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**Problem Behavior of Adolescents in Hong Kong:
A Socio-cultural Perspective**

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by

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In the last decade or so, the upsurge in juvenile crime has drawn tremendous attention from people from all walks of life in the community.¹ It is the major concern of not only the parents, teachers and social workers but also the general public at large. An investigation into the causes of crimes among young people is required before preventive and remedial measures are to be taken.

In explaining delinquency, the biological theory (McCord, 1958) has lost popularity (Chu and Yang, 1978) because biological factors cannot account for the occurrence of most delinquent behavior (Owen, 1972). On the other hand, social and cultural perspectives on delinquency are given more and more emphasis. Theories of delinquency that stress social and cultural factors are, however, quite diversified.

¹In view of the rising trend in juvenile delinquency in the early 70's, the Government set up a sub-committee to study the social causes of crime in March, 1973 in the hope of finding a solution to the problem. As a result, Agnes Ng of the Social Research Centre of The Chinese University of Hong Kong was commissioned by the sub-committee to conduct a research on the social causes of violent crime among young people in Hong Kong. The research report was published in 1975. A number of factors of juvenile delinquency were identified and some recommendations were proposed to curb the increase in juvenile crime. In the following years, the problem of delinquency continued to be a hot topic of discussion in the community. On 1st October 1980, the Governor in his speech at the Legislative Council expressed deep concern regarding the big increase in juvenile crimes and described the phenomenon as "disturbing and bewildering." A working group under the Fight Crime Committee was formed thereafter to look further into the possible causes of upsurge in juvenile crime. The report of the working group was published in 1981. Since then, the problem of delinquency has again drawn the response from community leaders and the general public.

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At least three models can be identified. The cultural deviance models (Sutherland, 1937; Sellin, 1938; Miller, 1958) contend that delinquent behavior is learnt from subcultures whose value and patterns of behavior are defined as deviant by the legal system. Thus, the socialization process in the social environment, that is, the family, the school, the neighborhood, and the peer group is considered to have a strong impact on the individual in developing delinquent acts. The control models (Nye, 1958; Reiss, 1951; Hirschi, 1969) argue that delinquent behavior occurs when one's bond to society is weakened or broken down. The individual tends to commit crime when personal and social controls fail to exert pressure to prevent him or her from violating the rules and norms of society. A combination of the cultural deviance models and the control models, referred to as the mixed models (Shaw and McKay, 1969; Cohen, 1955, 1966; Cloward and Ohlin, 1960) agree that one of the major causes of delinquency is weakening or breaking down of one's social bond, leading to the decline or absence of personal and social controls. They maintain that for most young people, they would not turn into a delinquent without being involved in and being influenced by a delinquent subculture.

In Hong Kong, a few research projects were carried out in the 60's and early 70's to study the problem of young offenders. (Chang, 1966; Ng, 1971; Chau, 1973; HKDPAS, 1974) However, these studies either suffered from methodological problems leading to unknown reliability of the findings, or failed to delineate the major causes of juvenile delinquency in Hong Kong (Ng, 1975). In subsequent

years, three major studies (Ng, 1975, 1980; WGOJC, 1981) were conducted to fill the knowledge gap in the causes of juvenile crime. Consistent with the socio-cultural theories of delinquency, it was found that the preconditions of delinquency include unfavorable family relationships, undesirable peer group associations, poor choice of free time activities and inadequate moral development, while the immediate factor contributing to delinquent behavior are the involvement with triad gangs and dropping out of school. It was also found that the changing educational system, the rising cost of living, the higher unemployment rate, the large influx of immigrants, fashions/crazes that encourage desires for luxuries, increased opportunity for petty theft (such as the growing number of supermarkets) are among the possible factors that account for the rise in juvenile crime. In light of the complex nature of the problem of deviance among young people, its sources are confirmed to be multifactorial.

The local studies discussed above focused on crime and delinquency, the targets of investigation were youngsters who broke the law and were convicted in the court. However, there are many more young people who are not legally defined as delinquents but who have demonstrated problem behavior and have a potential to turn to unlawful acts.²

²According to a survey on "Incidence of Unruly and Delinquency Behavior of Pupil in Schools" conducted by the Education Department of Hong Kong Government, more than 55,000 cases of unruly and delinquent behavior were committed by 34,500 secondary students during the first four months of 1982. *South China Morning Post*, December 3, 1982, p.1.

