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Morris G. Caldwell

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CASE ANALYSIS METHOD FOR THE PERSONALITY STUDY OF OFFENDERS

MORRIS G. CALDWELL

The author is Professor of Sociology in the University of Alabama. He was State Director of Corrections in Wisconsin from 1939 to 1943, and member of the Wisconsin Parole Board during the same period. From July 1, 1943 to December 31, 1945 he was National Chairman of the Council on Youth Delinquency. He is Counsel to Human Resources Research Institute for nation-wide studies of adult crime and juvenile delinquency. *Analysis of Social Problems*, by Professor Caldwell and Laurence Foster, was published in February, 1954 by the Stackpole Company of Harrisburgh, Pennsylvania.

The case analysis method has been adapted in this paper to the study of delinquents and criminals, however, it is equally adaptable to the study of non-offenders.—EDITOR.

ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS OF PRESENT METHODS

The principal methods, which have been widely used in the study of the personalities of the delinquent and criminal, include the observational, clinical, experimental, life history, statistical, and case methods. Each of these methods has its peculiar merits, but also has its limitations and defects for certain types of personality study. The method of direct observation¹ is primarily a technique for viewing and collecting the data, and not a method of analysis. Also, the clinical method² is a convenient arrangement for the interview, diagnosis, and perhaps therapy of the offender in an office or clinic. Research analysis is not necessarily involved in the process.

The experimental method³ works well in the physical and natural sciences in which the rigid control of all variables is possible. Thus, the experimental method is especially adapted to the psychological study of animal behavior. However, the experimental method has not been utilized for the study of human personality to any great extent in democratic countries, because it could be interpreted as violating the rights, freedoms, and liberties of the individual. The principal exceptions to this restriction include the many experimental laboratories in connection with nurseries, kindergartens, and elementary schools for the personality study of children. Also, a few prisons have research clinics for the experimental study of inmate personality.

The life history⁴ stands out as an exceptional method for viewing the developmental history of an offender as a natural phenomenon. The data are presented objectively from the genetic and developmental points of view, and analyzed according to pertinent personality trends and behavior patterns. The life history method is

¹ GLADYS C. SCHWESINGER, *HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT*. (New York: Macmillan Company 1933), pp. 110-114.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 103-110.

³ KIMBALL YOUNG, *PERSONALITY AND PROBLEMS OF ADJUSTMENT*. (New York: F. S. Crofts and Company, 1940), pp. 233-236.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, pp. 250-258.

used primarily in the analysis of the delinquency and criminal behavior trends of individual offenders. No satisfactory plan has yet been devised for scientific generalization from a series of life histories.

The statistical study⁵ of the personality of offenders involves the formulation of a research design, careful selection of the sample through approved methods, delineation and statistical control of the variables, development of interviewing techniques, collection of data from records or through interviewing, field work, coding, IBM tabulation, statistical manipulation of data, checks of reliability, tests of validity and significance, statistical analysis and interpretation of data. Some of the defects and limitations of statistical studies of personality include the large size of sample assumed to be necessary for sound sociological generalization, the time-consuming nature of statistical studies, the financial cost involved, inapplicability to qualitative data, the difficulty of analyzing the inner life of the person through statistical methods, and errors in statistical interpretation of data. The statistical method appears to be desirable in personality studies involving well-defined variables and a large number of cases.

The case method⁶ of personality study may be clearly differentiated from the case analysis method, which is presented in this paper. The former is largely descriptive in nature, while the latter is primarily analytical. The case analysis method involves a higher level of mental abstraction than that required in the descriptive case method. The case method as presently used in economics, political science, psychology, education, law, the other social sciences, and social work presents certain basic facts regarding the case at hand, and then proceeds to draw certain conclusions on the basis of the factual evidence. The data utilized by the case method generally deal with a contemporaneous segment of the personality, and may relate to practical personality difficulties and problems. This method may be contrasted sharply with the life history method, which presents a genetic approach to personality trends and a functional analysis of them.

