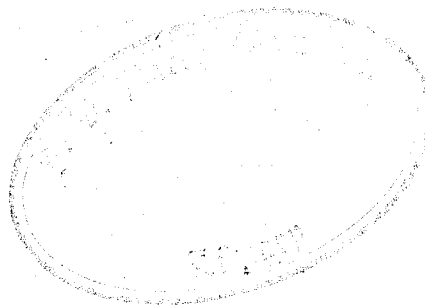# A SURVEY OF JUVENILE OFFENDERS,

QUEENSLAND

An in-depth study of the social and personal
conditions of a number of children appearing
before Brisbane Children's Courts.

BRISBANE DELINQUENCY STUDY

by Andrew Eakin
Lin Reilly

INTRODUCTION

This paper, results from a survey[1] into the social and personal

conditions of delinquents in Brisbane. The study was carried out with

174 young people who appeared in the Brisbane Children's Court on a

range of anti-social offences. The young people and their families were

all of those people appearing before the court on the days on which the

study was conducted. The children and parents, unless previously interviewed,

were invited to participate. The data was obtained by two interviewers, both

of whom had professional training and experience in interviewing. They

attended almost all sessions of the Brisbane Children's Court throughout the

study time period.

The study illustrates the problem of subjective judgments made by

researchers and interviewers. The paper begins with an explanation of the

problem and the procedures developed in an attempt to overcome them. Results

from the survey are then considered in three parts:

PART (I) Some general information about the young people as

recorded by themselves.

PART (II) (Interviewers' Findings and Impressions of the Child).
The areas dealt with are:

A. APPEARANCE

B. ETHICAL ATTITUDES A (Prosocial) and B (Anti-social)

C. ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

D. SUSCEPTIBILITY TO DELINQUENCY

PART (III) (Interviewers' Findings and Impressions of the Child's
Family), the areas are:

A. ATTITUDE TO INTERVIEWER

B. ETHICAL ATTITUDES

C. ECONOMIC SITUATION

D. FAMILY COHESION

THE METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEM

The interview as a tool of sociological research poses serious
methodological problems[1], and these are compounded when role distance
between interviewer and respondent is increased by larger than usual
differences in such factors as age, educational status, and world-view.
The problems are further compounded when the interview takes place in a
setting which is stressful and disadvantageous for the respondent, and
where his moral standing is officially defined as inferior to that of the
interviewer.

This was the situation in an inquiry into the personal and social
conditions of delinquents, carried out in Brisbane in 1974-5.

1. See, for example CICOUREL, 1969:73-79

In order to keep the interview setting as stable as possible
for the entire sample, most of the children (75.9%) were interviewed at
court, immediately after the court hearing. Eleven (6.3%) were interviewed
in custodial institutions, and 17.8%) in their homes. Though emotional
strain may have been less for those who were seen away from the court, the
child was always at a considerable psychological disadvantage compared with
the interviewer, who was probably regarded as representative of a law-abiding
majority who could be presumed to disapprove of the child's behaviour.
Families of the children concerned were interviewed separately, and here
again the situation was officially predefined in favour of the interviewer,
in a way which automatically assigned the respondents to a lower moral status.
To be labelled delinquent, or the parent of a delinquent, carries a heavy
negative value-loading for both.

In an attempt to reduce the value-loading, for this discussion the term
delinquent has been defined operationally as *any person who appears before a
children's court, whatever the nature of the charge or submission concerning
him*[1] - which implies no judgment as to "guilt" or otherwise. But though
the interviewers were acutely aware of the disadvantages under which their
respondents laboured, complete objectivity was impossible to achieve.

(1) The nature of offences were as follows:

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
Stealing	72.73	54.76	68.39
Traffic offences	6.82	-	5.17
Vandalism	3.79	-	2.87
Assault	2.27	-	1.72
Truancy/absconding	0.76	21.43	5.75
Uncontrollable	3.03	9.52	4.60
Sexual offence	6.06	7.14	6.32
Several of above	-	2.38	0.57
Other	4.55	4.76	4.60
	100.01	99.99	99.99

Methodologists often use delinquency research to press home the importance of objectivity.

> "... when the sociologist does research to
> try to learn what caused delinquent behaviour,
> he is obliged to design the project so that
> his disapproval of delinquency is irrelevant.
> In other words, even if he were in favour of
> increasing the delinquency rate, he would
> do the research in the same way." Thomlinson, 1965:24).

The design of the project as a whole might be said to come close to achieving this, in that no major changes would need to be made if the ultimate object were to increase the delinquency rate. But the attitudes of the interviewers towards respondents, and therefore, of their manner of interviewing and interpretation of responses, were inevitably coloured by value-judgments concerning the veracity, intelligence, appearance, and general behaviour and attitudes of the respondents. In making these judgments, the interviewers were accepting the official implications of their role, viz., that they were intellectually and morally superior to those they were interviewing.

Despite these difficulties, however, it can be argued that a computer-conducted interview (if such were possible) would be less successful in eliciting an adequate picture of the delinquents' "personal and social conditions" than those conducted by a biased human being who was aware, at least to some extent, of the direction of her biases. For one thing,

> "... reliability cannot be achieved by the same
> procedures for all subjects, but only for each
> subject treated separately ... every case is a
> unique event." (Cicourel, 1964:80).

Respect for the uniqueness of each individual interviewed allowed

for the possibility of mutual adjustments so that understanding could be

achieved. Questions sometimes needed to be repeated, re-phrased, or

explained; the methodological advantages of a rigidly structured question-

naire apply only to a hypothetically identical population. For example,

an outgoing, hyperactive child of eleven might interpret a question one

way, a sullen sixteen-year-old another, and his timid and tearful contemporary

yet another way; the interviewer's task was to help all reach the common

ground which the devisers of the question had originally assumed. This was

an attempt to reduce what Garfinkel calls "the indexical properties" of

expression; i.e.,

> "... expressions whose sense cannot be decided
> by an auditor without his necessarily knowing
> or assuming something about the biography and
> the purposes of the user of the expression,
> the circumstances of the utterance, the previous
> course of the conversation, or the particular
> relationship of actual or potential interaction
> that exists between the expressor and the auditor."
> (1967:4).

It was also the interviewer's task to be alert to subtle nuances

distinguishing between what was said and what was meant, and to attempt to

discern from inadequate clues whether the respondent was confused, boastful,

forgetful, shy, deliberately misleading, or any of numerous other possibilities.

For these purposes, empathy and intuition were essential; but both are highly

subjective.

Bruyn defends intuition as a source of valid information for the

social scientists. He says,

> "It is a human capacity which, like logic or sense,
> can be disciplined, and a set of procedures may be
> developed around it ..." (1966:167).

Initially in this survey, the procedures developed to codify intuitive impressions consisted of filling in two cover-sheets, one for the child's questionnaire, the other for the family questionnaire. Both were completed immediately after each interview, and provided space for recording, on the child's questionnaire, the interviewer's impressions of appearance, intelligence, ethical attitudes, interests and aspirations, and attitude to court proceedings. For the family, impressions were recorded of the type of family structure and degree of cohesion, attitude to interviewer, attitude to child, ethical attitudes, economic situation, intelligence, and influence of other adults significant to the child.

The employment of two interviewers soon revealed the need to structure these impressions so that both were, at least, talking about the same thing. Most effort was given to devising ways of recording impressions of the child himself, and scaling them so that comparison was possible. For later procedures, some impressions were noted down while the child was still in the room, engaged in filling in a short self-administered questionnaire. Others – (a) codification of environmental factors affecting fulfilment of the child's basic needs, and (b) a susceptibility to delinquency scale – were completed only after the child's family had been interviewed.

THE YOUNG PEOPLE

In this section we have identified some findings which are less likely to require interviewer conclusions. Some are simple demographic data, others are the young persons or the parents judgments about behaviour and interactions. The full data on the young person and the family will be produced in a following report. Here only some of the relevant data have been selected.

The 174 young people, mostly living in the near city and south western suburbs of Brisbane, were predominantly males though the ratio of young women in the group shows the steady increase of their numbers in children's court appearances in comparison with earlier years.

Table (1) SEX OF YOUNG OFFENDERS

Male	132 (75.9%)
Female	42 (24.1%)

Their average age is approximately 14 years.

Table (2) AGE OF YOUNG OFFENDERS

Age	Frequency
Under 10 years	3
11	9
12	10
13	29
14	43
15	41
Over 16	39

Most of the young people (81.0%) were second or more generation Australian. Aboriginal young people made up 5.7% of the group. No other nationality was significantly represented. The majority (91%) had spent all their life in Australia, 81% having lived almost entirely in city life.

The structure of their family showed an over-representation of the one parent family and separated families.

