SELF-ESTEEM AND ITS RELATION TO TWO MEASURES OF DELINQUENCY

IN INCARCERATED MEN

by

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to test Kaplan's (1978) enhancement model in a

sample of adult male inmates. Kaplan's enhancement model is based on the self-esteem

motive, wherein the individual behaves so as to enhance self-esteem. Engaging in

delinquent behaviour is one method of achieving group membership and enhancing self-

esteem. Subjects consisted of 332 male inmates ranging in age from 18 to 58 years. This

study was a cross-sectional post-dictive study that used data from the Low Self-Esteem

Content Scale and the Psychopathic Deviance Scale of the MMPI-2, and demographic

information from inmate intake assessments. It was predicted that self-esteem would be a

function of psychopathic deviance, recidivism, and length of sentence. The hypothesis was

that self-esteem would be higher for inmates who had higher scores on psychopathic

deviance, were recidivist, and had longer sentences. Results indicated that recidivists had

higher self-esteem than first offenders. Scores on psychopathic deviance were elevated for

both groups, and recidivists had higher scores than first offenders. The present study

found partial support for Kaplan's enhancement model.

Self-Esteem and its Relation to Two Measures of Delinquency in Incarcerated Men

The purpose of the present study was to test Kaplan's (1978) enhancement model in an adult male inmate sample. Self-esteem of inmates is an area of research that has received a great deal of attention in the psychological literature (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996; Joiner, Alfano, & Metalsky, 1993; Tice, Butler, Muraven, & Stillwell, 1995; Wood, Giordano-Beech, Taylor, Michela, & Gauss, 1994). Moreover, self-esteem has also been found to be an important construct in both juvenile delinquency and adult criminality (Brynner, O'Malley, & Bachman, 1981; Culbertson, 1975; Fischer & Bersani, 1979; Kaplan, 1978; Rosenberg & Rosenberg, 1978; Wormith, 1984).

The following discussion examines the literature regarding self-esteem and its relation to delinquency and adult criminality. The first section reviews the enhancement model and discusses the degree of support for this view from community-based studies and studies performed in the prison context. The second section examines the protection model. The third section reviews the stability of self-esteem, and how the stability and level of self-esteem are associated with violent behaviour. A final section reviews meta-analytic studies which examine self-esteem as a predictor of recidivism.

Enhancement Model

Kaplan's (1978) theory is based on the self-esteem motive, wherein the individual behaves so as to enhance self-esteem. Kaplan argued that individuals experience intense self-rejection when experiencing disapproval from a predeviance membership group. Such attitudes are the end result of a history of experiences in which the individual is unable to defend against or cope with self-devaluing circumstances, and resulting negative

evaluations by those in the normative group. Self-rejecting attitudes and negative

associations with the normative group result in a loss of incentive to conform to the

normative group standards and expectations, followed by motivation to deviate from these

expectations. Individuals then seek to associate with those who will offer acceptance and

approval while simultaneously rejecting the values and standards of their normative group.

Engaging in delinquent activities is one method of reducing negative experiences and

ameliorating self-rejecting attitudes.

Community-Based Studies

Kaplan (1978) conducted a three-year longitudinal study in Houston, Texas. Data

were gathered once a year from 36 junior high schools, with a final sample size of 3,148

participants. Students were assessed on their self-esteem and their SES. Twenty-eight

deviant acts were examined, and changes in self-esteem were assessed once a year over a

three year period. Kaplan compared, over the three time periods, initially low self-esteem

participants who engaged in delinquent acts, with those who were initially low self-esteem

who did not engage in delinquent acts, in order to tease out the relation between

subsequent increases in self esteem and delinquency. The results indicated that among

high and low SES males with initially low self-esteem, participation in delinquent activities

was associated with greater increases in self-esteem than for participants who did not

engage in delinquent acts. Kaplan found a more consistent relation between antecedent

deviance and subsequent increases in self-esteem among low SES males. He found that

participation in delinquent acts was not associated with increases in self-esteem for initially

medium or high self-esteem males. The results supported Kaplan's model of the

development of deviance in adolescents, wherein deviance is a defensive response to self-rejection.

Kaplan and Johnson (1991) conducted further statistical analysis of Kaplan's original data set to test the hypothesis that negative social sanctions (punishment) result in increased deviance at a later time. Their hypothesis was based on the idea that an individual who had experienced rejection from conventional society would re-value the label of deviant from a negative to a positive one in order to reduce self-rejecting attitudes. The effect of punishment in response to deviant behaviour would result in increased alienation from conventional society, increased association with deviant peers, and identification with the deviant subculture. Once the shift from a negative to a positive label had occurred, the individual would be motivated to behave in ways that reinforce the label, in order to evaluate himself positively. Kaplan's enhancement model included six parameters: early deviance, self-rejection, negative social sanctions, disposition to deviance, deviant peer associations, and deviance. The results indicated that punishment for prior deviance was related to future delinquency.

Rosenberg and Rosenberg (1978) found support for Kaplan's (1978) enhancement model in their longitudinal study, with one important difference. Like Kaplan, Rosenberg and Rosenberg (1978) found that social class was an important factor in predicting deviance. The Rosenbergs examined the data utilizing a cross-lag panel correlation, which is a statistical procedure used to attempt to tease out causal sequences from apparently reciprocal relations. They found that low self-esteem preceded delinquency; however, this effect was greater for low SES males as compared to high SES males. This

finding suggests a possible causal relation between initially low levels of self-esteem and the subsequent onset of delinquency. Rosenberg and Rosenberg reasoned that delinquency is one of the few means available to low SES males of attaining similar material possessions of high SES males, in addition to increased social status.

Brynner, O'Malley, and Bachman (1981) performed additional analysis of the extensive data utilized by Rosenberg and Rosenberg (1978). They used the data from the years 1966, 1968, and 1970, which consisted of 1,471 male participants from 87 different schools. The results suggested that males with low self-esteem upon entrance to high school who later engaged in delinquent acts, had higher scores of self-esteem, supporting Kaplan's (1978) study. Brynner et al. (1981) noted that self-esteem for adolescents had three major dimensions: successfulness, toughness, and sexual precocity. Loss of esteem in one area was compensated for in another. In this way, the individual could maintain at least a minimally acceptable level of self-esteem. Loss of overall self-esteem could be viewed as a belief that one or another of these dimensions to status was temporarily out of reach. As behaviour and self-perception change due to maturity, the balance between the three dimensions of self-esteem was restored, therefore the need to engage in deviant behavior was not necessary. Brynner et al. (1981) concluded that the adolescent crisis is at its height during high school; by the time adolescents leave high school they experience growing autonomy in self-concept, and the need for a delinquent response to restore self-esteem seems to diminish.

