CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION OF ETIOLOGY OF DELINQUENCY

The results of the present study appear to confirm the findings previously obtained by other investigators that factors such as intelligence, education, area of residence, socio-economic status, and ethnic background, etc. do not play as significant a role in contributing towards delinquency as the child's family, relationship between parents and most of all the way his family brings him up. In the present study it was revealed that delinquents' families had higher incidence of mental and emotional problems than nondelinquents' families. This only reinforces the fact that it is the families who must be helped and treated and not the kids. Carl Rogers (1937) puts it this way: "If we were to gamble on the outcome of treatment in the case of a problem child or delinquent and had to base our gamble on one item alone, we would do best to disregard the child entirely and investigate simply the way in which the parents behave toward the youngster and the attitude they hold toward him" (p. 181).

It is not amazing at all that the interaction between parents and between parents and child produces behaviors that are later treated by school counselors, clinicians, mental health professionals, and prison psychologists (Patterson, 1971).
One of the most commonly asked questions by parents is "Why do kids run away, desert their parents? There must be something wrong with them, they must be crazy or nuts?" To answer the question, let us examine a basic law of behavior. The consequences of our behavior determine or at least influence the way we will act. Thus, a pleasant consequence, positive reinforcer, makes it more likely an act will be repeated. By the same token, no consequence or an unpleasant consequence makes it less likely. Consider the situation in a family where parents by virtue of their ignorance, beliefs, values, and habits turn their family life and home into an unfriendly, unpleasant and at times unbearable experience. Thus, when a boy leaves his home he makes an attempt to avoid an unpleasant experience.

Let us examine another situation. Supposing a student disrupts a class to get attention from his teacher or classmates or both and the teacher in order to deal with the student effectively halts the class. The teacher chose what he thought was punishment, but the effects were counterproductive. Since the attention was what the child wanted, punishment in this situation became rewarding, and the disruption will very likely occur again. In this example the student's undesirable behavior has been reinforced by the teacher, even though the teacher or for that matter parents may not be aware of the unintended consequences of their behavior. One must examine, therefore, the way consequences are linked to the behavior being corrected.

Punishment was found to be one of the most frequently used methods
of control by delinquents' parents. It may not be such a bad deterrent when used appropriately. But at the same time one must also reward the individual appropriately and consistently for his desirable behavior. What happens in reality, however, is quite the opposite. The child is punished for misbehaving and rarely or inconsistently rewarded for his desirable behavior. This sort of handling keeps the child from discrimination learning and makes him perhaps more confused and emotionally frustrated. It is like producing "experimental neurosis" in the child by restricting his range of activities and choice. One boy may sustain these tensions, but the frustration pattern of another boy coming from a different family may not be able to sustain these tense situations and may very likely react undesirably.

Let us consider another example of parents' inconsistent behavior. A child may begin to throw temper tantrum because of his emotional arousal and frustration, and that behavior may be maintained at first by positive material rewards, and may also persist even in the face of occasional punishment simply because no alternative behavior achieves this kind of parental attention. Discussing the implications of research on intermittent reinforcement for undesirable behavior Salzinger (1968) states: "The intermittent reinforcement literature tells us the mother and/or father most likely serves all the better, for its inconsistency, to produce stable abnormal behavior in the child. The fact that the mother tries very hard not to give in to the child having a temper tantrum, but gives in some of the time, is of course the very paradigm which maintains the behavior she is trying to
eliminate.... the fact that conditioning is more rapid than extinction is what makes the intermittent schedule a good candidate for the production of abnormal behavior" (p. 6).

Our results and the results obtained by the Gluecks (1950) and Wilson (1958) clearly indicate that the family environment in which the delinquent and nondelinquent boys grew up were markedly different. Family environment of delinquent boys was obviously less conducive to the wholesome rearing of children. Their families suffered self-respect, their ambitions were low, relationship between parents were awfully bad, and their supervision of children and provision for their (boys') recreational activities were of extremely low quality. Affectional relationship between the parents and the delinquent boys was found to be extremely poor. Delinquent boys, far more than nondelinquent boys, were less attached to their parents, and in their estimate their parents were not concerned about their welfare. These unhealthy situations could very well produce and maintain a number of unwanted behaviors in these children.