Table (3) FAMILY STRUCTURE

Family Structure	Frequency
Nuclear	51.7%
Mother Alone	19.6%
Mother and Stepfather	13.3.%
Father Alone	5.8%
Father and Stepmother	2.8%

An analysis of the parents marital status showed a fairly high rate of change and separation.

TABLE (4) PARENTS MARITAL STATUS (FREQUENCY)

	Mother	Father
First Marriage	50.6%	50.6%
Divorced	4.6%	8.0%
De Facto	9.8%	2.9%
Separated	9.8%	19.0%
Deserted	5.7%	2.3%
Second Marriage	10.3%	0.6%
Widowed	3.4%	1.1%

The average family size was 5 to 7 members - a little higher than the norm for the Australian family.

On the whole the young people had more than usual difficulties in relating to their parents. In fact only 60% of the group were living with their fathers and 23% had little or no knowledge of his whereabouts. In comparison 85% were living with their mothers and only 6% did not know of her whereabouts. However perceptions of both parents were fairly similar.

Table (5) YOUNG PERSONS PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTS

Reported Statement	Frequency for Mother	Frequency for Father
Major Difficulties in Relationship with Parent	10.3%	20.6%
Seeing Parent Rejecting Them in Favour of Sibling	24.1%	23.0%
Failure to Understand Parent	25.2%	31.7%
Parents Failure to Understand Young Person	31.9%	36.6%

The young person tended to see their mothers as more dominant in the home life and decision making. Less than 5% saw decision making as an issue for the family as a whole. Mothers likewise were much more likely to find fault with their behaviour.

Table (6) FAULT FINDING - PUNISHING

| | Frequency | |
	Fault Finding	Punishing
Mother	47.1%	24.7%
Father	15.5%	33.3%
Both Parents	26.4%	17.2%

In keeping with most Australian family patterns it was the father who was more likely to be the one giving out the punishment which is consistent with the perceptions of relationships to father.

However the parents themselves had slightly different views on the responsibilities for discipline.

Table (7) PARENTS PERCEPTION OF ENFORCER OF DISCIPLINE ROLE

	Frequency
Mother	39.7%
Father	22.4%
Both Parents	17.8%

Relationships with step parents indicated even greater difficulties with fathers. Of the whole group 45.4% reported having very difficult relationships with step-fathers and 12.5% with stepmothers.

In spite of the fairly high rate of difficulties in relationship reported by the young people they tended to see their parents as fairly happy in the marital relationship.

Table (8) YOUNG PERSONS PERCEPTION OF PARENT'S MARITAL HAPPINESS

	Frequency
Very High	35.6%
Fairly High	21.3%
Variable	5.7%
Not Very High	9.8%
Very Low	7.5%

These perceptions were fairly similar to the parents perceptions

of their own marital happiness in the family study.

Table (9) PARENT PERCEPTIONS OF OWN MARITAL HAPPINESS

	Frequency
Very Happy	31.0%
Fairly Happy	20.1%
Average	8.0%
Variable	5.2%
None	9.8%

When the parents and siblings were asked about the extent to which

the parents understood the young person in question there were inconsistencies.

Parents in fact claimed to have less understanding of their child than the

child appreciated.

Table (10) PARENTS OWN ESTIMATE OF UNDERSTANDING THEIR CHILD

	Frequency
Neither Parent Does	28.2%
Mother Does Father Does Not	23.6%
Father Does Mother Does Not	7.5%
Both Do Sometimes	16.1%
Both Fairly Well	13.8%
Both Very Well	8.0%

The above reflects that a high proportion of these parents are in

difficulty with communicating with their adolescent children.

Parents also reported a much higher degree of difficulty in their

child's attitude to the parent than the young people as a group actually saw.

Table (11) PARENTS ASSESSMENT OF YOUNG PERSON ATTITUDE TO PARENT

	Attitude to Mother	Attitude to Father
Positive	50.0%	40.2%
Neutral	4.6%	12.1%
Ambivalent	23.6%	13.8%
Negative	21.1%	23.6%

When the areas for parent disciplining being required around the home
the parents tended to play down the significance of these compared to their
children.

Table (12) PARENTS AND CHILDRENS ESTIMATE OF HOME DISCIPLINE AREAS

	Child's Estimate	Parent's Estimate
No Troubles at Home	8.0%	33.3%
Quarelling	32.2%	12.6%
Coming Home Late	18.4%	16.7%
Disobedience	11.5%	10.9%
Cheekiness	5.2%	12.6%
Trouble with Authorities Outside Home	4.6%	4.0%
Not Doing Chores	10.3%	4.0%

Some of the notable differences can be seen in the recognition of
problem areas and the extent to which quarelling is a disipline area. The
low estimate by both of concern with anti-social problems does perhaps
convey a playing down of its significance. The young people generally agreed
that the punishment given out by parents was deserved by them with only some
difference in the extent of different types of punishment.

Table (13) FREQUENCY OF MAJOR PUNISHMENTS ADMINISTERED BY PARENTS

	Parent's Rating	Child's Rating
Physical Punishment	35.1%	29.3%
Restriction of Liberty	21.3%	33.9%
Reprimands	13.2%	13.2%

On reflection 42% of the parents considered that the young people should
be punished more than they were.

The parents ambivalent acceptance of their child's peers possibly reflects
their concern with the 'bad company' worry. Considering the extremely high
percentage of offences committed in peer company their fears may be well founded.

Table (14) PARENTS ACCEPTANCE OF CHILD'S PEERS

	Frequency
Never Accept Them	14.9%
Very Restrictive	13.8%
Sometimes	16.1%
Fairly Often	9.8%
Accepts Them All	44.8%

The degree of family interactions are probably lower than that which might be expected in comparable 'non-delinquent' families. The young people indicated that parents were only minimally seen as people to talk to about their concerns.

Table (15) PEOPLE TO TALK TO ABOUT CONCERNS

	Frequency
Mother	24.1%
Father	10.3%
Both Parents	5.2%
Peers	16.7%
Nobody	20.7%
Neighbours	3.4%
Teacher	2.9%

The young person is not left at home alone to any excessive degree i.e. there are few 'Latch-Key Children' and only 26% of the mothers are reported to be working. Family holidays and outings are not a frequent occurrence (regular holidays 39.1% and regular family activities 47.7%) but even for those young people reporting regular family activities only 50% reported deriving any enjoyment from them.

Considering the high degree of stealing among the offences one might have expected these young people to be more demanding for pocket money and allowances from parents. However only 16.7% stated that they received no pocket money and only 3.4% of the others complained of not receiving sufficient.

School proved to be a major area of difficulty and discontent for this population (47.2% of the group were still at school). The majority had a definite dislike for school (50.6%) while 34.5% had only a grudging acceptance of it. Teachers individually were better favoured - 26.4% definitely disliked all teachers and 24.1% had ambivalent feelings about teachers. However 48.2% had definite likings for their teachers. Over 30% of the young people saw themselves with inferior intelligence, 37% had repeated grades and over 35% had been in five or more schools in their school career.

The young people described their own health and personal characteristics. In areas of physical health they were asked to describe any significant problems. Those with the higher frequencies were,

Speech defects	37.3%
Dizziness	40.8%
Frequent headaches	11.5%

The interviewers estimated that only 30% of the group had a diet which approached a nutritious and balanced one. They reported that 65% were regular smokers and 58% regularly drank alcohol.

To assist these young people describe themselves a number of social incidents were prepared on paper and they were asked to report their own responses in such situations. The incidents allowed them to look at the following:

Responsibility for Others: Peer Loyalty: Aggressiveness:

Helplessness in Others: Selfishness: Self Confidence:

Courage: Tolerance: Persistence.

While the responses here are still being explored by the researchers some clear trends have emerged.

Areas where the group showed fairly <u>strong</u> positive self appraisal
included:

Responsibility for Others	63.8%
Loyalty to Peers	52.3%
Helplessness in Others	86.8%
Rejecting Selfishness	67.2%
Tolerance of mistakes in others	56.9%

Areas in which there were ambivalent self appraisals:

- Self Confidence - less than 48% had any real measure on this factor.

Persistence - less than 44% had any real measure on this factor.

Areas in which they were considerably negative in self appraisal:

Courage - over 58% showed quite marked fears in social settings.

Aggressiveness/Assertiveness - less than 20% were able to identify
themselves as positively aggressive.

When asked about their likes and dislikes the group as a whole showed
fairly normal adolescent responses.

Table (16) MAJOR PERSONAL LIKES   MAJOR PERSONAL DISLIKES

Motorbikes	75.9%	Drugs	19.5%
Movies	70.7%	Church	12.6%
Parties	70.7%	School	10.9%
Cars	67.2%	Drinking	9.8%
Sport	66.7%	Books	5.7%
Food	63.8%	Dances	5.2%
A Girlfriend	60.9%	Watching Sport	4.6%

Regarding their patterns of antisocial behaviour a very high percentage
of the group acknowledged a number of previous delinquent offences. The
following table gives their own statements on things that might have got them
into trouble in the past.

