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PREVIEW

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**Personality variables as predictors of response to residential
treatment for delinquent males**

Wachs, Carol, Psy.D.

Pace University, 1990

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PREVIEW

**PERSONALITY VARIABLES AS PREDICTORS OF RESPONSE
TO RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT FOR DELINQUENT MALES**

CAROL WACHS

**A Doctoral Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of
Psychology in the Department of Psychology at
Pace University**

**New York
1990**

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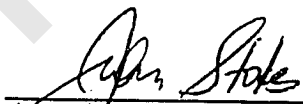
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PREVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the usefulness of the variables level of interpersonal maturity and personality style to predict response to treatment in a residential facility for adjudicated delinquent males. The study examined whether adolescent delinquent males would respond differently to an intervention model which employs a peer-normative culture as the core of its program.

Sixty adolescent adjudicated delinquent males ranging in age from 14 to 18 years were administered three questionnaires and the Metropolitan Achievement Test on admission to the program. These consisted of two personality inventories, the Jesness Inventory (Jesness 1969) and the Millon Adolescent Personality Inventory (Millon, Green, and Measher, 1977), and a measure of delinquent behavior, the Jesness Behavior Checklist (Jesness, 1970). Three of these instruments, the achievement tests, the Behavior Checklist, the Millon Personality Inventory were readministered in six months from the original date of testing.

T-tests were performed to determine whether there were any differences between subjects who completed six months of the program, and those who did not. Results of this analysis reveal that personality variables were unable to discriminate between these two groups. No other variables

were identified which were able to account for which subjects who sustained participation in the program.

Pearson product-moment correlations were conducted on staff ratings of the residents' behavior for the final four weeks of the six month period. Results of this analysis indicated that one variable, the Introversive Scale of the Millon Adolescent Personality Inventory, was able to predict positive staff ratings. No other variables were significant for this measure of treatment outcome.

Two instruments were employed to measure the subjects' perception of their delinquent behavior, the Behavior Checklist and the Millon Inventory. Regression analyses were performed to determine if the independent variables were able to predict change in delinquent behavior as measured by these instruments. A review of the regression analyses using the personality scales of the Millon and the Jesness as the predictive variables suggests that when subjects at I-Level III and IV are analyzed separately, the overall strength of the results increases markedly. I-Level alone did not prove to be a significant predictive variable for any of the outcome measures. It did enhance the strength personality style as a predictive variable. The Jesness was able to predict behavior change better for the higher level subjects.

The residential program appeared to be designed to

treat the more conformist-oriented I-Level III subjects better than the more mature subjects. Future research should focus on testing differential treatment outcome in a different type of treatment program, and on long term follow-up studies.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Juvenile delinquency is a continuing concern in a society plagued by youthful criminal offenders. Statistics addressing the issue of anti-social behavior in children and adolescents are astonishing in their magnitude and in demonstrating the severity of the problem. Follow-up studies of children who have behaved delinquently show that those youths as adults contribute disproportionately to the incidents of alcoholism, accidents, chronic unemployment, divorce, physical and psychiatric illness, the demand for welfare services and a host of other social problems (Patterson, DeBaryshe, and Ramsey, 1989).

While juvenile delinquents initially may appear to constitute a homogeneous group, exhibiting a propensity for antisocial behavior rather than, variously, depression, anxiety, withdrawal, or peer conformity, in recent years, there has been a shift toward subdividing this group. Theorists have attempted to subdivide delinquent youth in order to better understand this phenomenon and to plan more efficacious treatment. Researchers have developed instruments for subtyping delinquents, and differential

treatment has been suggested for different subtypes. But to date, little work has been done to determine whether certain subtypes of delinquent do, in fact, respond differently to any particular form of treatment. The focus of this study is on increasing understanding of factors related to response to treatment of juvenile delinquents. It has been estimated that in the United States, we spend more than one billion dollars a year to maintain our juvenile justice system. The yearly cost of school vandalism alone is estimated to be one-half billion dollars (Feldman, Caplinger and Wodarski, 1981). In 1988, juvenile crime (ages under 18 years) accounted for over 28% of the total number of arrests in the United States.

It has been estimated that over 68,000 violent crimes, including murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault, were committed by youths under the age of eighteen. Over 500,000 property crimes, which include the offenses of burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson were committed by this age group. Other crimes, such as drug abuse, embezzlement, fraud, prostitution, and weapons offenses, were committed in the hundreds of thousands.