Prison Studies: Juvenile

Culbertson (1975) investigated whether time spent in prison would be associated

with lower levels of self-esteem for juvenile inmates in a custodial institution. Self-esteem was measured using the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (Fitts, 1965) and was administered to a group of 222 male inmates. Participants had been incarcerated for a range of 1 to 550 days. Culbertson performed his research with the initial assumption that inmates in custodial institutions would experience lower self-esteem over time, since the focus is on punishment, and that inmates in rehabilitative institutions would experience increased self-esteem over time, due to the focus on treatment. Although Kaplan (1978) did not study incarcerated youth, application of his enhancement model would suggest that youth who exhibit greater delinquency, as evidenced by more delinquent acts, would experience higher self-esteem.

It was found that time spent in prison was marginally related to lowered self-esteem. A post-hoc analysis was performed and the data were divided into three groups, based on prior incarcerations. The three groups were: no prior incarcerations, one prior incarceration, and two or more prior incarcerations. Self-esteem was negatively associated with time spent in prison for participants who had no prior convictions (r = -.200, p < .05). For participants with one previous incarceration, time served showed no significant association with self-esteem scores (r = .006, p > .05). For participants with two or more previous incarcerations, time served was not associated with self-esteem (r = .073, p > .05). In cases where an increase in self-esteem was found, those participants were found to have an increasing involvement in delinquent activity.

Culbertson (1975) speculated that this pattern of higher self-esteem in repeat

offenders could have occurred as a result of the internalization of a criminal value structure and delinquent self-concept. His interpretation is consistent with the results of other research (Fischer & Bersani, 1979). Although the results indicated a marginal increase in self-esteem, it is important to note two points. First, the results were contrary to Culbertson's initial assumption regarding custodial institutions; he expected a decrease in self-esteem. Second, the inmates were adolescents and at the beginning of potential criminal careers. Due to their young age, they may not yet have developed an attachment to the deviant subculture, as discussed by Kaplan (1978).

Chassin and Stager (1984) conducted a study that examined the role of social labelling on the self-esteem of 154 incarcerated young male offenders. Chassin and Stager examined global self-esteem and role specific self-esteem to test the following hypothesis: in order for the label of 'deviant' or 'delinquent' to affect the youth negatively, the youth would first have to: (a) believe the label had personal relevance, (b) be aware that peers and adults hold negative views of the label, (c) agree with these negative views and negative evaluations of the deviant group, and (d) place importance on the opinions of peers and adults. Utilizing multiple regression, it was found that low self-esteem was associated with awareness of peers' negative views ($r = .46$, $p < .001$), and awareness of adult opinion of deviance ($r = .40$, $p < .02$). They concluded that social labelling alone is not associated with lower self-esteem; self-labelling is also necessary. These results are inconsistent with Kaplan's enhancement model, which utilized only global self-esteem.

Power and Beveridge (1990) explored how self-esteem changed over time in a group of 32 young offenders (ages 16-20, mean of 18 years). Self-esteem was measured

using the Self-Attitude Inventory (Bennett, Sorenson, & Forshay, 1971), the Positive and

Negative Self-Esteem Scale (Warr & Jackson, 1983), and the Behaviour Rating Form

(Coopersmith, 1967). Participants also completed the Beck Hopelessness Scale (Beck,

Weissman, Lester, & Trexler, 1974). The participants all had sentences of three months,

and each participant was assessed individually on three separate occasions: within the first

week of detention, midway through their sentence, and one week prior to release.

Self-esteem increased (SAI, F (2,62) = 6.03, p < .01; Positive Self-Esteem Scale,

F (2,62) = 5.90, p < .01) and hopelessness decreased (Beck Hopelessness Scale, F (2,62)

= 4.04, p < .05) over a three month period. Power and Beveridge (1990) offered two

explanations for the increase in self-esteem in their sample. One explanation was that

some institutional programs could enhance the self-esteem of inmates. The emphasis on

physical training and rigid daily routine offers the inmates an opportunity for success in

their lives, therefore enhancing self-esteem. Second, increased self-esteem could result

from a change in the inmate's social comparison group. The inmate may be more likely to

view himself as equal or superior to his fellow inmates than he is to the wider social

comparison group in the outside world.

These studies offer support for Kaplan's (1978) enhancement model that deviance

is a defensive response to self-rejection (low self-esteem). Incarceration offers the

opportunity for increased identification with criminal others through increased association

with deviant peers and alienation from conventional society (Kaplan & Johnson, 1991).

Support was indicated in that where higher self-esteem was found, there tended to be

greater involvement with delinquent activity (Culbertson, 1975) and longer periods of

incarceration were associated with higher self-esteem (Power & Beveridge, 1990).

Prison Studies: Adult

Clemmer's (1940) study of prisonization directly relates to Kaplan's (1978) enhancement model in terms of adoption of a criminal outlook resulting from the rejection of the conventional values of outside society. Clemmer defined prisonization as a process of assimilation that occurred whenever an inmate was introduced into an unfamiliar culture. The process of prisonization involves an adoption of a criminal outlook and a rejection of the conventions and values of the outside society. Clemmer believed that no inmate was immune to prisonization. Wheeler (1961) refined Clemmer's statements and speculated that inmate assimilation in the prison subculture could be tested, and that a pattern of prisonization would evolve over the period in which inmates were incarcerated. Wheeler proposed that the pattern of participation in inmate subculture would change dramatically from the initial phase of incarceration through the final phase of incarceration. Prisonization would be low during the first six months of inmate sentences, increase during the middle phase, and decrease during the last six months of inmate sentences.

Based on Clemmer's (1940) prisonization study, Wheeler (1961) hypothesized that during the initial phase, prisonization would be low due to socialized relationships with those outside the prison, stress resulting from leaving a familiar environment, and lack of familiarity with prison subculture. During the second phase, the inmate's prisonization would be higher. After the first six months he would have shifted his affiliation from those outside the prison to those inside prison and become acclimatized to his new setting. Once the inmate had entered the final phase, he would become anxious about facing and

shifting his affiliation to the outside world, and prisonization would decrease.

Wheeler (1961) devised a scale of prisonization which consisted of five brief vignettes that described various conflictual situations which occur frequently in prison. The prisonization scale was administered to 237 male inmates ranging in age from 16 to 30 years. Wheeler found that prisonization was low in the initial phase, increased in the middle phase, and decreased in the final phase to levels found in the initial phase, resembling an inverted U distribution.

