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THE CLASSIFICATION OF DEFECTIVE DELINQUENTS

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The classification of the so-called "criminal type" has, for a great many years, received the serious attention of professionally trained workers in correctional institutions. Concomitant with the emphasis upon classification, has come the natural corollary of such emphasis—the case work concept as a definite procedure in the handling of inmates of a correctional institution.

Naturally enough, there has been a sharp division of opinion as to the value of such classification. On the one hand, the proponents of such classification have insisted upon its value to the correctional institution, of whatever type. Opposed to this school have been those individuals who have seen in classification merely a means to a limited professional aggrandizement whereby highly paid professional workers such as psychiatrists and psychologists, the so-called "bug doctors," have introduced a mass of impressive sounding terms for the designation of types known to exist and so designated by all experienced correctional workers, by less impressive, but perhaps more descriptive, terms. As a homely example of this, we have the type, well known in correctional institutions, described by the psychiatrist as being "of mental subnormality at times coupled with mental instability" and by an experienced, but less didactic guard as being "a dope who gets a 'bug on' every once in a while." Obviously, it is not enough that the professional worker content himself with what has been termed by some as "appellative psychiatry" and by others as being mere "label sticking."

Unfortunately, from the standpoint of the professional worker, there has been a great deal of truth in the criticism levelled against him by experienced correctional workers. Too often, the psychologist and psychiatrist have dismissed such criticism by a shrug of the shoulders and a smug phrase anent "old time prison wardens." The fact remains that there is today, considerable dissension between "case workers" in the broad sense, and prison administrators. The problem

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—and any situation not leading to perfect harmony among officers of a correctional institution is a serious problem—is not lessened by either ignoring this self-same problem or by the even worse method of mutual recrimination. Again unfortunately, the fair minded professional worker must admit that the balance of the scale is on the side of the “old time prison warden” and that most of the blame for this situation must rest upon the frail shoulders of the psychiatrist and the psychologist.

The experienced administrative officer may not have been trained in either a psychiatric institute or a graduate school, but he is, nevertheless in most instances, thoroughly trained in perhaps even a better school—the correctional institution itself. He is, very often, a man of shrewd sense, vitally interested in his charges, and wise in the ways of his fellow man. Such an individual, after a lifetime of faithful, efficient service is neither to be dismissed with a phrase and a shrug, nor made to feel that because he lacks either an M.D. or a Ph.D. he is totally ignorant of all that pertains to correctional work. This has, in the writer’s certain knowledge, been attempted in several instances and it is to this attitude that much of the disharmony can be laid.

Again, the psychiatrist and psychologist, in a great many instances, has utterly failed to realize that the correctional institution of which he is an officer is not being conducted primarily for his convenience. The inmates must be safeguarded, schedules must be kept, shops and schools must function—and all these important administrative adjuncts cannot be suspended or interfered with at the pleasure of a psychiatrist or psychologist. While the work of the classification unit is highly important, it cannot be allowed to disrupt the entire administration of a correctional institution. Moreover, the administrative officer resents the perhaps unexpressed attitude of the psychiatric worker that it can. The administrative officer objects to this attitude and complains, justly enough in many cases, that the psychiatrist or psychologist has failed completely to get the institutional outlook or “feel.” Future good relations, it is felt, depend primarily upon the psychiatrist and psychologist rather than the administrator who has proven his loyalty to his profession and to his charges. The psychiatrist and psychologist must sell, but not oversell, themselves and their work.

Perhaps it is felt that an unduly pessimistic outlook has been expressed and that the writer believes that psychiatry, psychology, and classification have no place in a correctional institution. This is

not the case. Intelligent classification and intelligent human relations have an inestimably valuable place in the program of any progressive correctional institution. Branham¹ has concisely and clearly shown the administrative advantages of classification and the classification unit in the correctional field. It is, however, perhaps an additional indictment against the case workers in the field, that in spite of the fact that classification is a good many years old, it was not until the past year that the justification for such a procedure was logically expressed by Branham¹ and Stern.²

