

An Investigation into the Physical and Cultural Basis of Personality in College Women

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The problems introduced in the examination of the nature of the relationship between the constitution of the individual and his personality are varied and many. Who will be included in the study and how their personality and body constitution will compare are the major problems.

In the examination of the methods to be used in constitutional assessment, it was decided that W. H. Sheldon's technique of somatotyping would be used. He uses a 7 point scale for each morphological component and classifies a male according to the amount of endomorphy, mesomorphy, and ectomorphy in the body. A 1 in any of the components would mean that there was a small amount of that particular component in the body. Therefore, an extremely linear person would be considered to be low in endomorphy and mesomorphy, and high (near 7) in the ectomorphic component. An extreme case could be classified as a 1-1-7, meaning low endomorphy, low mesomorphy, and high ectomorphy. Thus Sheldon's scale could be used visually in which case the individual doing the somatotyping should be well trained by an instructor who is accomplished in the field of somatotyping. Sheldon makes use of photographs, also, in which he has a front, side, and rear view of the individual. Measurements can then be taken from the photographs which are comparable to those taken directly from the individual. I have eliminated the possibility of the photographs for women due to their controversial nature. Instead of the photographs, Slabaugh's scale for the somatotyping assessments will be used. In this way it will be possible to reconstruct the individual from body measurements by using the standardizing formula and still would not identify the person being measured. Any desire not to be recognized is given the greatest consideration. This is quite naturally the greatest obstacle in the study. However, if handled properly this method could ease the reluctance of being somatotyped because of photographs. The measurements needed to reconstruct an outline of the individual are comprised of ten from the front view, two from the side, and five from the rear view. In the practice we have had to date, it has worked effectively.

Two tests are being used in the selection of the personality assessment. One will be Sheldon's Temperament Scale which is again based upon three components: viscerotonia, somatotonia, and cerebrotonia. Twenty traits are listed for each component, and the individual uses the 7 point rating scale again. The lower the number, the less is the temperament component in the subject. An example is shown by the third temperament trait which for the viscerotonia is "Slow Reaction"; for the somatotonia it is "The Energetic Character"; and for the cerebrotonia it is "Overly Fast Reactions." This scale will be aided by the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule which is entirely different in its approach to personality. It is constructed as a general personality test which is needed to give more information of the individual being interviewed than can be gained by a single meeting.

The students used in this study are college undergraduate and graduate women at Indiana University in the age range of 18 to 25. The

majority of the sample is expected to fall in the 18 to 20 year age range. The study will cover Residence Halls, sororities, plus girls who live or room in the city of Bloomington. It will include Caucasoid, Negroid, and Mongoloid students.

The diversity of students will naturally mean diversity in cultural backgrounds. We hope that the study will indicate the role the background plays in the answers given by the student. This would appear to direct the mental aptitude of the student in her adaptation to the environment of a college. The cultural background is also influenced by the economic level of the girl herself or of her parents. An example would be two girls with the same morphological components, one of whom lived in a sorority and the other who lived in a co-operative house. Since the sample is taken from a State University, it is possible to have a wide range of Negro and White in-state and out-of-state students. They bring, in turn, several levels of society.

One area of the study could include a comparison of Negro and White somatotypes and personalities. Another area might compare the cultural and economic background of White students with their somatotype and personality, and a similar comparison made with the Negro students. There are many students from other countries studying at Indiana University, but it is doubtful whether a large enough sample of the women students could be obtained for comparison.

It is believed that the results of the study will give a substantial amount of information on the somatotype and personality of college Negro and White women, since there is little definite information at the present time. There will be some traits which will be similar in Negroes and Whites and others which will be quite different. It is suspected that there will be less difference between northern Negroes and Whites than will be found with the southern Negroes. All comparisons made may give one type of results in a college environment, and a later study may show the same morphological components giving another kind of result in a different environment. Results received from this study of college women might be compared with the same somatotypes given by Dr. Bullen in her study of factory women.

Dr. Sheldon has conducted many tests and somatotypic measurements on men of whom most have been college men at Harvard University. Data gathered from a private school would seem to be more limited than that gathered at a State University. However, it might still indicate whether Dr. Sheldon's somatotype charts and temperament scales for men may also be applicable for women or whether a slightly different scale will need to be devised. This study is constructed to answer some of these questions.