

A Group Dynamics Approach to the Treatment of Nonconformists in the Navy

J. Douglas Grant and Marguerite Q. Grant

Since 1952 the Navy has been conducting a research program¹ in the prediction and treatment of military delinquency. Three questions outline the aims of this program:

What are the personality characteristics of the recruit who will prove himself a nonconformist?

With men who demonstrate extreme nonconformity, what are the characteristics of those who will be able to modify their behavior sufficiently to adjust to the group aspects of military life?

What is the nature of the process that brings about attitudinal and behavioral change in the nonconformist so that he is able to meet the demands of military life?

This report deals with a study relevant to the second and third questions.

Camp Elliott, where the research was conducted, is a place of confinement and retraining for approximately 1000 sailors and marines who have been courtmartialled. They are confined for offenses ranging from absence without leave (about 85 per cent) to murder. The average period of confinement is about four months. Between 55 and 60 per cent of the men are restored to military duty at the termination of their confinement.

It is often assumed that the man who has offended against a military law is not the same sort of person as the civilian delinquent. While it is true that the majority of military men are confined for absence offenses, which are not civilian crimes, there is considerable evidence that civilian and military delinquent groups of comparable age show similar attitudes and nonconformity patterns.²

Reprinted from *Annals of American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 322, March 1959, pp. 126-135.

Frame of Reference

The frame of reference for this research program is a theory of sequential levels of interpersonal maturity. The case for an interpersonal relations approach to delinquency has been steadily gaining ground. Donald Bloch³ has described delinquent behavior as an effort to handle interpersonal anxiety. Croft and Crygier⁴ have been able to show that the social relationships of truants and juvenile delinquents vary markedly from those of their nontruant and nondelinquent classmates. Gough and Peterson⁵ and Sarbin⁶ have stressed the delinquent's inability to visualize himself in the role of another person. In studying military delinquents, Osborn⁷ found the main difference between repeated absence offenders and matched nonoffenders to be an inadequacy in childhood and adolescent interpersonal relationships for the offender group. The Camp Elliott Delinquency Potential Scale,⁸ which at the recruit stage predicts later military delinquency, contains many interpersonal items. Most of these items relate to what has been called social imperturbability—a tendency to deny any involvement with the relationships between one's self and others.

Although this frame of reference suggests that delinquent behavior results from interactions between individuals, the emphasis has been put on delinquency proneness and what it is within the individual that he takes with him into interpersonal relationships. This approach has recently received new emphasis from the methodological work of Cronbach.⁹ He has stated that we need to know much more about the "sets" that people bring with them into interpersonal situations. More needs to be understood about the nature of the delinquency proneness, in terms of interpersonal "sets," before we can study the effect of interpersonal interactions in determining delinquent behavior. The maturity levels theory maintains that these "sets" are extremely important. It further suggests that there are interpersonal problems laden with anxiety which form the core of the individual's social understanding in his efforts to integrate what is happening between himself and others as well as between others.

Maturity Levels

This theory of interpersonal maturity has been described in detail elsewhere.¹⁰ Seven successive stages of interpersonal maturity characterize psychological development. They range from the least mature, which resembles the interpersonal interactions of a newborn infant, to an ideal of social maturity which is seldom or never reached in our present culture. Each of the seven stages or levels is defined by a crucial

interpersonal problem which must be solved before further progress toward maturity can occur. All persons do not necessarily work their way through each stage but may become fixed at a particular level. Not all who are described as immature along this scale will be delinquent, but it is contended that those who are immature are more likely to find themselves in difficulties and to be apprehended for delinquency than are others.

Almost all persons who have grown to adulthood and not progressed beyond the first maturity level are found in institutions where they have to be cared for much like infants. Such personalities have not been found in a military delinquent population. At the other end of the scale, maturity levels 6 and 7 are also not represented in the Camp Elliott population. The adjustive capacity inherent in these "stages" would almost preclude delinquent activity.

