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## Criminal Intelligence

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## BOOK REVIEW

CRIMINAL INTELLIGENCE. By Carl Murchison, Ph.D. Clark University, Worcester, Mass. pp. 291. 1926. (\$4.00).

Not since Dr. Charles Goring published his well-known *English Convict* in 1913 has so extensive and detailed a statistical study of the criminal appeared as Dr. Carl Murchison's *Criminal Intelligence*. Indeed, it might very appropriately bear the corresponding title, the *American Convict*, for it is more than a study of the intelligence of the criminal. It considers his literacy, physical traits, geographical concomitants, marital condition, recidivism, length of incarceration, chronologic age, etc. It is the product of years of intensive study of the criminals in several state prisons, and comprises data for more than 6,000 prisoners. The study is superior to that of Goring partly because of the superiority of the statistical technique and partly because recently we have come into possession of the Army Mental Tests scores. Thus we are now able to compare our criminal population with the general population in respect of intelligence and its correlation with geography, occupation, type of crime, chronologic age, nationality, race, etc. Also, this improved method leads to results which are different from those Goring obtained, and will prove rather disturbing to our usual notions concerning the causal relation of intelligence and criminality.

Recently the army tests have been put to many uses—some scientifically defensible, some not so easily defensible. But in this study they are used in a way to which little if any, objection could be raised. Dr. Murchison makes no attempt to define intelligence in absolute units. He says, "No assumption is made as to whether the Alpha test measures anything that is native. For the practical purpose of this book, intelligence is whatever is expressed quantitatively as measured by the Alpha test. This makes practical comparison possible." (p. 8)

There follows a demonstration which proves that the army mental scores and the criminal norms obtained by the author are equally representative of the general non-criminal and the criminal populations respectively. If there is any discrepancy, it is that the criminal norms obtained from the sample underrate the mental capacity of the criminal population as a whole.

The criminal population is divided into four groups: native-born men, foreign-born white men, negro men, and white and negro women. Each of these groups is analysed for various traits, most of which are correlated with the intelligence scores, and then the results for the four groups are compared. The chief deductions are as follows:

- (a) Criminals are not less intelligent, but slightly superior to the general population.
- (b) Hardened criminals score higher than first offenders.
- (c) In terms of mental tests scores, there seems to be no different criminal type as distinguished from the general population. If any statistical proof was necessary, Dr. Murchison has furnished it by showing that the distribution of scores varies with the part of the country, type of crime, incarceration in home state or outside of home state. He says, "The hierarchy of criminal groups is so similar to the hierarchy of other social groups!" (p. 157)
- (d) The criminal population is less literate than the general population, but they are not below the general population in church affiliation.

These results obtained by Dr. Murchison suggest the following conclusions to us:

1. We have probably overemphasized the factor of intelligence in human conduct, and underemphasized temperamental and emotional balance.
2. Perhaps the concept of intelligence needs to be re-defined.

The chapter entitled "The Prevailing Fallacy of Maternalism" contains a denunciation of present-day coddling of the criminal, of crime commissions as being useless, together with the author's recommendations for changes in our criminal court procedure. "Practical and effective methods for removing criminals from our midst," he states, "are well known and at hand." They are, concretely: abolition of the jury system, the system of release on bond, of the indeterminate sentence, of the parole system; uniform punishment for the insane, feebleminded, and the young; and the

third penitentiary conviction to carry an automatic death penalty.

Whatever one may think of these recommendations, and the reviewer fails to see that they follow logically from the results obtained from the investigation, the work of Dr. Murchison is very important and its influence should be far-reaching. His book will shake our faith in many comforting illusions and *a priori* assumptions in regard to the mental inferiority and unique nature of "the" criminal. It deserves to be read and pondered by every criminal lawyer, judge, juror, warden, jailer, social reformer, probation officer, parole officer, sociologist, psychologist, and, even, policeman. Hereafter, the glib and impressionistic theories of these gentlemen will be confronted with the hard, cold figures of Dr. Murchison and they will either reply with equally hard and irrefutable facts or hold their peace.

—JACOB SAPOSNEKOW.

