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## The Organization of Function in the Delinquent

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be concluded that the velocity of association in this type of test varies normally, — within the restriction, that inhibition varies proportionally with time.

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## THE ORGANIZATION OF FUNCTION IN THE DELINQUENT

NEWELL C. KEPHART

The thesis in this study was that juvenile delinquents display personality defects which may be described as disorganization of the mental data. Such disorganization is thought of as a disconnectedness between the elements of the psychic material. It is thought that delinquent subjects as a group will give evidence in performance of less dynamic dependency among these data than will non-delinquent subjects as a group.

It was thought likely that evidence of disorganization would appear wherever a mental process which usually flows smoothly may be measurably disturbed in the direction of less smoothness. In any process requiring the use of many elements, smoothness of the process might depend in part at least upon the degree of connectedness between them. Two such processes have been chosen for investigation. The smoothness of flow of the processes required in verbal association has been investigated by means of the association-motor technique.

The subjects in this part of the study were 47 randomly selected delinquent boys at the Iowa Training School for Boys who were tested within two weeks of their admittance to the school. This delinquent group was compare with a non-delinquent group of 39 subjects of similar age and grade range selected at random from the school population of an Iowa city. The data indicate an increase of the delinquent group over the control group in mean score. The mean of the control group was 215 while that of the delinquent group was 412. The difference between these means is 11.1 times its probable error. This would indicate that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of these two groups.

Smoothness of flow of mental processes was further investigated

by means a spontaneous speech situation, the mean number of words spoken in a given time and the ratio of the time spent in speaking to the time silent being measured. Twenty randomly selected boys from the Training school and a similar number so selected from a rural school system were used as subjects. Each boy was asked to speak for two minutes on the subject "trees" the results being recorded with a dictaphone. The non-delinquent group averaged 169 words while the delinquent group averaged only 124 words. The difference was 4.03 times its probable error. The average ratio of time spent in speaking to time spent silent for the non-delinquents was .67 and for the delinquents .42. This difference was 7.09 times its probable error.

It was thought probable that disorganization would be shown in a perceptual process where synthesis of elements into a whole is required. For this purpose the Gestalt Completion Test devised by Street was used. This test was administered to 30 randomly selected subjects at the training school and a comparison of this mean with the authors norms made. The mean of the delinquents was 1.02 score units less than the norm which gave a critical ratio of 4.25.

In order to determine the connectedness which past experiences have with present problems a word list given by Hartmann was used. This list of nonsense words was composed by rearranging the sounds in the first phrase of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. The subject is asked to lead the list of words, a very difficult task unless the connection with the address is seen. By making the pertinent part of the address present in immediate past experience it was thought that those individuals in whom past elements were more connected with present problems would see this connection more easily. The experiment was administered to 25 delinquents and 25 non-delinquents. The results showed that whereas none of the delinquents saw the connection 36% of the non-delinquent subjects were successful.

In social relations a modification of the method of Moreno was used. This consisted of having the subject write down the names of his five best friends. From this the number of choices made within the group, the number of the group choosing the subject, and the number of mutual choices were computed. The test was administered to a group who had been in the Training school for a period of 12 to 13 months, and a non-delinquent group from a public school. The trends for the two groups showed opposite results the delinquents displaying a concentration at the end of

the scale indicating few contacts whereas the non-delinquent group displayed a concentration at the end indicating more contacts.

The data indicated evidence of disorganization in (1) The smoothness of flow of the processes required in verbal association, (2) the smoothness of flow of the processes required in spontaneous speech, (3) a perceptual process in which synthesis of elements is necessary, (4) the connectedness between past elements and present problems, (5) social relationships.

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## HANDEDNESS IN THE FIRST TWO YEARS OF LIFE

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A study of handedness in the first two years of life should contribute to a systematic description of the development of handedness at this period, factual information concerning which has heretofore been lacking. In this approach handedness has been defined in terms of a psychological concept and is limited to overtly discernible handed behavior.

The part of the study to be reported here has been organized in order to attempt an answer to the following questions. (1) At these age levels what constitutes a response relevant to or indicative of handedness? Until now authors have based their judgment on widely varied criteria, such as motility, reaching, or some other arbitrarily chosen activity. (2) How does handedness develop? (3) How consistent is a child in the use of his hands? (4) Can handedness be tested?

In our as yet unfinished study, we have endeavored to meet these questions by constructing a handedness test based upon specific handed responses, by observations of uncontrolled handed behavior, and by records of handed behavior under controlled conditions.

The handedness test aims to be descriptive as well as diagnostic. Items have been chosen from a variety of behavior categories and have, to a certain extent, been scaled in difficulty. The categories used were: (1) *spontaneous behavior*, such as warding off; (2) *gratification of needs*, such as sucking; (3) *just maturing behavior*; (4) *general activity* (behavior adequate to the ability of the child); (5) *socialized behavior or habits*, such as eating or