METHODOLOGY FOR PERSONALITY STUDY

The foregoing description reveals many limitations of present methods for the personality study of offenders. A new methodological approach to the study of the criminal personality known as the case analysis method has been developed by the writer and graduate students at the University of Alabama for the purpose of overcoming some of these limitations. Although the case analysis method is still in the embryonic stages, nevertheless, it has been designed to accomplish the following purposes:

- (1) To handle a small number of cases, ranging from one to fifty;
- (2) To deal with qualitative personality materials;
- (3) To factorize personality into its component elements;
- (4) To isolate the principal personality variables for study;
- (5) To establish scientific instruments for the measurement of these personality variables;

⁵ *Op. cit.*, pp. 236-250.

⁶ KIMBALL YOUNG, *PERSONALITY AND PROBLEMS OF ADJUSTMENT*. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1952), pp. 325-327.

- (6) To construct individual and group profiles on the basis of the results of these measurements;
- (7) To explore the inner attitudes and behavior patterns of the offender; and
- (8) To delineate sequences and patterns of criminal behavior.

STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

One of the first requirements of personality study is the precise statement of the research problem to be investigated. This requirement must be met so that the research investigators and field workers will know exactly what types of data to collect—only those types of data which bear specifically upon the objectives of the research project, the hypotheses to be investigated, and the analyses to be made. Collection of data unrelated to the research problem, just because they are readily available, may result in extraneous analyses, mental confusion, and unnecessary waste of time and research funds.

Formulation of Tentative Hypotheses

In all personality research with offenders, there are certain basic assumptions upon which the project rests. After these assumptions have been clearly stated, the major hypotheses and sub-hypotheses should be formally presented as propositions requiring experimental testing, proof or disproof. The hypotheses emerge out of the main research problem as selected phases requiring scientific verification or non-verification. Once hypotheses have been stated, the research personnel is obligated to collect, analyze, evaluate, and draw conclusions regarding these propositions. The hypotheses serve as guides to the research project from inception to final conclusion.

Preparation of the Research Design⁷

The research design or over-all research plan provides the blueprint for the research project. The research design is often a recapitulation of the following structural and functional elements: research objectives; the research problem; the hypotheses, explicit or implicit; the frame of reference; the research methods, techniques, and procedures; the principal variables for study; description of the instruments for the measurement of these variables; types of interviews, schedules, and forms for recording raw case data; analyses to be made; and individual and group profiles to be constructed. The aim of the research design is to combine, coordinate, and integrate the foregoing methodological items into a unified system, and anchor them to a sound theoretical base.

Frame of Reference⁸

The frame of reference is a systematic plan for the collection, organization, and analysis of the basic data of a research project. It is a special approach to, or unique way of viewing the data. The frame of reference provides the theoretical framework

⁷ WILLIAM J. GOODE AND PAUL K. HATT, *METHODS IN SOCIAL RESEARCH*. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1952), pp. 74-102.

⁸ MORRIS G. CALDWELL AND LAURENCE FOSTER, *ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS*. (Harrisburg: Stackpole Company, 1954), p. 8.

for presentation of the data in a uniform and related system of thought. This framework involves the establishment of a set of conceptual categories, types, or classes for the manipulation and analysis of the case data. The selection of an appropriate frame of reference for the personality study of offenders depends upon the objectives of the research project. Some of the most important conceptual schemes for the study of personality include the following frames of reference: "Causation,"⁹ "Differential Association,"¹⁰ "Social Disorganization,"¹¹ "Sociopathic Deviation,"¹² "Typology,"¹³ and "Functional Analysis."¹⁴ The functional frame of reference, which has been employed in the present study of the "Case Analysis Method," analyzes the functional relations between the four main variables of personality—organic heritage, social heritage, human nature of the person, and his unique experience.

