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EARLY DETECTION OF FUTURE DELINQUENTS

SHELDON AND ELEANOR T. GLUECK

This article by Sheldon Glueck and Eleanor T. Glueck embodies a comparison of the total discriminative capacity of various combinations among fifteen factors significantly differentiating delinquents from non-delinquents. The authors, Roscoe Pound Professor of Law, and Research Associate, in the Harvard Law School, are frequent contributors to this Journal and they require no introduction—EDITOR.

In "Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency"¹ we presented for consideration three tables on the basis of which we believe it should be possible to select from among young boys (at school entrance) those who will probably become persistent delinquents unless timely and effective intervention can divert their predicted course of maladapted behavior into socially acceptable channels. One is based on five social factors that sharply differentiate the delinquents from the control group of non-delinquents (supervision of boy by mother, discipline of boy by father, affection of mother for boy, affection of father for boy, and unity of the family group); a second on five traits of character structure derived from the Rorschach Test (social assertion, defiance, suspiciousness, destructiveness and emotional lability); and a third on five traits of temperament as determined by psychiatric interviews (adventurousness, extroversion in action, suggestibility, stubbornness and emotional instability).² These tables show a high association between the relevant factors and the likelihood of delinquency or non-delinquency,—a potentiality that (as will be indicated below) is already being converted into a high probability through the test of a series of experimental checks on other samples of cases.

As our "weighted score" method of constructing the tables is fully reported in "Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency" (Chapter XX), as well as in our other works,³ there is no need to describe it in any detail here beyond pointing out that the five predictive factors comprising a particular table were initially selected from among those showing the widest range of difference in incidence between the 500 delinquents encompassed in "Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency" and their 500 matched non-delinquents. The percent of delinquents existing in each subcategory of a factor provided the basis for constructing a "total weighted score" derived from summing the individual scores on the subcategories of all five factors in which a particular

¹ The Commonwealth Fund, New York, 1950, Chap. XX.

² Titles of tables from "Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency" have been slightly modified.

³ 500 CRIMINAL CAREERS, 1930, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, pp. 278-296; ONE THOUSAND JUVENILE DELINQUENTS, 1934, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, pp. 185-190; FIVE HUNDRED DELINQUENT WOMEN, 1934, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, pp. 284-298; LATER CRIMINAL CAREERS, 1937, New York, The Commonwealth Fund, pp. 134-144; JUVENILE DELINQUENTS GROWN UP, The Commonwealth Fund, pp. 199-234; CRIMINAL CAREERS IN RETROSPECT, 1943, New York, The Commonwealth Fund, pp. 215-283; AFTER-CONDUCT OF DISCHARGED OFFENDERS, 1945, New York and London, Macmillan Co., pp. 63-73.

boy is placed. The table itself was derived from separately distributing all the delinquents and all the non-delinquents (for whom their status on all five factors was known) into "weighted score classes". Assuming validation on other series of cases, the incidence of the delinquents and non-delinquents within each "weighted score class" expresses the likelihood of delinquency for individuals falling in that "score class." Whether or not such a table has applicability to samples of different composition (in respect, for example, to ethnic makeup or economic status), awaits practical demonstration.

Before presenting the tables, we set down the five social factors under consideration,⁴ the five traits of character structure,⁵ and the five traits of temperament,⁶ with their "weighted scores."

4 SOCIAL FACTORS	WEIGHTED SCORE
1. DISCIPLINE OF BOY BY FATHER	
Overstrict or erratic	72.5
Lax	59.8
Firm but kindly	9.3
2. SUPERVISION OF BOY BY MOTHER	
Unsuitable	83.2
Fair	57.5
Suitable	9.9
3. AFFECTION OF FATHER FOR BOY	
Indifferent or hostile	75.9
Warm (including over-protective)	33.8
4. AFFECTION OF MOTHER FOR BOY	
Indifferent or hostile	86.2
Warm (including over-protective)	43.1
5. COHESIVENESS OF FAMILY	
Unintegrated	96.9
Some elements of cohesion	61.3
Cohesive	20.6
5 TRAITS OF CHARACTER STRUCTURE	WEIGHTED SCORE
1. SOCIAL ASSERTION	
Marked	75.9
Slight or suggestive	63.8
Absent	39.7
2. DEFIANCE	
Marked	91.0
Slight or suggestive	76.7
Absent	34.9
3. SUSPICION	
Marked	67.3
Slight or suggestive	47.3
Absent	37.5
4. DESTRUCTIVENESS	
Marked	77.7
Slight or suggestive	69.9
Absent	35.7

TABLE I
PERCENT OF DELINQUENTS AND NON-DELINQUENTS IN EACH OF FOUR WEIGHTED SCORE CLASSES
BASED ON FIVE FACTORS OF SOCIAL BACKGROUND⁷

Weighted Score Class	Percent of Delinquents in Each Score Class		Percent of Non-Delinquents in Each Score Class		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	
Under 200.....	24	8.2	269	91.8	293
200-249.....	40	37.0	68	63.0	108
250-299.....	122	63.5	70	36.5	192
300 and over.....	265	89.2	32	10.8	297
Total Cases.....	451		439		890

("Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency" Table XX-3, p. 262.)