This group of problem youth is definitely much larger than that of the legally defined delinquents and thus worth studying in terms of their problem behavior. In the past years, although public discussion on the problem behavior of youth have been rampant, systematic study on the subject is scant. The only study that can be cited here is a survey on incidence of unruly and delinquent behavior of pupils in school.³ The survey was mainly descriptive and based on statistics submitted by school principals. While it revealed the general situation of problem behavior among students, the focus of the survey was not to explain problem behavior.

The main purpose of this research, therefore, is to study the factors that are likely to increase the probability of occurrence of problem behavior among adolescents in Hong Kong. The basic assumption underlying this research is that problem behavior, defined here to include deviant behavior such as stealing, fighting, intimidation, malicious damage to public property, disciplinary offences in school, etc., can have a strong correlation with criminal or delinquent behavior. It is considered proper and logical to adopt the social-cultural perspective of delinquency as the theoretical frame of reference in the study of problem behavior. Furthermore, the multiple causation model (Glueck and Glueck, 1950) as validated in previous local studies will be employed, that is, to explore the major possible sources of problem behavior from different directions.

³The survey was conducted by the Education Department, Hong Kong Government in 1982. Initial findings were reported in *South China Morning Post*, December 3, 1982, p.1; 38.

Method

Data for this study come from an extensive questionnaire survey of a probability sample of secondary school students in Hong Kong. In early November 1982, 40 schools were chosen randomly from a total of 430 secondary schools recorded in a list provided by the Department of Education. With the help of the Department, 38 schools were willing to participate in the study. Subsequent contacts were made with individual schools to work out a time convenient for them so that we could make the field visits. At the same time, information on each form in every school was also gathered. By means of random sampling, two classes of students were selected from each school to be included in the final sample of students, thus giving a total of 76 classes that ranged from the lowest to the highest grades in the schools.

As several researchers with different interest were involved in the study on adolescent mentality, the large number of question items thus devised for practical purposes had to be grouped into two separate questionnaires. The main criterion employed in the partition process was affinity in content. The two questionnaires, however, share a common set of items that serve to identify the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. As such, each questionnaire is a self-contained instrument for research.

Field work started in mid-December, 1982 and lasted until late January, 1983. During each school visit, two field workers were assigned to distribute the two questionnaires--Questionnaire A and Questionnaire B--randomly to all the students in each class. The

students were told to fill in the questionnaires by themselves. The field workers were on hand to help in case of doubts about specific questions. Each student, however, was asked to answer only one of the two questionnaires. At the end of the exercise, 1,466 of Questionnaire A and 1,407 copies of Questionnaire B were collected, out of which two copies of Questionnaire A and four copies of Questionnaire B had to be discarded owing to incompleteness. In all, the final sample of respondents for Questionnaire A is 1,464 and that for Questionnaire B is 1,403.

The finding reported in this article are based on 270 cases selected from the subjects responding to Questionnaire A. The criterion for selection is the number of problem behavior that have been committed by respondents. 149 of them who have committed eight or more of the fifteen problem behaviors listed below were placed in the 'problem group'; 121 who have committed none of the problem behaviors were put in the 'promising group'. The following table provides a summary of the 15 problem behaviors and the distribution of respondents in the number of problem behavior committed.

Table 1. Problem Behavior* and the Frequency Distribution of Respondents

Number of Problem Behavior Committed	N	%
0	<u>121</u> (Promising Students)	8.3
1	158	10.8
2	226	15.4
3	242	16.5
4	173	11.8
5	166	11.3
6	107	7.3
7	73	5.0
8	<u>49</u>	3.3
9	<u>34</u>	2.3
10	<u>28</u>	1.9
11	<u>18</u>	1.2
12	<u>8</u> (149 Problem Students)	0.5
13	<u>6</u>	0.4
14	<u>4</u>	0.3
15	<u>2</u>	0.1
<u>missing</u>	49	3.3
TOTAL	1,464	100.0

