

A STUDY OF CERTAIN PERSONALITY TRAITS OF DELINQUENTS

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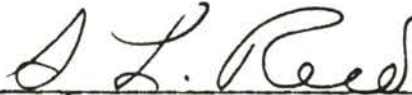
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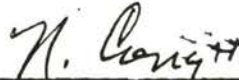
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I. Purpose

The principal purpose of this study is to determine whether there is any significant relationship between juvenile delinquency and certain personality traits. The traits used are introversion - extroversion, ascendance - submission, and emotionality. These personality traits were selected largely because they are the traits of the only adequate test for this group of delinquents. A general consideration of these traits leads me to believe that this test should have some significant bearing on delinquency.

There is also a secondary reason: to determine whether there is a significant connection between the chief "complaint" that was responsible for their admission to the training school and the personality traits as indicated above.

II. Previous Studies

A very few studies have been made to determine the relationship between personality traits and delinquency. The reason for this is obvious, personality inventories have only been developed recently, and have not established the reputation that mental tests have. The measure of personality is relatively new. The first personality inventory was constructed in the first World War, about the same time as the construction of the Army Intelligence Test. Because of the fact that such a test is not as valid as a mental test, its use was confined largely to the measurements of extreme deviates, particularly of the neurotic type.

Later some authors constructed tests that measure various personality traits. Bernreuter Personality Inventory was one of the first in this field. Pintner constructed a test along similar lines and standardized it for the adolescent age level. These inventories were none too reliable for individual cases but they did help to determine trends in groups of individuals.

A survey of the literature of the personality of delinquents shows that very little has been done to establish significant relationships between such traits as Introversion--Extroversion, Ascendance--Submission, and Emotionality in their relationships to delinquency.

There is a great deal of data on the relationship of intelligence and delinquency. This relationship was first

investigated and many of the earlier writers found it very significant. Terman, Goddard, and others seemed to think that the main cause of delinquency was defective intellect. When delinquents and non-delinquents of the same social and economical status were compared, however, much of this difference disappeared. More recently an attempt was made to determine what relation, if any, there is between the level of intelligence of delinquents and the type of crime committed.

Burkey, for example, studied 198 cases under the age of 21, about half of the boys were normal in intelligence, half sub-normal. Those of normal intelligence began their delinquencies relatively more frequently by stealing than those who were sub-normal, whereas the reverse obtained for sex delinquencies. "Cruelty was equally characteristic of the two intelligence groups."

Stating this relationship in a different way, another student of delinquency used the Pintner-Patterson Scale of Intelligence on 42 normal and 48 delinquent children. This is a performance test and the verbal factor is largely eliminated, hence the educational factor is minimized, a factor that always has a strong negative correlation with delinquency. This writer concludes that "the mean deviation for normal children is 1.02 while the mean deviation for delinquent children is 1.68". "This difference", the writer concludes, "seems to be a criterion

1. R. E. Burkey, J. Juv. Res. 16, 144.

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for delinquency".² This means then that delinquents as a group scatter considerably more than the normal in a frequency distribution.

J. E. Moore tried to equate the 'selection' factor by using as the control group 'institutionalized dependent boys of the same age range'. He gave the Otis S-A test to 152 institutionalized delinquent boys between 14-18, and to 157 institutionalized dependent boys of the same age range. "Both groups gave scores below the norms for the test, that is, below the normal group of boys, but the median Otis IQ of the delinquent boys was significantly lower than the median of the dependent boys."³

C. A. Charles, using the Kuhlmann-Anderson intelligence test, found that public school boys in St. Louis between the ages of 12 and 16 are "superior to the boys in the same age in reform schools".⁴ This author holds that "the criminality of a person should be determined from the behavioristic point of view; that the personality of criminals is not different from that of other members of society; and that forces largely beyond the control of the individual play the leading role in the formation of the criminal personality".⁴

Another type of study of delinquents that has recently been brought to our attention in psychological research literature is

2. Pintner-Paterson scale of intelligence. Bull. Soc. Psychol. Med. Sibir., 1937, 4, 30-33.

3. J. E. Moore, J. Educ. Psychol., 1937, 28, 355-366.

4. C. A. Charles, J. Appl. Psychol., 1936, 20, 499-510.

that of attitude-interest inventories. This is, however, so recent a venture that only few studies have so far appeared. M. E. Ordoroff and D. B. Harris made a study of 412 delinquent boys from the Minnesota State Training School and a control group of non-delinquents. They used the Pressey's Interest-Attitude Tests. Scores were compared with those made by boys of equivalent CA in a high school situated in a delinquency area, and with those made of unselected boys. "The study clearly indicates that delinquent boys are more like non-delinquents who come from similar social background than delinquents are like unselected boys in general."⁵ The correlation test score with mental ability is sufficient to account for some of the delinquent retardation. The authors, however, question the usefulness of the test with young or dull subjects "because of the possibility of the subjects checking verbal stimuli which they do not comprehend".⁵

