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DEVELOPMENT OF A MODEL FOR THE PREDICTION OF
RECIDIVISM OF FEMALE JUVENILE DELINQUENTS

by

Earl D. Dredge

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College in the University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Educational Psychology and Measurements

Under the Supervision of Professor Earl D. Wilson

Lincoln, Nebraska

December, 1973

TITLE

Development of a Model for the Prediction of Recidivism
of Female Juvenile Delinquents

BY

Earl D. Dredge

APPROVED

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In Memoriam

I would like to dedicate this study to the memory of my mother who had provided tremendous encouragement to me in the course of this study and who had wanted to see me finish the study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the many people who have made this study possible.

The students and the staff at the Youth Development Center at Geneva, Nebraska cooperated fully in providing their time and the necessary background information needed for the study.

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E. D. D.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Juvenile delinquency has been a serious problem for many decades in the United States. Bennett (1960) indicated that delinquency has been slowly recognized as a social problem, the causes of which lie in the forces that tend to disrupt society as well as in the failure of the normal socialization and education processes in the individual. A large number of studies have been conducted concerning the area of delinquency amongst boys, but, in comparison, few studies have been done relating exclusively to the area of delinquency amongst girls. In order to better understand those girls who run into conflict with the law, much more research is needed, specifically in the area of female juvenile delinquency.

Youth development centers are maintained as correctional sites for those delinquents who are unable to make the necessary adjustment in society. These centers exist so that positive behavior changes will take place in the youths sent there, however, for many of these delinquents this rehabilitative change does not occur.

There are many different circumstances that surround the individuals who are committed to the youth development centers. Many people who are interested in all of the various aspects of juvenile delinquency have examined and will continue to examine the differences among these individuals and their circumstances in hope of effecting the necessary behavior changes to enable these young people to adjust to society. Many

of the young people committed to these institutions are able to make a meaningful adjustment, but there are an increasing number who continue on in a criminal pattern and are sent back to the institution. This specific problem of repeating offenders or recidivists was the basis for the present research.

Perhaps the best way to improve juveniles' success on parole would be to improve and refine parole-prediction methods. If we could make certain that those released on parole were the very releases who would not return to crime, we would, of course, eliminate failure on parole (Arnold, 1970, p. 141).

THE PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to develop, test, and verify--by the use of an independent sample--a prediction model for determining which girls committed to a youth development center would most probably be recidivists.

There have been relatively few studies reported concerning the factors of recidivism, and most of those reported deal with male juvenile delinquents. At the present time, there are relatively few ways to determine those delinquents who are potential recidivists, especially in the area of female delinquency. There appears to be a need for some procedure that will ascertain those delinquents who are potential recidivists. If such factors are present, it is the author's premise that they can be detected through the use of a structured interview.

OBJECTIVES

The major research objective focuses on the structured interview and whether or not it can be used to determine if there are any differences in the interview between girls who are recidivists and those who are

nonrecidivists, thus setting up the possibility of the prediction model. A minor objective will be to examine 34 demographic factors to determine if there are any differences between the recidivist group and the non-recidivist group that can be used for predictive purposes.

RATIONALE

Much research that has gone on before in the area of juvenile delinquency has emphasized the statistics of crime and delinquency. A more complete explanation of crime must necessarily involve its etiology and the expression of individual criminal conduct. More recent theory from the field of social psychology emphasizes the impact of culture and patterns of social interaction upon the behavior of individuals.

Arrests of juveniles are increasing twice as fast as is the population of juveniles. This increase is causing deep concern for large portions of our society--especially for those who are responsible for handling delinquents and for parents and youths who are involved with delinquencies.

The failure rate of juveniles on parole is so much higher than the failure rate of adults on parole that special study of the parole experience of juveniles is highly desirable (Arnold, 1970, p. 6).

The social-psychological approach to looking at delinquent behavior seems superior to the approaches used by sociologists and psychologists exclusively within their own disciplines. Sociologists tend to look at delinquents as existing in their own social system, which is known as the delinquent subculture. Psychologists, on the other hand, tend to concentrate on the intrapsychic processes of the individual. The social-psychological formulation puts emphasis on both the intrapersonal and interpersonal approaches. Peer interpersonal relations play a major

part in the individual's make-up because they influence the development of the delinquents' attitudes and philosophy of life, their aspirations for the future, the kinds of activities in which they will excel, and the form and content of relationships they will make with adults.

