

67360

AN ANALYSIS OF PRISON STAFF, PSYCHOLOGISTS AND
INMATES: COMMONALITIES AND DISSIMILARITIES

A Report Offered in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements of the Course
Correctional Administration
Corrections 540

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SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Rotter Incomplete Sentences and the 16-PF were used to examine the personality characteristics of correctional officers, newly-admitted inmates, parole violators, and psychologists of Ohio Penitentiary. The following report presents an analysis of that data.

Mixed results were found to support the hypothesis that authoritarianism and the culture of poverty were operating in the personality of inmates and officers. Inmates and officers, however, were far more similar to one another than they were to psychologists. The officers and inmates seem to come from a similar cultural background although the effects of institutionalization were telling. Parole violators showed considerable more pathology. They viewed the parole situation as negative although they felt more positively toward the parole officer.

The need to develop more discriminating and sophisticated techniques in future research is cited.

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Part I

Introduction and Statement of the Problem

The primary purpose of the present study was to examine the personality characteristics of newly hired correctional officers employed by Ohio Penitentiary in April, 1971. It was hypothesized that personality instruments would reveal few differences between the correctional officers and newly admitted inmates largely due to the leveling influence of two variables - authoritarianism and what has been called "the culture of poverty" (Lewis - 1969).

In addition, a group of psychologists and technical parole violators was examined, the idea being that psychologists would offer an excellent contrasting sample to the variables of authoritarianism and poverty and that parole violators would show how the effects of prisonization interacted with the two variables.

Authoritarianism (Adorno - 1969) has been described as a cluster of values, attitudes, and beliefs which characterize the "potentially fascistic" individual. The cluster includes such things as Conventionalism, a rigid adherence to conventional values; Submission, an uncritical attitude toward idealized moral authorities; Aggression, a tendency to condemn people who violate conventional values; Anti-intracceptions, an opposition to the imaginative and tender-minded; Superstition, the belief in mystical determinants; Power, the tendency to deny any weakness; Cynicism, the inclination toward sarcasm and a negative view of human nature; Projectivity, the belief in the dangerousness of the world; and Sex, and exaggerated concern with sexual "goings - on". Such individuals tend to be rigid, covertly hostile, anxious, and ascribe to dichotomous thinking. Their opposite is found in a kind of democratic personality which tends to be considerably more optimistic, free thinking, and unconventional.

Lewis (1969) has described the culture of poverty. He hypothesizes that membership in a group that has been poor for more than one generation constitutes belonging to a separate culture even when the group is exposed to affluence as it is in the United States. Many studies have identified some seventy traits that characterize the members of such a subculture. In America these individuals tend to mistrust politicians and intellectuals. Although gregarious, their attitude toward the future tends toward fatalism. Thus, their concentration is upon the present and they are often called hedonistic. There is an inclination toward impulsivity and like the authoritarian, a deep need to deny any weakness especially in men. In addition they also tend to be conservative in their values despite their poverty.

It has been said that "the only thing that is worse than a convict is his keeper". There may be some truth to the statement, despite its simplistic negativism, in that both tend to be more like than unlike. It is felt that both come from an economic class which provides a basis for far more commonality (authoritarianism and poverty) than simple incarceration would for dissimilarity. They both enter the correctional system because they are poor and unskilled. One group enters by chance; the other by choice.

Part II

Method

Instruments

Two instruments were used to examine the various groups. The first, the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (Cattell - 1957) is a fairly well standardized personality test which examines such variables as introversion-extraversion, intelligence, tension, emotional stability, and group dependency. The second instrument is a form of the popular incomplete sentences (Rotter - 1950). In this test there is a stem such as "I like..." and the subject has to complete the sentence. The sentences are scored by reference to a series of representative norms derived from maladjusted and healthy groups. It tends to be more subjective than the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16-PF).

These tests were used because they are short, easily understood, require few literary skills, and can be administered in a group. Despite these virtues we were unable to administer the 16-PF to the correctional officers due to the pressure of their training schedule.¹

1 There were other considerations also. This is a pilot study. To our knowledge correctional officers at Ohio Penitentiary have never been tested before. In the interest of future research it was to our advantage to make this first task as pleasant as possible for the officers. Although they tended to be more cooperative than we expected, we still recognized that Psychology's reputation in the prison tended to be negative and that psychologists were viewed with suspicion.

