

TURNING BAD GIRLS INTO LADIES: FEMALE JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN
TEXAS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION AND HISTORIOGRAPHY.....	1
II. “TEXANS IN TROUBLE:” TEXAN’S REACTION TO THE INCREAS IN JUVENILE DELINQUENCY.....	23
III. TEACHING FEMININITY: THE TEXAS YOUTH COMMISSION’S ATTEMPT TO REHABILITATE WAYWARD GIRLS.....	50
IV. THE YOUTH PROBLEM AS A COMMUNIST THREAT.....	79
V. CONCLUSION.....	105
BIBLIOGRAPHY	111

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

In the years following World War II, Texas' juvenile justice system underwent major reform. This thesis argues that the Texas Youth Commission's desire to reform wayward children into upstanding United States citizens motivated the commission to enforce rules, regulations, and curricula that reinforced the gender and racial expectations of post-World War II United States society. By examining the Gainesville State School for Girls, Brady School for Negro Girls, and the Crockett School for Colored Girls, it becomes clear how Texas' juvenile justice system attempted to teach white and black delinquent girls how to conform to the prescribed gender roles defined by United States Cold War society.

Until recently, the historiography of juvenile delinquency in the United States primarily focused on juvenile reform at the turn-of-the-twentieth century and paid scant attention to the rest of the century.¹ In particular, historians ignored juvenile delinquency after World War II, leaving scholarly examinations in the hands of sociologists or psychologists. Over the past two decades, historians have begun their

¹ Although these books focus on a period of American history before post-World War II, many of the same themes that appear in these histories were still very present throughout the 1950s and 1960s. See Anthony M. Platt, *The Child Savers: The Invention of Delinquency*, 3rd ed. (Camden, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2008); Robert M. Mennel, *Thorns and Thistles: Juvenile Delinquents in the United States, 1825-1940* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1973); David J. Rotham, *Conscience and Convenience: The Asylum and Its Alternatives in Progressive America* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 2002); Steven Schlossman, *Transforming Juvenile Justice: Reform Ideals and Institutional Realities, 1825-1920* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005); Paula Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

own analyses of post-World War II juvenile delinquency. Two very different motives inspire sociological studies and historical studies. While sociologists studied post-war juvenile delinquency in order to assess and possibly use their findings to improve the juvenile justice system of the time they were writing, historians studied juvenile delinquency in order to grant these children and the juvenile justice system agency within the historical narrative. Indeed, instead of relying largely on secondary sources, historians who have produced recent works on post-war juvenile delinquency have had to rely heavily on primary sources; federal and state agency records, psychological, sociological, and educational dissertations, and studies written in the 1950s and 1960s, as well as newspaper and magazine publications from the time. These sources are invaluable to these historians as they illuminate the way the government and society reacted to a perceived post-war juvenile delinquency surge.

Federal and state youth agencies records from the post-war years reveal that much of the blame for juvenile delinquency was placed on mothers who did not conform to their social prescribed roles as submissive homemakers. Because mothers of the 1950s faced most of the blame for the rise in juvenile delinquency, it is important to examine the historiography of 1950s women. This historiography not only examines the gender prescriptions as well as the lived experience of 1950s woman, but also analyzes the social change that occurred after World War II.

The historiography of American women in the 1950s shifted significantly over the years as historians debated who these women were and where, occupationally, they preferred to be. It is important to note what assumptions existed about postwar women since much of the historiography of these women is built against these assumptions. One

of the most common and debated beliefs was that women happily returned to the home at the conclusion of World War II in order to fulfill their roles as wives and mothers. The historiography reveals however, that this belief is a myth instead of reality. Further, this attempt to reveal myths and realities appears to inspire much of the history on postwar women. To complicate the story further, some historians also show how women used the myth, or their assumed roles as homemakers, in order to change their reality. In other words, how women used their prescribed gender roles to challenge gender roles.

A number of historians give William Chafe credit for writing the first scholarly work about women in the 1950s in his highly criticized, yet influential, book *The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970*. In his chapter about postwar women, Chafe focuses on their involvement in the work force. Chafe's book, written in 1972 during the women's movement of the late twentieth century, begins his evaluation of post-war women by discussing the complexities of what *Life* magazine presented in 1947 as the "American Woman's Dilemma."² The "dilemma," according to the author of the article, was the 1950s woman's confusion about remaining a homemaker or joining the work force. Chafe argued, however, that most postwar women wanted both: marriage and the opportunity to "participate in the world beyond the home, especially after the early years of child-rearing were over."³

Despite the groundbreaking nature of his work, women's historians criticized Chafe because he maintained that World War II and not feminism brought about the most fundamental change of women's roles in postwar America. Arguing that before World

² William Chafe, *The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 199.

³ Ibid.

War II single, working-class women who left the public sphere after marriage dominated the work force, he credited the war with introducing large numbers of married women to opportunities in the job force. Chafe then proves that the number of women in the work force increased instead of declined in the 1950s. By 1960, the number of women working outside of the home had doubled since 1940.⁴

Since Chafe's book was one of the first scholarly works on American women after World War II, he laments the dearth of resources available on the topic. According to Chafe, historians had ignored women's history after the 1920s. Chafe states that the only analysis of post-war women that had been done was limited to popular articles, surveys, sociological and psychological studies, and studies in anthropology; however, nothing had emerged from the historical community before the early 1970s.⁵

Susan Hartmann's 1982 book, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s*, continues the investigation of postwar women by delving into events in the 1940s led women to reject traditional occupational roles. Hartmann asserts that the 1940s "sharply set off that decade from the preceding one and ... established patterns that would shape women's lives for some years to come."⁶ Unlike Chafe, Hartmann does not focus on individual women but instead examines the public sphere that women occupied during and after World War II. More significantly, unlike Chafe, Hartmann does not give full credit to World War II for reshaping women's roles in the United States, since,

⁴ Ibid., 218.

⁵ Ibid., viii.

⁶ Susan M. Hartman, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), ix.

according to Hartmann, the war did not have a universal effect on postwar women.⁷ However, Hartmann does give Chafe credit for bringing the question of how the war affected 1950s women to the attention of later generations of historians.⁸

A shift in the historiography of 1950s women occurred in 1984 with the publication of Eugenia Kaledin's book *Mothers and More: American Women in the 1950s*. Instead of focusing on postwar women in the work force, as previous historians had done, Kaledin discussed how women "coped" with being restricted to the home. Many historians viewed this restriction to the domestic sphere as the "victimization" of postwar women. Kaledin argues that women "coped" with their expected exclusion from the public sphere in "ingenious ways" by volunteering, joining political groups or other organizations, thus changing their frustrations into "creative energy."⁹ Kaledin asserts that several postwar women preferred to stay in the home in order to avoid the competitive "male dominated working world."¹⁰

⁷ Ibid., 209. Hartmann denies that World War II single-handedly brought about change in women's lives. Change in gender roles after the war, according to Hartmann, came from a number of different sources including the economic boom during and after World War II, increased educational opportunities for women, the "sustenance" of a small body of feminists, the civil rights movement, and the growth of the suburbs. The changes that occurred during the 1940s and 1950s, Hartmann argues, laid the groundwork for the revitalized sense of "womanhood" in the 1960s.

⁸ See also, Susan Hartmann *The Other Feminists: Activists in the Liberal Establishment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998) in which Hartmann investigates how the 1950s greatly contributed to the women's movements of the 1960s. Despite her shift in topic from women in the work force to the 1960s women's movements, Hartmann upholds the same argument she made in her previous book by giving credit to the aforementioned factors that influenced women to challenge traditional sex-roles in the 1950s. In *The Other Feminists*, Hartmann explains in greater detail how postwar women attempted to move out of the domestic sphere in order to become contributing members of the male-dominated work force. According to Hartmann, "these changes fueled the feminist consciousness that turned to activism in the 1960s" (3). Hartmann states that the studies of this activism have "focused on mainstream feminism" and major women's movement groups such as the National Organization of Women (NOW) and the Women's Equity Action League. Building on the work of other women's historians, such as Dorothy Sue Cobble and Leila Rupp, all of whom focus on women's labor movements, Hartmann claims that she has "unearthed" a more extensive range of earlier activities "that contributed to the feminist revival" (4).

⁹ Eugenia Kaledin, *Mothers and More: American Women in the 1950s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), preface.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Kaledin argues that women who remained homemakers in the 1950s found satisfaction in knowing that their achievements did not need to be measured the same as men's. By emphasizing these women's embrace of "separate but equal" ideology, Kaledin states that women found "satisfaction" in the ability to work "on their own terms as volunteers."¹¹ This historian also emphasizes the importance of recognizing women's creative energy through their writings and educational pursuits as examples of how 1950s women avoided the victimization that many historians have associated with them. Despite the lack of "institutional encouragement" to develop their creativity, many women persevered and, according to Kaledin, accomplished more than their contemporaries acknowledged.¹²

The victimization of women is an important theme not only in the historiography of women, but also in the history of women's progress. The politicization of the private sphere found itself emerged in a unique discourse, or "therapeutic" language, within the second wave women's movement. According to Sara Evans in her 2003 book, *Tidal Wave: How Women Changed America at Century's End*, "'I feel' became a 'point of order,' trumping and other priority." In other words, by using the more personal discourse of feelings, women linked themselves with victimization, "thereby claiming a moral high ground."¹³ Especially in the 1980s and early 1990s, when a woman's reproductive rights held a crucial position on the feminist platform, theorists such as Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin, stressed victimization over agency.¹⁴ Since

¹¹ Ibid. These women would volunteer for causes they cared about the most, such as school and library improvements.

¹² Ibid., 211.

¹³ Sara M. Evans, *Tidal Wave: How Women Changed America at Century's End* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 125.

¹⁴ Ibid., 222.

the second wave women's movement used victimization to advance its cause, it is no surprise that much of the historiography of postwar women uses the same discourse.

. Kaledin encourages further research to avoid the traditional idea of victimization that is usually associated with postwar women. It is clear to Kaledin, that women's creativity in the 1950s is enough to rid the stereotype placed on them, and that recognizing these achievements will show scholars that the study of 1950s women is worthwhile. Kaledin does not deny that the male-dominated political, social, and economic realms, at times, victimized these women. However, Kaledin attempts to make her readers realize that the achievements of American women in the 1950s "would be distinguished on many lists of twentieth-century accomplishments"¹⁵

In 1987, Leila J. Rupp and Verta Taylor published *Survival in the Doldrums: The American Women's Rights Movement* shifting attention to the women's movements of the 1950s. Rupp and Taylor start their survey with the stereotype that women of the 1950s were happily fulfilling, rather than protesting, a domestic role. Their real purpose, however, is to ask what happened to the American women's movement that had been such a powerful force before World War I. After finding that the women's movement of the early twentieth century was still active during the 1950s, these authors sought to "find what was missing from the historical record."¹⁶ Rupp and Taylor argue that the women's movement, once believed to have died in the 1920s before reemerging in the 1960s,

¹⁵ Eugenia Kaledin, *Mothers and More: American Women in the 1950s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), preface.

¹⁶ Leila J. Rupp and Verta Taylor, *Survival of the Doldrums: The American Women's Rights Movement, 1945 to the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), vii-viii. Rupp and Taylor state that the traditional image of the middle-class 1950s woman as a happy homemaker is not completely inaccurate. However, as further research has shown, more women began to work outside of the home during this time. It was "increased labor force participation" by postwar women that Rupp and Taylor argue "is one of the factors cited in all explanations of the resurgence of the women's movement in the 1960s" (6).

remained constant through World War II and the decades following. They found that the national Woman's Party, although weakened, continued to exist and to fight for women's rights.

Even as Rupp and Taylor urged historians to focus on postwar women's involvement in the 1950s women's movements, Elaine Tyler May turned attention back to women in the home with the 1988 publication of *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War*. A highly criticized book because of the limitations of May's main source base (the Kelly Longitudinal Study), *Homeward Bound* makes the connection between politics, foreign policies, the fear of communism during the Cold War and domesticity.¹⁷ Recognizing the decade of the 1950s as a "domestic explosion," she argues that the evidence "overwhelmingly indicates that postwar American society experienced a surge in family life and a reaffirmation of domesticity that rested on distinct roles for women and men."¹⁸ The home was seen as a safe haven against the communist threat, according to May, causing women, for the most part, to "embrace domesticity" and "thrive within it."¹⁹

A direct rebuttal to May's *Homeward Bound*, as well as works with a similar theme, is Joanne Meyerowitz's book *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar*

¹⁷ The Kelly Longitudinal Study is a collection of surveys of 300 white middle-class heterosexual couples after World War II. May's heavy use of this source has attracted much criticism because of its limited spectrum. Not only is the number of surveys small representations of a large white middle-class population, but many groups of people were excluded from this survey including lower classes, minorities, and homosexuals.

¹⁸ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 6.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 213. *Homeward Bound*, unlike previous books about Cold War women, takes a deeper and more personal look into the home and the family of these women; the center of the family, of course, was the mother. Because of her focus on the home, May's book is often times rejected by historians who prefer the image of women in the 1950s as being a more proactive one. However, May states that around the time her book was published, more and more scholars were examining "the connections among cold war politics, suburban development, race relations, and the domestic ideal" (17).

America, 1945-1960, published in 1994. Meyerowitz considers works like *Homeward Bound* to be “eras[ing] much of the history of the postwar years.” Meyerowitz claims that by describing 1950s women as purely domestic creatures, May “downplay[s] women’s agency and ... portray[s] women primarily as victims.”²⁰ The collection of essays that Meyerowitz presents “displaces[s] the domestic stereotype...from the center of historical study.”²¹ Cold War politics and rhetoric, according to Meyerowitz, did not make women willing to stay in the home as May argued. Instead, fear of communism encouraged women’s participation in the public sphere and increased their involvement in politics.²²

Alice Kessler-Harris in her 2001 book *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in the 20th Century*, also disputes the long held image of the American woman of the 1950s. Kessler-Harris argues that, despite the fact that women were not granted the same wage earning advantages as men, who were the established breadwinners following World War II, women did work outside the home. Harris points out however, that there were also several groups of women, whether married, single, divorced, or widowed, who did not see unequal pay policies as “unfair or unjust.” Instead, significant segments of society accepted the male/breadwinner and

²⁰ Joanne Meyerowitz, ed., *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 4.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

²² *Not June Cleaver* contributes to the historiography of women in the 1950s by exploring a wide range of topics: ranging from pre-marital pregnancy to civil rights movements within different ethnic groups. This wide range of topics gives historians and other scholars a look into the diversity that existed among postwar women and the social impositions each group was experiencing. Meyerowitz uses sources such as Chafe and Kaledin to support her argument that women were more than homemakers; they were active members in the public sphere. Meyerowitz states that the historiography of women of the 1950s, when “taken together ... point[s] to pockets of resistance, to significant groups of women who questioned and loosened postwar constraints.” However, Meyerowitz claims that much of the history about postwar women has “fractured” the public’s view of them. Meyerowitz insists that more research into the roles these women played outside of the home is necessary to fully understand this group (5-6).

female/housewife as a “comforting vision of family life and social order.”²³ However, according to Harris, as women entered “dual” roles, mother and laborer, they began to challenge the traditional view of men as the primary breadwinner and began to question how to achieve economic citizenship.

The historiography of women and crime is not as debated as the historiography of 1950s women. This historiography is invaluable when trying to understand young women and juvenile delinquency. What becomes obvious throughout the history of women and crime is that many incarcerated women were arrested for sex related crimes. Sex laws placed stigmas on women in the early twentieth century. Mary Odem, Pippa Holloway, and Stephen Robertson all use legal studies of sex and morality laws for their analyses in different ways. These works collectively expose two things: what the law reveals about these women and what these women reveal about the law. First, they show how reformers and authorities created laws in an attempt to contain female sexuality under male authority and within the gendered language of the period. For the same sexual transgressions, women would receive a harsher punishment than men. Secondly, women found ways to resist the policing of their sexuality. When combined, these works reveal a deeply rooted paradox. Women’s sexuality was oppressed when they adhered to sex laws as well as when they broke them. Whether they were seen or unforeseen,

²³ Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in the 20th Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3-4. Harris explores certain ideas of “fairness” and argues that, “gender constituted a crucial measure of fairness and served a powerful mediating role.” Postwar women were not afforded the ability to build credit, take out loans, or make significant purchases. However, according to Harris, by the 1960s the once believed “fair” economic policies were being seen as “rank discrimination.” This scholar discusses how “gendered habits of mind” shaped economic discrimination and how this discrimination was eventually challenged (5-6).

consequences of gendered sex laws further embedded the oppression of female sexuality, which in turn fueled the female resistance against this oppression.

In her 1995 book, *Delinquent Daughters: Protecting and Policing Adolescent Female Sexuality in the United States, 1885-1920*, Mary Odem discusses the connection between juvenile female sexuality and the turn-of-the-century reformers who sought to alter the double standards associated with female sexuality.²⁴ Odem argues that white middle class women reformers attempted to establish age of consent laws and in the process helped to develop statutory rape laws. Reformers, believing that a girl under the age of eighteen was not old enough to “legally consent to her own ruin,” pushed the government to establish acceptable statutory rape laws in the hopes of protecting the moral purity of adolescent females.²⁵ However, as Odem makes clear, there were unforeseen consequences to these laws. By looking at this history from the bottom-up, Odem shows that parents used sex laws to control the behavior of their sexually active daughters. In many cases, the laws meant to protect these girls ended up controlling them as well as their sexual partners, and the enforcement of these laws rested in the hands of their families.²⁶

²⁴ Mary E. Odem, *Delinquent Daughters: Protecting and Policing Adolescent Sexuality in the United States, 1885-1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995). The differentiating punishment and views of men and women over the same sex “crime,” reveals the double standard embedded in early twentieth century law and society. Forever branded immoral, women who had sex outside of marriage received longer sentences and harsher punishments than sexually deviant males.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁶ Consequences to reform also become apparent when Odem discusses issues surrounding race and class. African American adolescent females remained invisible in the efforts made by these reformers. According to Odem, reformers explicitly fought “on behalf of the ‘white slaves’ of male vice and exploitation,” which in turn left African American girls without the protection of the law (25). White and immigrant adolescent females that belonged to working class families are the central characters in this book. By focusing on this group, Odem reveals that reformers either ignored or did not foresee the sexual agency adolescent girls obtained when they left the safety of their home to work. When women left the home, either for work or entertainment, they had the opportunity to develop social lives without direct parental observation. Participation in this kind of social activity “undermined family influence,” leaving the

Stephen Robertson offers further support to Odem's argument. In his 2002 article, "Making Right a Girl's Ruin: Working-Class Legal Cultures and Forced Marriage in New York City, 1890-1950," Robertson focuses more on familial rather than legal intervention in girls' sexuality. According to Robertson's research, females who voluntarily or involuntarily participated in premarital sex, or those without an "intact hymen," were "ruined," and the only way to "make right" this ruin was to coax the accused male penetrator into marriage.²⁷ Although he does examine court actions in statutory rape cases, Robertson proves that families frequently used statutory rape laws to persuade their daughter's sexual partner into marriage. Fearful that their daughters, and possible illegitimate grandchildren, would become dependent on the state or family for financial support, parents approached their daughter's sexual partner with threats stating that if he did not agree to marry and support their daughter, they would have him arrested for rape.²⁸

Odem and Robertson's use of bottom-up histories of female sexuality, institutionalization, and resistance, gives voices to the women who were found guilty of breaking sex laws. Despite their use of legal cases or institutional records, their works give the women agency within the historical narrative. While this approach is valuable, a top-down approach offers another valuable perspective. Their work clearly establishes how the legal system and law viewed and suppressed young women in the early twentieth century.

young woman vulnerable to delinquency and therefore, vulnerable to family instigated incarceration (22). By examining this history from the bottom-up, Odem demonstrates how families used sex laws to control their daughters.

²⁷Stephen Robertson, "Making Right a Girl's Ruin: Working-Class Legal Cultures and Forced Marriage in New York City, 1890-19," *Journal of American Studies* 36, no. 2 (August 2002): 205.