As regard the boy's behavior in school and community, the same behavioral principles could be applied in these situations too. Social behavior, however, can best be explained in terms of "social learning". Its general principles have been developed by Skinner (1953) and further developed and applied by Bandura and Walters (1963), Ullman and Krasner (1969), Homme et al. (1963), and Patterson (1968, 1969, 1970, 1971). Social learning, both prosocial and asocial, takes place between individuals or individual and a situation.
Children, for example, produce or change their parents' behavior just as parents bring about changes or produce new behavior in their children.

Discussing social learning and behavioral rehearsal, Kanfer and Phillips (1970) make this observation: "In clinical work it often appears that a patient's neurotic behavior patterns are related to similar maladaptive behaviors he has observed in parents or other models. Many a child has been admonished by a teacher for exhibiting language or manners acquired by observation of a father's behavior in the privacy of his home. More serious disruption occurs when a child adapts an ineffectual, 'sick' method of coping with stress, such as pleading illness or using assaultive violence, after observing successes with this method in siblings and parents. The problem is often defined as such outside the home. The family may tolerate, and thus sustain, these behaviors, but other social groups may punish them. Clinicians also note that many actions, originally learned by peer group observation, turn into nonadjustive behavior when they are no longer acceptable in a broader social community. The acquisition of delinquent behaviors in institutions, clubs, or in any situation that permits observation of these skills and that rewards their performance is an excellent example of the opposite consequences for the same behavior in different circumstances. Yet the frequency of exposure and the personal importance of the group make a juvenile a better imitator of behavior of his friends than of the standards of conformity vaguely provided by adult society" (p. 191).
The preceding discussion revolved around learning theory principles, but the emphasis was on reinforcement principles as they relate to our environment. No apparent reference was made to inner systems or inner causes, as emphasized by the personality theorists. "The practice of looking inside the organism for an explanation of behavior has tended to obscure the variables which are immediately available for a scientific analysis. These variables lie outside the organism, in its immediate environment and in its environmental history.... The objection to inner states is not that they do not exist but that they are not relevant" (Skinner, 1953, p. 31, 35).

Social events or environmental variables function as positive or negative or neutral reinforcers. Hypotheses regarding constitutional or psychodynamic origins of pathological behavior have been disputed by those who believe that it is the social reinforcers that produce and maintain the behavior. Patterson, Littman, and Bricker (1967) demonstrated that aggressive and assertive behaviors in children are operants. They maintain that the behaviors (consequences) produced in their victim, e.g., compliance, crying, defensive posture or retaliation can maintain or weaken the aggressive behavior in these children. Laboratory studies (Hinsey et al., 1961; Lovaas et al., 1963; Walters et al., 1964) have further demonstrated that aggressive behaviors can be controlled by social reinforcers. They also demonstrated a significant relationship between aggressive behaviors produced in the laboratory and those taking place in a natural setting.

Behavior therapists of both classical and operant conditioning
persuasion generally agree that maladaptive behavior is a learned behavior. They disagree, however, as to how a behavior is produced and maintained. In contrast to reinforcement position, followers of classical conditioning (Eysenck, 1957; Eysenck and Rachman, 1965; Eysenck, 1963; Lader and Wing, 1966; Lynn and Eysenck, 1961) maintain that "behavior disorder represents a failure of conditioning process to occur which would produce socially desirable habits.... (or) where they may have taken place a type of positive, repetitive conditioning which is contrary to the rules and laws of the country in question" (Eysenck and Rachman, 1965, pp. 7-8). Examples of the latter group are sociopaths and homosexuals. Based on Pavlov's theories of cortical inhibition and excitation Eysenck has also developed his own theory of introversion and extraversion. Being a theorist, Eysenck offers different etiologies for different pathological behaviors which have not been empirically substantiated yet. But what surprises his critics most is that he still talks about some of the most ambiguous and misleading terms, such as introversion-extraversion, neurosis, psychosis, sociopathy, and homosexuality, etc. What Eysenck overlooks is the fact that whatever the physiological deficiencies, the law of producing, maintaining and eliminating behavior is the same - same functional processes that affect all behavior. Ferster (1965) accepts Eysenck's postulate as a possible but unproven cause. He and other behaviorists believe that behavior becomes symptomatic when it fails to achieve the desired consequences of a given cultural environment.
"The milieu specifies the behaviors potentially available to an individual in contact with it. An individual's environment might be thought of as an infinite variety of response keys, all of which are set to produce a reinforcer or avoid an aversive stimulus if — and only if — the individual's repertoire contains the required behavioral items.... The use of milieu as a standard of reference provides a classification system that is cross-culturally general, because it does not refer to specific items of behavior or specific environmental practice. Two entirely different repertoires from two entirely different cultures might, for example, have in common that all the performances in the repertoires are maintained by positive reinforcement, and that the individual's repertoires are the maximum that could be maintained by such environments. Conversely, various items of behavior may be absent because of the absence of a history of the experiences that were necessary in order to approximate a complex form by slow stages; or because the particular schedule of reinforcement currently maintaining the performance reduced the disposition to engage in the performance. Such an evaluation of the discrepancy between the actual repertoire of an individual and the potential behavior supported by the individual's milieu does not depend upon the particular performance that is evaluated.... The basic processes by which behavior is strengthened, weakened, maintained, extinguished, put under stimulus control, and so forth, can provide a frame work for specifying the relation between the individual's existing repertoire and the milieu potentially available to him" (Ferster, 1965, pp. 12-13).
The foregoing discussion on the etiology of delinquency clearly suggests that even though the two groups were thoroughly matched on a number of variables, their environmental conditions were found to be significantly different. The difference once again supports the hypothesis that behavior operates on the environment and it has consequences. The operant and respondent behaviors occur together in an individual’s everyday behavior, and they interact in extremely intricate ways.

