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Parolees' Cognitive Structure —

Second Report of the Study on Rehabilitation

Processes of Parolees

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I. Objectives of the Study

In Japan, over a half of the prisoners are released on parole before the sentence expires. The application of parole is far more frequent in the case of long-termers. All the parolees are placed for the remainder of the sentence under supervision. In general, such parole supervision is carried out by volunteers with collaboration and supervision of professional parole officers.

The whole project of the study was intended to throw light on processes of parolees' reinstatement in society by an investigation of social and psychological facets of such released offenders with special attention to their subjective viewpoints and experience. Apart from the previous report in 1974, which made more or less general observation, the current part of study focuses on how parolees perceive their self, corrections and society. For this purpose, the second report dealt mainly with unexplored part of the data collected from parolees by means of a psychological test called "semantic differential". A part of our efforts was devoted also to ascertaining how far volunteers supervising parolees could recognize real state of offenders under supervision.

II. Method

A total of 363 offenders were sampled randomly from 30 parole offices in the country. They were under parole supervision at the time of inquiry (January 31, 1973) for a sentence of imprisonment for life, or four years or more. With a very few exceptions, the period from the time of release to the date of inquiry ranged between three months and three years. At the same time another set of questionnaire was administered on the 363 volunteers who supervised the abovementioned subjects. Additional data were collected from official case records.

The inquiry of semantic differential was made at the last part of the parolees' questionnaire on four concepts most relevant to them i.e., "me", "prison", "society" and "parole supervision". In order to quantify and compare connotative or subjective meaning of the four stimulus words, a set of twelve scales common to the four concepts were prepared. Each scale has a pair of polar adjectives such as bright/dark, fair/unfair, and the like, with seven grades in between so that the parolee may choose the one which appropriately represents his subjective assessment of the concept in question.

III. Result

Of the 363 subjects so inquired, 282 persons, or 78 percent, were found to have given complete response to the semantic differential schedule. All the analysis of semantic differential summarized below is related to these 282 persons.

1. Profiles of the Four Concepts:

Figure 1 shows profiles of the four stimulus words (concepts) drawn on the basis of mean score of the 282 parolees in each scale. The figure seems to indicate that both "me" and "society" are characterized by positive assessment in almost all scales. On the other hand, "prison" is perceived positively in those scales related to what is generally regarded as potency, whereas negatively in those other scales indicating receptivity dimension. The profile of "parole supervision" shows a remarkable fluctuation. While it represents positive assessment in most scales, mean scores in pleasantness and agitatedness scales are relatively low. It should also be noted that the upper half of the profile of "parole supervision" somewhat resembles the counterpart of "prison" at a relatively higher score level.

A comparison of such findings regarding "prison", "society" and "parole supervision" with responses by inmates of prisons and juvenile classification homes in previous studies did not reveal any notable differences irrespective of the differences in status and age levels of the groups thus inquired.

2. Factor Analysis and Semantic Space:

Then factor analysis was carried out by centroid method with a program to derive three factors for each of the four concepts. In consequence, the meaning of three factors turned out to be common throughout the four concepts although the order of factor loading differed from one concept to another.

The interpreted meanings of the three factors and their key scales which appeared in all concepts are as follows:

(R) Factor (Receptivity)—pleasant/unpleasant

friendly/unfriendly

bright/dark

(E) Factor (Evaluation)—fair/unfair

kind/cruel

(P) Factor (Potency) — large/small

rough/mild

Figure 2 shows co-ordinates (connotative locations) of the four concepts in so-called semantic space constructed with the three factor-dimensions on the basis of the mean scores of those key scales. As demonstrated in that figure, the assessment of self by parolees is quite comparable with "parole supervision" both on (E) and (P) dimensions while it is close to "society" on (R) dimension. "Society" ranks highest on (R) and (P) dimensions whereas it is nearly as low as "prison" on (E) dimension. "Prison," in turn, is isolated remarkably from the three other concepts particularly on (R) dimension.

The distance from origin to the co-ordinates of each concept was calculated as a tentative index of overall positive perception integrating the three dimensions. Such a distance was greatest for "society" followed by "me" and "parole supervision". "Prison" found itself conspicuously closer to the origin than the others.

3. Levels of Assessment and Background of Individuals:

For the next step, the 282 subjects were divided into high and low groups on the basis of the individual scores of each semantic differential factor, and the relationship between tendencies in cognition and selected variables was examined by a χ^2 (chi-square) test. Such variables include eight individual scores derived from another factor analysis carried out previously on a number of other variables, several individual attributes, and levels of adjustment in society.

