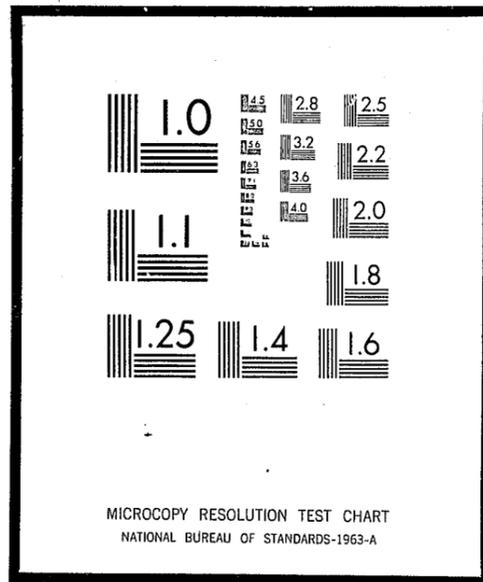


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ON THE MEASUREMENT OF SOCIAL ROLE
ADAPTATION IN THE PRISON COMMUNITY -

A Research Note

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The Metropolitan Criminal Justice Center operates the Pilot City program in Chesapeake, Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Virginia Beach, Virginia. Established in September, 1971, the Center is a research and program planning and development component of the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. The Center's Pilot City program is one of eight throughout the nation funded by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration of the U. S. Department of Justice. The basic purpose of each Pilot City project is to assist local jurisdictions in the design and establishment of various programs, often highly innovative and experimental in nature, which will contribute over a period of years to the development of a model criminal justice system. Each Pilot City team is also responsible for assuring comprehensive evaluation of such programs, for assisting the development of improved criminal justice planning ability within the host jurisdictions, and for providing technical assistance to various local agencies when requested.

The Pilot City Program has two primary responsibilities -- to the host municipalities and to the improvement of the criminal justice system. In Virginia, responsibility for adult corrections, except for offenders sentenced for one year or less to local jails, rests entirely with the State Department of Welfare and Institutions. Thus the Pilot City Program's activities in the adult corrections area consist primarily of program planning assistance to local correctional efforts and research regarding such currently important issues in Virginia as sentencing procedures and criteria, community corrections, and institutional programming and management (as reflected in this monograph).

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ON THE MEASUREMENT OF SOCIAL ROLE ADAPTATION
IN THE PRISON COMMUNITY

A Research Note*

During the past thirty years a considerable volume of research has examined factors related to the assumption of "argot" or social roles within the structure of inmate communities (Reimer, 1939; Clemmer, 1940; Schrag, 1944, 1954, 1961a, 1961b; Caldwell, 1956; Irwin and Cressey, 1962; Ward and Kassebaum, 1965; Giallombardo, 1966a, 1966b; Wellford, 1967; Thomas and Foster, 1972, 1973). Although a review of these studies shows that the techniques employed in the measurement of social role types have varied considerably, the logic behind examinations of this variable is consistent. When inmates enter correctional institutions, they necessarily become participants in the informal inmate organization. As is true when individuals become participants in any organizational setting, inmates will typically move into one of a number of the positions that make up the structure of the inmate society. Thus, if it were possible to develop a reliable means of acquiring information on the type of position that an inmate had assumed, we would be in a much

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better position to understand and to predict the attitudinal and behavioral changes that occur as a result of his confinement. Such information is clearly crucial for those interested or involved in attempts to alter the attitudes and behavior of those confined in correctional institutions.

Despite both the theoretical importance of social role adaptations and the frequency with which this variable has been examined in various types of research, little has been done to examine the empirical soundness of the types of measures that have been employed. At least two basic questions must be resolved if we are to demonstrate the continuing utility of this issue for criminological research and institutional management. First, does a given measure of social role type really discriminate between the types of role adaptations that are of interest, or does the measure simply allow us to "assign a number" to each of the cases in a sample? Second, even if the measure provides a sound means of discrimination between types of inmates, does it really add anything to our capability to predict other important variables? In other words, does a given measure actually do what it was intended to do? If so, is it of any substantive utility? Given the fact that one approach to the measurement of social role types appears to have drawn a considerable amount of interest in recent years (cf. Garabedian, 1963, 1964; Glaser, 1964; Thomas and Foster, 1972, 1973), the purpose of this report is to examine both the extent to which this specific approach can discriminate between types of inmates and its potential as a predictor of other

important aspects of adaptation to confinement.