The relationship between behavior and its consequences determine the frequency, intensity, duration, and the form of behavior as well as its relationship to many features of the environment. It is the reinforcement contingencies that are of primary importance in producing various behaviors. The undesirable behavior is produced (or learned) and maintained both in nonsocial situations that are reinforcing or discriminative and through social interactions (social learning) in which the behavior of the other person is reinforcing or discriminative. Thus the learning of a delinquent behavior, including specific attitudes, criminal techniques, and other similar behaviors, is a function of the effective and available reinforcers, the existing reinforcement contingencies, and the individual's repertoire containing the required behavior items - history of experiences. On the other hand, there is not enough evidence to believe that individuals exhibiting abnormal behaviors would have certain personality characteristics that others would not possess (see discussion on personality characteristics). In fact, the reification of abnormal or undesirable behavior as a function of pathological personality still remains
unsupported by any consistent research. Personality theorists who emphasize on the psychopathology of the individual just do not take sufficient cognizance of the fact that a learning process must take place before the personality of the individual can be established and before his actions come to include the violations of existing social norms.

The dynamic school, by looking too much into feelings, concerns, and psychodynamics, ignores large hunks of extremely valuable data, called behavior. Although the case history data in the present study were essentially exploratory in nature and not intended for functional analysis of behavior, they do suggest situations (environmental conditions of delinquents and nondelinquents) where behavior actually occurs or is made to occur. On the other hand, most dynamically oriented investigations attempting to find the exact antecedents of behavior are too far removed from the situations where the behavior actually occurs. Instead, the emphasis is on symbolic interpretation (rational and intuitive in nature) of both the pathology and the environment. Opponents have reasonably argued that in an attempt to overcome the failure to obtain a functional relationship at the level of the data, researchers in clinical psychology have become involved in theory.

In conclusion, the definition of pathological behavior and laws of behavior, we believe, await functional analysis. Because such a method is capable of analyzing behaviors in empirical rather than theoretical terms.
Discussion of Patterns
(Charactersitics) of Personality

Statistical analysis of one hundred delinquent and one hundred nondelinquent Rorschach records revealed that there was no significant difference between two groups' personality characteristics. The only difference between them was that one was delinquent and the other was not. Ackerman (1971) made a successful attempt to cross validate twenty hypotheses investigated over a period of thirty years. These hypotheses claimed to differentiate alcoholics from nonalcoholics using the Rorschach. His results were extremely disappointing — nineteen of the twenty hypotheses yielded insignificant differences. Discussing the technical flaws in the previous studies, Ackerman makes this observation: "while it is reasonable to expect difference between alcoholics and schizophrenics, labeling these signs as descriptive of an alcoholic personality per se is dubious at best.... Over the past several decades methodological improvements that have led to the rejection of previously stated erroneous hypotheses" (p. 226).