FACTORIZATION OF CASES INTO COMPONENT ELEMENTS OR CHARACTERISTICS¹⁵

The case analysis method of studying personality involves the factorization or breakdown of the cases into their component elements and characteristics. Fracturing the sample in this manner may uncover the functional relationships existing between the constituent parts of the personality, and disclose the social factors associated with criminal behavior. This procedure may also reveal new insights into the personality of John Doe, youthful offender, age 19, who has recently been convicted of armed robbery and sentenced to a long prison term. The accompanying tabulation shows the breakdown of characteristics for two groups of offenders.¹⁶

MEASUREMENT OF PERSONALITY VARIABLES

"Anything which exists, exists in some amount and can be measured."¹⁷ Thus, personality factors and variables can be measured, if, and when instruments of measurement and units of measurement are devised for that purpose. The procedures involved in measurement include the operational definition of terms and concepts, the formulation of units of measurement, the invention of instruments of measurement, and the processing of the data by these instruments. Each personality

⁹ J. H. S. BOSSARD, W. A. LUNDEN, L. V. BALLARD, AND LAURENCE FOSTER, *INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY*. (Harrisburg: Stackpole Company, 1952), pp. 542-545.

¹⁰ EDWIN H. SUTHERLAND, *PRINCIPLES OF CRIMINOLOGY*. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1947), pp. 3-9.

¹¹ MABEL A. ELLIOTT AND FRANCIS E. MERRILL, *SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION*. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941), pp. 26-58.

¹² EDWIN M. LEMERT, *SOCIAL PATHOLOGY*. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1951), pp. 21-25.

¹³ HOWARD BECKER, *Constructive Typology in the Social Sciences*, in H. E. BARNES AND HOWARD BECKER, *CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL THEORY*. (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1940), pp. 17-46.

¹⁴ CALDWELL AND FOSTER, *Op. cit.*, pp. 28-37.

¹⁵ MORRIS G. CALDWELL, *The Youthful Male Offender in Alabama—A Study in Delinquency Causation*. SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL RESEARCH, Vol. 37, No. 4 (March-April, 1953), pages 236, 238, 239.

¹⁶ ROBERT D. MURPHY, *A Comparative Analysis of the Factors Associated with White Male First Offenders and Recidivists Who Have Served Terms in a Federal Correctional Institution*. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, Master's Thesis, 1952), pp. 83-85.

¹⁷ H. H. REMMERS AND N. D. GAGE, *MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION*. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1943).

TABLE I
THE FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR OF TWENTY WHITE MALE
FIRST OFFENDERS AND TWENTY WHITE MALE RECIDIVISTS^a

Characteristic	First Offender	Recidivist
Age (mean).....	26.5	30.5
I.Q. (score).....	99.7	102.5
Educational Status (grade completed).....	7.9	7.0
Stanford Achievement Test (grade).....	6.7	5.9
Children in the Family (number).....	4.7	6.1
Membership in Social Groups.....	20.0	15.0
Church Membership.....	40.0	30.0
Regular Church Attendance.....	20.0	10.0
Parents Married at Subject's Eighteenth Birthday.....	65.0	30.0
Parents Separated, Divorced, or One or Both Deceased at Subject's Eighteenth Birthday.....	35.0	70.0
Serious Delinquency in Parental Family.....	15.0	35.0
Marital Status of Offender:		
Single.....	30.0	35.0
Married.....	65.0	30.0
Separated and Divorced.....	5.0	35.0
Ownership of Property.....	20.0	0.0
Military Service with Undesirable or Dishonorable Discharge.....	0.0	36.4
One or More Accomplices in Instant Offense.....	60.0	45.0
Violated Parole.....	0.0	40.0

^a The factors are expressed in the form of percentages, unless stated otherwise.

