PROJECT
FOR FUNDAMENTAL CRIMINOLOGIC RESEARCH
IN PUERTO RICO

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Beginning with a discussion of major American approaches to research into the etiology of delinquency, the author criticizes certain unilateral theories. He describes the main features of Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency, a major work by his wife and himself, and summarizes its chief findings. These demonstrate the great variety of etiologic patterns and the childhood roots of typical delinquency. The author calls for a Comparative Criminology, pointing out that only through replication of a basic research in regions and cultures differing from those in which the original investigation was made can there be hope of turning Criminology into something approaching a true science. He then discusses the Glueck Social Prediction Table and its validations. He concludes with hints regarding the prevention of delinquency.

At the outset I wish to express the deep appreciation of Mrs. Glueck and myself to the Chancellor of the University of Puerto Rico, Mr. Jaime Bentez, for his most gracious and cordial invitation to visit this beautiful island and dynamic Commonwealth. We had, of course, heard of the warm climate of Puerto Rico but we had no idea of the great extent to which this warmth has been transformed into the warmth in the hearts of its citizens. We are most grateful for your cordial reception.

Our mission to Puerto Rico is to discuss a plan for what we conceive to be very important and highly promising research to be conducted under the auspices of your University and of representatives of the Law School of Harvard University. A few years ago, we had the pleasure of hearing an address by your honorable Governor, Luis Munoz-Marin, at an important commemorative meeting of the New York City Youth Board; and we were greatly impressed by his statesmanship and forward-looking ideas respecting delinquency and crime. We hope that, with the blessings of your Government and your progressive University, it may be

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possible for us, as representatives of Har-
vard, to collaborate with scholars of the Uni-
versity of Puerto Rico in carrying on truly
meaningful research in delinquency. We
think it is fortunate that the staff of the
newly created Program of Research and
Training in Criminology are highly qualified
for their job.

The project of the Program of Research
and Training in Criminology which interests
us particularly is a plan to replicate our basic
research, reported on in a book called Un-
raveling Juvenile Delinquency (Glueck and
Glueck, 1950). This work has twice been
translated into Japanese and is about to
appear in Spanish. A briefer version, called
Delinquents in the Making (1952), has been
translated into French, German, Italian,
Japanese, and Urdu, the official language of
Pakistan.

If the technique of Unraveling Juvenile
Delinquency can be applied in San Juan, a
major forward step will have been taken
toward converting Criminology into a science;
for one of the basic characteristics of a true
science is repeatability. Another basic ear-
mark of science is predictability. Both of
these attributes are being sought in the re-
search which we hope will be established
within the Program in Criminology in Puerto
Rico.

APPROACHES TO RESEARCH IN CRIMINOLOGY

Now, to speak generally, there are two
approaches to criminologic research in the
United States: the resort, exclusively, to
some single discipline, such as Sociology or
Psychiatry; or the resort to a multifaceted
investigation. In all our researches, we have
definitely preferred the latter approach; for
it is no more likely that delinquent or crimi-
nal behavior is exclusively explainable by
any single theory — whether it be sociologic
or biologic — than that normal, conventional
nondelinquent behavior, is. Yet certain
American criminologists insist that only the
sociologic approach should be used.

To develop further the typical points of
view toward delinquency research, I should
say that some researchers urge that it is
absolutely indispensable for the investigator
of etiology to set off on his precarious jour-
ney with some unilateral, all-embracing
theory as his chart and compass. Otherwise,
they insist, the result can only be “barren
empiricism.” Now there can, of course, be
no quarrel with the suggestion that so far
as possible researchers into the causes of
delinquency should be guided by a theory;
this is the familiar practice in the more
exact pure sciences. However, a theory spun
out of whole cloth, or one based on narrow,
one-sided observations of limited factors, or
one deriving from parochial loyalty to any
single discipline can, in the investigation of
the roots of human behavior, misdirect rather
than guide the quest for relevant influences.
Etiologic research, even though not making
an initial bow to some a priori theory, such
as the well-known “differential association”
theory stubbornly cling to by some sociolo-
gists, is certainly not useless and can, in
fact, be less misleading than adherence to
some cloudy, abstract general theory which
is presumed to “generate hypotheses” to be
tested. The truth is that comprehensive
etiologic research into facts is not an un-
anchored ship tossing about on stormy seas.
That scientific genius, the biologist Thomas
Huxley, has apropos given this sound advice:
“Sit down before fact as a little child,” he
said; “be prepared to give up every pre-
conceived notion, follow humbly wherever
and to whatever abysses nature leads, or you
shall learn nothing.” And the eminent Rus-
sian physiologist-psychologist, Ivan Pavlov,
just before his death, made this observation:
“Perfect as is the wing of a bird, it never
could raise the bird up without resting on
air. Facts are the air of a scientist. . . .
Without them your ‘theories’ are vain
efforts.” And the distinguished physiologist,
Claude Bernard, laid down this safe rule to
follow: “When you meet with a fact opposed
to a prevailing theory, you should adhere to
the fact and abandon the theory, even when
the latter is supported by great authorities
and generally adopted.”

All one has to do is to compare the find-
ings of a solid multifaceted investigation into
etiology with the findings derived from a
generalized theory, to establish beyond doubt
that, certainly up to now, the former yields
more significant data for understanding,