Subjects

The incomplete sentences, however, were administered to the officers. The total number of officers participating was 15 (see figure 1) which constituted the entire in-service training class.

We then administered the test to a group of thirty-three newly-admitted inmates in their first week of residence. By this time they were used to such testing and accepted the task readily. From the past year's intake we selected some thirty technical parole violators to whom we administered this test. This, by far, was the most uncooperative group and one third of them refused to participate, most feeling that their answers would be communicated to the Parole Board despite the fact that anonymity was assured.² Because of extraneous interests we departed from procedure at this point and introduced a questionnaire (see appendix) concerning their feelings toward parole and the parole officer.

Psychologists were easy to test and we got six to complete the sentences and seven to fill out the 16-PF. Since the job of the psychologist is to predict, we asked them to fill out the same questionnaire given to the parole violators in the way that they expected the violators to complete it.

Analysis of the Data

As mentioned, the incomplete sentences are scored in terms of pathology. The higher the score, the more pathology exhibited. Generally preoccupation with psychological symptoms or deviant attitudes will earn higher scores. This test has been standardized on various populations. About 119 is the average score with 135 discriminating 75% of maladjusted individuals from adjusted.

2 The author might comment that this was one of the most hostile groups he has encountered so far - an unexpected subjective feeling.

Figure I
Rotter Means For Various Groups Examined

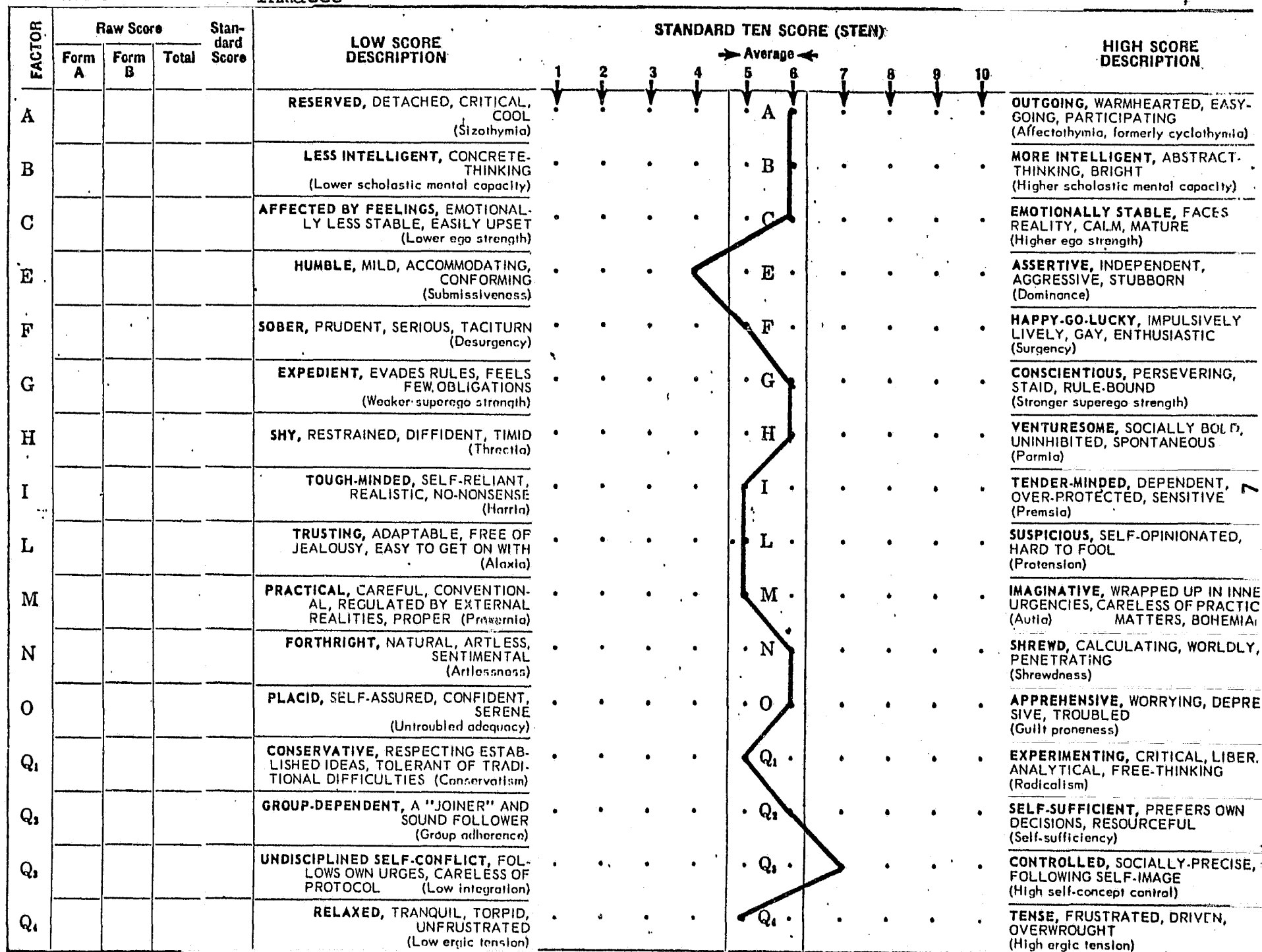
	GUARDS	NEW INMATES	PSYCHS.	P.V.	AVERAGE
Score	111.7	119.9	125.1	135.2	122.9
N	15	33	6	20	