*The 15 problem behaviors include:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Stealing or Shop-lifting | 10. Involvement in gambling |
| 2. Fighting | 11. Drinking liquor |
| 3. Intimidation | 12. Smoking cigarettes |
| 4. Malicious damage to public property | 13. Habitually jumping the queue |
| 5. Demerit imposed by school | 14. Habitually inattentive in class |
| 6. Habitual truancy | 15. Failure to submit homework on time |
| 7. Cheating | |
| 8. Dishonesty in examinations | |
| 9. Habitual use of foul language | |

The purpose of creating the smaller sample (N=270) from the larger one (N=1,464) is to facilitate the analysis of how the 'problem students' differ from the 'promising students'. Tests will be carried out to identify the factors that possibly contribute to problem behavior in the social environment, which include questions designed in the areas of family relationship, peer group associations, and personal and social values.

The problem behaviors as listed in Table 1 were constructed with reference to the measurement used in a study carried out in Taiwan (Yang, 1978). They were adopted after discussions with school teachers and discipline masters of three schools (one government, one subsidized and one private) who strongly felt that these 15 types of behavior were commonly committed by problem students in their schools. The decision to use eight problem behaviors as the cutting point is arbitrary; but teachers and discipline masters consulted believed that children who have demonstrated eight or more problem behaviors are definitely considered problem students in their schools.

Since this study used a self-administered instrument, there is the question of the validity of the self-reported responses on problem behavior. In a study on delinquency (Hirschi, 1969), the self-reported items used as measures of delinquency were proved to be valid, which were able to differentiate between boys known to differ on some independently measured aspect of delinquency. In the present research, a small experiment was done in a school before the research project was carried out. Twelve children from middle one to middle four who were

considered problem students by the school authority were interviewed by the researchers. At the same time, they were requested to fill out a questionnaire consisting of a number of problem behavior. In order to avoid their suspicion about the interview which might bias their responses, some good students were also interviewed and asked to fill out the same questionnaire. Checking their self-reported problem behaviors with those listed in their files and with those known to the school teachers, it was found that 90% of their responses were true. Such a finding strengthened the belief that self-reported responses to items on problem behavior are valid.

Results and Discussion

A profile of the respondents

The distribution of respondents by sex, form (which is also indicative of age, normally the age of Form 3/Middle 3 students is 14), school type (differentiated by language of instruction and mode of financing) is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Characteristics of Respondents

	(N=270)		(N=1,464)
	N	%	%
<u>Sex</u>			
Male	162	59.9	52.0
Female	108	40.1	48.0
<u>Form</u>			
Form 3/Middle 3 & below	204	75.6	66.0
Form 4/Middle 4 & above	66	24.4	34.0
<u>School Type</u> (by language of instruction).			
Chinese Middle School	46	17.1	16.5
Anglo-Chinese School	176	65.1	67.0
School with Chinese Middle & Anglo-Chinese Section	48	17.8	16.5
<u>School Type</u> (by mode of financing)			
Government, Subsidized & Aided	115	42.6	50.0
Private & Private Aided	155	57.4	50.0

A comparison is made between the smaller sample (N=270) used for analysis in this paper and the larger one (N=1,464) drawn from the population of secondary students in Hong Kong. These two samples are comparable in terms of respondents' sex, their classes and the types of

schools they are studying. It has to be noted, however, that the smaller sample is in no way representative of the larger sample as far as their behavioral patterns are concerned. In fact, the smaller sample consists of the extreme cases of the larger sample - about 10% of the most "promising students" and another 10% of the most "problematic students".

Family relationship

The family is universally considered one of the most important social organizations in shaping child behavior. Its unique role as a socializing agent transmits socially acceptable norms and values which the child internalizes. Furthermore, the family provides both emotional and material support for the child to meet challenges that lie ahead. Whether or not a family can adequately perform its socializing function and provides the kind of support that a child needs depends very much on the family relationship, which may affect the occurrence of problem behavior. This paper assumes that poor family relationship is associated with problem behavior among secondary students. The poorer the family relationship a child has, the more likely he will have problem behavior.