More literature may be found on emotionality and delinquency than any other personality trait. The reason for this is obvious. Most of these boys are maladjusted socially and such maladjustment produces emotional conflicts of various kinds. There are certain personal and family relationships in which the delinquent is ordinarily deficient. The delinquent shows little of the true loyalty that is evinced by so many people in general. The loyalty to parents is lacking, and lack of confidence is common

5. M. E. Ordoroff and D. B. Harris, J. Educ. Psychol., 1942, 3, 13-24.

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mong juvenile delinquents. In the following studies is confirmed what most of us suspect, namely, loyalty to the peer group and guidance by the group rather than loyalty to parents and guidance by parents.

"The hypothesis is advanced that 'the lack of close emotional tie between most delinquent children and their parents results in but superficial assimilation of the moral values and ideals of the parents by the children', which is possibly a basic factor in delinquency. Groups of 25 delinquent boys and 25 non-delinquent boys, and socio-economic status, were verbally given three stories to complete. In a situation calling for choice between parents and a friend, both in need of help, the delinquent boys chose the friend significantly more frequently. There was no significant difference between the groups in a play situation calling for a choice between the advice of parents and the advice of friends. In a situation where there was a chance to follow or reject the advice of a parent against stealing, the delinquent group significantly more often rejected the advice. Relatively weak attachment to parents as evidenced by choice of a friend over parents in a hypothetical emergency is found to be highly correlated with a tendency to neglect parental advice, which combination is found significantly more often in the group of delinquents."⁶

Courthial⁷ made a careful study of delinquent girls with

6. H. Tucker, *J. Psychol.*, 1943, 15, 31-40.

7. Stagner, *Psychology of Personality*, 1937, p. 160.

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ference to emotional sensitivity. He found a considerable difference between the average delinquent and the non-delinquent group, so much so that there is less than one chance in 10,000 that a similar study would find the non-delinquent group more emotional. Other studies report similar studies for delinquent boys. Mathews⁸ found a definite tendency for scores on the questionnaire to decrease as normal boys grew older, but several studies by Slawson indicate that the delinquent boy will continue to make a very high score even up to the age of 16 or 18. Cady,⁸ using similar questionnaire, found that boys in a reform school who had been rated 'incorrigible' made somewhat higher scores than the unselected population of the school. This, then, shows that there is lack of agreement among students of delinquency on emotional sensitivity which may be due to the 'selection' factor, different types of measuring instruments, or to different methods of analysis.

No studies have appeared in recent years indicating possible relationships between delinquency and introversion-extraversion, or between delinquency and ascendancy and submission. Just off hand, it would seem that the shy, retiring, seclusive, sensitive child might commit some characteristic acts of delinquency while the extravert might commit others. Furthermore, most delinquents would be somewhat aggressive and rebellious and this could be measured on an ascendancy-submission scale, but no studies have appeared recently to indicate such a connection.

8. Stagner, *Psychology of Personality*, 1937, p. 160.

III. Description of Present Study

I first became interested in juvenile delinquents at Hutchinson State Reformatory, at Hutchinson, Kansas. I naturally became familiar with a number of cases that held outstanding interest for psychological study. One of these cases I remember as of a negro, young, handsome and talented. He could play the piano beautifully but he was said to be treacherous. At the time I was more interested in a permanent cure for such cases than in trying to find the fundamental causes for crime and delinquency. At this, however, I found I was making the wrong approach to the problem. So when Dr. Rigg suggested that I take a personality test of 100 boys at Pauls Valley State Training School, the idea intrigued me.

It was in the winter of 1939 that I presented the Personality test to 100 inmates of this State Training School for delinquent teen age boys. I have never felt any resentment toward young boys of this type because they have done something unwise in the eyes of the law. It is nearly always caused by some sort of wrong start in life or some type of personal neglect that occasioned such a misstep. So when this study is presented to the public it will not be by name but by number that the scores will be made. This, I am sure, will spare the feelings of my young friends whom I hope in due time will browse in university libraries.

To make a personality study of juvenile delinquents, this test was presented to one hundred male inmates of the State Training School at Pauls Valley. The three aspects

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of personality that this inventory contained were: ascendance-submission; extraversion-introversion, and emotionality. This inventory was chosen because it was constructed for the age range of the delinquent boys that I proposed to study. The test was constructed by Pintner and others and is known as Pintner's Aspects of Personality test. The latest edition published in 1938 was used. The first section of the test contains thirty-five items for measuring ascendance-submission; the second section likewise contains thirty-five items on extraversion-introversion; and the third section contains forty-four items on emotionality. Nine of the forty-four items are not scored, however, since they are non-significant items for emotionality. This then leaves a total of thirty-five on emotionality. These were presented to the boys in the form of a game called same-different in order to eliminate as much as possible the idea they are taking a test. Two squares are prepared in the following manner

S	D
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Take for example one item in the test: I like my school. If the child likes his school, he puts a cross in the square containing S. If he does not like his school, he puts a cross in D.