We calculated mean scores for each of our groups (see figure 1).

The 16-PF purports not to measure pathology, per se. Rather it is simply supposed to reveal characteristics and traits. It has been standardized on such widely diverse groups as psychopaths and creative scientists. Again we calculated mean profiles (see figures 2, 3, and 4).



Figure #2 Mean Profile for New Inmates 16 P.F. TEST PROFILE



Name:

Comments:

16 PF, Forms A and B, Copyright © 1956, 1957, 1961, 1962, Institute for Personality and Ability Testing, 1602-04 Coronado Drive, Champaign, Illinois, U.S.A. All property rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A.

A sten of 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 is obtained by about 2.3% 4.4% 9.2% 15.0% 19.1% 19.1% 15.0% 9.2% 4.4% 2.3% of adults

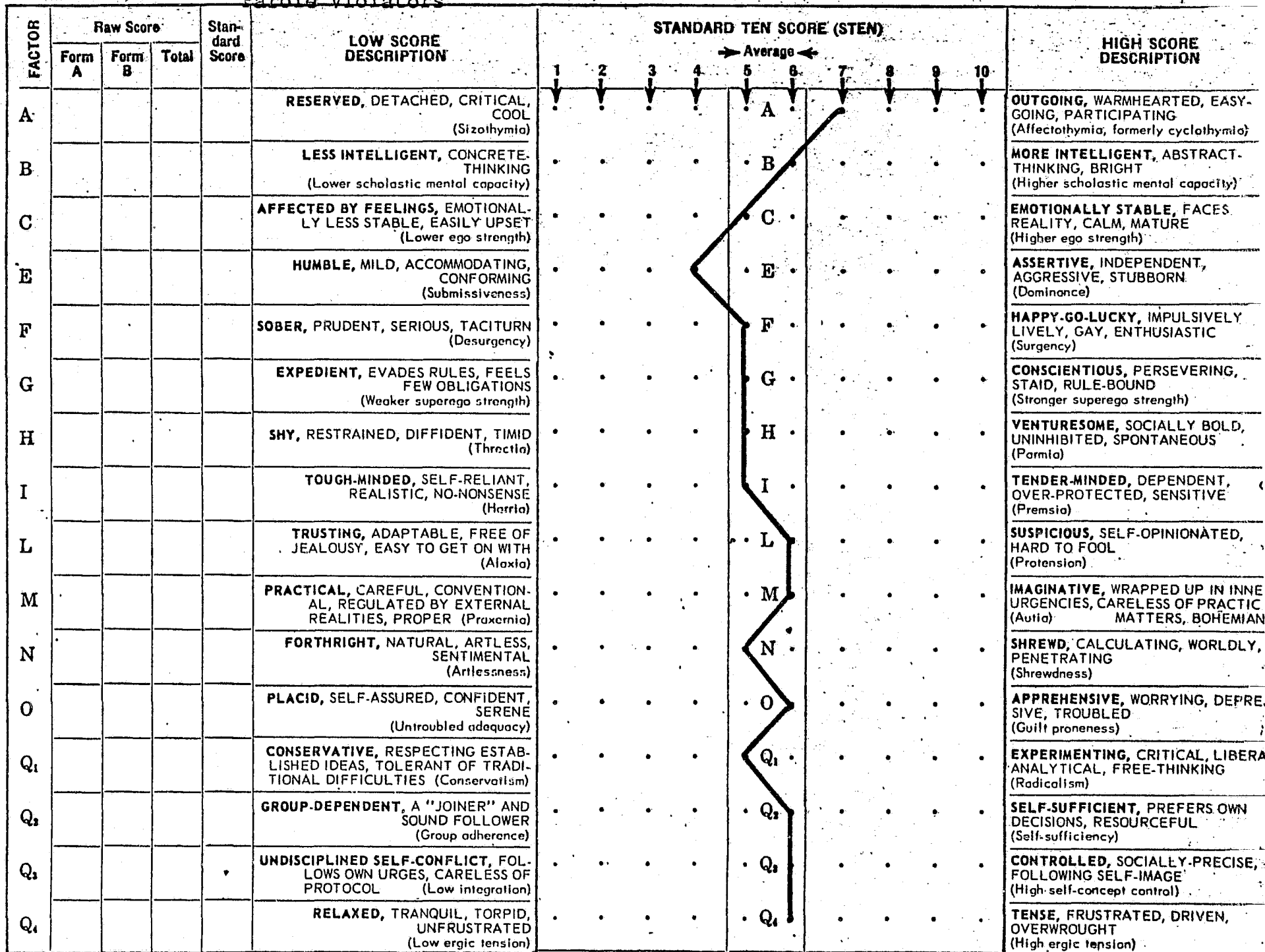
16 PF-ABp-6A

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Figure #3 Mean Profile for
Parole Violators