Research Methodology

The analysis presented in this paper is based on data obtained from inmates who were confined in a Virginia maximum security institution for adult male felons during 1970. A systematic random sample (N = 405) was drawn from all of those who were permanently assigned to the working population of the institution (N = 810), and a subsample was drawn from those confined in the maximum security cell block (N = 37). Some initial sample shrinkage was caused by transfers, releases, illness, and unavoidable conflicts with institutional schedules, but most of the initial cases were available for contact when the data collection began (N = 401). Additional cases were lost due to refusals to cooperate and improperly completed questionnaires, but complete data were obtained on 84 percent of those in the sample (N = 336). Supplemental data were then obtained by matching the questionnaires with permanent prison records, and we were able to successfully match 82 percent of the completed questionnaires (N = 276). This report is based on the data obtained on the matched group of 276. The operational measures that are relevant for the present paper are described below.

Prisonization Prisonization is conceptualized as the degree to which an inmate has accepted the normative prescriptions and proscriptions characteristic of what is generally referred to as the "inmate code" (cf. Ohlin, 1956). A fourteen item Likert-type attitude scale was developed from a larger pool of items as a

measure of this variable. With respect to both this measure and that of opposition to the prison organization, item analysis was accomplished by correlating the responses to each attitude item with the summated scale score of the scale in which the item appeared. When an item to scale score correlation was not statistically significant at the .001 confidence level, the item was not included in the final scale. The potential range of scale scores was from 14 to 70. The lower the scale score, the higher the degree of prisonization. The mean of the final score was 38.33 with a standard deviation of 12.49. (Sample items are provided in Appendix A).

Opposition to the Prison Organization The extent to which inmates have developed negative attitudes toward the prison organization has often been confused with the extent to which they have become prisonized, but it seems clear from descriptions of the inmate code that a negative response to the prison organization is more appropriately viewed as a result of prisonization rather than as a part of that process. The degree to which inmates have developed negative attitudes toward the prison organization and its programs was measured by a twenty-one item Likert-type scale. The potential range of scores was from 21 to 105. The lower the scale score on this measure, the more negative the attitudes towards the prison. The mean of the final scale was 55.46 with a standard deviation of 17.58. (Sample items are provided in Appendix A). A t-test was calculated in order to determine whether the mean of the prisoni-

zation scale was significantly different from that of the opposition scale, and the difference was significant at less than the .001 confidence level. This supports the notion that they are, in fact, measures of two distinct phenomena.

Social Role Type Social role adaptations are conceptualized as reflections of the positions into which inmates move within the structure of the informal inmate organization. A modification of the techniques reported earlier by Garabedian (1963, 1964) yielded twenty-three Likert-type items. Each item was designed as a measure of one of five basic role configurations. The logic behind the development of this measure is straight-forward. We expect that each inmate will endorse only those items that reflect the expectations linked to the position that he occupies within the inmate system. Similarly, we expect that he will fail to endorse items not associated with his position. The scoring technique is accomplished in such a way as to make low scores on the scales indicative of high endorsement. The inmate is assigned five scale scores on the basis of his responses to the five sets of items, and these scores are then compared with the mean responses of all inmates to each of the five sets. The expectation is that each inmate will have one scale score out of the five scores that is below the mean response level. Should a given inmate have scores that are below the mean scale values for two or more scales, he is placed into the type on which he is furthest below the mean. In cases where all five scores were above the mean, the inmate was classified in favor of the score which was closest to the mean of a given role type. Should he have two

or more scores that are equally below the means of the respective scales, or should he fail to answer some of the items, he is not classified into one role type. The argot designations reported by Garabedian (1963, 1964) were used in this research, and theoretical discussions of the alignment of these types along a prosocial to antisocial continuum are readily available elsewhere (cf. Schrag, 1961a).¹