²⁸Ibid., 202.

Pippa Holloway's 2006 book, *Sexuality, Politics, and Social Control in Virginia, 1920-1945*, utilizes the top-down method of writing history to show how Virginia's political leaders sought to control the sexual behavior of women. Focusing on the years just before the Great Depression through World War II, Holloway shows how Virginia's political system used ideas of gender to define "sexual normalcy and deviance," in hopes of controlling the sexual behavior of African Americans and citizens belonging to the lower class in order to ultimately preserve the political and economic power held by the white elite.²⁹

According to Holloway, Virginia's political leaders attempted to preserve the white elite of the state in a number of ways. Virginia's state government "legalized eugenic sterilization," censored movies they deemed as sexually and racially inappropriate, "tightened restrictions on interracial marriage," attempted to reduce the spread of venereal disease, and control prostitution.³⁰ Sterilization was the most harmful and invasive control method practiced by Virginia's political system, and was, in theory, used primarily against women in state mental institutions. The government believed that any person exhibiting mental illness should not procreate. However, Virginia's government took advantage of sterilization laws, using them against anyone they did not want having children: African Americans, members of the lower classes, or anyone they did not see as a valued member of the white elite.³¹

²⁹ Pippa Holloway, *Sexuality, Politics, and Social Control in Virginia, 1920-1945* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina, 2006), 6, 10.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 24. When sterilization due to mental illness did not apply to a citizen they deemed undesirable, they used medical rhetoric to convince female patients to undergo sterilization treatments. According to Holloway, doctors would claim that they needed to perform sterilization treatments on lower class women and African Americans for the betterment of their health (24). By passing sexuality laws, Virginia's white elites, stripped citizenship rights away from anyone they saw as threatening to their elite

Scholars analyzing women convicted of a crime, whether of a sexual nature or not, faced a similarly skewed system of justice. The study of women in reform institutions, according to Jocelyn M. Pollock, has “either been brutalized or ignored for the greater part of history.”³² Chapter two of Pollock’s 2002 book, *Women, Prison, & Crime*, focuses on women’s prison reform movements during the Progressive era. Once in prison, or a reformatory, women had to uphold their “female duties” by cooking, cleaning, and sewing.³³ Women in prison underwent harsh physical punishment, rape, and unwanted pregnancy (or loss of pregnancy).³⁴ The view of female criminals underwent changes in the late nineteenth century. Incarcerated women had been previously labeled “evil,” but closer to the Progressive Era, women “criminals” fell under the description of “misguided.”³⁵ This change of opinion inspired reformers to fight for the improvement of women’s criminal housing.³⁶

White progressive female reformers not only fought for living conditions of these female prisoners to change, but they also insisted that female prisoners needed female wardens to guide their “recovery.” These female wardens ensured that the female inmates avoided sexual abuse by male authorities, set examples of “true womanhood,” and provided a mother-like figure that would be sympathetic to the troubles and cries of the inmates. The goals of the female wardens would be to reform “deviant” women into good wives and mothers. According to the legal system and society women needed to

status. What Holloway’s book shows the contradiction between Virginia’s anti-big government attitude and their willingness to impose invasive methods to maintain sexual regulation.

³² Jocelyn M Pollock, “History of Women’s Prisons: The Legacy of Difference,” in *Women, Prison, & Crime*, 2nd ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Thomson Learning, 2002), 20.

³³ *Ibid.*, 22.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

remain submissive, and women who did not possess this quality, most likely fell under incarceration for not following these guidelines. These reformers wanted women wardens to be in charge of the reform of women inmates in the hopes that these women conformed more closely to the expected gender and sexual roles placed on women.³⁷

The bottom-up histories of Odem and Robertson help answer what the lives of young women reveal about the law. By showing that the legal system and families used sex laws for their own purposes, it becomes evident that the goal of sex statutes was to impose levels of social control over adolescent and adult women. Suppression of female sexuality occurred when women followed the confining nature of sex laws. Women were required to adhere to the gendered language of the court system and society that insisted women remain sexually pure and submissive to their male counterparts. When women voluntarily or involuntarily became “impure,” they were subject to harsher stigmas and punishment than that of their male sexual partners. When confronted with punishment, women practiced creative resistance as a way of challenging legally imposed sexual repression and gaining sexual autonomy. The top-down histories of Holloway, Pollock, and Devlin, help answer what the law revealed about young women’s lives in the early twentieth century.

These works show how the legal system, reformers, reform institutions, and society viewed sexually deviant women as problems in need of correction. By labeling them as “problems,” legal systems in the United States stepped over their constitutionally held. Collectively these works demonstrate how using legal cases and law as sources can be both helpful and restricting. The disadvantage of using these sources occurs when

³⁷ Ibid.

historians are only able to write in the voice of the courts and authorities, or the oppressor. However, when deeply examined, the voice of those victimized by the law can also become apparent.

The historiography of young women in institutions has fluctuated over the last decade. These histories examine young women in institutions throughout North America. A leading scholar of juvenile history is Tamara Myers who focuses on young women in Canada's juvenile justice systems. Anne Meis Knupfer examines delinquent girls in Illinois' juvenile justice system.

Anne Meis Knupfer's 2000 article "'To Become Good, Self-Supporting Women': The State Industrial School for Delinquent Girls at Geneva, Illinois, 1900-1935," relies little on legal cases and more on institutional records. Although she does not specifically use legal cases as a source, Knupfer does use documentation produced by authorities, or court run juvenile institutions and psychologists. Knupfer's bottom-up approach to investigating the State Industrial School for Delinquent Girls at Geneva, Illinois produced a sympathetic view of the girls institutionalized there. Using critical theory, or theory that examines culture and society, Knupfer grants the delinquent girls housed in these institutions a high level of agency. Juvenile delinquent girls came to the attention of the legal system for several reasons, but "immoral" or "incorrigible" behavior constituted the two main punishable offenses. These two misbehaviors, according to Knupfer, were code words for "sexual behaviors."³⁸ Young women, according to the gendered language of the legal system and society, needed to conform to their gender's expectations by

³⁸ Anne Meis Knupfer, "'To Become Good, Self-Supporting Women': The State Industrial School for Delinquent Girls at Geneva," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 9, no. 4 (October 2000): 422. See also Anne Meis Knupfer, *Reform and Resistance: Gender, Delinquency, and America's First Juvenile Court* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

remaining sexually pure, reserved, and innocent. If girls did not conform, the legal system and society labeled them as “wayward” or “problem women,” whose actions brought them to the attention of the juvenile court system.³⁹

Tamara Myers and Joan Sangster’s 2001 article “Retorts, Runaways, and Riots: Patterns of Resistance in Canadian Reform Schools for Girls, 1930-60” is similar to Knupfer’s in that it also examines the history of a juvenile detention home for delinquent girls looking to restore agency and interrogate resistance. However, the two works differ greatly in their approaches. Myers and Sangster’s article approaches the history of juvenile delinquent girls in reform schools from the top-down and does not share the sympathetic view of Knupfer’s article. Myers and Sangster examine how female juvenile delinquents in Canadian reformatory schools used passive and active resistance to challenge gendered sex laws. The article looks to place juvenile female “rebellion in a feminist and materialist framework of historical causation.”⁴⁰

Primarily brought to the attention of the courts because of sexual acts, the court often asked the girls about the status of their virginity. Too regularly, according to Myers

³⁹ Ibid., 423. Once institutionalized, psychiatric evaluations of the girl inmates classified the majority of them as “feebleminded,” or mentally disadvantaged in some way. Medical evaluations sought to determine the sexual histories of the girls, often seeking evidence of a broken hymen, venereal disease, or pregnancy (425-426). The best chance of reform, according to the Geneva school and other female juvenile institutions, would occur with intense domestic training. Their classes revolved around teaching the incarcerated girls how to keep house and raise a family; ultimately, how to remain within the boundaries of her expected submissive gender role. However, these girls rebelled against the institution by running away, blatantly misbehaving, or practicing sexual misconduct (428-429). According to Knupfer, the rebellion of girl delinquents at the Geneva school was a justified reaction to the unacceptable physical and emotional abuse exerted upon them by the staff at the school (436).

⁴⁰ Tamara Myers and Joan Sangster, “Retorts, Runaways and Riots: Patterns of Resistance in Canadian Reform Schools for Girls, 1930-60,” *Journal of Social History* 34, no. 3 (Spring 2001): 670. Rebellion in the form of retort first occurred when the delinquent girls would speak out against the judge during their hearings. Many of the girls showed no remorse for whatever “crime” they had committed while others immediately verbally accused their mother or stepmother of turning them in. According to Myers, these retorts reveal an underlying “frustration with the sexual double standard they confronted daily” (673). See also, Tamara Meyers, *Caught: Montreal’s Modern Girls and the Law, 1869-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

and Sangster, girls would point to a male family member as the reason for their loss of virginity. Even when these accusations proved authentic, the courts would still send the girl into a reform school. The girls' objections to their sentencing continued upon reaching their assigned institutions. Verbal assaults on the staff as well as refusal to follow simple rules are two examples of how girls practiced resistance once they entered the school. A form of passive resistance occurred when the girls blatantly performed their daily activities at a slow pace. The most active resistance, according to Myers and Sangster, occurred when girls would run away from their reform institutions.⁴¹

Most of the aforementioned works on young women and crime and young women in institutions primarily focuses on late nineteenth and early twentieth century North America. One of the first books on post-World War II juvenile delinquency is James Gilbert's 1986 book, *A Cycle of Outrage: America's Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s*. Focusing primarily on the public's concern over juvenile delinquency rather than juvenile crime itself, Gilbert examines the role mass media played in exaggerating the problem of post-war delinquency. Using juvenile delinquency as the lens, Gilbert focuses on the social, cultural, and political landscape of the late 1940s and 1950s United States. *A Cycle of Outrage* "explores how changes in mass culture" following World War II engendered or exacerbated fear "of a wide variety of individuals." Further, the book discusses "the interconnections of ideas, individuals, and

⁴¹ Ibid., 678. Running away was most likely to occur shortly after a girl's arrival at the institution. According to the staff and psychologists who evaluated the girls, some girls ran away to continue in delinquent behavior while others would leave to cure their homesickness. Violent resistance took the form of rioting. Girls would directly respond to their incarceration and treatment in the facilities by destroying their uniforms as well as property in their rooms. According to Myers and Sangster, it is difficult to nail down the primary cause behind riots. However, their article does reveal the same forms of creative resistance as those discussed in Knupfer's article. Myers and Sangster recognize that resistance was rare in reform schools, but those who did perform acts of resistance did so "as a means of protecting their autonomy" (687).

institutions that, at first glance, might appear only to have a marginal relationship to each other. But on a deeper level, these coincidences reveal a profound and general response to an important problem in American culture."⁴²

Gilbert discusses how the government, while trying to find the cause of delinquency, blamed a broken home, or working mothers, as well as the movie and comic book industry for the rise in juvenile crime. However, as Gilbert convincingly asserts, filmmakers attempted to “sanitize delinquency and praise youth culture as good clean fun.”⁴³ As Gilbert states, “the problem of delinquency is also the problem of definition.” Certain crimes, Gilbert asserts, are arrestable offenses not matter the age of the offender; these include murder, rape, and burglary. The crimes juveniles committed, underage drinking, sex, curfew violations, and driving without a license, were not criminal activities, but instead were “*status crimes* or acts considered criminal simply because of the age of the perpetrator.”⁴⁴ Gilbert is able to demonstrate, is how that the concern over juvenile delinquency increased after World War II due to the hyperbolic language of important officials and institutions, and declined in the 1960s because the definition of juvenile delinquency had changed. Gilbert states, “what once seemed clearly to be delinquency became confused in a burst of enthusiasm for youth culture.”⁴⁵

William S. Bush’s 2010 book, *Who Gets a Childhood? Race and Juvenile Justice in Twentieth Century Texas*, has contributed greatly to the historiography of juvenile

⁴² James Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage: America’s Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 10.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 195.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 217.

delinquency, and more specifically, juvenile delinquency in Texas.⁴⁶ By examining “key moments of juvenile justice reform” in Texas, 1910-1920, the 1940s, and 1970s, Bush demonstrates how youth, their parents, and “other advocates began to employ the language of protected childhood to argue their case against mistreatment, poor physical conditions, or the lack of a homelike environment facilities.”⁴⁷ Bush blames a number of things for the ill successes of Texas’ juvenile justice system. These include, underfunding by the Texas legislature, “recalcitrant” townspeople, and poorly paid and trained staff. Bush discusses at length *Morales v. Turman* (1974) as it caused major reform in Texas’ juvenile justice system. Not only did it ban corporal punishment, but it also closed down two outrageously oppressive schools, Mountain View in 1975 and Gatesville in 1979.⁴⁸ Bush brings the history of Texas’ juvenile justice system through to the 2007 discussions on where Texas stands and should go in regards to their delinquent youth programs, and hopes that by examining the errors of their past, Texas can improve and grow such programs.⁴⁹

The historiography of 1950s women, young women and crime, young institutionalized women, and juvenile delinquency in post-World War II United States set up a much needed background to understand Texas’ post-war juvenile justice system since many of these same themes existed after the war. Working mothers were still perceived as a cause of juvenile delinquency; a particular challenge considering that women’s, and especially married women’s, participation in the job market continued to

⁴⁶ *Who Gets a Childhood?* is an outgrowth from Bush’s well researched dissertation “Representing the Juvenile Delinquent: Reform, Social Science, and Teenage Troubles in Postwar Texas.”

⁴⁷ William S. Bush, *Who Gets a Childhood? Race and Juvenile Justice in Twentieth Century Texas*, (Athens, G.A.: The University of Georgia Press, 2010), 5.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 208.

grow. Young women primarily faced incarceration because of the government and society's desire to contain adolescent female sexuality, and once incarcerated, girls used creativity to resist the gendered nature of juvenile institutions. All of these themes are very present in the records of the Texas Youth Commission as well as federal agencies concerned with delinquent youth.

What follows is a brief history of Texas' juvenile justice system after World War II. Chapter one paints the picture of youth crime in Texas and how closely it resembled the youth crime occurring in the United States as a whole. Based heavily on statistical data from the Texas Youth Commission, chapter one shows how many children, white and black, were admitted to the three main juvenile justice institutions in Texas, and argues that the Texas Youth Commission used a broken-home theory as the primary cause for juvenile delinquency. This chapter also shows how the Texas Youth Commission used familiar gender stereotypes to define what they believed constituted "girl" crime.

Chapter two focuses on the experiences of the girls at the Gatesville State School for Girls, the Brady School for Negro Girls, and the Crockett School for Colored Girls. Finding first-hand accounts of these girls is impossible because of their statuses as minors. With that said, chapter two attempts to find these girls' voices by examining how the schools set up the girls' day-to-day lives. Chapter two ultimately argues that the Texas Youth Commission used its power to enforce rules, regulations, and a curriculum that conformed to narrow socially prescribed ideas of gender and race.

Finally, chapter three addresses the hopes the Texas Youth Commission had for wayward youth, and specifically girls, once they left the institution. While the commission believed a college education or even middle to upper class jobs seemed impossible for these “reformed” youth, they hoped that their programs at least turned criminal youth into upstanding compliant citizens. The chapter then discusses how these themes of citizenship occurred not only throughout the records of the Texas Youth Commission, but also in the records of federal agencies concerned with juvenile crime. Ultimately, chapter three argues how the gendered language and practices of Texas’ juvenile justice system responded to a national concern of communist influence in America’s youth.

CHAPTER II

“TEXANS IN TROUBLE:” TEXANS’ REACTION TO THE INCREASE IN JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

On November 16, 1952, an episode of *Dragnet* titled “The Big Seventeen” aired on national television. The episode started by telling viewers that “the story they are about to see is true, the names have been changed to protect the innocent.” At the beginning of the show, Sergeant Joe Friday received a call notifying him about the vandalism of a local theater. On the scene, the police discovered a small box of marijuana and compiled a list of suspects. After interrogating one of the suspects, they learned that a 17-year-old boy named Johnny had been distributing drugs to local teenagers. After further investigation, Joe Friday found out from Johnny’s mother that her husband, Johnny’s father, had abandoned them, leaving Johnny to be raised in a single-headed household. The officers could not find Johnny and constantly pressured the boy’s mother and girlfriend to give him up. Johnny’s girlfriend Evelyn, who appeared to be the ideal bobby soxer teenage girl of the 1950s, met Johnny later that night only to discover him dead the day before his 18th birthday. Upset, Evelyn expressed to the officers that she did not know why someone as smart as Johnny would have gotten involved in such deviance, let alone overdose on dope. Joe Friday told Evelyn exactly why Johnny had gotten involved. Sergeant Friday stated that Johnny “had

the best excuse in the world...he was seventeen” (*Dragnet*, “The Big Seventeen,” February 3, 2011 [originally aired November 16, 1952]).

Sergeant Joe Friday excuses Johnny’s behavior because it fits in with the accepted gender stereotypes of the day. Traditional gender roles, after World War II, were more than just what society expected of their fellow citizens. These roles, women as homemakers and men as breadwinners, were a measuring stick to determine the well-being of the nation. In fact, faced with an unprecedented increase in juvenile crime, authorities in Texas and around the country fell back of familiar gender stereotypes to explain what was causing the situation and how they should respond to it.

This chapter argues that despite their lack of quantitative support for their accusations, members of the Texas Youth Commission, as well as national agencies, placed the blame for juvenile delinquency on the broken home. A home was considered “broken” when the members of a family, mothers, fathers, daughters, and sons, did not strictly follow the gender role assignments that were so deeply embedded in United States society during the early Cold War. Mothers were to be submissive wives and nurturers and fathers were to be the wage earner and primary discipliners of the children. Sons were to follow the footsteps of the fathers, while daughters were to follow those of their mothers. The mere fact that this episode of *Dragnet* focused on these same concerns over the consequences of not conforming to traditional gender assignments shows that this was an issue that was not only evident in the reports of national and state youth authorities, but was also highlighted in popular culture of the time.

National and state youth agencies, along with researchers, relied heavily on a broken home theory as an explanation for the increase in juvenile delinquency in Texas and the United States after World War II.⁵⁰ The rate at which youth crime occurred on the national and state level after World War II was a cause for public concern. The rates of increase in youth crime, or crimes committed by children under the age of 17 in Texas reflected, on a smaller scale, similar rates of increase on the national level. By examining national and state statistics, Texas juvenile court records, and newspaper articles, a pattern of specific responses to the increase of juvenile delinquency emerges. A number of groups accused women in the workforce as well as other challenges to tradition, as the reason for heightened youth crime in the Cold War era. The specific crimes committed by boys and girls also concerned United States society. Youth crime remained gendered, and while the Texas Youth Commission provided solid definitions of crimes committed by juvenile boys, they remained vague in the definitions of crimes typically committed by girls. For example, boys committed more tangible crimes such as vandalism and assault, while girls committed crimes against morality. No matter the crime, national and state youth agencies were desperate in their attempts to find a reason for increased youth crimes. This desperation led them to place responsibility on the delinquent's family and upbringing rather than on the individual delinquent.

In the episode of *Dragnet* mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the characters continued to emphasize that the issue of juvenile delinquency was a new problem. However, juvenile delinquency was not a new problem in post-World War II America; juvenile delinquent cases had been a national concern in the United States for

⁵⁰ Susan Kellogg and Steven Mintz, *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1988), 226.

some time.⁵¹ However, in the twentieth century, the nation's concern over juvenile delinquency reached its zenith in the 1950s before dwindling again in the early 1960s. Aware of the increase of juvenile delinquency that had follow World War I, the American public and authorities on juvenile delinquency concluded that the changed society following World War II created similarly fertile ground to produce higher numbers of delinquent acts. After World War I, according to the TYC, the United States had experienced "one of the worst and most sensational crime-waves known."⁵²

Authorities on juvenile delinquency attributed this post-World War I crime wave to the displacement of the family due to war. Veterans of World War I, as well as their families who stayed behind, now lived in a United States that had undergone tremendous change, and a similar displaced picture of post war America existed after World War II. The rate at which children under the age of 17 committed crimes increased after World War II, just as the government agencies on juvenile delinquency had predicted.⁵³

As juvenile delinquency rates increased, the national and state youth agencies attributed the cause to the failing American family.⁵⁴ According to these agencies, any disruption to the ideal nuclear family, father as a breadwinner and discipliner, and the mother as a nurturer and homemaker, left the children vulnerable to the temptations of youth crime. In a time of upheaval, authorities interpreted juvenile crime in familiar terms whether the facts supported their assumptions or not.