16 P.F. TEST PROFILE

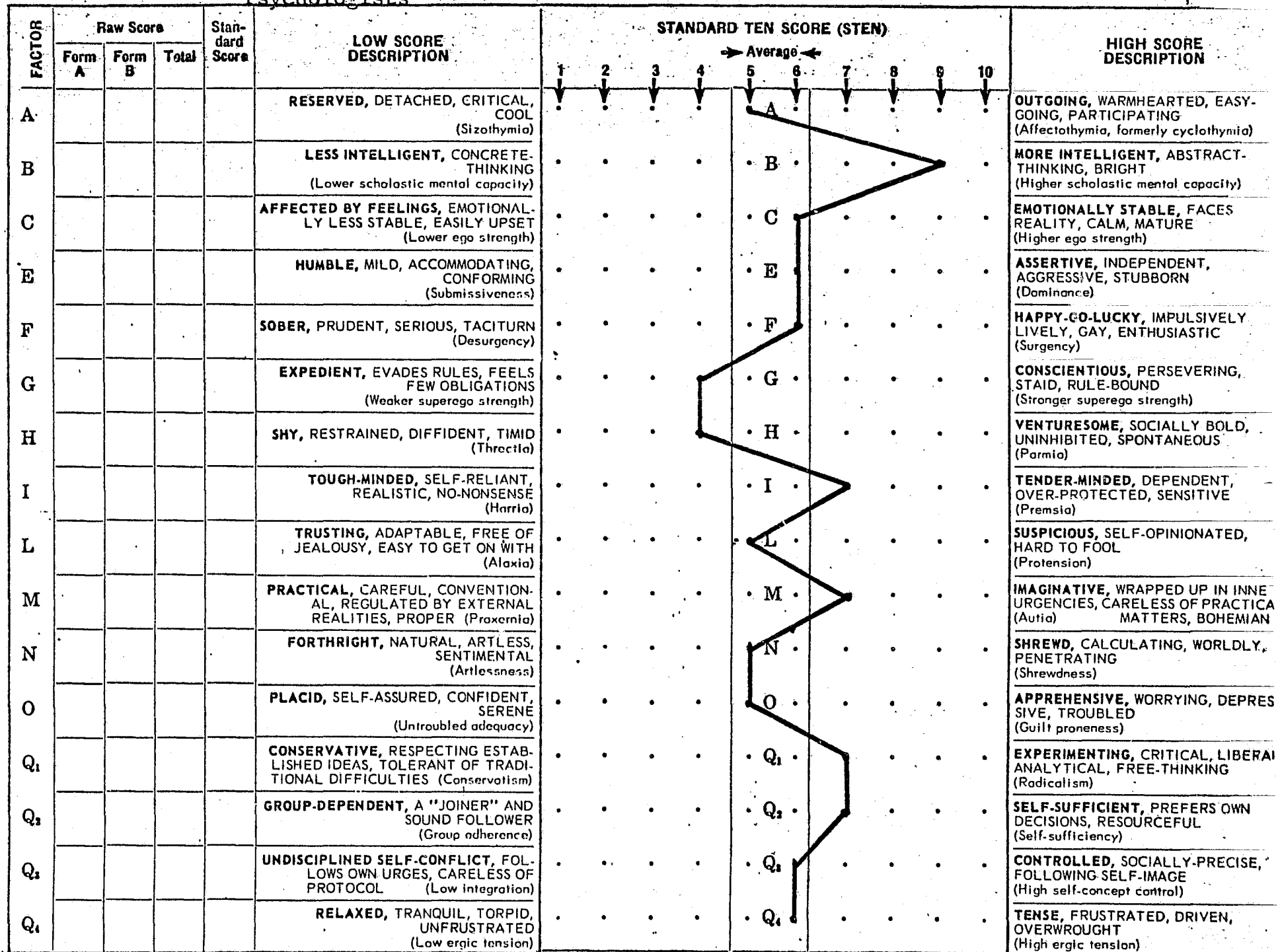


Name: _____
Comments: _____



Figure #4 Mean Profile for
Psychologists

16 P.F. TEST PROFILE

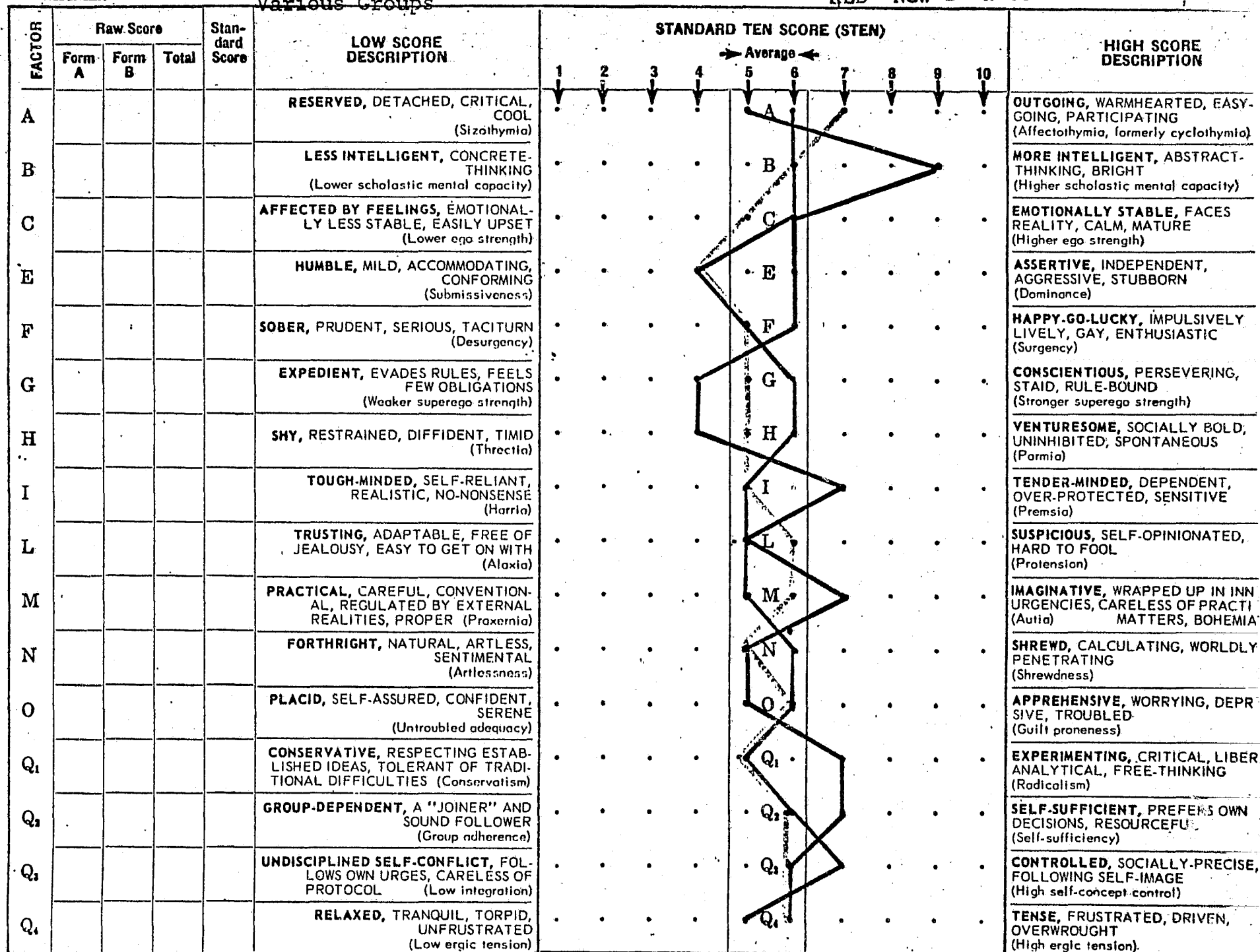


Name: _____
Comments: _____



FIGURE #5 Mean Profiles for 16 P.F. TEST PROFILE
Various Groups

BLUE- Parole Violators
RED- New Inmates



Name:

Comments:

Part III

Results and Discussions

The means on the incomplete sentences ranged from 111.7 for the correctional officers to 135.2 for the parole violators. For all groups the mean was 122.9. New inmates averaged 119.9 and psychologists were next to the highest group with 125.1. Given the hypothesis that the authoritarian personality should display more pathology, our results are not in the expected direction. Although our guards were similar in their scores to newly admitted inmates (111.7 vs. 119.9), we would expect this similarity to occur at a higher place on the pathology scale if authoritarianism was involved. The hypothesis predicts that the rank order