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## THE INFLUENCE OF PERSONALITY ON SOCIAL NON-CONFORMITY

Vernon Fox

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The social area in which a person can adequately function seems to be largely dependent upon the aggressiveness, gregariousness, security, and general personality of the individual involved. Conversely, social non-conformity occurs when the personality is unable to function adequately in the social setting in which it lives. The problem of social adjustment, then, becomes one of placing the personality in a favorable environment or of effecting a change in the personality so that it can be properly integrated in the social milieu. If the relationship between the personality and the social setting is one so functionally interdependent, then it is reasonable to suppose that personality differences would at least partially determine the social area in which the person is unable to make a proper adjustment. These personality differences may be sufficiently great so as to be reflected in the results of a standard personality testing device.

It was a practical and recurring situation which gave rise to speculation in this area. While routinely interviewing all incoming prisoners at the State Prison of Southern Michigan, the writer found himself making subjective evaluations as to the nature of the offenses of many new men as they came through the office door. These subjective evaluations seemed to be based on interpretations of overt mannerisms which conveyed to the interviewer an air of self-confidence or insecurity, of dominance or submission, of gregariousness or seclusiveness, and similar personality traits. The purpose of this study is to determine whether or not differences in measurable personality traits among criminals are accompanied by differences in the areas of social non-conformity.

No criminal personality type has been discovered. Personality is not fixed, but complex and dynamic, difficult to measure. Many factors bear on personality. Metfessel and Lovell reviewed a series of studies correlating criminal tendency with intelligence, physical traits, race and nationality, age, sex, and other factors, including personality traits.<sup>1</sup> With regard to personality factors, they found that the literature regarded personality as important, but that there was so much overlapping that a "criminal personality" could not be specified. Generally,

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1. METFESSEL, MILTON, and LOVELL, CONSTANCE; *Recent Literature on Individual Correlates of Crime*, PSYCHOLOGICAL BULLETIN, March, 1942, Vol. 39, No. 3, pp. 133-164.

offenders were inferior to non-offenders in many aspects of personality. For instance, they scored high on tests of neurotic tendency and showed retardation on tests of social maturity.

The means by which personality may affect crime or the area of social non-conformity are varied. In general, Taft classified these ways in three categories,<sup>2</sup> (1) cases in which there is a logical connection between symptoms of mental abnormality and the act, i.e., the paranoid personality inclined toward homicide, (2) the exclusion of the personality from status-conferring social relationships because of deviant traits and mannerisms, and (3) delinquency as an alternative to mental disease in relieving inner tension. Taft holds that while the abnormal personality is often a proximate cause of crime, the personality structure does not explain crime without knowledge of more basic causes.<sup>3</sup> Personality seems more and more to be a cultural product. The origin of personality similarities and differences lies in the pressures between culture and the basic organic needs. When these pressures become greater by way of a higher degree of incompatibility, inner conflicts increase, and the propensity to adjust through mental disease or criminality is proportionately increased.

In the analysis of individual crime patterns, psychological or personality factors become prominent. Cleckley has indicated that all forms of antisocial behavior have in common a malfunctioning of the personality at the social level as behavior unacceptable to others.<sup>4</sup> Schmitz points out that personality factors motivate the apparently normal individual who is carried away by irresistible impulse, the neurotic who is motivated by forces he considers foreign to his personality, the offender who expresses his hostility in crime, as well as the mentally deficient criminal who is inadequate to cope with his cultural environment by his own devices.<sup>5</sup> It is the hypothesis of this study that an analysis of group crime patterns will suggest that general personality factors are operative in predicting the social areas in which conformity is difficult.

#### PROCEDURE

The selection of a suitable personality test or inventory presented a difficult problem. While the individual Rorschach or other projective technique would be highly desirable, they were found to be too time-

2. TAFT, DONALD; *CRIMINOLOGY*, New York, 1947, p. 82.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

4. CLECKLEY, HERVEY; *Anti-Social Personalities*, in PENNINGTON, L. A., and BERG, I. A.; *INTRODUCTION TO CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY*, 1948, pp. 249-264.

5. SCHMIDBERG, MELITTA; *Psychological Factors Underlying Criminal Behavior*, *JOURNAL OF CRIMINAL LAW AND CRIMINOLOGY*, March-April, 1947, Vol. 37, No. 6, pp. 458-476.

consuming for the volume needed for statistical analysis. Group Rorschach did not seem adequate. An exhaustive survey of the available tests was made. The Bernreuter Personality Inventory was selected as having the fewest objections and the greatest volume of research, validation, and popularity.