A brief description of the levels of interpersonal maturity which are found in the population of military delinquents follows:

Maturity Level 2: The individual whose interpersonal understanding and behavior are integrated at this level is primarily involved with demands that the world take care of him. He sees others solely as "givers" or "withholders" and has no conception of interpersonal refinement beyond this. He is unable to explain, understand, or predict the behavior or reactions of others. He is not interested in things outside himself except as a source of supply. He behaves impulsively, unaware of the effects of his behavior on others, and is apt to explode or run away when frustrated or thwarted.

Maturity Level 3: The individual who operates at this level is attempting to manipulate his environment in order to get what he wants. In contrast to level 2, he is at least aware that his own behavior has something to do with whether or not he gets what he wants. He still does not differentiate, however, among people except to the extent that they can or cannot be useful to him. He sees people only as objects to be manipulated in order to get what he wants. His manipulations may take the form either of conforming to the rules of whoever seems to have the power at the moment ("If you can't lick them, join them.") or of the type of maneuvering characteristic of a "confidence man" ("Make a sucker out of him before he makes a sucker out of you."). He tends to deny having any disturbing feelings or strong emotional involvement in his relationships with others.

Maturity Level 4: An individual whose understanding and behavior are integrated at this level has internalized a set of standards by which he judges his and others' behavior. He is aware of the influence of others on him and their expectations of him. To a certain extent, he is aware of the effects of his own behavior on others. He wants to be like the people he admires and may feel guilty about not measuring up to his internalized standards. The conflict produced by the feelings of inadequacy and guilt may be internalized with consequent neurotic symptoms or acted out in antisocial behavior. Because the individual at level 4 tends to be uncomfortable about himself and because he is able to in-

ternalize values, he appears more amenable to treatment than previously described maturity levels.

Maturity Level 5: A person who functions at this level is able to see patterns of behavior; he may see himself and others behaving in the same way in different situations or see a continuity in his past, present, and future. His perceptions of himself and others are more differentiated than before. He begins to see others as complex, flexible objects which cannot be dealt with on the basis of a few single rule-of-thumb procedures. He is aware of many points of view in the world around him and sees interwoven reasons for behavior. He is able to play different roles in different situations and is thus more flexible. He is more capable of establishing and carrying through long-range plans than persons at lower levels. Delinquency, for a person at this maturity level, is apt to be situationally determined.

Theory of Treatment

A good deal of pessimism has been expressed regarding the possibility of curing delinquents with our traditional methods of treatment or psychotherapy. Traditionally, psychotherapy was aimed at helping the neurotic whose conflicts are internalized, who carries his guilt and anxiety with him. This kind of neurotic tends to know that he is upset or uncomfortable. He may, for example, feel afraid, have bad dreams, or not be able to speak in groups. In contrast, the acting-out personality tends to dissipate his anxiety before he feels it by running away, striking out at someone, or having an affair. Since the acting-out person periodically resolves his uncomfortableness, he abates any felt need for personality change. Traditional psychotherapeutic methods then are not appropriate for this kind of personality, since he feels no need to change and since he most certainly would run away from any therapy relationship which made him feel anxious.

Since almost all delinquents are acting-out personalities, the task in treatment becomes one of putting the offender in a nonpanic-producing correctional situation, which keeps him concerned about and facing his problems, in an attempt to bring about personality change in him. Acceptance of a need to change or grow results from a challenging-uncomfortableness. Since this prerequisite for personality change—this uncomfortableness—is absent or easily dissipated, it needs to be created or maintained for the acting-out person. However, intense anxiety leads to rigidifying panic where no personality change can occur. Therefore, the goal of the treatment program here described was an attempt to create in a correctional situation a program which would produce in the subjects a challenging uncomfortableness without rigidifying panic.