Arnold (1970) brought together different theories to present a comprehensive explanation of success or failure on parole. Half of the individual juveniles on parole may be seen as experiencing the process which has been identified as drift out of delinquency. This drift can also be described as maturation which involves the process of public evaluation of delinquency. Many juvenile parolees, however, are prevented from engaging in this drift process by one or more of the following variables:

- (1) failure, just by chance, to engage in interaction in which delinquency is defined as childish; (2) experiencing such great threats to status in peer groups that adolescent anxieties about membership are not reduced sufficiently to permit public evaluation of delinquency; (3) resumption of interaction with peers who have had enough experience in crime that they are too committed to delinquency to evaluate it as childish; (4) development by the parolees themselves in delinquent 'career lines' for so long that they cannot evaluate delinquency as childish; and (5) past experience of such ineffective teaching about noncriminality that alternatives to delinquent behavior are not clearly perceived (Arnold, p. 131).

Any one or any combination of these five conditions permits the continued perception that peers favor delinquent solutions to problems.

Recent studies indicate that repeat offenders constitute the hard core of the crime problem. Glover (1955) has stated that the proper examination of recidivist cases is only in its infancy. He felt that the systematic work that has been done on unselected groups indicated that a very considerable number of offenders suffered either from pathological

stigma or have acquired those stigma through penological mishandling. He stated that until we become able to investigate the attitudes of the repeat offenders, it is really absurd to draw hard and fast conclusions on the subject.

Only a limited amount of research has been done in the area of female juvenile delinquency. Felice and Offord (1971) declared that there were numerous papers which covered the problem of juvenile delinquency in general, but most focused upon male delinquency only. This is understandable because four to five times as many boys have appeared before juvenile courts as girls, and for a long time the problems of both genders were interpreted as being the same. They further indicated that it has been only within the past two decades that female delinquency has emerged as a complex problem in its own right, differing from male delinquency on several factors; etiology, types of crime committed, age at onset of criminal behavior, and rehabilitation. For this complex problem, few studies in the literature have been well enough designed to yield useful reproducible data. They reported only two studies that dealt specifically with female recidivism. They suggested that much more work needs to be done in the field of female delinquency if we are to obtain information which will help in the treatment of delinquent girls.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Juvenile delinquency is a legal and sociological concept rather than a psychological term. Rubin (1970) stated, "The chief purpose of the juvenile court is to take child offenders out of the criminal court and protect them from criminal procedure and its effects (p. 4)." It is therefore found, in the juvenile court acts, that every definition of

delinquency includes violations of laws and ordinances by children. The definition of delinquency does not, however, stop there, but starts there. The list of other acts or conditions which may bring a child within the jurisdiction of the juvenile courts is painfully long. State laws average eight or nine items of these acts in addition to normal violations of laws. No juvenile court law confines its definition of delinquency to just violations of laws and ordinances.

Youth Development Center (YDC) is located at Geneva, Nebraska and supported by the State of Nebraska. This institution receives female juvenile offenders under the age of 18 who have been adjudicated as delinquent by the juvenile court. The state charges the YDC with responsibility for the retention, education, discipline, and reformation of the girls. A short description of the YDC is provided in Appendix A.

Nonrecidivist refers to those girls who have been released from the YDC and remained outside the YDC for one year without having been recommitted. It is quite possible that some nonrecidivists may return at a later date; however, this factor is not a part of the present study.

Recidivist, in this study, refers to those girls who leave the YDC and are recommitted within a period of one year by a juvenile court.

ORGANIZATION OF REMAINING CHAPTERS

In Chapter II, the pertinent literature is reviewed. This review examines relevant research and theoretical constructs of recidivism and parole-prediction devices.

In Chapter III, the procedures of the study are indicated and descriptions of the nature of the sample are given, indicating the population from which it came and the nature of the devices used for

measurement purposes in the study. Other items included are a restatement of the research objectives, an explanation of the research design, and a discussion of the analysis of the data.

In Chapter IV, the findings are presented which come from the data that have been gathered and analyzed.

In the last chapter, Chapter V, the study is summarized, the results of the study discussed, conclusions drawn, and the implications of the results are discussed.

PREVIEW

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

There are two main areas of research that have particular relevance for this study. They are: (1) research relating to delinquency and recidivism, especially that research pertaining to female juvenile delinquents, and (2) research methodology relating to the use of prediction devices, especially the research concerning the use of the interview technique. The review will be limited to research with direct relevance to this study since a comprehensive review of the research on juvenile delinquency is beyond the scope of this study.

Delinquency and Recidivism

There will be two main subdivisions in this section. The first part will relate the special problems and complications that female delinquents have as opposed to their male counterparts. The second part will be devoted to the research on recidivism and includes studies with male delinquents due to the extreme lack of research on recidivism among girls.

Research Related to Female Delinquency

Vedder and Somerville (1970) examined records from the Chicago Police Department and found that in 1951, a total of 11,288 juveniles were handled by that division. Of this total, 2165 were girls, or a ratio of 23.7 girls per 100 boys. During 1965, out of a total of 38,531 juveniles handled, 8866 were girls or a ratio of 29.9 per 100 boys. In 1966, the ratio had gone up to 32.7 girls per 100 boys.

