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## Abstracts and Notes

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## ABSTRACTS AND NOTES

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### ARE PRISON TROUBLEMAKERS DIFFERENT?

#### INTRODUCTION

Research in the field of penology is woefully scant. Before the enormously varied problems of prison rehabilitation can be intelligently approached we must derive statistical determination of the relative success of different systems in use past and present. We do not really know that those rehabilitative programs now emphasized (education, group therapy, psychological service, etc.) represent the highway to social and moral adjustment, or whether they are merely temporary detours on the rutted road to recidivism. Statistics are lacking.

It is felt that the present study might provide some illumination for one small facet of the correctional field. It is important only insofar as it adds to the fragmentary research in the total field.

This problem was undertaken to determine whether there are indicated significant differences between inmates who are chronic disciplinary problems and those who are not disciplinary problems at the New Castle Correctional Institution of the Delaware State Board of Corrections.

#### PROCEDURE

For experimental purposes, two groups of inmates were chosen, each comprising fifty individuals. A group of non-troublemakers (control group) was selected from among men who had not been "locked up" or punished for rules infractions during the period between January 1950 and July 1955. The troublemaking group (experimental group), composed of fifty men in trouble three or more times during the set time period, was random-picked from the records of the prison adjustment board (the instrument for handling rules violations).

Following selection of the members of the two groups, case histories and Federal Bureau of Investigation records were analyzed for infor-

mation pertinent to this study; i.e., (1) Subject's age at time of sentencing (2) Educational achievement (3) Number of children (4) Average weekly earnings—most recent (5) Size of parental family (6) Age left school (7) Age left parental home (8) Birth rank (9) Age at first arrest (10) Total number of arrests (11) Number of jail sentences served, including the present one (12) Length of sentence subject is now serving (13) Subject's intelligence quotient.

In order to determine the significance of the findings in this study the following procedure was employed in analyzing each factor. (1) A mean was computed for each group in each area of study. (2) A standard deviation was computed for the two groups in each area. (3) The t-test for significance of differences between means was employed as a specific measure of the relative significance of mean differences discovered in the study.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analyses of results two rather remarkable conclusions are suggested. First, environmental, familial and economic factors, often associated strongly with goodness or badness of conduct in our free society, appear to have no significant bearing upon conduct while in jail. In the present study, sibling relationships, economic distresses, comparative intelligence, family problems, educational variations—numerous of those factors considered responsible, in combination, for many persons being sent to jail originally—display no measurable influence in predicting prison behavior.

What factors then do have a connection with prison conduct? There were three that appear in the present study, (1) The inmate's age at the time of latest sentencing (30.5 years for well-behaved group to 24.2 years among the troublemakers). (2) The inmate's age at the time of first arrest (the control group mean was 21.4 years at the time of first arrest; the incorrigible prisoner was only 15.4 years when first ensnared). (3) The length of present

sentence [the mean sentence for the control (good convict) group was 11 years, while the sentence mean for the experimental group was 3.5 years].

In attempting to evaluate data compiled in this study, the immediate logical conclusion appeared to be a simple reiteration of the well established fact that old men are a little wiser than younger men. In other words, the more mature and settled long term inmates have learned to adjust to prison life, having already passed through the troublemaking stage in which members of the younger, more volatile group, now find themselves.

One rather startling factor must be weighed in with this conclusion before it can be accepted. Fifteen life-term inmates were represented among the good conduct group members, while only one such was found among the troublemakers. This surprising imbalance was directly responsible for the wide divergence in comparative sentence-length (11 years to 3.5 years) between the two groups. As a matter of fact if "lifers" were dropped from the study, there would be no significant differences in any of the study areas.

What of this unusual preponderance of life-term criminals among the control (good conduct) group? The first reaction was to reason that age may have a causative relationship here also. Further investigation revealed, however, that only two of the lifers had ever been "locked up" for infraction of rules in prison, and they, but one time each. Additionally, only two had served previous jail sentences. Figures here disclose the mean number of sentences served, including the present one, is 1.312 for the life-termers compared with 3.08 mean sentences served for the good conduct group as a whole and 3.88 sentences for the bad conduct group.

The relatively mature age (28.75 years) at which life-termers were sentenced indicates that members of this group had ample time to display ordinary criminal tendencies prior to commission of the crime for which sentence is now being served. A similarity in the age factors among the life-term, control and experimental groups (28.75 years, 30.38 years, 24.20 years), combined with the considerable differences

evident between total jail sentences served among the three groups, leads to the suspicion that age factors are not significant in terms of the differences between the life sentence group and the other two. Rather there seems to be a basic difference in the criminality displayed by capital criminals compared with other felons and misdemeanants. The limited sample available for analysis in this investigation suggests strongly that capital criminals at the New Castle Correctional Institution have, as a group, (1) Seldom been in previous entanglements with "John Law" (2) Seldom been observed breaking regulations while in prison.

The sample utilized here is small; thus conclusive interpretations are not feasible. There is, however, sufficiently indicative material to presuppose the value of considerably expanded research into the differences between capital criminals and all other categories of offenders.

The results of the present study indicate that those who are behavioral problems in prison are not significantly different, as a group, from those who display perfect conduct, if the life term members are omitted from consideration. Perhaps the most important conclusion suggested by this research is that men serving life terms appear to be clearly different types from other felons. If this assumption is validated by expanded research, it would seem logical to consider the establishment of separate facilities for this type of offender designed to deal with the unusual problems of such a group.—Theodore M. Zink, Director of Education and Recreation. Board of Corrections of the State of Delaware, Wilmington, Delaware. (Abstract of a graduate-level thesis, University of Delaware.)

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#### SCHOLARSHIPS FOR TRAINING OF CORRECTIONAL PERSONNEL

September 30–November 22, 1957

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During the past five years, over 500 correctional officers and others have attended these Institutes. Such officers have returned to their respective agencies prepared to establish in-service training programs for those unable to attend the Institute, as well as to carry on their own work on a better professional level.

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