Super summarized the mass of literature reporting work done with the Bernreuter, pro, con, and neutral, through 1941,<sup>6</sup> and since that time little new has been added. He maintains that although there is disagreement, the majority of investigators hold that the Bernreuter norms are adequate. The consensus among research workers was that the Bernreuter can be used to measure group trends with a reasonable degree of reliability. Caution should be exercised, however, when used individually. The scores have distinguished psychotics and neurotics from normals with some degree of accuracy, though not perfectly. Unfavorable scores were considered indicative of maladjustment, but favorable scores do not necessarily indicate good adjustment. For instance, a psychopathic inferior would obtain a low neuroticism score. It is emphasized that a Bernreuter score represents a point on one continuum, and does not depict the complex interplay of personalities and situations which are present in behavior problems.

The six Bernreuter scales used in this study are: (1) B1-N, neurotic tendency, in which a low score indicates a wholesome adjustment to the environment, (2) B2-S, self-sufficiency, in which a high score indicates a wholesome independence of others, (3) B3-I, introversion, in which a high score is indicative of withdrawing from social situations, and which Super views as identical with B1-N, (4) B4-D, social dominance, in which a low score indicates submissiveness in face-to-face situations, (5) F1-C, self-consciousness, in which a high score indicates hampering self-consciousness, and which Super considers a consistent measure of the trait assessed by B1-N, and (6) F2-S, solitariness, in which a low score indicates a wholesome gregariousness.

The experience of other researchers in handling the Bernreuter in prison situations might be of interest. Although no figures were given, Lock reported that 262 successive admissions to Colorado State Penitentiary avoided extremes of neuroticism and stability, were self-sufficient, introverted, submissive, lacking in self-confidence, and were gregarious.<sup>7</sup> Corsini selected for testing with the Bernreuter 50 prison inmates with I.Q.'s over 90 ( $M=117$ ) from the Reception Center at

6. SUPER, DONALD E.; *The Bernreuter Personality Inventory: A Review of Research*, PSYCHOLOGICAL BULLETIN, February, 1942, Vol. 39, No. 2, pp. 94-125.

7. LOCK, B.; *Various Factors in a Penal Population*, LAW AND CRIMINOL., 1942, Vol. 32, No. 4, pp. 316-320.

Elmira, New York.<sup>8</sup> He reported significance to the five per cent level in neurotic tendency and to the one per cent level in self-consciousness. Corsini, of course, consciously introduced a selective intellectual factor into his sample. Tabulating his group into those who used force and those who did not use force in their offenses, he found that the 23 "violent" offenders were more self-conscious, significant to the five per cent level. These studies do not attack the problem with which this study is specifically concerned, but they are indicative of the status of present research.

The Bernreuter Personality Inventory was administered to all men who entered the State Prison of Southern Michigan during the six months ending January 1, 1945. An inmate clerk who was a college graduate assisted individually the illiterates and men with reading difficulties. The scores on the six Bernreuter scales were tabulated on these 1,235 men according to the crimes for which they had been convicted and sentenced. Means and standard deviations were computed on each scale for each crime group and for the total group. In crime groups of 25 cases or more, critical ratios were computed between each crime group and the total group on each scale to determine the significance of the differences between the individual crime groups and the average prison commitments. Low scores were considered "favorable" on scales B1-N (neurotic tendency), B3-I (introversion-extroversion), F1-C (self-consciousness), and F2-S (solitariness-sociability). High scores were considered "favorable" on scales B2-S (self-sufficiency) and B4-D (dominance-submission). Plus signs were attached to the critical ratios depicting significance of scores on the "favorable" side of the mean for the total group. Negative signs were placed with the critical ratios depicting the significance of scores on the "unfavorable" side of the total group mean. The algebraic sum of the critical ratios in each crime group was obtained and divided by six to arrive at some estimate of the average deviation from the means of the six Bernreuter scales in each crime group.

## RESULTS

The results of the tabulations of the groups large enough for statistical analysis are shown in Table I. They are ranked in accordance with their favorable to unfavorable scoring on the Bernreuter Personality Inventory as shown by the weighted average critical ratios.

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8. CORSINI, RAYMOND; *Bernreuter Patterns of a Group of Prison Inmates*, JOUR. CLIN. PSYCHOL., July, 1946, Vol. II, No. 3, pp. 283-285.