Three general statements were used to measure family relationship in this study and the results are shown in Table 3.

It was found that more problem students than promising students had very poor or poor relationship with their parents; and fewer problem students than promising students felt that their family is more harmonious than the average family. The summary score indicates the same direction, with more problem students having negative family relationship than the

promising students do. All but one of the chi-square statistics are significant at 0.01 level. In addition to the three statements, another two questions related to family relationship were given similar responses (not shown in the table). Fewer problem students (5.6%) than promising students (39.1%) said when faced with difficulties or problems, they would immediately seek help from their parent(s); and fewer problem students (25.2%) than promising students (40%) felt that the family, compared with school, friends and mass media, had the greatest impact on their thinking and behavior. The assumption that poor family relationship is associated with problem behavior is thus confirmed.

Table 3. "Problem" and "Promising" Students' Responses to Statements on Family Relationship

		Problem Students	Promising Students
		%	%
Generally speaking, my relationship with my father is:	V.Good/Good	56.5	82.2
	V.Poor/Poor	43.5	17.8
		(N=147)	(N=118)
		$\chi^2=18.74$	
Generally speaking, my relationship with my mother is:	V.Good/Good	67.6	87.1
	V.Poor/Poor	32.4	12.9
		(N=145)	(N=116)
		$\chi^2=12.45$	
I feel that my family is more harmonious than the average family	Strongly Agree/Agree	51.7	69.5
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	48.3	30.5
		(N=143)	(N=118)
		$\chi^2=7.74^*$	
Summary Score (Based on the responses to the preceding statements)	High/Positive	38.1	60.7
	Low/Negative	61.9	39.3
		(N=139)	(N=112)
		$\chi^2=11.78$	

Notes: The chi-square values with one asterisk sign are significant at 0.05 level; those without any asterisk sign are significant at 0.01 level. The Alpha value of the summary score is 0.62.

The findings presented above are consistent with those found in other research on delinquent behavior. Non-offenders generally perceived that they had a more favorable and consistent relationship with their family members than had the offenders. In particular, parent-child relationship, though it might be conditioned by the relationship between parents, had its own bearing upon the tendency to delinquency (Ng, 1975). Along the same line of thinking, the hypothesis that a disruptive family relationship, including family variables such as parental educational expectation for sons, maternal discipline, marital relationship, parental expectation on son's future achievement, and housework behavior was supported by empirical data (Ng, 1980). The generation gap between young people "at risk" and their parents appeared to be growing (WGOJC, 1981).

Having concluded that poor family relationship contributes to problem behavior, what leads a family to having poor relationship among its members needs to be explored. One possible factor is the changing family structure from the extended or stable stem family to the small nuclear family, resulting in inadequate parental care and supervision and unsatisfactory parent/child relationship and communication.⁴ This view is a subjective observation of local social workers; nonetheless, it

⁴Hong Kong Council of Social Service Ad hoc Working Group on the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency, "Change in the Family System and Its Relationship with Juvenile Care." Memeograph, March 2, 1981.

was supported by the findings of a number of local studies on the family.⁵

Peer group associations

Parents' influence gradually decreases when the child is moving toward adolescence. Conversely, peer group influence is on the increase. In this study, 32.3% of the students felt that friends, compared with the family, school and the mass media, had the greatest impact on their thinking and behavior. 61.9% of them said when faced with difficulties or problems, they would immediately seek help from siblings, friends or school-mates. The significance of the peer group lies in the fact that on the one hand, it satisfies the common human need of being accepted, recognized and appreciated by equals; and on the other hand, it socializes the child into the subculture of the peer group. If the group conforms to values and norms that are different and conflicting with those of the larger society, the child tends to deviate. The hypothesis to be tested is that peer group association is related to problem behavior.

⁵ See, for example, F.M. Wong, "Family Structure and Processes in Hong Kong," in *Hong Kong: Economic, Social and Political Studies in Development*, (Hamburg: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1979), pp. 95-121; The Boys' and Girls' Club Association of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union, the Graduate Association of Colleges of Education, "Students' Use of Leisure in Hong Kong," 1979; The Boys' and Girls' Club Association of Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Students' Union Psychological Society, "The Child's Perception of the Parental Role," 1979; YWCA and Shue Yan College, "The Need of Working Mothers and their Preschool Age Children in the Tsz Wan Shan Estate," 1979.