⁵¹ For more on the concerns over female delinquency before World War II see Odem, *Delinquent Daughters* and Holloway, *Sexuality, Politics, and Social Control in Virginia, 1920-1945*.

⁵² Juvenile Court Activities in Texas 1955, Juvenile court reports, Records, Texas Youth Commission. Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission (hereafter cited TYCA), Box 1999/087-8, 2. Hereafter cited as Court Reports 1955, TYCA, Box 1999/087-8, pg.

⁵³ Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage*, 27.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 153.

The number of juvenile delinquency cases increased both nationally and at the state level in the 1950s. In order to demonstrate that juvenile delinquency in the state was part of a larger national trend, the Texas Youth Commission, provided national statistics in all of its court reports. In 1955, they recorded that juvenile delinquency in the nation had increased 13 percent over the rates in 1952. According to the commission, this was the fifth consecutive year of a recorded increase of that magnitude. The United States government had determined, through investigations made by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Children's Bureau, that in 1953 the number of youth brought to juvenile authorities was about 435,000 children, or 2.3 percent of all children in the United States between the ages of 10 and 17. Although there was a time in the 1940s where the rates of juvenile delinquency had slightly decreased, by 1953 the recorded level of juvenile crime was 45 percent higher than in 1948.⁵⁵

Congressional investigators found similar trends during their investigations. The statistics coming from the U.S. Senate Subcommittee Investigating Juvenile Delinquency presented higher and more worrisome numbers of children involved in crime. Senator Estes Kefauver (D-TN) reported, on November 10, 1955, "Over 1,333,000 children came to the attention of the police in 1954." According to Senator Kefauver, almost half of the over one million children brought to the attention of the juvenile system had been referred to the juvenile courts once before; this represented a ten percent increase over 1953. The Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency, in the 1950s, was beginning

⁵⁵ Court Reports 1955, TYCA, Box 1999/087-8, 2.

to realize that the number of juvenile delinquents in rural areas was increasing and stated that the problem of youth crime was “far from being a ‘big city’ problem.”⁵⁶

The number of children aged ten to 17 increased by the mid-1950s because of the baby boom following the war. As historian Elaine Tyler May points out, during the twentieth century Americans of all races, religions, and classes produced more children between the years of 1946 and 1964.⁵⁷ Between the war years and 1956, approximately 40 million children were born in the United States.⁵⁸ Common belief holds that the increase in children born after World War II was a direct effect of men returning home from war. However, the intention of procreating after the war ran far deeper than a pure desire to have a family. As May has argued, having children was a way of fighting domestic communism. Families believed that children were “a defense—an impregnable bulwark” against the Red Menace. When raised properly, offspring could ensure the safety of America in the future. Parents believed that by having more children, they demonstrated “loyalty to national goals,” and by raising a family in suburbia, families believed they could protect “against hostile outside forces.” While these children could be bulwarks against communism, they could also challenge the fight against communism by not conforming to the proper values instilled in them by their parents.⁵⁹

The increase in the teenage population coincided with the increase in juvenile delinquency. The children born immediately after World War II entered the teenage age bracket, as defined by juvenile authorities, of ten to 17 by the mid-1950s. National and

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵⁷ May, *Homeward Bound*, 3.

⁵⁸ Thomas Hine, *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager* (New York: Avon Books, 1999), 249.

⁵⁹ May, *Homeward Bound*, 130, 152.

state agencies took this increase in teenage population into consideration when trying to explain the rise of juvenile delinquency. Despite the expansion of this demographic due to the baby boom, the government found that the increase in delinquency was four times greater than the increased number of teenagers, therefore more children committed more crimes.⁶⁰

FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover reported in 1954 that children under the age of 18 had committed 50 percent of all auto thefts, 49 percent of burglaries, 15 percent of all rapes, and five percent of homicides. Teenagers who committed the majority of these crimes were in the 15 to 17 year-old age bracket. Additionally, 35 percent of the children who committed the above crimes were repeat referrals to the juvenile courts. The FBI found that there was one juvenile delinquent for every 18 children under the age of 18 in 1954.⁶¹

In 1956, the Children's Bureau reported that 2.2 percent of all children aged ten to 17 committed a form of youth crime.⁶² A report produced by the Federal Bureau of Investigation presented similar statistics and showed shocking increases in juvenile delinquency in 1957. In that year, 34,974 juveniles faced burglary charges; this was an increase from the 17,771 juvenile burglary cases in 1950. Juvenile larceny cases increased from 17,954 in 1950 to 63,993 in 1957, while auto thefts committed by juveniles increased from 8,592 in 1950 to 23,473 in 1957. However, that same year the FBI also reported a decline in juveniles committing acts of rape, homicide, and narcotic use. Although this seemed promising, the thought of children under the age of 18

⁶⁰ Court Reports 1955, TYCA, Box 1999/087-8, 3.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Court Reports 1958, TYCA, Box 1999/087-8, 13.

committing such heinous crimes still worried the national leaders. Government officials predicted that the end of World War II would bring about a rise in juvenile delinquency; they determined this by examining the increases after World War I. However, much to the dismay and disappointment of the nation, the majority of the 1950s saw that the actual rates of increase of juvenile delinquency were well above what the FBI and Children's Bureau predicted. The rates in juvenile delinquency increased nationwide, and each state sought statistics that confirmed their concerns about the rise in youth crime.

Texas agencies on juvenile justice had long existed in the state, dating as far back as the middle of the nineteenth century. One of the first responsibilities of the Texas youth agency was to establish homes for delinquent and abandoned children. Plans had been under way to build these facilities but the Civil War had delayed progress. Sometime after the Civil War, construction began on facilities. The Gatesville State School for Boys opened in 1889; the Gainesville State School for Girls opened in 1916. In 1949, under the Gilmer Aiken Act, the Texas Youth Development Council became the new name of the Texas youth agency.⁶³ The goal of the Texas Youth Development Council was "the rehabilitation and successful re-establishment of delinquent children in society." The council went through one more name change in 1957 to become the Texas Youth Commission.⁶⁴

⁶³ For ease of reference, all agencies that constituted what became known as the Texas Youth Commission will here to be mentioned by that name. While some statistics presented may have been gathered by the Texas Youth Development Council they will be referred to as findings of the Texas Youth Commission. Further, the terms "delinquent boys" and "delinquent girls" were verbiage used by the Texas Youth Commission, and will be referred to as such in this thesis.

⁶⁴ "A Brief History of TYC," Texas Youth Commission, accessed March 10, 2011, last modified December 30, 2010, <http://www.tyc.state.tx.us/about/history.html>.

The rate of juvenile delinquency acts in Texas closely mirrored national rates of youth crime in the 1950s. In their 1955 juvenile court report, the Texas Youth Commission, after their overview of national statistics, titled the next section of the report “Texans in Trouble.” The Texas Youth Commission considered it of vital importance to produce reports showing the breakdown of juvenile delinquency rates in Texas to not only assess what youth agencies were facing but also assist in justifying the commission’s existence and expertise. Before 1949, Texas youth agencies did not have formal statistical reports on delinquency. The commission first called on Texas’ 254 counties to send in court reports in 1952; by 1955, of the 254 counties, only 146 participated in the survey.

The information that these counties provided showed a drastic spike in delinquency cases from 1954 to 1955. There were 20,805 delinquency cases referred to county juvenile courts in 1955; this represented a 26 percent increase from 1954’s 16,481 juvenile cases. Out of the 20,805 cases, 16,829 were first time offenders, while 3,976 children were repeat offenders. The total population of children under the age of 17 in the 146 counties reporting was 863,999. This meant that in 1955, 19 out of every 1,000 children in Texas participated in youth crime that was severe enough to constitute an appearance before judges and probation officers.⁶⁵ Although not all of Texas’ counties reported, the Texas Youth Commission took these numbers and used them to represent the state in its entirety.

The ratio of 19 delinquents per 1,000 children was a significant increase from the first statistics the commission assembled in 1952. In that year, 15 per 1,000 children

⁶⁵ Court Reports 1955, TYCA, Box 1999/087-8, 3-4.

were delinquents—the number rose again in 1954 to 18 delinquents out of 1,000 children. The Texas Youth Commission determined, from the reports of participating counties that juvenile delinquency would continue to increase drastically until 1960.⁶⁶ They came to this conclusion after considering the increase in birth rates after the war.

Youth crime was only one of the concerns of the commission. The court processed 25,875 children in 1955. The 20,805 children mentioned previously came to the attention of the court on criminal charges; this represented 80 percent of the 25,875 children. According to the 1955 report, 3,207, or 12 percent, of these children appeared before the court due to dependency and neglect, while the remaining eight percent or 1,863 children fell under the special hearings classification.⁶⁷ Dependency and neglect cases consisted of adoption or foster cases. The juvenile court system in Texas would handle adoption cases, children placed in foster homes, and reports of child negligence. The Texas Youth Commission did not specify, in their reports, what types of juvenile cases comprised special hearings.

The age that determined a child's juvenile classification depended on the child's sex. According to the commission, juvenile delinquent boys were between the ages of ten and 16, while girl delinquents were between the ages of ten and 17. The median age of all children referred to the Texas juvenile courts in 1955 was 15.1 years, in other words, half of the children reported were between ten and 15 years old and the other half occupied the 15 to 18 year old age bracket.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Ibid., 4.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 5.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 7.

Instead of making a noticeable effort to challenge juvenile delinquency within communities, national and state juvenile agencies focused on assigning blame in order to influence citizens to combat youth crime. Best defined as groups of a lot of talk and little action, these agencies considered themselves providers of information and funders of juvenile detention centers and training schools. When a youth committed a crime, the agencies believed that it was either because of the child's mental instability or because the child resided in a broken home.⁶⁹

The Texas Youth Commission took their cues from the national government, including national agencies such as the FBI and the Children's Bureau that consistently advised the nation on how to best run a home and raise a family. In its 1955 *Fourth Annual Report of Juvenile Court Activities in Texas*, the commission quoted FBI director J. Edgar Hoover:

All elements of the community, the home, the school, the church, the law enforcement agency, must work together in a common effort. Juvenile Delinquency is broader than any one segment of society. There is no single solution or easy remedy. It calls for a spirit of devotion and sacrifice from men and women willing to become fighters in the cause.⁷⁰

The FBI and national agencies played an important role in studying the causes of juvenile delinquency. They acknowledged that there was a previously held belief that juvenile delinquents originated from "so-called underprivileged families," but that the government found that this belief was a myth since "families in well-to-do circumstances" produced the same number of delinquents as the "lower" classes. The

⁶⁹ Conference on Interstate Procedures Affecting Juveniles 1955, Records, TYCA, Box 1999/164-5, 4.

⁷⁰ Court Reports 1955, TYCA, Box 1999/087-8, 11.

FBI determined that instead of claiming that these children were “victims of economic circumstances or illness,” more stress needed to be placed on the changes in society due to World War II. There was common consensus that children were not born bad, rather they came from an environment or home that was not conducive to raising well-behaved and moral citizens.⁷¹

Politicians, specifically those in the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency, disagreed as to what individual factor of post-war America was the primary cause of juvenile delinquency. However, when the question of juvenile delinquency pertained to girl juvenile delinquents most authorities placed the blame on working mothers. Chief probation officer of Toledo, Ohio, Wallace Hoffman, stated, “the employment of women in industry has been an important factor in the present disorganization of families.” According to Hoffman, this disorganization was the cause of a “new type of child case”: “the door-key stepchild.” A door-key stepchild was one who, when he or she arrived home, had to make their own meals and take care of themselves in other ways until their mother came home from work.⁷² The leadership of the American Federation of Labor echoed a similar opinion. National legislative representative for the AFL, Lewis G. Hines, directly blamed women who had “neglected the home” as the primary cause of delinquency and claimed that women “wouldn’t be missed in industry” if they left to go back to the home.⁷³

To the dismay of many American men, the increase of women in the workforce during World War II brought empowerment to women whose assumed career was that of

⁷¹ Ibid., 1-2.

⁷² Quoted in Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage*, 32-33.

⁷³ Ibid., 33.

a homemaker and mother. When the war ended, American society wished for traditional familial roles of men, women, and children to resume as they had before the war. When many women stayed in the workforce, the government and much of society saw this as harmful to the American nuclear family and to the children of working mothers.⁷⁴

Several women's groups urged the government to rethink their accusations and not place the blame on women who either needed or chose to work.⁷⁵ While some women returned to their homemaking tasks at the end of World War II, a large number of women remained in the workforce. Those who did remain were primarily lower-class women who needed to work and older women whose child rearing responsibilities had lessened as their children came of age and began to take care of themselves. These women transitioned from low paying "pink collar jobs," to higher-paying industrial work during the war, back to the service sector after the war.⁷⁶ Government authorities aimed their most vicious accusations at working middle-class women with young children, whom the "experts" blamed for abandoning their home for a career. Several women's groups feared that these accusations would force women to surrender their right to work because of claims made by youth agencies that had little factual evidence.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, the blame on working mothers was only part of the state and national government's broken home theory.

⁷⁴ May, *Homeward Bound*, 74.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ For more on the challenges faced by working women after World War II see Dorothy Sue Cobble's *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 13.

⁷⁷ Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage*, 33; For more on working women during World War II see Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond*.

The Texas Training School Code Commission submitted a report in 1949 titled “‘Child by Child’ We Build a Nation” to Texas Governor Beauford H. Jester expressing the same broken home theory held by the national government and agencies. Towards the end of the report, the commission informed Governor Jester that in order to rehabilitate juvenile delinquents, they must recognize and assign causes of delinquency. They provided a list of 21 possible reasons as to why a child would become a juvenile delinquent; none of these reasons placed any responsibility on the child. The majority of these factors related to broken homes, but ranged greatly in specifics. The commission mentioned the delinquency danger in broken homes caused by “death or divorce or working mothers,” drunk or criminal parents, lack of moral training from parents, and “failure[s] to train children for marriage and parenthood.” Non-broken family factors included “salacious,” crime-ridden movies and comics⁷⁸ and even “the automobile.”⁷⁹

In October 1950, the Texas Youth Commission decided to start publishing a monthly news bulletin entitled “The Key.” The purpose of this bulletin was to explain how the Texas Youth Commission handled juvenile delinquency in Texas on the state and local levels. At the beginning of the report, they emphasized that child delinquency did not originate at the state level, but on the home level. In order to rehabilitate these

⁷⁸ National and state youth agencies could do little about how parents were raising their children. Therefore, in the 1950s, the Senate Subcommittee Investigating Juvenile Delinquency performed a full-scale assault on the comic book industry. They saw that comic books displayed acts of “crime, vice, lust, and horror,” and that this was an important contributor to juvenile delinquency. One psychiatrist in the Cold War era, Fredric Wertham, testified in front of the Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency and stated, “I think Hitler was a beginner compared to the comic-book industry.” For more on the concern over comic books see David Hajdu, *The TEN-CENT PLAGUE: The Great Comic-Book Scare and How it Changed America* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), 6.

⁷⁹ Report, *A Youth Development Program for the State of Texas*, Texas Training Code Commission, 1949, Records, TYCA, Box 1999/087-7, 26-27; The automobile has long been seen as a contributor to youth crime. For more on how the automobile contributed to youth crime see Michael L. Berger *The Devil Wagon in God’s Country: The Automobile and Social Change in Rural America, 1893-1929* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1979) and Virginia Scharff, *Taking the Wheel: Women and the Coming of the Motor Age* (New York: Free Press, 1991).

children to the point where they could contribute to society, the commission insisted that the citizens as well as youth agencies and personnel needed to be sensitive to the poverty or “lack of supervision” that caused a child to become a delinquent.

Newspaper editors also voiced concerns about the cause of increased juvenile crime. While many agencies and experts equally dispersed blame on home and community, a Fort Worth newspaper, the *Star Telegraph*, published an article in 1949 stating that places like schools and churches cannot receive sole responsibility and that “every [emphasis added] juvenile offender gained his inspiration from his elders and their influence in some form or another.”⁸⁰ The *Houston Chronicle*, in August 1949, had a similar article, “Muddled Home Life Blamed for Number of Youths at Gatesville Correctional School.” The article gave an example of a delinquent boy named Johnny who became a delinquent because his father was too lazy to work and his mother was not interested in taking care of the responsibilities at home.⁸¹ The *Austin American Statesman* gave a more detailed account of a 17-year-old deaf boy arrested on burglary suspicion a year earlier. The boy claimed to be stealing in order to support his financially insecure grandmother with whom he had been living with for some time. The boy stated that his mother, who at the age of thirty-five had been married 11 times, would get tired of him and send him to live with his grandmother.⁸²

Although the two stories mentioned in these newspaper articles placed the spotlight on juvenile delinquents who came from delinquent families, others blamed the

⁸⁰ “A State Youth Development Council,” *Star Telegram*, March 19, 1949.

⁸¹ Don Hinga, “Muddled Home Life Blamed for Number of Youths at Gatesville Correctional School,” *Houston Chronicle*, August 30, 1949.

⁸² Fred Williams, “Gatesville Rejects Youth Ordered There by Betts,” *Austin American Statesman*, August 26, 1949.

new technologies appearing in households. This new technology, such as the “vacuum cleaner, washing machine, bakery and restaurant,” according to Mrs. Paul Whitney, authority on youth problems, helped “paint today’s juvenile delinquency picture.” Modern conveniences limited the need for manual household labor that required the participation of the entire family thus providing more free time for youth to be away from the home and possibly run into trouble. These advances in technology, she argued, combined with growing numbers of women working outside of the home, deterred youth from learning the responsibilities of running a home and left a void in the moral development of the youth.⁸³

Despite the conclusion that most of the juveniles referred to state facilities were from broken homes, the statistical evidence provided by the Texas Youth Commission’s Juvenile Court Report in 1958, shows just the opposite. It announced that 57 percent of juveniles lived in a two-parent household.⁸⁴ Out of that 57 percent, 48 percent of these delinquents came from a home where both natural parents were still married, while the other nine percent lived with a stepparent or adoptive parents. The commission’s vagueness as to the individual family situations leaves much uncertainty regarding the causes of delinquency.

Despite the high ratio of delinquents with natural parents, the commission’s accusations about the effects of a broken home and working mother cannot be completely discounted. Even though the statistics show that the majority of delinquents came from a home where both natural parents resided, the commission did not include in their report

⁸³ “New Conveniences Help Paint Juvenile Picture, Expert Says,” *The Austin American*, November 8, 1949.

⁸⁴ Court Reports 1958, TYCA, Box 1999/087-8, 7.

the employment or personal constitution of each parent. The commission blamed child delinquency on broken homes caused by a number of factors such as a drunken father or emotionally absent mother, but they did not record this information in their statistics.

Popular culture reflected the commission's attitude as evidenced by the episode of *Dragnet* mentioned previously. One important scene in the episode presented a common belief about children living with only one parent. The main suspect, Johnny, according to his mother, had a father who had deserted them. Under questioning, Johnny's mother stated that because her husband left her she had to take on a full-time job in order to support herself and her son. She told Sergeant Friday that she had tried the best she could but "the boy needs a father, you can try all you want but he still needs a father, some kind of discipline" (*Dragnet*, "The Big Seventeen," February 3, 2011 [originally aired November 16, 1952]). This statement reflected the belief that there was an increase in delinquency rates among children who lived with their mother only. According to youth agencies, a father's presence as the head of the household remained critical in the prevention of juvenile delinquency. This suggests that children needed to see and experience gendered roles within their homes so that they too could practice and learn these same prescriptions in order to avoid becoming a juvenile delinquent.