Table (17) YOUNG PERSONS STATEMENTS ON PREVIOUS OFFENCES

	Frequency	
Offence	Once or Twice	More Frequently
Shoplifting	18.9%	51.0%
Stealing from Parents	10.9%	30.5%
Illegal Use of Motor Vehicle	19.6%	8.1%
Assault	9.2%	8.6%
Gang Fight	20.7%	8.6%
Breaking and Entering	21.1%	17.1%
Vandalism	13.8%	12.1%
Truancy	12.6%	68.9%
Running Away From Home	22.4%	16.1%
Sex Offences	12.1%	0.6%
Drugs Hard	1.1%	0.6%
Soft	3.4%	8.6%
Arson	4.5%	1.8%
Extortion	2.9%	2.2%
Rape	1.1%	0.6%

The above data does indicate a moderately high pattern of previous
offences particularly in the areas of theft and school truancy.

When asked where they attached responsibility for the current court
charge the young people attributed most of the blame on themselves and
their peers.

Table (18) YOUNG PERSONS ATTRIBUTION OF BLAME FOR CURRENT OFFENCE

	Frequency
Nobody	8.0%
Self	37.9%
Peer	16.7%
Self and Peer	17.8%
Sibling	0.6%
Adult Relative	5.2%
Adult Non Relative	1.7%
Don't Know	5.7%
Several of Above	5.7%

Parents views of the source of responsibility generally supported
those of their children though they were more ready to attach blame to
themselves and the child.

Table (19) PARENTS ATTRIBUTION OF BLAME FOR CURRENT OFFENCE

	Frequency
Child Only	32.8%
Child and Siblings	2.9%
Child and Peers	25.3%
Child and Parents	2.3%
Parents Only	10.9%
Parents and Others	0.6%
School/Society	2.3%
Don't Know	9.8%
Several of Above	13.2%

The young people were asked about their future attitudes towards delinquent activities. Though the question almost invited a denial of future offences the group indicated quite some uncertainty about this.

Table (20) ATTITUDES TO FUTURE DELINQUENCY
LIKLIHOOD OF COMMITTING SAME SORT OF OFFENCE AGAIN.

	Frequency
Definitely Not	58.0%
Doubtful	17.2%
Hopefully Not	8.0%
Probably Will	3.4%
Definitely Will	2.9%
Don't Know	8.0%

A small percentage seemed fairly convinced that delinquency would continue for them.

When parents were asked about the changes for their child's future they also showed some definite insecurity about this.

Table (21) PARENTS VIEW OF CHILD'S FUTURE

	Frequency
Better than Average	21.3%
Average	37.4%
Less than Average	17.2%
Criminal	6.3%
Don't Know	16.1%

INTERVIEWERS' IMPRESSIONS OF THE CHILD

A. APPEARANCE

The most obvious impression formed by the interviewer concerned the child's appearance. A scale was constructed which allotted a possible two points each for build, face, and grooming: 2 = above average, 1 = average, 0 = below average; possible maximum, 6. The application of this scale, however, was by no means as simple as the scale itself. Devereux points out that

> "The correct perception and interpretation of reality is both facilitated and hampered by man's tendency to consider his self, his body, his behaviour, and his manner of experiencing as archetypal or at least prototypal, and to refer to it - and model upon it - his image of the outer world. He constructs for himself a more or less unconscious and often partly idealized self-model, which he then uses as a kind of touchstone, standard, or baseline, in terms of which he evaluates other beings or even material objects." (1967:162).

The interviewers, then, were likely to judge respondents' appearance from a middle-aged, middle-class "baseline" which would probably reveal more about their own expectations than about the respondents. To overcome this bias, a definite effort was made to rate appearance according to the presumed standards of the respondents' opposite-sex contemporaries. In practice this may have contributed to interviewers' reluctance to rate anyone as below average in appearance. Results are given in Table (22).

Table (22) APPEARANCE

	Male	Female	Total
Above average	40.1%	57.1%	44.2%
Average	43.9%	28.5%	40.2%
Below average	15.9%	14.2%	15.5%

If the average is raised to 4 points in a possible 6, 18.9% of
the boys and 21.4% of the girls would be rated as definitely good-looking,
and some people might consider this a more realistic estimate. Nevertheless, .
by any reasonable standard, this survey did _not_ support Cowie, Cowie & Slater's
findings regarding delinquent girls, viz.,

> *"The main impression which one forms on seeing these*
> *girls is that of lack of grace and beauty... It seems*
> *likely that physical defects and lack of physical*
> *attractiveness have played a part in causing delinquency."*
>   (1968:64).

B. ETHICAL ATTITUDES

If judgment of appearance proved difficult, other judgments were much
more so, because there could be no escaping the fact that they were largely of
a moral nature. Both interviewers, of course, aimed at being "non-judgmental",
and probably achieved this quite successfully in their respondents' eyes, if
only by contrast with the necessarily judgmental nature of the court proceedings.
There was also a deliberate emphasis on respect for the child's autonomy, which
he seemed to appreciate as an unusual experience, not only since his apprehension
as a "delinquent", but also in his school and family life as a whole. No attempt
was made to pressure children or parents into agreeing to an interview, the
child's own permission was always sought and his decision respected, and the
purpose and confidentiality of the interview were explained. Avoidance of
further humiliation was a central concern for both interviewers. An unsentimental
friendliness and respect for the child's rights quickly gained, in most cases,
a high degree of co-operation, and the overall impression obtained from the
survey was that most questions were "truthfully" answered according to the child's
understanding of what constituted truth.

But with this said, there can be no denying that the interviewers

perforce made intuitive assessments of each child that came before them,

usually on a basis of moral standards more intellectualized and articulated

than those familiar to the child. According to Devereux, a moral stance in

social investigation is not only defensible but desirable:

> "... *negation of the legitimacy of ethical judgments
> can lead to a refusal to make scientific diagnoses...*"
> (1967:87, emphasis in original),

but if this is true, it can apply only to ethical judgments which are

acknowledged and explicit.

Accepting the inevitability of judgments in this situation, then,

it was decided to try to explicate them and devise a scale which both

interviewers could use, thus lending a degree of consistency to the comparison

of one set of impressions with another. To achieve this, answers on the

original questionnaire were examined to determine the sort of judgments which

interviewers were making when they recorded their impressions. They seemed

to consist of two main aspects of the child's personality, which could be

summed up as attitudes related to "giving" (pro-social) and "taking" (anti-social).

Each of these aspects was subdivided into 12 components, which were scored as

2 = above average, 1 = average, 0 = below average in each case. "Average"

referred to the interviewer's estimate of a similar attitude manifested by an

"average" child of the same age in the general population. The "giving" or

pro-social attitudes (Ethical Attitudes A) were scored as positive, the "taking"

or anti-social attitudes (Ethical Attitudes B) as negative.

1. Pro-social Attitudes

The twelve components of Ethical Attitudes A were as follows:

Self-knowledge (ability to look objectively at himself and his motives).

Self-respect (degree of positive self-image; ego-strength).

Respect for rights of others.

Generosity towards friends and relatives (including generosity of spirit - e.g., tolerance of faults).

Generosity towards outsiders.

Sensitivity.

Communicativeness (open-ness; truthfulness; willingness to participate in meaningful interaction).

Loyalty (to family; to peers, to principles).

Responsibility (including attitudes to family, to money, and to work).

Productiveness (e.g., hobbies, part-time work, school or sports achievements).

Futurity (evidence of planning for the future).

Universalism (breadth of vision; evidence that perspectives extended beyond immediate peer-group or home-situation).

Results are given in Table (23).

Table (23) ETHICAL ATTITUDES A

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
Well above average	6.82	2.38	5.75
Slightly above average	17.42	16.67	17.24
About average	33.33	33.33	33.33
Below average	28.03	45.24	32.18
Far below average	13.64	2.38	10.92
Very few pro-social attitudes	0.76	-	0.57
	100.00	100.00	99.99

Scores for futurity and universalism were low for almost all respondents; i.e., they seemed to the interviewers to be less future-oriented and universalistic than could be expected of members of their age-group in the general population. Scores for self-respect, responsibility, and productiveness also

tended, on the whole, to be lower than the presumed "average", but generosity, sensitivity, communicativeness, and loyalty were probably much the same as among their general-population contemporaries. The one child rated as having "very few pro-social attitudes" was a seriously disturbed and alienated 14-year-old with transvestite characteristics. He could however have been added simply to other low-rated respondents in the category immediately above (i.e., "well below average").

