

- Euphoria on the Rocks: Understanding Crack Addiction *Edward M. Read*
- The Costs and Effects of Intensive Supervision for Drug Offenders *Joan Petersilia*
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- A Day in the Life of a Federal Probation Officer—Revisited *E. Jane Pierson*
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Jay F. Meyer
Terry D. Childers
- Personality Types of Probation Officers *Richard D. Sluder*
Robert A. Shearer
- When Do Probation and Parole Officers Enjoy the Same Immunity
as Judges? *Mark Jones*
Rolando V. del Carmen
- „ Program: An Evaluation of 5 Years of Electronic
..... *J. Robert Lilly*
Richard A. Ball
G. David Curry
Richard C. Smith
- f the Retarded Offender in Cuyahoga County *Arthur L. Bowker*
Robert E. Schweid
- 1 Prison Management: Effects of Administrative
New Zealand *Greg Newbold*
- tion of Prisons: The Wardens'
..... *Patrick T. Kinkade*
Matthew C. Leone
- e Law—Recent Developments in Restitution *David N. Adair, Jr.*

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This Issue in Brief

Euphoria on the Rocks: Understanding Crack Addiction.—A certain mystique surrounds crack cocaine and makes supervision of crack addicts a real challenge for even the most seasoned probation officer. Stressing the importance of knowing the facts about this drug, author Edward M. Read focuses on helping the officer understand the drug itself, the dynamics of addiction to it, and how to assess a person's dependence on it.

The Costs and Effects of Intensive Supervision for Drug Offenders.—Authors Joan Petersilia, Susan Turner, and Elizabeth Piper Deschenes report the results of a randomized field experiment testing the effects of an intensive supervision probation/parole project for drug-involved offenders. Among the findings were that intensive supervision apparently did not affect drug use, did not reduce recidivism, and cost more than routine supervision.

A Day in the Life of a Federal Probation Officer—Revisited.—Six United States probation officers update an article published in *Federal Probation* more than 20 years ago by describing what might come up in a typical workday. The authors—E. Jane Pierson, Thomas L. Densmore, John M. Shevlin, Omar Madruga, Jay F. Meyer, and Terry D. Childers—all of whom serve in specialist positions—offer commentaries about their work that range from philosophical to highly creative.

Personality Types of Probation Officers.—Are there personality characteristics common to probation officers? Authors Richard D. Sluder and Robert A. Shearer address the question, reporting findings from a study of 202 probation officers using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). The authors discuss the patterns of MBTI personality characteristics among the officers studied, reviewing the strengths and potential weaknesses of the personality types.

When Do Probation and Parole Officers Enjoy the Same Immunity as Judges?—Authors Mark Jones and Rolando V. del Carmen examine the types of defenses a probation or parole officer enjoys in civil liability suits, focusing on the concepts of absolute, quasi-judicial, and qualified immunity. The authors

ACQUISITIONS CONTENTS

- Euphoria on the Rocks: Understanding Crack Addiction Edward M. Read 3
141146
- The Costs and Effects of Intensive Supervision for Drug Offenders Joan Petersilia
Susan Turner
Elizabeth Piper Deschenes 12
141147
- A Day in the Life of a Federal Probation Officer—Revisited E. Jane Pierson
Thomas L. Densmore
John M. Shevlin
Omar Madruga
Jay F. Meyer
Terry D. Childers 18
141148
- Personality Types of Probation Officers Richard D. Sluder
Robert A. Shearer 29
141149
- When Do Probation and Parole Officers Enjoy the Same Immunity as Judges? Mark Jones
Rolando V. del Carmen 36
141150
- The Pride, Inc., Program: An Evaluation of 5 Years of Electronic Monitoring J. Robert Lilly
Richard A. Ball
G. David Curry
Richard C. Smith 42
141151
- Habilitation of the Retarded Offender in Cuyahoga County Arthur L. Bowker
Robert E. Schweid 48
141152
- What Works in Prison Management: Effects of Administrative Change in New Zealand ... Greg Newbold 53
141153
- The Privatization of Prisons: The Wardens' Views Patrick T. Kinkade
Matthew C. Leone 58
141154
- John P. Conrad Simon Dinitz 66
- Departments
- Looking at the Law 68
Reviews of Professional Periodicals 73
Your Bookshelf on Review 80
It Has Come to Our Attention 87
Indexes of Articles and Book Reviews 88

