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A study of maternal attitudes towards loss of control with adolescent boys

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A STUDY OF MATERNAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS LOSS
OF CONTROL WITH ADOLESCENT BOYS

A thesis

Submitted by

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CHAPTER I

This is a comparative study of the attitudes of twenty mothers of male adolescent boys, ten of whom have been found by The East Cambridge Court to be Stubborn Children and ten who have been found to be Habitual Truants. It is the purpose of this study to examine the maternal attitudes towards the loss of control with adolescent boys who have been declared Stubborn Children or Habitual Truants.

The attitudes and role of the parents in work with children is important. Particularly important is the role of the mother and her attitudes as she has the responsibility for most of the early contact with the child. This is especially important when school truancy problems are considered. To help the child then becomes a twofold thing. First to help understand the child's attitudes and also to help understand the parents' attitudes so that the child will be able to make use of the help he is receiving. It is hoped that this study will reveal some attitudes of the mother and also of the methods to modify them.

The cases were collected from the probation department at The East Cambridge Court. The probation records and ten records from the Judge Baker Pilot Project were processed by means of a schedule for the data in this study. Seven of the mothers were also interviewed and the material from these interviews was also processed by means of the same schedule.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this study of the attitudes of the mothers of Stubborn Children and Habitual Truants the mother-child relationship is most important because the symptom is a direct result of the mother-child relationship.

As stated in *A Healthy Personality for Every Child*, a healthy personality development in children does depend in large measure on the character of the parents' attitudes and the nature of the parent-child¹ relationship.

The mother who is seen in a juvenile court setting such as in this study presents a particularly complex picture.

In a juvenile court setting the client has not located the point at which her needs and anxieties focus so that she can bring herself to act for help, rather the first meeting is made necessary because the community has decided that the child or family need help. The negative feelings about help which are always present have been for the moment submerged by the acuteness of need.

Many difficult defenses against letting any helpful relationships begin are present in the first interview. They are expressed in such ways as "You are treating my boy like a criminal" or, "We can handle everything now that he has learned his lesson."²

¹
For Every Child A Healthy Personality Mid Century White House Conference
on Children and Youth 1950

²
Elliot Studt, "Learning Casework in A Juvenile Probation Setting,"
Social Casework, Vol 32 (October 1951), P.343

Another author points out the pressure of an outside authority in discussing initial defenses and attitudes that might be met.

The delinquent person is anxious and conflicted. She is at the agency because of pressure by some outside authority. Her whole life experiences may have conditioned her to distrust adults, to resent authority, to be prepared for deception.

Almost universally she feels she must be on her guard and her reaction is one of fear and deeply ingrained suspicions. 3.

In a study of comparisons of attitudes it becomes important to consider as to what extent the mothers' attitudes might have on the child.

The psychosexual development of the mother will to a large extent influence that of her child, both as a model for him and as a determining influence in how his needs are satisfied or frustrated and his growth stimulated or retarded. Clues to her level of development may be found in how she relates to people, her sources of gratification and the nature of her preoccupations, both as to subject matter and quality. Assessment of the mother's ego development requires some understanding of how she copes with anxiety and handles her own infantile wishes as well as of her training of her children in these respects. Her ability to differentiate between fantasy and reality both for herself and her children is important. Another significant area of ego functioning is helping the child to deal with his own physical motivation and the development of a suitable body image.

Material about the mother's superego may be revealed slowly. With some parents there is a frank expression of delinquent attitudes; with others one sees in the early stages only reaction formations against delinquent wishes. 4.

3

Avel O. Goldsmith, "Challenges of Delinquency to Casework Treatment" Social Casework, vol. 4 (April 1959) p.15

4

Beatrice R. Simcox and Irving Kaufman, "Handling of Early Contacts with Parents of Delinquents", Social Casework, (October and November 1956) PP 16 and 17.

Thus an understanding of the why of the mothers' attitudes gives important clues to the child's difficulties. As Judith Silberpfenning says their behavior since early infancy is a reaction to the mother's unconscious and conscious wishes in relation to the child.^{5.}

Having reviewed the importance of the mothers' attitudes let us now turn to the specific attitudes that seem important.

Dr. Elizabeth Makkay states that with most parents there will be an initial fear of the authoritativeness of the court setting. How these mothers handle this should give some clues to how they look upon authority. This will also give some insight into their relationship with their own parents since it is from the parents that initial authority has come.^{6.} This will also tell how the child might view the authority of the court.

Menninger discusses this role of authority by saying that parents often treat their child as they themselves were treated by their own parents many years previously thus achieving a long deferred and displaced revenge for the indignities and sufferings they endured.^{7.}

The mothers' attitudes about the child being brought to court thus became important in this study as do their attitudes about their own adolescence.

⁵ Judith Silberpfenning, "Mother Types Encountered in Child Guidance Clinics," American Journal of Osteopsychiatry, 11:476 (July 1941).

⁶ Elizabeth Makkay, M.D. Director of The Judge Baker Pilot Project Program "Delinquency Seminar", (February 1959).

⁷ Karl Menninger, Love Against Hate, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co 1942) P. 25.

Since this study compares attitudes of mothers of adolescent boys it becomes necessary to consider how the mother handles the limit setting area of the boy who is starting to reach out for independence.