Sophisticated methodologies include not only improved experimental designs and better statistical treatment of the data but also new theories, techniques and procedures to assess personality. In fact, the focus of attention has been sharply shifted from "traditional" to "behavioral" approach to personality assessment. Most of the personality tests, including Rorschach test, were devised to assess personality and the underlying psychodynamics of the
individual. These conceptualizations of human functioning are very much dependent upon one's own theoretical orientation. Therefore the personality characteristics revealed by these tests are "inferred" characteristics, sometimes based on one theory of personality and often times a combination of several theories of personality.

Personality theorists and psychodynamically oriented psychologists believe that consistencies in behavior (i.e., patterns of traits) exist within a range of situational variables. In addition to that, clinical psychologists who developed these tests assumed that such a theory of personality had some validity. Accumulating evidence, however, indicates that these tests as used lacked empirical validity and even reliability (Kanfer and Phillips, 1970; Mischel, 1968; Pervin, 1970; Loevinger, 1957; Jessor and Hammond, 1957). The selection of test items and the empirical validity of personality theories have been seriously questioned, because: "...most approaches to personality still remain largely separated from developments in behavior theory and experimental research.... Progress in the area of personality psychology and assessment has been hindered by the failure to apply relevant principles about the conditions that produce, maintain, and modify social behavior. The principles that emerge from basic research too often have not been seen as directly relevant to the understanding of the determinants of test responses in the clinic or to the assessment project" (Mischel, 1968, pp. 1-2).

The problem of traditional assessment of personality is further complicated when one looks into the inconsistent interpretation of
test responses. The interpretative meaning given to any test response may be influenced by two possible methods (Hase and Goldberg, 1957; Loevinger, 1957), namely intuitive and empirical. The difference between the two methods is obvious. The intuitive approach may involve "... informal rationale with few explicit theoretical assumptions or may involve more formal deduction from theory. In using the empirical approach, on the other hand, the interpretative significance of test responses is derived solely from the empirically established relationship between test and external criteria" (Goldfried and Kent, 1972, p. 411).

Despite the fact that Rorschach signs lack empirical confirmation, clinicians tend to hold on to their own interpretation of the test, whether valid or invalid. As a result, five different clinicians, for example, can interpret the same Rorschach sign in possibly five different ways. (See Ogdon's Psychodiagnosis and Personality Assessment; A Handbook, 1967.) Chapman and Chapman (1969) selected 20 possible Rorschach signs (used by Wheeler, 1949) indicating homosexuality and asked experienced psychodiagnosticians to determine which of these signs reflected male homosexuality. Incidentally, some of these signs had been validated. The results showed that most clinicians preferred to pick up only those signs that they thought (on a rational intuitive basis) were best representing homosexuality, e.g., "buttocks". Interestingly enough none of them selected those signs that had actually been empirically validated.

Still another basic problem in interpreting test responses is that of sufficient sampling of individual's personality characteristics (MacFarlane and Tuddenham, 1951; Murstein, 1961). Insofar as projective
techniques, sampling of the subject's personality characteristics is determined by the subject's own responses to the test situation, which obviously differs from subject to subject, the investigator cannot be certain that enough data have been obtained (Murstein, 1961). Since the sampling procedure emphasizes the empirical relationship between individual's characteristics and external criteria (actual behavior), most projective and objective tests just do not meet that kind of requirements, specially when there is a control group and subjects are carefully selected and matched.

The traditional approach to personality assessment assumes that test response can best be interpreted as an indication of some underlying personality traits. What is actually missing in this approach is that subject's responses to a simulated situation do not represent his actual responses to his real life situations — the most direct approach to behavioral sampling. To top it all off, the process of categorizing or scoring the responses is also based on intuition and inference.

The basic underlying assumption that a high degree of consistency in behavior exists across a wide variety of stimulus situations regardless of situational change are faulty at best. "The real trouble is that it has not worked well enough, and despite the huge volume of literature it has stimulated, it seems to lead to a dead end" (Vernon, 1964, p.239).

Psychodynamic orientation seems to focus its attention on the personality characteristics the individual "has" and not what he "does" in a given situation. In contrast, the behavioral approach places a
lot of emphasis on the individual's previous social learning history and the present environmental variables and consequences of the behavior under study. The chances that a person would perform in a given way largely depends on the nature of the situation and the reinforcement potential a situation contains (Wallace, 1966; Endler and Hunt, 1966, 1969; Mischel and Ebbesen, 1970; Moos, 1969). Reviewing the experimental studies on consistency of personality variables, Mischel (1968) concludes: "... behaviors which are often construed as stable personality trait indicators actually are highly specific and depend on the details of the evoking situations and the response mode employed to measure them" (p. 37).