For the classification of the population of the ordinary type of correctional institution, a rather elaborate and careful system has been worked out by the Committee on Classification of the Medical Section of the American Prison Association.³ This system of classification is too well known to need any description or comment. One major criticism, however, which has been expressed against this system is that little emphasis or stress has been laid upon that type of inmate to be found in large numbers in all correctional institutions and in only a minority of the cases segregated in a special type of institution, namely, the Defective Delinquent. It is believed by many workers in the field that a universal classification of the Defective Delinquent should be adopted so that the administrators, as well as professional workers, in correctional institutions housing the Defective Delinquent, may have the benefit of such classification. Certainly the stand of the American Prison Association concerning the defective delinquent is, at best, unsatisfactory. The American Prison Association maintains the stand that, "The defective delinquent is an offender who, because of mental subnormality at times coupled with mental instability, is not amenable to the ordinary custody and training of the average correctional institution and whose presence therein is detrimental to both the type of individual herein described and to the proper development of the methods of rehabilitation of other groups of delinquents. Further, the defective delinquent because of his limited intelligence and suggestibility requires prolonged and careful training, preferably in a special institution to develop habits of industry and obedience."³ Such a definition is, on the one hand too broad to be of much help, and on the other, too delimiting in excluding the relatively high grade, stable inmates to be found in large numbers in such an institution as that at Napanoch, N. Y.

The previous literature in the field offers only two thoroughly worked out classifications of the defective delinquent, Doll in 1921 and Branham⁵ in 1926. Both these classifications, while distinct con-

tributions to the field at the time of their presentations, are at present, outmoded by the rapid change in the type of inmate classified as defective delinquent, and in view of the increased knowledge in the field since the time of the two publications. Branham's own analysis of these two systems is interesting.⁶

"Doll in 1921 offered a classification of the defective delinquent type that attracted considerable favorable comment on the part of workers in the field. His method of procedure was to make a primary grouping in which the factors of the intellectual subnormality, mental stability, and degree of recidivism received equal consideration. Thus various combinations were made of the three factors involved, namely:

Feeble-minded.....	{	Stable.....	{	occasional offender habitual offender
		Unstable.....	{	occasional offender habitual offender
Non-feeble minded.....		Unstable.....	{	occasional offender habitual offender

An etiological subclassification of types of instability was given as follows: toxemic, congenitally syphilitic, epileptic, endocrinopathic, environmental, respectively. Thus an inmate might be classified as a feebleminded unstable habitual offender of the epileptic type. The same criticism may be offered here as in Doll's previously quoted classification of the prison inmates; namely, too fine distinctions are drawn to serve practical needs. The classification errs in the direction of over classification, thereby creating lines of distinction that are either exaggerated in value or false in construction.

A somewhat different approach to the problem of classification of the defective delinquent was suggested by V. C. Branham in 1926. The question of the eventual social adjustability of the inmate was given prime consideration. Assumption was made that each human being had within himself (either as hereditary or acquired characteristic) a certain amount of sense of responsibility toward his fellow man. In some individuals, the amount was small and therefore the probability of his remaining irreclaimable proportionately large. Accordingly the following plan of classification was suggested: (a) Community-conscious Type (Social); (b) Community-indifferent Type (A-Social); (c) Community-antagonistic Type (anti-social); (d) Community irresponsible Type (Irresponsible). To the first of

these groups was assigned the good conduct, easily adjustable types, and to the last named the psychopaths. The intermediate groups contained the suggestible, assaultive, resentful incorrigibles. All types included were feeble-minded. Branham in his discussion analyzed the types already incarcerated at the Napanoch institution into four grades. (all feeble-minded):

(a) "The fairly low grade, feeble-minded inmate who is uncleanly, given to pilfering and destructiveness."

(b) "The emotionally unstable or psychopathic type."

(c) "A type which may appropriately be called the prison type inasmuch as the general reaction shown both inside and outside the institution more nearly approximates the conduct seen in the usual prison inmates."

(d) "The good conduct group."

The complete classification of the defective delinquent in use at the Napanoch Institution is advanced:

I. INTELLECTUAL CLASSIFICATION (Intelligence)

Based on 15 year Maximum Chronological Age

M. A.	Classification	I. Q.
0—3 0/12	Idiot	0-20
3 1/12— 6 11/12	Imbecile	21-46
7 0/12— 8 6/12	Low Grade Moron	47-57
8 7/12—10 0/12	Medium Grade Moron	58-67
10 1/12—12 0/12	High Grade Moron	68-80
12 1/12—12 9/12	Borderline	81-85
12 10/12—13 9/12	Dull Normal	86-92
13 10/12—16 0/12	Normal	93-107
16 1/12—17 0/12	Superior	108-113
17 1/12—19 6/12	Very Superior	114-130
19 7/12—and Higher	Gifted or Genius	131 and Higher

Note: The intellectual classification of those individuals testing above the defective group has been included for the convenience of those interested in such classification.