It is interesting to note that one-third of the respondents, male and female alike, were rated by interviewers as approximately as pro-social as most of their age-group in the general population. More males (24.4%) than females (19.05%) were rated as at least slightly above the average in this respect; but more females (47.62%) than males (42.4%) were rated below the average. This finding may be due to the smaller size of the female sample, but when it is taken into consideration that a much higher proportion of males (14.4%) than females (2.38%) were rated as seriously below average, the results can be seen as further evidence of the well-established tendency for findings concerning females to cluster about the norm, with a much wider range of variation for males.

2. Anti-social Attitudes

The twelve components of Ethical Attitudes B (anti-social; "taking") were classified in four sub-groups: (i) acquisitiveness; (ii) violence; (iii) dependency; (iv) alienation.

(i) Acquisitiveness. The components of the acquisitiveness sub-group were:

(a) at the expense of organizations (e.g., shops).

(b) at the expense of strangers.

(c) at the expense of friends and relatives.

(d) generalized (i.e., attitudes which might or might not be expressed in the types of behaviour listed in items a, b, and c).

Scoring 2 = above average acquisitiveness, 1 = average, and 0 = below average

for each item, resulted in a maximum negative total of 8 for this sub-section. .

Results are shown in Table (24).

<div align="center">Table (24) ACQUISITIVENESS</div>

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
Above average	30.30	21.32	28.26
Average	52.27	47.62	51.15
Below average	17.42	30.95	20.69
	99.99	100.00	100.00

Considering that 68.39% of the total sample (72.73% males, 54.76% females)

had come before the court for offences involving stealing in one form or another,

it is not surprising that nearly one-third of the boys impressed the interviewers

as revealing more acquisitiveness than might be expected in contemporaries from

the general population. Figures for the girls were consistently more favourable

than for the boys. Nevertheless there is a distinct possibility that much

stealing on the part of delinquent boys takes place less to acquire coveted

objects than to outwit authority figures; in other words, the satisfaction or

excitement of the exploit is of more importance than the article stolen.

Certainly many parents complained that their sons had no need for the items

stolen (e.g., "He took a pair of jeans - and his cupboard's full of them!").

Girls more often gave the impression that their thefts (most of which involved

shoplifting) were motivated by actual coveting of desired goods.

In a highly acquisitive society it must be expected that children who

are disadvantaged economically and emotionally will respond by developing

attitudes that are even more acquisitive than those displayed by the general

population.

(ii) Violence. Components of the "violence" sub-group were:

    (a) against property (vandalism, or acts of violence in the home.

    (b) against perceived enemies.

    (c) generalized (i.e., attitudes which might or might not be express
         in the type of behaviour mentioned in a and b).

Scoring in the same way (i.e., 2 = above average violence, 1 = average, and 0 = below average) resulted in a maximum of 6 negative points for violent attitudes as a whole. Results are given in Table (25).

Table (25) VIOLENCE

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
Above average	17.42	9.52	15.52
Average	36.36	23.81	33.33
Below average	46.21	66.67	51.15
	99.99	100.00	100.00

Again the figures are more favourable for females, reflecting their tendency to conform in many ways with accepted feminine stereotypes. The ratings for below-average violence, however, are unexpectedly high for both sexes. Apparently the colourful language and aggressive posturing of the few rated above-average in violence (17.42% males, 9.52%) females) had an impact on interviewers which led to the expectation that these occurred more frequently than was in fact the case. On reflection, the subdued and nervous children who were notably lacking in self-confidence and self-respect greatly out-numbered those who conformed to the "over-confident criminal" stereotype so often associated with delinquency, and individual impressions noted down by interviewers while the child was still present have served to correct an overall view which would otherwise have been seriously biased.

(iii) Dependency The sub-group "dependency" also consisted of 3 components:

(a) on parents (both financial and emotional - e.g., non-payment of board, and expectations that parents should be able to get them out of trouble).

(b) on peers (i.e., being "easily led").

(c) on society (e.g., institutionalization, or undue reliance on the dole).

Scored in the same way (i.e., 2 = above average dependency, 1 = average, 0 = below average) this produced a maximum of 6 negative points. Results are shown in Table (26).

Table (26) DEPENDENCY

	Male(%)	Female(%)	Total(%)
Above average	15.15	11.90	14.37
Average	55.30	71.43	59.20
Below average	29.55	16.67	26.44
	100.00	100.00	100.00

It is interesting to note that a higher proportion of males (15.15%) were rated as overly dependent, but this may reflect a greater social tolerance (shared by the interviewers) of dependency in girls (11.9% rated over-dependent). As might be expected, far more males (29.55%) showed a considerable degree of independence compared with females (16.67%). The high proportion of girls (71.43%) clustering around the "average" is, as previously mentioned (see p.9), a very common characteristic of data relating to females.

(iv) Alienation. For the final sub-group, "alienation", two components were considered most useful for this survey, viz., meaninglessness and estrangement. The latter was defined more in the sense of what Seeman (Coser & Rosenberg, 1964:533-4) means by "isolation" than "self-estrangement" (i.e., estrangement from normal social contacts), though some children revealed elements of both types. "Meaninglessness" referred to a lack of purpose and meaning in life. Results are shown in Table (27).

Table (27) ALIENATION

	Male(%)	Female(%)	Total(%)
Above average	37.88	38.10	37.93
Average	46.21	54.76	48.28
Below average	15.91	7.14	13.79
	100.00	100.00	100.00

Well over a third of the sample (37.93%) were rated as showing more than average alienation, in that their lives seemed to have no guiding purpose or meaning, and they appeared to be "estranged" from the meanings and purposes which the interviewers thought likely to be present for their contemporaries

in the general population. For this sub-group of attitudes, there was no
significant difference between ratings for males and females in the
above-average group; more boys, however (15.91%), than girls (7.14%) displayed
below average alienation, and there was the usual tendency for girls' scores
to cluster around the average (girls, 54.76%; boys, 46.21%).

Total Anti-social Attitudes

Adding all 12 components of the anti-social ("taking") attitudes
together produced total Ethical Attitudes B scores as shown in Table (28).

Table (28) ETHICAL ATTITUDES B

	Male(%)	Female(%)	Total(%)
Extremely anti-social	37.88	33.33	36.78
Fairly anti-social	24.24	19.05	22.99
About average	21.21	21.43	21.26
Less anti-social than average	12.88	19.05	14.37
Few anti-social attitudes	3.79	7.14	4.60
	100.00	100.00	100.00

The girls do not reach the extremes of anti-social attitudes as often as
the boys (33.33% girls compared with 37.88% boys); those who seemed at least
slightly more anti-social than the presumed average consist of 62.12% males
and 52.38% females. However, the figures for males and females rated about
average are almost identical (21.21% boys, 21.43% girls). At the other end
of the scale, the ratings again favour the girls; 26.19% females, compared
with 16.67% males, were considered to be at least slightly less anti-social
than their contemporaries in the general population.

Total Ethical Attitudes

Ethical Attitudes A were scored according to a possible _positive_
maximum of +24; Ethical Attitudes B according to a similar, but _negative_

maximum - i.e., -24. Fifty points were added to the sum of the two totals

to eliminate minus scores. Ratings around 50 indicate that positive and

negative totals cancelled one another out; those above 50 revealed a

pre-dominance of pro-social attitudes; those below 50, a pre-dominance of

anti-social attitudes. Results are shown in Table (29).

Table (29) TOTAL ETHICAL ATTITUDES

	Male(%)	Female(%)	Total(%)
Predominantly pro-social	12.88	9.52	12.07
Slightly more pro- than anti-social	21.21	23.81	21.84
Slightly more anti- than pro-social	26.52	28.57	27.01
Fairly anti-social	21.21	30.95	23.56
Very anti-social	16.67	7.14	14.37
Apparently intractably anti-social	1.15	-	1.15
	100.00	99.99	100.00

Again males out-number females at both extremes of the scale, with slightly

more boys (12.88%) than girls (9.52%) at the pro-social end, and considerably

more boys (17.82%) than girls (7.14%) at the anti-social end. The proportion

of girls (52.38%) is higher than boys (47.73%) for the two categories closest

to an even balance between pro-social and anti-social attitudes. However, if

the high proportion of girls displaying "fairly anti-social" attitudes is

added to the "very anti-social" category, their advantage over boys in this

respect (i.e., in being rated as having fewer anti-social attitudes) almost

disappears.

It is notable that with the two sexes considered together, over a

third display more pro-social than anti-social attitudes, and if those for

whom the balance is tipped only slightly towards the negative end are included

with these, the proportion rises to well over half (60.92%). The majority

of children who appear before a court are psychologically very similar to

those who do not have this experience. If interviewers' impressions
are at all reliable as a guide, those with real problems are probably to
be found within the 15% at the anti-social end of the scale.

C. ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

The researchers had some dissatisfaction with the concentration on
psychological and personality factors implied in the scores listed thus far.
In many, if not all, environmental factors had obviously played some part
in forming "ethical attitudes". Interviews with parents or guardians provided
insight into the nature of these environmental factors, which might be summed
up as differential fulfilment of human needs.

Using a tripartite scale adapted from Maslow's (1954) work, three
groups of five related needs were scored on the same principle as before –
i.e., 2 = above average fulfilment, 1 = average, 0 = below average. The
scores so arrived at were meant to convey the part the child's family and
general environment played in fulfilling survival, affiliation, and
effectiveness needs.

Survival Needs

The first group of five needs corresponds approximately to those
designated by Maslow as "physiological", and by Alderfer (1969) as "existence"
needs. Of the many other terms in use, "survival needs" seems most descriptive
and will be used for this paper. Survival needs were assumed to consist of:

(1) Space, air, and water. Access to open country or parks; unpolluted air;
    ample water for washing and recreational needs.

(2) Nutritional needs. Wholesome and nutritious diet; hygienic disposal
    of wastes.

(3) Safety and shelter. Physical safety; standards of housing.

(4) <u>Health.</u> Habits of living conducive to health. The availability of

help for the needs of respondents with special health problems

(e.g., asthmatics, diabetics) were taken into account. A family of

peer-group environment encouraging cigarette-smoking or other drugs was

scored as below average.

(5) <u>Exercise and rest.</u> Opportunities for healthy exercise, relaxation,

and sleep.

Scores for the fulfilment of these needs are shown in Table (30)

Table (30) PROVISION FOR SURVIVAL
NEEDS

	Male(%)	Female(%)	Total(%)
Well above average	15.15	21.43	16.67
Slightly above average	12.88	9.52	12.07
About average	25.86	26.19	25.86
Slightly below average	30.30	16.67	27.01
Far below average	15.91	26.19	18.39
	100.00	100.00	100.00

More than half of the total samples were reasonably well provided for

regarding housing, diet, and other matters related to general health;

but 18.39% could be regarded as seriously deprived in this respect. In

most cases these were children with a large number of siblings living in

one-parent homes. For survival need fulfilment, girls tended more than

boys to be rated at both extremes of the scale; 21.43% of the girls came from

a better than average physical environment, and 26.19% from homes rated well

below average; whereas slightly more than 15% of the boys appeared in both

these extreme categories.

<u>Affiliation Needs</u>

In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, affiliation needs are sometimes referred

to as "belonging" or "love" needs; Alderfer calls them "relatedness" needs.

Analysing them into five components, they can be said to comprise:

(1) Security. Psychological security, usually provided by a stable

home environment. Excessive mobility (evidenced by a change of

schools as well as dwelling-place) were scored as below average.

(2) Affectionate relationships. Opportunities to give and receive love

from both sexes within the family group, and to establish satisfying

relationships outside it.

(3) Status. The standing accorded the respondent by his peers, his family,

and his society; opportunities to achieve an acceptable status with

all three.

(4) Cosmic meaning. Encouragement for a sense of being part of the whole

human race and its destiny, whether achieved through religion or some

other philosophic standpoint.

(5) Communication. Encouragement for participation in discussion with

family and peers on a wide range of subjects, especially those of

emotional importance to the respondent.

Results are given in Table (31)

Table (31) PROVISION FOR AFFILIATION NEEDS.

	Male(%)	Female(%)	Total(%)
Warm, accepting, and meaningful environment	3.03	7.14	4.02
Slightly above average	10.61	-	8.05
About average	10.61	14.29	11.49
Slightly below average	19.70	16.67	18.97
Far below average	36.36	42.86	37.93
Almost totally deprived of adequate affiliative opportunities	19.70	19.05	19.54
	100.00	100.00	100.00

That the great majority (76.44%) were rated as at least slightly below

average, and the largest proportion (37.93%) as far below average, for the

fulfilment of affiliation needs, is a significant indication of the most

common disadvantages suffered by the children in this sample. The figure

is even higher for girls - 78.58% at least slightly below average (compared

with 75.76% for boys), and 42.86% far below average (compared with 36.36%

for boys). The proportion of children almost totally deprived with regard

to affiliation needs is almost the same for both sexes, and at 19.54% (nearly

one in five) seems an alarmingly high figure. This category includes the

10.34% who suffered complete rejection or scapegoating.

These figures reflect low scores for each of the needs designated as

separate components of the affiliation cluster. Psychological security is

difficult to attain in situations where parental conflict is combined with

geographical mobility, as was often the case for these children. The need

for a satisfactory status both in primary and secondary relationships tends

to be ill-provided for in the lower socio-economic groups to which most

respondents belonged, and the particular family situation often aggravated

this tendency. The need for cosmic meaning was granted some recognition

in only a few homes, and even in these often took the form of rather rigid

religious beliefs which probably created "information incongruities" (Moss,

1973:133-7) with disturbing effects upon the child. Finally, evidence for

the non-fulfilment of communication needs was provided by ansers to questions

in Section 7E in the child's questionnaire, which dealt specifically with the

matter, and revealed disturbingly low levels of communication between generations.

It should be kept in mind that affiliation needs are inherently

pro-social in that they are more concerned with giving than with taking or

consuming (the modes of fulfilment characteristic of the survival needs).

Because caring, sharing, and contributing are essential to belonging (i.e.,

to affiliation), rights to fulfilment of affiliation needs are inevitably

associated with obligations. Often these children have little opportunity

to express their need for affiliative giving, and attempts to redress

the balance so that affiliation needs are more adequately provided for

are likely to succeed only if modes of fulfilment include obligations to

contribute as well as rights to receive.

In sum, interviewers' impressions were that in this area -

integration of the child into the social structure through adequate

fulfilment of his affiliation needs - most children in the sample differed

quite radically from their contemporaries in the general population.

Effectiveness Needs

This group of needs corresponds to what Maslow calls "self-actualization",

and Alderfer, "growth". They are concerned more especially with the ego, and

for this paper are designated "effectiveness" needs because some degree of

fulfilment of each one is required for the individual's effective functioning.

They include needs for:

(i)   Identity. Respect for individual uniqueness on the part of family,

        peer group, and society.

(ii)   Sensory expression. Opportunities to develop and appreciate all

        sensory faculties. Over-use of TV was negatively scored.

(iii)   Cognition. Chances to develop a delight in knowledge and inquiry,

        through books, shared projects, family open-ness to questioning,

        achievement at school or work.

(iv)   Productiveness and creativity. Family, peer-group, and social

        encouragement of constructive activities and creative thinking.

(v)   Autonomy. Encouragement in the making of informed choices and

        acceptance of responsibility for their consequences.

Items (i) to (iv) inclusive all contribute to (v), so that responsible autonomy in decision-making can be taken as indicative of satisfactory fulfilment of the entire need-cluster. Results are shown in Table (32).

Table (32) PROVISION FOR EFFECTIVENESS NEEDS

	Male(%)	Female(%)	Total(%)
High degree of encouragement for effective and responsible decision-making	3.79	2.38	3.45
Slightly above average	6.82	-	5.17
About average	21.97	9.52	18.97
Slightly below average	21.21	30.95	23.56
Far less than average	37.12	47.62	39.66
Almost none	9.09	9.52	9.20
	100.00	99.99	100.00

As in the affiliation need-cluster, results for this group of needs show a disturbingly high frequency of ratings in the below average fulfilment categories (72.42%); also, the same progression from a low incidence in the "good" categories to a high incidence in the second-to-worst category can again be noted. Traditional expectations of the female role probably contribute to the particularly difficult conditions experienced by the girls in the sample: only 11.9% are granted average or above average opportunities for effective decision-making, compared with nearly a third (32.59%) of the boys. This leaves 88.09% of the girls and 67.42% of the boys, experiencing less than average effectiveness, and 47.62% of the girls, compared with 37.12% of the boys, far less than average. However, in the worst category - almost total deprivation of effectiveness needs - the proportion is almost identical for both sexes, i.e., about 9.2%. This is considerably less than in the most severely deprived category regarding affiliation needs, which reached 19.54% - so that though effectiveness needs tend to be poorly catered for, the position is not quite so bad as for affiliation.

It should be noted that effectiveness is defined for this paper in terms of opportunities to make informed and responsible choices, an ability which is unlikely to develop in the absence of adequate fulfilment of needs for identity, sensory expression, cognition, and productiveness and creativity,

as well as the need for autonomy. Some of the boys rated as below average in their opportunities to fulfil their effectiveness needs were in fact notably "free" of supervision or guidance, with the result that their effective control over themselves and their environment was decidedly less than might be expected in the general population. For the girls rated in similar categories, however, the situation was usually quite different, in that unrealistic and non-negotiable restrictions were placed upon their movements by parents or guardians deeply fearful of the "permissive society" and determined to protect their charges from its dangers by heavy (and self-defeating) discipline. This was also the case with a few of the boys, whose fathers or stepfathers attempted to enforce an almost military type of discipline within the home.