Wheeler (1961) further theorized, but never tested, that the pattern of self-esteem of incarcerated men, if assessed throughout their period of incarceration, would be similar to that of prisonization. Wheeler's theory was based on the same assumptions about the relation between prisonization and phase of sentence. Self-esteem would be low during the initial phase, increase during the middle phase, and decrease during the final phase. In the initial phase, the inmate would have been separated from family and community and would have the stigma of a prisoner. The inmate would have been assimilated into the prison subculture during the middle phase, but would experience doubt about his ability to make a successful transition from prison to the outside world during the final phase.

To test Wheeler's (1961) theory, Atchley and McCabe (1968) conducted a cross-sectional study of 856 inmates in a maximum security prison in the southwestern United States. Ages ranged from 16 to 33 years, and the ratio of white to non-white subjects was seven to one. Participants were grouped according to time served: less than six months, six months to two years, and six months or less remaining. Participants not in these time frames were not included in the sample. Self-esteem was measured using the McClosky-

Schaar Anomie Scale (McClosky & Schaar, 1965). An inverted U distribution was not

found; self-esteem actually decreased significantly during the middle phase of

incarceration, and increased during the final phase. The decrease during the middle phase

could be attributed to a shift from conventional to deviant reference groups during this

shift.

Bennett (1974) also searched for a pattern of self-esteem change over time in a

group of 82 incarcerated men who were entering the California Penal system. The

researcher used the Self-Attitude Inventory (Bennett et al., 1971) to measure self-esteem.

Participants were retested individually every six months for a period of 2.5 years. Of the

original 82 participants, 39 (48%) were released or discharged. An analysis of the self-

esteem data of the 39 released men showed that there was no consistent pattern. Eleven

(28.2%) showed the inverted U shaped curve suggested by Wheeler (1961), eight (20.5%)

showed a U shaped curve, as found by Atchley and McCabe (1968), fourteen (35.9%)

showed an increasing slope, and six (15.4%) showed a decreasing slope. Self-esteem

increased for 56.4% of the participants who were released during the period of

incarceration, and did not decrease prior to release. These findings suggest that there may

be some aspects of institutional life that are psychologically supportive for many

individuals.

Gendreau, Grant, and Leipciger (1979) found self-esteem to be important to post

prison adjustment. Self-esteem was assessed shortly after entry to prison, and just prior to

release. It was found that high self-esteem just prior to release was a predictor of

recidivism (r (10, 63) = .63, p < .01). They suggested that there are many dimensions of

self-esteem, some of which predict recidivism quite well, such as nurturance. An inmate with high nurturance, as indicated by the Nurturance subscale of the Adjective Checklist, would be unlikely to embrace pro-criminal attitudes and values.

Wormith (1984) conducted research that examined the initial effect of prosocial contact with volunteers on offenders' attitudes, followed by a three year follow-up. Post-release success was marginally correlated with increased self-esteem during incarceration (r (5,38) = -.30, p < .03), and identification with criminal others (r (5,38) = .23, p < .06), neuroticism (r (5,38) = -.21, p < .07), external locus of control (r (5,38) = -.22, p < .06), and ego strength (r (5,38) = .21, p < .07). Offenders who felt more inadequate in the prison environment were more successful upon release.

MacKenzie and Goodstein (1985) used the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) to compare self-esteem levels of long-term offenders and short-term offenders who were either early or late in their sentences. Their findings support Kaplan's (1978) enhancement model. The sample consisted of 1,270 male inmates who were serving sentences in mixed medium and maximum security prisons. Long-term offenders were serving at least 10 years in prison, and short-term offenders were serving an average of 2.5 years. When they compared long-term and short-term inmates who were early in their sentences, they found no differences in self-esteem. When late long-term offenders were compared with early long-term offenders, however, it was found that early long-term offenders had significantly lower self-esteem. The longer an inmate had been incarcerated, the more likely it was that the inmate had become involved in the prison subculture, due to limited access to conventional society in the form of scheduled and controlled visitations.

Additionally, once an inmate had experienced rejection from his reference group, in this case "outside society", a new reference group was adopted. The only consistently available reference groups for an inmate are other inmates, which would be equivalent to Kaplan's deviant subculture. Once a new reference group had been established, the individual had a sense of acceptance and approval, hence the higher self-esteem observed in the late long-term offender group.

This review indicates that there are inconsistencies in the self-esteem literature of incarcerated men, showing varying patterns of self-esteem throughout inmates' sentences (Bennett, 1974). There does appear to be consistency regarding prison adjustment with post-release success: inmates who do not adjust to the prison milieu and hence reject pro-criminal attitudes, have greater post-release success (Wormith, 1984). This would suggest support for Kaplan's (1978) enhancement model, in that adoption of a deviant subculture leads to further deviant acts (recidivism). While the literature on juvenile male inmates indicated increased self-esteem, the literature on adult male inmates indicates that there is not a consistent pattern for self-esteem across the duration of confinement.

Protection Theory

Theoretical development of the enhancement/consistency models has traditionally suggested that people low in self-esteem will seek opportunities to enhance their self-view, and people high in self-esteem will tend to maintain a consistent self-view. The enhancement/ consistency motive, according to this view, can be used to predict behaviour. Baumeister, Tice, and Hutton (1989) contend that self-esteem also includes motivational patterns and presentation styles. Baumeister et al. (1989) argued that high

self-esteem scores are associated with an orientation toward an enhancing presentation, whereas low scores are associated with a protective presentation. It has been found that high self-esteem people tend to invest in opportunities to enhance themselves, whereas low self-esteem people are orientated mainly toward consistency. If presented with an opportunity that is safe and practically guaranteed to offer an enhancement opportunity, only then will those with low self-esteem choose enhancement over protection (Wood, Giordano-Beech, Taylor, Michela, & Gauss, 1994).

While the postulates offered by Baumeister et al. (1989) are opposed to Kaplan's (1978) enhancement model, these researchers did not study the association of deviance and self-esteem. It is plausible that, for those with low self-esteem, opportunities to enhance self-esteem within their normative group are limited and seemingly unaccessible. According to Kaplan (1978), opportunities to enhance self-esteem are more attainable within a deviant group, as it reflects achievable means for positive self-evaluation. Investment in the deviant identity is also an excuse for conventional failure. For those who choose deviance as a means of enhancement, conventional failure could be attributed to their deviant label and being socially stigmatized. The individual may view him or herself as resourceful and receive secondary benefits from illegal activities, such as viewing him or herself as brave after performing hazardous acts. Once the shift from the negative label has become positive, the individual would be motivated to behave in ways that reinforce the label in order to maintain positive self-evaluations.

It could, therefore, be speculated, that deviant individuals have areas of their self-esteem that are unstable. For example, they may believe they lack competence with the

normative group, but demonstrate competence within their deviant group. The stability of

self-esteem has received attention from theorists as a possible explanation for violent

behaviour.