Analysis and Findings

The first task in our analysis is to determine whether the measures of five basic role types can discriminate between categories of inmates. This problem can be approached in two ways. First, the mean values of each of the five scales can be compared with one another to determine the extent to which they are significantly different. Should this comparison show that the means of the several scales do not differ significantly at some pre-set confidence level, a fundamental question would be raised about the discriminatory power of the measures. Table 1 provides the necessary statistical information that is required to answer this question.

¹Readers familiar with the prior research will note that the ordering of the respective role types along a prosocial to antisocial continuum departs in some respects from that provided by Garabedian (1963, 1964). Given Garabedian's data on the impact of confinement on each of the role types and Schrag's theoretical discussion of prosocial, pseudosocial, antisocial and asocial adaptations, we feel this modification of the ordering is well-justified.

Table 1

SUMMARY OF T-TESTS ON MEAN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SOCIAL ROLE TYPE MEASURES

	Square John	Ding	Politician	Right Guy	Outlaw
Square John	-----	2.06*	17.26**	9.04**	4.63**
Ding		-----	21.16**	22.21**	17.00**
Politician			-----	16.94**	12.88**
Right Guy				-----	3.99**
Outlaw					-----

* Critical ratio .05
 ** Critical ratio .001

As can readily be seen from these data, each mean is significantly different from every other mean. This, in turn, provides support for the notion that each of the five scales are measuring different dimensions of adaptation. Thus, our interpretation is that the social role measures do discriminate between categories on inmates and that their use is justified.

Evidence from this set of t-tests notwithstanding, it is necessary to view these findings with care because of the fact that statistically significant mean differences are to be expected even when the magnitude of the mean difference is small if a relatively large sample is being used. Thus, as a check on this phase of our analysis, we also computed the intercorrelations between the five scales. The logic behind these computations is simple. If two or more of the scales were actually measuring the same or very similar attitudes, we would expect their correlations with one another to approach unity. If the scales were measuring totally unrelated attitudes, we would expect their correlations with one another to approach zero. Because each of these scales represents an attempt to place individuals along a prosocial to antisocial continuum, we would expect moderate intercorrelations, but high levels of correlation between any pair of scales would raise serious questions about their status as independent measures. Table 2 provides the findings of this correlational analysis.

Table 2

INTERCORRELATION MATRIX OF INMATE SOCIAL ROLE TYPES

	Square John	Ding	Politician	Right Guy	Outlaw
Square John	1.000	.251	.267	.163	-.004
Ding		1.000	.398	.266	.402
Politician			1.000	.499	.490
Right Guy				1.000	.487
Outlaw					1.000

In no instance do we find unacceptably high levels of association between any pair of scales. The highest correlation coefficient, for example, was found between the "politician" and "right guy" measures ($r = .499$). This means that slightly less than 25 percent of the variation in one measure is accounted for by variation in the other. Were the two measures measuring the same phenomenon, we would expect much higher levels of association than this. Our conclusion, therefore, is that the measures of social role types are discriminating and that they are not highly interrelated with one another.

These findings do not, however, allow us to conclude that they are useful as predictors of other relevant variables. In order to ascertain the extent to which our measures of social types can be used as a predictor of other dimensions of response to confinement, the associations between social role adaptation and both prisonization and opposition to the prison organization were computed. Prior researchers have suggested that role adaptations may be ranked from prosocial to antisocial (cf. Schrag, 1961a; Garabedian, 1963, 1964). If these suggestions are valid, one would expect to find the assumption of antisocial roles paired with both high levels of prisonization and high levels of opposition to the prison organization. Given the considerable theoretical support for such contentions, empirical findings that demonstrate these linkages would not only support the theoretical predictions, but also the adequacy of our measure of social role types. Tables 3 and 4 provide the necessary data for the evaluation of both the adequacy of the theoretical expectations and the utility of the social role scales.