The "prediction" tables derived from these three sets of data appear as Table I, Table II, and Table III.

Examination of the distribution of the delinquents and non-delinquents in each weighted score class in the three tables appears to indicate that their capacity to differentiate between delinquents and non-delinquents is quite similar (see note 13).

Thus far only the table based on five social factors (the "Social Prediction Table," as it has come to be known) has been put to the test; and then only in retrospective application on various samples of delinquents (and in one instance of non-delinquents also) of different background from those on which the table was initially constructed. As these validations are fully reported elsewhere,⁸ there is no need to elaborate here beyond pointing out that the above mentioned table could have correctly "spotted"

5. EMOTIONAL LABILITY	
Marked	75.2
Slight or suggestive	65.0
Absent	40.0
⁶ TRAITS OF TEMPERAMENT	WEIGHTED SCORE
1. ADVENTUROUSNESS	
Present in marked degree	75.3
Not prominent or noticeably lacking	35.4
2. EXTROVERSION IN ACTION	
Present in marked degree	66.5
Not prominent or noticeably lacking	37.8
3. SUGGESTIBILITY	
Present in marked degree	69.4
Not prominent or noticeably lacking	35.5
4. STUBBORNESS	
Present in marked degree	83.4
Not prominent or noticeably lacking	39.0
5. EMOTIONAL INSTABILITY	
Present in marked degree	62.0
Not prominent or noticeably lacking	26.5

⁷ Titles of tables from "Unraveling" have been slightly modified.

⁸ BLACK, B. J. AND GLICK, S. J., *Predicted vs. Actual Outcome for Delinquent Boys*, New York, The Jewish Board of Guardians, 1952; THOMPSON, RICHARD E., *A Validation of the Glueck Social Prediction Scale for Proneness to Delinquency*, JOUR. CRIM. L. AND CRIMINOLOGY, November-December,

TABLE II

PERCENT OF DELINQUENTS AND NON-DELINQUENTS IN EACH OF FOUR WEIGHTED SCORE CLASSES
BASED ON FIVE TRAITS OF CHARACTER STRUCTURE DERIVED FROM RORSCHACH TEST

Weighted Score Class	Percent of Delinquents in Each Score Class		Percent of Non-Delinquents in Each Score Class		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	
Under 205.....	21	14.7	122	85.3	143
205-254.....	79	38.9	124	61.1	203
255-279.....	32	64.0	18	36.0	50
280 and over.....	134	87.9	18	12.1	152
Total Cases.....	266		282		548

("Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency," Table XX-7, p. 264.)

TABLE III

PERCENT OF DELINQUENTS AND NON-DELINQUENTS IN EACH OF FOUR WEIGHTED SCORE CLASSES
BASED ON FIVE TRAITS OF TEMPERAMENT DERIVED FROM PSYCHIATRIC EXAMINATION

Weighted Score Class	Percent of Delinquents in Each Score Class		Percent of Non-Delinquents in Each Score Class		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	
Under 220.....	34	10.4	294	89.6	328
220-244.....	74	43.0	98	57.0	172
245-269.....	51	63.0	30	37.0	81
270 and over.....	311	87.4	45	12.6	356
Total Cases.....	470		467		937

("Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency," Table XX-11, p. 266.)

as potential delinquents about 90 percent of each of the samples of delinquents, had it been applied when the boys in question were only six years old. A more definitive test is now in process, however, to determine whether the discovery of potential delinquents in a first-grade school population on the basis of the Social Prediction Table actually proves by follow-up of a substantial group of boys, not yet delinquent, that it can successfully differentiate both potential delinquents and true non-delinquents at the early age of six.⁹

The question now at issue is whether the "screening" capacity of the Table based on five social factors can be enhanced beyond what the validation studies so far show (in retrospective validations, at least) to be its ability. In order to make adequate comparison possible between the Social "Prediction" Table and others about to be presented that are based on various combinations of factors and traits from all three

1952; PREDICTING JUVENILE DELINQUENCY, Research Bulletin Number 124, April, 1955, published by Department of Institutions and Agencies, Trenton, New Jersey.