In order to measure peer group influence, five statements/questions were designed in three areas: relationship with siblings, types of friends associated, and types of extracurricular activities participated. It is assumed that siblings help the family transmit socially acceptable norms, thus good sibling relationship will enhance this family function to keep the child away from bad influences. It is also assumed that associating with friends with poor academic performance and triad membership will increase the chance of having problem behavior. Participating in summer youth programs and youth centers' activities is considered desirable because proper guidance is available from social workers. The findings are presented in Table 4.

For the first four statements/questions, there is a significant difference between the two groups' responses. More problem students than promising students stated that they had very poor or poor relationship with their siblings; that their best friend's academic performance was very poor or poor; that they had friend(s) who are member(s) of triad societies; and that they rarely or never took part in summer youth programs. In particular, the relationship between group membership (i.e., problem group and promising group) and the response to the question on "Do you have friend(s) who are members of triad societies?" is very strong. 53.2% of the problem students answered with yes, while only 2.6% of the promising students gave the same answer. Previous studies also lend support to such findings. It was discovered that about half of the offenders (52.7%) had intimate friends in triads (Ng, 1975); and a high proportion of juvenile offenders (48%) considered that there

Table 4. "Problem" and "Promising" Students' Responses to Statements on Peer Group Associations

		Problem Students	Promising Students
		%	%
Generally speaking, my relationship with siblings is:	V.Good/Good	54.9	76.1
	V.Poor/Poor	45.1	23.9
		(N=144)	(N=113)
		$\chi^2=11.53$	
The academic performance of my best friends is:	V.Good/Good	32.3	53.2
	V.Poor/Poor	67.7	46.8
		(N=133)	(N=111)
		$\chi^2= 9.94$	
Do you have friend(s) who are member(s) of triad societies?	Yes	53.2	2.6
	No	46.8	97.4
		(N=141)	(N=117)
		$\chi^2=75.32$	
How often do you participate in youth programs?	V.Often/Sometimes	33.1	49.1
	Rarely/Never	66.9	50.9
		(N=133)	(N=112)
		$\chi^2= 5.84^*$	
How often do you participate in youth centers' or community centers' activities?	V.Often/Sometimes	25.2	28.2
	Rarely/Never	74.8	71.8
		(N=143)	(N=117)
		$\chi^2= 0.17^{**}$	
Summary Score (based on the responses to the preceding statements)	High/Positive	34.5	74.4
	Low/Negative	65.5	25.6
		(N=110)	(N=90)
		$\chi^2=30.02$	

Notes: The chi-squared values with one asterisk sign are significant at 0.05 level; those without any asterisk sign are significant at 0.01 level; those with two asterisk signs are not significant. The Alpha value of the summary score is 0.39.

were triad members among their classmates (WGOJC, 1981). In the opinion of some people, the interpretation of such data should be treated with caution. The reason is that differentiating between genuine and fake triad societies or members is no easy task. For many people, anyone who uses triad jargons or gestures is immediately regarded as a triad member. Such persons, in fact, may not be triad members or even associated with triad societies. While this view may have some truth, it has not been substantiated empirically. The results as shown in this study indicate that the difference in friends' involvement in triads between the problem group and promising group is great and significant. The belief that having friends who have triad involvement is related to problem behavior is confirmed. What needs to be explored further is how the problem students get to know triad friends and what kind of influence they have from such friends.

The question on participation in youth or community center's activities is the only one that has a very low chi square score, indicating that there is no significant difference between the two groups of students in joining the centers' activities. A side issue that needs to be brought out here is the low attendance rate in the centers' programs among problem and promising students (25.2% and 28.2% respectively). In view of the increasing number of youth and community centers and the introduction of outreaching social service in the past years, youth workers and outreaching workers should keep their programs under careful scrutiny to ensure that they are attractive to youngsters and able to meet the needs of both problem and promising youth.