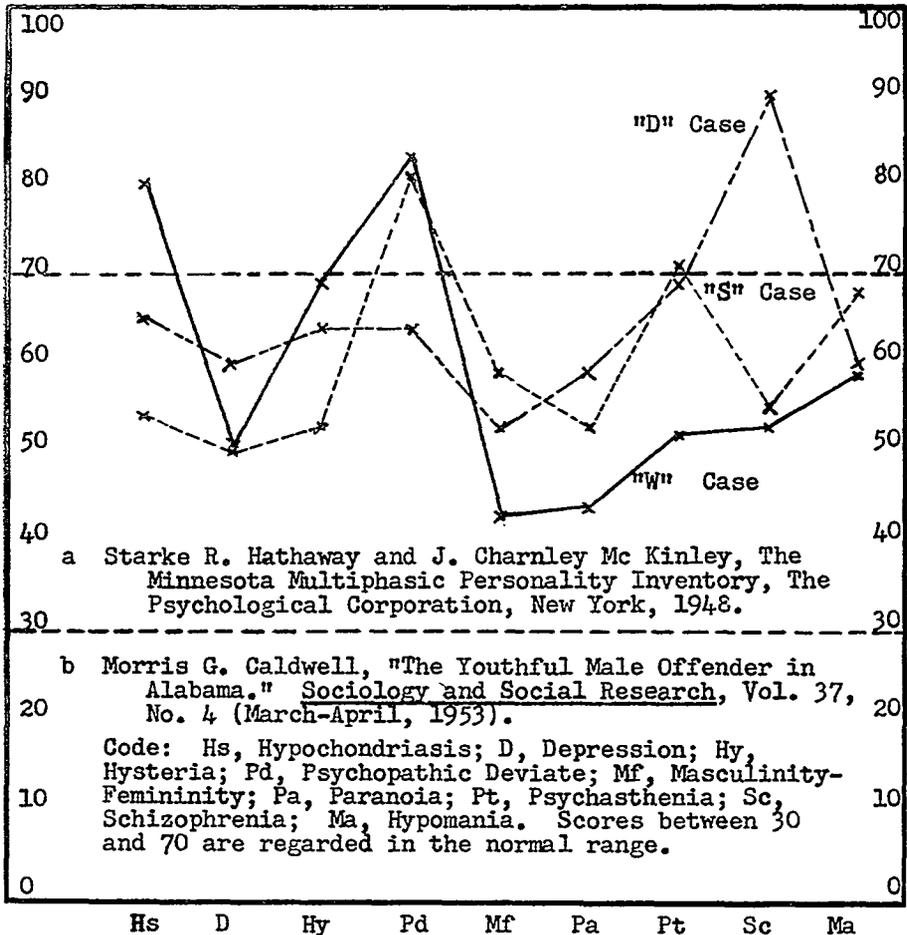
factor and variable can be measured along a continuum of objective units, and the results recorded in the form of a score, grade, rating, ranking, or percentage. Present-day psychological tests, including intelligence tests, personality tests, attitude tests, emotional maturity tests, projective techniques, aptitude tests, achievement tests, and sociometric scales and rating devices comprise some of the most important instruments available for personality measurement. However, certain new instruments will also be required for the measurement of variables connected with the inner behavior patterns of the personality, including the self, life organization, attitudes, values, and the unconscious.

CONSTRUCTION OF INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP PROFILES

The case analysis method involves the graphic presentation of the results of personality measurements in the form of individual and group profiles—the single profile for individual offenders and the group profile for a group of offenders. The score results of an entire battery of tests, including intelligence tests, personality tests, attitude tests, emotional maturity tests, aptitude tests, projective techniques, and sociometric scales and rating devices may be portrayed graphically on individual profile sheets. These profiles are extremely helpful in analyzing the personality trends of one offender or a group of offenders.

The score results of one of these instruments, Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, have been used in this article to illustrate the utility of the profile in