Parents who have maintained relations of friendliness and comradeship with their children are often disappointed when they realize that adolescents do not want equality with their parents. They want to stress the point that they, the younger generation, are much cleverer and much more energetic than their own parents are. Commonly however parents do not even offer equality but try to treat their boys and girls like small children as long as possible. In this case there will be either open revolt or if the fear of the parents and their punishment is too severe,^{8.} the adolescent will find more hidden ways to demonstrate his contempt.

English and Pearson point out another viewpoint in this area by saying that some parents are afraid to emancipate their children, to allow them to think independently, to permit them to plan their own lives because of the great urge much of which is unconscious to master and control them and to have them dependent on themselves.^{9.}

Karl Menninger speaks out more specifically about some of the crimes unwittingly committed against the child by the mother. He states "I mean such things as inconsistency, threatening, and objecting to his activity because they are disturbing."^{10.}

8

Kate Friedlander, "The Psychoanalytical Approach to Juvenile Delinquency", (New York: International Universities Press, 1941) P. 65.

9

English and Pearson, "Emotional Problems of the Living," (New York, W.W.Norton and Co., 1945) P. 283

10

Karl Menninger, op.cit. P. 30

The attitude of the mother as to blame for the problem and how to alleviate the difficulty can have a wide variance.

The mother who reacts to the agency by pouring out her own condemnation may seem to be taking responsibility for her child but actually she may be much sicker than the mother who denies her responsibility. ^{11.}

Thus the mother that blames herself would have different attitudes as to how to alleviate the problem than another client who may deny that a problem exists or may project the blame onto the child's bad companions or the school rather than in relation to his stealing or his sexuality ^{12.} which the mother may have to minimize.

The mothers' attitudes toward the father and the role of the father must be considered since the children are adolescents.

If at this time the parents' relationship is less than adequate or the parents are not together the effect on the adolescent is serious. The mothers' attitude about the father becomes to the child an attitude towards his own masculinity.

Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck state since it is the parents who set the tenor of the family life, and by their relationship to each other determine the affectional mood of the home, it is crucially important to learn something about the quality of their feeling for each other. The re-

11

Beatrice R. Simcox and Irving Kaufman, op.cit. p. 13

12

Beatrice R. Simcox and Irving Kaufman, op.cit. p. 14

relationship of only a third of the parents of the delinquents studied compared to two thirds of the parents of non-delinquents studied could be considered good, by which we mean that they were living together in harmony. In another third of the families of the delinquents, the parents were in fact not compatible, but no open break had occurred between them except possibly an occasional separation followed by a reunion. But in one of three of the families of delinquents as compared with only one in seven of the non-delinquents, the inharmonious relationship of the parents had already resulted in an open break, one or the other parent having left or deserted the family. The disastrous effect on children of incompatibility of parents need not be labored.^{13.}

The absence, death or illness of the father also has a disastrous effect on a child. Dr. Kaufman points out three effects the father's loss has on pre-delinquent characters:

1. Trauma: the specific trauma of losing one parent figure
2. Specific kinds of disturbances in psychosexual development (i.e. fixations at pregenital levels of psychosexual development.)^{14.}
3. Specific kinds of ego and superego disturbances.

The effect of divorce and separation can have great meaning as to what the mothers' attitude will be.

13

Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, "Delinquents in The Making," (New York Harper and Bros. 1952) P. 50

14

Irving Kaufman, "Three Basic Sources for Pre-Delinquent Character," The Nervous Child vol.2, (October 1955) P. 12

A study of only parents done by Kurt Freudenthal showed that a significant number of divorced group members seemed to see in the child a reminder of the marriage situations which had been experienced as a failure. There was wide-spread indication of direct or indirect resentment.

At the same time the discussion material brought out that the parents' awareness of such hostile sentiments in turn would tend to be guilt producing.¹⁵

Another important attitude of the mothers of adolescents is attitude toward dating.

Dr. Marynia F. Farnham states that if the parents want to be a positive factor in the youngsters' lives they must exert a constructive influence on their early sexual experience. She suggests the following points:

1. Training for a mature femininity or masculinity begins when the child is born.
2. The adolescent's impression of his parents' attitude will have a great effect on his own attitude.
3. Adolescents cannot be expected to manage their own impulses unaided.
4. The youngsters must understand and above all parents must believe that sexuality is a vital part of life.¹⁶

The mothers' attitudes about dating should provide a good clue to their feelings of letting the boy grow towards independence and a mature sexual life. If there is difficulty in this area or the parents greatly fear this area of the adolescent's life it can be said that when the worst is expected of him he may well deliver the worst.¹⁷

15

Kurt Freudenthal, "Problems of The One Parent Family," Social Casework, vol. 4 (January 1959) P. 47

16

Marynia F. Farnham, "The Adolescent" (New York, Harper and Bros., 1951) P. 133

17

English and Pearson, op.cit. P. 286

Summary of Literature

From the literature the following maternal attitudes have been considered important in understanding limit setting and controls. The mothers who are seen in a Juvenile Court setting manifest defensive behavior that give clues as to their attitudes. This is especially true in the area of attitudes toward authority.

The importance of the limit setting area between mother and adolescent provides an indication of how controls have been met by the adolescent and why the controls have broken down.