TABLE I  
Bernreuter Scores by Crime Group

Crime	No. of Cases	B1-N		B2-S		B3-I		B4-D		F1-C		F2-S		Aver. CR
		Mean	CR	Mean	CR	Mean	CR	Mean	CR	Mean	CR	Mean	CR	
Embezzlement.....	28	40.2	2.5	48.8	1.5	33.0	3.8	39.5	0.2	32.9	4.9	38.0	0.7	+2.0
Robbery.....	122	48.8	1.4	43.7	1.0	43.3	1.8	42.4	1.8	56.9	1.5	33.1	0.9	+1.4
Weapons.....	47	45.4	2.0	28.8	5.8	39.9	1.9	32.5	2.8	55.6	1.3	22.6	3.8	+0.4
Against Family.....	36	52.1	0.0	42.1	0.1	47.0	0.1	41.7	0.9	58.7	0.4	38.5	0.7	+0.1
Auto Theft.....	121	52.2	0.1	38.2	0.8	50.6	1.4	39.3	0.5	61.1	0.5	30.8	2.1	0.0
Escape.....	27	53.9	0.3	44.3	0.7	49.7	0.5	37.5	0.2	66.3	1.2	37.5	0.4	-0.3
Rape.....	88	53.4	0.4	41.5	0.0	48.9	0.5	37.8	0.2	58.7	0.5	37.7	1.0	-0.3
Forgery.....	51	58.6	1.7	42.8	0.4	50.7	0.9	39.2	0.2	62.9	0.7	37.8	0.5	-0.5
Burglary.....	298	55.5	1.9	42.1	0.3	47.8	0.2	38.3	0.0	61.7	0.0	39.5	2.1	-0.8
Homicide.....	32	59.7	2.4	39.5	0.6	50.5	0.6	34.0	1.0	65.2	1.1	35.6	0.0	-1.0
Larceny.....	199	53.3	0.5	42.3	0.4	51.3	2.0	37.7	0.3	60.8	0.4	43.5	3.7	-1.1
Sex Offense.....	77	56.9	1.6	31.7	3.7	50.0	0.9	31.8	2.0	67.6	4.7	26.1	4.8	-1.4
Ag. Assault.....	25	51.1	0.2	30.5	2.7	52.9	1.1	26.9	6.3	64.9	0.9	39.5	0.7	-1.9
TOTAL.....	1,235	52.3		41.6		47.5		38.3		60.3		35.6		

By far the most favorable scores were made by men convicted of embezzlement and robbery. The only score which was unfavorable in comparison with the total group was made by the embezzlers when they expressed a slight dislike for contact with others (F2-S).

The *average* for men convicted of carrying concealed weapons was favorable. However, this group showed significantly unfavorable scores in their lack of self-sufficiency (B2-S), and their tendency to be submissive in face-to-face situations (B4-D), which were offset by their favorable scores in other areas. Apparently, the carrying of weapons gives these men a feeling of security and their criminal behavior is compensatory.

The auto thieves scored at the average of the total group. Men convicted of auto theft have been found to be younger, more intelligent, and possessed of better education than the general prison population, based on another study made at the State Prison of Southern Michigan.<sup>9</sup> With regard to Bernreuter patterns, these boys scored unfavorably in their need for advice from others (B2-S) and some introversion (B3-I), but favorably in their better score in wholesome gregariousness (F2-S).

Burglary and larceny show somewhat similar patterns, both scoring significantly unfavorable in their desire to be alone (F2-S) and their tendencies toward introversion. The burglary group approaches significance in neurotic tendency (B1-N). Feelings of insecurity and inadequacy seem to be present. A case in point is that of William Heirens, the Chicago student who burglarized primarily and murdered secondarily. The psychiatric examinations indicated that he was suffering from a hysteria neurosis and sex perversion, and would actually experi-

9. BERG, IRWIN AUGUST; *A Comparative Study of Car Thieves*, JOUR. CRIM. LAW AND CRIMINOL., 1944, Vol. 34, pp. 392-396.

ence an ejaculation when climbing through an open window.<sup>10</sup> This illustrates our finding in the direction of neurotic tendency.

The homicide group scored significantly high in neurotic tendency (B1-N), and does not show favorable scores on any of the scales. In another study, the lower intellectual adequacy of persons convicted for homicide was evaluated as presenting to the individuals as frustrating situations (1) an adjustment in a problem situation required by the murderer which he could not make, and (2) an argumentative situation characterized by a degradation from a verbal, to an emotional, and finally to a physical level at which time the crime was committed.<sup>11</sup> Hence, our high neurotic tendency found on the Bernreuter has support.

