passive, father was unable to support his immature and dependent wife without the emotional support of his own family, church, and social group and began to make demands of support from her. Feeling disillusioned and abandoned, she rejected him and devoted herself to becoming a college student, abjuring at the same time her role as mother.

Both parents turned to the oldest son to be parent to themselves and to the younger children, including Billy, and all three of these older members of the family switched roles. The mother became also, and primarily, a sister; the father became a mother and a brother; and the brother became a father and a mother.

These changes and their inherent instability and lack of predictable emotional support made Billy so dependent that he turned first to neighbors and then to the troubled boys in his peer group, who seemed strong and authoritative to him, to replace his family constellation.

Many of his delinquent acts are performed to allow him to be included in this group, which gives him an identity, some emotional support, and a sense of security. The acts also help to dissipate the range and frustration he feels from the changes and the lacks in his home life. Other delinquent acts, like drinking, running away, and drug abuse are forms of escape from the burden of his situation.

Maurice Carol

Maurice, thirteen, has been insolent and has acted up in school and has destroyed both private and school property.

His parents, divorced after a short but unhappy marriage, continue to feel bitterness and resentment toward each other, but the divorce increased his mother's already deep sense of inadequacy, and consequently, her anxiety and hostility. These, in combination with the resulting defensiveness, caused her to push Maurice away from her emotionally at the same time that she was increasing her controllativeness over his life and autonomy to strangulation proportions.

Having had time to develop some sense of autonomy and masculinity before the marital split, however, and receiving occasional emotional reinforcements from visits to his father, Maurice has retained enough will to resist her, although not openly, with a determined passive resistance.

The frustration and rage this produces he expresses toward other authority figures and in retaliatory acts of destruction against them.

Benny Wilson

Benny, fifteen, has been incorrigible in and truant from school, has destroyed property, and has committed various minor acts of theft.

His mother, after submitting to her husband's will and decrees for twenty years, rebelled and demanded recognition of her own identity, bringing all of the latent hostility and tension in the relationship into the open with continual conflict and fighting. She finally left him, dragging Benny and his sisters through a miserable, insecure year in a distant city, and eventually sending them back to their father.

At home again, Benny's oldest sister, nearly retarded and severely damaged psychologically, moved into the mother role and established a husband-wife relationship with her father. In their efforts to justify and maintain this unhealthy relationship, they have forced

Benny to remain in the small-child role. These efforts have been incremented by the sister's irrational modes of communication, with which she places him in continual double bind situations.

Benny's acting up in school and truancy are attempts to cover and to escape his complete inadequacy there and are also efforts to get attention in the one role he feels confident in: the naughty child. His other delinquent acts are efforts to be accepted among the tougher boys, the ones he admires, but because of his extreme immaturity those boys do not accept him and will not usually allow him to accompany them. His delinquent acts have been of a lesser nature so far because those boys who will accept him are much younger than he is and are not yet ready or willing to commit more serious acts.

Ronnie Prague

Ronnie, fifteen, has committed almost every form of theft and has had seventeen contacts with the police, including one period of detention.

His mother, highly anxious and fearful, keeps Ronnie in a state of uncertainty and dependence on her which is not alleviated by the father, who lives in another state and who has made no effort to contact him. Hating and fearing males, his mother is at the same time rejective and controllative and expects Ronnie, because he is male and

because she has found males to be troublesome and hurtful and needs to reinforce this perception to justify holding him away from her, to get into all kinds of trouble. When he is, she castigates him verbally but is actually very well satisfied.

For Ronnie, the delinquency fulfills part of his role expectations at home, where his masculinity is ignored in every other respect, and establishes his masculine identity with his peer group.

Alex Tinos

Alex, fourteen, has acted up in school, stolen some small items, and has experimented with drugs.

His parents are divorced because his father was an alcoholic, but his mother, who is warm and supportive and has a well-developed sense of identity as well as a healthy self-esteem, handled the turmoil in the marriage, the tension of the break-up, and the financial uncertainty of the aftermath with stability and calm good-sense.

The reason for Alex's delinquency is that he is the third son (of three sons born in quick succession) of five children living in a rough neighborhood, and he sees acting-up and stealing as his chief means of asserting and establishing his masculine identity. This is important to him because he is in a fierce competitive battle of

masculinity with his two older brothers, although and also because, he admires one of them tremendously.

