

C Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay (1931),
Social Factors in Juvenile
Delinquency

Shaw, Clifford & Henry McKay
(1931) Social Factors in
Juvenile Delinquency

John Edgar Hoover

CHAPTER XII

SUMMARY

The present study of *Social Factors in Juvenile Delinquency* has been concerned with the relationship of delinquent behavior to the social situations in which it occurs. More specifically, delinquency has been studied in relation to the community, the play group and gang, and the family. An effort has been made to describe not only the objective situations in which delinquency occurs, but also to present through case materials, the attitudes of the delinquent with reference to these situations and the meaning which they have for him. In this way we have attempted to present both the objective and subjective aspects of juvenile delinquency.

The findings in this study have been presented in considerable detail in the introductions and conclusions of the separate chapters. In this summary, therefore, we shall confine ourselves to a statement of the general findings resulting from the study.

1. JUVENILE DELINQUENTS ARE NOT DISTRIBUTED UNIFORMLY OVER THE CITY OF CHICAGO BUT TEND TO BE CONCENTRATED IN AREAS ADJACENT TO THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT AND TO HEAVY INDUSTRIAL AREAS

Spot maps were prepared to show the geographic distribution of various series of alleged delinquents dealt with by the Juvenile Police Probation Officers of Chicago and by the Cook County Juvenile Court. These maps show the same typical configuration. Each map shows areas where there are few delinquents and other areas where there are very heavy concentrations. These areas of heaviest concentrations, which are in the same parts of the city regardless of the types of cases included in the different series, are almost without exception near the central business district or centers of heavy industry.

2. THERE ARE WIDE VARIATIONS IN THE RATES OF DELINQUENTS BETWEEN AREAS IN CHICAGO

Rates of delinquents showing the ratio between the number of delinquents and the aged 10 to 16 male population were calculated for each of the 113 areas into which the city was divided for the purposes of this study. Rates were calculated for a series of boys dealt with by the police probation officers, a series of boys in the juvenile court, and a series of boys committed to correctional institutions. In each of these series there was a wide range of rates, some areas having rates of delinquents many times higher than the rates in other areas. In each series also the areas with the highest rates of delinquents are near the central business district and the heavy industrial centers, while the lowest rates are in the residential areas near the periphery of the city. The similarity of variation in the different series is indicated by the high coefficients of correlation secured when the rates of delinquents in each series are correlated with the rates in each of the other series.

It should be remembered that these rates are presented as indices of the relative number of delinquents, rather than as measures of the actual number of delinquents in the several areas of Chicago. Undoubtedly the actual number of delinquents is much greater than is indicated by the rates of delinquents even in the police series, since many boys engage in delinquent activities who are not apprehended.

3. THE RATES OF DELINQUENTS TEND TO VARY INVERSELY WITH DISTANCE FROM THE CENTER OF THE CITY

This general tendency is quite evident when the rates of delinquents are studied along lines radiating out from the center of the city. In most instances the highest rates are just outside of the central business district and the lowest rates in the outskirts of the city.

This tendency of the rates to decrease outward from the center of the city is more obvious when rates of delinquents are presented more idealistically in large zones constructed by drawing concentric circles with a focal point in the

central business district. In each series the highest rate of delinquents is in the first or central zone with a regular decrease out from the center in each successive zone. The percentage decrease for the four full zones in Chicago is almost the same for the three types of series presented.

4. THE AREAS OF HIGH RATES OF DELINQUENTS IN CHICAGO HAVE BEEN CHARACTERIZED BY HIGH RATES FOR A LONG PERIOD OF TIME

A comparison of the location of the areas of high rates of delinquents in a series of cases brought into the Juvenile Court of Cook County in the period 1900-1906 and a similar series brought into the court in the period 1917-1923 reveals that, with little variation, the areas of highest rates in the early series were identical with those having the highest rates in the more recent series. A comparison of the distribution maps for the two periods reveals that the heaviest concentrations in the more recent series are somewhat farther extended from the center of the city due to the fact that the central business district has expanded. The rate maps, however, are very similar as indicated by a very high coefficient of correlation.

Similarly, a comparison of the rate of delinquents in a series of boys committed to correctional institutions by the juvenile court between 1900 and 1906 and the rates based upon boys committed between 1917 and 1923 indicate further that the same areas were characterized by high rates of delinquents during these two periods.