What the mother views as the main problem and how she thinks the problem can be helped will provide information as to how seriously disturbed the relationship with the child is. There is a wide variance in how the adolescent's difficulty is seen and what steps can be taken to alleviate the problem.

The relationship between mother and father has a great effect on an adolescent. One of these effects is in relation to how the adolescent boy will view his own masculinity if the maternal attitudes about the father are negative. If the father's role is not of sufficient quality or he is separated by death, separation or illness there can be a deleterious effect on the child.

Another area that is important to study is the mothers' attitudes toward the adolescent's recreational activity. This will give an idea as to the willingness the mother has to allow the adolescent to achieve maturity, independence and an identity of his own. Failure in achieving this can bring about a resistance to parental controls that can be exhibited in many different ways.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This was a comparative study of the attitudes of twenty mothers of male adolescent boys, ten of whom have been found by The East Cambridge Court to be Stubborn Children and ten who have been found to be Habitual Truants.

A. Setting

The East Cambridge Court handles and makes disposition of all charges brought against offenders who are under seventeen years old. The court is located in the Third District Court Building. Its jurisdiction covers the City of Cambridge plus two outlying towns, Arlington and Belmont.

The court is actually a part of the district court system. The hearings are held in a closed session and a district court judge presides. One particular judge handles most of the juvenile hearings. However any of the district court judges can preside at a juvenile hearing.

Juvenile hearings are held on Tuesdays and Wednesdays of each week. Special or emergency hearings are held on other court calendar days if an arrest is made by the police in the court jurisdiction.

The Tuesday sessions are usually devoted to hearings and adjudications. The Wednesday sessions are devoted to the presentation of the pre-sentence report and the judge's disposition. The pre-sentence period is usually for a period of two or three weeks.

There are several resources that the judge may look to for the pre-sentence investigation. His chief resource is the juvenile probation officer. There are three juvenile probation officers who handle only

juvenile offenses. In addition there is the chief probation officer who besides his administrative and supervisory duties, works with some juvenile offenders.

In addition the judge can detain a child at the Reception Detention Center of The Youth Service Board where a study and evaluation will be done.

There is also within the court building two court clinics. One is under the Division of Legal Medicine of The Department of Mental Health and services all courts of The Third District system.

The other clinic is the Judge Baker Pilot Project. This Clinic, a research project, is serviced by the Judge Baker Guidance Center staff and financed by the National Institute for Mental Health. Its purpose is to train psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers in the methodology of working with delinquency. The Clinic works with the court only and accepts only from the chief probation officer cases that appear before the court as they can be handled. The director is a psychiatrist from the staff of The Judge Baker Guidance Center. The director of casework training is also a member of the staff at the Judge Baker Guidance Center as is the director of psychological training. There is also one psychiatric trainee in the clinic who does therapy with both the children and parents as well as psychiatric evaluation when necessary. There is also a psychologist who besides administering testing does therapy with the children and their parents. There are three social work trainees who act as probation officers for the children besides doing casework with children and their parents.

The Clinic works in collaboration with the Probation Department in three areas: pre-sentence investigation, diagnostic studies, and treatment.

The two court clinics serviced fourteen of the situations studied. The Judge Baker Pilot Project works with the child and both of the parents in an effort to bring a solution to the problem. In addition to servicing both the child and the parents, The Judge Baker Pilot Project maintains close contact with the child's school and other community agencies that might prove helpful in the situation. Diagnostic evaluation and psychological testing are also administered at this clinic when it is felt to be necessary.

The court clinic under the auspices of The Division of Legal Medicine also works with the child and the parents in some cases of this study. However they are used more often in the situations of this study for a diagnostic evaluation of the child and the home situation.

One other resource for disposition of cases is the Middlesex County Training School. This school is used only for children who have been found to be Habitual School Offenders or Habitual Truants. This school is used primarily for children residing in the Middlesex area but on occasion is used by other counties of the Commonwealth.

B. Sample

Ten cases who were found to be Stubborn Children and ten cases that were found to be Habitual Truants were chosen from the caseload of the probation department. Since all cases active before the court are carried

by the probation department this included the cases being serviced by the Judge Baker Pilot Project and the Division of Legal Medicine Court Clinic.

Cases of children were chosen between the ages of twelve and seventeen. The sample was limited to male offenders. All but three of the cases are currently active and all originally appeared before the court on charges of Stubborn Child or Habitual Truancy. Three of the cases have since appeared in court on additional charges.

At first it was felt that there would be sufficient cases to limit the study to a closer comparison but it was found that there are only nine Habitual Truancy cases active in the juvenile court. Since two of these cases are now over the compulsory school age the study examines only the original attitudes of the mothers. It was also necessary to use one case in which a step-mother is involved. The limited number of Habitual Truancy cases seems significant in this research question. It might also be noted that in Arlington, one of the three towns covered by the Third District Court not one case of Habitual Truancy has been referred to the court in three years.¹

Ten of the situations studied were serviced on a long term basis at The Judge Baker Pilot Project Clinic. The records of these situations were studied and where necessary consultations with the workers involved took place.

1

Anthony DiNatalie, Chief Probation Officer of East Cambridge Court. Student Seminar.

Two of the cases studied were serviced by The Division of Legal Medicine's Court Clinic and two were serviced by the Catholic Boys Guidance Center. In these four cases the material was gathered from the records of the Probation Department and from the material of the two participating clinics. As in all of the cases studied only the initial attitudes of the mothers were used.