Shulman (1961) indicated that evidence from many sources led to the generalization that far fewer girls than boys were dealt with as official delinquents. In the United States in 1958, boys arraigned outnumbered girls by about 4.5 to 1, while earlier statistics indicated the ratio had been 7 to 1. He concluded that since the rate difference for delinquency between boys and girls had dropped, the differential delinquency patterns were best explained by cultural and social differences, as seen in terms of differential role functions of boys and girls in our culture. Shulman stated, "The description of delinquency among girls, separate from a discussion of delinquency in general, is called for because of the many striking differences in delinquency patterns, rates and etiological processes between boys and girls (p. 468)."

Konopka (1964) and Richards (1966) indicated that cultural expectations have been especially confusing for girls. While the emancipation of women has proceeded rapidly, the traditional double standard for men's and women's behavior and position in society has continued to exist. For some girls, the conflict of values led to inner turmoil, withdrawal into mental illness, or delinquency. The complex problems of delinquent adolescent girls often has been misunderstood. Delinquent girls have felt exceedingly lonely and yearned for friends, but they have had little camaraderie. Delinquent girls have shown little confidence in adults and have had major resentments against them. The delinquent girl's low self-esteem has been her most outstanding characteristic. Donohue (1971) also indicated that there were basic differences in the case histories of girl delinquents with regard to their identities as compared to boys.

Vedder and Somerville (1970) listed five offenses that led to approximately 75 to 85 percent of commitment for delinquent girls. The five listed in order were (1) running away, (2) incorrigibility, (3) sexual offenses, (4) probation violation, and (5) truancy. The underlying vein of many of the offenses was sexual misconduct by the girl delinquent.

In England, large differences between the manifestations of delinquency in adolescent boys and girls were found by Cowie, Cowie, and Slater (1968). They stated that boys and girls differed in their liability to delinquency, the age at which they became delinquent, the type of delinquencies, and the way the delinquent individual differs from nondelinquent peers or those who do not get caught. According to their study, the two sexes should not be considered together, but "in isolation" from one another.

Konopka (1966) identified a few key concepts helpful in understanding and treating the delinquent girl. These concepts were the unique, dramatic, biological onset of puberty in the girl; the complex identification problem; the changing cultural position of women; and the faceless adult authority and the resulting loneliness.

She further stated that most of the girls who become delinquent have problems related to sex. Those girls who become delinquent have shown a great need for dependence and have shown little capacity to establish friendships. They are lonely girls who have had a lack of success and a lack of opportunity. Many times they do not have an adequate understanding of their own physiological functions. Many factors contribute to make the problem girl a very lonely human being with each girl having her own individuality.

Mueller (1966) indicated many factors contributing to deviancy among teen-age groups in school, and their effects are felt to a different degree and in different ways by the male and female segments of the school population. He stated:

Inadequate prior education, lack of occupational skills, language handicap, early school leaving, work opportunities, suitability of school subjects, broken families, minority status, substandard housing --all these and other circumstances have a different impact, a different meaning, for girls than for boys. In her dilemmas, the girl does not have the means of self-satisfaction, illegitimate but useful, in the gang warfare that appeals to boys and offers them ego outlets (p. 344).

If she is unpopular with boys, withdrawal is the girl's usual response. The delinquent's image or self-concept is highly negativistic in regard to self and future goals, being an exaggeration of many less consciously defined problems of the adjusted girl.

Dressler (1969) stated that female prisoners have violated parole less often than male prisoners, although the differences were not marked in some studies. He said, "Recidivism breeds recidivism. The offender with a long record of arrests and convictions is a less favorable risk than the first offender (p. 153)."

The disproportionate number of Negro girls committed to state training schools in our modern society has been noted by several researchers (Vedder and Somerville, 1970; Shulman, 1961; Dressler, 1969). They indicated that the conflicts and frustrations of the normal adolescent are compounded as applied to the delinquent girl, and even more so for the delinquent Negro girl. It was found that Negro girls were arraigned approximately four times as often as white girls, although in Southern communities public indifference over the behavior of Negro

children often led white police to ignore open misconduct of Negro delinquent girls, even soliciting in public.

Vedder and Somerville found that an increasing number of girls are becoming engaged in delinquent behavior damaging to others. They felt that female delinquency may be becoming more like male delinquency. They indicated that as the social roles of boys and girls become more alike due to the increasing emancipation of women and the proliferation of equal rights movements, their delinquent activities will become less distinguishable from one another. Considering the direction of modern society, they concluded that more serious female delinquency and crime could be expected in the future.