5. IN AREAS OF HIGH RATES OF DELINQUENTS A HIGHER PERCENTAGE OF DELINQUENT BOYS BECOME RECIDIVISTS AND THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF TIMES RECIDIVISTS APPEAR IN COURT IS GREATER THAN AMONG BOYS IN AREAS OF LOW RATES OF DELINQUENTS

Among the 8,141 juvenile delinquents included in the 1917-1923 juvenile court series, 43 per cent more delinquents became recidivists in the areas with high rates than in the areas with low rates. Likewise, beyond the second appearance in court the average number of times recidivists

appeared in court was more than twice as great in the areas of high rates of delinquents as it was in the areas of low rates. Similar variations were found in the 1900-1906 juvenile court series.

Therefore, certain areas of the city produce not only a high percentage of delinquents, but also a disproportionate percentage of recidivists among these delinquents. This suggests that the factors in the situation that make boys delinquent tend also to perpetuate their delinquency.

6. THE LOCATION OF DELINQUENCY AREAS IS CLOSELY RELATED TO THE PROCESSES OF CITY GROWTH

In the processes of city growth differentiation between areas of the city takes place. The invasion by either industry or commerce tends to deteriorate the immediately adjacent residential areas and causes the population to move out. The dwellings thus vacated, and not needed for business, become undesirable and the rents in these areas are driven down to a point which forces into these areas the group with the lowest economic status. It is in these areas that the highest percentage of delinquency is found. They appear to be characteristic of most American cities and are known as "slum" areas. Their location near the business center of the city is not, therefore, accidental but is the product of the process of unregulated expansion in the city growth.

7. DELINQUENCY AREAS IN CHICAGO ARE CHARACTERIZED BY PHYSICAL DETERIORATION, DECREASING POPULATION, HIGH RATES OF DEPENDENCY, HIGH PERCENTAGES OF FOREIGN AND NEGRO POPULATION IN THE TOTAL POPULATION, AND HIGH RATES OF ADULT CRIME

By means of these formal characteristics it is possible to differentiate the areas of high rates of delinquents from the areas of low rates, and to predict roughly, the rate of delinquents that is to be expected in a given area. Generally speaking, the areas of highest rates are in the districts that are subject to invasion by industry and commerce and the areas with the lowest rates are in the outlying residential communities.

8. THE COMMUNITY FAILS TO FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY AS AN AGENCY OF SOCIAL CONTROL IN THESE AREAS OF HIGH RATES OF DELINQUENTS

There are few, if any, spontaneous self-supporting community or neighborhood institutions or organizations fostering community programs in these areas. Concerted collective action toward the solution of common problems is virtually nonexistent. The high rate of movement of the population and the fact that the social and cultural backgrounds of the groups are so widely different prevents either the establishment or the perpetuation of community spirit. There are few common interests or common objectives among the people.

This breakdown of community control is accentuated by the social and personal disorganization among the immigrant groups who are forced to make their adjustment to a new culture in these areas of high rates of delinquents.

9. THE GREATEST CONCENTRATIONS OF DELINQUENTS OCCUR IN THE AREAS OF MARKED SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION

In the process of city growth, the neighborhood organization, cultural institutions and social standards in practically all of the areas adjacent to the central business district and the major industrial centers are subject to rapid change and disorganization. The gradual invasion of these areas by industry and commerce, the continuous movement of the older residents out of the area and the influx of newer groups, the confusion of many divergent cultural standards, the economic insecurity of the families, all combine to render difficult the development of a stable and efficient neighborhood organization for the education and control of the child and the suppression of lawlessness.

10. JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IS ~~TRADITIONAL~~ BEHAVIOR IN THE DISORGANIZED AREAS OF THE CITY

In the absence of social solidarity, neighborhood organization, and public opinion in the disorganized areas near the central business district of the city, crime and delinquency gain a foothold, persist over a period of years, and become more or less traditional aspects of the social life. These traditions of delinquency are transmitted through personal and group contacts.

Culture

11. THERE ARE MANY POSITIVE INFLUENCES LEADING TO DELINQUENCY IN THE DISORGANIZED AREAS

The disorganized areas not only fail to provide effective neighborhood agencies for the development of socially accepted types of behavior or the correction of tendencies toward delinquency among the children, but they present many positive influences which lead directly to delinquencies among the boys. We refer specifically to the highly organized and powerful criminal gangs, the prevalence of "fences," who induce the boys to steal for them, the general attitudes of indifference, or the low neighborhood resistance to crime, and the widespread knowledge of political corruption and the alliance between crime and politics.