should be (1) psychologists, (2) guards, (3) new inmates, and (4) parole violators. With the exception of the parole violators, the found order is actually somewhat reversed - (1) guards, (2) new inmates, (3) psychologists.

If results are rounded, no group achieved a score which would identify it as psychiatrically ill although psychologists and parole violators are above the mean for the general population. Actually each group arrives at its score in a different way.

The hypothesis of authoritarianism predicts an emphasis upon masculinity among men. The variable which we have called the culture of poverty, predicts a focussing upon here and now with little concern for the future and a preoccupation with pleasure and concreteness.

With the exception of psychologists, all groups tended to give short answers. Psychologists tended to qualify their responses more. For example, in response to question #19, Other people..... One psychologist answered ".....usually like me when they get to know me". The other groups answered in a much more simplistic, concrete, and direct way such as, Other people..... ".....are good." In general, psychologists tended to focus more on the abstract such as political problems (I feel..."that the leaders of the world play insensitive (and insensible) games").

The other groups focussed much more on the here and now and the concrete (I feel..."...good mostly."). With reference to the hypothesis concerning the culture of poverty, these results are in the expected direction.

Three main themes recur with the correctional officer - money, automobiles, and women. These are the themes which often characterize the lower middle and lower classes. Newly admitted inmates focussed on their new situation (I want to know..."...when I am going to get out of here"). Parole violators are more mixed in their interests and in general show more pathology (I want to know..."...if every one have problems"). Their focus was not so much on parole (the past) as it was on what was to come next (the future).