The question of guidance towards an ideal of self-discipline is obviously a difficult one for most parents, and is probably an argument for making extensive adult-education classes available for the whole area of human relations.

Total Need-fulfilment

Adding scores from the three need-clusters together, the results shown in Table (33) were obtained.

Table (33) TOTAL NEED-FULFILMENT

	Male(%)	Female(%)	Total(%)
Well above average	9.09	4.76	8.05
Slightly above average	21.97	19.05	21.26
About average	21.97	30.95	24.14
Slightly below average	25.00	35.71	27.59
Far below average	15.91	7.14	13.79
Grave deprivation	6.06	2.38	5.17
	100.00	99.99	100.00

Due to the inclusion of survival-need scales, these figures are more

encouraging than either affiliation or effectivenss need-fulfilment

scores considered separately. More than half the sample (53.45%) were

rated as environmentally average or above, and scores for each sex

(53.45% for boys, 54.76% for girls) were very similar. Nine children

(5.17% of the toal sample, 8 of them boys), however, must be regarded

as gravely deprived.

SUSCEPTIBILITY TO DELINQUENCY

After interviewing the families of the children concerned, it seemed

possible to combine psychological and sociological impressions in an

estimate of the child's general susceptibility to continued delinquency.

For this purpose, Martin Davies' INDEX OF SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT (1973) was

adapted to the requirements of the survey.

Davies employs three factors:

1. support at home;

2. work situation or school relationships;

3. level of crime contamination.

He dichotomizes each factor into "high" and "low" (or "good" and "bad").

For the Brisbane survey this index was expanded in two ways:

First, the number of factors was increased from three to five, thus

allowing for separate consideration of achievement and relationships in

the school and/or work situation, and for crime contamination occurring

at home and/or with peers.

Second, scales allowing for several gradations, rather than a simple

dichotomy, were devised for each factor.

Because susceptibility to delinquency is essentially a negative concept, higher scores on each factor were allotted to disadvantageous circumstances. High levels of support at home were therefore scored as 0, average support, 1, poor support, 2, elements of rejection, 3, and complete rejection, 4.

School/work achievement and school/work relationships were each scored on a negative basis as 0 = good achievement or relationships, 1 = average, and 2 = below average.

The two crime contamination factors were scored as 0 = no evidence of contamination, 1 = possible contamination, 2 = probable contamination and 3 = proved contamination.

Emotional Support at Home

Taking each of the five factors separately, results for emotional support at home are given in Table (34).

Table (34) EMOTIONAL SUPPORT AT HOME

	Male(%)	Female(%)	Total(%)
High levels of support	17.42	9.52	15.52
Average support	45.45	42.86	44.83
Poor support	21.21	19.05	20.69
Elements of rejection	7.58	11.90	8.62
Complete rejection	8.33	16.67	10.34
	99.99	100.00	100.00

These figures show that most children (60.35%) were rated by interviewers as receiving at least average emotional support in their home situation; but well over a third (39.65%) were rated as less than satisfactory in this respect. Of these, nearly half (18.96% of the total sample) were considered by interviewers to be suffering some, or complete, rejection.

Differences between the sexes are remarkable here, with the boys favoured at both ends of the scale. 62.87% of the males, compared with 51.38% of the females, were rated as receiving at least average support, and 47.62% of the females, compared with 37.12% of the males, appeared to be in less than satisfactory circumstances in this regard. Elements of rejection and outright scapegoating applied to a startling 28.57% of the girls, compared with 15.91% of the boys. The reasons for this apparent discrimination against girls seem to be connected with the higher standards of obedience to social norms expected (and usually obtained) from the female sex. If a daughter offends against these norms in her parents' eyes, their outrage is more likely to result in rejection than in the case of a son, to whom the saying "boys will be boys" excuses behaviour which for girls is regarded as unthinkable. In addition, at least 45% of the girls were brought before the courts for offences with sexual connotations (e.g., absconding from home), and for many parents these imply a rejection on the daughter's part of parental standards and strictures to which great emotional importance is attached.

School/work Achievement

Standards of achievement both at school and - in cases where the child had left school - at work, were almost uniformly low, particularly for boys. This is illustrated by Table (35).

Table (35) SCHOOL/WORK ACHIEVEMENT

	Male(%)	Female(%)	Total(%)
Above average	3.03	–	2.30
Average	40.91	54.76	44.25
Below average	56.06	45.24	53.45
	100.00	100.00	100.00

Four boys were rated "above average" on the basis of satisfactory school results, obtained in two cases by consistent effort and in one by what seemed to be a rather cynical and slapdash approach. The fourth had "dropped out" of high school in spite of good results and had since lived on the dole without making any effort to obtain work; however, he was considering returning to matriculate and perhaps go on to University. Those who had left school to go to work had seldom retained one job for long, and on the whole the interviewers felt that it was persistence rather than intelligence that was lower than the norm. However, more than half of the boys had to be rated as decidedly below a rather undemanding estimate of "average" achievement by general-population contemporaries, and there can be no doubt that high levels of school achievement are negatively co-related with delinquency, while low-achievers in all fields are more likely to come before the courts.

As usual, a higher proportion of girls (54.76%) than boys (40.91%) were in the "average" category. For both sexes, however, high school seemed to have little to offer, and their parents reported with monotonous frequency that satisfactory or even highly satisfactory achievement in primary school had been followed by a sharp deterioration on reaching secondary school.

School/Work Relationships

Relationships with teachers, schoolfellows, workmates, and employers seemed worthy of separate rating, and these are shown in Table (36).

Table (36) SCHOOL/WORK RELATIONSHIPS

	Male(%)	Female(%)	Total(%)
Above average	6.06	-	4.60
Average	59.85	66.67	61.49
Below average	34.09	33.33	33.91
	100.00	100.00	100.00

Two-thirds of the sample reported satisfactory relationships with peers, teachers, or employers - a result that suggests that affiliation deficiencies are more notable in the home than outside it. Though there is the usual wider variation in the ratings for boys, the sexes are similar in that about one-third are definitely below average in their ability to relate to others in their school or work situation.

Crime Contamination at Home

The most frequent source of "crime contamination at home" was a sibling of nearly similar age; where both had been charged, this was scored as "proved". Older siblings who had been in trouble at an earlier date were usually regarded as a "probable" contaminating source, though sometimes, if their influence was doubtful, this was rated "possible". "Possible contamination", however, usually referred to parents - often the same-sex parent - who admitted to trouble with the police at some time in their lives. Drunken driving charges were rated as serious offences, but other traffic offences were omitted altogether. Results are shown in Table (37).

Table (37) CRIME CONTAMINATION AT HOME

	Male(%)	Female(%)	Total(%)
No contamination	47.73	50.00	48.28
Possible contamination	28.79	26.19	28.16
Probable contamination	12.88	16.67	13.79
Proved contamination	10.61	7.14	9.77
	100.00	100.00	100.00

At least some possibility of criminal activities by other members of the family was evident for more than half of the total sample, though contamination of the respondent was proved (i.e., charges had been lodged conjointly for more than one member) in less than 10%. At least two fathers and one mother were in gaol at the time of the interview; criminal

influence on their offspring was rated "possible" in all three instances, though their example could as easily, of course, have provided a deterrent rather than a crime-encouraging effect upon the child. Several mothers of delinquent girls admitted to similar acts of delinquency in their own youth, and were all the more determined to stamp it out in their daughters by prompt resort to official sanctions; two had been convicted (but denied guilt) for receiving stolen goods; and one very respectable mother who had married into managerial status admitted to the same rather unusual misdemeanour (forgery) as that with which her daughter had been charged.

Most parents, however, and even older siblings, who had been in trouble in the past, actively discouraged delinquent behaviour in the younger members of the family. In only one instance (the father of two part-aboriginal girls) was there any suspicion of parental collusion.

Crime Contamination with Peers

The great majority of respondents were brought before the courts for acts committed in company with members of their peer-group. Results are shown in Table (38).

Table (38) CRIME CONTAMINATION WITH PEERS

	Male(%)	Female(%)	Total(%)
No peer contamination	5.30	–	4.02
Possible peer contamination	14.39	4.76	12.07
Probable peer contamination	14.39	33.33	16.97
Proved peer contamination	65.91	61.90	64.94
	99.99	99.99	100.00

The 7 males (no females) brought before the court for acts committed

in isolation from their peers included some of the most severely disturbed

respondents in the survey (e.g., the 14-year-old son of a middle-class

authoritarian father who broke into a house and terrorised two old ladies).