Table 3

CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ROLE TYPE AND DEGREE OF PRISONIZATION

Degree of Prisonization	Social Role Type				
	Square John	Ding	Politician	Right Guy	Outlaw
High	2 (2.9)	10 (20.4)	16 (27.1)	20 (40.8)	21 (46.7)
Medium	24 (34.3)	18 (26.7)	31 (52.5)	20 (40.8)	18 (40.0)
Low	44 (62.9)	21 (42.9)	12 (20.3)	9 (18.4)	6 (13.3)
TOTALS:	70 (100.1)	49 (100.0)	59 (99.9)	49 (100.0)	45 (100.0)

Gamma = $-.518$, $p. < .001$

In Table 3, we find strong support for the expectation that the assumption of an antisocial role is related to high levels of prisonization. Indeed, a comparison of the percentage differences in the table is more instructive than is the coefficient of association ($\gamma = .518$) when taken by itself. For example, only 2.9 percent of the 70 inmates who were classified as "Square Johns" had high prisonization scores, while 46.7 percent of the 45 "Outlaws" showed high levels of prisonization. Similarly, while 62.9 percent of the Square Johns showed low levels of prisonization, only 13.3 percent of the outlaws obtained low scores on this measure. In other words, the assumption of antisocial roles within the structure of the inmates society is closely associated with increased prisonization. This supports the theoretical expectation, and also suggests that our measure of social role adaptation is a meaningful predictor of this aspect of adaptation to confinement.

Similar results were obtained when type of social role adaptation was compared with degree of opposition to the prison organization (Table 4). While the level of association ($\gamma = -.350$) is not as strong as the role adaptation-prisonization linkage, the assumption of an antisocial role is significantly related to opposition. Taking the most prosocial and most antisocial role types as a point of comparison once again, the Outlaw types were almost twice as likely to strongly oppose the prison organization and its programs as were the Square Johns. Square Johns, on the other hand, were three times as likely to have low opposition scores when compared with the Outlaws.

Table 4

CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL ROLE TYPE AND DEGREE OF
OPPOSITION TO THE PRISON ORGANIZATION

Opposition to the Prison Organization	Social Role Type				
	Square John	Ding	Politician	Right Guy	Outlaw
High	10 (14.3)	9 (18.4)	12 (20.3)	16 (32.7)	17 (37.8)
Medium	21 (30.0)	25 (51.0)	28 (47.5)	24 (49.0)	20 (44.4)
Low	39 (55.7)	15 (30.6)	19 (32.2)	9 (18.4)	8 (17.8)
TOTALS:	70 (100.0)	49 (100.0)	59 (100.0)	49 (100.1)	45 (100.0)

Gamma = $-.350$, $p. < .001$

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Summary and Conclusions

Our purpose in this discussion has been to direct attention to methodological and substantive issues that we feel are critical concerns for those interested in the sociology of corrections. With respect to the methodological issue that we have raised, most criminologists would agree that one of the most salient problems in the field is that of the inadequacy of our measures of central concepts. Despite this consensus, an open discussion of attempts to render important concepts measurable appears only infrequently in the professional literature. This has certainly been true of research on correctional institutions. For that reason, we have prepared this paper in part as a report on the development of a measure of social role adaptations, and we have attempted to provide a basic evaluation of the empirical adequacy and utility of the relevant subscales. The statistical data that we have presented show that the scales do discriminate between various categories of inmates that have been discussed in previous research. Further, the data show that that these measures facilitate the prediction of other variables that are of considerable importance. By so doing we do not encourage others to apply this measure as is in subsequent research on confined populations. On the contrary, we are well aware of the need for a more sophisticated set of measures, particularly in light of the fact that measures developed for use in a maximum security institution for adult felons may not be at all adapted to work in, for example,

juvenile detention centers. Still, we do hope this type of report will encourage others to critically evaluate and report on measurement techniques that they have found to be useful in this, as well as other, areas of inquiry.