Out of Texas delinquents, 27 percent of them lived with just their mother. Only nine percent of delinquents in 1958 came from a single-father household.⁸⁵ These numbers seemed to indicate one of two things to the Texas Youth Commission: either the fathers maintained a more stringent discipline policy in their homes that would prevent their child from becoming a delinquent, or the relationship between a father and child

⁸⁵ Ibid.

was more capable of preventing delinquency than a relationship between a mother and child. This disproportion may also exist because of the fact that the commission did not provide statistics regarding the overall population of children living with one parent. What this information could show is that there were far more single-headed households headed by women due to a number of factors such as high rates of male deaths in industry and war, desertion, and the court's tendency to grant sole custody to mothers. Therefore, there may have been significantly higher numbers of homes where only the mother was present than those where only the father was present.

During the 1950s, the Texas Youth Commission divided youth criminal activities into five categories: stealing, disobedience, immoral conduct, violence, and "other." In their reports, the commission effectively described what some of these crimes entailed while leaving other crimes open to interpretation. The commission specifically defined stealing and violence, those crimes committed mostly by delinquent boys, while disobedience, immoral conduct, and "other," committed mostly by delinquent girls, went without adequate explanation.

Delinquent boys in the 1950s most commonly committed crimes associated with theft. According to the commission, stealing described any cases of auto thefts, burglaries, armed robbery, forgery, shoplifting, and "other thefts." The 1958 court report broke down each crime within the category of theft. Out of these subsections of stealing, burglary was the most common with 3,577 individuals including both boys and girls. The second highest subsection of stealing fell under the heading of "other thefts." Neither the commission's 1955 or 1958 court report described what constituted "other thefts;" although not specifically noted, petty theft would most likely be included in this

category. To demonstrate the disproportionate numbers of boys involved in cases of stealing in 1958, the report cited, of the 8,775 thefts, boys committed 93.2 percent, while girls committed only 6.8 percent of these crimes.⁸⁶

Violence was the most well defined crime, in terms of statistical reports, according to commission reports. Violence included homicide, attempted homicide or suicide, aggravated assault, and “not specified.” The fact that violence represented the least number of crimes committed by juveniles pleased commissioners; acts of violence made up 3.5% of juvenile delinquency in 1955 and the number decreased to three percent in 1958.⁸⁷ In 1958, boy delinquents committed 487 of the total number of violent acts, while girls committed 111.

The third highest crime committed by boy delinquents fell in the category of “other.”⁸⁸ “Other,” broadly defined by the commission, was a catchall category. Acts of arson, carelessness or mischief, liquor or drug violations, traffic violations, other delinquent behavior, and not specified, were the six subcategories within “other reasons for referral.” In 1955, “other” constituted 29 percent of juvenile crimes committed by boys. Although delinquent boys committed more “other crimes” than delinquent girls did, girls only trailed boys in “other crimes” by one percent, constituting 28 percent of girl crimes in 1955.⁸⁹ This ratio differed greatly in the 1958 court report with boys committing 26 percent of other crimes and girls committing 18 percent.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Ibid., 6.

⁸⁷ Court Reports 1955, TYCA, Box 1999/087-8, 8.; Court Reports 1958, TYCA, Box 1999/087-8, 6.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Court Reports 1955, TYCA, Box 1999/087-8, 8.

⁹⁰ Court Reports 1958, TYCA, Box 1999/087-8, 5.

Stealing, violence, and other crimes had specific definitions provided by the youth commission in the 1955 and 1958 court reports. However, the crimes committed mostly by girls, did not receive clear definitions in these reports. The Texas Youth Commission described disobedience and immoral conduct in very broad terms in the 1950s, which leaves room for a number of questions. Disobedience, according to the commission, included any case of truancy, running away, ungovernability, and not specified. Definitions of truancy and running away were self-explanatory, but their lack of a definition for “ungovernability” and “not specified” poses questions of whether or not a child should have been committed to a juvenile correction facility. Their vagueness of these two subsections of disobedience calls into question the validity of their concern over delinquency, especially as it pertains to girl delinquency.

Girls represented 49 percent of “disobedience” delinquency in 1955 and 50 percent in 1958.⁹¹ The majority of these girls faced charges of running away, which accounted for 1,206 cases. In 1958, the next highest incidence of girls within the disobedience category was under the “ungovernable” heading, which the statistics failed to define; this classification included 324 of the 3,747 girl delinquency cases.⁹² These numbers still do not clarify what the commission or society defined as “ungovernable.” From the court reports, it can only be assumed that these girls were thought to be rebelling against authority, therefore were turned over to professional juvenile authorities. To place ungovernable in the context of the Cold War, the courts might have labeled a girl ungovernable if the girl challenged prescribed gender and sexual roles of the time. If

⁹¹ Court Reports 1955, TYCA, Box 1999/087-8, 8.; Court Reports 1958, TYCA, Box 1999/087-8, 5.

⁹² Court Reports 1958, TYCA, Box 1999/087-8, 6.

the girl participated in premarital sexual relationships, homosexual relationships, or deviated from submissive or feminine behavior in any way she most likely bore the label ungovernable.

Immoral conduct, according to the commission, included vagrancy, sex offenses, and “not specified.” The Texas Youth Commission narrowly defined vagrancy as curfew violations and “improper associates,” whom the report did not specify. However, the commission lacked a definition of “improper associates” as well as sex offenses. The concern over sexual immorality among girls in the 1950s was increasing at a steady rate. The increased number of immoral conduct cases between 1955 and 1958 seemed to justify this rising concern. In 1955, the commission concluded that nine percent of girl delinquency was under the category of immoral conduct; this number increased in 1958 to 13 percent. However, the commission and society’s definition of sexual deviance in the 1950s is still unclear in these reports. The question becomes, whether these girls were actually having sex or simply associating with boys or girls in ways that their parents saw a reason for such concern as to report their daughters to the authorities.

The Texas Youth Commission used traditional gender role assignments to make conclusions as to why boy delinquents turned to stealing and girl delinquents turned to general disobedience. In their analysis, they acknowledged and promoted the double standards that the society placed on their sons and daughters. They also stated that the analysis must take into consideration the understanding of the “basic characteristics of the two sexes.”⁹³

⁹³ Ibid., 4.

Both the 1955 and 1958 reports stated that because boys “are more active than girls,” boys generally committed crimes pertaining to the “violation of property rights of others.” They blame the increased freedom for boys along with their “natural aggressiveness” as reasons why boys committed different crimes than girls. The commission also found it important to note that the possible reason as to why boy delinquency was disproportionately greater than girl delinquency was the individual community’s willingness to report boys and hesitation to report girls.⁹⁴

Acts of disobedience and immoral conduct were the two categories most associated with girl delinquency in the 1950s. The commission believed that there was a reasonable explanation for this. They claimed, “The delinquent behavior of girls usually channels itself into more personal activities” such as “immoral conduct, sexual promiscuity, running away, [and] uncontrollable behavior,” although the commission did not define what qualified as uncontrollable behavior. The reason the girls committed this type of delinquent act, according to the commission, was because of their natural “resentment to authority or other maladjustments.”⁹⁵ Their reasoning as to why girls committed crimes different from boy delinquents remained the same throughout their reports in the 1950s.

The three main detention schools for juvenile delinquents were the Gatesville School for Boys, the Gainesville State School for Girls, and the Crockett School for Colored Girls (previously known as the Brady State School for Negro Girls). The Gatesville School for Boys did house both white and black delinquent boys, but the dormitories and classes remained segregated. When talks of forming an all-black female

⁹⁴ Ibid., 4-5.

⁹⁵ Court Reports 1955, TYCA, Box 1999/087-8, 8.

juvenile detention center in Texas began in 1916, the Texas Youth Commission never considered establishing the same partial integration system that existed at Gatesville. Instead, Dr. Carrie Weaver Smith, the superintendent of the Gainesville School in 1916, insisted that delinquent black females should receive a separate institution. On February 14, 1947, The Brady School for Negro Girls received its first students.⁹⁶

The race of the children reported to juvenile authorities and courts receives little discussion on the part of the commission. White children being brought to the attention of juvenile authorities greatly outnumbered black children. The 1955 juvenile court report showed that 17,412, or 86 percent, of the total delinquents reported that year were white, while 2,842, or 14 percent, of these children were black; 551 children did not have their race identified. This is in part because the juvenile courts were not noting the possibility of a child being Hispanic. It was not until the 1958 report that the commission recognized Hispanic juvenile delinquency.⁹⁷

The Texas school census from the 1955-1956 school year showed that the population of white children, in the delinquency age range of ten to 17, constituted 88 percent of all schoolchildren. The black population of schoolchildren in the same age group was 12 percent. In 1955, the rate of referral for white children was 22.8 per 1,000 and for black children, 27.4 per 1,000. The rate of referral for each of these groups, according to the commission had increased by five percent every year since the commission's first analysis in 1952. The commission makes clear in their 1955 report that they do not mean to imply that the referral of black children was higher than that of whites, or that black children, in relation to their population in Texas, were committing

⁹⁶ Bush, *Who Gets a Childhood?*, 71.

⁹⁷ Court Reports 1955, TYCA, Box 1999/087-8, 8.

more crimes than white children were. Instead, they wanted to acknowledge, “community attitudes may have a bearing on the higher rate of referrals of negro children.”⁹⁸ In other words, they acknowledged the racism in Texas communities.

The 1958 report has even less of a discussion about the race of the children referred to the courts than the 1955 report. White children, in 1958, were involved in 18,902 or 85 percent of delinquency cases while black children were involved in 3,214 cases or 15 percent of referred cases. This was the first year in which the commission made a note to recognize Hispanic juvenile delinquency. Out of the 85 percent of white children, 55 percent were English speaking while the remaining 30 percent were “Spanish-speaking white children.”⁹⁹

In 1956, the Texas Youth Commission put together the “Manual on Preparation of Children of Admission to the State Training Schools.” The manual discussed the goals the commission had for each of the schools. The goal specific to the Gatesville School was to train the young men for a future occupation. They stated that many of the boys who were admitted to the school were “young and immature mentally and emotionally,” and would only be there for a few months. The commission claimed that the short amount of time was not even enough to train “an intelligent and mature person” for a specific trade.

Because of the lack of time, the school’s goal was to have the boys learn a number of different skills in hopes of them finding their passion for a specific career.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Ibid., 6.

⁹⁹ Court Reports 1958, TYCA, Box 1999/087-8, 4.

¹⁰⁰ “Manual on Preparation of Children of Admission to the State Training Schools 1956,” Records, TYCA, Box 1999/087-1, 23.

The overall goal of all of the schools, for all sexes and races, was to mold the delinquent into a contributing member of society and an upstanding citizen. The activities for boys at the Gatesville School very much revolved around manual and skilled labor. The staff at the Gatesville School did spend a short amount of time teaching these young men how to wait on tables and work in gardens, but the majority of their training revolved around activities such as wood work, electrical repair, plumbing, auto repair, and sports.¹⁰¹

The Gainesville School and the Crockett or Brady School were the only two schools solely for delinquent girls. The Gainesville School was more optimistic about the training of their delinquents because, according to the commission, girls had received “more education and are more mature physically and emotionally than the boys.” For this reason then, according to reports, the girls who received training at the Gainesville School had “been more successful in securing jobs” than the boys at the Gatesville School.¹⁰² However, the traditional gender roles of the 1950s needs to be remembered when reviewing their analysis. The training the girls received was reflective of the traditional gender roles assigned to each of the sexes during the early Cold War era. The activities that girls participated in at the Gainesville School included housekeeping, homemaking, typing, filing, cosmetology, and switchboard operating.

The goals and activities of the Gainesville School differed considerably from those of the Crockett School for Colored Girls. The delinquent black girls at the Crockett School had only a fraction of the training available to delinquent white girls at Gainesville. The activities were not only limited, but also were very different because the school tailored the activities to the girls’ race. They taught the black girls at the Crockett

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 24.

¹⁰² Ibid., 22-23.

School things such as maid and janitorial services and “good grooming and care of person.” Although some of the activities were similar, housework, sewing, and cleaning, the commission appeared to be preparing the black girls of low-paying domestic employment, instead of preparing them to keep a home for a husband and children.¹⁰³

The commission acknowledged this difference between the two delinquent girls’ schools and tried to justify these differences by accounting for the “low mentalities and very poor educational backgrounds” of black children. Revealing their own racial biases, the commission claimed that it would be almost “impossible” to teach the black girls any kind of trade, therefore, the funds for the Crockett School could not come close to matching the “equipment and instructors” needed to train these girls. In their discussion of the goals of these black girls, the commission continued to suggest that the only type of employment a black woman could obtain was that of a servant, or in some instances, a laundress for a commercial business, hotel, or private home of another family. When discussing both schools for girls, the commission stated that they have regular “lectures on family life and other things affecting them as mothers and women in a modern society.”¹⁰⁴

With the juvenile delinquency rates increasing nationwide in the 1950s, concerns over the well-being of the nation and future generations became the focus of many national and state youth agencies. The increase in youth crime was so substantial and worrisome that national agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Children’s Bureau participated in gathering statistics and insisted the undertaking of direct action to solve the juvenile delinquency problem. These agencies attempted to

¹⁰³ Ibid., 26.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

discover what was causing the increased rates in juvenile delinquency and concluded that youth crime was a direct result of a broken home. They continually encouraged American families to conform to the traditional gender roles, man as the breadwinner and woman as the homemaker. If parents deviated from these roles in any way, they were ultimately handing their child over to a life of crime.

The Texas Youth Commission also encouraged members of families to adhere to their assigned roles. However, the commission could not control how families throughout Texas functioned. Instead, the commission attempted to teach the wayward youth in their facilities the skills and behaviors deemed appropriate by society. However, the Texas juvenile justice program “trained” the delinquents how to fit within their socially prescribed roles. As the next chapter will demonstrate, race and gender both played significant roles in the commission’s definitions of the proper education for the young women in the juvenile justice homes. While white girls at Gainesville took courses on how to be wives and mothers in their own homes, the Brady and Crockett schools received training as maids, janitors, or launderers.

These teachings mirrored American society’s understanding of race and gender. After World War II, United States society underwent a renaissance of family values and unity. However, many groups remained excluded from the *Leave it to Beaver* nuclear family, which indeed itself, was a myth. Nevertheless, the commission attempted to teach young white girls how to assume their roles as mothers, while reinforcing the suppression of racism and Jim Crow on the African American girls at Brady and Crockett.

CHAPTER III

TEACHING FEMININITY: THE TEXAS YOUTH COMMISSION'S ATTEMPT TO REHABILITATE WAYWARD GIRLS

Because American society in general viewed female juvenile delinquents as a challenge to established societal norms, the Texas Youth Commission, as well as other juvenile justice agencies in the United States, set forth policies, curriculums, rules, and regulations that attempted to extinguish the threat of subversive behaviors in delinquent youth. Legislators and other authority figures presented delinquent girls that participated in premarital sexual relationships, prostitution, or other disturbing or questionable behavior as a serious threat to the American family, and therefore to America's political, economic, and social systems. The Texas Youth Commission created programs that reinforced societal norms to those who had strayed in order to teach good values to those whose education had been lacking. Ultimately, the Texas girls' juvenile justice system used its authority to perpetuate race and gender constructs of the time through curricula, rules, and regulations within the Gainesville State School for Girls, Brady School for Negro Girls, and Crockett School for Colored Girls.

Established in 1916, the Gainesville School for Girls, previously named Texas State Training School for Girls, stood on a 160-acre plot of land east of Gainesville,

Texas.¹⁰⁵ The school's goal was "to provide a home for delinquent and dependent girls where they [might] be trained in those useful arts and sciences to which women are adapted."¹⁰⁶ Scholars credit Dr. Carrie Weaver Smith, a graduate from the Pennsylvania Women's Medical College in Philadelphia and self-proclaimed "expert on female delinquency," for establishing the institution.¹⁰⁷ Since its beginning, Gainesville focused its curriculum on what society considered "women's work." Stressing the importance of femininity, Gainesville personnel focused their curriculum on grooming future homemakers. Despite the increase in working women during and after the war, the Texas juvenile justice system still focused their curriculum on the domestic sciences with the intention of reforming delinquent girls into what society called them to be: homemakers. However, the type of domesticated work depended on the girls' race. The curriculum at Gainesville focused on the upkeep of the American home, while the girls at Brady and Crockett attended classes that stressed the importance of commercial cleaning and services.

According to the Texas State Youth Development Council in 1956, Gainesville's campus did "not make an unattractive appearance with its hilly campus covered trees."¹⁰⁸ In the first four years of its existence, the Gainesville school reached a population of 232 girls.¹⁰⁹ The school's curriculum emphasized "character building, formation of habits of self-control and stability, better understanding of spiritual values and . . . an ability to

¹⁰⁵ The Texas State Training School for Girls changed to the Gainesville State School for Girls in 1948 when the school's population reached 198 inmates. For more see Brian Hart, "Gainesville State School for Girls," Handbook of Texas Online (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/jjg01>), accessed July 10, 2011.

¹⁰⁶ Bush, *Who Gets a Childhood?*, 22.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 22-23.

¹⁰⁸ "Manual on Preparation of Children for Admission to the State Training Schools, 1956," Records, TYCA, 1999/087-1, 14.

¹⁰⁹ Bush, *Who Gets a Childhood?*, 22.

cope with present social conditions.”¹¹⁰ These goals remained central to Gainesville’s efforts for the majority of the twentieth century. Although established many years later, the Brady State School for Negro Girls began with the same set of principles.

The Crockett School for Colored Girls began as the Brady State School for Negro Girls. The Brady school accepted its first students on February 14, 1947; thirty years after the Texas legislature authorized the state Board of Control to establish a school for black female delinquents. The thirty-year delay occurred because the state did not appropriate funding for the school until 1945.¹¹¹ The push for an all-black female juvenile detention center in Texas began in 1916 by Dr. Carrie Weaver Smith, the superintendent of the Gainesville School.

Before its actual establishment, several civil rights groups expressed concern that young black girls that were being committed to adult prisons. Black girls who committed violent crimes received sentences to adult correctional facilities where they were vulnerable to abuse. Those who committed morals crimes were often times not placed in an institution, but instead rejoined the community. The efforts to establish a juvenile facility for black girls gained momentum at the conclusion of World War II due to the “escalating pressure from black civil rights advocates.”¹¹² The military also pushed for the establishment of a juvenile facility for black girls in Texas. This was primarily because of the increased concern over black female prostitution during World War II and

¹¹⁰ Hart, “Gainesville State School for Girls.”

¹¹¹ “Manual on Preparation of Children for Admission to the State Training Schools 1956,” Records, TYCA, 1999/087-1, 13.

¹¹² Bush, *Who Gets a Childhood?*, 71; The lack of funding for an all-black female juvenile delinquency center in Texas mimics the funding gap for other African American educational facilities. For more on this see Judith N. McArthur and Harold L. Smith, *Texas Through Women’s Eyes: The Twentieth Century Experience* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010).

the subsequent spread of venereal disease in the military. V-girls, also known as Khaki-Wackies, “frequented places of public entertainment” where they would seek or gain the sexual attention of military men. Studies from the time reveal how lower-class areas as well as areas with large black populations were considered heavily populated with these “prostitutes.”¹¹³ Finally, in 1947, Article 3259a placed the State Board of Control in charge of establishing what would become Brady State School for Negro Girls. The Texas legislature asked the State Board of Control to place the school “upon the cottage plan for the care, education and training of dependent and delinquent colored girls, provided such location is approved by the Governor.”¹¹⁴

Although the Brady School was to be similar to the Gainesville School in location and curriculum, this did not happen. The location of the new Brady School was far from similar to Gainesville’s “cottage” like campus, instead occupying a retired German prisoner of war camp. Because these facilities were not adequate for a juvenile facility, the school moved near Crockett, Texas and was renamed Crockett School for Colored Girls in 1950.¹¹⁵ The Texas legislature stated that the purpose of a training school for black girls was “to provide an institution of training and care of colored girls who by their own misconduct or by their unfavorable surroundings have become dependent or delinquent and need care and attention not otherwise provided.”¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Marilyn E Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes: The Regulation of Female Sexuality during World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 67-68.