Because only nine Habitual Truancy cases were active on the probation files one closed case in which there was sufficient material on the mother's initial attitudes was studied.

Five of the mothers were interviewed. These five were the most recent situations brought before the court.

Two of the cases from the Judge Baker Pilot Project were also interviewed and carried on a regular basis by the writer.

C. Schedule

A schedule of the areas of interest (See Appendix A for Schedule) was proposed prior to the studying and interviewing. The statistical background information, gathered from the records of Probation and Judge Baker Pilot Project files before studying or interviewing the mother, was religion of parents and child, marital status of parents and reactions to the original court hearings.

The mothers' attitudes were studied and discussed in regard to their own education, about their loss of control, how the situation could be alleviated, limit setting area, dating of the boy, their own adolescence and towards the role of the father in the family.

D. Limitations of Study

The limitations of this study of mothers' attitudes are that this only considered the initial attitudes after the original court appearance and did not take into consideration the change of attitudes that might have been brought about by the treatment provided for fourteen of the twenty cases studied. Also because of the authoritarian setting which usually brings about a fear of punishment by the court, both for the child and the parent, it can be assumed that the mothers related to their concept of authority.

Another major limitation is that all of the material regarding the role of the father was provided by the mothers. Thus this information is based on impressions of the mothers and the interviewer's interpretation and omissions therefore were not brought out. Since fourteen of the fathers in the situations studied were out of the home for some reason the mothers' feelings over the separation, divorce, or death could not be distinguished as to their emotional or reality basis.

CHAPTER IV

DATA FINDINGS

The following material reviewed in Tables I through V covers some general characteristics of the mothers studied.

Table I considers the ages of the adolescents whose mothers were studied at the time of the court hearing.

TABLE I

AGE OF ADOLESCENT AT THE TIME OF APPEARANCE IN THE COURT

| Stubborn Child | | Habitual Truant | |
|----------------|--------|-----------------|--|
| Age | Number | Number | |
| 12 | 1 | 0 | |
| 13 | 1 | 2 | |
| 14 | 3 | 1 | |
| 15 | 4 | 7 | |
| 16 | 6 | 0 | |

The age range of the Stubborn Children was from twelve to sixteen at the time of the initial court appearance. The largest number, seven, were in the thirteen and fourteen year old range. The youngest was twelve and the oldest sixteen.

The age of the Habitual Truants ranged from thirteen to fifteen at the time of their initial court appearance. The largest number, seven, were fifteen years old.

TABLE II

AGE OF MOTHERS AT THE TIME OF THE COURT HEARING

| Stubborn Child | | Habitual Truant |
|----------------|--------|-----------------|
| Age Range | Number | Number |
| 30 to 34 | 1 | 0 |
| 36 to 40 | 4 | 4 |
| 41 to 45 | 3 | 1 |
| 46 to 50 | 2 | 4 |
| 51 to 55 | 0 | 1 |

The age of the mothers of Stubborn Children ranged from thirty-five to fifty. The largest number, seven, were between the ages of thirty-six and forty-five.

The mothers of Habitual Truants ranged in age from thirty-five to fifty-four. Four were in the thirty-five to forty bracket and four mothers were between forty-six and fifty.

Table III shows the number of children in the families of the mothers studied and the rank of the child who appeared before the court.

TABLE III

NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND RANK OF BOY WHO APPEARED IN COURT

| Number of children | Stubborn Child | | | | Habitual Truant | | | |
|--------------------|------------------|---|---|---|------------------|---|---|---|
| | Rank of boy 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Rank of boy 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1 | 2 | | | | 2 | | | |
| 2 | 2 | 1 | | | 2 | 1 | | |
| 3 | 1 | 1 | | | | | 1 | |
| 4 | | | 1 | | | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| 5 | 1 | | | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | 1 | | | | | | | |

Nine of the families of Stubborn Children had fewer than seven children. In seven cases studied the boy who appeared in court was the first born child. Two of the boys were only children; only one boy ranked higher than second born of the children in the family.

Four of the families of Habitual Truants had four children. There were also two only children as in the case of the Stubborn Children.

The religion of the mothers, fathers, and boys who appeared in court is the subject of Table IV.

TABLE IV
RELIGION OF FATHER, MOTHER, AND CHILD

| | Stubborn Child | | | Habitual Truant | | |
|------------|----------------|--------|-------|-----------------|--------|-------|
| | Father | Mother | Child | Father | Mother | Child |
| Protestant | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Catholic | 7 | 7 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 7 |
| Jewish | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Unknown | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Seven of the fathers, mothers and children of Stubborn Children were Catholics. Two fathers were Protestant and three mothers and children were Protestant. None were Jewish. One father's religion was unknown.

Eight of the father of Habitual Truants are Catholic. Seven of the mothers and children are Catholic. Two of the fathers are Protestant. Three of the mothers and children are Protestant. None are Jewish.

The amount of education of the mothers studied and also the education of their husbands is considered in Table V.