The methodological issue notwithstanding, the substantive problem that we have tried to raise also deserves the continuing attention of researchers in this field. The development of adequate explanatory models in this area of the sociology of corrections demands that attention be allocated to numerous determinants of the outcome of confinement. These determinants certainly include, but are obviously not limited to, the characteristics of the prison as formal organization, the structure of the inmate social system, and the process of assimilation into the inmate normative system. A considerable amount of work has attempted to account for the factors which influence the assimilation or prisonization process. More recently there has been a substantial interest in comparative organizational analysis. (Grusky, 1959; Zald, 1962a, 1962b, 1963; Glaser, 1964; Street, 1965; Berk, 1966; Street, et al., 1966; Cline, 1968; Akers, et al., 1972). Far less interest has been shown to detailed empirical analyses of the structure of the informal inmate system. However, to the extent that one can argue that this structure is most clearly reflected in the positions and social roles into which inmates can move, such analyses are critically important. Because the analysis presented in this discussion shows that measures of social roles can be applied and that they do increase our ability to understand and predict other important

phenomena, we would hope that other researchers would be reminded of the potential importance of such research.

APPENDIX A

The following items provided the operational measures of five social role types:

Square John

1. No matter what happens or how much trouble I'm in, I always know that there are people on the outside that will help me when I get out.
2. Most people try to be law abiding and straight.
3. I usually feel guilty when I do wrong.
4. The only criminals I know are the ones I've met in prison.

The mean of this measure is 9.03.

Ding

1. I worry a lot about little things.
2. I have had some serious problems since I've been in prison.
3. Most of the inmates are not very friendly toward me.

The mean of this measure is 8.83.

Politician

1. Who you know is more important than what you know.
2. There are basically just two kinds of people in the world: those in the know and those who are suckers.
3. One of the main reasons why I get along in here is because I've got a lot of confidence in myself.
4. Brains are more important than muscle.
5. Most people have done something they could have been locked up for if they'd been caught.
6. Having pull is more important than ability in getting a good job.
7. If you know the right people, you can get just about anything you want around here.

The mean of this measure is 15.58.

Right Guy

1. The best way to do time is to keep your mouth shut and never let the staff know that anything is getting you down.
2. There are times when it is all right to inform on another inmate.*
3. You have to do what you can to help other inmates even when it might get you in trouble with the officers.
4. The real big boys in crime can fix anything and rarely get into prison.
5. Inmates can trust me to be a right guy and loyal in my dealings with them.

The mean of this measure is 12.14.

Outlaw

1. You have to take care of yourself because nobody else is going to take care of you.
2. I don't like anybody to boss me around.
3. "Might is right" and "Every man for himself" are the main rules of living regardless of what people say.
4. Around here it's best to do something to others before they get a chance to do it to you.

The mean of this measure is 10.53.

The following items are samples of those that provided the operational measures of the relevant attitudinal variables:

Prisonization

<u>Item</u>	<u>Item to Scale Correlation</u>
1. The other inmates are right when they say, "Don't do anything more than you have to."	.670
2. You have to do what you can to help other inmates even though it might get you in trouble with the officers.	.632
3. When inmates stick together, it is a lot easier to do time.	.617
4. I try to stay out of trouble, but nobody around here is going to push me around and get away with it.	.569
5. Around here it's best to do something to others before they get a chance to do it to you.	.597

Attitudes Toward Institution

1. Most people on the staff here do their best to help inmates.*	.712
2. The officers are usually willing to meet with inmates half-way.*	.665
3. Most of the people on the staff are willing to go out of their way to help an inmate.*	.632
4. The staff here would rather do things for a few inmates who will inform on others or who do just what they are told than do anything about the problems the rest of us have.	.582
5. The people on the staff here seem to feel that no inmate can be trusted.	.506

*Directional coding of item was reversed when obtaining scale scores. This designation is used throughout the appendix.

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