We find mixed support for our hypotheses. The parole violators (a group that has manipulated itself back into an authoritarian atmosphere) do show more pathology. However, we would not expect psychologists to show as much conflict as they do. The correctional officers do seem to respond in simplistic conventional terms but without any great conflict.

The most reasonable conclusion to be drawn is that we are mixing several things at once without adequate discrimination - educational level, different culture concerns, and conflict.

The 16-PF

Figure #5 shows more clearly that we are dealing with different culture groups but none strikingly different from the general population. Psychologists, from the 16-PF, can be described as bright, expedient, shy, over-protected, imaginative, experimenting, and self-sufficient. None of the other groups show deviations of this sort. New inmates tend to be humble and conforming and controlled. Parole violators also tend to be conforming.

Goffman (1961) tells us that the total institution is characterized by stripping and tests of obedience. Obediant, conforming behavior is expected of the prison inmate and is rewarded. These

two traits also characterize the authoritarian.

It is difficult to tell which comes first here - the chicken or the egg. We do not know whether the prison creates the submissiveness (authoritarianism) or whether submissiveness characterizes persons who are entering the system. Probably both processes are involved. At any rate the end result seems to be just what is required in the prison (submissiveness and conformity), as seen in the returned parole violators, but these traits may not be particularly useful in adjustment to civilian life.

It is certainly not difficult to see why psychologists may have trouble adjusting to the rigid rules of their job. Their tendency to be shy and covertly manipulative, however, may have great survival value in such an environment.

Authoritarianism, the Culture of Poverty, and Prison: Conclusion

It is felt that both newly-admitted inmates and correctional officers have more in common than they have dissimilarities. Artificially, their concerns are somewhat different because of the incarceration of the inmates but both seem to engage in less abstract, present oriented, concrete thinking, which characterizes the lower, less educated class. They seem to come from the same environment with education being an important variable. Parole violators also share many characteristics in common with them but also seem to be much more disorganized and conflicted. Whether their experience with prison, their return, or their personalities, per se, is the critical variable is open to conjecture but they do seem ill equipped to deal with civilian life.

Psychologists seem to have wider horizons and different concerns but are also more conflicted. In general, the data lend some support to Miller's ideas of lower class focal concerns.³

3 Miller, S. M. "The American lower classes: a typological approach" found in Reissman, F., Cohen, J., and Pearl, A. Mental Health of the Poor. New York: The Free Press, 1964, pp 139-154.

Parole, the parole violator, and the psychologist

Research has indicated that at least with delinquent boys and probation, the experience of supervision in the community is viewed with hostility although the supervising agent is seen positively.⁴

While we had the opportunity we decided to see if we could get similar findings with adult parole violators. We administered a questionnaire (see appendix) to twenty violators which was specifically designed to find out their feelings toward parole, the officer, and their own needs.

Eighty-six percent decided that they would rather see men released with flat time rather than parole, however, well over half felt that the officer usually liked them, respected them, and did not harass them. Their problems revolved about drinking and employment (seventy-one percent endorsed these two). In general they wanted more freedom and yet more support from the officer. Strangely enough, fourteen percent asked that the officer be more strict.

Psychologists felt that the violators would be much more negative toward their officer than they actually were, the majority feeling that the violators would report (for whatever reason) that the officer was authoritarian, vindictive, and without any great liking for the parolee. How much this reflects the psychologists' own feelings toward parole violators is a very real question.

Implications for future research

Interest is expanding in viewing the prison as a total institution with staff and inmates alike being effected by their small community. Yet there is a great research lag in this field. Part of the problem has been the development of proper hardware (techniques) for investigation. There are many confounding variables which must be eliminated.

⁴ From a talk given by Mr. Scholink at Xavier University, February, 28, 1970 citing Stanton Wheeler's "Controlling Delinquents" (1965).

It must be recognized that the prison is a variegated place with disparate groups coming together. Our results point to how different attitudes among staff and inmates can come into conflict. It is hard to sort out how much prison leads to pathology or to health but it is easy to see that the total institution does have its impact creating, as it were, expedient psychologists and submissive inmates.