¹¹⁴ Compiled Notebooks, Brady, 1947, Records, TYCA, 1999/087-5.

¹¹⁵ Hereafter, Brady State School for Negro Girls will be the name used when referring to the facility for black female delinquents before 1950. For years following 1950, Crockett School for Colored Girls will be used.

¹¹⁶ Compiled Notebooks, Brady, 1947, Records, TYCA, 1999/087-5.

Despite the differences between the schools, the sentencing and admissions processes for each school were somewhat similar. Once a girl committed a crime considered severe enough to warrant the involvement of the juvenile court the child would appear before a judge who would then decide the proper punishment for the juvenile. Depending on the judge and the crime, the sentencing for girls included returning to their home under the watchful eye of their guardian, or commitment to time at a juvenile facility. Once committed to Gainesville or Brady, “a sheriff or probation officer, usually accompanied by a woman attendant,” escorted the delinquent girl to the school. While some of the delinquent boys were in handcuffs or even strait jackets when escorted to the Gainesville School, there were no reports of girls en route to Brady or Gainesville needing restraint.¹¹⁷

When the girls arrived at Brady or Gainesville, they underwent a number of medical tests to ensure that the child’s mental and physical health were sufficient to be placed in the school. The girls were under quarantine during these medical tests. White girls attending Gainesville would undergo one week of quarantine while the black girls admitted to the Brady or Crockett School would remain in quarantine anywhere between eight to twelve days. These medical examinations would check for poor dental hygiene, small pox, or feeble-mindedness, but ultimately the “principal interest in the newcomer’s physical condition at Gainesville” was to “determine the presence or absence of venereal disease.”¹¹⁸ Since many of the girls faced sentencing for premarital sexual behavior or prostitution, the schools feared the spread of venereal disease within the schools.

¹¹⁷ “Child by Child We Build a Nation,” 1949, Records, TYCA, Box 1999/087-7, 14.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

Therefore, testing for sexually transmitted disease remained a priority during the quarantine period before entering the school.¹¹⁹

The Texas State Youth Development Council had an interesting opinion about how poor medical conditions could be to blame for the child's delinquency. They stated that "In this connection it should be pointed out that illness and physical defects—such as a damaged heart, flat feet, poor vision, or acne—are known to play a major part in causing many delinquencies." The director for the Gatesville School, Harold J. Matthews, acknowledged physical defects as one of the main causes for delinquent behavior in a newspaper article published in *The Sherman Democrat*.¹²⁰ Matthews gave two examples in the October 1949 article of boys who required "special attention." One boy had "an osteomyelitis knee," another had a drooping eyelid; both conditions distorted their physical appearance which in turn influenced teasing from other children. This teasing made the boys "violently angry," causing the boys to act out. Matthews' solution to remedying the childhood teasing of physical defects was the use of plastic surgery, which would no longer make the child "an object of curiosity."¹²¹

The commission believed that the quarantine period also provided "an opportunity to orient the newcomer to the school." However, the black girls that were on their way to Brady received a handbook to the school that contained rules, regulations, and expectations while those on their way to Gainesville and Gatesville were not. The

¹¹⁹ For more on controlling adolescent female sexuality and the spread of venereal disease see Nancy K. Bristow, *Making Men Moral: Social Engineering during the Great War* (New York: New York University Press, 1996). Holloway, *Sexuality, Politics, and Social Control in Virginia, 1920-1945*, and Odem, *Delinquent Daughters*.

¹²⁰ This echoes much of the thinking of leading eugenicists of the time. For more see Wendy Kline, *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001).

¹²¹ "Delinquents Are Bundles of Emotions, Says Council Head," *The Sherman Democrat*, October 1949, 10.

children on their way to Gainesville and Gatesville learned of the rules, regulations, and expectations by word of mouth from other inmates or employees of the schools.¹²²

The fact that the girls on their way to Brady or Crockett received a handbook while inmates of Gainesville and Gatesville relied on word of mouth to learn rules and regulations brings up noticeable differences between the schools. As will be noted in further discussion of rules, expectations, and even styles of dress, this difference in orientation clearly illustrates the Youth Commission and staff's desire to regiment the African American girls. The history of Brady and Crockett demonstrates how the Texas juvenile justice system attempted to take away the individuality and agency of black females in order to solidify the oppression of African Americans in United States society.

The student handbook for Brady began with a welcome letter from the superintendent at the time, Mrs. E. G. Harrell. The superintendent expressed joy over having the girls there because she fully believed that the school could help the young girls, and that it was obvious the girls needed help or they would not be at the school. The letter told the girls entering Brady that their "past life must be forgotten" because at the school they were beginning a new life. What the girls did not know, was that whites would groom their new life in a way that attempted to engrain societal ideas of black inferiority. Immediately after the welcome letter, the handbook stressed to the girls what the rules and regulations were at the institution.

The staff and superintendent at Brady took these rules very seriously and asked the students to pledge their loyalty to the institution, therefore relinquishing their individuality and potential to advance themselves out of the gender and race constructs of

¹²² "Child by Child We Build a Nation," 1949, Records, TYCA, Box 1999/087-7, 15.

the time. The section of the handbook that discussed “Education and Home Life,” urged the girls to keep up their personal appearances. “Clothes don’t make the woman, but they help a lot,” was not only a motto at Brady, but also the Gainesville School. Whether or not the girls at Brady maintained an acceptable personal appearance determined whether the girls earned placement on the schools Honor Roll.¹²³

The Brady School had no tolerance for rule breaking, and followed the rigid practices they believed would best help these “wayward” girls. Bells ruled the girls’ daily life, the school expected girls to remain quiet at all times, and follow the “keep-to-the-right rules” in all rooms, hallways, and corridors. This contrasts greatly with the tone of the Gainesville school. *The Austin Statesman* wrote an article about Gainesville and stated, “The giggles that sound through the corridors of the school are no different from those in any high school.”¹²⁴ This statement further demonstrates the clear differences between the more lax atmospheres of Gainesville compared to the regimented Brady and Crockett institutions.

If discussion between inmates was not regimented enough, housemothers at Brady and Crockett were the first to read the students’ mail as the school saw it important to monitor all correspondence between the girls and outsiders of the institution.¹²⁵ The staff also strictly monitored the conversations between inmates. Brady girls always found a housemother or other staff member very close by, even if they were not wanted. During meals, there were six to ten girls for every staff member at the meal tables.

¹²³ Brady Student Handbook, 1949, Records, TYCA, 1989/169-1.

¹²⁴ “Gainesville State School Girls Learn Practical Subjects in Study Courses,” *The Austin Statesman*, 14.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

The commission claimed that the mealtime “arrangement makes for a family-like atmosphere and reduces the problem of maintaining discipline,” however, their reasoning for this arrangement is questionable when mealtime at Brady is compared to the mealtimes at Gainesville. Girls at Gainesville ate their morning and evening meals in their “cottages,” and the afternoon meal in a cafeteria. The staff never ate with the girls, leaving the inmates to discuss whatever they wanted with fellow inmates.¹²⁶ If establishing a family like atmosphere was the commission’s goal, then it becomes questionable as to why this same cafeteria staff interaction did not occur in all of the juvenile facilities underneath the commission’s control. The best explanation, perhaps, is that the commission insisted on the constant monitoring of the girls at Brady, further enforcing the regiment like atmosphere that defined the school, while they saw this control over the Gainesville girls as unnecessary. It is also important to note how this monitoring helped the school stay one-step ahead of possible rebellions and escapes from the institution.

The differences in treatment and expectations between the girls at Gainesville and those at Brady/Crockett are undeniable and reinforce scholars’ assertions that both race and gender are socially constructed. Evelyn Higginbotham notes this importance in her 1992 article, “African-American Women’s History and the Metalanguage of Race.” Higginbotham calls for the recognition that race constructs gender and class saying that “both gender and class are colored by race.”¹²⁷ African American women needed to first gain racial equality in order to gain gender equality. According to Bettye Collier-

¹²⁶ “Child by Child We Build a Nation,” 1949, Records, TYCA, Box 1999/087-7, 17.

¹²⁷ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, “African-American Women’s History and the Metalanguage of Race,” *Signs* 17, no.2 (Winter 1992): 254.

Thomas, “Being female is only part of the black woman’s tradition.” Throughout American history, African American women’s race “has taken precedence over their sex, and has affected every aspect of their lives.”¹²⁸ Race and gender shaped black girls’ lives. On the one hand, the perception was that black women, and in this case girls, were less than feminine compared to their white girl counterparts. While Gainesville taught white girls homemaking classes in order to maintain their own future homes and families, Brady and Crockett taught black girls commercial cleaning skills that prepared them to work for white families. On the other hand, Brady and Crockett expected black girls to possess and maintain the same maternal and feminine qualities as the white girls at Gainesville. Both schools taught obedience and encouraged submissiveness in order to ensure a happy marriage and family.

The living conditions and allowances at Gainesville were more favorable than those at Brady and Crockett. White girls at Gainesville had their own rooms, while Brady and Crockett allowed private rooms only for the very few girls on the Honor Roll. Gainesville encouraged the girls to decorate their rooms while Brady and Crockett girls were not. Furnishings in the Gainesville rooms were a bed, closet and dresser for clothes as well as a small table and chairs. The superintendents and staff at Gainesville allowed the girls to decorate their rooms as they pleased “with pictures, cushions, dolls or acceptable knickknacks that she may make or obtain from home.” Gainesville also permitted girls to have personal radios.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Bettye Collier-Thomas, *Jesus, Jobs, and Justice: African American Women and Religion* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), xxviii.

¹²⁹ “Child by Child We Build a Nation,” 1949, Records, TYCA, Box 1999/087-7, 15.

The differences between the physical living conditions of Gainesville girls and Brady/Crockett girls were drastic. Few girls had their own personal living space at Brady/Crockett. Instead, the girls experienced communal living with fellow inmates. They were allowed a bed, chair “and a dressing table made of two wooden crates covered with gingham.” Although Brady/Crockett allowed girls to have a few pictures and a radio, the tone of the commission drastically changed when discussing Brady and Crockett. The girls could keep a few personal pictures on the crate tables provided for them as well as “a radio if she has one.” The Brady and Crockett school did not provide the girls with closets, but instead, the school provided a clothing room where all of the girls placed their clothing on designated hangers.¹³⁰

The differences between the living conditions at Gainesville versus Brady and Crockett make sense with the understanding of the expectations of white and black girls. As mentioned previously, black females faced defeminization by society and institutions such as the Texas Youth Commission. Gainesville taught white girls how to keep house and take care of a family. Allowing them to decorate their own rooms with personal belongings encouraged the Youth Commission’s desire for them to hone their homemaking skills. Its unwillingness to allow black girls to have their own rooms that they could decorate directly reflects the racist mindset of the Texas Youth Commission. Because they focused the Brady/Crockett girls’ training on commercial cleaning, the experience of practicing “keeping house” in their own personal space was unnecessary, as seen by the Youth Commission. These rules that the Youth Commission enforced

¹³⁰ Ibid., 15-16.

further demonstrates their desire to mold white and black girls into the gender and racial roles society laid out.

The Brady/Crockett school had more in common with the Gatesville School for Boys than it did with Gainesville. One explanation as to why Brady/Crockett did not allow girls to bring as many personal possessions as the girls in Gainesville is because the Texas Youth Commission assumed that the African American girls could not afford the same luxuries as white inmates. However, the comparison of the Brady/Crockett school with the Gatesville School for Boys challenges this explanation.

The similarities between the Gatesville and Brady/Crockett schools show that the Youth Commission considered delinquent black girls to be on the same level as delinquent boys and this becomes even more apparent with the comparison of their living environments and allowances to the boy inmates at Gatesville. Gatesville allowed the boys to keep only one personal belonging and that was their billfold. Their rooms were barren and the school emphasized “the de-personalization of the boys, their separation from anything they might call their own.”¹³¹ Similarly, the Texas Youth Commission supported the de-personalization of the girls at Brady and Crockett. The examination of the clothing requirements at Gainesville compared to those at Brady/Crockett reveals this de-personalization, de-sexing, and de-feminization of the African American girls.

The clothing expectations of both schools also demonstrate the de-feminization of the Brady and Crockett school compared to the girls at Gainesville. Rules about clothing changed over time. Reports in 1949 show that the Gainesville school expected its girls to

¹³¹ Ibid., 16.

wear clothing the school provided that fit the ultra-feminine image of the post war homemaker, while the Brady school provided clothes more conducive to manual labor.

In 1949, Gainesville allowed girls to bring and keep their own clothing and possessions from home. The school would provide “two carefully fitted pairs of low heel shoes, attractive print dresses made at the institution, bobby sox, underwear, and a warm sweater and jacket,” if they did not already have these items in their personal belongings. The Gainesville School also allowed girls to receive cosmetics from home. The Brady School in 1949 had a very different dress code than the Gainesville School. Upon entering the school, the girls at Brady were required to mail their clothing and belongings back to their homes. Instead, Brady issued “dresses like those worn by Army nurses plus all other essential clothing and toilet articles.” The only way a girl at Brady could wear her own clothing or clothing sent from home was if she earned 1,000 merits for good behavior, a feat that was difficult to achieve.¹³²

While the army nurse dresses provided to the Brady girls were technically dresses, therefore possessing feminine connotations, they were reflective of the regimented guidelines of the school. All of the dresses were uniform and industrial in style in order to ensure the absence of individuality and expression and allowed the girls to participate in the work needed to maintain the juvenile facility. The Texas Youth Commission wanted to keep the African American girls at Brady and Crockett in line. In other words, they wanted the girls at Brady and Crockett to know their place, not only at the school, but also in society. The Commission prepared these girls to be ready to submit to the still present Jim Crow laws and mentalities in the South. The Commission

¹³² Ibid., 15.

also prepared the girls at Brady and Crockett to accept the reality that they would be working all of their adult lives.

Reports in 1956 show that clothing requirements changed, but the clear distinction between the feminine clothing of Gainesville girls to the unfeminine, work-oriented clothing of Crockett was still present. By this time, the schools provided very little clothing for the students, and instead expected the parents or guardians to send clothing and toiletries with the girls. Crockett expected incoming girls to bring essentials such as pajamas and undergarments, but their active wear was limited to denim jeans and plaid shirts. Once again, the girls could not bring cosmetics and although previously allowed to have a radio, in 1956, the Texas Youth Commission no longer allowed the girls at Crockett to have a radio.¹³³

The clothing list for the girls at Gainesville was drastically different. Gainesville expected girls to wear dresses instead of jeans and skirts. One of the required cosmetics for the girls at Gainesville was lipstick, as the use of cosmetics was encouraged by the school. Gainesville provided each girl their own personal radio, and the restrictions of care packages sent from home were almost nonexistent compared to the strict policies at Crockett. Crockett advised the girls' parents or guardians to "send no more than is listed," while the parents and guardians of the girls at Gainesville were advised to not send "bizarre, unusual, or impractical garments," or other "expensive clothing or jewelry."¹³⁴

¹³³ "Manual on Preparation of Children for Admission to the State Training Schools 1956," Records, TYCA, Box 1999/087-1, 27.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 28-29.

In many ways, these juvenile facilities had more in common with finishing schools than detention centers. Brady, Crockett, and Gainesville expected the girls to attend classes that the commission hoped would improve their behavioral and social skills. Yet the classes offered at each institution differed according to racial expectations. Gainesville held classes on floristry, English, business education, music, cooking, elementary education, homemaking, institutional sewing, and physical education. These classes, according to *The Austin Statesman*, “are as practical as a saddle on a horse.”¹³⁵ In 1950, Gainesville held an open house for the parents and guardians of the girls.¹³⁶ The visitors received an informational packet that described each class and the goals the school hoped to accomplish through these classes. These classes, as well as the goals each class tried to achieve, show the obvious gendered nature of the Texas juvenile justice system.

The floristry classes at Gainesville focused primarily on corsage making, fundamental art, and club activities projects. The class had several aims besides learning design, the effective use of floral materials, and table decorating. The class aimed “to awaken the students’ natural love for flowers” and “to open new channels of aesthetic appreciation.” Although it was the newest of the classes in 1950, the school believed the floristry department had “created a love for beautiful things,” “improved mental health,” and taught the girls “to think beautiful thoughts.”¹³⁷

Gainesville also had business classes; however, they taught the office skills that would limit students to secretary work. The girls received instruction on typing,

¹³⁵ “Gainesville State School Girls Learn Practical Subjects in Study Courses,” *The Austin Statesman*, 1952, 14.

¹³⁶ “Gainesville State School Open House, 1950,” Records, TYCA, 1999/087-3.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

shorthand, filing, business spelling, and business math. The aim of the department was “to give the girls some practical instructions that will enable them to provide at least a part of their livelihood after leaving the school.” The class not only taught them how to perform secretarial tasks common for women at the time, they also emphasized the importance of appropriate clothing for office work that would be “acceptable in the business world.”¹³⁸

There is little doubt that the Texas Youth Commission as well as the staff at Gainesville was concerned about teaching business. The sentiments over women in the workforce drastically changed at the conclusion of World War II. Health professionals believed that by challenging the traditional role of women as homemakers, working women “place[d] the security of the nation at risk.” Their concerns as to how working women placed the nation at risk relates directly to the juvenile delinquency concern. If a mother chose to work, her child was more likely to be “unsupervised,” therefore possibly leading to the child’s sexual immorality.¹³⁹ However, women were remaining in the service sector of the workforce in impressive numbers.

To counteract the business education, Gainesville offered a myriad of classes, all pertaining to the girls’ assumed duties as wives and mothers. Heavily weighted in the curriculum at Gainesville were classes on cooking, sewing, and homemaking. Besides teaching “good every-day manners,” the homemaking courses attempted to teach the “responsibilities of homemaking, marketing, and meal planning.” According to Gainesville the girls who “completed this course, besides being better trained homemakers, are better waitresses and domestic helpers where monetary jobs are

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ May, *Homeward Bound*, 96.

necessary to their livelihood.” A 1949 *Austin Statesman* article discussed the benefits of these homemaking courses. Maxine Burlingame, superintendent of the Gainesville school, stressed how it was necessary for these girls to learn how to create well-balanced meals. According to the article however, “the stress is put on meals for hard working people. Superintendent Burlingame explained “that most [of the] girls will marry laborers who want fried potatoes with their breakfast.”¹⁴⁰

The clothing classes emphasized good hygiene and grooming, as well as stressed the importance of carefully choosing clothing and textiles. The institutional sewing class prepared the girls for mending their family’s clothes and wanted “every girl to have attractive clothes as well as a pretty face-thus we have happier girls.”¹⁴¹ The physical appearance of a young girl was crucial to the school as it put on full display the potential feminine qualities of their students.

The curriculum at the Brady and Crockett schools was noticeably different from the Gainesville School. In 1956, the Crockett School offered considerably fewer courses to their students than other juvenile facilities. They justified offering fewer classes to the girls at Crockett because of the “low mentalities and very poor educational backgrounds” of black girls. The Youth Commission considered it at times “difficult, if not impossible, to teach many of them any sort of trade.” The commission also blamed the

¹⁴⁰ “Gainesville State School Girls Learn Practical Subjects in Study Courses,” *The Austin Statesman*, October 11, 1949, 14.

¹⁴¹ “Gainesville Sate School Open House, 1950,” Records, TYCA, 1999/087-3.

disproportionate amount of classes between Crockett and Gainesville on lack of funding.¹⁴²

They did teach the girls at Crockett homemaking skills, however, much of their focus was on maid, janitorial, and commercial laundry services. The classes that focused on maid and janitorial services were “designed to help girls secure and hold jobs in hotels and private homes.” Commercial laundry equipment was available for classes as “an honest attempt...to teach all of the girls how to handle laundry as is found in laundries...and private homes.”¹⁴³ The comparison of curriculums between Gainesville and Brady/Crockett exposes the social constructs of both gender and race. The white girls at Gainesville found themselves in a curriculum that encouraged and “trained” them to fulfill their expected duties as a submissive homemaker. The black girls at Brady and Crockett experienced a curriculum that recognized the possibility of them being homemakers, but the majority of the classes aimed at teaching trades like domestic service or other jobs United States society associated with their race instead of their capabilities.