The Stability of Self-Esteem

Traditionally, it was believed that high self-esteem had positive effects for the

individual (Coopersmith, 1967; Cummings, 1982; Wells & Marwell, 1976). In contrast, it

has been found that persons with high self-esteem or highly favourable self-appraisals are

the most likely to be reactive and/or violent when presented with negative feedback

(Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996; Kernis, Cornell, Sun, Berry,& Harlow, 1993). Self-

esteem is not an independent and direct cause of violence; rather, an antecedent of

violence is unstable high self-esteem. When favourable views about oneself are

questioned, or in any way endangered, the person may become aggressive toward the

source of the threat. In this view, violent reactions emerge from a discrepancy between

two contradictory appraisals of the self, one favourable self-appraisal, one negative

external appraisal. The higher the self-view is, the larger the range of external feedback

that is unacceptable. If violence is the result of threats to self-esteem, then people with

high self-esteem will encounter threats more often, and, therefore, have a greater

probability of behaving in an aggressive manner as a means of achieving superiority over

the source of threat. In short, people may become violent when external feedback is

received that is inconsistent with their positive self-views. An extreme example of those

with unstable high self-esteem would be psychopaths who have been described as being

highly reactive to criticism and insults (Hare, 1993).

A widely accepted view of violence, according to Baumeister, Smaii, and Boden (1996), has been that low self-esteem is a cause of violence. These authors assert that many researchers assume that violent individuals have low self-esteem, without providing evidence to support their claims. A combination of aggressive tendencies and low self-esteem may influence the choice of target, those with low self-esteem targeting those who were more vulnerable and not capable or in a position to retaliate; for example, men who victimize women or adults who abuse children. This version of low self-esteem could account for domestic violence, however, it is not comprehensive enough to account for other forms of violence. Attacking a powerful or equal person would require an individual with high self-esteem.

Enhancement model suggests that people seek to view themselves positively, and that people with high self-esteem are in a better position to ignore threats to their ego. Meanwhile, enhancement remains a central concern of people with low self-esteem. High self-esteem is theorized to offer a kind of immunity to ego threats, because the person is secure in their own view of themselves, making external threats to the ego meaningless. Unfortunately, there is very little evidence that such people are immune to threats, insults, criticism, or disrespect. In fact, there is a preponderance of literature that cites the extreme reactions of those with high self-esteem in response to negative feedback (Baumeister et al.,1996).

Baumeister et al. (1996) offer an intriguing discussion concerning the effect of ego threats to those individuals who are violent, and that self-esteem motivates human behaviour in a complex manner. Violence, however, is only one form of deviance. In the

present study, type of crime (violent versus property offenses) was included as a variable

to determine if there is a difference in self-esteem depending on the type of offense. There

is little consensus about the relation between self-esteem and behaviour. Similarly, the

relation between self-esteem and behaviour has been examined in the field of corrections.

In the last few decades, a plethora of research has been produced investigating the

effect of self-esteem, and other variables, on varying treatment outcomes of offenders. A

successful treatment outcome would be indicated by low recidivism rates, therefore,

prediction of recidivism has become of particular importance for those in the field of

rehabilitating offenders. One method of determining factors that contribute toward

recidivism and treatment efficacy is through meta-analysis.

<u>Meta-Analysis</u>

The results from a variety of meta-analyses on the predictors of offender

recidivism (Bonta, Law, & Hanson, 1998; Gendreau, Goggin, & Law, 1997; Gendreau,

Little, & Goggin, 1996; Hanson & Bussiere, 1996) have recently been summarized

(Gendreau, Goggin, & Paparozzi, 1996). These meta-analyses, all based on adult

offenders, found that personal distress factors (depression, anxiety, personal inadequacy,

psychiatric symptomology, low self-esteem) were among the weakest predictors of

recidivism (r's ranged from .00 to .07). Socio-economic status was also a weak predictor,

compared to previous criminal history and antisocial attitudes and values (r's ranged from

.27 to .35).

Self-esteem, as a construct, has been shown to be a significant, though weak

predictor of recidivism in this research literature. One possible reason for self-esteem not

being a robust predictor of recidivism could be that self-esteem has not been used

independently; rather, it has been included in a group of variables collectively labelled

"personal distress".

The Present Study

For the purpose of this study, self-esteem was operationally defined as the

individual's self views as measured by the Low Self-Esteem (LSE) content scale of the

MMPI-2. For example, a person with low self-esteem would believe he or she was

unattractive, a burden to others, awkward, and experience difficulty accepting

compliments. A person with high self-esteem would believe he or she was confident,

attractive, and accepting of compliments. Deviance was operationally defined as the

possession of antisocial characteristics, such as rebellion toward authority figures,

difficulty incorporating the values and standards of society, impulsive behaviour,

immaturity, self-centredness, exhibiting attachment problems, and an insensitivity to the

needs of others (as measured by the Psychopathic Deviance scale of the MMPI-2).

Recidivism was divided into two categories: no prior convictions (first offenders) and

prior convictions (recidivists). Length of sentence was defined as the number of months

to be served by each inmate.

The hypothesis of the present study predicted that if the results support Kaplan's

(1978) enhancement model, then high self-esteem would be associated with high Pd

scores, recidivism, and longer sentences. The LSE scale of the MMPI-2 would have a

negative relation with psychopathic deviance, recidivism, and length of sentence, as high

scores indicate low self-esteem. The regression equation would be LSE= -deviance -

recidivism - length of sentence.

Method

Participants

Springhill Institution is a medium security federal prison that contains approximately 600 first and repeat offenders. Data from psychological intake assessments of approximately 700 male inmates of Springhill dating back one year (August 1995 to August 1996) were screened from previously existing psychological assessments. Approximately 368 files were excluded from the study. Eighteen percent were invalid (n = 67), as indicated by the computer generated scoring of the MMPI-2. Twelve percent (n = 44) of the files did not include the Content Scales and were not included. Seventy percent (n = 257) were sex offenders and excluded from the data set. J. Earle (personal communication June 7, 1996) stated sex offenders differ from other offenders in that they tend to be are older, more educated, and their MMPI-2 profiles in general tend to differ from other offenders. It was advised that they be excluded as they may alter the data set. The resulting sample size was 332. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 58 years. Participants consisted of three ethnic groups; there were 16 African Canadians, 16 Aboriginal Canadians, and 300 Caucasian Canadians.

Materials

Each inmate file in the Springhill Institution Psychology Department contained the results of the MMPI-2, the Brief Symptom Inventory, the House-Tree-Person Test, and an admission form from the Sentence Administration Department. Other test results contained in some inmate files were the Hare Psychopathy Checklist, the Non-Language

Multimodal Test of Intelligence, and the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory .

The measures employed in the present study are self-esteem, deviance, and length of sentence. Self-esteem was obtained from scores of the Low Self-Esteem (LSE) content scale of the MMPI-2 (Appendix A). The LSE Scale is a 24-item scale that measures negative self views. It was developed to be "symptom free", meaning it does not contain items that measure anxiety or depression. People who score high ($t \geq 65$) tend to have a low self opinion and characterize themselves in negative terms, such as being awkward, unattractive, useless, and a burden to others. In addition, low scorers tend to find it hard to accept compliments and they often lack self-confidence. The MMPI-2's LSE content scale correlates -.74 and -.51 (for men and women, respectively) with the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (Strassberg, Clutton, & Korboot, 1991). The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory is one of the most well developed and widely used measures of self-esteem (Crandall, 1973).

Deviance was measured by scores attained on Scale 4, or Psychopathic Deviance, of the MMPI-2 (Appendix B). The Psychopathic Deviate (Pd) scale is a 66 item scale that measures antisocial tendencies and psychopathic behaviour. Studies have found that offender groups have elevated scores on Scale 4 of the MMPI and MMPI-2 (Carmin, Wallbrown, Ownby, & Barnett, 1989; Erikson, Luxenberg, Wallbeck, & Seely, 1987; Huesmann, Lefkowitz, & Eron, 1978; Pickett, 1981). High Pd scores ($t \geq 65$) have been found to be related to membership in many deviant groups (Butcher & Williams, 1992). Such individuals tend to manifest considerable antisocial tendencies. For example, they may be rebellious toward authority figures, have difficulty incorporating the values and

standards of society, have stormy family relationships, exhibit impulsive and/or immature

behaviour, self-centredness, display an insensitivity to the needs of others, be superficial in

relationships, exhibit attachment problems, and may have poor prognosis for therapy. The

internal consistency of the MMPI-2 content scales and Pd scale are reported to range from

.69 to .86 (Butcher & Williams, 1992). Length of sentence was measured in terms of

months to be served in the current sentence. Recidivism was determined by the number of

convictions as an adult in which incarceration was received. Prior arrests and probation

orders were not considered in this sample. For example, a first offender would be an

inmate who was, at the time of data collection, serving a sentence for their first adult

conviction. A recidivist would be an inmate serving a second or subsequent re-

incarceration as an adult offender. Information pertaining to juvenile records was not

available due to protection of this information under the Young Offenders Act.

Assessment

The researcher first contacted the Head of the Psychology Department at

Springhill Institution and provided a copy of the proposal of this study, as requested. The

Psychology Department Head then forwarded the proposal to a research/ethics committee

within Corrections Canada. Once approval was granted, arrangements were made for the

researcher to obtain data from already existing files for the period August 1995-August

1996 within the Psychology Department of Springhill Institution. Each inmate was

assessed upon entrance to Springhill Institution by a psychologist, unless the inmate was a

recidivist within a two-year period of his last incarceration. There were approximately

700 files that were screened. Invalid MMPI-2 profiles, profiles that did not include the

MMPI-2 content scales, and sex offenders were excluded from the data set resulting in a total sample size of 332. Demographic information such as age, education, and IQ were also collected. Names and other identifying descriptors were not used to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

Results

As previously stated, support for Kaplan's (1978) enhancement model in the present study would occur if the results support the hypothesis: LSE= - deviance - recidivism - length of sentence. The relation would be negative due to low scores of LSE representing high self-esteem. Therefore, if LSE is low (i.e., high self-esteem) it is expected that deviance, recidivism, and length of sentence will be high. Table 1 is a summary of the demographic and MMPI-2 data by offender status that was gathered from inmate files. The sample was divided into two groups, first offenders and recidivists. A series of one way ANOVAs were performed to determine whether these two groups were different in their resulting scores. Self-esteem was within the normal range for both groups; however, first offenders had higher scores on LSE, indicating they had lower self-esteem than recidivists. Pd (deviance) was escalated (t > 65) for both first offenders and recidivists, with the latter having higher scores. Length of sentence was different, showing that recidivists had longer sentences than first offenders. Age was different as recidivists were older than first offenders. IQ did not differ between first offenders and recidivists. The three validity scales of the MMPI-2 Lie, Fake, and Cannot Say (K) did not differ between the two groups, indicating that there was no difference in the validity of their MMPI-2 profiles. To summarize the results of Table 1, first offenders had lower self-

esteem, lower Pd scores, shorter sentences (measured in months), and were younger,

when compared with recidivists.

Table 1

Summary of Demographic and MMPI-2 Data by Offender Status

Variable	First Offenders (n = 196)		Recidivists (n = 136)		F (2, 330)
	M	**SD**	**M**	**SD**	
LSE	53.37	13.04	49.77	14.34	5.66*
P	67.31	10.35	69.99	9.11	5.95*
Lsen	52.28	38.97	79.11	74.83	18.72**
Age	26.42	9.06	33.05	8.04	47.28**
IQ	89.12	26.13	90.26	28.05	.14
Lie	54.92	15.96	52.00	18.67	2.35
Fake	58.08	20.17	54.40	20.99	2.60
K	46.76	14.86	47.91	18.39	.39

Note. LSE and P are the scores obtained from these scales of the MMPI-2. Lsen is

length of sentence measured in months. L, Fake, and K are the scores obtained from the

validity scales of the MMPI-2.

*p < .05. **p < .00.

Zero order correlations of all variables included in this study were performed and are outlined in Table 2. Please note that high scores on the LSE scale indicated low self-esteem. Table 2 shows that low self-esteem was correlated with higher Pd scores (r (1,331) = .20, p < .001), an altogether unexpected finding since this correlation was expected to be negative. On the other hand, low self-esteem was negatively correlated with recidivism (r (1,331) = -.13, p <.02), and length of sentence (r (1,331) = -.20, p < .01), indicating recidivists had higher self-esteem than first offenders, and those with longer sentences had higher self-esteem. Recidivism positively correlated with Pd (r (1,331) = .13, p = .01), length of sentence (r (1,331)= .23, p = .00), type of crime (r (1,331) = .12, p = .03), age (r (1,331) = .35, p = .00), and level of education as indicated by grade (r (1,331) = .11, p = .04). Interpretation of these results indicates recidivists' crimes tended to be more violent, they were older, had more education, longer sentences, and higher scores on Pd. Type of crime positively correlated with age (r (1,331) = .16, p = .00) and length of sentence (r (1,331) = .31, p = .00). These results suggest violent offenders were older and received longer sentences. This variable is dummy coded with property offenders = 1 and violent offenders = 2. Age correlated with length of sentence (r (1,331) = .27, p = .00). Grade and IQ correlated (r (1,331) = .15, p = .00). With the exception of Pd, all correlations were in the expected direction, therefore supporting Kaplan's self-enhancement model that high self-esteem would be related to recidivism and length of sentence.