From 1979 to 1988, the murder rate among juvenile offenders increased over 16%. Aggravated assaults increased over 15% and other assaults increased 32% during this same time period (Uniform Crime Reports 1988). The number of

juveniles incarcerated in public facilities increased 10% between 1983 and 1987. In 1987, over 53,000 juveniles were held in publicly run juvenile facilities and 80% of the admissions to these facilities were male. (Allen-Hagen, 1988).

In New York state alone, there were over 70,000 juvenile arrests of children 15 years and younger in 1988 for crimes ranging from disorderly conduct to murder (Uniform Crime Report, New York State, 1988). Over 350 males aged 15 and younger were arrested for arson, over 2,000 for car theft, over 9,000 for larceny theft. Over 3,000 males aged 15 and younger were arrested in 1988 in New York State for robbery, almost 2,000 for aggravated assault and 3,500 for breaking and entering. Over 200 males in this age group were arrested for forcible rape and over 50 were arrested for murder and murder-related crimes such as manslaughter.

Juveniles are documented as being involved in prostitution promotion, stolen property, criminal mischief, a host of drug-related offenses, weapons offenses, sex offenses, extortion, forgery, embezzlement, assaults, driving while intoxicated, alcohol-related crimes, as well as the more minor juvenile crimes (known as "status offenses") such as vandalism, truancy, public mischief, disorderly conduct and the like.

While these statistics are based on official records and police reports, usually juvenile crimes are recorded at a less severe standard than for adult crimes because, in juvenile court, criminal charges are often reduced under plea bargaining agreements. Furthermore, these statistics are probably a vast underestimation of the actual number of crimes committed by juveniles in New York State. Data on self-reported delinquency indicated that police records may account for as little as 2% of the actual juvenile law violations (Dunford and Eliot, 1982).

According to the New York State Division for Youth, over 2,000 youthful offenders were admitted to residential facilities operated by the State. The largest category among these admissions was for non-secure facilities; only 7% of these admissions were placed in secure facilities.

The monetary cost to the public as a result of increased staff at schools, psychiatric clinics, mental health and community centers to cope with these problems is staggering. While we may be able to estimate the cost to society in terms of the actual economic expenditures involved in incarcerating or attempts to rehabilitate these children, it is not possible to estimate the costs to the children themselves, to their families and to society.

Despite over a century of involvement by sociologists, psychologists and policy makers, very little has been

achieved in the way of finding solutions to the problem of juvenile crime and youthful offenders. Attempts to understand this social phenomenon have been largely unsuccessful and attempts to prevent juvenile crime or even to treat and rehabilitate youthful offenders have been met with frustration and dubious results. Davidson, Redner, Blekely, Emshoff, and Mitchell (1987, p.68) state that "Juvenile delinquency is a social problem whose history of theoretical and therapeutic solutions represents a legacy of frustration." Edelman, et al (1984, p.270) state that "evidence accumulated over many years and literally several hundred investigations appears to converge on the broad conclusion that interventions implemented toward the goal of altering the anti-social behavior of juvenile delinquents have in the vast majority of instances proven ineffective."

One of the problems in adequately researching the topic of juvenile delinquency, in order to enhance our understanding of the problem and plan for treatment or prevention, has been the lack of a precise definition of the construct. In his 1949 work on delinquency, Tappan suggests that

To a considerable extent, ineffective dealings with young deviants arises from the failure to determine and classify their problems, and then to apply treatment that is appropriate to such careful classification.

Olczak et al (1983) suggest that we have not made any progress in systematically defining the construct of delinquency since that time. In their work on the "right to treatment" for juveniles, they stress that we need clear definitions because of the statutory and constitutional rights to treatment that presumably apply to incarcerated juveniles. Kratcoski and Walker (1978) suggest that it is a major function of the juvenile justice system to rehabilitate or improve the welfare of juveniles in that system. Olczak et al (1983) further define the problem in terms of the differences between behavioral and legal definitions of delinquency, implying that when doing psychological research it is essential to specify the extent of the legal involvement in order to adequately address the issue.