Sex offenders of a homosexual nature scored significantly unfavorable in their lack of self-sufficiency (B2-S), submissiveness in social situations (B4-D), and their self-consciousness (F1-C). Simultaneously, they scored in a significantly favorable manner in gregariousness (F2-S). They are uncomfortable in social situations in the normal roles, but like to be in social situations in their assumed roles.

The assaultive persons scored significantly unfavorably in their lack of self-sufficiency (B2-S) and their natural inability to dominate social situations (B4-D). Their aggressive behavior is obviously compensatory, and results from frustration. It has been found that persons convicted of assaultive crimes tended to be persons of limited intelligence who were irritable in social situations because of their impaired ability to cope with them.<sup>12</sup>

In crimes of violence and theft, feelings of insecurity and an inadequacy in social situations seem to be a central theme. This is not out of line with the findings in a previous study in which the looters and rioters in the 1943 Detroit race riot were studied.<sup>13</sup> In both these types of criminal behavior, the role of insecurity feelings is fairly well established.

Violent and non-violent crimes would seem to be selected by varying personalities. Crimes against person as opposed to those against property would appear to be different on the surface. The "lone wolf" would be different, also, from the person who commits crime with

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10. KENNEDY, FOSTER; HOFFMAN, HARRY R.; and HAINES, WILLIAM H.; *Psychiatric Study of William Heirens*, *JOUR. CRIM. LAW AND CRIMINOL.*, 1947, Vol. 38, pp. 311-341.

11. BERG, IRWIN AUGUST, and FOX, VERNON; *Factors in Homicides Committed by 200 Males*, *THE JOUR. SOC. PSYCHOL.*, 1947, Vol. 26, pp. 109-119.

12. FOX, VERNON; *Intelligence, Race, and Age as Selective Factors in Crime*, *JOUR. CRIM. LAW AND CRIMINOL.*, July-August, 1946, Vol. 37, No. 2, pp. 141-152.

13. See AKERS, ELMER R., and FOX, VERNON; *Detroit Race Rioters and Looters Committed to Prison*, *JOUR. OF CRIM. LAW AND CRIMINOL.*, Vol. 35, July-August, 1944, pp. 105-110.

"the gang". To determine whether or not any differences in these areas would be shown by the Bernreuter, the entire group of 1,235 cases was broken down and tabulated in groups depicting (1) crimes against property as opposed to crimes against person, (2) violent crimes as opposed to non-violent crimes, and (3) crimes committed by persons when alone as compared with crimes committed with one or more accomplices. Non-violent crimes against property included burglary, robbery, larceny, auto theft, forgery, breaking jail or escape, possession of burglar's tools, embezzlement, and possessing stolen property. Non-violent crimes against person included sex offenses of homosexual nature, offenses against family, drug laws, liquor laws, gambling, marriage laws, habitual drunk and disorderly, perjury, conspiracy to obstruct justice, traffic laws, and carrying concealed weapons. Violent crimes against property included arson and malicious destruction of property. Violent crimes against person were homicide, rape, aggravated assault, and other assault. The results of the computations are shown in Table II.

TABLE II  
Bernreuter Scores by Crime Classification\*

Classification	No. of Cases	B1-N		B2-S		B3-I		B4-D		F1-C		F2-S	
		Mean	CR	Mean	CR	Mean	CR	Mean	CR	Mean	CR	Mean	CR
Property.....	868	-52.9	0.1	+45.7	6.1	-47.8	0.6	+39.3	2.3	+60.3	0.6	-37.8	3.5
Person.....	367	+52.7		-36.7		+47.7		-36.0		-61.3		+32.7	
Violence.....	155	-53.2		-39.3		-49.3		-36.6		-61.3		-37.0	
			0.2		1.9		0.9		1.0		0.3		0.4
Non-Violence.....	1,080	+52.8		+43.6		+47.5		+38.7		+60.5		+36.1	
With Associates.	347	+51.7		-39.9		-46.9		+44.2		+58.7		-36.1	
			1.3		2.0		0.5		5.3		1.3		0.4
No Accomplices..	888	-53.8		+43.1		+47.7		-35.9		-60.9		+35.4	

\*The + and - marks preceding the Bernreuter means refer to the respective favorable and unfavorable relationships between each item in each comparison.

