

1968

## Brief Criminal Attitude Scale

A. J. W. Taylor

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarlycommons.law.northwestern.edu/jclc>

 Part of the [Criminal Law Commons](#), [Criminology Commons](#), and the [Criminology and Criminal Justice Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

A. J. W. Taylor, Brief Criminal Attitude Scale, 59 J. Crim. L. Criminology & Police Sci. 37 (1968)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Northwestern University School of Law Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology by an authorized editor of Northwestern University School of Law Scholarly Commons.

## A BRIEF CRIMINAL ATTITUDE SCALE\*

A. J. W. TAYLOR

Dr. Taylor is Head of the Student Counselling Service at the Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, and a part-time psychotherapist to an institution for delinquent girls. He is a former university lecturer in psychology, prison psychologist, and probation officer who has authored many papers on various aspects of clinical and criminal psychology.

In the research paper presented here, Dr. Taylor gives the results of a brief criminal attitude scale. It consists of a number of items that criminals were heard to express, and it was administered to various administratively classified groups of convicted offenders. The scale was also given to non-criminal groups in which reasonable precautions were taken to ensure that they were in fact non-criminal in behaviour as well as in law.

Hardened offenders tend to have firm attitudes and opinions about the judiciary, the police, the probation service, the prison officers, and other figures of authority with whom they come into daily contact, and they also tend to have deeply ingrained feelings of despair about ever changing their own behaviour. These attitudes and opinions were therefore built into a criminal attitude scale (C.A.T.S.) with the object not only of assessing the degree of criminality of any given offender, but also of reflecting changes of attitude as a result of treatment or contamination. The test did, in fact, prove to be helpful as one of several pre- and post-therapy measures in an experiment to evaluate group psychotherapy with borstal girls.<sup>1</sup> The C.A.T.S. consisted of 15 attitudes which were

often expressed by criminals to the author over many years, and the attitudes were arranged in such a way as to avoid a response set by the subjects. The latter were merely asked to signify their agreement or disagreement with each of the 15 attitudes which were listed before them. Eysenck's introduction to the T.R. Scale was used in the original presentation of the C.A.T.S., but subsequently it was simplified. Different forms of the C.A.T.S. were also prepared to enable different groups of offenders to respond from their different probation, borstal, prison, or non-criminal backgrounds without changing the essence of the scale.

The composite form of the C.A.T.S. is as follows:

### Attitude Scale

There are 15 statements below which represent opinions that some people hold. Would you please say if you agree or disagree with the opinions by putting your mark in the appropriate column alongside each one. Remember that there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers, but your own opinion is the one that counts. Answer all questions and be frank. Thank you for your help.

	<i>True</i>	<i>False</i>	<i>Key</i>
1. I deserved my sentence/criminals deserve their sentence.	....	....	(-)
2. I did not want the police to catch me/criminals do not want the police to catch them.	....	....	(+ for females only)
3. There are bigger criminals outside prison than inside it.	....	....	
4. The Judge or Magistrate sentences you/criminals, not the Probation Officer.	....	....	(-)
5. The police hound you if you have a criminal record.	....	....	(+)
6. The authorities/officers are interested in you/criminals, and try to help you/them.	....	....	(-)
7. A fixed sentence is better than an indeterminate sentence.	....	....	(+)

\* This research was supported by the Secretary for Justice and various members of his research, disciplinary, and field officers. A grant was provided by the Internal Research Committee of the Victoria University of Wellington for the employment of Mr. D. Hoddinott, B.A. and Mrs. G. Maxwell, M.A. as research assistants on the statistical data.

<sup>1</sup> Taylor, *An Evaluation of Group Psychotherapy in a Girls' Borstal*, 17 INT. I. GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY 163-177 (1967).

	<i>True</i>	<i>False</i>	<i>Key</i>
8. People get sentenced on their records, not on what they have done.	....	....	(+)
9. The past must be forgotten.	....	....	
10. There is some point in planning for the future and not living from day to day	....	....	(- for females only)
11. I was able/criminals are able to get some peace when I was/they are caught.	....	....	(-)
12. Punishment begins on the day you are released from the Court/Institution.	....	....	(+)
13. Once a criminal/in trouble, always a criminal/in trouble.	....	....	(+)
14. It is the probationers/trainees/prisoners who cause the trouble for themselves, not other people.	....	....	(-)
15. Everybody knows me here: I have nothing to hide/criminals are at home in prison.	....	....	(+ for females only)

TABLE I  
CHARACTERISTICS OF FEMALE CRITERION GROUPS

	Prisoners	Borstal Trainees	Probationers	Non-Criminal Control	Total
N.	18	33	50	40	141
Age	27	17½	22	29	
Sentence	9 months to five years' imprisonment	Maximum 2 years' borstal training	Average 1.6 years' probation		

Initially the C.A.T.S. was found to have some reliability and internal validity when compared with the responses of three comparable groups of borstal girls and with other tests and scales that were used as a part of the same test battery.<sup>2</sup> Tetrachoric correlations between factors on various psychological tests and rating scales showed that those with high scores on the C.A.T.S. were inclined to be depressive, outgoing, radical, and toughminded with little concern for their personal standards of hygiene. The same subjects also had a tendency towards paranoia, excitability, and insensitivity with little interest in their own rehabilitation and much psychopathic deviation.