TABLE V
AMOUNT OF EDUCATION OF MOTHERS AND FATHERS

| | Stubborn Child | | Habitual Truant | | |
|---------------------|----------------|---------|-----------------|---------|---|
| | Mothers | Fathers | Mothers | Fathers | |
| Grades 6-9 | 5 | 3 | Grades 4-9 | 3 | 4 |
| 1 Year High School | 0 | 3 | | 3 | 2 |
| 2 Years High School | 3 | 0 | | 1 | 2 |
| 3 Years High School | 2 | 1 | | 2 | 2 |
| Trade School | 0 | 1 | | 0 | 0 |
| Unknown | 0 | 2 | | 1 | 0 |

Only one of the fathers of Stubborn Children was a high school graduate. Three had completed one year of high school and three had finished their formal education in the grammar school grades. The education of two of the fathers was unknown. Five of the mothers shown in this table finished their education in the grammar school grades. Three went as far as the second year of high school and two were high school graduates.

In comparison four of the fathers of Habitual Truants completed their education in the grammar school grades. Two were high school graduates. Three of the mothers seen in the table graduated from high school. One mother's education was listed as unknown because she received an unestimable amount of formal education in Italy. One mother also graduated from a four year business college.

The opportunity for and motivations for the mothers' own education plus her own parents' attitudes as to the furtherance of education is shown on Table VI.

TABLE VI
MOTHERS' OPPORTUNITY FOR EDUCATION

| | Stubborn Child | Habitual Truant |
|--|----------------|-----------------|
| 1) Mother had opportunity for education | | |
| 1.yes | 3 | 5 |
| 2.no | 7 | 5 |
| 2) Mothers' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with amount of education | | |
| 1.satisfied | 4 | 4 |
| 2.dissatisfied | 6 | 6 |
| 3) Mothers' motivation for education | | |
| 1. better jobs | 6 | 6 |
| 2. help you to compete with people | 2 | 2 |
| 3. no answer | 2 | 2 |
| 4) Mothers' parents' attitudes towards her education | | |
| 1. wanted her to have more | 4 | 7 |
| 2. did not want her to have more | 2 | 3 |
| 3. did not care | 4 | 0 |

Seven of the ten mothers of Stubborn Children did not have an opportunity to further their education at the time that they left school. Six expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of education they received.

Six mothers also felt that the chief motivation for education was to obtain better employment. Four felt that their parents wanted more education for them and four felt that their parents were not interested in them.

This compares with five of the mothers of Habitual Truants who felt an opportunity for further education did exist and five felt an opportunity did not exist. Six were dissatisfied with the amount of education received.

Table VII compares the number of mothers who felt a secondary symptom appeared by showing the number of mothers of Stubborn Children who felt a secondary symptom of truancy was present and the number of mothers of Habitual Truants who felt a secondary symptom of poor behavior at home existed.

TABLE VII
APPEARANCE OF SECONDARY SYMPTOMS WITH ADOLESCENT

| Stubborn Child | Habitual Truant |
|--|---|
| Mothers felt secondary symptom of truancy appeared | Mothers felt secondary symptoms of poor behavior at home appeared |
| 1) School truancy did appear 7 | 1) Behavior problems in home did appear 5 |
| 2) School truancy did not appear 1 | 2) Behavior problems in home did not appear 5 |
| 3) Mothers felt boy was behavior problem in school 2 | |

Nine of the ten mothers of Stubborn Children felt a secondary symptom involving school appeared. This compares with only fifty per cent of the mothers of Habitual Truants who felt a secondary symptom of poor behavior at home existed.

Table VIII shows the mothers' attitudes on being brought to court on the two complaints.

TABLE VIII
MOTHERS' ATTITUDE TOWARD CHILD BEING BROUGHT TO COURT

| | Stubborn Child | Habitual Truant |
|---|----------------|--|
| 1) Mother sees court role as punishment for child. (combination of 1 and 2) | 5 1 | 0 1 |
| 2) Mother sees court role as punishing parents | 0 | 0 |
| 3) Mother sees court as helping agent with problem | 1 | 3 |
| 4) Mother sees court as making decisions relieving her of responsibility | 3 | 3 |
| 5) Other | | Other |
| Note 1. Three parents who answered as seeing primarily as punishment of child also mentioned courts taking over responsibility. | | A. Court unnecessary as problem could be handled at home |
| | | 3 |

Note 2. Also two of the mothers who responded first by a number four answer mentioned number one as a secondary thought.

Three of the mothers of both Stubborn Children and Habitual Truants felt the court would relieve them of making a decision and their responsibilities.

Three of the mothers of Stubborn Children saw the court as a helping agent while only one mother of an Habitual Truant saw the court as helping.

Three of the mothers of Habitual Truants saw no necessity for court intervention.

The mothers' attitudes in the area of loss of control is the subject of Table IX.

TABLE IX

MOTHERS' ATTITUDES OVER LOSS OF CONTROL RESULTING
IN COURT APPEARANCE

| Stubborn Child | | Habitual Truant |
|---|------|-----------------|
| 1) mother blames self | 3 *1 | 0 |
| 2) mother blames child | 5 *2 | 2 |
| 3) mother blames other: | | |
| 1. school | 0 | 5 |
| 2. friends and environment | 0 | 0 |
| 3. father | 1 | 0 |
| 4. grandfather | 1 | 3 |
| | | illness |
| 4) mothers' amount of concern over loss of control: | | |
| 1. great concern | 9 | 1 |
| 2. concerned but thinks situation can be controlled in home | | 8 |
| 3. little concern | 1 *3 | 1 |
| 5) kind of concern: | | |
| 1. sees placement necessary | 7 | 1 |
| 2. can be helped in home | 0 | 8 |
| 3. sees need for help | 3 | 1 |
| *1. all three also blamed child and fathers as secondary reason | | |
| *2. Two showed own guilt feelings also | | |
| *3. no expressed concern | | |

Five of the mothers of Stubborn Children blamed the boy for the breakdown of controls. In comparison, five mothers of Habitual Truants felt the school authorities were primarily responsible for all the dif-

difficulty and did not consciously recognize a loss of control.