His superior intelligence and strong, extroverted personality make him capable of success in many fields, but the boys in his age and social group admire toughness and "coolness" above every other quality. For many of them, however, there is no real chance of advancement or achievement in the world of business and industry, partly becuase of the instability of their home lives and partly because the attitude prevalent in their social milieu is that there is no chance for them so that they are programmed not to recognize, and therefore, not to take advantage of, any opportunities that do exist. This includes succeeding in school. Being responsible and level-headed, Alex would probably not be acting up to this degree if he lived in a higher socio-economic area, where the general levels of ambition and expectation are higher.

Michael Porter

Michael, fifteen, has committed some atrocious acts of violence: attempted rape, assault, and arson. He will assault any child smaller than himself if provoked by teasing and at one time cruelly beat a little dog tied to a post.

His parents each project their own negative self-images and their conceptions of each other onto Michael so that they can deal with their hostility and tension without shattering the tenuous stability of the marriage or confronting their own dissatisfactions with themselves or with each other.

His mother is particularly virulent in this respect because she has accepted the martyr role in the marriage and is afraid to confront her husband with her feelings of abuse or to insist on her rights. Instead, she focuses her feelings toward him on Michael, whom she abuses and castigates.

To insure that he will actually behave badly enough to justify her excoriation and abuse, she deigns to recognize him only when he does something wrong or stupid, and pays increasingly more attention to him as the negativity of his misdeeds increases.

Michael has therefore developed a concept of himself as stupid and bad. In order to assure himself that he exists at all, in order to be recognized and to evoke some response from others, he says or does things which are stupid or bad.

His violent acts are both extreme but logical extensions of this adaptation to his family and expressions, or outlets, of the hostility and negativity that it creates. Each new act of hostility brings a new deprecation and punishment upon him, of course, and further reinforces his (negative) sense of Self, his internal identity.

Marche La Pointe

Marche, fourteen, has committed felonious assault, property destruction, unlawful discharge of firearms, and other acts of violence against his own father. He has also been involved in drug abuse and theft and has run away from school.

Marche is a seriously troubled boy, the product of seriously irrational parents who clung together in such extreme dependency during his early childhood that the mother was not allowed even to shop without the father. After a serious illness, she attempted to gain some freedom, which resulted in a divorce and her mental breakdown and eventual suicide. The father, left with Marche, also deteriorated into a near breakdown and sent him to a military school, which he continually ran away from to go to his aunt's, the one haven of stability and security in his life.

The attacks on his father and the shooting up of his house were attempts at first to defend himself against his father's irrational anger and then to frighten him into either taking a stand as a man or into giving Marche a sum of money. They were also expressions of his own near-psychotic rage and terror from the irrational chaos of his early life.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In every case in this investigation, the boy's delinquency was adaptive either in the family nexus or in his peer group because of a lack in the family's emotional relationships. In some cases, therefore, the delinquency became an integral part of the family system and in some cases it was peripheral to the system but was created and promoted because of the system. It is part of the system if the family needs or uses the behavior to maintain its internal balance. It is peripheral if the delinquency is the result of feelings or emotions engendered in the system but does not itself play a part in that system.

For Peter Jablonski, Ronnie Prague, Michael Porter, and Marche La Pointe, the behavior was an integral part of the system. Peter's family, both the marital pair and the sibling subsystem, needed him to act up in order to displace their own tension and hostility, to remove or dissociate it from themselves and thereby reduce their own anxiety by focusing it on him, an available and vulnerable symbol of it.

Ronnie's delinquency actually affected only the relationship between his mother and himself on an internal level. She needed him to act up so that she could justify rejecting him and could reinforce her own conception of the male as hurtful. It also served to promote his lack of self-esteem in the family (although it added to his self-esteem in his peer group) and therefore to bind him tighter with dependency

and guilt. The other children did not benefit except that it served to increase their status in relation to his in the family.

Michael's mother needed him to behave badly, and even violently, in order to release her own frustration and anger on an assailable representative rather than on her husband, who actually engendered and intensified it. His father also, but to a lesser degree, needed a repository for his original hostility and anxiety and for that generated by his unsatisfactory marriage. Michael's function as the scapegoat relieved enough of the tremendous hostility in this couple to enable them to remain together, yet the increasing violence of his acts threatened to upset the very balance it was meant to protect; the outside world was beginning to put pressure on the family, as well as on Michael, to exert some control over his behavior.