To the commission, religion classes and services also played an important role in the “positive transformation” of these delinquents. Article 5123 of the Vernon’s Texas Statutes required any student who was physically able, to attend at least one religious service every Sunday during their time at the school. The Texas Legislature appropriated what they considered “meager” funds to pay for a full time chaplain for each institution. With the salary “not to exceed seven hundred and twenty dollars a year,” a chaplain's

¹⁴² “Manual on Preparation of Children for Admission to the State Training Schools, 1956,” Records, TYCA, Box 1999/087-1, 23.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

charge was to “devote his time to the religious and moral training and education of said inmates.”¹⁴⁴ Despite the efforts the commission and Legislature placed on religious training, the commission recognized the ineffectiveness of such training. They stated that with the exception of Brady, “this aspect of life at the institutions seems rather formalized and meaningless to the children.” The girls at Brady and Crockett, on the other hand, willingly “assumed some responsibility for the organization of religious services on Sundays” and most evenings. Although they recognized the lack of enthusiasm for religious services at Gainesville and Gatesville, the commission still placed importance on the religious aspect of their curriculums as they thought it would give “meaning” to the students’ personal relationships with others around them.

The Texas Youth Commission did not offer any explanation as to why the African American girls at Brady and Crockett actively participated in religious services while the inmates at Gainesville and Gatesville did not. However, scholar Bettye Collier-Thomas explores how African American women first had to gain racial equality before they could gain gender equality; at the foundation of their activism was the church. Arguing that “black women have woven their faith into their daily experiences,” Collier-Thomas illustrates how “religion has served as both a source of black women’s oppression and a resource for their struggles for gender equality and social justice.”¹⁴⁵ The church served “as an essential base of influence” for African American men and women since the time of slavery.¹⁴⁶ Given this long and close relationship between African Americans and

¹⁴⁴ “Texas Youth Development Council Manual of Casework Services,” Records, TYCA, Box 1999/087-1, 78.

¹⁴⁵ Collier-Thomas, *Jesus, Jobs, and Justice*, xvi – xvii.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, xxi.

Christianity, it is undeniable that the dedication the girls at Brady and Crockett felt towards their religious services was a byproduct of this long tradition.

Messages of acceptance and freedom from persecution gave hope to African American slaves before and during the Civil War. Those same messages of freedom also attracted many African Americans oppressed by Jim Crow laws to Christianity. The girls at Brady and Crockett found themselves inside of a bigoted juvenile justice system that insisted they follow lessons and rules that further encapsulated them in the gender and racial constructs of the time. The girls became subject to punishment if they broke the rules, making the messages offered during religious services that much more attractive.

The use of corporal punishment in the Texas training schools was a highly sensitive and much-debated practice. Punishment in the Texas juvenile facilities remained in a constant state of change and controversy throughout the 1940s and 1950s. The commission recognized the controversy and admitted that such punishment could bring “unwelcomed headlines to many correctional schools throughout the country.” The types of corporal punishment that were being practiced nationwide included spraying 50 pounds pressure of water at the groins of the male inmates, “solitary confinement on bread and water, and shaving of girls’ heads.” The commission stated that it was “encouraging to report” that “some” of these punishments were never in practice in Texas juvenile institutions.¹⁴⁷

Punishment practices differed between the schools. Gainesville girls experienced several different methods of punishment, all of which were acceptable under Texas law. Committing even minor offenses left girls confined to their rooms with a limited diet. In

¹⁴⁷ “Child by Child We Build a Nation,” 1949, Records, TYCA, Box 1999/087-7, 20.

1949, the commission reported that the superintendent restricted “whipping” and “hair clipping.” Any girl who ran away for the first time found herself apprehended, taken back to the school, and then forced to wear an “ankle length tube-shaped blue denim dress for one month.” If they ran away a second time, they would be confined to chains. Although the superintendent restricted whippings, she did not eliminate them. Whippings at Gainesville could only occur if the superintendent was present.¹⁴⁸

Gainesville punished girls for a number of reasons or offenses. The two main concerns the school had was the act of running away or homosexual behavior.¹⁴⁹ Minor offenses included “cursing or being impudent to a member of the staff, refusal to work, [or] destruction of school property.”¹⁵⁰ However, homosexual acts and running away remained the two main concerns of the school. Homosexual behavior was especially worrisome for the staff and superintendent at Gatesville, and in order to monitor the boys at all times, the school left the lights on while the boys slept to ensure they did not engage in same sex acts with other inmates.¹⁵¹ This concern over same sex acts did exist at Gainesville, Brady, and Crockett. However, throughout their records, the Texas Youth Commission did not discuss this concern with the all-girl juvenile facilities as they did with Gatesville.

Punishment at Brady in 1949 was much different from the punishment practices at Gainesville. According to the commission, the girls’ sentencing was manual labor in the

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 21.

¹⁴⁹ Homosexuality remained an obsessive concern throughout the United States during the 1950s. For more on the ways in which sexuality was used to define upstanding citizenship see Carolyn Herbst Lewis, *Prescription for Heterosexuality: Sexual Citizenship in the Cold War Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), and Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

¹⁵⁰ “Child by Child We Build a Nation,” 1949, Records, TYCA, Box 1999/087-7, 21.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 16.

form of cleaning and field work in lieu of whippings. More severe punishment included solitary confinement in the “disciplinary barrack for the prisoner-of-war camp.” The school had eight small cells on their campus. The girls would spend the mornings in the cell and afternoons working in the field under the “supervision of the matron’s husband.” This punishment could last anywhere “from three days to several weeks.”¹⁵²

The possibility of running away greatly concerned the staff at each of the schools as well as the commission. In 1950, the Crockett School experienced, what they considered, a “low” percentage of successful and unsuccessful run away attempts. The commission reported nineteen “runs and attempted runs,” five of which were “incomplete,” or, the inmate was caught running on Crockett’s campus. The other fourteen did successfully make it out of the campus, but did not make it out of the county and law enforcement was not notified. The commission was very surprised at this low percentage of runaways at Crockett because the school “had no security measures.” In explaining the reasons as to why fewer girls were attempting to run away, the commission gave credit to the lack of “physical restraint” as they thought it “create[ed] a better atmosphere,” for the girls at the school. The commission found that at Gatesville, the more corporal punishment that occurred, the more the students attempted to run away from the institution.¹⁵³

Although scholar Tamara Myers discusses how female juvenile delinquents in Canadian reformatory schools used passive and active resistance to challenge gendered sex laws and disciplinary regimes within state institutions, her work provides some insight into the situation in Texas institutions. Active resistance took the form of

¹⁵² Ibid., 22.

¹⁵³ Compiled Notebooks, Brady, 1950, Records, TYCA, 1999/087-5, 46.

physically acting out against the staff and running away. One similarity between the Canadian girls' reform schools and the schools in Texas is the fact that run away attempts were most likely to occur shortly after a girl's arrival to the institution. Myers notes several explanations as to why the desire to run away was so tempting. Homesickness, the desire to see family, or the desire to continue delinquent behavior were reasons psychologists believed girls attempted to escape.¹⁵⁴ These are the same reasons the commission gave when trying to explain why some children wanted to leave the school. The commission stated, "A boy who runs away because he is worried about conditions at home certainly has done nothing we consider reprehensible." The punishment for running away depended on the reasons the child had for leaving. If they ran away to fulfill a desire to cause mischief, the punishment would be greater than if they had left because they were worried about family or coaxed into it by an older inmate.

The superintendent for the Gainesville School, Maxine Burlingham, made it her mission to create an atmosphere that would prevent the desire to act out or run away. When Burlingham took over the school in March 1949, she removed the barbed wire fencing that surrounded the campus, discontinued the practice of marching the girls to and from classes, and eradicated the merit system. Burlingham stated that Gainesville was "not a prison," but instead she wished to "head a 'rehabilitation' school." Described by a writer for *The Austin Statesman* as a "vivacious, attractive 42 year old superintendent," Burlingham arrived at Gainesville after working with juvenile girls in Fort Worth for eleven years. Burlingham entered her position as superintendent for

¹⁵⁴ Myers and Sangster, "Retorts, Runaways and Riots: Patterns of Resistance in Canadian Reform Schools for Girls, 1930-60," 670, 679.

Gainesville with high hopes, although many of her practices, theories, and requests were unorthodox and fell under heavy criticism.¹⁵⁵

One of superintendent Burlingham's first requests was for the State Board of Control to allow the girls at Gainesville to smoke cigarettes. She believed that by allowing girls, aged fourteen or older, to smoke it would "relieve tension." Burlingham was also concerned about the fire hazard that existed when girls secretly smoked and disposed of their cigarettes in their rooms at night. However, the ultimate goal Burlingham wanted to accomplish was to create an environment that was relaxed enough to create happier girls. Burlingham states, "With four smokers a day, we brought smoking out of hiding and into control and relaxed the girls."¹⁵⁶ The staff at Gainesville recognized Burlingham's efforts as well as the schools transformation from a reform-oriented school to more of a boarding school, stating, "it's Mrs. Burlingham's doing!"¹⁵⁷

Burlingham firmly believed that her approach to the Gainesville School was creating happier inmates. However, Burlingham's accomplishments fell into question after the inmates, in the spring of 1952, participated in a riot at Gainesville that lasted several hours. According to Burlingham, the riot occurred after the girls at Gainesville learned of the ban on whipping as a form of punishment in the state's training schools for girls. According to the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, furniture was destroyed, "electrical fixtures [were] broken," and doors were "smashed." The riot was so frightening to the

¹⁵⁵"Gainesville School Being Transformed," *The Austin Statesman*, October 8, 1949.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

staff, that the superintendent as well as many staff members considered submitting their resignations the next morning.¹⁵⁸

The administrative freedoms Maxine Burlingham experienced as superintendent at Gainesville were vastly different from those experienced by the superintendent at Brady. From the outset of the Brady School's existence, Superintendent Iola Rowan, an African American woman, faced incredible amounts of pushback from her white staff, the Texas Youth Commission, and the State Board of Control. In order to instill a sense that African-Americans were in charge of the rehabilitation of the black juvenile delinquents placed at the school, the Board of Control not only named Rowan superintendent, but also established an all-black advisory board. As would soon become known, however, the powers granted to Rowan and the advisory board were limited at best.

Unwilling to let the school be without white supervision, the Board of Control established a dual-administration for the school. Superintendent Rowan was in charge of the all-black female staff that worked directly with the students, while an all-white male staff was in charge of the day-to-day operations and upkeep of the facility. The school's business manager, a Brady businessman by the name of Carl Tibbitts, did everything in his power to make sure that Rowan did not succeed, solely for the reason that she was a black woman. Tibbitts accused Rowan of incompetence and corruption on a seemingly daily basis, and subjected every purchase request of Rowan's to a nine-day review process, greatly hampering the smooth operation and development of the school. When the Board of Control witnessed a verbal altercation between Tibbitts and Rowan at an

¹⁵⁸ "Whipping Ban Blamed for Girls School Riot," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 20, 1952.

official meeting of the advisory board, they restricted the powers of Rowan to the development of curriculum, and placed Tibbitts in charge of the physical plant, which, according to the board, “should always be a responsibility relegated to a man.”¹⁵⁹

The different experiences of the superintendents at Brady/Crockett and Gainesville demonstrates how the social constructs of race and gender existed throughout every level of the Texas juvenile justice system immediately following World War II. Inmates, staff, and administration all fell victim to the Texas Youth Commission’s desire to uphold societal norms and expectations; if these social norms were challenged, so too were the democratic principles of the United States.

Wives and mothers in post-World War II America found themselves suspended between two potential careers, one that adhered to society’s expectations and another that challenged gendered constructs of the early Cold War era by entering the workforce. While not all Cold War women remained confined to domestication, their roles as wives and mothers continued to define what society saw as necessary for the preservation of the American family, and ultimately, the United States. A woman’s occupation as a wife and mother served a greater purpose in 1950s America. These women were patriots expected to maintain and operate the most important strategic fortification against the spread of communism within American society: the home. The belief was that if the home produced delinquent children it was only because their mother did not fulfill the prescription of domesticity.

As long as women remained in the home and adequately performed their roles as submissive homemakers, the United States could rest assured that the next generation of

¹⁵⁹ Bush, *Who Gets a Childhood?*, 80-81.

Americans would uphold the fight to preserve democracy. If women left the home, their children became susceptible to crime and subversive tendencies, therefore, societal discourses constantly stressed the importance of child rearing. While sons learned important lessons in masculinity and breadwinning, daughters learned to emulate and carry on the domesticity of their homemaking mothers. Only by instilling these expectations in Cold War children could the United States live in a world without communism.

The underlying fear of communism throughout the United States after World War II is evident in the publications of the Texas Youth Commission, and it remained their primary motivation to create good upstanding citizens, a task the delinquents' parents failed to do. They could accomplish this goal by maintaining juvenile institutions that taught and enforced what society expected from white and African American women. By teaching classes that limited and undermined the girls' capabilities, the Texas Youth Commission was transforming criminally motivated delinquent girls into the 1950s image of June Cleaver and June Cleaver's invisible black maid.

The white girls at Gainesville found their time at the juvenile institution to be more relaxed than what they would have experienced as a black girl at Brady or Crockett. Classes that taught "women's work" filled their curriculum. A career in homemaking was encouraged and expected for the girls after they left Gainesville. While at Gainesville, the girls learned to leave behind a life of unacceptable "crime" in exchange for a life confined to the four walls of their future kitchens. Stressing the importance of appearance and home skills, the Texas Youth Commission blatantly ignored the potential

of these girls entering the work force, a phenomenon that was a reality for many women after joining the work force in World War II.

However, the Texas Youth Commission saved their encouragement to become homemakers for the white girls at Gainesville. The black girls that attended Brady and Crockett received a much different message. The Texas Youth Commission modeled rules, regulations, dress expectations, and curriculum in such a way as to further engrain African American's unequal place in United States society. The girls at Brady and Crockett found their daily life ruled by bells and supervision. The constant white supervision ensured that they were in no way a threat to their considered place at the institution. The Texas Youth Commission stripped these girls' individuality, creativity, and agency in order to run a regimented program that would ensure the girls' subordination.

Juvenile crime was different, and anything that differed from the American nuclear family was perceived as a threat to the morality and national security of the United States. The study of the Texas juvenile justice system shows how this threat was a concern to almost every institution in the country. In order to extinguish this perceived threat, American youth needed grooming into what society considered an upstanding citizen. For white girls, this meant that they needed to perform, without challenge, their natural homemaking duties. For black girls however, they still needed to strive for the same feminine qualities espoused by white women, but they also needed to accept their second-class citizenship status. Ultimately, the Texas Youth Commission's purpose was

“to teach the girls how to live a normal, useful, happy life, and to take their place as respected members of an organized society.”¹⁶⁰

¹⁶⁰ “Gainesville State School Girls Learn Practical Subjects in Study Courses,” *The Austin Statesman*, 14.

CHAPTER IV

THE YOUTH PROBLEM AS A COMMUNIST THREAT

As youth were preparing to leave the facilities in which they were placed due to delinquent behavior, the Texas Youth Commission predicted a bleak future for both boys and girls. The commission did not believe that these newly reformed youth would ever be able to hold a steady, high-paying job, or even stay out of the criminal justice system. Indeed, the commission expected many of the young people to end up in the adult prison system. Instead, the commission hoped that they would be able to reform the youth and instill qualities of good citizenship in the delinquents. For many boys, this would mean a career in the Army, ready for the front lines in the battle against communism. Commissioners encouraged the girls to enter service in the homes of America, whether as homemakers or maids.

Additionally, the Texas Youth Commission worried about what many across the state and nation saw as the rising threat of communism to the American Way of life. These anti-communist fears during the Cold War guided the decisions of the Texas Youth Commission. According to the commission, as well as many national authorities, in order to be a good citizen, a person must fit into narrowly defined societal parameters. For men, this meant that they needed to hold gainful employment and act as the head of a household, meaning that they maintained a heterosexual marriage and god-fearing household. Work inside the home defined good citizenship for women. Submissive

wifehood and adequate childrearing remained a woman's contribution to the fight for democratic ideals.

The Texas Youth Commission mirrored national concerns about the relationship between delinquency and communism. In the minds of many Americans, juvenile delinquency and communism were closely associated with one another. Evidence of this is present in both state and federal records. These records reveal an anxiety towards the burgeoning teenage culture in the United States at the time. Many state and national leaders believed that the existence of youth who were not respectful of and to authority or societal norms made the nation weak and vulnerable to communism. Authorities in the state and federal agencies in the United States employed a number of methods that they hoped would turn wayward youth into strong defenders of democracy or at least deter them from being active threats to the stability of the community.

This resolve to create "good citizens," along with more practical motives, determined how long the youthful offenders remained incarcerated. The time delinquent Texas youth spent in each institution depended on the child's sex and race. The average length of time boys spent at Gatesville was eight to nine months. The Texas Youth Commission found this short duration troubling and wished for the boys to stay for an entire year. However, because Gatesville consistently maintained a high population of students, the admittance of one boy led to the release of another, or else the school became "hopelessly crowded."¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ "Manual on Preparation of Children of Admission to the State Training Schools 1956," Records, TYCA, Box 1999/087-1, 37.

Good behavior on the part of an individual drastically shortened the time spent at Gatesville. The Youth Commission believed that the time the Gainesville and Crockett girls spent at their respective institutions was appropriate. Gainesville girls spent on average 12-14 months in the institution. According to the Texas Youth Commission, “It takes about that long for a girl to get adjusted, complete a definite block of schooling or a vocational course, and to complete plans for her return to the home or to a job.”¹⁶² However, as “Order of Parole” forms demonstrate, a number of girls found themselves at Gainesville for two to three years.¹⁶³ Similar to the Gatesville School, Gainesville would release a girl on parole if the girl became “cooperative” and “help[ed] herself” by improving her behavior.¹⁶⁴

The girls at Crockett found themselves in the juvenile justice system for a longer period. The girls at Crockett averaged a 16-month stay at the institution. According to the Texas Youth Commission, the longer stay at Crockett was justified because the institution was small, “but mainly because there have been so many custodial type of cases committed and because many of these girls come from less hopeful home situations.”¹⁶⁵

The Gainesville and Brady/Crockett schools used the merit system to determine the children’s parole eligibility, while the superintendent at Gainesville used her better judgment to determine the girls’ readiness to leave the institution. Brady/Crockett girls needed to earn 1620 merits in order to be eligible for parole. Although the merit system

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Document – Order of Parole, Records, TYCA, Box number 1991/016-17

¹⁶⁴ “Manual on Preparation of Children of Admission to the State Training Schools 1956,” Records, TYCA, Box 1999/087-1, 37.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 38.

was not closely followed at Gainesville, the Gainesville girls were, on paper, required to earn only 12 merits before they were eligible for parole; one merit for every month of good behavior.¹⁶⁶ The Texas Youth Commission noted, “the shortest possible period for the Brady girls to meet the 1620 merit requirement is 13 months.”¹⁶⁷ Realistically, the girls at Brady/Crockett often stayed at the school a great deal longer than 13 months.

The only sure way Gainesville, Brady, and Crockett girls could leave the institution early was if the school found the girls to be pregnant upon admittance. Because none of these schools had the facilities or equipment necessary for prenatal, delivery, and postnatal care, pregnant girls had to leave the institutions early in their pregnancies. The Youth Commission made it explicitly clear that “the schools will accept no girl for care if the reason for her commitment was simply her pregnancy.” On the occasion of a girl’s pregnancy, the Youth Commission would make sure that the girl would remain in the care of “her own family or in her own community.” If the commission deemed the girls’ home and community life to be undesirable, the commission then attempted to provide or fund maternity home care.¹⁶⁸ Although the commission desired to release pregnant girls very early in their pregnancy, they acknowledged, “pregnancy is often a by-product of delinquent activities, and that a girl’s behavior, in spite of her pregnancy, may continue to be outside the realm of social acceptability.”¹⁶⁹ In the cases where the girl’s behavior problem was “acute,” the

¹⁶⁶ Audit Report, Gainesville State School for Girls, Records, TYCA, August 31, 1947, Box 1991/016-85, 12.