The traditional tests of personality, specially projective tests, do not present an adequate stimulus situation, however reliable they may be. For instance, in order to measure anxiety of a subject, the clinician using the traditional approach does not operationally define the situations that actually provoke anxiety and does not employ any measure to measure anxiety, such as its intensity, frequency, and duration. The behavior in question is not directly and specifically related to the simulated test situation and its scoring system. The crucial question of content validity, therefore, still remains unanswered.

Sundberg and Tyler (1962) suggest that a clinician actually makes an attempt to develop a "theory of a person" which involves inferences too far removed from the data and most dependent upon his orientation and experience. In fact, Rorschachers are advised to develop their
own individual baselines as to "... how much or how little shading, color, form or movement is to be considered unusual" (Schafer, 1956, p. 28).

A number of studies have compared the predictive accuracy of several projective and objective techniques and self rating. Wallace et al., (1963), for example, found that the correlation between criterion and self rating on achievement, hostility, somatic concern, religious concern averaged .57, and the average correlations for the other tests were .05 for Rorschach, .08 for the TAT, and .14 for RISB test. Several other studies (Carroll, 1952; Campbell and Fiske, 1959; Hase and Goldberg, 1967) using different tests reported similar results. Cronbach (1956) makes this remark about the traditional approach and its prediction process: "Assessment encounters trouble because it involves hazardous inferences. Very little inference is involved when a test is the sample of the criterion or when an empirical key is developed. Simple test interpretations involve inference from test to construct to behavioral prediction. But assessors attempt a maximum inference from tests.... Assessors have been foolhardy to venture predictions of behavior in unanalyzed situations, using tests whose construct interpretations are dubious and personality theory which has more gaps than solid matter" (pp.173-174).

What the preceding discussion really suggests is this. Attempts certain to empirically demonstrate the presence of/personality characteristics in delinquent and nondelinquent boys or other diagnostic groups have been unsuccessful. There are perhaps two possible reasons.
First, researches suggest that the Rorschach may be an effective clinical technique but not a psychometric method. That is, individual clinician may find it useful and may meaningfully use his findings to fit into his theoretical model of personality. But the "... method (Rorschach) has neither the advantage of a theory worthy of a name nor, with certain exception, adequately designed research" (Wittenborn, 1967, p. 25). Secondly, the rapidly changing concept of personality, ever increasing understanding of personality pathology, and new behavioral approaches to personality assessment and its treatment have forced psychologists of all persuasion to question the clinical as well as empirical validity of personality theories and tests based on these theories. Researches in learning theory, on the other hand, have demonstrated the fact that all behavior is learned and that personality traits or characteristics can be and have been commonly found in other diagnostic groups as well.

The ineffectiveness and futility of personality tests, particularly the Rorschach and the MMPI, can be seen in Buros' (1970) extensive review of personality tests. In it he has pointed out the "sterility" of research on the Rorschach and the MMPI. Almost 3,747 references on the Rorschach technique, according to Buros, have not been able to generate a body of knowledge that would generally be accepted by competent psychologists. As a result, projective tests and their once widespread use has been declining sharply. Of all the references on personality tests, projective tests shared 20 percent in 1939, 66 percent in 1951, and back to 24 percent in 1967. In
fact the Sixth Mental Measurement Yearbook published in 1965 contains only three reviews on the Rorschach.

It seems obvious then that personality tests just do not meet the rigorous scientific standards demanded by experimentally oriented psychologists and their research designs. It would not be inappropriate to say that unless these tests and their theories demonstrate empirical validity, their already diminishing use in clinical and research setting is destined to become a thing of the past. Because psychodynamic theories of personality and personality tests have more hypothetical propositions about psychopathology and personality assessment than proven principles.

As pointed out in the Introduction section, behavioral approaches based on learning theory principles have a lot more to offer, as far as assessment of maladaptive behavior and its successfully effective treatment. Functional analysis of behavior, because of its objectivity and empirical validation, holds a promising future. To repeat, it explains how a behavior is produced, maintained, and eliminated in a scientifically verifiable manner. Behavioral techniques offer not only a verifiable theory but also the programmatic application of the research proven to be useful. These successful experiences are being shared by all those professionals concerned with behavioral deficits. These professionals are making a difference.