The Camp Elliott research subjects were placed for six or nine weeks in groups of twenty in small closed communities called Living Groups.¹¹ The twenty men, with three supervisors, lived together in the same

barracks, ate together, worked on a farm as a unit, held classes together, participated as a team in recreational activities. The group was "closed," not only in the sense that no new members were admitted nor old members dismissed, but also in the sense that great effort was made to eliminate interpersonal dealings with anyone outside the group. The attempt was made to establish close, continuing interpersonal relationships within the group—with no way out. Ordinarily in confinement institutions there is much opportunity for running away even while staying within the fence by getting transferred from job to job or one living unit to another or running from therapist to therapist. To as great an extent as possible, all chances for this kind of acting-out or running away from anxiety were eliminated.

Many members of this population have been running away from close relationships all their lives. They may have run away from home, left school, held jobs for very short periods—and, for our military population—85 per cent of them have run away from the military service and have absence or deserter charges against them. They may never in their lives have worked through a single interpersonal relationship. They tend to leave any relationship before it is obvious to them that they have interpersonal problems.

SUPERVISORS AND CONSULTANTS

The three supervisors assigned to each Living Group were Marine, noncommissioned officers, all of whom had volunteered for the program. They were on a two day out of three duty schedule. Two of the three supervisors were with the men on the job for half of each day; they held discussion classes with the men for the other half day. During free time and evening hours, one of the three supervisors was in the barracks available to the men for individual or small group "bull sessions." A psychologist was assigned to each team of three supervisors to act as a consultant. The psychologist was available to the confinees and supervisors for individual conferences, although every effort was made to keep as much as possible of the interpersonal relationships for group discussion.

Each consultant's main function was to conduct 90 minute, 5 days a week group therapy sessions attended by the twenty men and the supervisors. These sessions were the heart of the attempt to encourage social maturing through "forced" working through of the anxiety provided by the close, continuing interpersonal relationships. The psychologist's job was to prevent the challenging uncomfortableness from turning into rigidifying panic, yet not to allow subjects to flee the group. The focus in the group discussions was the interpersonal interactions within the group. An attempt was made to create a self-study atmosphere in which group members were encouraged to notice some interpersonal dealing of self with others or among others—to notice this interaction and to bring it to the group for discussion.

For the reader familiar with methods of psychotherapy, six or nine weeks may seem an impossibly short time in which to bring about personality change. Without presenting these short periods as ideals, it is worth remembering that the "treatment" here was a twenty-four hour a day process, a much more intensive experience than is usual in psychotherapy.

The closed Living Groups may be seen as the primary family situation revisited. Group therapy has often been likened to a family constellation with the therapist representing a parent and other group members, the siblings. In the Camp Elliott Living Groups two additional factors were present which contribute to the analogy, the twenty-four hours a day together and the "closedness" of the group. One of the characteristics of the family situation for the young child is that it is a closed system—he is trapped in it—he has no other resources. In our closed Living Groups, the men also could not escape. There is the possibility that interpersonal problems which for some reason could not be worked out in the original closed group—the family—may be worked through on such a return trip, especially with a parent figure who is perhaps more able to be supportive.

Experimental Design

Over a two-year period, twenty-seven Living Groups were run. During most of that period three groups were running simultaneously, one handled by each of the three supervisory teams. Three aspects of the Living Group experience were systematically varied in order to measure the effect of each aspect on later success of subjects. First, the three supervisory teams were ranked in order of their predicted effectiveness in bringing about reduction in delinquency-prone attitude; this ranking of the teams was one of the variables in the experimental design.

A second aspect was the level of maturity of the group members. Six of the groups were composed only of individuals of maturity levels 4 and 5. For the discussion here, these subjects will be called high maturity subjects, keeping in mind that their maturity level is high only in relation to other confined men. Six of the groups included only maturity levels 2 and 3, here to be called the low maturity subjects. The remaining fifteen groups included maturity levels 2, 3, 4 and 5. Nine of these mixed maturity groups operated for six weeks rather than nine in order to handle scheduling difficulties.