Three mothers of Stubborn Children blamed themselves and three mothers of Habitual Truants again showed no awareness of loss of control by saying illness caused the difficulty.

Seven mothers of Stubborn Children felt the loss of control so serious as to merit placement of the boy while eight mothers of Habitual Truants felt the situation could be handled at home.

The kind of concern shows a wide variance between the two groups. Nine mothers of Stubborn Children felt greatly concerned while only one mother of an Habitual Truant expressed great concern and only one saw placement as necessary.

Table X considers the mothers' attitudes in the limit setting area.

TABLE X
LIMIT SETTING AREA BETWEEN MOTHER AND ADOLESCENT

| Stubborn Child | | Habitual Truant |
|--|---|---|
| 1) Mother able to set limits affectively | | |
| a) too strict | 1 | 0 |
| 2) Can set limits with support | 0 | 0 |
| 3) Has difficulty in area | | |
| a) lost completely | 5 | 0 |
| b) inconsistant | 2 | 5 |
| 4) Doesn't see mothers' role at setting limits | 0 | 1 |
| 5) Fathers' role in limit setting and how mothers see it. | | |
| a) boy closer to her; she therefore set limits ineffectively | 2 | a) boy closer to her so she set limits, father ineffective and uninterested |
| | | 4 |

Five mothers of Stubborn Children felt they had completely lost control of the boy and felt unable to set limits. Two saw the father's role as setting the limits but expressed a closeness to the boy themselves that made the father's limit setting ineffective.

This compares with five mothers of Habitual Truants whose attitudes indicated an inconsistency in the area of limit setting. Four of the mothers also saw the father's role as handling the limit setting but handled this area themselves because they felt the father was not adequate in this area.

The mothers' attitudes as to what can be done to alleviate the existing problem is considered in Table XI.

TABLE XI

MOTHERS' ATTITUDES AS TO WHAT CAN BE DONE TO ALLEVIATE PROBLEM

| | Stubborn Child | Habitual Truant |
|---|----------------|------------------------------|
| 1) Mother feels change must come in child only | 2* | 2 |
| 2) Mother feels court will bring about change by authority | 0 | 1 |
| 3) Mother feels that parents share in problems and recognize their need to participate: | | |
| a) sees father's part | 1 | a) environment 1 |
| b) father in home change | 1 | |
| 4) Mother feels symptom has gone too far and drastic action is necessary | 6 | 1 |
| 5) Mother feels need for school to change | 0 | 3 |
| * One felt boy change or placement should be made in near future. | | 6) Other: better health 2 |

Six of the mothers studied of Stubborn Children felt placement was the only way in which the existing problem could be alleviated. Two felt the boy must change to alleviate the problem.

Five of the mothers of Habitual Truants saw more understanding school authorities or better health as a solution to the existing problem.

The mothers' attitudes around the boys' dating is the subject of Table XII.

TABLE XII
MOTHERS' ATTITUDE TOWARD DATING

| | Stubborn Child | Habitual Truant |
|--|----------------|-----------------|
| 1) Accepts dating as part of growing interest in girls occurring in adolescence. | 2 | 2 |
| 2) Mother feels child too young or does not approve. | 0 | 2 |
| 3) Mother doesn't consider this area important. | 2 | 2 |
| 4) Mother doesn't see the child as developing interest in opposite sex. | 1* | 1 |
| 5) Mother feels problems so big hadn't had time to be interested in girls | 0 | 0 |
| 6) Other: no information | 5 | not covered 3 |

* Youngest boy age 12

This area was not sufficiently covered with five of the mothers of Stubborn Children and three of the mothers of Habitual Truants and is therefore not as reliable as the other tables.

Two of the mothers in each category expressed an acceptance of their son's dating. Two also in each category did not consider this area as being important.

Two mothers of Habitual Truants felt their boy was too young to date

while no mothers of Stubborn Children expressed this viewpoint.

Table XIII compares the mothers' own adolescence.

TABLE XIII
MOTHERS' OWN ADOLESCENCE

| | Stubborn Child | Habitual Truant |
|---|----------------|-----------------|
| 1) Mother was allowed to date freely | 2 | 1 |
| 2) Mother's dating was carefully supervised | 1 | 1 |
| 3) Mother's parents were reluctant to allow her to date | 0 | 3 |
| 4) Mother wasn't allowed to go out with boys | | |
| a) strict | 2 | 2 |
| 5) Parents uninterested | 4 | 3 |
| 6) Unable to obtain information | 1 | 0 |

Four mothers of Stubborn Children felt their parents were uninterested in their adolescence problems as did three mothers of Habitual Truants.

Five mothers of Habitual Truants expressed a reluctance on the part of their parents to allow them normal dating privileges. This compares with only two mothers of Stubborn Children who expressed a reluctance on the part of their parents to allow them to date.

