

Personality Traits of U.S. Army Prisoners

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The study of personality traits among military prisoners is both extensive and somewhat conflicting. An Army Chaplain (Berbiglia, 1971) administered the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis (Taylor, et al, 1968) to confined AWOL offenders in post stockades at Fort Bliss, Texas, and Fort Polk, Louisiana. Results revealed a similiarity in test profiles which was subsequently termed the "AWOL Syndrome." Later tests were conducted with 800 men in a Fort Bliss artillery battalion and with 803 members of an advanced Individual Training Battalion at the same installation. As a result of these studies, Berbiglia concluded that the T-JTA identified individuals with various problems who were not apparent to their company commanders. Further, he reported that AWOL rates were drastically reduced by providing counseling for those men whose test patterns matched the "AWOL Syndrome." However, additional research by Bell, Kristiansen, and Houston (1974) and Frass and Fox (1972), among others, failed to validate the "AWOL Syndrome." Additional research with military (Army/Air Force) prisoners was conducted by Gough and Peterson (1952) utilizing the Socialization Scale of the California Psychological Inventory. Results of the investigation indicated significant differences in the scale between first time offenders and recidivists. However, additional research by Thorne (1963) failed to find such differences. In light of these differences, the following two studies were undertaken at the U.S. Army Retraining Brigade (USARB), Fort Riley, Kansas, to determine if measurable differences exist between prisoners who successfully complete the USARB training program from those who do not. The USARB training program consists of 7 weeks of training designed to place a soldier under sustained physical and mental stress within a stringent military environment. This stress is considered essential to the rehabilitation process.

Methodology

In the first study (Study A), the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (Cattell, Eber, and Tatsuoka 1970) was administered to 550 prisoners prior to entering one of the eight training teams. In the second study (Study B), a battery of seven scales from the California Psychological Inventory (Gough, 1957); two scales from the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule (Edwards, 1959); Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem Scale; and Hudson's (1974) Index of Self-Esteem were administered to 260 prisoners prior to entering the USARB program.

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In both studies, all the prisoners who were administered the instrument were followed throughout the duration of the program. Upon completion of the program, the prisoners were placed into one of two groups, graduate and non-graduate, depending upon completion/noncompletion of the program. The groups were then randomly reduced to 100 in each group. All data was keypunched and analyzed utilizing the computer program for the t-test as contained in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (Nie, Hull, Jenkins, Steinbrenner, and Brent, 1975).

Findings

The results from the Sixteen Personality Factors are shown in Table 1 and the results from the other personality measures are shown in Table 2.

The results of the two studies are consistent and suggest that graduates of the retraining program have more self-control, a better sense of personal responsibility, and are more sociable than those who fail to complete the program. Nongraduates, on the other hand, tend to be more independent, more expedient, careless, indifferent, and aggressive. It is important to note that these differences exist a priori and are not casual effects of the program.

Discussion

From the results obtained from these two investigations,  It appears that individuals who complete the training successfully may well have personalities better suited to the specific requirements of the Retraining Brigade program, and probably to some extent, to the Army environment in general than their nongraduate counterparts. Today, with the Army meeting its recruitment goals with high quality accessions, a case could be made for sending only those prisoners who have the greatest potential for success to the United States Army Retraining Brigade. 

TABLE 1

Results from the Sixteen Personality Factor

Factor	Graduates (N=287) X (SD)	Nongraduates (N=263) X (SD)	F	Sig
A - Reserved/Outgoing	5.69 (1.67)	5.08 (2.04)	14.85	.0001
B - Dull/Bright	4.65 (1.69)	4.73 (1.83)	0.29	
C - Affected by Feelings/ Emotionally Stable	4.97 (1.72)	4.17 (1.95)	25.98	.0000
E - Humble/Assertive	5.13 (2.00)	5.86 (2.02)	18.15	.0000
F - Sober/Happy-Go-Lucky	5.29 (1.85)	5.17 (2.10)	0.54	
G - Expedient/Conscientious	6.22 (1.57)	5.42 (1.74)	31.86	.0000
H - Shy/Venturesome	5.63 (1.85)	5.11 (2.02)	9.56	.002
I - Tough-minded/Tender-minded	6.30 (1.52)	6.11 (1.77)	0.47	
L - Trusting/Suspicious	5.49 (1.88)	5.93 (1.96)	7.19	.007
M - Practical/Imaginative	6.23 (1.92)	6.19 (1.82)	0.05	
N - Forthright/Astute	5.84 (1.82)	6.05 (1.91)	1.77	
O - Self-Assured/Apprehensive	6.03 (1.77)	6.47 (1.93)	7.73	.005
Q ₁ - Conservative/Experimenting	5.41 (1.95)	5.54 (1.92)	0.64	
Q ₂ - Group Dependent/Self-Sufficient	5.84 (1.64)	6.62 (2.09)	23.44	.0000
Q ₃ - Undisciplined Self-Conflict/ Controlled	6.30 (1.74)	5.35 (2.04)	34.68	.0000
Q ₄ - Relaxed/Tense	5.72 (1.99)	6.25 (2.01)	9.73	.002

TABLE 2

Results from the Other Personality Measures

	Graduates (N=100)		Nongraduates (N=100)		t	Sig
	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD		
1. Index of Self-Esteem (Hudson)	26.07	12.58	28.54	13.47	-1.34	.09
2. Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale	23.50	2.54	22.91	2.51	1.65	.05
3. Autonomy Scale (Edwards)	10.40	4.57	11.90	4.51	-2.34	.01
4. Endurance Scale (Edwards)	12.74	3.26	12.55	3.04	0.43	.33
5. Responsibility Scale	21.79	5.25	20.36	5.61	1.86	.03
6. Self-Control Scale	23.64	7.52	21.90	6.98	1.70	.04
7. Social Presence Scale	34.55	5.44	34.46	5.43	.09	.47
8. Well Being Scale	28.96	5.48	27.79	6.43	1.39	.08
9. Dominance Scale	25.71	5.66	24.98	6.15	.87	.19
10. Self-Acceptance Scale	22.02	4.02	21.05	3.74	1.77	.04
11. Socialization Scale	26.90	4.99	24.98	5.38	2.62	.01

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