The group who committed crimes against person scored in a significantly inferior manner to property offenders in their lack of self-sufficiency (B2-S) and their inability to dominate social situations (B4-D). On the other hand, the individuals who committed crimes against persons regarded their social contacts of more value than did the property offenders (F2-S).

There were no significant differences in the Bernreuter scores between those who committed violent crimes and those who committed non-violent crimes. This finding is somewhat surprising, for it would seem that such an obvious difference in behavior would reflect in a personality testing device as quickly as other classifications, such as property versus person. Besides, significant deviations were found in the homicide group and the assaultive group. Perhaps there is sufficient



variation in behavior patterns that are violent that they counterbalance each other when grouped together. Perhaps, there is more difference than we suspect between the impulsive fist-fight and felonious assault on the one hand, and pre-meditated homicide on the other. Perhaps, too, we are dealing with an inadequate measuring instrument. It is interesting to point out, in any case, that in all scales, the violent offenders were consistently inferior to the non-violent offenders, though not enough so in any scale to be regarded as statistically significant.

The "lone wolf" group was found to be significantly inferior to those who committed crime with accomplices in their inability to dominate in social situations (B4-D). At the same time, the "lone wolf" group scored higher in self-sufficiency (B2-S). The "lone wolf" also showed a slight neurotic tendency (B1-N) and self-consciousness (F1-C), but these tendencies did not reach statistical significance.

It is apparent that personality differences which can be shown by group personality devices exist in sufficient degree so that various types of social maladjustment may be conjectured. An interesting study in this field distinguished the main personality "types" in three respective and different areas of social maladjustment. Using data from 500 Michigan Child Guidance Institute case files punched on Hollerith cards, Hewitt and Jenkins found three well-defined syndromes in maladjusted children; (1) those displaying unsocialized aggressive behavior, which included about 10.4% of their cases, (2) socialized delinquency behavior, comprising 14.0% of their cases, and (3) overinhibited behavior, including 14.6% of their maladjusted children.<sup>14</sup> The aggressive child was found to be one who is unwanted and experiences no affection. The socialized delinquent is accepted in his early years, at least by his mother, and when his parents become indifferent, he becomes a loyal gang member. The overinhibited child comes from a repressive family, often shows physical deficiencies, and feels neglected and a little "different". These categories might well be useful in analyzing our person versus property, violent versus non-violent, and accomplice versus non-accomplice dichotomies, as well as in other areas of non-conforming behavior.

### CONCLUSIONS

There are areas of differential personality development which influence to some degree the area of social non-conformity. These per-

14. HEWITT, L. E., and JENKINS, R. L.; *Fundamental Patterns of Maladjustment; Dynamics of Their Origin; A Statistical Analysis Based Upon Five Hundred Case Records of Children Examined at the Michigan Child Guidance Institute, State of Illinois, Springfield, 1946*, 110 pp.

sonality differences are sufficiently great in some instances to be reflected in the scores of the Bernreuter Personality Inventory. All six scales showed some sensitivity, with the sociability scale (F2-S) being most discriminatory and the introversion scale (B3-I) being of least value. This study suggests that intensive research in this area by using more discerning individual projective techniques would prove fruitful.

The relatively favorable Bernreuter patterns of embezzlers and robbers stand in conspicuous contrast to the unfavorable patterns of men sentenced for homicide, larceny, sex offenses of homosexual nature, and assaults. The group which committed crimes against persons was marked by less self-sufficiency, less ability to control social situations, and greater regard for social contacts than those who committed crimes against property. The fact that the group of violent offenders was consistently inferior to the non-violent offenders, but not enough to be statistically significant, suggests that some qualitative difference exists which the Bernreuter only partially and inadequately reflects. The "lone wolf" group showed greater self-sufficiency, combined with relative inability to control social situations, as compared with those who committed crime with accomplices.

The findings of this and other studies suggest that personality structure in some instances may determine the social area in which conformity is most difficult. Since personality is the product of the interaction between social influences and organic needs, it must follow that the molding of the personality so that it can adjust in a given culture can be observed and predicted by accurate evaluation of social forces at work. If the organic needs are now elusive and difficult to define, their functions and effects can be progressively well determined in proportion to increasing accuracy in evaluating the social forces. If, eventually, the molding of personality can be observed and predicted, in turn, it would seem that the social forces or environment could be manipulated to control personality maturation, within biological limits. The growth and prevention of maladjusted, asocial, and antisocial personalities would of necessity be basic with the growing child.