A third aspect of the experimental design was the duration of the supervisor-group relationship. Eighteen of the groups had the same supervisory team for the entire research period, while the other nine changed supervisors and consultant every three weeks.

The Living Groups were described to all incoming offenders at Camp Elliott, and 98 per cent of all the eligible men volunteered. In order to be eligible, the subject had to have a good chance of being restored to duty

and have at least six months left on his enlistment time so that follow-up information would be available on him; and he had to have sufficient confinement time to be able to complete the research program. Eligible volunteers were tested on a battery of personality tests given routinely at Camp Elliott.¹² Two psychologists independently assessing the test profiles made estimates of each volunteer's maturity level.¹³ If the two psychologists agreed that the subject appeared to fit the maturity level of the group currently being formed, the subject was given a one-hour recorded interview. On the basis of this interview, the subjects were put into the appropriate group. No attempt was made to equalize our selection of Navy and Marine subjects, nor to have them represent their proportion in the service or in confinement.

Many interpersonal rating scales were built into the Living Group design.¹⁴ Early and late in the research group experience, peer evaluations, supervisor-confinee, consultant-confinee, and consultant-supervisor evaluations were systematically obtained. In addition, at the completion of the research period, the subjects were again tested and interviewed to determine the effects of the program on them. This report, however, will discuss only the relationship of later duty success to (1) the individual subject's maturity level, (2) the maturity level characteristics of the group in which the subject was a member, (3) the duration of the supervisor-group relationship, (4) the predicted effectiveness of the supervisory team, and (5) the interaction of these variables.

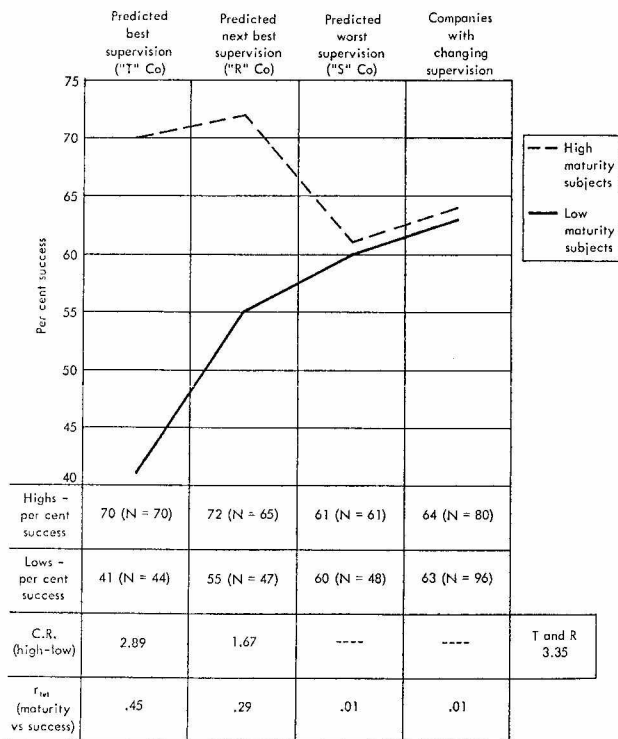
Results

Tables 1 and 2 summarize these five relationships. (1) The high maturity subjects did significantly better ($P = .01$) on restoration to duty than low maturity subjects. (2) Success rate was not affected by the maturity characteristics of the group; that is, high or low maturity subjects did as well following mixed maturity group experience as they did following groups composed of only low or only high maturity subjects. (3) Totalling results for all subjects over all conditions, the duration of the supervisor-group relationship did not affect the success rate. (4) Again, totaling over-all experimental conditions, no significant differences were found which can be attributed to predicted supervisory effectiveness. (5) However, the interaction between the predicted supervisory effectiveness and the maturity of the subject significantly (Analysis of variance, $P =$ less than .05) affected restoration success. The relationship between the subject's maturity and restoration success varied markedly and consistently with the amount of exposure to the supervisory teams in the order of predicted effectiveness. For subjects spending time only with T company supervision, predicted most effective, the relationship between maturity of the subject and restoration success was high ($r_1 = .45$; $N = 114$). For subjects supervised by R company only, predicted second most effective, the relationship was