Only one mother in each category studied felt their dating was carefully supervised.

A comparison of mothers' attitudes as to the role of the father in the family is considered in Table XIV.

TABLE XIV
ROLE OF FATHER

| Stubborn Child | | Habitual Truant |
|---|---|-----------------|
| 1) Father important and effective in role | 0 | 0 |
| 2) Father does not participate enough | 1 | 2 |
| 3) Father's attempts at participation ineffectual: | | |
| too easy | | |
| too strict | 1 | 0 |
| 4) Father participates but child does not respond | 0 | 2 |
| 5) Father's role is not important as far as child's difficulty is concerned | 0 | 0 |
| 6) Father separated or divorced and not living in the home | 6 | 4 |
| a) Father deceased | 1 | 0 |
| b) Father ill and unable to participate | 0 | 2 |
| c) Father unknown | 1 | 0 |

Six of the fathers of Stubborn Children and four of the fathers of Habitual Truants are out of the home because of a divorce or separation.

Two of the fathers of Habitual Truants were too ill to effectively participate according to the mother and two mothers felt the fathers did not participate enough.

Of the two fathers shown living in the home of Stubborn Children one mother felt father did not participate enough and one felt father too strict.

Table XV compares numbers that were referred for psychiatric evaluation and treatment.

TABLE XV
NUMBER OF CHILDREN REFERRED FOR PSYCHIATRIC EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDED FOR TREATMENT

| Stubborn Child | | Habitual Truant |
|--|----|-------------------------------------|
| 1) Referred for psychiatric evaluation | | |
| a) JBC | 5 | 5 |
| b) DLM | 1 | 0 |
| c) YSB | 2 | 0 |
| d) Other | 2* | 2* |
| 2) Recommended for continued treatment | 7 | 7 |
| 3) Not referred for psychiatric evaluation | 0 | 3 |
| * One Catholic Boys Guidance Center | | * One Catholic Boys Guidance Center |
| * One NEH | | * One Saterard Clinic |

All of the boys declared Stubborn Children were referred for psychiatric evaluation as compared with seven boys declared Habitual Truants.

Seven in each of the categories were later accepted for treatment.

CHAPTER V

This study considers the maternal attitudes of twenty mothers of male adolescent boys ten of whom have been found by The East Cambridge Court to be Stubborn Children and ten who have been found to be Habitual Truants.

Summary and Conclusions

The majority of adolescents in this study were thirteen and fourteen. This would mean that the controls at home or in the school broke down during the height of what is termed the "adolescent turmoil."

The mothers of Stubborn Children at the time of the court hearing were younger than the mothers of Habitual Truants. The majority were forty-five or younger while the majority of the mothers of Habitual Truants were over forty-five. The fact that the mothers of Stubborn Children were closer in age to their own adolescence could lead to greater anxiety over the loss of controls.

The size of the families of Stubborn Children was from one to seven as compared to the Habitual Truants whose family size was from one to four. It is significant that seven of the Stubborn Children were the first born in their family and four of the Habitual Truants were also the first born. It is felt that the oldest son is most susceptible to acting out the parents' impulses. How many of the younger children later presented difficulties is not known.

The great majority of both groups studied were Catholic. This coincides with the religion of the population which the court serves.

Only two mothers and one father of the Stubborn Children graduated from high school. Two of the mothers and fathers of Habitual Truants also graduated from high school. Both groups studied had similar education backgrounds.

Seventy percent of the mothers of Stubborn Children felt they had no further opportunity for education and sixty percent expressed dissatisfaction with the amount achieved. Also sixty percent felt further education would have brought better job opportunities but only forty percent felt their own parents desired more education for them. Of the mothers of Habitual Truants fifty percent felt they had the opportunity for more education and fifty percent said they did not. Sixty percent felt they were dissatisfied with their education. Sixty percent also felt job opportunities would have been better if they had received more education and seventy percent felt their parents desired more education for them. It is significant that a larger number of mothers whose children's symptoms was truancy thought their own parents wanted more education for them than did the mothers of Stubborn Children.

However seventy percent of the mothers of Stubborn Children stated that school truancy appeared as a secondary symptom while fifty percent of the mothers of Habitual Truants denied difficulty with the child in the home. Thus there is an indication of a stronger defense against loss of control by the mothers of Habitual Truants.

The need for projection of the difficulty onto the child can be seen in the mothers of Stubborn Children by the sixty percent who saw the court as punishment for the child and the thirty percent who saw the

court as relieving them of further responsibility. This compares with only ten percent of the mothers of Habitual Truants who saw the court as punishing the child. This again indicates the stronger defense by the mothers of Habitual Truants against recognizing a loss of control.

This difference that the mothers of the two groups felt about the loss of control can clearly be seen again in the area of the responsibility for the problem. Eighty percent of the mothers of Stubborn Children blamed themselves or the child, ninety percent expressed great concern, and seventy percent saw placement as necessary. In comparison fifty percent of the mothers of Habitual Truants saw the school as being at fault and thirty percent blamed illness for the child's difficulty. Only ten percent expressed great concern and eighty percent felt the situation could be handled in the home.

This indicates that the mothers of Stubborn Children are at a better stage for actual treatment as they recognize a problem, than the mothers of Habitual Truants who tend more to deny the need for outside help.