12. THE RACIAL AND NATIONALITY COMPOSITION OF THE POPULATION IN THE AREAS OF HIGH RATES OF DELINQUENTS CHANGED ALMOST COMPLETELY BETWEEN 1900 AND 1920, WHILE THE RELATIVE RATES OF DELINQUENTS IN THESE AREAS REMAINED PRACTICALLY UNCHANGED

At the beginning of the present century these areas of highest rates of delinquents, which are for the most part areas of first immigrant settlement, were occupied by the older immigrant groups, such as the Germans, Irish, and Scandinavians. Since that time, these nationalities have almost disappeared from these areas and they have been succeeded by the newer immigrant groups, such as the Polish and the Italians. This change which took place, both in the areas adjacent to the central business district and to the large industrial developments, did not bring about any appreciable change in the relative rates of delinquents in these areas.

13. AS THE OLDER IMMIGRANT GROUPS MOVED OUT OF THE AREAS OF HIGH RATES OF DELINQUENTS THE RATES OF DELINQUENTS AMONG THE CHILDREN OF THESE GROUPS DECREASED AND THEY TENDED TO DISAPPEAR FROM THE JUVENILE COURT

When the German, Irish, and other immigrant groups lived in the areas of high rates of delinquents they constituted a large proportion of the population in the juvenile

court. As they moved out of these areas of high rates into areas of second and third immigrant settlements their children disappeared from the juvenile court at a rate far greater than the decrease in these nationalities in the total population of the city. They were supplanted in the juvenile court population by the Italians, Polish, Negroes, and other groups, all of whom moved into these areas of high rates of delinquents.

The same fact is indicated by the lower rates of delinquents in the areas of second and third immigrant settlement.

14. THE FACTS CONCERNING THE DISTRIBUTION AND VARIATION IN RATES OF DELINQUENTS REVEALED IN THE CHICAGO STUDY ARE CONFIRMED BY THE STUDIES IN THE SIX OTHER CITIES

In each of these six cities there were concentrations of delinquents in the areas adjacent to the central business district and industrial areas. Likewise there were wide variations in the rates of delinquents in the different areas into which these cities were divided. As in Chicago, the areas with the highest rates tended to be near the central business district and the areas with the lowest rates in the outlying residential communities. Very similar variations in rates were found in these cities even though the cities vary in size, type, and composition of population.

When the rates of delinquents were calculated by large zones drawn with focal points in the central business districts, the highest rates in each city were in the first or central zone. With slight variation these zone rates decreased regularly out from the center of the city.

15. THE AREAS OF HIGH RATES OF DELINQUENTS IN OTHER CITIES HAVE CHARACTERISTICS SIMILAR TO THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AREAS OF HIGH RATES IN CHICAGO

The characteristic configuration of spots on the maps showing the distribution of delinquents and the location of the areas of high rates in each of these six cities indicate their relation to the processes of expansion and segregation in city growth.

Facts on the physical and social characteristics of the areas of high and low rates were not presented for these cities. They are available, however, and they indicate that these areas of high rates tend to be the districts of physical deterioration, decreasing population, poverty, high percentage of foreign born and Negro population, as well as areas where the community functions least efficiently as an agency of social control.

16. JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IS GROUP BEHAVIOR

CT A study of cases of boys brought before the Cook County juvenile court during a single year showed that only 25.0 per cent were alone in committing their initial delinquency. When the analysis was restricted to offenders charged only with stealing, the percentage of lone offenders was much smaller, namely, only 11 per cent for offenders brought to court, and only 6.0 per cent for all offenders officially known to have been involved. The groups of participants having the highest frequency are those involving two and three boys.

17. DELINQUENT TRADITIONS ARE TRANSMITTED THROUGH GROUP CONTACTS

CT A study of the play groups and gangs of delinquent boys shows that these groups serve as an agency for the transmission of the traditions of delinquency in the high rate areas of the city. Through his participation in the activities of the delinquent groups the boy acquires the knowledge and techniques that are essential in delinquent practices. It appears that the patterns of delinquent behavior, especially the various forms of stealing, are acquired through group contacts just as any cultural form is disseminated and transmitted through social groups.

18. THE DELINQUENT CODE IS ACQUIRED THROUGH CONTACTS WITH DELINQUENT COMPANIONS AND GROUPS

The delinquent group tends to develop standards of conduct by which it seeks to control and regulate the behavior of its members. The traditions and codes of the delinquent groups emphasize as desirable qualities in their

members, ability in delinquency and a record in one of the correctional institutions. The "big shot" is respected; the traitor is stigmatized as a "rat" or "stool pigeon"; and, the petty thief is regarded as inferior. These characteristic attitudes are built up in the course of the boys' personal contacts with delinquent groups in the neighborhood and with older offenders in correctional institutions.