TABULATION OF SCORES

The procedure for giving the test is prescribed by a Manual and this was strictly adhered to. The scores obtained in terms of those in agreement with the key were determined for each person and then converted by tables in the Manual of Directions into percentile rank for each of the three personality traits. These are listed below. Those under section one are ascendance-submission ranks; those under section two are extraversion-introversion

anks, while the third section denotes emotionality percentile
 anks. The names of the boys, of course, are not given but are
 indicated by number since we are interested not in any given
 individual but rather in the group as a whole.

No.	Sec. I	Sec. II	Sec. III	No.	Sec. I	Sec. II	Sec. III
1	42	97	66	2	77	93	27
3	95	97	09	4	71	83	42
5	98	83	18	6	37	79	75
7	63	99	36	8	100	83	03
9	96	55	36	10	77	79	27
L	95	83	06	12	77	97	05
3	98	79	02	14	88	69	18
5	88	79	08	16	88	79	09
7	88	79	03	18	88	42	66
9	77	79	06	20	77	69	18
L	27	98	36	22	71	42	42
3	55	42	53	24	90	42	18
5	96	42	42	26	42	32	75
7	63	42	36	28	95	42	04
9	90	32	13	30	15	55	66
L	63	55	88	32	77	16	53
3	42	42	53	34	42	55	36
5	37	69	27	36	77	55	00
7	19	55	66	38	71	55	02
9	77	13	36	40	77	42	06
L	37	79	05	42	88	24	08
3	71	42	08	44	96	22	00
5	05	22	92	46	88	24	02
7	55	32	27	48	71	32	13
9	71	32	08	50	77	32	00
L	77	32	01	52	15	83	12
3	55	42	08	54	88	09	09
5	77	22	05	56	63	32	09
7	15	69	18	58	27	69	08
9	88	24	00	60	19	32	53
L	96	02	02	62	37	09	53
3	63	32	05	64	42	55	10
5	01	55	42	66	00	97	01
7	90	06	00	68	71	42	03
9	15	06	75	70	77	00	18
L	55	09	27	72	27	55	06
3	55	32	02	74	27	24	13
5	00	79	00	76	77	02	01
7	15	22	42	78	63	02	10
9	55	06	12	80	05	22	42
L	42	22	02	82	00	32	36
3	42	24	01	84	06	24	36

<u>o.</u>	<u>Sec. I</u>	<u>Sec. II</u>	<u>Sec. III</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Sec. I</u>	<u>Sec. II</u>	<u>Sec. III</u>
5	42	22	01	86	15	32	13
7	37	24	00	88	19	32	08
9	06	42	10	90	42	13	01
1	37	02	08	92	15	22	09
3	27	05	05	94	15	22	00
5	27	01	06	96	19	13	03
7	06	05	18	98	01	24	00
9	05	02	18	100	01	06	00

The average score for these boys in Number 1 Ascendance-submission is 20.41 which equals a percentile of 80. The average score for Number 2 Extraversion-introversion is 21.04 which equals 2 percentile. The average score for Number 3 Emotionality is 10.83 or a percentile of 8. For the average boy, who is not in such an institution, we found for each of these abilities to be 50.

The following will show the mean and the distribution for the entire group of 100 boys.

<u>Percentile score</u>	<u>Sec. I</u>	<u>Sec. II</u>	<u>Sec. III</u>
5 - 100	10	4	1
10 - 95	3	3	1
5 - 90	9		
10 - 85	0	5	
5 - 80	14	9	3
10 - 75	7		
5 - 70	1	5	4
10 - 65	5		
5 - 60	6	10	
10 - 55			
5 - 50			5
10 - 45		13	6
5 - 40	9		7
10 - 35	6	14	1
5 - 30	5	2	5
10 - 25	1	15	
5 - 20	12		10
10 - 15		3	8
5 - 10	6	10	22
10 - 5	6	7	27

For Section I, Median equals 59.16.
 For Section II, Median equals 44.63.
 For Section III, Median equals 10.63.

The following distribution is a group of 38 students who are brought to Pauls Valley on charges of some sort of theft.