Table 1—Percentage Restoration Success by Maturity Characteristics of the Living-Group and Supervisory Effectiveness

Super- visory Team	Predicted Supervisory Effectiveness	9-Week High Maturity Only			9-Week Low Maturity Only			9-Week High Maturity Mixed			9-Week Low Maturity Mixed			6-Week High Maturity Mixed			6-Week Low Maturity Mixed			Total High Maturity			Total Low Maturity		
		No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent		
T Co.	First	19	68.0	18	39.0	9	56.0	42	69.0	17	35.0	70	70.0	44	41.0	114	59.0								
R Co.	Second	19	68.0	17	41.0	8	88.0	12	67.0	38	71.0	18	61.0	65	72.0	47	55.0	112	65.0						
S Co.	Third	18	67.0	13	77.0	10	50.0	10	40.0	33	61.0	25	60.0	61	61.0	48	60.0	109	61.0						
Subtotal		56	68.0	48	50.0	27	70.0	31	55.0	113	67.0	60	53.0	196	68.0	139	53.0	335	61.0						
RS1 Co's	Fourth	20	65.0	20	70.0	10	60.0	10	60.0	10	40.0	30	63.0	30	67.0	60	65.0	60	65.0						
SR Co's	Fourth	16	69.0	33	51.0	10	60.0	7	84.0	7	84.0	26	65.0	40	58.0	66	61.0	66	61.0						
TR Co's	Fourth	14	50.0	17	65.0	10	80.0	9	67.0	24	63.0	26	65.0	24	63.0	96	65.0	50	64.0						
Subtotal		50	62.0	70	60.0	30	67.0	26	69.0	67	61.0	60	53.0	80	64.0	276	67.0	235	57.0						
Totals		106	65.0	118	56.0	57	68.0	57	61.0	113	67.0	60	53.0	276	67.0	235	57.0	511	62.0						

Table 2—Percentage Restoration Success of High Maturity Subjects Compared with Low Maturity Subjects Over Kinds of Supervision



present but lower ($r_1 = .29$; $N = 112$). For S company subjects, supervised by the predicted least effective team, the relationship vanished ($r_1 = 0.1$; $N = 109$). If the Living Group experience was under supervision that changed every three weeks, there again was no relationship ($r_1 = .01$; $N = 176$). Under conditions of changing supervision, only when the last six weeks were spent with the predicted most and next most effective teams did some relationship again emerge.

This interaction between the nature of supervision and the relationship between maturity and success was impressively consistent over several breakdowns of the data. The interaction holds for both Navy and Marine personnel, for both mixed and dichotomized maturity groups.

Another way of stating this interaction is that the over-all difference in success rate for high and low maturity subjects was found entirely under conditions of predicted effective supervision, T and R Company ($C.R. = 3.35$). The different success rate for high and lows failed to exist under predicted ineffective supervision (S Company) or under changing supervision. The maturity classification system appears valueless without an effectiveness of supervision classification, and an effectiveness of supervision classification appears valueless without a maturity classification.

Although further research needs to be done, these findings suggest that the cost of military recidivism could be reduced by installing a closed Living Group program with effective supervision for high maturity inmates. High maturity inmates have a high potential for improved restoration behavior but, unless subjected to an attitude-change program under effective supervision, this potential is not expressed in improved restoration behavior. This study does not support a closed Living Group program for low maturity inmates and, in fact, strongly suggests that at least aspects of an effective program for high maturity inmates can be detrimental to low maturity inmates.