II. PSYCHIATRIC (PSYCHOLOGICAL) CLASSIFICATION.

A. Sexual Predominance

1. Homosexuality
2. Carnal Abuse
3. Bestiality

4. Active Rape
- B. Defective Predominance
 1. Petty Theft
 2. High Suggestibility
 3. "Mores" Offense
 4. Petty Revenge
- C. Delinquent Predominance
 1. The "Prison Type"
 2. The Psychopathic Type
 3. The Assaultive Type
 4. The Criminally Cunning Type

III. INSTITUTIONAL BEHAVIOR (ADMINISTRATIVE) CLASSIFICATION

- A. The Adjustable
 1. Emotionally Stable Type
 2. "Special Squad" Type
- B. The Chronic Offender
 1. The Uncleanly
 2. The Lazy
 3. The Petty Thief
- C. The Segregable
 1. The Sex Offender
 2. The Hopeless Major Offender
 3. The Occasionally Disturbed

Comment: It is believed that inasmuch as the problem of the defective delinquent is obviously, to greater or lesser degree, one of intelligence, an "intellectual" classification, based upon mental age, should be included in any attempt at a comprehensive classification of the defective delinquent. The writer's classification therefore includes such a category. The "intellectual classification" is in universal use in the institutions of the Department of Correction of New York State and has been included by McCartney in his handbook. This intellectual classification has previously been presented in the literature on the subject.⁸ It is based upon the 15 year maximum chronological age in accordance with the report of the Sub-Committee on Psychology of the Committee on Classification of the American Prison Association (1933) and upon the Gaussian curve of normal distribution.

It has been a moot question for some time among workers in the field as to whether the defective delinquent is more defective than delinquent, or more delinquent than defective. In other words the question has arisen as to whether primary emphasis is to be laid upon the offense itself or the amentia which induced the offense. The writer does not believe that either is the sole explanation. In some cases it is the feeble-mindedness which is more responsible for the conflict with the law and in other the delinquency is the prime motivating factor. Hence the "defective predominance" and the "delinquent predominance." However it is also felt that a third large category is needed to properly classify all offenders who come under the heading of defective delinquent. There are a great many offenders who commit sexual crimes of one of the four categories mentioned where neither the defective nor the delinquent factors is especially predominant.

Four subdivisions have been included under "Sexual Predominance" and it is believed that, with certain minor technicalities as exceptions, all sexual crimes committed by the defective delinquent are included. A review of the cases confined at Napanock indicates that, with one exception, all sex cases could be so classified. The single exception was an individual committed for the crime of necrophilia.

The sex offenders are considered, under the category of "sexual predominance," only for the offenses committed outside the institution, that is, the offense for which the inmate was incarcerated. Sex offenses within the institution, or a predilection for such offenses is treated under III C I of the classification.

For purposes of clarity, "homosexuality" refers to any sexual act with a member of the same sex as the object. "Carnal abuse" refers to that type of offense where the object is a member of the opposite sex of extremely immature age—usually 9 years or under. In this respect, differentiation should be made with cases where the offense has been committed upon a girl, with her consent, but where the girl is technically under the legal age of consent—seventeen year old girl, for example. Differentiation between this type and the active rape case should also be noted. "Bestiality" refers to any act of sexual relations with an animal other than a human being. "Active rape" is the act of attacking a female and forcing her, by superior physical strength, or drugs or alcohol, to submit to sexual intercourse.

Under "Defective Predominance" we get the type of offender whose conflict with the law comes about not so much because the

offender is essentially criminalistic, as because he is, as a mental defective, prone to certain overt types of behavior which might, through social restriction, be considered crimes. Under this category we get the petty thief—a defective who is also a criminal because he has not sufficient intelligence to differentiate between *meum* and *teum*. Under “high suggestibility” is categorized the offender whose chief difficulty is his inability to say “no.” This type is often the tool of more sophisticated criminals. Under the “mores offender” comes that type of person who, because of his improper social training, coupled with mental deficiency, sees nothing wrong in, for example, incest. This type occurs rather more frequently than the uninitiated would suspect, especially in certain isolated, rural regions where incest and “wife-swapping” are every-day occurrences. Under “petty revenge” one classifies those inmates who in a spirit of retaliation, attempt to “get even” for some real or fancied grievance. The writer recalls several inmates sentenced for arson, and one or two sentenced for cutting off tails of cows of neighboring farmers who are properly classified in this category.