A summary of findings of these reports and of certain as yet unpublished studies is to be found in "Status of Glueck Prediction Studies," a paper prepared for the International Criminological Congress, London, September, 1955, by ELEANOR T. GLUECK.

⁹ WHELAN, RALPH W., *An Experiment in Predicting Delinquency*, J. OF CRIM. L., CRIMINOL. AND POL. SCI., Vol. 45, No. 4, November-December, 1954, pp. 432-441.

TABLE IV
PERCENT OF DELINQUENTS AND NON-DELINQUENTS IN EACH OF SEVEN WEIGHTED SCORE CLASSES
BASED ON FIVE FACTORS OF SOCIAL BACKGROUND

Weighted Score Class	Percent of Delinquents		Percent of Non-Delinquents		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	
Under 150.....	5	2.9	167	97.1	172
150-199.....	19	15.7	102	84.3	121
200-249.....	40	37.0	68	63.0	108
250-299.....	122	63.5	70	36.5	192
300-349.....	141	86.0	23	14.0	164
350-399.....	73	90.1	8	9.9	81
400 and over.....	51	98.1	1	1.9	52
Total Cases.....	451		439		890

("Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency," Table XX-2, p. 261.)

TABLE V
PERCENT OF DELINQUENTS AND NON-DELINQUENTS IN EACH OF SIX WEIGHTED SCORE CLASSES
BASED ON FIVE SOCIAL FACTORS AND FIVE TRAITS OF TEMPERAMENT

Weighted Score Class	Percent of Delinquents		Percent of Non-Delinquents		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	
250-399.....	2	1.7	115	98.3	117
400-449.....	9	20.5	35	79.5	44
450-499.....	19	34.5	36	65.5	55
500-549.....	36	60.0	24	40.0	60
550-599.....	37	86.0	6	14.0	43
600-799.....	102	97.0	3	3.0	105
Total Cases.....	205		219		424

tables, it is necessary to set down a more detailed distribution by score classes than was done in Table I.

Now we proceed to make various combinations of factors from among the fifteen that comprise all three tables on a group of 424 boys out of the 1,000 in "Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency" (205 delinquents and 219 non-delinquents) in whose cases data on all the fifteen factors and traits were available.¹⁰

The first of these combined tables incorporates the five social factors and the five traits of temperament (derived from psychiatric examination) and results in the distribution seen in Table V.

Comparison of Table V with Table IV suggests that the differentiation between the delinquents and the non-delinquents is not heightened by the addition of the five traits of temperament to the five social factors. The quite uniform reciprocal tendency in the percentage of delinquents and non-delinquents within the score classes is clearly evident.

¹⁰ All the computations were checked by Dr. William H. Angoff, Princeton, New Jersey.

TABLE VI

PERCENT OF DELINQUENTS AND NON-DELINQUENTS IN EACH OF SIX WEIGHTED SCORE CLASSES
BASED ON FIVE SOCIAL FACTORS AND FIVE CHARACTER TRAITS

Weighted Score Class	Percent of Delinquents		Percent of Non-Delinquents		Total No.
	No.	%	No.	%	
300-399.....	3	2.4	125	97.6	128
400-449.....	10	21.3	36	78.7	46
450-499.....	27	40.9	39	59.1	66
500-549.....	31	58.5	22	41.5	53
550-649.....	89	89.9	10	10.1	99
650-799.....	58	100.0	0	0.0	58
Total Cases.....	218		232		450

TABLE VII

PERCENT OF DELINQUENTS AND NON-DELINQUENTS IN EACH OF SIX WEIGHTED SCORE CLASSES
BASED ON FIVE TRAITS OF TEMPERAMENT AND FIVE TRAITS OF CHARACTER STRUCTURE

Weighted Score Class	Percent of Delinquents		Percent of Non-Delinquents		Total No.
	No.	%	No.	%	
350-399.....	2	3.6	54	96.4	56
400-449.....	17	16.8	84	83.2	101
450-499.....	35	38.0	57	62.0	92
500-549.....	41	70.7	17	29.3	58
550-599.....	52	91.2	5	8.8	57
600-749.....	58	96.7	2	3.3	60
Total Cases.....	205		219		424

We turn now to Table VI based on the five social factors and the five traits of character structure (derived from Rorschach Test).