19. PARTICIPATION IN THE ACTIVITIES OF DELINQUENT GROUPS OFTEN SERVES TO SATISFY THE FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN DESIRES OF THE BOY IN THE DELINQUENCY AREAS OF THE LARGE CITY

In the deteriorated and disorganized areas of the city, where the facilities for training and supervision of the boy are meagre, the possibilities for the satisfaction of the boys' desires for recognition, stimulation, companionship, and security are limited largely to the spontaneous and undirected play groups, whose standards and activities are often delinquent in character. In many cases it is by means of his delinquency that the boy is enabled to achieve the recognition and esteem of his fellows, or to defend his status and honor in the group. It may serve, also, as a source of thrill, adventure, and stimulation. Presumably in the outlying neighborhoods these same desires find their expression through the supervised and controlled groups, whose activities and standards are more in keeping with the norms of conventional society. While the standards and values in the two situations may be widely divergent, or even reversed, the human motives and desires underlying the boys' participation in the activities of his groups are perhaps identical in the two neighborhood situations.

20. THERE ARE WIDE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RATES OF BROKEN HOMES IN DIFFERENT RACIAL AND NATIONAL GROUPS, AND SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RATES OF BROKEN HOMES AT DIFFERENT AGES, AMONG UNSELECTED SCHOOL BOYS

A study based upon interviews with 8,278 boys in 20 public schools reveals that the rates of broken homes in some racial and national groups are more than three times as high as the rates in other groups. Likewise, the expected rate of

broken homes among boys 17 years of age is 42 per cent higher than the expected rate among boys 10 years of age. These facts emphasize the importance of an identical control group in the study of the incidence of broken homes in any series of delinquents.

21. THE RATES OF BROKEN HOMES AMONG DELINQUENT BOYS IN THE COOK COUNTY JUVENILE COURT AND THE RATES OF BROKEN HOMES AMONG BOYS OF THE SAME AGE AND NATIONALITY IN THE SCHOOL POPULATION ARE NOT WIDELY DIFFERENT

The rate of broken homes among a group of 1,075 delinquent boys was found to be 42.5, while the expected rate of broken homes in a control group of the same age and nationality composition was found to be 36.1. This general finding was substantiated by a more controlled comparison in one area where the rate of broken homes among all of the boys in the public schools was found to be greater than the rate of broken homes among the delinquents.

This small variation between the rates of broken homes among delinquents and the control group suggests that the broken home, as such, is not an important factor in the case of delinquent boys in the Cook County juvenile court, and that attention should be focused upon inner personal relationships, rather than on the formal aspects of family life.

22. NO CONSISTENT VARIATION WAS FOUND BETWEEN RATES OF BROKEN HOMES AND RATES OF DELINQUENTS

Very little correlation was found between the rates of broken homes in the 29 schools and the rates of delinquents in the areas in which the schools were located. Similarly, when the 8,278 school boys and the 1,075 delinquents were grouped into three divisions on the basis of the rates of delinquents in the areas in which they lived it was found that there was little variation between the rates of broken homes among the boys in the areas of low, intermediate, and high rates of delinquents. Neither was there any consistent relationship between the rate of broken homes in a racial or

national group and the prevalence of delinquency in that group.

23. CASE STUDIES SUGGEST THE NEED FOR GREATER EMPHASIS UPON THE STUDY OF THE SUBTLER ASPECTS OF FAMILY SITUATIONS IN RELATION TO DELINQUENCY

While our studies failed to reveal any consistent relationship between "broken homes" and delinquency, it appears that the subtler aspects of family life—the attitudes and personal relationships within the group—are probably important in the development of tendencies toward delinquency, and are of particular significance in the formation of the child's attitudes, personality, and conception of his rôle in relation to other persons. These aspects of family life are illustrated in the foregoing verbatim reports of family interviews. Apparently the emotional attitudes and personal relationships, which after all constitute the essence of family life, are more significant and formative in the development of the attitudes and behavior patterns of the child than the formal and external aspects of the home or any formal break in the relations between its members.

24. A DELINQUENT CAREER IS THE PRODUCT OF A NATURAL PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT

Many students of the problem of delinquency and crime agree that a large proportion of habitual offenders commit their first delinquencies during childhood, youth, or adolescence. Our detailed case studies, as illustrated in the case presented in the last chapter, indicate that criminal patterns of behavior develop as a product of a long process of interaction between the individual and the successive social situations in which he lives. This process in which criminal habits and attitudes are formed usually involves a continuity of experiences, extending over a long period of time. From this standpoint, a delinquent or criminal act is a part of a dynamic life process and should be considered as such in the analysis and treatment of cases.