Overall, the summary score which is based on the responses to the five statements/questions shows that the quality of peer group association is related to problem behavior. More problem students (65.5%) than promising students (25.6%) had negative peer group relationship or undesirable peer group association.

Personal and social values

Value orientations influence behavior. This statement is not absolutely true, but it is very likely that one's behavior is always determined by the type of values one chooses. Along this line of thinking, it has been argued persuasively that whether one becomes a delinquent or not depends on how much one is committed to social norms and values (Nye, 1958; Hirschi, 1969). Locally, it has been empirically confirmed that "the less the intensity with which an individual is committed to conventional belief and attitudes, the more likely he will become a delinquent." (Ng, 1980) In contemporary societies where there are no absolute standards for values and behavior, it is difficult to judge what is right and what is wrong. However, general consensus on certain socially acceptable values still can be found. The proposition here is that socially acceptable values are related to problem behavior. The more the adolescent conforms to socially acceptable values, the less likely he will have problem behavior.

The questions were asked on the personal and social values of the respondents, and the results are presented in Table 5.

The responses show a significant difference between the two groups of students in their value orientations. More problem students

demonstrate less conformity to socially acceptable values than promising students do. The summary scores suggest that 81.5% of problem students as compared to 40.5% of promising students score low in conforming to socially acceptable values. Most of the chi-square results are significant at 0.01 level; some are significant at 0.05 level. There is thus strong evidence that the relationship between socially acceptable values and problem behavior exists in the population.

Table 5. "Problem" and "Promising" Students' Responses to Statements on Personal and Social Values

		Problem Students	Promising Students
		%	%
One should be reckless in order to achieve one's goal	Strongly Agree/Agree	41.8	12.5
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	58.2	87.5
		(N=146)	(N=120)
		$\chi^2=26.25$	
Money is all mighty	Strongly Agree/Agree	66.4	27.7
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	33.6	72.3
		(N=143)	(N=101)
		$\chi^2=33.95$	
Adults give promises, but cannot keep them	Strongly Agree/Agree	55.3	36.3
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	44.7	63.7
		(N=141)	(N=113)
		$\chi^2= 8.38^*$	
One should work less, enjoy more	Strongly Agree/Agree	29.0	7.7
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	71.0	92.3
		(N=145)	(N=117)
		$\chi^2=17.36$	
Doing voluntary work is not worthy	Strongly Agree/Agree	35.1	9.5
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	64.95	90.5
		(N=148)	(N=116)
		$\chi^2=22.16$	
One should mind his own business	Strongly Agree/Agree	44.3	25.5
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	55.7	74.5
		(N=131)	(N= 94)
		$\chi^2= 7.51^*$	
I am loyal and devoted to my parents	Strongly Agree/Agree	67.6	87.2
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	32.4	12.8
		(N=145)	(N=117)
		$\chi^2=12.70$	
Give a second chance, I am willing to be given birth to my present family	Strongly Agree/Agree	42.4	47.4
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	57.6	52.3
		(N=139)	(N=107)
		$\chi^2= 0.47^{**}$	
Home is the best place in the world	Strongly Agree/Agree	52.8	66.1
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	47.2	33.9
		(N=144)	(N=115)
		$\chi^2= 4.14^*$	
Summary Score (based on the responses to the preceding statements)	High/Positive	18.5	59.5
	Low/Negative	81.5	40.5
		(N=110)	(N= 75)
		$\chi^2=30.51$	

Notes: The chi-squared values with one asterisk sign are significant at 0.05 level; those without any asterisk sign are significant at 0.01 level; those with two asterisk signs are not significant; the Alpha value of the summary score is 0.47.

Conclusion

This paper focuses on the study of problem behavior among adolescents in school, which is a topic that has not been given the amount of attention it deserves. The data gathered in this study support the hypotheses that family relationship, peer group associations, and personal and social values are associated with problem behavior. In general, problem students are found to be significantly different from promising students in the three independent variables under study. These findings are congruent with those found in previous studies on delinquency conducted both abroad and locally. Apparently the consistency is attributed partly to the similar nature of problem and delinquent behavior, the former being generally defined normatively while the latter denoted legally.