¹⁶⁷ “Child by Child We Build a Nation,” 1949, Records, TYCA, Box 1999/087-7, 23.

¹⁶⁸ “Manual on Preparation of Children of Admission to the State Training Schools 1956,” Records, TYCA, Box 1999/087-1, 21.

¹⁶⁹ “Texas Youth Development Council Manual of Casework Services,” Records, TYCA, Box 1999/087-1, 21.

commission allowed the girl to stay until half way through her seventh month of pregnancy.¹⁷⁰

In order to qualify for parole, young people in Texas' juvenile justice institutions needed to have met the requirements of the school, whether that took the form of earning merits or obvious reformed behavior. However, just because a student completed their rehabilitation at one of Texas' juvenile institutions, did not mean to say the students would never again find themselves inside of Texas' juvenile justice system. Recidivism, or the return of children to the training schools for parole violations, seriously concerned the Texas Youth Commission between 1955 and 1963. The Texas Youth Commission found that a less than effective parole system caused the high recidivism rate. The commission blamed the ineffective parole system on the lack of parole officers. Without an effective parole system, the "constructive progress made while in the Training School is frequently lost," and "both the money and effort expended are a total loss to the state as well as to the child."¹⁷¹ Between 1957 and 1960, 1,623 of the students entering Gatesville were returning to the institution for violating parole. During the same period, 159 girls returned to Gainesville for parole violations and 44 returned to Crockett.¹⁷²

When released from the institution, Gainesville girls still needed to maintain a close relationship with the superintendent. Girls were required to sign an agreement prior to their departure from Gainesville. By signing these "Order of Parole" forms these girls agreed to send "bi-weekly letters to the Institution" as long as they were on parole. In

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Compiled Notebooks, Parole, Excerpts from annual reports, 1892, 1941, 1959-1986 Handbooks, Records, TYCA, Box 1999/087-6, 10-11.

¹⁷² Ibid., 10. The disproportionate amount of boys returning to juvenile justice institutions can best be explained by the consistently higher population of delinquent boys at Gatesville compared to the smaller populations of delinquent girls at Gainesville, Brady, and Crockett.

addition to these letters, the girls needed to agree “not to marry without the consent of the superintendent” for the duration of parole.¹⁷³

After spending at least a year learning the skills of wifehood and homemaking, Gainesville girls still needed to seek the superintendent’s approval in marriage partners. The superintendent most likely looked for certain qualities in the girl’s choice of spouse that would ensure the maintenance of the girl’s education at Gainesville. If a girl chose to marry a fellow juvenile delinquent, according to the commission, both would perhaps find themselves, once again, in a life of crime. Requiring that the superintendent approve a girl’s mate demonstrates how the Texas juvenile justice system exercised control over female delinquents’ sexuality, even after the girls left the institution.

Controlling the sexuality of young women did not start in the 1950s. Control over female sexuality has a long history in the United States. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, “middle-class reformers and social experts” grew increasingly concerned over the “sexual dangers and temptations” faced by “young working-class women.”¹⁷⁴ White middle class women reformers attempted to establish age of consent laws and develop statutory rape laws. Reformers, believing that a girl under the age of eighteen was not old enough to “legally consent to her own ruin,” pushed the government to establish acceptable statutory rape laws in the hopes of protecting the moral purity of adolescent females.¹⁷⁵

However, there were unforeseen consequences to these laws as parents of young girls used sex laws to control the behavior of their sexually delinquent daughters. In

¹⁷³ Document – Order of Parole, Records, TYCA, 1991/016-17.

¹⁷⁴ Odem, *Delinquent Daughters*, 1.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

many cases, the laws meant to protect these girls ended up controlling them as well as their sexual partners, and the enforcement of these laws rested in the hands of their families. Consequences to reform also became apparent when these laws were subject to change due to a girl's race and class. African American adolescent females remained invisible in the efforts made by these reformers. Reformers explicitly fought "on behalf of the 'white slaves' of male vice and exploitation," which in turn left African American girls without the protection of the law.¹⁷⁶

The desire to control female sexuality is apparent in the Texas Youth Commission records. Most of the girls at Gainesville found themselves in Texas' juvenile justice system because of "General Delinquency," which including "Sex, vagrancy and drunkenness." Between 1948 and 1949, 109 girls ended up at Gainesville because they performed one of these crimes listed under "general delinquency."¹⁷⁷ A similar picture existed at the Brady school. The number one reason courts sentenced black girls to time at Brady was "general delinquency." Out of the 89 girls housed at Brady in 1949, 30 ended up in the school due to charges for vagrancy, sex, or drunkenness.¹⁷⁸ One-third of the girls entering Gainesville and Brady had venereal diseases, "a reflection of the leading offense categories of sexual delinquency as well as the ways in which child savers attempted to control adolescent female sexuality." According to historian William Bush, Gainesville responded to this trend by "devis[ing] a program" that would instill "appropriate feminine behaviors."¹⁷⁹ Crimes classified under "general delinquency" represented a challenge to the societal expectations of these girls. Premarital sex,

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 25.

¹⁷⁷ Audit Report, Gainesville State School for Girls, August 31, 1949, Records, TYCA, Box 1991/016-85, 3.

¹⁷⁸ Audit Report, Brady State School, August 31, 1949, Records, TYCA, Box 1991/016-85.

¹⁷⁹ Bush, *Who Gets a Childhood?*, 22.

improper associates, drinking, incorrigibility, and vagrancy did not fit the post-war image of femininity and challenged America's democratic ideals.

However, despite the beliefs society had about sexual norms in the 1950s, studies conducted by Alfred Kinsey demonstrated that these beliefs were not unfounded. Post-war America is usually defined as a place where a "code of sexual containment" existed throughout society. Sexual containment required sex to remain inside of a heterosexual marriage. Sexual containment also called for sexual satisfaction. Many believed that one way to ensure a happy home life for a child was for the parents to engage in satisfying sex. If mothers were not satisfied in the bedroom, the theory went, they could practice "momism" which could turn their sons into homosexuals or perverts, two traits that fell outside of sexual containment.¹⁸⁰ However, Kinsey found that more people were engaging in homosexual behavior and premarital sex than was expected. While 80 percent of women "had moral objections" to premarital sex, 50 percent of them had engaged in the activity. The reality was sexual containment was not effective. Despite societal disapproval of premarital sexual behavior and homosexuality, both were occurring at steady rates. When Kinsey reported his findings, several critics claimed that his reports "were subversive of the nation's moral fiber."¹⁸¹

However, in 1949, the Texas Training School Code Commission provided a report to Texas Governor Beauford H. Jester that described the juvenile justice system's limitations in preparing a child, family, and community for the child's reentrance into the home and community. Before they left the school, Gatesville boys needed to have a "suitable" job lined up or they were not allowed to leave. However, if the Youth

¹⁸⁰ May, *Homeward Bound*, 111.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 110.

Commission found that the boy did not have a home, “either good or bad,” to return to, the school would house the child until he could join the Army.¹⁸²

Unlike the Gatesville School, Gainesville did not house homeless girls after they completed their time at the school. Instead, the superintendent at Gainesville placed “homeless girls as domestics” in homes in Gainesville, Texas, or adjacent communities.¹⁸³ The Texas Training School Code Commission found several problems with this set up. They stated that the homes that housed girls received very little inspection and supervision and that “the School’s records contain evidence that girls so placed have been over-worked and kept from attending public schools.”¹⁸⁴ Homeless girls remained vulnerable to abuse once placed in homes. However, by placing these girls in homes to be domestics, the commission knew that the girls could continue to be educated in domestic sciences. This 1949 report did not address the placement of Brady girls.

Upon the child’s exit, the Vernon State Statutes required that the schools provide the child with clothing, five dollars, and a bus ticket back home. The Texas Training School Code Commission stated, “It is a pleasure to report that parolees from Gainesville are outfitted with appropriate and attractive clothing.” The Gatesville School furnished the boys with “a shirt, trousers, shoes, and if it is cold, a coat or sweater.” The girls placed on the Honor Roll at Brady, and therefore able to live in the Honor Hall section of

¹⁸² “Child by Child We Build a Nation,” 1949, Records, TYCA, Box 1999/087-7, 23-24.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

campus, left the school with their own clothes. Those girls who did not achieve an Honor Roll status received clothes from the school upon their departure.¹⁸⁵

The clothing differences between Gainesville and Brady/Crockett girls during their stay at the institutions continued even after their departure. The commission recognized that by giving “attractive clothing” to departing Gainesville girls, the same feminine qualities the institution reinforced during the girls’ education could be and should be maintained after the girls left the school. The same protection of feminine qualities did not exist for the girls leaving Brady and Crockett. Throughout their records, whenever the commission discussed clothing for the girls at Gainesville, they always referred to the garments as “attractive” or “floral.” This language never existed when discussing clothing for entering or existing Brady/Crockett girls.

As the commission well understood, femininity was not a trait girls were born with, it was something that required teaching. Parenting magazines encouraged mothers to teach their daughters how to be future wives by espousing femininity.¹⁸⁶ If the commission’s goals for the Gainesville girls were to maintain homes and families of their own, feminine clothing was one of those tools the commission used to ensure this future. It was important for the girls leaving Gainesville to have attractive feminine clothing so that they could live the life of femininity that would attract a husband.

However, the commission had more to worry about than what the “rehabilitated” youth wore while leaving the institutions. Despite the schools’ efforts, the commission acknowledged that much of the time spent rehabilitating Texas’ wayward youth was

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Lynn Peril, *Pink Think: Becoming a Woman in Many Uneasy Lessons*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002), 3.

pointless if the community accepting the newly paroled children did not do their part; “The community itself does much to determine whether a parolee shall succeed.”¹⁸⁷ After interviewing a number of boys from Gatesville who had returned to the school for parole violations, the commission discovered that the boys and girls reentering a community found themselves labeled as “no good” by other members of the same community. The commission also reported communities’ tendency to use paroled youth as “scapegoats” to “any unsolved offense committed in the neighborhood.” The commission stressed the importance of positive community involvement and asked “How can a community expect rehabilitation if it makes rehabilitation impossible?”¹⁸⁸ The reality was that a “substantial percentage” of graduates from the Texas Training Schools ended up in Texas prisons for more serious offenses. According to a survey conducted by the Bureau of Classification of the State Prison System, 53 percent of inmates in adult prisons had a prior juvenile record were once inmates in juvenile institutions.¹⁸⁹

Several years later, in 1953, the Youth Commission acknowledged some improvements that were being made and stated that their program provided enough children with the tools necessary to begin a new life, which was “an improvement over the old one,” after leaving the institution.¹⁹⁰ However, despite its efforts, the Texas Youth Commission remained rather pessimistic about the futures of the juvenile delinquents. The commission stated

while we and the child can fantasize (sic) a college education, unquestionable economic security, and mature and understanding parents

¹⁸⁷ “Child by Child We Build a Nation,” 1949, Records, TYCA, Box 1999/087-7, 24.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁹⁰ “Texas Youth Development Council Manual of Casework Services,” Records, TYCA, 1999/087-1, 8.

upon release, these are not a part of the reality picture. Though it means an abandoning of the treasured American ideal that any man may become president, we must accept the reality that most of these children are doomed to achieve at a level below our middle-class standard.¹⁹¹

Ultimately, all the Texas juvenile justice system could hope to do was transform wayward youth into good upstanding citizens. Throughout their reports, audits, and informational pamphlets, the commission expressed their desire for Texas' juvenile delinquents to contribute to a democratic society by adhering to societal norms. According to the commission in 1949, the State Training Schools in Texas "fail[ed] to restore to good citizenship too many of the delinquent children committed to them," and therefore failed to "protect society."¹⁹²

The ability to uphold societal standards remained the measuring stick used by Texas' juvenile justice system because all of the reasons as to why delinquents misbehaved remained unknown to the commission. The only thing they could judge, however, was whether a child met the "standard of behavior which is particularly prescribed—say, as our societies."¹⁹³ Prescribed standards of behavior depended on the sex and race of the child. According to Vernon's Texas Statutes, the Gatesville School's purpose was to guarantee that each inmate be provided instruction in a "useful occupation," discipline, and "moral training."¹⁹⁴ According to the same statutes, the purpose of the Girls' Training School was to "provide training in all of the useful arts and

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² "Child by Child We Build a Nation," 1949, Records, TYCA, Box 1999/ 087-7, 6.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 29.

¹⁹⁴ "Texas Youth Development Council Manual of Casework Services," 77. Compilation of laws relating to the State Training Schools. Vernon's Texas Statutes Article 5119a. Records, TYCA, 1999/087-1.

sciences to which women are adapted, to prepare them for future womanhood and independence, and shall provide instruction in nursing, sanitation and hygiene.”¹⁹⁵

The commission recognized the value of children as future members of a successful society. Labeling children as a “most precious resource,” the commission strove to mold “them into useful, alert, intelligent citizens.” It was of vital importance to guide delinquents back to a life that would “constructively” enhance society.¹⁹⁶ They were constantly on the lookout for more effective ways of rehabilitating wayward youth. The commission believed that “a child’s life is a total unity,” and that this unity required recognition if the child was “to develop normal attitudes and normal behavior,” in order to determine “the success of the civilization.”¹⁹⁷

The themes of creating better citizens to improve society and civilization occur throughout the records of the Texas Youth Commission and demonstrate how Texas’ juvenile justice system reflected the ideological and security concerns of many Americans. Anxiety over anti-democratic ideologies remained constant during and after World War II. During World War II, Americans feared the totalitarian governments and philosophies of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Towards the end and after the war, the threat transitioned and anxiety over the spread of communism and the fall of a democratic society intensified. The concern spread through all layers of society and increased worries by many state and national authorities that there was a connection between juvenile delinquency and the threat to democratic ideals.

¹⁹⁵ “Texas Youth Development Council Manual of Casework Services, 82.” Compilation of laws relating to the State Training Schools. Vernon’s Texas Statutes Article 5143a. Section 3. Records, TYCA, 1999/087-1.

¹⁹⁶ “The Key,” Texas Youth Development Council, Vol 1, October 1950 No. 1, Records, TYCA, Box 1999/087-4.

¹⁹⁷ “Child by Child We Build a Nation,” 1949, Records, TYCA, Box 1999/087-7, 33.

Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, J. Edgar Hoover frequently expressed his worries about the rise in crime and communist fears. Like the Texas Youth Commission, Hoover blamed a number of different factors for the post-war spike of juvenile delinquency. Hoover consistently asked the mothers and fathers in the United States, “How Good a Parent are You?” In this address, he gave seven reasons why juvenile delinquency rose in the United States after World War II. Hoover listed the seven reasons, neglect, broken homes, unhappy homes, bad examples, lack of discipline, doting parents, and outside influences, and told specific stories of individual juvenile delinquents affected by these factors. Whether he was talking about Jimmy who drank, smoked, and killed a man, or two teenage girls who spent the night with a band in a hotel, Hoover came back to the same causes and solutions for the youth problem. Victimized youth came from Godless, broken, and unhappy homes and only the unification of the home under God could prevent future increases in delinquency.¹⁹⁸

Secularism, according to Hoover, was the “Breeder of Crime.”¹⁹⁹ Hoover stated, “Surely no parent can be blind to the creeping paralysis of secularism and materialism which continues to infect the moral fiber of the world.” To Hoover, secularism and materialism went hand in hand, and communism was “a materialistic religion,” “Communism is secularism on the march.”²⁰⁰ What concerned Hoover most of all was whether or not the parents of the United States were raising upstanding citizens.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ J. Edgar Hoover, “How Good a Parent are You?” *This Week*, April 20, 1947.

¹⁹⁹ J. Edgar Hoover, “Secularism--A Breeder of Crime” (lecture, Conference of Methodist Ministers, Garrett Institute, Evanston, IL, November 26, 1947).

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ J. Edgar Hoover, host., *This Is Your FBI*, ABC, November 8, 1946.

While addressing a group of “‘career’ women,” Hoover stated “there are no careers so important as those of homemaker and mother.” He expresses his concerns with the “twin enemies of freedom—crime and communism.” The crime problem, which Hoover believed to be a youth problem, and communism were two forces of evil that Hoover believed “menace not only the security of our Nation but they also menace the homes of America, which are the foundations of our civilization.”²⁰²

Hoover emphasized that communism and crime were one in the same. Both communism and crime grow and succeed “because men ignore God.” In a fervent and passionate speech, Hoover called on the “women of the Nation,” who “must make their contribution by raising their voice to preserve the American way of life” and defeat communism that is marked by “criminal ends.” Hoover believed that mothers played a crucial role in teaching their children how to be good citizens. He reminded these women “Let us never forget that strength and good character, like charity, begin at home. So long as the American home is nurtured by the spirit of our Father in Heaven and is a center of learning and living, America will remain secure.”²⁰³

Hoover insisted, however, that the solution to juvenile delinquency could only be found in a certain type of home, one inhabited by parents that fit certain societal standards. While society expected mothers to be the full time caretaker of the children, a call for a new type of fatherhood also played a significant role in the healthy development of children. If a child spent too much time with the mother, they risked becoming “too accustomed to and dependent on female attention.” Fathers needed to take on more

²⁰² J. Edgar Hoover, “The Twin Enemies of Freedom” (address, 28th Annual Convention of the National Council of Catholic Women, Chicago, IL, November 9, 1956).

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 5.

responsibility for child rearing than the generations of fathers before, in order to prevent their children from becoming “sissies, who were likely to become homosexuals, ‘perverts,’ ‘dupes of the communists.’”²⁰⁴

Leading “child experts” like Dr. Spock called for the professionalization of motherhood. A father earned an income from working outside of the home, while the mother’s income was “reflected in the number of children they raised successfully.” A large family indicated the financial success of the man and the child rearing success of the woman. Societal norms believed that the domesticity of the woman was not a “retreat from public affairs,” but instead a measuring device of the woman’s citizenship. Raising successful children meant raising non-delinquent children; children who did not participate in criminal activity, but instead lived up to their civic obligations as citizens. However, this image of a nuclear family was not realistic for a large number of American homes. Juvenile delinquency was a growing problem that, according to state and federal agencies, was the product of a broken and unhappy home.