As a result, those factors in which a high individual score was correlated with categories indicating better social adjustment were identified as (E) factor of self and (R) factors of society and parole supervision. On the other hand, the assessment of self on (R) dimension and of parole supervision on (E) dimension appeared to be correlated inversely with the adjustment. Other semantic differential factors were found to be in neutral to the level of social adjustment, or major variables indicating it. It is worthy of special attention that those who showed indication of poor adjustment tended to assess "parole supervision" highly on (E) dimension and conversely on (R) dimension.

An examination of how the mean score of each semantic differential factor changes after return to society revealed an uneven development. It was noticed, for instance, that (R) and (E) scores of "me" were on the increase whereas (P) scores of both "society" and "parole supervision" decreased as time went on although in most factors a considerable fluctuation was observed during the three-year period.

4. Analysis of Cognitive Patterns:

Of the four concepts, the present study paid special attention to "self" and "society" as they were perceived by parolees. Thus, four response patterns of individuals were formulated for each of (R) and (E) dimensions by a combination of positive or negative cognition of "self" and "society". Cross tabulation was made of these patterns with major variables as stated above. Consequently it was observed that patterns formed by the combination of (+-) or (-+) contrasted signs, rather than of (++) or (--) signs, on either (R) or (E) dimension in the cognition of "self" and "society" had a greater significance in determining the level of adjustment. In other words, the relative gap between cognitive levels of "self" and "society" has a far greater relevance with indicatives of social adjustment than overall positive or negative cognition of the both concepts. Symptoms hindering social adjustment were seen more frequently, and with a statistically significant level of difference, in self (+)/society(-) pattern in (R) dimension and society(+)/self (-) pattern in (E) dimension than vice versa.

5. Volunteer's Understanding:

In this study only a minor part of the total efforts was directed to the purpose of investigating how correctly the volunteers were able to recognize the real state of affairs of parolees under their charge. So, still much of that respect is left to future research.

An analysis was made as to how the judgment of the volunteer differed from reality perceived by the parolee regarding matters such as his experience of crises after release, willingness and evaluation of keeping contact with the volunteer, feeling of dissatisfaction with his life, and the like. Furthermore, a comparison was made between volunteers and professional parole officers in respect to their diagnosis as to how far the parolee under their charge had achieved rehabilitation. The outcome revealed considerable difficulties that volunteers had in comprehending problems—especially of inner nature—of the parolee and their optimistic tendency which had apparently stemmed from such insufficient understanding.

Figure 1
PAROLEES' PERCEPTION OF FOUR
CONCEPTS QUANTIFIED BY SEMANTIC
DIFFERENTIAL SCALES

N = 282

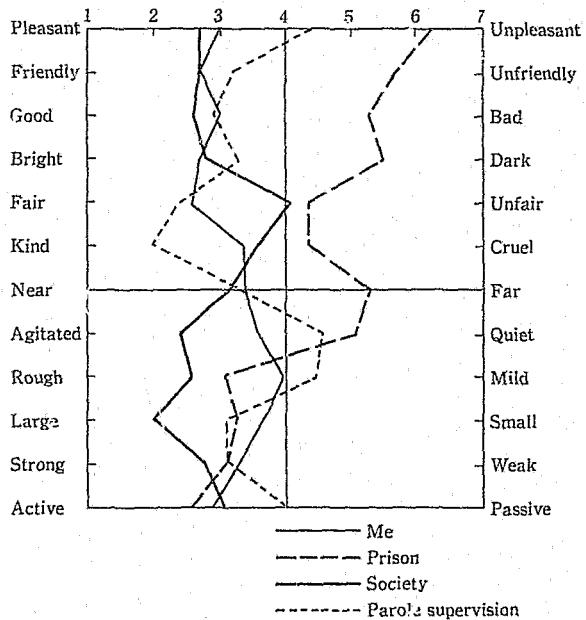
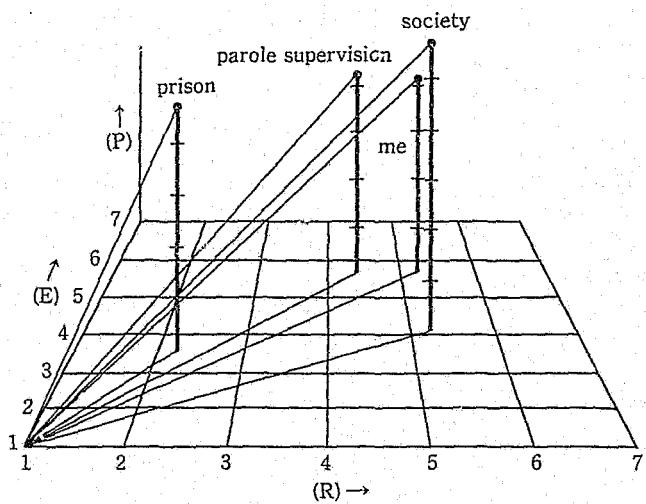


Figure 2
Co-ordinates of the
Four Concepts



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