Although Table VI appears to reflect a slightly greater differentiative capacity than Table IV, it cannot be said that it is so much more discriminative that its substitution for the table based on only five social factors is warranted.

Considering next a table omitting the five social factors, and combining the five traits of temperament with the five character traits, Table VII shows that these ten traits are no more discriminative than the one based on the five social factors alone.

Next we turn to Table VIII in which all fifteen factors and traits are incorporated.

Comparison of Table VIII with Table IV, in which only the five social factors are utilized, shows it similarly differentiates the delinquents and non-delinquents.

Next we turn to Table IX in which two social factors (supervision of boy by mother and cohesiveness of family) are combined with two traits of temperament (stubbornness and adventurousness) and one trait of character structure (defiance). They were selected because they distinguish delinquents from non-delinquents more markedly than do the others.

Although Table IX appears to be more discriminative than the one based on five

TABLE VIII

PERCENT OF DELINQUENTS AND NON-DELINQUENTS IN EACH OF SIX WEIGHTED SCORE CLASSES
BASED ON FIVE SOCIAL FACTORS, FIVE TRAITS OF TEMPERAMENT, AND FIVE TRAITS OF
CHARACTER STRUCTURE

Weighted Score Class	Percent of Delinquents		Percent of Non-Delinquents		Total No.
	No.	%	No.	%	
450-649.....	5	3.6	134	96.4	139
650-699.....	6	14.6	35	85.4	41
700-749.....	18	36.0	32	64.0	50
750-799.....	28	71.8	11	28.2	39
800-849.....	26	83.9	5	16.1	31
850-1099.....	122	98.4	2	1.6	124
Total Cases.....	205		219		424

TABLE IX

PERCENT OF DELINQUENTS AND NON-DELINQUENTS IN EACH OF SIX WEIGHTED SCORE CLASSES
BASED ON TWO SOCIAL FACTORS, TWO TRAITS OF TEMPERAMENT, AND ONE TRAIT OF
CHARACTER STRUCTURE

Weighted Score Class	Percent of Delinquents		Percent of Non-Delinquents		Total No.
	No.	%	No.	%	
100-149.....	3	3.8	75	96.2	78
150-199.....	9	11.8	67	88.2	76
200-249.....	20	31.2	44	68.8	64
250-299.....	75	65.2	40	34.8	115
300-349.....	66	95.7	3	4.3	69
350 and over.....	42	100.0	0	0.0	42
Total Cases.....	215		229		444

TABLE X

PERCENT OF DELINQUENTS AND NON-DELINQUENTS IN EACH OF FOUR WEIGHTED SCORE CLASSES
BASED ON TWO SOCIAL FACTORS AND TWO TRAITS OF TEMPERAMENT

Weighted Score Class	Percent of Delinquents		Percent of Non-Delinquents		Total No.
	No.	%	No.	%	
100-149.....	17	6.5	244	93.5	261
150-199.....	67	40.4	99	59.6	166
200-249.....	98	66.7	49	33.3	147
250 and over.....	243	94.5	17	5.5	260
Total Cases.....	425		409		834

social factors, there is insufficient difference between them to justify the application, in ordinary practice, of the Rorschach Test and a psychiatric examination to arrive at a sum total of predictive potency just as readily attained by the table made up of the five social factors only.

To experiment still further, we eliminated from the above group of factors and traits the one derived from the Rorschach Test (defiance) and constructed a table based on the four remaining items.

In Table X the result varies so little from the discriminative capacity of Table IX, based on five social factors alone, that there would appear to be no need to resort to Rorschach Tests and psychiatric examinations for the purpose of selecting potential delinquents.

The social factor table, already shown to be a valid instrument by several retrospective applications of it to series of cases differing in makeup from the original sample on which it was constructed,¹¹ now awaits only the final result of its application to a group of six year old boys at the point of school entrance¹² who have been "spotted" as potential delinquents and who are being "followed up" to determine the correctness of the prediction of delinquency. Thus far, although the boys are as yet only in the third grade, 50 percent of those found to be "potential delinquents" are already manifesting obvious behavioral difficulties in school as contrasted with 8.2 percent of those predicted as non-delinquent. This as yet very limited "follow up" appears to suggest the effectiveness of the table. However, we are not yet in a position to make a definitive statement as to the potency of the Table.

In order to determine whether a statistical analysis would yield results confirming those presented above, we asked Dr. William H. Angoff of Princeton, New Jersey, to compute correlation coefficients between the tables and between each table and delinquency. It will be observed that his results do tend to confirm our interpretations.¹³

¹¹ See Note 5.