Marche's delinquency was part of the system in his family of origin but not in his aunt's family group, where it was disruptive and frightening. It became part of his relationship with his father, however, for it served Marche as a controlling or maneuvering mechanism and it served his father as a guilt-reduction mechanism: so long as Marche acted up, and especially if he was violent, his father was justified in sending him to military school or to his aunt's.

For David and Matthew, delinquency has some function in the system but is not an integral part of it. David's violent acts serve

to deflect his rages away from his mother, thereby allowing her (by not stopping her) to continue to put him in a double bind: promising parenting for him at the same time that she is demanding it for herself. Matthew's running away reinforces his mother's view of him as a child and justifies her for removing some accustomed responsibility from him, but it is actually upsetting and disruptive to the system and creates more anxiety in the total constellation, while it reduces it in the immediate situation for Matthew. Unfortunately, his reduced anxiety is only temporary, because the knowledge of his family's anxiety, the guilt that this engenders, and the strong attachment and need that he has for his mother (and his siblings) increase his own anxiety each time to the point where he returns voluntarily.

For Billy, Maurice, Benny, and Alex, the delinquent acts were symptoms of a problem in the system but were actually peripheral to the system itself. Billy, Maurice, and Benny all committed anti-social acts partly or mainly to reduce their own tension, which was caused and exacerbated by the relationships in their families. Billy and Benny, both very immature, dependent personalities, also acted up in order to be accepted as a male and as an individual, which was the prime motive for Alex and played a part for Peter, Ronnie, and Matthew also.

In each of these cases the delinquency was adaptive in at least one respect but usually in more than one. It helped either directly

or indirectly to get their needs for emotional support and/or security and/or recognition met either in their families or in their peer groups, or in both.

Though this study is by no means conclusive, being neither controlled, comparative, nor objective, it yet indicates that delinquency can serve to meet a youngster's deepest needs.

The very fact that most delinquent behavior ceases around the age of eighteen, and even at seventeen, tends to support this view, for an eighteen year old male is in a different position in our society than is a thirteen to sixteen year old. At eighteen the young male often begins a career, enrolls in college, or enters the armed services, in each of which group pressure mitigates anti-social behavior that is not in the prank category.

At eighteen he takes on a new role as the young adult with responsibilities and status, a role where juvenile anti-social behavior is definitely not adaptive. Therefore, it either disappears or changes form at that age.

If the problems in the relationships which caused the anxiety that precipitated the anti-social behavior have not been resolved, however, the anxiety must still be dealt with and the needs met in some way. But it will be a way that is adaptive for age eighteen or thirty or fifty, and it will fit the family, economic, and social situations of those ages.

APPENDICES

STRUCTURED QUESTIONS FOR AN INTERVIEW

1. Tell me who is in your family.

2. What are the names of your children? Where are they now? What are their ages?

3. Has either parent been married before? What happened? Where is the other mate now? Other children?

4. Are there any other people living with you now?

5. Are there any other persons who at any time in the past have been members of this family?

6. When did each come into the family?

7. What was the reason that each joined the family?

8. When did each leave the family?

9. What was the reason for leaving the family?

10. What is the contact between each of these persons and each of the present family members now?

11. Then we have all the people who were or are part of this family?

12. Well, now, you two haven't been parents all your lives. How did you meet?

13. What was it about (her, him) that led you to choose (her, him)?

14. When did you meet again? Who took the important step? How did it come about?

15. (To other partner) What did you do? Did you expect (him, her) to call (etc.)? What did you expect (him, her) to do?

16. And then what happened?

17. When did you both agree that you wanted to continue the relationship?

18. When did you tell your friends that it was serious?

    Ask questions of the children during this time. Did you know this about Dad? Did you know that Mother . . . ?

19. When did you decide to marry? How did you go about making plans to marry?

20. What was the marriage ceremony like? Who was there?

21. How did your parents feel about your marrying him?

22. How did his parents feel about his marrying you?

23. What were the main obstacles to your getting married?

24. How did the marriage go?

25. Were you happy at first? Was he?

26. Then what happened?

27. How did you handle differences?

28. Both of you came from your own family environments. We'd better get a picture of who is in these families. Do you have brothers and sisters?

29. How old are they? Younger or older than you?

30. Where are they living now? Are they married? Do they have children? How old are their children?

31. Where are your parents living now? How old are they? What does your father do for a living?

32. If I were to meet your (husband's) mother in a railroad station, how would I recognize her? How would I know your father?

