

Crime Panel's Next Push

by Patricia McBroom

When the National Crime Commission submits its report to President Johnson next January, it will propose a method for typing personalities that promises to update the nation's correctional system.

The aim is to tailor correctional measures to fit different types of individuals. Traditional treatment of the criminal population has been unsophisticated to say the least—"We've been firing with a shotgun," said Dr. Elmer K. Nelson, who heads the Commission's task force on corrections.

"Until we can break down the offender population," said Dr. Nelson, "we can't get very far."

The new "typology", developed by California psychologist Rita Warren, would put offenders in one of nine categories according to their style of dealing with other people, or their "interpersonal maturity."

One type is the manipulative personality—the type skilled at working others for his own purposes. Another is the anxious personality. Ideally, the first should get firm handling, greater discipline; the second more permissive treatment and tender care.

Interpersonal typing gives the system the flexibility of a variety of correction-

al treatments, said Dr. Nelson.

Though the Warren typology was based on a juvenile delinquent population, Dr. Nelson said it would be applicable to adults as well. It is now being tested on delinquents in four California locations. Complete data on the criminal repeat rate—yardstick for measuring the success of any correctional program—is not yet available, but Dr. Nelson said the differential treatment is showing a "clear advantage" over traditional methods.

From statistics released last week by the Crime Commission, it would appear that almost anything would be an advantage over current practice.

Survey Reveals . . .

In the first national survey of prisons and correction programs ever made in this country, the Commission revealed that two and a half million offenders were involved in the system last year.

Of that total, one third were in institutions, described as "often fortress-like constructions where security is the predominant goal and where rehabilitative programs are absent."

The other two-thirds were in the community, "under the supervision of overworked, underpaid and poorly trained probation and parole officers."

On the state level, the Commission established these facts:

- Only two of 50 states claim they do not put children in jails. Last year a quarter of the 400,00 children detained were locked up with hardened criminals.

- Only five states have "halfway houses" to aid offenders in making the leap from prison back into society.

- Eleven states have no probation service for adults convicted of misdemeanors and most offer it on a "spotty basis." As for felonies, half of the nation's parole officers carry case-loads exceeding 100 persons, far above the recognized standard.

- Thirty percent of all the state prisons have no vocational training.

The Commission summed up the situation on the local level by stating that more than 90% of the working personnel in jails and institutions are guards and administrators; "barely five percent" are in treatment and training. These jails are where many of the first offenders—presumably those most receptive to rehabilitation—are handled, said the report.

Dr. Nelson said this and other Commission reports will constitute a "charge" to states and the government to take action toward "profound" changes in the correctional system.

PSYCHOLOGY

Racial Reaction Pattern Studied

Negro and white Americans choose different ways of coping with stress, says a French-born Texas psychologist after a study. But Negroes may have to find new patterns of reaction as the restrictions of American society relax.

Until now, says Dr. Maurice Korman, a psychologist at the University of Texas' Southwestern Medical School, Negroes living in the United States have chosen to repress rather than express their frustrations.

While the Negro pattern was repression, the white was expression, said Dr. Korman.

He bases his conclusion on an inventory of 291 teachers—131 whites, 125 Negro and 35 Latin-American.

Asked how they usually react to stress, the whites checked such self-descriptions as: "I just let my feeling out then and there," "I behave like a child, do silly things," and "I catch

myself letting out my feelings on others."

The Negroes, on the other hand, more often choose statements like: "I make believe the problem isn't there," "I evaluate it as if I were someone else," and "The problem just vanished from my mind."

Latin-Americans fell midway between the two.

It is well documented that people living under high degrees of stress use less mature ways of handling problems, said Dr. Korman. Repression and denial can be considered less mature than their opposite—expression. Of course, he said, "if expression can get you into trouble, the best method is to swallow your frustration."

Dr. Korman said he now sees the Negro coping pattern beginning to change. Negro leaders are increasingly talking about the need for "psychologi-

cal equality"—the right to develop radical fringe groups and to express themselves whether or not they accomplish anything, he noted.

"This may be uncomfortable for other people," he said, "but in general it is more healthy."

Comparisons of Negro and white attitudes, however, pose complications for the experimenter.

Anthropologist Margaret Mead, of the American Museum of Natural History, pointed out in a telephone interview that Negroes respond differently depending on whether the experimenter is white or Negro. There is evidence, she said, that they will express themselves more fully to a Negro than to a white researcher. Dr. Mead, however, had not seen the Korman study, which was presented at a recent meeting of the National Association for Mental Health in New Orleans.