¹² WHELAN, *op. cit.*

¹³ (Statement prepared by Dr. William H. Angoff:) "All figures given below are based on the group of 424 cases (205 delinquents and 219 non-delinquents) for whom all information necessary to compute these statistics was available.

Finally, there are the correlations of the sum of the two Social plus two Psychiatric factors (I-4) and also the two Social plus two Psychiatric plus one Rorschach factors (I-5) against the criterion of delinquency. The index I-4 correlates .681 with delinquency; I-5 correlates .722 with delinquency. Comparison of the figures with those in Tables I and II shows these two to be intermediate in their diagnostic power: I-4 is about as valid as the Social index alone, which is the most valid of the three basic indexes. The index I-5 yields a still higher correlation, but not as high as any index-composite which contains Social. Nevertheless, it should be recalled that I-4 and I-5 consist of only four and five factors and the composites consist of ten and fifteen factors. It is noted that I-4 and I-5 even yield higher validities than the ten-factor composite of the Psychiatric plus Rorschach."

TABLE I

INTERCORRELATIONS AMONG PRIMARY DIAGNOSTIC INDEXES AND CRITERION OF DELINQUENCY
N = 424

	Social	Psychiatric	Rorschach	Delinquency
Social.....	—	.461	.410	.682
Psychiatric.....	.461	—	.442	.610
Rorschach.....	.410	.442	—	.542
Delinquency.....	.682	.610	.542	—

Note in Table I that the Social, Psychiatric, and Rorschach indexes correlate .682, .610, and .542

Although Angoff's statistical analysis confirms our findings that combinations of factors involving social plus psychiatric data, social plus Rorschach data, or all three sets of data combined, yield only a slightly better relationship to the criterion of delinquency than that attained either by the three separate sets of data or by the Social Prediction Table alone, it does not appear that the increment in efficiency is great enough to warrant a recommendation that Rorschach Tests and psychiatric skills be utilized in "screening" or "spotting" potential delinquents. This is especially true in view of the fact that less training is required to become adept in the gathering and classification of social factors than in the application and interpretation of Rorschach Tests or the making of psychiatric examinations and assessments.

We are therefore satisfied to recommend the use of the Social Prediction Table rather than those based on Rorschach or psychiatric data; and we look forward to its development as a large-scale screening device which will not only make possible early "case finding" but will lead the way to early preventive therapy.

respectively with delinquency. The Social index alone identifies delinquents better than does the Psychiatric index, and that better than the Rorschach index. Thus, if we were restricted to the use of only one index, we would choose the Social index. If we were restricted to the use of only two indexes, we would choose the Social and Psychiatric and omit the Rorschach. Note also that the three indexes are not entirely independent measures, since they correlate to some extent among themselves. Social vs. Psychiatric: .461; Social vs. Rorschach: .410; Psychiatric vs. Rorschach: .442. Nevertheless, while the contribution of each index to the identification of delinquency is not independent of the contribution of the other two, each index does add something unique to the identification. For that reason, the contribution of all three together is greater than that of any one or two alone, as will be shown below.

TABLE II
CORRELATIONS OF COMBINATIONS OF INDEXES WITH DELINQUENCY
 $N = 424$

Sum of Indexes	Correlation of Composite with Criterion	Multiple Correlation with Criterion
Social plus Psychiatric.....	.755	.759
Social plus Rorschach.....	.740	.740
Psychiatric plus Rorschach.....	.675	.681
Social plus Psychiatric plus Rorschach.....	.781	.783

Table II gives the correlations of the indexes with the criterion when the indexes are taken in combination. The first column of figures gives the correlations with delinquency of each composite taken as a simple sum of the indexes. The second column of figures gives the correlations with delinquency of each composite taken as an optimally weighted sum of the indexes, to yield maximum (multiple) correlation with the criterion. Comparison of the two columns, row by row, reveals that the multiple correlations with the criterion are not appreciably higher than the correlations of index-composites with the criterion. By this we learn that there would be no advantage to weighting one index more heavily than another in order to achieve high correlations.

A comparison of the first three figures in Table II (either of the two columns) with the last column of Table I shows that in every case the sum of the two indexes is a better index than either one taken alone. For example, the composite of the Social and Psychiatric indexes yields a higher correlation (.755) with the criterion than does either the Social (.682) or the Psychiatric (.610) separately. Also, the composite of the three indexes yields a higher validity (.781) than the composite of any two. It is also of interest to note that the Social index *alone* correlates higher with the criterion than the composite of Psychiatric and Rorschach.