33. If I had the opportunity to talk to your (wife's) mother, what would she tell me about how food, money, sex, raising of children, and fun were handled in your family? What would your father tell me?

34. Then it seems that your mother and father were alike in these ways . . . and different in these ways.

35. How did you see them manage to live with these differences?

36. Everyone needs ways to handle the presence of differences. It looks as if in your (wife's) family it was handled like this.

37. How do you see yourself as like your husband (wife)?

38. How do you see yourself as different?

39. What ways did you work out to live with your differences? How did those ways work?

40. What did your parents do for fun?

41. How did you see your mother treat your father? How did your mother treat you? How did she tell you to treat your father? How have you explained the difference?

42. Let's go back to just before you were married. What were your plans: where to live, jobs, spending money, having fun, having children?

43. When did you plan to have them? How many? What sex?

44. What did you think about where you would be, what you would be doing, and what you would look like ten years after the marriage? 20 years?

45. Then what did actually happen?

46. How did you tell each other about what you wanted, what you didn't like?

47. About children: How did the first birth go? Where was your husband?

48. What kind of changes did the first child bring? How had you planned for these changes?

49. Right now, which child seems most like you? Most different? Does any one of them resemble someone else in the family?

50. To children: What do you think?

51. Ask questions about children's lives; how they feel about different members of the family, their friends, teachers, etc.

52. Ask them to comment on what has been discussed.

53. Ask all to describe a day in their house.[1]

54. What do you feel are the most important things about a family? What do you think the purposes and goals of a family should be?

55. Are you achieving these goals?

56. Describe the ideal family.

57. What kind of person would you like your (boys, girls) to be like?

58. What would you like your (boys, girls) to become?

59. How would you like your (boy, girl, children) to be different? How would you like your (wife, husband) to be different?

60. What person would you like to be like?

61. What would you choose to do if you could?

62. Describe the ideal (boy, girl, man, woman) your age.

63. Describe the ideal parent.

64. Compare yourself to (how like, how unlike) the ideal parent.

65. What is your family like?

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[1]Satir, op. cit., pp. 116-132.

66. How about your _____? Does (he, she, they) measure up to your ideal?

67. What kinds of things do the children do that you disapprove of?

68. What do you do when _____?

69. Do your children ever fight? What about? What do you do about it?

70. What type of punishment do you use?

71. Tell me about the last time or a time that you especially remember when you lost your temper. Or do you ever lose your temper? How do you act?

72. What kinds of things do children do or not do that you don't like?

73. What things make you mad? What do you do about it?

74. How do you act when you are feeling happy and loving?

75. How do you know when your (husband, wife) is feeling happy? Loving? Angry? Sad?

76. How do you act when you are feeling angry? Do you tell your (husband, wife)? Does your (husband, wife) tell anyone else?

77. What makes you feel good?

78. What can your (husband, wife) do to make you feel good? Badly?

79. What can you do to make your (husband, wife) feel good? Badly?

80. What things do you like to do with your family? What things don't you like to do with your family?

81. If you had a personal problem, who would you talk to about it?

82. (To children) What do you do that your parents disapprove of, that makes them mad?

83. (To all) Who is the head of the house? Who makes the decisions in the family?

84. If there is a difference of opinion, who usually wins?

85. What disagreements do you and your (husband, wife) have over handling the children?[2]

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[2]Robert D. Hess and Gerald Handel, Family Worlds: A Psychosocial Approach to Family Life (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959).

GUIDE FOR DATA LEADING TO FAMILY DIAGNOSIS

I. A. Presenting problem

B. Level of entry

1. Disturbance of family member

2. Disturbance of family relationship

3. Impaired family function

4. A special stress situation which precipiatates the referral, inside or outside the family

C. Attitudes toward the family problem and toward professional intervention

II. Identifying data

A. Composition of family: age, sex of family members and other persons in the house

B. Physical setting: home, neighborhood, geographical mobility

C. Social and cultural pattern: occupation, income, education, ethnic and religious status, social mobility

D. Special features: e.g., previous marriages, separations, pregnancies, health problems (mental or physical), significant deaths

III. Family as a group

A. Internal organization

1. Describe emotional climate, communication, shared goals, activities, pleasures, lines of authority, division of labor, child rearing attitudes, problems, etc.

