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Character Training Affects Crime Rate

A HARVARD professor has suggested that America's declining public concern with "character training" over the past 60 years may have played a significant part in our recent high crime rates.

This tentative conclusion should be rated alongside the new scientific theory that men's and women's brains may function differently. Evidence for both is abundant and obvious.

Nevertheless, the observation about the relationship between lack of character training and crime is so significant that it ought not be ignored. Character building should be given consideration along with other steps being proposed to "save the public schools."

Significantly, the steep increase in crime coincides with abandonment of the famous McGuffey Readers, which stressed character.

When emphasis was shifted to permissiveness, individual rights, freedom to "do one's thing," and humanistic principles that ridicule religion, mediocrity set in and immorality flourished.

Teachers have been accused of re-

sisting responsibilities for building character, a chore which their earlier counterparts accepted as naturally as they undertook to teach the "three Rs."

For those youngsters who received little or no training in morality and responsibility at home this left a vacuum that was filled by alcohol, sexual promiscuity, drugs and crime.

The entertainment world has been irresponsible in utilizing marvelous inventions to strengthen the better side of mankind. Many movies and TV shows include no heroes but have as their themes violence, immorality, crime and silliness.

"The most powerful influence on children between 12 and 18 is not the school, not the church, not the home, but rock music and all that goes with it," wrote Allan Bloom, professor at the University of Chicago, recently. "It is not an elevating but a leveling influence, the children have as their heroes banal drug- and sex-ridden guttersnipes who foment rebellion not only against parents but against all no-

ble sentiments.

Churches may have been remiss by presenting vital messages in manners that appear dull alongside noisy beer commercials.

Numerous educators, civic leaders and parents have expressed concern about the condition of public schools since a blue-ribbon panel commissioned by Terrel H. Bell, secretary of education, issued a "report card" that, in effect, flunked the system.

We have seen only brief summaries of proposals to better the situation but so far as we can deduce the emphasis will be on more money, more qualified teachers and stronger curricula, in that order.

We have seen no reference to teaching of principles of morality, responsibilities of citizenship, self-reliance as compared to dependency upon government, and the desirability of such institutions as homes, families and churches.

The arts and sciences are essential but something more is needed for meritorious lives and worthwhile living.