Concern over rising juvenile delinquency penetrated the office of the president. President Harry S. Truman grew increasingly concerned that many of the youth in the United States reflected and practiced bad citizenship. In 1950, Truman invited 11 delegates from the Texas Youth Commission to the Mid-Century White House Conference on Children and Youth. Truman opened this conference by reminding the delegates of the fragile state of foreign affairs in the United States and the “critical struggle to uphold the values of peace and justice and freedom” that faced the United Nations. The purpose of the conference, Truman stated, was to “preserve the elements of

²⁰⁴ May, *Homeward Bound*, 139.

our American way of life.” Further, Truman stated, “We are seeking ways to help our children and young people become mentally and morally stronger, and to make them better citizens.”²⁰⁵ After acknowledging and offering prayers to the young men that were fighting in Korea at the time, Truman stated that in order for the youth of the United States to face the same challenges to democratic ideals, they must have “moral strength—and strength of character.” Truman called upon teachers “and all others who deal with our young people,” to help the children to understand the United States’ “free institutions and the values upon which they rest.” Much like Hoover, Truman wanted parents to separate their children from materialism, since communism fed off “the materialistic way of life.”²⁰⁶

Truman told a story about when he held local judicial office in his home of Jackson County, Missouri. When Truman was looking for experts for the welfare department in Jackson County, he called upon two women. However, the director of welfare approached Truman and expressed his concern over the women Truman chose to assist in the welfare program. The director’s problem with the women was that, from what he could tell, the two experts had “never washed a dish or pinned a diaper in their lives.” Truman continued to have faith in their abilities, and the welfare department produced “a very satisfactory outcome.” While the director based the women’s qualifications on their ability to perform homemaking and child rearing tasks, Truman continued to believe in their abilities.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Harry S Truman (address, Midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth, Washington, DC, December 5, 1950). <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=13677#axzz1px7AkIVw>

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

Despite the concern over women challenging societal expectations, many prominent leaders in federal welfare programs, such as the Children's Bureau, were women who did not fit into their assigned "roles." In 1952, Martha Eliot, became the chief of the Children's Bureau. Daughter of a Unitarian minister and cousin of poet T.S. Eliot, Martha Eliot graduated with her M.D. from John's Hopkins University.²⁰⁸ It was while she was acquiring her Bachelor's degree, Martha Eliot met her life partner, Ethel Collins Dunham.²⁰⁹ Eliot never had children, and her secret relationship with another woman challenged societal norms during a time when the Lavender Scare was synonymous with the Red Scare in that society labeled both homosexuality and communism as threats to American democracy.²¹⁰

During her tenure as chief of the Children's Bureau, Eliot created a Special Delinquency Project in order to arouse community concern and assistance. This project looked to "increase the power and impact of social work and psychiatric experts." In order to accomplish this, the Project reached out to state Youth agencies so that "these organizations and political subdivisions will be stimulated" to address children's special needs.²¹¹ Even though the duration of the Project was short, 1952-1955, it had done much to address the growing concern of juvenile delinquency throughout the United States. Federal agencies and projects also stressed the need for positive community involvement and good homes to prevent juvenile delinquency.

²⁰⁸ Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage*, 57.

²⁰⁹ Lillian Faderman, *To Believe in Women: What Lesbians have done for America – A History* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 199), 293.

²¹⁰ As fear over communism increased, homosexuality was branded as a threatening subversive behavior. The concern and fear over homosexuals in the federal government came to be known as the Lavender Scare. For more see David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004).

²¹¹ Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage*, 58.

Much like Hoover, the Children's Bureau, and the Texas Youth Commission, Truman found the solution to juvenile delinquency inside good homes that could breed "useful and honorable citizens." The buildup of United States defenses concerned Truman, as he believed that as the "defense effort is increased," so too would the disruption to the family. However, Truman had faith that Americans could learn from their experiences with broken homes during and after World War II, and at least try to prevent the same issues from affecting children again. Truman opposed shielding children from understanding the international turmoil that was occurring, insisting that they needed the tools necessary to confront the communist problem.²¹²

Truman concluded by referring to the youth enslaved under dictatorships throughout parts of Europe, primarily Nazi Germany. Reports told Truman that the youth living under dictatorships were physically healthy but "mentally and morally" enslaved by dictatorship. The defeat of Nazi Germany left these children not knowing how "to take care of themselves." This same form of mental and moral enslavement that occurred in Nazi Germany, according to Truman, was also happening under Communist dictatorships.²¹³ The Texas Youth Commission also referred to the youth in Germany and Italy. The commission stated

It is interesting to note that well planned youth programs appeared in totalitarian states—for example, the youth program in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. In these instances, the motive was to develop the youth for the purpose of the state. Surely in Democratic America, where the emphasis is upon the individual rather than the State, a better youth program can be developed. And some of us believe, though we may be

²¹² Public Papers of the Presidents. Harry S. Truman 1945-1953. 299. Address Before the Midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth, December 5, 1950.

²¹³ Ibid.

biased, that if it is to be done in America, naturally it will be done in Texas first.²¹⁴

The ideas that juvenile delinquency was either linked to communism or hurt American efforts at defeating communism existed at both the state and federal levels. The efforts made to quell juvenile delinquency at the federal level greatly affected the efforts of the Texas Youth Commission. The influence that federal agencies had over Texas' youth agencies becomes apparent when reviewing the Texas Youth Commission records. Oftentimes, the commission quoted J. Edgar Hoover, the FBI, and the Children's Bureau in their reports to show how juvenile delinquency was a nationwide epidemic. The commission also sent delegates to Washington D.C. for conferences on the youth crime problem. These delegates brought back information provided by the president and federal agencies in the hopes of improving the Texas Youth Commission. Federal concerns of delinquency, citizenship, and communism trickled down to every state youth agency in the country.

The language Hoover and other agencies used to define crime, communism, and juvenile delinquency was so vague that it was almost identical. In addition, the solution to these three problems was the same: a stronger home, family, church, and community. Hoover was not alone in fanning the flames of fear over juvenile delinquency. Although his presence appears to have dominated the national discussion over juvenile delinquency, journalists and children's experts also contributed to much of the concern. All of these sources blamed broken homes and communities for the increase in wayward youth. Juvenile experts, who ultimately remained outside of the realm and language of

²¹⁴ "Child by Child We Build a Nation," 1949, Records, TYCA, Box 1999/087-7, 34.

federal agencies, also focused their attention on the stresses in the home caused by the “atomic age.”²¹⁵ Fear over delinquency encouraged mothers to write letters to senators, expressing their concern over juvenile delinquency finding its way inside their homes. The message was that no “race or class, could hope to be immune” to delinquency. In 1954, Bertram Beck of the Children’s Bureau spoke to the National Congress of Parents and Teachers and stated that over the last ten years delinquency had spread “from ‘the wrong side of the tracks’ to middle-class areas.” Juvenile delinquency’s movement from the lower classes to middle classes, he stated, “was a sign of ‘social decay.’”²¹⁶

Even if these leaders in the fight against juvenile delinquency did not intend to make youth crime and communism sound the same, the way in which they spoke of each made the American public associate the two closely. Lois Higgins, director of the Chicago Crime Prevention Bureau, told Senators “that delinquency was a symbol of the cold war.” She advised the Senators that parents needed to inform their children of the ways in which communism was attempting “to destroy the decency and morality which are the bulwarks of society.”²¹⁷ Higgins was not saying that communism and delinquency were the same thing. Instead, she was showing how both “originated outside the family” and “represented assaults on the stability of society.” Her use of metaphors between delinquency and communism engendered “hostile reactions” to social and cultural changes of the time. Ultimately, anticommunist anxieties and anti-delinquency language became synonymous with worry about the society falling apart; “Delinquency

²¹⁵ Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage*, 72-73.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 75.

and communism were both symbolic of a very genuine concern about social disintegration.”²¹⁸

Although broken homes received most of the blame for juvenile delinquency, federal and state agencies also recognized the effects of a growing teenage media culture. Cinema houses spread throughout the United States during the 1920s. This growth in cinema corresponded with a burgeoning teenage culture. Movies played an even stronger role in teenage girl culture. Movies “provided role models,” and influenced new ideas of “fashion, beauty, language, and behavior.” Even more, the movie houses themselves created a new place for teenagers, boys and girls, to mingle and date.²¹⁹ After the Depression and World War II, “a renewed, consumer oriented teen-culture provided the economic basis for the success of the drive-in.” Movies, like *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), created a fantasy filled with “sexual innuendo and symbolism.”²²⁰

Federal and state agencies concerned with juvenile delinquency viewed these movies as a leading cause of juvenile delinquency, and attempted to combat what children were seeing in theaters with public service films in the classrooms. While films on the silver screen glamorized teen sex, violence, and overall rebellious behavior, films made for the classroom acted as scare tactics that advised against a life of delinquency and crime. Between 1945 and 1970, “Thousands of mental hygiene films would be produced.”²²¹ Using scare films in the classroom was “a uniquely American experiment

²¹⁸ Ibid., 76.

²¹⁹ Kelly Schrum, *Some Wore Bobby Sox: The Emergence of Teenage Girl Culture, 1920-1945* (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2004) , 129.

²²⁰ “*Rebel Without a Cause*: Using Film to Teach about Dating in the 1950s” *OAH Magazine of History*, July 2004, 39.

²²¹ Ken Smith, *Mental Hygiene: Better Living Through Classroom Films, 1945-1970* (New York: Blast Books, 1999), 23.

in social engineering,” and by 1952, had become a mainstay in America’s public school system.²²²

Classroom films like *Boys with a Knife*, demonstrated how broken homes could cause juvenile delinquency and how those same homes, with some improvement could put a stop to delinquency. The film focuses on Jerry, a teenage boy with an emotionally absent and domineering stepmother and subdued father, who used a pocketknife as a substitute for his unhappy home life. Jerry and a group of his fellow delinquents joined a boys club under the guidance of an adult who managed to gain the gang’s trust. To show how progress was being made, the film showed how Jerry once used his knife for violence, but then used it to carve the name of this new club into a wooden plaque. However, this progress was short lived when his stepmother decided to send Jerry to live with his grandmother. It was not until his father saw the knife and realized how out of control Jerry’s behavior was, that he stood up for his son against the urging of his second wife. When Jerry saw how his father took back his place as head of his household, Jerry turned his knife over to the adult who formed the club (*Boy with a Knife*, 1956).

Producers of classroom films used entertainment value in order to deliver a carefully configured message to children. Classroom films were “entertaining” and “pedagogically convincing.”²²³ Schools used film to maintain social order. While these films wished to garner trust for adult authority, some films, like *Boys Beware*, warned young men about prowling adult homosexuals who suffer “a sickness of the mind,” looking for young victims. (*Boys Beware*, 1961). Children received mixed messages

²²² Ibid., 19.

²²³ Joshua Garrison, “‘The Teenage Terror in the Schools:’ Adult Fantasies, American Youth, and Classroom Scare Films during the Cold War,” *American Educational History Journal* 36, no. 1 (2009), 7.

about the adults in their life. On the one hand, a lack of trust for adults caused juvenile delinquency, and on the other hand, adults could not be trusted. Parents were getting similar warnings through their television at home. *The Homosexuals*, a film produced by CBS in 1967, described homosexuality as a growing threat, and one that the United States saw as “more harmful to society than adultery, abortion, or prostitution.” (Mike Wallace, *The Homosexuals*, CBS, 1967).

Many of these films received the label “faux documentaries,” as they were supposed to look like real documentaries, but were instead composed of actors and a “Voice-of God commentary” that “rel[ie]d heavily on propaganda and demagoguery.”²²⁴ However, many students oftentimes laughed at the films meant to create or maintain social order because the film did not meet the reality many of the children faced, although it tried to act as a close representation.²²⁵ According to Joshua Garrison, “The classroom scare film...allowed filmmakers total freedom in molding representations of the world of youth to fit the needs and ideals of those adults who were responsible for their production.”²²⁶

The public school system’s enthusiasm over showing scare films may also have resulted from the growing concern over subversive educators. Since the 1930s, the United States viewed teachers as possible subversives that could negatively influence the children they were teaching. Texas, in 1935, took action to prevent subversive educators from entering the classroom. The Texas legislature, in 1941, passed a law that “required all teachers to take a loyalty oath” to the United States, and any teacher that was found to

²²⁴ Ibid., 9.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid., 11.

have “undermine[d]...the republican and democratic forms of government in the United States,” would be dismissed from their duties.²²⁷ Many “questionable” teachers looked to new “progressive” teaching styles, while conservatives wanted the curricula to focus on the “three R’s.” Conservatives viewed progressive teaching as “un-Texan,” and questioned educators who migrated from states along the West and East coasts of the United States to Texas. It was the same concern over “out-of-staters” that convinced Texas’ public school system to distrust the National Education Association since “out-of-staters’ controlled it.” It was for this reason, “the public schools became the focal point of the Red Scare in Houston.”²²⁸

The Committee for Sound American Education warned Houstonians of the consequences of allowing socialism and communism into their children’s schools. Some campaign circulars of the CSAE warned that there was a “conspiracy” that “bodes evil to YOUR CHILD,” and urged parents to vote for the men and women who believed in a democratic America.²²⁹ Conservatives in Texas were concerned that a subversive curriculum, taught by subversive teachers, could cause children to support communist ideals as well as lead to the breakdown of the family.²³⁰

Juvenile delinquency represented a challenge to upstanding citizenship and ultimately, American democracy. Although the Texas Youth Commission’s outlook on the economic and academic future of the juvenile delinquents they housed remained bleak, they did believe that their programs could create good qualities of citizenship in

²²⁷ Don E. Carleton, *Red Scare! Right Wing Hysteria Fifties Fanaticism and Their legacy in Texas*, 155.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 159.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 171.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 173.

the juveniles. Doubts about the program centered on the worrisome increases in recidivism. However, this did not deter them from their goals. The commission knew the only way they could turn wayward youths into upstanding citizens was by reinforcing the language of gender and race at the time.

A general message of anti-communist, pro-democratic language linked federal and state efforts to quash juvenile delinquency. Themes of citizenship and successful civilizations occur throughout federal and state records from the time. What these documents show, is how governmental agencies throughout the nation used the gender and racial expectations prescribed by society as a way of determining what was good behavior, bad behavior, good qualities of citizenship, and disloyalty in the form of bad citizenship.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Even before the conclusion of World War II, American society was expecting a terrifying increase in juvenile delinquency. This anticipation has to be seen, at least in some respects, as one of the causes of increased “youth crime.” Although many of the children who found themselves incarcerated in a juvenile justice system committed an actual punishable crime, it is difficult to know how many committed, what James Gilbert refers to as, a *status crime*. It has to be recognized, especially for delinquent girls, that the acts they committed were quite possibly not justifiably punishable. Instead, these crimes were considered legitimate crimes because they committed these acts while under the age of adulthood.

United States society expected these girls to remain wholly feminine. To uphold the socially prescribed ideas of femininity, they needed to remain sexually pure and innocent, as well as submissive to a patriarchal world. These qualities would ensure that these girls would fulfill the call to be successful wives and mothers. It was by challenging what society expected of them that brought “wayward” girls to the attention of the juvenile court systems in the first place.

The Texas Youth Commission records expose the long-held concerns over female sexuality. As historians such as Odem, Holloway, and Robertson demonstrate, the

preoccupation with female sexuality existed well before the Progressive Era. Parents, communities, state and federal governments attempted to control female sexuality. Parents and communities would do so by reporting girls, and women, to local authorities for engaging in premarital sex or same sex relationships. State and federal governments implemented laws that allowed for the punishment of women who violated sex, or moral, laws in order to suppress future sexual deviance. However, if women adhered to sex or moral law, their sexuality was also suppressed.²³¹

Why was female sexuality such a threat? And why is the concern over female sexuality so prevalent throughout the United States historical narrative? One answer is found in the issue of patriarchy. Patriarchal order is the central concerns in Carol Pateman's 1988 book *The Sexual Contract*. Pateman states, "The story of the sexual contract is also about the genesis of political right, and explains why exercise of the right is legitimate." Pateman defines patriarchal right or sex-right as "the power that men exercise over women."²³² The sexual contract, according to Pateman, "is a story of subjection."²³³ Men's right to access women's bodies explains the desire of parents (fathers), communities, and state and federal governments to control female sexuality throughout much of American history. Understanding social and sexual contract theory is crucial in order to understand female juvenile delinquency. The commission attempted to curtail or contain female sexuality in order to preserve patriarchal rights, which explains why the rules, regulations, and curricula at Gainesville, Brady, and Crockett emphasized the maintenance of a feminine, not sexual, demeanor.

²³¹ See Odem's *Delinquent Daughters*, Holloway's *Sexuality, Politics, and Social Control, 1920-1945*, and Robertson's "Making Right a Girl's Ruin: Working Class-Legal Cultures and Forced Marriage in New York City, 1890-19."

²³² Carol Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, (Stanford, C.A.: Stanford University Press, 1988), 1.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 2.

Juvenile justice systems automatically looked to a broken home for the reason as to why juvenile delinquency was on the rise. However, the broken home theory did not rest evenly on the shoulders of mothers and fathers. Mothers received a disproportionate amount of blame when it came to the bad behavior of their children. If a girl did not exude the qualities of femininity, or the potential to be wives and mothers, then obviously their mothers did not possess those same qualities. Even if their mothers did express love and devotion to her family, those sentiments were negated if the mother was active in the workforce. Although many women returned to the home at the conclusion of World War II, a substantial number of them remained in the work force. Enough women continued working to invoke alarm and worry throughout the United States society.

However, by placing most of the blame for juvenile delinquency on the mothers of American youth, the Texas Youth Commission and other youth agencies throughout the United States appeared to be contradicting themselves. National and state youth agencies did not have the statistics to back their accusations against mothers and families. On the one hand, the Texas Youth Commission blamed broken homes for the increase in Texas juvenile delinquency, and on the other provided statistics that showed the majority of juvenile delinquents originating from homes with both natural parents married and present. More contradictions appeared when juvenile justice agencies suggested in what ways a mother could prevent juvenile delinquency, but they never seemed able to provide a clear-cut definition of “proper” mothering. Instead, they exposed that on the one hand, if a mother did not play the role of a nurturing and submissive homemaker doting on her children, their children were at risk of becoming juvenile delinquents. On the other

hand, if a mother was too mothering, the child, especially a son, risked becoming weak or effeminate, which were not considered qualities of upstanding citizenship.

Once a girl was admitted to a juvenile justice institution, they found themselves moved from one gendered world to another. Juvenile justice programs, like the Texas Youth Commission, built a reform program for girls that had the ultimate goal of creating the good wives and mothers that the wayward girls' mothers failed to be. Essentially taking on the role of the concerned parent, the Texas Youth Commission forced girls to take classes in the domestic sciences, while having to maintain acceptable hygiene and appearances.

Other contradictions appear when examining the Texas Youth Commission's preoccupation with the girls' appearance. At Gainesville, the staff and commission expected the girls to maintain a feminine appearance. The girls wore floral dresses, makeup, and maintained good hygiene. By doing so, the girls kept a hyper-feminine appearance in order to, ultimately, attract the opposite sex. However, it was by attracting the sexual attention of others and participating in sexual acts that brought the girls to the attention of the juvenile court system in the first place. This suggests that the commission, in order to not cross the line between feminizing and sexualizing the girls, found it important to teach how to use feminine products (clothing, makeup, and hair care) in moderation instead of what types of products to use.

However, expectations of femininity differed depending on the race of the girl. Black girls at Brady and Crockett experienced a more regimented system. Instead of being taught how to be a good wife and mother in their own homes, Brady and Crockett

girls were forced to take classes geared more towards commercial cleaning and laundry services. The commission wanted to ensure that the girls at Brady and Crockett conformed to their gender and racial roles in the Jim Crow South.

Despite their efforts, the Texas Youth Commission remained pessimistic about the future of released inmates. A college degree or well-paying job was a fantasy, and the Texas Youth Commission was well aware of the reality that many of the children they attempted to reform would end up in adult prisons. The best the Texas Youth Commission could hope for was that their efforts transformed wayward youth into upstanding citizens. Despite the reality of second-class citizenship for the white and black girls, the commission expected these children to be the beacons of hope from the maintenance of a Democratic America.

With anti-communist fears and rhetoric dominating the United States after World War II, demagogues like Joseph McCarthy and J. Edgar Hoover capitalized on these fears in order to push conservative agendas. Authorities like J. Edgar Hoover and President Truman blurred the language that defined youth crime and communism, making the two almost synonymous. An already hyper anxious and sensitive society listened intently and called for the improvement of the home in order to prevent juvenile delinquency.

Figureheads like President Truman and J. Edgar Hoover, compared United States youth to the youth found in Nazi Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union. Their main complaint against these youth programs was that these fascist and communist societies indoctrinated their youth. However, by expressing their condemnation of these indoctrinating programs, they once again point out a significant contradiction in the

United States federal and state youth policies. By teaching juvenile delinquents to be better citizens by conforming and adhering to the roles society prescribed for them, agencies like the Texas Youth Commission indoctrinated certain segments of American youth.

The Texas Youth Commission, attempted to reform youth by forcing them to learn and adhere to their assigned duties. Since change threatened comfortable and traditional functions of a democratic society, children had to learn how to live inside what was comfortable. What federal and state programs, and much of society for that matter, did not recognize was that change was already happening. And these children were not the change they feared. Instead, these children simply reflected the change that was already taking place.

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