The C.A.T.S. was then administered to a wide range of sample groups of both sexes in an attempt to assess its validity more extensively. The sample groups consisted of five criterion groups of male criminals and three of female criminals from different penal institutions and probation centres to which they had been allocated by the classification procedures of the criminal courts and the Depart-

ment of Justice (See Tables I and II). The allocations were based upon the kind of offenses which offenders had committed, the security, training, and treatment which the offenders required, and the institutional facilities which were available to meet their requirements.<sup>3</sup> The combined total of 230 offenders represented an acceptable proportion of the total of 5,124 prisoners and probationers who were under the care of the N.Z. Department of Justice at 31.3.66.<sup>4</sup> The non-criminal control groups consisted of 46 males and 40 females who had worked for long periods as members of the secretarial, labouring, and caretaking staff at a university. While the control sample of non-criminal males was quite comparable socio-economically with that of criminal males, the control sample for the females may well have been biased towards white collar groups. The C.A.T.S. was also administered twice within the space of four days on a test-retest reliability trial to two non-criminal groups of university students in a Sociology class.

<sup>2</sup> Described in the author's unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Victoria University of Wellington, 1965), *An Evaluation of Group Psychotherapy in a Borstal: The Arohata Project*.

<sup>3</sup> See *Classification in the Prisons*, in *PSYCHOLOGY FOR PRISON OFFENDERS*, Department of Justice, N.Z., n.d.

<sup>4</sup> Report of the Department of Justice, March 31, 1966, H.20.

TABLE II  
CHARACTERISTICS OF MALE CRITERION GROUPS

	Persistent Criminals	Senior Borstal Trainees	First Admissions To Prison	Star* Borstal Trainees	Probationers	Non-Criminal Control	Total
N.	21	50	42	37	34	46	230
Age	32	19	33	18	19	31	
Sentence	2 years to life imprisonment	Maximum 2 years' borstal training	6 months to 3 years' imprisonment	Maximum 2 years' borstal training	Average 8.1 years' probation		

\* Reported as the most hopeful prospects for reformation and rehabilitation.

TABLE III

C.A.T.S. (FEMALE SCORES)

F = 11.0 S.E. = 1.826.

Group	Prisoners 1	Borstal Trainees 2	Probationers 3	Non-Criminal Control 4
Mean	5.44	5.09	4.24	3.12
S.E. mean	.43	.36	.26	.29
* 5%	a	ab	b	c
* 1%	A	A	A	B

i.e. At the 5% level:

Group 1 differs significantly from Groups 3 and 4.

Group 2 differs significantly from Group 4.

Group 3 differs significantly from Groups 1 and 4.

At the 1% level:

Groups 1, 2, 3 differ significantly from Group 4, but not from each other.

## STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

1. An analysis was made of the responses of different groups to items on the C.A.T.S., and those items were rejected which did not clearly discriminate between the groups (i.e., items 2, 3, 9, 10, 15 for males; items 3, 9 for females). The rejection level was fixed at a variation of 15% or less in the responses between the different groups to each item, except for one item on which the variation was 30% but to which more than 50% of all groups responded in the same way. The corrected mean scores ranged on a continuum in the expected direction, with the older and more experienced prison and borstal offenders obtaining higher scores than the probationers and non-criminal controls.

2. An analysis of variance was then made of the amended scores, and significant F results were obtained above the 1% level—indicating that the

TABLE IV  
C.A.T.S. (MALE SCORES)

F = 10.21 S.E. = 1.774.

Group	Persistent Criminals 1	Senior Borstal Trainees 2	Probationers 3	Non-Criminal Control 4	First Offenders Prison 5	Star Borstal Trainees 6
Mean.....	5.29	4.02	3.21	2.91	2.62	2.49
S.E. mean.....	.39	.25	.31	.26	.27	.28
* 5%.....	a	b	c	c	c	c
* 1%.....	A	B	BC	BC	C	C

i.e. At the 5% level:

Group 1 and Group 2 differ significantly from each other and from all of the other groups.

At the 1% level:

Group 1 differs significantly from all of the other groups.

Group 2 differs significantly from Groups 5 and 6 as well as from Group 1.

TABLE V  
PRODUCT MOMENT RELIABILITY COEFFICIENT  
OF THE C.A.T.S. WITH TWO  
NON-CRIMINAL GROUPS

Test-retest with four-day interval.

	Males		Females	
	Test 1	Test 2	Test 1	Test 2
Mean. ....	3.88	3.85	4.61	4.58
S.E.m. ....	.17	.16	.18	.16
$r_{xy}$ .....	.86		.65	
N. ....	26		31	

total variance was significantly greater than that which could have been expected from combined sources of error.

3. The Duncan's Test was then applied to the statistical data.<sup>5</sup>

4. A product moment correlation coefficient of reliability was applied to the test-retest data.

#### RESULTS

*Validity:* The C.A.T.S. separated all three groups of female offenders from female non-offenders, but for the males the discrimination was between the

<sup>5</sup> The Duncan's test is a multiple range statistic which was devised from the "t" distribution. See Harter, *BIOMETRICS* (4/16/60).

persistent criminals, senior borstal trainees, and all four other groups together.

*Females* (Table III): The prisoner, borstal trainee and probationer groups differed significantly from the non-criminal group at the 1% level, but not from each other. The prisoners also differed significantly at the 5% level from the mean score of the probationers.

*Males* (Table IV): The persistent criminals and senior borstal trainees were discriminated at the 5% level from the four other groups and from each other. These results were also true at the 1% level except that the senior borstal trainees were not significantly different from the probationers and non-criminal controls.

*Reliability:* The test reliability with samples of non-criminal males and females was sufficiently high to be acceptable (Table V,  $r_{xy}$  males .86,  $r_{xy}$  females .65).

#### CONCLUSIONS

The Criminal Attitude Scale is a sufficiently valid, reliable and useful psychometric tool for assessing the degree of criminality of any groups of offenders, and it could be used in classification procedures, clinical practice, or research projects in which some degree of objectivity is required. It would be more helpful in the assessment of any given case if the total number of items were increased.