In the area of limit setting fifty percent of the mothers of Stubborn Children felt they were no longer able to set limits and forty percent felt that their setting of limits were "inconsistent." This compares with fifty percent who were "overprotective" and forty percent who saw their role as the limit setter but did not give initial information that could be categorized more clearly.

Thus the mothers of Stubborn Children have more of a tendency to reject their limit setting responsibility while the mothers of Habitual Truants tend to have more of a need to overprotect their children from

responsibility in this area.

In responding to what could be done to alleviate the problem sixty percent of the mothers of Stubborn Children saw drastic action as necessary while only ten percent of the mothers of Habitual Truants saw drastic action necessary. The majority of mothers of the Habitual Truants felt a need for the school to change or better health as the solution.

In only five of the cases of Stubborn Children studied were any attitudes towards dating expressed. Seven of the mothers of Habitual Truants responded to this area. Thus the validity of a comparison in this area is negligible. From this one wonders however whether this is an indication of great difficulty in managing this aspect of the adolescent's life.

The majority of mothers in both groups felt they were not allowed to move comfortably into an adolescent relationship with boys. From this it can be speculated that there will be difficulties in this area as the adolescent boys' interest in girls develops.

The role of the father is quite striking in this study. More of the fathers of Stubborn Children studied, eighty percent, were deceased, ill or unknown. Sixty percent of the fathers of Habitual Truants were separated or illness made their ability to participate ineffective. Not one mother saw the father's role at that time as important and effective.

It can be concluded that the attitudes of the mothers of Stubborn Children towards loss of control have reached the point that the mothers feel a need for outside help is necessary. These mothers are more apt to blame themselves and the child for the existing problem. The majority

see the best solution as placement of the adolescent outside of the home. Most of these mothers felt that their dating habits in their own adolescence were not handled by their parents in an effective way. Information concerning their attitudes towards the adolescents' dating habits was limited. The majority of fathers in this category were out of the home. The attitudes of the mothers of Habitual Truants revealed that they were not accepting of the loss of control and blamed outside sources such as the school or illness as the cause for the problem. Most of these mothers felt the situation could be handled in the home or by more understanding school authorities.

Most of these mothers also felt that their dating habits in their own adolescence were not handled effectively by their parents. An indication of difficulty in this area with their own sons is present in this study.

Six of the fathers in this category were in the home but all of the mothers felt that the fathers' role was not as important or effective as it should be.

Recommendation for Further Study

There are four areas in which further research is recommended as a follow-up to this study.

Since the complaint of Habitual Truancy is a rare charge in The East Cambridge Court it is felt that a study that included other juvenile courts and probation facilities could provide more cases of this nature. In this way the initial attitudes of the mothers could be more accurate and not taken in part from records.

Another area for future study would be the role of the father. Only the mothers' attitudes about the fathers' role were studied and it would be more reliable if the attitudes of the fathers were included.

Seven of the mothers and adolescents were recommended for psychiatric treatment. This also would provide an excellent area for follow-up study to see how the mothers' attitudes had been effected by the treatment process. The large number of cases referred for psychiatric evaluation and treatment would also provide an interesting comparison with the number referred by other juvenile courts.

accepted by
Maxwell J. Schütz
1/59

APPENDIX A: SCHEDULE

- A. Name:
Birth Date:
Birth Place :
School:
- B. Age of adolescent at the time of appearance in court:
- C. Age of mother at time of the court hearing:
- D. Number of children and rank of boy who appeared in court:
- E. Religion:
Father:
Mother:
Adolescent:
- F. Amount of Education:
Mother:
Father:
- G. Mothers' opportunity for education:
mother had opportunity :
mothers' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with amount of education:
mothers' motivation for education:
mothers' parents' attitudes towards her education:
- H. Appearance of secondary symptoms with adolescent:
- I. Mothers' attitudes toward child being brought to court:
punishment for the child:
punishment for parents:
court seen as helping agent:
mother sees court as relieving her of responsibilities:
Other:
- J. Mothers' attitudes over loss of control:
mother blames self:
mother blames child:
mother blames other:
mothers' amount of concern :
kind of concern :
- K. Limit setting area between mother and child:
mother able to set limits:
can set limits with support:
has difficulty in this area:
doesn't see her role as limit setting:

how mother sees father's role in limit setting area:

L. Mothers' attitudes as to what can be done to alleviate the problem:

mother feels change must come in child:
mother feels court will bring about change:
mother sees parents' need to share in problem:
mother sees drastic action necessary:
mother sees need for school to change

M. Mothers' attitudes toward dating:

mother accepts dating:
mother feels child too young:
mother doesn't consider this area important:
mother doesn't see child developing interest in this area:
mother feels problems have kept adolescent from developing
interest:
other:

N. Mothers' own adolescence:

mother was allowed to date freely:
mother's own dating supervised:
mother's parents reluctant to allow her to date:
mother not allowed to go out with boys:
parents uninterested:

O. Role of father:

mother sees father as important:
mother feels father does not participate enough:
mother sees father participations as ineffective:
mother feels child does not respond to father's participation:
mother doesn't see father's role as important:
father separated, divorced from family, or ill:

P. Number of children referred for psychiatric care:

referral for evaluation:
referral for treatment:

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