2. Evaluate:

a. Identity of the family group: strivings, expectations, and values

b. Stability of the family (identity and stability as imaged from within)

(1) Continuity of family identity in time

(2) Conflict in family relations, mechanisms of control and interplay of defenses

(3) Capacity for change, learning, development; complementarity in family role relations

B. External adaptation of the family to the community

1. Describe associations and transactions of the family with the community as a group, as marital and parental pairs, and as individuals

2. Evaluate identity and stability as above (as perceived from without)

3. Conflict and complementarity in the requirements of intra- and extra-familial roles

IV. Current family functioning

A. Current marital relationship

1. Describe interaction as marital partners; perception of own and partner's role adaptation; describe components of marital role relations at sexual, social and emotional levels: quality of love and related satisfactions, image of future relationship, including children

2. Evaluate identity and stability of marital relationship as above

B. Current parental relationship

1. Describe interaction as parents and with children; describe perception of own and partner's role adaptation

2. Evaluate identity and stability of parental relationship as above

C. Current parent-child relationship

1. Describe relations of parental pair and each parent with each child, influence of parental pair and of each parent on the child, and vice versa

2. Evaluate identity and stability of parent-child relationship as above

D. Sibling pair relationship, as in IV C.

V. Personality make-up of each individual member

A. Appearance, attitudes, behavior

B. Personality structure: evaluate identity and stability as above

C. Evaluate pathogenic conflict, anxiety, symptoms and patterns of control in the frame of total functioning and integration into the family group

VI. Relations with primary parental families

VII. Developmental history of the primary patient; problems in relation to mother, father, and family group

VIII. Summary interpretation of the mental health of the family group and interrelations between individual and family mental health.[3]

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[3]Ackerman, The Psychodynamics of Family Life, op. cit., pp. 138-140.

SENTENCE COMPLETION TEST--ADULT

Complete all of these sentences as fast as you can. Write the first idea that comes to your mind.

1. There are times when I
2. What people like most about me is
3. It's fun to daydream about
4. People think I am
5. My father
6. When things go wrong, mother
7. One thing I can't stand is
8. To get along with people, I
9. My mother
10. My greatest fear is
11. If I only hadn't
12. I want my children to
13. The weakest part of me
14. The fact that I failed
15. Children
16. Secretly I
17. Other people

18. I often think of myself as

19. If only my father had

20. I think my friends

21. Most women

22. Fathers sometimes

23. Being sick

24. I cannot understand what makes me

25. I despise

26. I don't like the sort of person who

27. When somebody makes fun of me

28. A good mother always

29. I don't like the sort of kids who

30. No one can make me

31. Mothers sometimes

32. If I had my way

33. Compared to women, men are

34. When father comes home

35. Sometimes I feel like

36. Compared to men, women are

37. When told to keep my place, I

38. When they avoided me

39. Around here, too many people

40. When the family is together

41. Bosses can

42. Most men

43. People under me are

44. When I'm put under pressure, I

45. Nothing makes me madder than

46. When others do better

47. Brothers and sisters

48. Our family

49. If they tell me its dangerous, I

50. Most people don't know that I

51. I get down in the dumps when

52. Children would be better off if their parents

53. The strongest part of me

54. Even the best person will

55. What gets me into trouble is

SENTENCE COMPLETION TEST--CHILD

Complete all of these sentences as fast as you can. Write the first idea that comes to your mind.

1. My mother and I
2. When the family is together
3. My father and I
4. When things go wrong, neither
5. I am most scared of
6. When I do something wrong, father
7. When the kids don't play with me
8. People think I am
9. My father
10. My mother
11. I am sorry when I
12. I want my children to
13. What gets me into trouble is
14. Children
15. If my father would only
16. Mother sometimes
17. Secretly I

18. Fathers sometimes

19. I hate

20. When father comes home

21. I don't like the sort of kids who

22. If I had my way

23. The thing that really makes me mad is

24. What people like most about me is

25. Brothers and sisters

26. Our family

27. If they tell me I shouldn't, I

28. One thing I can't stand is

29. To make people like me

30. Other kids

31. Teachers are

32. I think my friends

33. Most girls

34. Being sick

35. I don't like the sort of person who

36. When somebody makes fun of me

37. No one can make me

38. Sometimes I feel like

39. Most boys

40. When I take care of younger kids

41. When younger kids hang around

42. It's fun to daydream about

43. I feel sad when

44. Children would be better off if their parents[4]

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[4]Hess and Handel, Family Worlds, op. cit., pp. 298-301, as adapted from Rohde's Sentence Completion Tests.

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