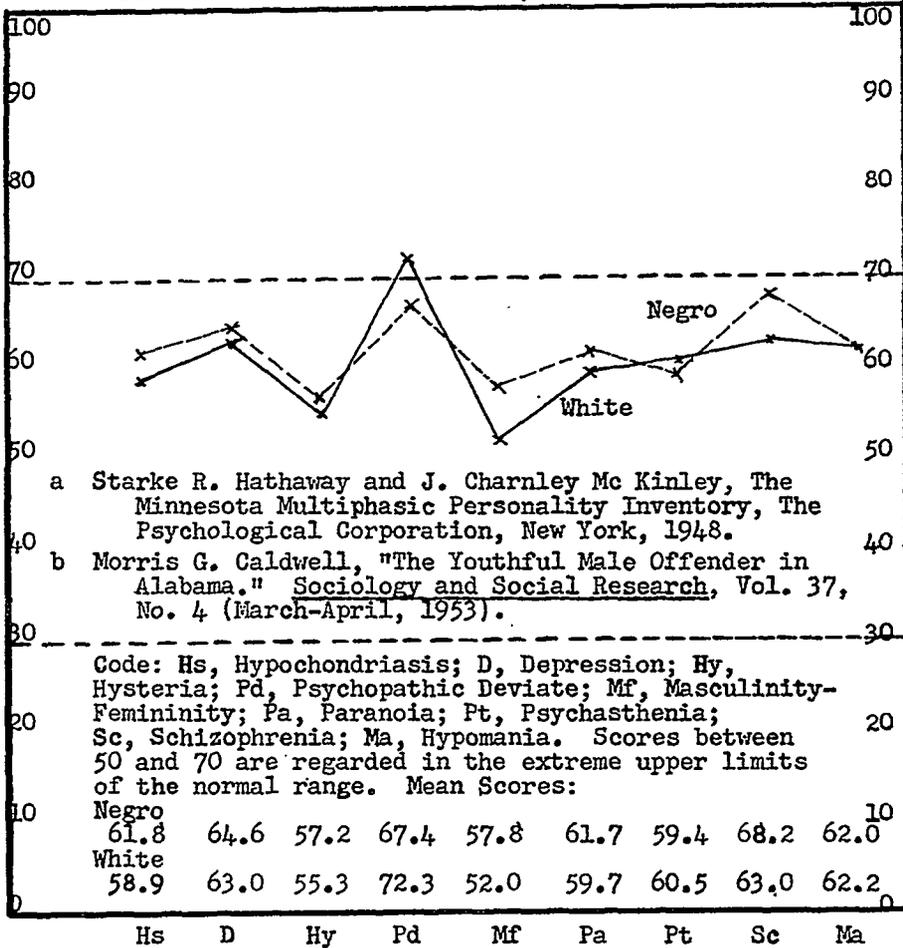
CHART 1
 THE MINNESOTA MULTIPHASIC PERSONALITY INVENTORY^a
 PERSONALITY PROFILES OF THREE YOUTHFUL OFFENDERS^b



personality analysis. The accompanying graph, Chart 1, delineates the personality profiles of three white youthful offenders. The "W" case, age 23 years, I.Q. 102, completed the 11th grade in school, sentenced from five to nine years for burglary shows definite trends toward hypochondriasis and psychopathic deviation. The "S" case, age 21 years, I.Q. 112, completed the 11th grade in school, sentenced to life imprisonment for murder shows a definite trend toward psychopathic deviation. Finally, the "D" case, age 17 years, I.Q. 69, completed the 4th grade in school, sentenced from five to nine years for burglary shows definite schizoid tendencies.

The personality profiles for two groups of youthful rural-farm offenders, Chart 2, show slight tendencies toward psychopathy. The white group, comprising 63 cases, with a mean age of 20.7 years, mean I.Q. of 87.4, and an average of 7.1 grades com-

CHART 2
 THE MINNESOTA MULTIPHASIC PERSONALITY INVENTORY^a --
 PERSONALITY PROFILES OF 63 WHITE AND 34 NEGRO
 YOUTHFUL RURAL-FARM OFFENDERS, 16 TO 23 YEARS OF AGE^b



pleted in school reveals a definite trend toward psychopathic deviation with a mean score of 72.3. The Negro group, consisting of 34 cases, with a mean age of 21.3 years, mean I.Q. of 72.5, and an average of 7.6 grades completed in school discloses specific tendencies toward both psychopathic deviation and schizophrenia with mean scores of 67.4 and 68.2 respectively.

ADVANTAGES OF THE CASE ANALYSIS METHOD

The case analysis method of personality research has many distinct advantages. It is possible through the "factorization process" to break down a case or group of cases into their component elements and factors, and isolate the main personality variables for intensive study. The principal personality variables can then be meas-

ured according to one or more of the several standard measuring instruments presently available or by measuring devices constructed especially for that purpose. The factorization and measurement of personality greatly facilitate the analysis of the functional relations existing between the principal variables and major structural components of personality. However, once these analyses are made, the aim of the case analysis method is to reconstruct the individual or group of individuals under study through the construction of individual and group profiles, which present an over-all view of personality according to principal personality trends, sequences and patterns of behavior. The case analysis method gives an insight into personality not possible under other methods of study.