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APPENDIX

The following pages contain a copy of the Rotter Incomplete Sentences Blank, the questionnaire used with the parole violators and the psychologists, and the results of that questionnaire.

[]

INCOMPLETE SENTENCES BLANK — ADULT FORM

Name _____ Sex _____ Age _____ Marital Status _____

Place _____ Date _____

Complete these sentences to express your real feelings. Try to do every one.

Be sure to make a complete sentence.

1. I like _____
2. The happiest time _____
3. I want to know _____
4. Back home _____
5. I regret _____
6. At bedtime _____
7. Men _____
8. The best _____
9. What annoys me _____
10. People _____
11. A mother _____
12. I feel _____
13. My greatest fear _____
14. In school _____
15. I can't _____

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QUESTIONNAIRE

	NEVER (1)	OCCASIONALLY (2)	ALWAYS (3)
1. My parole officer harrassed me about bills, associates, how I spent my time, etc.	(1)	(2)	(3)
2. My parole officer would not listen to my suggestions - he only wanted his own way.	(1)	(2)	(3)
3. I had the feeling that he didn't like me.	(1)	(2)	(3)
4. I had the feeling that he didn't respect me.	(1)	(2)	(3)
5. He threw up my past to me.	(1)	(2)	(3)

A. I had significant problems with:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (1) Employment | (5) Parole Officer |
| (2) Family (Wife Included) | (6) Associates |
| (3) Sponsor | (7) Parole Rules In General |
| (4) Drinking | (8) Police Harrassment |

B. I believe that men should be released with flat time.	TRUE (T)	FALSE (F)
--	-------------	--------------

6. My parole would have been a success if my parole officer would have _____.

Parole Violator Responses

QUESTIONNAIRE

	NEVER (1)	OCCASIONALLY (2)	ALWAYS (3)
1. My parole officer harrassed me about bills, associates, how I spent my time, etc.	(1) 43%	(2) 48%	(3) 10%
2. My parole officer would not listen to my suggestions - he only wanted his own way.	(1) 43%	(2) 33%	(3) 24%
3. I had the feeling that he didn't like me.	(1) 57%	(2) 29%	(3) 14%
4. I had the feeling that he didn't respect me.	(1) 48%	(2) 29%	(3) 24%
5. He threw up my past to me.	(1) 52%	(2) 29%	(3) 19%

A. I had significant problems with:

(1) Employment 33%	(5) Parole Officer 24%
(2) Family (Wife Included) 29%	(6) Associates 19%
(3) Sponsor 0%	(7) Parole Rules In General 19%
(4) Drinking 38%	(8) Police Harrassment 24%

B. I believe that men should be released with flat time.	TRUE (T) 86%	FALSE (F) 14%
--	-----------------	------------------

6. My parole would have been a success if my parole officer would have _____

- the officer could do nothing. 9%
- the officer should provide more understanding. 27%
- the officer should give more freedom. 27%
- the officer should be more strict. 14%
- the officer should tell the truth. 5%
- (failed to respond to this question) 19%

How the Psychologists Predicted QUESTIONNAIRE

	NEVER (1)	OCCASIONALLY (2)	ALWAYS (3)
1. My parole officer harrassed me about bills, associates, how I spent my time, etc.	(1) 42%	(2) 56%	(3) -
2. My parole officer would not listen to my suggestions - he only wanted his own way.	(1) -	(2) 70%	(3) 30%
3. I had the feeling that he didn't like me.	(1) -	(2) 84%	(3) 16%
4. I had the feeling that he didn't respect me.	(1) -	(2) 30%	(3) 70%
5. He threw up my past to me.	(1) 15%	(2) 70%	(3) 15%

A. I had significant problems with:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| (1) Employment 56% | (5) Parole Officer 28% |
| (2) Family (Wife Included) none | (6) Associates 28% |
| (3) Sponsor 14% | (7) Parole Rules In General 56% |
| (4) Drinking 70% | (8) Police Harrassment 56% |

.. I believe that men should be released with flat time.	TRUE (T) 42%	FALSE (F) 56%
--	-----------------	------------------

6. My parole would have been a success if my parole officer would have _____

provide more understanding. 43%

provide more freedom. 43%

been fair. 14%

END