

- Preview of a book that tells how to spot the young criminal before he gets started.

## WHAT MAKES A JUVENILE DELINQUENT?

If potential lawbreakers could be spotted on their first day in school — before they have ever thrown stones at train windows, set fire to houses, slugged, stolen or murdered — we could save lives, careers, untold heartaches and literally billions of dollars every year.

This old dream of psychologists and churchmen comes much nearer to reality in a report just issued on to scientific study of the problem by Sheldon Glueck, professor of criminal law and criminology, and his wife, Dr. Eleanor Touroff Glueck, research associate, of the Harvard Law School. Their survey throws a hopeful light on the riddle of hostile character and incorrigible behavior.

In a New York tenement two brothers were born a year or so apart. They played in the same alleys, were

neglected by the same mother, abused by the same father. One became a gangster and a killer. The other became a detective whose grim job it was to bring his own brother to justice. What made the brothers different?

The overwhelming majority of boys born in wrong streets and reared in wrong families turn out all right. What is the basic difference between the majority who turn out good and the few who, turn out bad? It was the purpose of the Gluecks' inquiry to find all the factors which are common to child offenders.

The Gluecks began their ten-year exploration by carefully selecting 1000 youngsters. Five hundred were normal boys doing well in home and school. The other 500 had all been in police trouble — most of them sentenced to reformatories after

judges, doctors, social agencies and church workers had tried in vain to help them.

The investigators decided to match, as nearly as possible, bad boys with good boys of equal age, background, intelligence and disposition. But twos and twos of 1000 lads were laboriously paired. The troublemaker from a family paying \$26 a month rent must have his opposite number from a similar low-rent family; Greeks to match Greeks; a stepson for a stepson. The boys were weighed, measured and photographed. A medical examination was followed by tests of intelligence and achievement, a study of traits and a psychiatric interview. Family backgrounds and personal histories were explored.

Out of a maze of facts and statistics there emerges an astounding creature a composite juvenile delinquent. Not in body, mind or spirit is he what you might expect would make for dynamic manhood if drawn into different channels!

Far from being the underprivileged runt of sentimental

legend, the delinquent is likely to have the form of an athlete. There is nothing undernourished about him; in height and weight he is superior to most of the good boys. He is more masculine, a fellow of bone and muscle, with broad shoulders and chest, tapering torso and narrow hips. This portrait of an athletic, masculine delinquent does not, in the words of the authors, "in any sense represent merely random variations. It is a meaningful anatomical pattern."

More surprises appear in the health examination. The delinquent is not at all the product of bodily disease or weakness. There is "little if any difference in the general health of the two groups." Except for one thing, the handgrip of the delinquent is stronger, reflecting greater vitality. "There is" the report recalls, "a popular notion that juvenile delinquents are on the whole a less healthy group of youngsters. The facts by no means bear out this belief."

Another surprise, "There is a significant difference in the proportion of delinquents and

non-delinquents evidencing neurological handicaps of one sore or another."

What difference? *More good boys have neurological or psychoneurotic troubles than do bad boys!*

How intelligent is this mentally and physically healthy delinquent? The survey demonstrated that low mentality is not a characteristic of juvenile delinquency. While in certain tests the delinquent is a little inferior, he is in other somewhat superior. Out of thousands of tests in "hand-mindedness," for example, he emerges to convince the Gluecks that delinquents "evidently have a little more sort of creative ability."

But it is in temperamental make-up that more positive factors of delinquency appear. Our feelings have more to do with shaping character and behavior than our brains have. These deeper aspects are explored by use of the Rorschach test, which psychologists regard as a powerful instrument in diagnosis. With ten ink blots on cards, examiners draw from a child the darkest secrets of his mind. What does the shapeless blotch

make him think of? Telling what thoughts it evokes in him, the boy begins to reveal himself.

The inquirers learn that from earliest childhood the delinquent has found it hard to "think and act in the ways of the community," which means that he lacks what we call common sense. He seems constitutionally unable to follow a methodical approach to any problem; his "social assertion" gets in the way. This "social assertion" is his determination to assert not his rights or his opinions but his will. He wants what he wants when he wants it, never mind what anybody else says or thinks. To his nature all submissiveness is odious. As if by instinct, he refuses to respect any rules. Here is a major symptom. In this dangerous difference lies the boy's defiance of decent and natural restraints.

Far from having feelings of insecurity or anxiety, the boy suffers from neither frustration nor inferiority. He does not worry about losing his job, his home or his liberty. He is loftily sure he is smart enough to take care of himself. He is a superior being

who is not appreciated. With grandiose notions about his destiny, he has no normal fear of failure or defeat. Incurable optimist, when the law catches up with him he is always sure that the next time he will "get away with it." He is the most self-reliant of lads; the good boy, whom he scorns, is more often the one who looks to others for help and encouragement. The delinquent feels no need to live up to the expectations of others; basically he does not wish to cooperate.