"Delinquency" must be regarded as more "normal" when the delinquent acts

are clearly a result of group pressures. In many of the families interviewed

delinquency was seen by parents as a worrying phase through which boys almost

inevitably passed before adjusting to the necessity for a more or less steady,

low-wage job and an early marriage.

For the girls, rebellion against non-negotiable parental sanctions

in favour of unacceptable boy friends seems to be the most usual pattern;

where parent-child relationships were more normal, the offence tended to

be some mild shoplifting, invariably in the company of peers.

Total Susceptibility to Delinquency

Adding scores for emotional support at home, school/work achievement

and relationships, and crime contamination at home and with peers, produced

a possible negative maximum of 14 points. Results are shown in Table (39).

Table (39) SUSCEPTIBILITY TO DELINQUENCY

	Male(%)	Female(%)	Total(%)
Not susceptible	0.76	–	0.57
Slightly susceptible	1.52	–	1.15
Borderline	21.21	4.76	17.24
More susceptible than most	41.67	54.76	44.83
Fairly highly susceptible	28.79	38.10	31.03
Highly susceptible	6.06	2.38	5.17
	100.01	100.00	99.99

A huge majority of the girls (95.24%) were rated as more susceptible

to further delinquent acts than the average member of their sex and

age-group in the general population, while only a little more than

three-quarters of the boys (76.52%) gave the interviewers this impression.
This might be interpreted as saying that a delinquent act on the part
of a girl is more indicative of profound behaviour disturbance than amongst
boys. More than twice the proportion of boys, however (6.06%), compared
with girls (2.38%) were rated as highly susceptible; and it is these
9 young people, (8 boys, one girl) who might be regarded as in danger of
resorting to a permanently anti-social life-style. This is the same number,
and probably the same individuals, as those rated as suffering from grave
deprivation of basic human needs.

INTERVIEWERS' IMPRESSIONS OF THE CHILD'S
FAMILY

Parents or guardians of the child were approached in the court
waiting-room and asked whether they would agree to an interview in their
homes at a time convenient to them. Refusal rates cannot be calculated
exactly, as it was not always possible to contact the parents of all
children attending, or to obtain from every contact a definite agreement
or refusal. No appointments were made if their residence was outside the
Brisbane metropolitan area, or if respondents were not fluent in the English
language; and if a refusal was given at the first approach, no attempt was
made to persuade a change of decision. However, once an appointment was agreed
to, interviewers went to considerable pains to see that the questionnaire was
completed, even if the respondents were not at home at the time originally
agreed upon.

Persons Present at Interview

Respondents at the family interview varied, though at least one
parent was present in the great majority of cases. An analysis is presented
in Table (40).

Table (40) PRESENT AT INTERVIEW

	Male(%)	Female(%)	Total(%)
Mother only	38.64	40.48	39.08
Father only	7.58	7.14	7.47
Mother & Father	31.82	19.05	28.74
Real parent and Step-parent	9.85	11.90	10.34
Step-parent only	0.76	–	0.57
Parent/step-parent & sibling(s)	6.82	11.90	8.05
Sibling(s) OR other relative	1.52	7.14	2.87
Several of above	2.27	2.38	2.30
Other	0.76	–	0.57
	99.99	100.02	99.99

Interviews were deliberately planned for evenings or week-ends so as to allow the inclusion of both parents wherever this was possible, but this opportunity was availed of by only 39.08%, a figure which includes 10.34% in which one of the respondents was a step- or de facto step-parent. Mothers were present more often than any other relatives, and siblings took part twice as often when the child concerned was a girl (21.42% of the interviews) as for boys (10.61%).

Attitude to Interviewer

In most cases the interviewers were made welcome and treated with every courtesy; this was rated "average". "Above average" refers to cases where the respondents were exceptionally helpful; "below average" to those few who obviously set out to conceal or evade relevant facts. Some were difficult to rate: e.g., some fathers reacted with marked hostility at first, but became fully co-operative as the interview progressed. General impressions are summarised in Table (41).

Table (41) PARENTS' ATTITUDE TO INTERVIEWER

	Male(%)	Female(%)	Total(%)
Above average	30.30	60.67	39.08
Average	64.39	23.81	54.60
Below average	5.30	9.52	6.32
	100.00	99.99	100.00

As these figures show, only a very small minority of those interviewed (6.32%) were less than helpful and co-operative, and well over half of the girls' families (60.67%) were especially obliging. On the other hand, more of the girls' families (9.52%) were rated below average than the boys' (5.3%). These results may stem from the fact that female delinquency seems to call forth a more emotional response from her close relatives (as, indeed, from society in general).

Parents' Ethical Attitudes

Parents' attitude to the child has already been dealt with in the section Emotional Support at Home. An attempt was made, however, to sum up parents' general ethical attitudes, without analysing them in detail as was done for the child's, and an assessment was made as to whether they conformed to what interviewers regarded as an "average" standard for the general population. Results are shown in Table (42).

Table (42) PARENTS' ETHICAL ATTITUDES

	Male(%)	Female(%)	Total(%)
Above average	21.21	11.90	18.97
Average	67.42	78.57	70.11
Below average	11.36	9.52	10.92
	100.00	99.99	99.99

It is evident from these figures that interviewers considered the great majority of parents interviewed conformed to at least average standards of morality, and deviations from the norm were more towards the "better-than-average" end (18.97%) than the "worse-than-average" (10.92%). Most parents, in fact, seemed to be doing their best for their children according to their understanding, and their difficulties seemed to the interviewers to be due more to circumstances and lack of information than to ill-will or carelessness.

Economic Situation

The economic circumstances of the family were roughly assessed by interviewers as above or below the average for the community. Other data obtained from the survey will yield more detailed information; but questions about income were among the few which were often reluctantly answered, evaded, or greeted with a point-blank refusal. Interviewers' assessments, therefore, though subjective, should be of assistance in building up a complete picture. Results are given in Table (43).

Table (43) ECONOMIC SITUATION

	Male(%)	Female(%)	Total(%)
Above average	18.18	26.19	20.11
Average	58.33	57.14	58.05
Below average	23.48	16.67	21.84
	99.99	100.00	100.00

More than three-quarters (78.15%) of the families interviewed seemed to be as well-off financially as most people in the community. Over a quarter (26.19%) of those in which the "delinquent" was a girl were rated as above the average, though the figure was lower (18.18%) in the case of boys, and boys came more frequently (23.48%) from below average economic circumstances than did girls (16.67%). Of the total sample, 21.84% were rated definitely below average; these were usually one-parent homes, or homes in which the sole source of income came from social security. On the whole, however, stringent economic circumstances cannot be regarded as an important factor for the sample surveyed.

Family Cohesion

An attempt was made to estimate the stability and general emotional atmosphere of the family situation. Family structure was coded in some detail to allow for the many variations found, but the main categories elicited were those shown in Table (44).

Table (44) FAMILY STRUCTURE

	Male(%)	Female(%)	Total(%)
Nuclear family	53.03	47.62	51.72
Mother alone	21.97	14.29	20.11
Mother and stepfather	11.36	21.43	13.79
Father alone	6.06	7.14	6.32
Father and stepmother	4.55	2.38	4.02
Other relative	0.76	2.38	1.15
Adoptive/foster parent	-	2.38	0.57
Mother sometimes/father sometimes	0.76	-	0.57
Institution	1.52	2.38	1.72
	100.01	100.00	99.99

About 44% of the mothers were living apart from the child's natural father, compared with an estimated 8.1% in corresponding age-groups in the general population.[1] The normal nuclear family structure existed for less than half of the girls (47.62%) and only slightly more than half of the boys (53.03%). Three times as many mothers (13.79%) than fathers (4.02%) were living with substitute-parents (the term "substitute" here referring to either legal or de facto unions), and the proportion was particularly high for mothers of delinquent girls (21.43%, compared with 11.36% for mothers of delinquent boys). On the other hand, mothers living alone seemed to cope better with daughters (14.29%) than with sons (21.97%), which suggests that a same-sex parent-figure is important in avoiding delinquency; also, perhaps, that step-fathers, legal or otherwise, tend to be resented, especially by daughters.

Though Table (44) illustrates how family-structure is quite radically skewed away from the nuclear pattern most prevalent in the rest of the community, it merely hints at the most destructive element of this abnormality of structure - viz., parental discord.

1. This estimate is derived from census figures of females in age groups 25-54 described as permanently separated from their husbands, divorced or widowed.

Several independent studies (Brown, 1961; Douglas et al., 1966,

Gibson, 1969; Glueck and Glueck, 1950; Gregory, 1965) have found that

the delinquency rate was about double that from intact families for boys

whose parents were divorced or separated, and not nearly so high for boys

from homes broken by death. After reviewing the evidence, Rutter concludes

that

> *"Delinquency is thus associated*
> *with breaks which follow parental*
> *discord, or discord without a break,*
> *but not a break-up of the home as*
> *such."* (1972:108).