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Table 2

Zero Order Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1		.20*	-.20*	-.13*	-.06	-.05	-.11	-.06	.00
2		—	.06	.13*	.02	.00	.02	-.01	-.17*
3		—	—	.23*	.31*	.27*	.04	-.02	.00
4		—	—	—	.12*	.35*	.11*	.02	-.07
5		—	—	—	—	.16*	.07	.07	.15*
6		—	—	—	—	—	.00	-.05	-.04
7		—	—	—	—	—	—	.15*	.04
8		—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.00

Note: 1 = Low Self-Esteem, 2 = Pd, 3 = Length of Sentence, 4 = Recidivism, 5 = Type of Crime, 6 = Age, 7 = Grade, 8 = IQ, 9 = Race.

* $p < .05$.

In order to assess the contributions of psychopathic deviance, length of sentence, recidivism, and additional factors toward the prediction of low self-esteem scores (LSE), a multiple linear regression approach was selected. The stepwise regression equation was significant at the $p<.01$ (r (1,331) = .331, $p < .01$). The r^2 accounts for 11% of the variance of the scores. Examination of individual factors' contribution to the equation was conducted. In addition to the primary factors of interest, all additional theoretically relevant factors for the prediction of low self-esteem available to the study were considered in this analysis, including type of crime (property vs. violent), grade level, IQ, age, and race (Caucasian Canadians, African Canadians, and Aboriginal Canadians).

Pd was the single best predictor of LSE (β = .23, sr = .22). The direction of the Beta for Pd was positive and consistent with Table 2, although not consistent with the hypothesis. Length of sentence followed (β = –.20, sr = –.18) and recidivism (β = –.12, sr = –.10). Length of sentence and recidivism were in the expected direction, indicating support for the hypothesis that high self-esteem would be associated with higher scores of Pd, recidivism, and length of sentence. Other variables in the equation were not significant.

Type of crime was not a predictor of LSE, indicating that property and violent offenders do not differ in their LSE scores. Additionally, age, grade, IQ, and race were not predictors of LSE. The effect for race is tenuous due to the small sample size of African Canadians and Aboriginal Canadians.

Table 3

Results of Stepwise Regression Equation of Demographic and MMPI-2 Data Predicting

LSE

Factor	Beta	SE Beta	Semi Partial r	r	F (8, 324)
Pd	.23	.05	.22	.20	18.20**
Lsen	-.20	.06	-.18	-.20	12.07**
Recid	-.12	.06	-.10	-.13	4.01*
Typcr	.01	.06	.01	-.06	.05
Age	.04	.06	.03	-.05	.43
Grade	-.09	.05	-.09	-.11	2.80
IQ	-.04	.05	-.04	-.06	.67
Race	.03	.05	.03	.00	.29

Note: Pd = psychopathic deviance, Lsen = length of sentence, Recid = recidivism, Typcr =

type of crime, Grade = education.

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$

Discussion

The results of this study lend some support for Kaplan's (1978) enhancement model. The hypothesis that would support Kaplan's (1978) enhancement model was that high self-esteem would be associated with high Pd, recidivism, and longer sentences. The step-wise regression analysis (see Table 3) revealed that each of the three measures of deviance were predictors of self-esteem; however, Pd was not in the expected direction, indicating only partial support for Kaplan's (1978) enhancement model. High LSE (low self-esteem) was related to higher scores on Pd. Interpretation of this result suggests that inmates with low self-esteem have higher Pd scores. Inmates obtained higher scores on the Pd scale of the MMPI-2 when compared to the norms for the instrument, a finding found in previous studies (Carmin, Wallbrown, Ownby, & Barnett, 1989; Erikson, Luxenberg, Wallbeck, & Seely, 1987; Huesmann, Lefkowitz, & Eron, 1978; Pickett, 1981; Wormith, 1984). It has been demonstrated that self-esteem is at its lowest upon entrance into penal institutions (Bennett, 1974; Culbertson, 1975; MacKenzie & Goodstein, 1985; Power & Beveridge, 1990) when assessments used in the present study occurred. Self-esteem was found to be in the normal range for both first offender and recidivist groups, suggesting that the prospect of incarceration was not very damaging to inmates' self-esteem. It is important to note that first offenders had lower self-esteem than recidivists, suggesting that recidivists may value the deviant subulture to a greater extent than first offenders, and, therefore, be less threatened by the prospect of incarceration.

The positive relation between LSE and Pd could be due to one of the criticisms of the MMPI-2 presented by Helmes and Reddon (1993), who found that Pd scores can

become elevated due to family discord and poor peer relations in the absence of other clinical implications. If inmates' Pd scores were elevated on the basis of family discord, it could be speculated that there would be attachments to their normative group (e.g., family, spouse, children). Incarceration would disrupt such relationships and could have a significant effect on self-esteem; therefore, self-esteem would have a positive relation with higher Pd scores. The fact that self-esteem was in the normal range for all offenders could suggest that there is some committment to a deviant group and a transition was occurring in terms of alliance between the normative and deviant groups. The Pd scale has Harris-Lingoes subscales that measure: Familial Discord (Pd1), Authority Problems (Pd2), Social Imperturbability (Pd3), Social Alienation (Pd4), and Self-Alienation (Pd5). Examination of the Pd1 Harris-Lingoes subscales would have revealed if elevations of Pd occurred due to endorsements on the Pd1 compared to the other subscales.

The present study had some limitations. In reference to the LSE scale, there are two main difficulties. First, the content scales are not well researched (Helmes & Reddon, 1993), but have been found useful in making differential diagnoses (Ben-Porath, Butcher & Graham, 1991; Ben-Porath, McCully, & Almagor, 1993), and the LSE scale has been shown to correlate with the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (Strassberg, Clutton & Korboot, 1991). The LSE content scale was used as it was the only measure of self-esteem in inmate files available to test the hypothesis.

Second, the enhancement model would likely receive stronger support from specific measures, rather than global measures, of self-esteem. The LSE is a global measure, which could offer a possible explanation for why the correlations were not

higher. Global measures of self-esteem appear to be associated with psychological well being, whereas content specific self-esteem appears to be associated with behavioral outcomes (Jang & Thornberry, 1998).

The MMPI-2 has some noted drawbacks. On a theoretical note, the MMPI-2 does not include items to test modern theories of psychopathology. In terms of its utility in predicting offender recidivism, other measures have been developed that outperform the MMPI-2, such as the Level of Service Inventory (Andrews & Bonta, 1995) and the Salient Factor Score (Hoffman, 1983). These measures are gaining recognition for their efficacy, however, their use in the prison system was in the primary stages during data collection for the present study. The MMPI-2 still remains very popular in personality and psychological assessment for various psychological disorders, which the LSI and SFS do not assess.