Percentile score	Sec. I	Sec. II	Sec. III
5 - 100	4	2	1
0 - 95	0		0
5 - 90	4		0
0 - 85	0	2	0
5 - 80	7	5	1
0 - 75	3		0
5 - 70	0	1	0
0 - 65	1		0
5 - 60	3	2	0
0 - 55	0		2
5 - 50	0		0
0 - 45	3	2	3
5 - 40	2		0
0 - 35	0	8	0
5 - 30	2		2
0 - 25	0	6	0
5 - 20	5		2
0 - 15	0	2	4
5 - 10	2	3	11
0 - 5	2	5	12

For Section I, Median equals 60.
 For Section II, Median equals 31.87.
 For Section III, Median equals 8.18.

The following illustrates the number of run-aways that are in this group. Their medians are also given.

Section I	Section II	Section III
22	22	01
3	55	88
7	55	00

The median for Section I is 63, for Section II, 55, and for Section III, .01.

An analysis of the data indicates two sets of facts. The first and most important set is stated in medians and the second in distributions.

The median delinquent in this study falls in the 59 percentile rank in the dominance-submission trait of personality.

his indicates that he is slightly above the average non-delinquent according to the norms established by Pintner for an unselected group of this age range. Pintner points out in his manual that only a very low score or a very high score is significant for individual diagnosis. However, for group diagnosis percentile of 59 seems significant. It shows that on the whole the group is ascendant. Pintner believes that children whose score are in the 90th percentile should be watched closely to see that they do not develop into inconsiderate, domineering individuals, who like to bully and dominate others in their own individual gratification. Thirteen of the delinquents belong to the 90th percentile and above. This is, of course, a much larger number than would be found in the average population of the same age range. In most normal distributions, the frequencies follow a bell-shaped curve, but in the ascendance-submission distribution it is almost a rectilinear distribution. There are as many at the ends of the distribution as in the middle. In fact, we attempted to say that this is a bi-modal distribution, with fewer in the middle than towards the end. This might indicate that delinquents are divided into two groups, pronounced ascendant and pronounced submissive individuals.

In the introversion and extraversion traits, nothing very definite was found. The group ranks in the 44 percentile, a little lower than the average child of that age, and the distribution is almost normal except a tendency to pile up at the extreme end of the introvert scale. This is, of course, what

ne might suspect. Extreme introverts are likely maladjusted emotionally and a study of emotionality seems to confirm this.

The most significant finding of this study is the emotionality trait of the delinquents. The median percentile rank of the group was 10.63 whereas the median percentile rank of unselected groups is 50. This is clearly a significant difference. Since the number of cases and the standard deviation are not given in the standardization of the test, it is not possible to determine the critical ratio, but there is no question about this being statistically a significant difference. Another feature that is very significant is the piling up of scores toward the lower ranges of emotionality. In fact, almost half of the scores are below 10 percentile rank. Pintner interprets very low scores like these as indicative of "lack of emotional balance. Such ratings point to the psychoneurotic type of individual. Such a child is likely to be flighty, easily upset; he probably has anger outbursts or temper tantrums; he may have many fears and anxieties; minor excitements may cause psychic shocks out of all proportion to their stimuli".⁹

The writer tried to secure data on intelligence, scholastic achievement, home status, and "chief complaint" that brought them to the institution, but much of the data furnished was so incomplete that only an analysis of the chief complaint has been undertaken. Theft seems to be the chief complaint. Incurabili-

9. Pintner, Rudolph, Aspects of Personality, Manual of Directions, 1938.

and running-away are mentioned a number of times but these two complaints represent so small a number that the data is not statistically reliable. Delinquency is mentioned a number of times but the writer has not been able to get a clear meaning of this term other than the way in which it is generally used, that is, a term that includes all antisocial acts of juveniles punishable by law.

A study of the distribution of personality traits of delinquents accused of theft shows about the same trends as that of the group as a whole. Ascendance-submission averages are just about the same. The theft group seems to be lower in extraversion-introversion, and this seems reasonable when one considers the type of person that usually commits thefts. The median score on theft is still lower in emotionality than that of the group as a whole. No definite conclusions, however, can be drawn from the data.

IV. Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that the only trait that shows a significant relationship is that of emotionality. The difference between the median scores of the non-delinquent and the delinquent is so great that one is forced to accept this as a significant difference. The frequency distribution is highly skewed toward the extreme end of emotionality, which seems to indicate that about half the delinquents are emotionally unstable.

There is a slight tendency for the group to be ascendant rather than submissive, but the distribution is not of the normal bell-shaped type. It is rather bi-modal, indicating that the group is composed of extreme ascendant and extreme submissive individuals. There are very few in the middle of the distribution indicating few average individuals.

In the trait of introversion-extraversion, nothing significant was found. The average delinquent's scores corresponded to the average non-delinquent's score. To make this study more adequate, a group of 100 boys should be selected from the same economic and social status (or delinquency area) as a control group. The use of a normal group of boys is not a fair standard of comparison for boys in training institutions. Whether such a control group would eliminate the differences above listed is hard to say. It is quite likely that it might eliminate all but differences in emotionality.

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