It is therefore of interest to try and assess the degree of parental discord

in the existing family situation, as well as the record of such discord in

the past as evidenced by divorce or separation.

A direct question was asked concerning this issue; viz.:

DO YOU MIND IF I ASK WHETHER YOU AND YOUR (SPOUSE) WOULD

REGARD YOURSELVES AS HAPPILY MARRIED?

However, interviewers' impressions often differed from the reply given.

For example, one husband who said, loudly and defiantly, "Yes, of course

we are!" was promptly contradicted by his wife, who reminded him of an

occasion when he had broken her jaw. The interviewer had no hesitation in

rating this relationship as "unhappy", especially as the husband was

constantly accusing his wife of sleeping with her son by a former union.

Less extreme examples abounded. Some were due to discrepancies in standards

of evaluation: e.g., what was rated "Oh, about average, I suppose," by one

well-adjusted couple might be declared "very happy" by another. With these

difficulties in mind, the interviewers attempted to assess the happiness of

the conjugal relationship in four main categories: happy, average, doubtful,

and definitely unhappy. Results are shown in Table (45).

Table (45) CONJUGAL HAPPINESS

	Male(%)	Female(%)	Total(%)
Happy	17.42	11.90	16.09
Average	35.61	35.71	35.63
Doubtful	9.09	26.19	13.22
Definitely unhappy	7.58	4.76	6.90
Mother alone	24.24	14.29	21.84
Father alone	6.06	7.14	7.32
	100.00	99.99	100.00

These figures tend to coincide misleadingly with the frequency of nuclear families in Table (44), whereas in fact several of the nuclear families were highly unstable and family discord was probably at a peak -- a peak which had been reached prior to the interview by those in which marital breakdown had already occurred. A more revealing analysis is provided by correlating conjugal happiness with family structure, as in Table (46).

Table (46) FAMILY STRUCTURE AND CONJUGAL HAPPINESS

	Nuclear	Mother and Stepfather	Father and Stepmother
Happy	15.56	45.83	100.00
Average	53.33	29.17	-
Doubtful	18.89	20.83	-
Unhappy	12.22	4.17	-
	100.00	100.00	100.00

In the 90 nuclear families in the survey, more than two-thirds (68.89%) seemed to the interviewers to have attained at least an average degree of conjugal happiness, but this leaves nearly a third (31.11%) where the prognosis for the marriage was at least doubtful, and a considerable degree of discord appeared to exist. For mothers living with stepfathers (de facto or otherwise), the figures were a little better, indicating that for three-quarters of these women the period of discord which had led (in most cases) to marital breakdown was now in the past, and a more stable relationship seemed likely. For 25%, however, a change of partner had not

led to much improvement as the interviewers received the impression

that the union was unhappy or at least doubtful in this respect.

The 7 fathers living with a substitute mother (in most cases in

legal re-marriage), all appeared to have achieved a happy relationship.

To the amount of past, present, and potential discord revealed

by this table, most of the 21.43% who were parents without partners must

be added, as separation was far more often due to marital breakdown than

to the death of the spouse. However, deceased mothers occurred nearly six

times as frequently as in the general population;[1] and of the 10 deceased

mothers, at least three had died of cancer after a lingering illness. Rutter

found that

> *"Chronic physical illness which often*
> *precedes death is itself a factor in*
> *child psychiatric disorder"* (1972:64);

and the same may hold for delinquency. It was also found that over 61%

of the mothers in this sample reported their health as less than satisfactory;

in those cases where health was seriously impaired, Rutter's findings may be

relevant in considering the numerous disadvantageous circumstances suffered

by the children in this sample.

CONCLUSIONS

In codifying their impressions as outlined above, the interviewers

were acutely aware that they had not solved the problem of subjectivity

inevitable to the type of assessments attempted. However, even an attempt

at codification (whatever the shortcomings of the methods used) serves to

explicate the grounds on which the judgments were made.

1. Census figures for Queensland give figures for widowed males in age groups
   25-54 amounting to 1.01% of the total number of male cohorts. In the
   Brisbane delinquency sample the proportion is 5.0%.

The over-riding impression gained from the survey was that the children and their families conformed closely to averages in the general population, <u>except for the number of stressful circumstances to which they had been subjected</u>. Marital discord and physical illness seem to be the two outstanding features of family situations in which a <u>constellation of disadvantages</u> is operating, each one reinforcing others. The result is that the children for whom these disadvantages are most acute are seriously deprived of opportunities to fulfil their potential as effective members of an integrated community.

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An in-depth study of the social and personal
conditions of a group of children appearing
before Brisbane Children's Court.

18th May, 1982.

The study was carried out with 174 young people who appeared in the Brisbane Children's Court on a range of anti-social offences.   The young people and their families were all of those people appearing before the court on the days on which the study was conducted.   The children and parents, unless previously interviewed, were invited to participate.
The data was obtained by two interviewers, both of whom had professional training and experience in interviewing.   They attended almost all sessions of the Brisbane Children's Court throughout the study time period.

The study illustrates the problem of subjective judgments made by researchers and interviewers.   The report begins with an explanation of the problem and the procedures developed in an attempt to overcome this.
Results from the survey are then considered in three parts:

PART (I)   Some general information about the young people as recorded by themselves.

PART (II) (Interviewers' Findings and Impressions of the Child).
   The areas dealt with are:

A.   APPEARANCE
B.   ETHICAL ATTITUDES A (Prosocial) and B (Anti-social)
C.   ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS
D.   SUSCEPTIBILITY TO DELINQUENCY

PART (III) (Interviewers' Findings and Impressions of the Child's Family), the areas are:

A.   ATTITUDE TO INTERVIEWER
B.   ETHICAL ATTITUDES
C.   ECONOMIC SITUATION
D.   FAMILY COHESION

The interview as a tool of sociological research poses serious methodological problems, and these are compounded when role distance between interviewer and respondent is increased by larger than usual differences in such factors as age, educational status, and world-view.
The problems are further compounded when the interview takes place in a setting which is stressful and disadvantageous for the respondent, and where his moral standing is officially defined as inferior to that of the interviewer.

This was the situation in this study.

Some of the major characteristics of this population were -

.   Their family structure is quite markedly skewed away from the nuclear pattern.   Such a position however points to the most destructive element in such families, i.e. potential discord.

.   While the young people generally perceived their parents' relationship as satisfactory they had more than usual difficulties in relating to their parents.

.   The parents tended to agree with their children in attributing blame for the delinquent behaviour.   Both pointed to the child and his peers as the major source of blame.

.   Where criminal behaviour exists in other people in the family home the risk of crime contamination for the child was very high.   However the risk of crime contamination from delinquent peers was equally high.

.   Both parents and their delinquent children did tend to play down the significance of anti-social problems in social terms.

.   The young people in this study had uniformly low school achievement records and a high percentage had very poor perceptions of their personal relationships at school.   The high frequency of speech defects noted in the study group further complicates school achievements.

.   The study indicated that only 30% of the young people had a diet which approached a nutritous and balanced one.   They also reported a high usage of alcohol and tobacco.

.   Overall the social relationship patterns reflected a high degree of alienation between them and the community they lived in,

.   The young people, while not sharing concerns with their parents a great deal, had a very restricted range of other close confidants.   They also showed considerable fear and lack of assertiveness in social settings.

.   While emotional support at home was very low for 40% of this population, the girls experienced stronger feelings of rejection at home.

.   Where basic need fulfilment is concerned (affiliation, affection), over 45% of this population experience moderate to grave deprivation in their home and community life.

.   About 20% of the families reported being in difficult economic circumstances, with over 20% reporting more than average financial resources.

.   The young people reported a moderately high rate of previous offences (detected and undetected), mainly in the areas of theft and school truancy.

.   The interviewers in this study tended to rate the likelihood of further delinquency amongst the young people as much higher than the young people themselves or their parents.

The study generally points to the need for greater resources in the family development area, alternative school programmes, and self development courses for the young people.

In codifying their impressions, the interviewers were acutely aware that they had not solved the problem of subjectivity inevitable to the type of assessments attempted. However, even an attempt at codification (whatever the shortcomings of the methods used) serves to explicate the grounds on which the judgments were made.

The over-riding impression gained from the survey was that the children and their families conformed closely to averages in the general population, except for the number of stressful circumstances to which they had been subjected. Marital discord and physical illness seem to be the two outstanding features of family situations in which a constellation of disadvantages is operating, each one reinforcing others. The result is that the children for whom these disadvantages are most acute are seriously deprived of opportunities to fulfil their potential as effective members of an integrated community.