An understanding of the factors contributing to problem or delinquent behavior represents that first step in dealing with the problem of delinquency. Further steps have to be taken as to how this problem may be handled and minimized. In the past, concrete recommendations have been made and implemented to reduce the risk of delinquency. For example the introduction or expansion of family life education, outreaching social work and school social services. These social programs have their merits and advantages, however, they can hardly remove the roots of delinquency.

The findings in this study point to the importance of the family in shaping the values and behavior of the adolescent. While family relationship significantly affects adolescent behavior, the choice of peers

and the development of the value system are all influenced greatly by the family. To strengthen the family as a basic and effective socialization unit is the best way to combat delinquency. A public policy for families is required to achieve this purpose. Such a policy should include full employment at a sufficient wage and income security at benefit levels to sustain life in health and dignity; access to decent housing, health care, and quality education; and livable, safe neighborhoods and communities.⁶ All these are vital in supporting and consolidating the status of families and family life. A public policy for families should be the primary strategy in dealing with the problem of delinquency; the social programs of family life education, outreaching social work and school social work should be a secondary strategy. This secondary strategy supplements the primary one and should be well coordinated to avoid fragmented results.

To single out the impact of family on problem or delinquent behavior does not negate the importance of other factors in the social environment such as the school and television. As a matter of fact, these two variables have been widely discussed by teachers, journalists, community leaders and social workers in the past few years. However, empirical research is needed if their arguments are to be substantiated. It has to be stressed that research efforts in the future should not focus primarily on adolescents convicted in the court, but should pay

⁶This policy for families is broad and embracing, and has to be further elaborated for implementation. See for example June H. Brown et al. *Child, Family, Neighborhood: A Master Plan for Social Service Delivery*, New York: Child Welfare League of America, Inc., 1982. p. 13.

more attention to young people who have demonstrated problem behavior. This latter group of youngsters is much bigger in terms of its number. If they are properly understood and helped in time, the society will be able to save them from falling into the first group.

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香港青少年的問題行爲—— 一個社會文化的觀點 (中文摘要)

過去十年來，青少年犯罪急劇上升，深受社會各界人士所關注。青少年犯罪與其他問題行爲的關係至爲密切，本文深入分析本港青少年的問題行爲，並尋求導致這些行爲的原因。

本研究從社會文化的觀點出發，分析家庭、同齡羣體、和個人與社會價值三個因素對青少年問題行爲的影響。研究的資料取自中文大學香港研究中心在一九八二年所贊助之「香港青少年心態的研究」。樣本是用聚類抽樣方法，從全港中學名單中抽出四十間，再在每間學校中抽出兩班。由於有兩間學校不願參與，故研究的樣本實際上只包括三十八間學校，共七十六班，一四六四人。在這班人中，再根據其特徵選出二七零人爲研究對象。其中一四九人表現了八種或以上問題行爲，被列爲「問題學生」。其餘一二一人沒有任何問題行爲，被列爲「好學生」。問題行爲指：(一)偷竊或高買、(二)打架、(三)恐嚇、(四)惡意損壞公共財物、(五)校內記過、(六)逃學、(七)行騙、(八)考試作弊、(九)粗言穢語、(十)賭博、(十一)飲酒、(十二)吸煙、(十三)排隊打尖、(十四)上課不留心和(十五)遲交功課。

比較上述兩組學生，得到如下結論：

(一)家庭關係與青少年的問題行爲有密切關係。據研究所得，在「問題學生」中，家庭關係惡劣的(61.9%)比「好學生」(39.3%)爲多。這個結論與其他本地越軌行爲的研究互相吻合。

(二)同齡羣體與青少年的問題行爲亦有密切關係。在「問題學生」當中，受到同齡羣體不良影響的，佔65.5%，而在「好學生」當中，則只佔25.6%。特別值得一提的，就是在「問題學生」當中，53.2%表示有朋友是黑社會份子，而在「好學生」當中，給予同樣答案的則只有2.6%。

(三)最後，個人及社會價值與青少年的問題行爲也有關係。79.1%的「問題學生」不接受社會的價值；而「好學生」當中則只有37.3%拒絕接受社會的價值。