Access to juvenile records would have been useful in terms of refining the definition of 'first offender'. Juvenile records are sealed, therefore, operationally defining a first offender must be based on the information available in the current files. It is possible that the current data are contaminated; a young adult sentenced for the first time may actually be a recidivist, who was erroneously placed in the first offender category. Gendreau, Madden, and Leipciger (1979) found that 76.5% of adult 'first' offenders had had contact with the law as juveniles. This factor adds considerable contamination to the results of the present study as there was likely a very small portion of the sample that was suitable for the category of first offender, thereby weakening the results.

Gathering data throughout inmates' sentences and conducting a predictive

longitudinal rather than a post-dictive (going back in time) cross-sectional study would likely yield more revealing results. A longitudinal study would offer a stronger test of Kaplan's (1978) enhancement model in that a true test of whether an erosion of self-esteem precedes involvement in delinquent acts could be conducted. Owens (1994) found negative self-views played a stronger role in the draw toward delinquency than an actual erosion of self-esteem.

The literature pertaining to meta-analysis predicted that there would be a weak relation between self-esteem and the three measures of delinquency; Pd, recidivism, and length of sentence, as self-esteem had not proven to be a robust predictor in any of the cited meta-analyses. This could possibly be because self-esteem was included with several other variables: anxiety, depression, empathy, inadequacy, alienation, schizo-affective symptoms, and other mental disorders. Self-esteem may have had an effect that was rendered insignificant due to the other variables. This study examined self-esteem as a singular variable and Pd, length of sentence and recidivism were significant predictors of LSE (see Table 3). Upon examination of the correlations in the recidivism column of Table 2, it is revealed they are not dissimilar to those found in the meta-analysis (Gendreau, Little, & Goggin, 1996).

The results of the present study could be supportive of protection theory as presented by Baumeister et al. (1996). The only way to tease out whether the present study was supportive of protection versus enhancement would be to have run a separate analysis of the data that would examine if the relation between self-esteem was different for violent versus property offenders. This analysis was not performed. Type of crime

(violent versus property) was included in the stepwise regression analysis and did not contribute toward the prediction of self-esteem (see Table 3). There was, however, a correlation between recidivism and type of crime (see Table 2) suggesting recidivists crimes are more violent than first offenders. According to Gendreau, Goggin, and Paparozzi (1996), predictors of violent and general recidivism are essentially the same, as very few offenders commit only violent offenses. Given this, Baumeister's assertions may be very difficult to test, and, therefore, were not attended to in the present study.

The purpose of the present study was to examine the relation between self-esteem and deviance. Two measures of deviance, recidivism and length of sentence, were in the predicted direction. The correlational values for these variables, however, were slightly higher than those found in meta-analysis (Gendreau, Little, & Goggin, 1996). A more robust test of Kaplan's (1978) enhancement model would be a longitudinal study which assessed offenders after release. Assessment of self-esteem, in addition to anti-social attitudes and beliefs through the utilization of the LSI and the Criminal Sentiments Scale would give a good indication of attachment to a deviant subculture. Wormith (1984) found that inmates with low self-esteem and prosocial attitudes exhibited the greatest post release success, that is, the lowest recidivism rates. It should also be noted that Kaplan's original work targeted adolescents and their attraction to deviance due to an erosion of self-esteem. Since it is likely there were very few actual 'first' offenders amongst the sample, a true test of Kaplan's model is difficult to assess due to the fact that many were likely already associated with a deviant group. It could be that enhancement model would be more strongly supported in an adolescent sample as opposed to an older adult sample

where attachment to the deviant subculture has already occurred.

Traditionally, offender self-esteem has been targeted as a treatment goal as it was assumed to be low. This could be due to practitioners' theoretical orientation, such as psychodynamic theory (Gendreau, Little & Goggin, 1996). The results of the present study suggest that offender self-esteem is not low. In fact, self-esteem appears to be associated with deviance, as indicated by recidivists having higher self-esteem than first offenders. Increasing self-esteem, without attending to where it originates (prosocial versus antisocial behaviours and beliefs), could actually serve to increase recidivism. For example, if offenders adapt to the prison environment and experience higher identification with antisocial peers while simultaneously increasing self-esteem, such offenders essentially have a prescription for recidivism (Wormith, 1984). Fortunately, advances in offender rehabilitation target antisocial values, beliefs, and behaviours through the use of the cognitive behavioral model.

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Appendix A

MMPI-2 Low Self-Esteem Content Scale Items

61.   I am an important person. (F)

70.   I am easily downed in an argument. (T)

73.   I am certainly lacking in self-confidence. (T)

78.   I am liked by most people who know me. (F)

109.   I seem to be about as capable and smart as most others around me. (F)

130.   I certainly feel useless at times. (T)

235.   I was a slow learner in school. (T)

326.   I have several times given up doing a thing because I thought too little of my ability. (T)

369.   I am apt to pass up something I want to do when others feel that it isn't worth doing. (T)

376.   I do not feel I can plan my own future. (T)

380.   It bothers me when people say nice things about me. (T)

411.   At times I think I am no good at all. (T).

421.   I am apt to pass up something I want to do because others feel that I am not going about it in the right way. (T)

450.   I cannot do anything well. (T)

457.   People can pretty easily change my mind even when I have made a decision about something. (T)

475.   Often I get confused and forget what I want to say. (T)

476.   I am very awkward and clumsy. (T)

483.   People do not find me attractive. (T)

485. People are not very kind to me. (T)

503. When problems need to be solved, I usually let other people take charge. (T)

504. I recognize several faults in myself that I will not be able to change. (T)

519. I get angry with myself for giving in to other people so much. (T)

526. I know I am a burden to others. (T)

562. It is hard for me to accept compliments. (T)

Appendix B

MMPI-2 Psychopathic Deviance Content Scale Items

9. My daily like is full of things that keep me interested. (F)

12. My sex life is satisfactory. (F)

17. I am sure I get a raw deal from life. (T)

21. At times I have very much wanted to leave home. (T)

22. No one seems to understand me. (T)

31. I find it hard to keep my mind on a task or job. (T)

32. I have had very peculiar and strange experiences. (T)

34. I have never been in trouble because of my sex behavior. (F)

35. Sometimes when I was young I stole things. (T)

42. If people had not had it in for me, I would have been much more successful. (T)

52. I have not lived the right kind of life. (T)

54. My family does not like the work I have chosen (or the work I intend to choose for

my lifework). (T)