Engel (1970) investigated the program at the Good Shepherd Home in St. Paul, Minnesota. In 1969, there were 48 Good Shepherd Homes in the United States, housing 3600 of the 11,000 girls in reform schools. Engel reported that letters from the files of the St. Paul Home indicated that 80 to 90 percent of the girls have gone on to lead constructive lives after leaving the Home. This is substantially better than most of the other reform schools in the country. The Sisters at the Home emphasized the idea of accepting, respecting, and listening.

Barden (1970) used the M-B History Record to gather personal data on three groups of individuals in correctional institutions. There were 102 boys and 52 girls in the juvenile category and 275 male felons that served as an older age comparison group. The juvenile girls had significantly higher mean scores on the Family Disunity, Conflict with Parents, Health Awareness, and Social Misfit clusters than did the juvenile boys. The boys were more preoccupied with their physical

health than were the men. But the men more approximated the delinquent girls than did the boys in the areas of greater family disunity, more conflict with parents and being social misfits.

Lumpkin (1972) investigated the factors underlying the delinquent behavior of 252 girls committed to the Wisconsin Industrial School and found that parental socio-economic status was a very significant factor. Ninety-five percent of the girls came from manual workers' homes, and according to the investigator's estimate, in over 70 percent of the 220 cases, socio-economic conditions were distinctly unfavorable. The family group tended to be considerably larger than families in general. About two-thirds of the homes were broken and in 42.2 percent of these there was a step-parent or foster parent. Social defective tendencies appeared 443 times in 189 families including delinquency, alcoholism, and sexual acting-out. The group also averaged considerably below normal in intelligence, the modal IQ falling in the 66-75 category.

Cowie, et al (1968), conducted a study on 322 girls incarcerated at a girls' institution in England. The girls tended to be of slightly less than average intelligence, but were much more retarded educationally than could be accounted for on the basis of intelligence. Many girls showed neurotic symptoms which appeared to be the result of stresses coming from an unfavorable environment. Families tended to be quite large; the home was often broken, and in only 44 percent of the cases the child was living with both her natural parents; delinquency was common among the girls' siblings, and tended to occur in clusters, suggesting the significance of psychological contagion. At a later time, 316 of the 322 girls were successfully followed up. Two-thirds of these girls had no subsequent delinquency records, but 32 percent did continue on in a delinquent pattern.

Wolman (1970) attempted to describe empirically the interrelationships between early reflections or fantasies of childhood and the perception of significant others during adolescence. His investigation was based on a sample of 150 boys from the Wisconsin School for Boys and 150 girls from the Wisconsin School for Girls. It was hypothesized that early memories of a succorant need-fulfilling nature coupled with early memories of self-abasement and denial would impair the objective perception of significant others and that early memories of independent activity and confrontation would enhance objective, mature perception. Both of these hypotheses were supported, and there were differences between the girls and boys. The girls were found to have an essentially negative view of men in general whom they regarded with anger, suspicion, and hostility. They tended to see themselves as having been mistreated by men, and these conscious feelings remained. The early memories the girls had of their mothers was overidealized and need-fulfilling. Their glowing descriptions of their mothers was often in stark contrast to descriptions of their fathers.

Davenport (1969) investigated the feasibility of using the School Interest Inventory to aid in the identification of junior and senior high school girls who were more likely to become delinquent than other girls in the general population. Of the 800 girls involved in the study, 400 were delinquent and 400 were nondelinquent. He had hoped to assemble the significant items into a delinquent girl scale, however, his results were inconclusive.

Studies on Recidivism

Studies on Female Recidivism. The research study most relevant to the present study on recidivism among female juvenile delinquents was conducted by Offord, Aponto, Frei, and Cross (1968). The primary aim of the study was to discover what characteristics distinguished a female delinquent who became a recidivist before the age of 18 from one who did not. There were approximately 100 recidivists, both Negro and white, and their 100 nonrecidivist controls. Significant differences were found at the .01 level on the factors of early contact with the juvenile court and early age of admission to the institution for both the Negro and white recidivists. It was also indicated that the Negro recidivists came from unsettled and inadequate home situations and the white recidivists came from disturbed family situations. It was inferred that the Negro recidivist clung to the institution during her initial stay while the white recidivist did not. Based on this, they concluded that there were different etiologies of recidivism for the Negro and the white girls.

Another relevant study was conducted by Wattenberg and Saunders (1955) in Detroit in 1952 on a total of 1082 girls, of whom 655 were one-time offenders and 427 were repeaters. A history sheet was prepared on each girl with facts or ratings on sixty items relating to home conditions, school, neighborhood situations, and her activities. The repeaters were more in conflict with their homes than the nonrepeaters, especially with their mothers. School also appeared to be an area of tension for the repeaters; more of them had quit school. Aside from poor relations with school classmates, the repeaters seemed to enjoy good peer-group relationships more than the nonrepeaters. None of the direct