But he is forever making blunders. He acts on impulse, with little self-control. One can never tell what he will do next. Yet in all his headstrong ways he shows a certain charming vivacity, a liveliness of manner which makes him outshine many a solid and dependable young citizen. Psychologists call him extrovert, because he is likely to get rid of his tensions through emotional tantrums or rugged action. He doesn't brood; he explodes.

Perhaps his most significant trait is identified in the psychiatric tests when some of his hopes and dreams be-

gin to appear. Far more than most boys do the incorrigible lad yearns for adventure. All youngsters have such daydreams, but the delinquent believes in them; with him the need for danger is a compulsion, an unsatisfied thirst.

In olden times boys could run away to sea and struggle with man and nature. Or they could join a train of covered wagons and, standing with their elders, shoot it out with redskins and bandits. Finding excitement, they ultimately matured, if they survived, and finished their lives as more or less ordinary citizens. Not so today. Too often boys think that excitement can come only in violating the law.

"This definite preference of the delinquents for adventurous activities, for exciting forms of recreation," the report declares, "is one of the more striking findings of this study."

To satisfy the craving, a boy will steal rides, hop trucks, keep late hours roaming the streets; he exults in destructive mischief, begins to drink in his early teens. His haunts are those of his gang — waterfront, railroad

yards, poolrooms, cheap dance halls and amusement parks. One half of all the 500 delinquents were active members of gangs, organized for a definite antisocial purpose and having vigorous leadership.

The survey shatters the illusion that the delinquent is led into crime by bad companions. From earliest childhood he shows a preference for other boys as unmanageable as himself. He avoids good boys because he despises them.

In a study of the delinquent's home and family, other immediate signs and tokens appear. Most of the good boys live with father and mother; delinquents come from broken homes — parents separated, divorced, or parted by imprisonment or death. The delinquent's family is more likely to be dependent on relief agencies and doles. His home is not as clean, has fewer sanitary facilities. There is crowding and no privacy. "The under-the-roof situation," the report states, "is significantly worse among the delinquents."

So we see that even when matching boys are drawn

from the same slums there are differences in family self-respect and integrity which count heavily. When one boy is good and another bad in the same family, however, the differences narrow down to individual temperament, and these symptoms need to be discovered at the earliest moment.

There is a certain cohesion in the families of good boys, a "we" feeling of strong emotional ties. Here we come close to the heart of the whole matter. The most significant factor in any boy's life is his relationship with his parents and especially with his father. When it is disturbed — as it is so often in sordid surroundings — the child is in danger. If the father shows hostility or contempt, something is dammed up in the son. He has a deep, passionate need for "emotional identification" with his father; he needs an ideal image, a paternal, older, wiser friend. That deep human hunger for emulation will be turned elsewhere — and perhaps the disappointed boy begins to worship the strongest, boldest, toughest ne'er-do-well in the district.

*The survey shows that the delinquent has long been at odds with his father, while most of the good boys on the block remain close to their fathers.*

Moreover, the incorrigible has suffered from erratic and conflicting discipline, which has encouraged him to defy all authority. He has taken many beatings for his sins and learned nothing from them except how to endure pain, which may be of grisly use to him in a criminal career.

But not all of the characteristics which Glueck investigators revealed would appear in the young child; many develop only with the years. Would enough storm signals show up in a six-year-old to make a forecast possible? This question was answered by setting up a series of "predictive tables" listing outstanding signs of delinquency which manifest themselves at an early age.

Was the boy markedly adventurous? Extroverted? Stubborn? Emotionally assertive? Did he exhibit the aggressive infliction of his will on others? Was he defiant? Suspicious? Destructive?

It was also important to know whether the discipline of the father was lax, over-strict, erratic — or firm and kindly. In cases where discipline by the father was lax, 59.8 percent were in the delinquent group; of those who fatherly discipline was firm and kindly, only 9.3 percent were delinquent. The same questions must be asked about the mother. Was the family held together by ties of sympathy and warmth of feeling?

These are major factors from which a character diagnosis can be made. No child could be expected to show all the symptoms. Any child might have several of them and still not be a potential delinquent. But it is beyond argument a danger signal when most of such factors appear in a six-year-old.

Social scientists work in the realm of probabilities, and there are reliable laws in probabilities. By applying them to young children, it is asserted that from 65 to 70 percent of the delinquents can be isolated at six years of age, when there is still a chance to help them. — *By Fulton Oursler.*