56. I wish I could be as happy as others seem to be. (T)

70. I am easily downed in an argument. (F)

71. These days I find it hard not to give up hope of amounting to something. (T)

79. I do not mind being made fun of. (F)

82. I do many things which I regret afterwards. (I regret things more than others seem

to.) (T)

83. I have very few quarrels with members of my family. (F)

89. My hardest battles are with myself. (T)

94. Much of the time I feel as if I have done something wrong or evil. (T)

95.   I am happy most of the time. (F)

99.   Someone has it in for me. (T)

105.   In school I was sent to the principal for bad behavior. (T)

113.   I know who is responsible for most of my troubles. (T)

122.   At times my thoughts have raced ahead faster than I could speak them. (F)

125.   I believe that my home life is as pleasant as that of most people I know. (F)

129.   My conduct is largely controlled by those around me. (F)

143.   I am neither gaining nor losing weight. (F)

157.   What others think of me does not bother me. (F)

158.   I makes me uncomfortable to put on a stunt at a party even when others are doing

        the same sort of thing. (F)

160.   I liked school. (F)

167.   I find it hard to make talk when I meet new people. (F)

171.   I am against giving money to beggars. (F)

185.   I wish I were not so shy. (F)

195.   There is very little love and companionship in my family as compared to other

        homes. (T)

202.   My parents often objected to the kind of people I went around with. (T)

209.   I like to talk about sex. (F)

214.   I have been quite independent and free from family rule. (F)

217.   My relatives are nearly all in sympathy with me. (F)

219.   I have been disappointed in love. (T)

225. My way of doing things is apt to be misunderstood by others. (T)

226. Sometimes without any reason or even when things are going wrong I feel excitedly happy, "on top of the world". (F)

243. When in a group of people I have trouble thinking of the right things to talk about. (F)

259. I am sure I am being talked about. (T)

261. I have very few fears compared to my friends. (F)

263. I am always disgusted with the law when a criminal is freed through the arguments of a smart lawyer. (F)

264. I have used alcohol excessively. (T)

266. I have never been in trouble with the law. (F)

267. I have periods in which I feel unusually cheerful without any special reason. (F)

288. My parents and family find more fault with me than they should. (T)

IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (QA–3)

1.0

1.1

1.25   1.4   1.6

2.8   2.5

3.2   2.2

3.6

4.0   2.0

1.8

←———————— 150mm ————————→

←———————— 6" ————————→
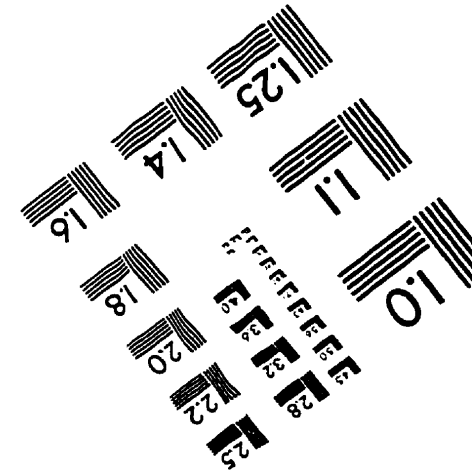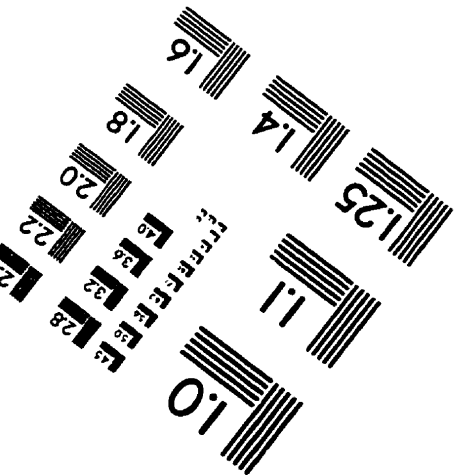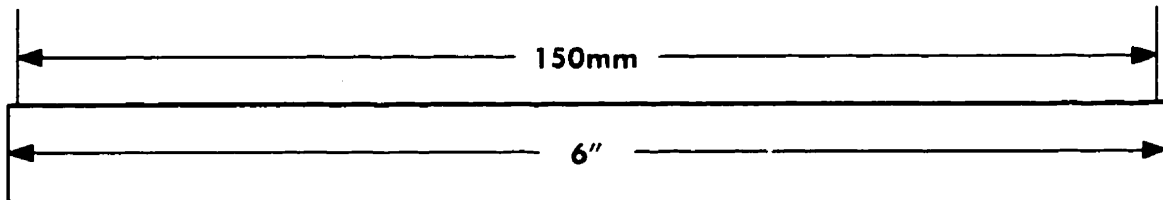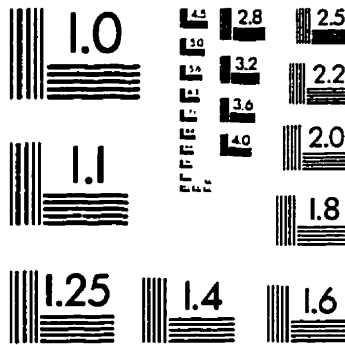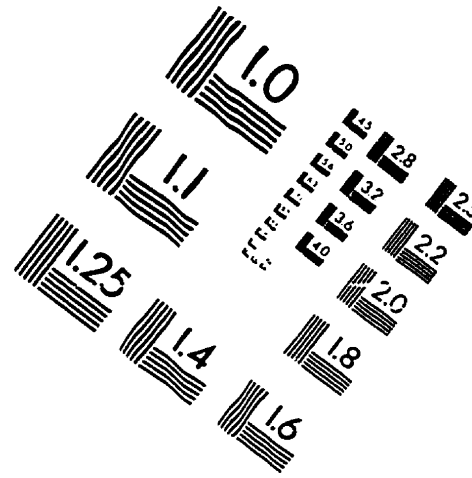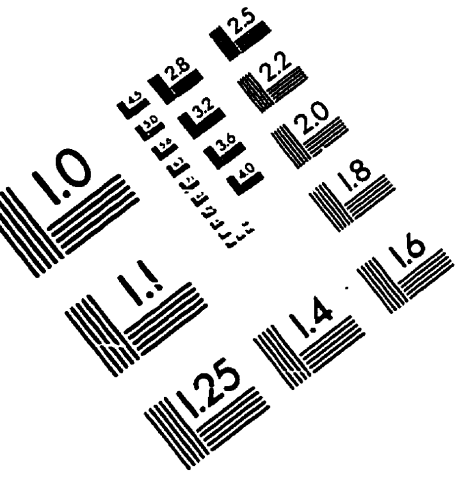
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