Important as these applications are, the implications of these data for delinquency research in general are far greater. Correctional researchers have been finding it hard to demonstrate relationships between classification systems and postinstitutional behavior. They also have found it hard, if not impossible, to demonstrate relationships between treatment situations and postinstitutional behavior. As long as the data of the Camp Elliott research are viewed as a study of single variables, its findings are comparable to earlier correctional studies; that is, no demonstrable situational (supervisory effectiveness) effect and only a low, though significant classification (maturity) effect. It is when the interaction of the situation and classification variables is considered that one finds productive relationships with restoration behavior. It now appears likely that, in many of our correctional studies, the classification and situation effects have been masking each other. Future studies need to consider all three factors: kinds of subjects, kinds of supervisors, kinds of programming. This study has demonstrated for delinquency research the point that Cronbach^{15, 16} has been emphasizing for social research in general.

Notes

1. The opinions expressed are those of the authors. They are not to be construed as reflecting the views or endorsement of the Department of the Navy.

Sponsored by, at the time of this writing: Neuropsychiatric Branch, BuMed; Corrective Services Branch, BuPers; ONR Group Psychology Branch, under ONR contract Nonr 1535(00) with Family Relations Center, Berkeley, California. J. Douglas Grant, Principal Investigator.

2. The following point to similarities in the two populations: Offenders in both populations have similar juvenile records; norms on a delinquency potential test are very similar for prisoners in the State of California institutions and Camp Elliott; a delinquent high school population showed test scores much more similar to the Camp Elliott population than to the nondelinquent high school population.

3. D. A. Bloch, "The Delinquent Integration," *Psychiatry*, Vol. 15 (1952), pp. 297-303.

4. I. J. Croft and T. C. Grygier, "Social Relationships of Truants and Juvenile Delinquents," *Human Relations*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (1956).

5. H. G. Gough and D. R. Peterson, "The Identification and Measurement of Predispositional Factors in Crime and Delinquency," *Journal of Consulting Psychology* (1952), p. 16.

6. T. R. Sarbin, "A Preface to a Psychological Analysis of the Self," *Psychological Review* (1952), p. 59.

7. H. G. Osborn, "Situational and Personal Variables in AWOL Behavior." Presented at the Annual Meetings of the American Psychological Association in Cleveland, 1953.

8. E. K. Gunderson, K. B. Ballard, and P. S. Hoge, "The Relationship of Delinquency Potential Scale Scores of Naval

Recruits to Later Military Performance." Ninth Technical Report, Rehabilitation Research, U. S. Naval Retraining Command, Camp Elliott, San Diego, 1958. Available in mimeographed form at Rehabilitation Research, U. S. Naval Retraining Command, Camp Elliott, San Diego 44, California.

9. L. J. Cronbach, "Proposals Leading to Analytic Treatment of Social Perception Scores," in *Person, Perception and Interpersonal Behavior*, edited by R. Tagiuri and L. Petrullo (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1958), pp. 353-78.

10. C. E. Sullivan, M. Q. Grant, and J. D. Grant, "The Development of Interpersonal Maturity: Applications to Delinquency," *Psychiatry*, Vol. 20 (1957), pp. 373-85.

11. "A Group Dynamics Approach to Treating Acting-Out Personalities." Presented at the Eighth V.A. Clinical Research Conference in Berkeley, November, 1953.

12. E. K. Gunderson, *Group Testing Diagnostic Manual*, First Revision, U. S. Naval Retraining Command, Camp Elliott, San Diego, 1956.

13. Virginia Ives and M. Q. Grant, "Initial Steps in the Measurement of Interpersonal Maturity," Sixth Technical Report, Rehabilitation Research, U. S. Naval Retraining Command, Camp Elliott, San Diego, 1956.

14. R. W. Carey, *Research Companies Procedures Manual*, Rehabilitation Research, U. S. Naval Retraining Command, Camp Elliott, San Diego, 1954.

15. L. J. Cronbach, "Two Disciplines of Scientific Psychology," *The American Psychologist*, Vol. 12 (1957), pp. 671-84.

16. L. J. Cronbach and G. C. Gleser, *Psychological Tests and Personality Decisions* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1957).