The Delinquent predominance is an interesting category. Taken by and large, those coming under this classification are individuals who would probably have come into conflict with the law even had their intellectual status been much higher than it was. The mental deficiency is only incidental to the anti-social behavior. Defective Delinquents coming under this category are usually comparatively high grade morons. The “Prison type” of this category is difficult to define. Usually they are inmates who are not readily recognizable as defective and not readily distinguished from the recidivist to be found in large numbers in all State prisons. They are deliberate and malicious violators of the law and almost as common in an institution for defective delinquents as in a State prison. Branham’s definition may be used here.⁶ “A type which may be appropriately called the prison type inasmuch as the general reaction shown both inside and outside the institution more nearly approximates the conduct seen in the usual prison inmates.” The psychopathic types are those individuals, primarily psychopaths who are also mentally defective, and from our standpoint, delinquents. For definition of “psychopathic personality,” see the American Prison Association discussion.⁸ The assaultive type includes individuals who use knives, razors, or fire-arms, etc., as a means to settling an argument. Their offense against the law is one of delinquency rather than of deficiency since people of this type are to be found in all levels of intellectual status. The

criminally cunning type includes the forgers, confidence men, etc., who surprisingly enough to the uninitiated are found among the defective delinquents. Those crimes, usually considered as being committed by the intellectually elite of our criminals are by no means unusual among defectives upon, of course, a limited scale.

In the Institutional Behavior, or Administrative, Classification, some overlapping is, as is to be expected, found. However, with the understanding that no sharp lines of demarcation are noted, such a classification may be of value to the administrator. The Adjustable include two main categories—those of any degree of intelligence who because of inherent emotional stability, are not serious behavior problems, and those who are of such low grade intelligence that they literally “do not have the brains to get into trouble” in the institution. These two types are usually classified as of defective predominance in the psychiatric classification. The chronic, petty offender, while not a serious disciplinary problem, is yet a source of constant annoyance to the administrative officers of an institution for defective delinquents. The early recognition of such a type is often a great benefit to the administrative officers who can then take steps for special education and training. These include the “uncleanly type” who seem to find it practically impossible, without special training, to keep either themselves or their rooms with any degree of cleanliness. The “lazy type” which is always shirking work, and constitute large proportion of the institution’s malingerers, can also be aided by special training. The petty thief is another source of annoyance and is usually the type classified under II B 1 insofar as his outside activities are concerned. Again, all three types of the chronic Offender are usually of the “Defective Predominance” in the Psychiatric Classification.

Under The Segregable Type in the Administration Classification are practically always found individuals who are of either the Sexual or the Delinquent Predominance in the Psychiatric Classification. The sex offender in prison is very often, although not always, the homosexual on the outside. It is recognized of course that many guilty of homosexual practices in an institution are individuals who are using this method of sex gratification because of lack of opportunity for normal outlet. However, such practices are usually considered serious offenses in most institutions and every effort is made to segregate such individuals from the general population. The hopeless major offender is a type in which there is much overlapping. Any of the previous types if their offenses are great in degree or

kind, may be so classified. These are the individuals who commit serious offenses such as non-sexual assaults upon other inmates or officers, those who escape, etc., and it is desirable to segregate this type also from the general population. The "occasionally disturbed" are to be commonly found in institutions for defective delinquents. They are the individuals referred to by the phrase "at times coupled with mental instability." During their disturbed spells they are apt to commit serious offenses and the early recognition of this type is highly important to the administrative officer so that such an individual may be segregated or placed where he can do the least possible amount of harm to himself or others during such "spells."

The fore-going classification, together with the "comment" has been offered as a result of the study of over 1500 inmates of the Institution for Male Defective Delinquents at Napanoch, in the belief that the value of classification has been demonstrated in correctional institutions of all types and that hence a classification of a special type of inmate may also prove of value to the field.

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