In 1952, Bloch asserted that "it is quite different to say with sureness just what delinquent behavior is" (p.297). In Binder's (1988) review of the literature on juvenile delinquency, he suggested that when a youth has violated a criminal code according to the judgment of a juvenile court, he or she is thought of as a juvenile delinquent. He states,

The critical differentiating element between juvenile delinquents and the other topics, that is other anti-social behaviors, is the element of law. While aggressive or violent behavior is definable purely on the basis of observations of the interactions among

people, delinquent behavior requires for its definition the evaluation of behavior in terms of laws and actual or potential legal processes. (p.254)

He suggests that the behavioral or social phenomenon of juvenile delinquency cannot be restricted to youthful offenders (those adjudicated by juvenile courts because of the selective nature of the juvenile justice system).

While the Oxford English Dictionary's definition of delinquency is "Failure or neglect in a duty; more generally violation of a duty or right; the condition of being guilty," surely the condition of "being guilty" would apply to too many of us and is therefore too broad for a definition that undertakes to distinguish between delinquent and non-delinquent youth.

Binder's conclusion (1988, p.255) is that, "Youths under the age of 18 who have behaved in a manner prohibited by a criminal code in the jurisdiction where it occurred," are appropriate for inclusion in an overview discussion of delinquency. He continues:

They may have indicated the behavior on a self-study questionnaire or they may have been arrested for the behavior. They may have been adjudicated in juvenile courts or convicted as criminals in criminal courts. They may have been institutionalized or they may have been diverted from further processing in the system by referral to a mental health or similar community agency (Binder, 1988, p.255).

However, his definition of delinquency does not include anti-social conduct or "deviance" in the sense discussed by

other authorities, and he suggests that "it is not possible to define juvenile delinquency in a manner independent of the laws that anchor and bound it" (Binder, 1988, p.255).

This study is concerned with those children and adolescents who have been placed in the legal system as a result of their own criminal activity and it will be only to this group that the term juvenile delinquency refers.

Review of the Literature

History of the Concept

All researchers and theoreticians in the area of juvenile delinquency have as their goal to minimize or eliminate those behaviors which are considered to be anti-social or which deviate from socially acceptable behavior. In 1838, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court set a precedent in ruling that the State had a right and an interest in taking charge of the lives of children for incorrigibility, viciousness and moral depravity. Such offenses came to be called "Status Offenses" because they could be committed only by people of a certain status, that is, below the age of legal maturity (which now varies from state to state). Status Offenses had not been included in the criminal codes and had not been defined as criminal acts, so there was a need at that time for a special law applying to children and adolescents exclusively. The underlying implication of this decision was that the State had a vested interest and an

ultimate responsibility for the welfare of all the children in the country.

The concept underlying this new law was parens patriae, which put the State in the role of a superparent with this ultimate responsibility. Determinations about the welfare of a child under the parens patriae law were intended to benefit the child and the child's welfare, as well as society. Therefore, the usual constitutional protections that adults have, such as the right to trial by jury, and other legal protections, were declared to be unnecessary. When first established in Chicago in 1899, juvenile court was supposed to operate on the behalf of the youthful offender in a more informal manner than adult criminal court, with the aim of rehabilitating the youth for his behavior. This concept of parens patriae and the superparent concept of juvenile court persisted until the years 1966-1967, when the United States Supreme Court declared that "Under our Constitution, the condition of being a boy does not justify a kangaroo court."

In 1950, the Youth Corrections Act was passed (since repealed in 1984). This Act had as its goal to ameliorate the problem of youthful offenders by placing them into alternative, or diversionary, programs; but children were still not being afforded the same rights as adults.

Throughout this period, the goal of the juvenile system and the juvenile court was to address the clinical needs of the youthful offenders passing through this system.

Theories of Delinquency

In the early years of this century, psychologists were very active in researching the process of juvenile delinquency, and in 1909 the Chicago Juvenile Psychopathic Institute was founded to further this aim. According to Fink (1938) and Snodgrass (1972), psychology dictated the theoretical concept of juvenile delinquency in the United States until the 1930's, when a more social and sociological view of delinquency came into vogue. At that time, the topic of juvenile delinquency became subsumed in the overall rubric of criminology, which was a subfield of sociology at that time. Thus, the focus of juvenile delinquency research came to emphasize social causative factors and social relationships more than the previous emphasis on individual idiosyncrasies and a more individually oriented scholarship.

Psychoanalytic Theories

In 1935, August Aichorn attempted to combine two contrasting views of delinquency in his work, "Wayward Youth". He addressed the issue of delinquency as a social phenomenon with social causes, into which he integrated psychoanalytic concepts of individual psychology. Aichorn postulated that through psychoanalytically oriented