Personality Types of Probation Officers

BY RICHARD D. SLUDER, PH.D., AND ROBERT A. SHEARER, PH.D.*

Introduction

BECAUSE ANY organization's success depends largely upon the performance of its members, administrators have a critical need to know all they can about their employees. With a basic understanding of the characteristics of workers, administrators are equipped to begin to address employee needs and, ultimately, facilitate the attainment of organizational goals.

Although there are many tools that managers can employ to acquire a better understanding of those who work for them, one method is by studying employee personality characteristics. There is a virtual plethora of available personality measures. One which seems particularly well suited for use in criminal justice agencies, however, is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI).

Guided by Jung's theory of psychological types, Isabel Myers developed an initial version of the MBTI in 1942 (Myers & Myers, 1980). Since then, the MBTI has undergone several revisions, been extensively analyzed for reliability and validity (see, e.g., Myers & McCaulley, 1985), and has become the most widely used personality measure for nonpsychiatric populations (Black, cited in Myers & Myers, 1980).¹ The MBTI has been completed by persons from a variety of occupational groups, and there are extensive data available for comparison purposes. In addition, there is a wide body of literature on the use of MBTI "type" in understanding and enhancing organizational effectiveness, education and training programs, career guidance, interpersonal communications, and situations requiring cooperation and teamwork.

Given its diversity, it is not surprising to find that the MBTI has recently been used to study several occupational groups within the criminal justice system. For example, personality profiles have been assembled for police officers (Burbeck & Furnham, 1985; Hanewicz, 1978); fire department employees (Seeley & Seidler, 1985); correctional managers (Mactavish, 1992); and judges, lawyers, and corrections officers (Macdaid, McCaulley, & Kainz, 1987).

Noticeably absent from this body of literature are research efforts having used the MBTI to study probation personnel. In fact, no studies have been located that classify probation officers by MBTI type. This seems a significant oversight since a clear picture is lacking about whether probation officers, as a group,

may be described by unique personality characteristics. In light of this limitation, this study assesses whether probation officers have specific MBTI personality characteristics.

Description of the MBTI

Drawn from Jung's theory of personality type, the MBTI is premised on the idea that all people have inborn psychological preferences (Myers & Myers, 1980). To illustrate this principle in a very simple sense, type experts usually begin by asking a person to write their name with both their preferred and nonpreferred hands. Drawing an analogy from this exercise, MBTI theorists suggest that, as with our right or left handedness, each of us has inborn psychological preferences for performing certain tasks (see, e.g., Hirsch & Kummerow, 1989).

Carrying this idea forward, the theory suggests that "much seeming random variation in behavior is actually quite orderly and consistent, being due to basic differences in the way that individuals prefer to use their perception and judgment" (Myers & McCaulley, 1985, p. 1). Perception, on the one hand, includes such processes as becoming aware of things, people, occurrences, and ideas. Conversely, judgment "includes the processes of coming to conclusions about what has been perceived (Myers & Myers, 1980, p. 1). The theory suggests that perception and judgment govern much of a person's behavior.

The MBTI was thus developed to determine a person's basic preferences in four areas. The Extraversion-Introversion (EI) scale describes two opposite preferences for where a person prefers to focus his or her attention. Those who are classified as Extraverts are more focused on the outer world of people and the external environment. Extraverts tend to be action-oriented and seek to experience the world in order to understand it. Introverts, on the other hand, are more attentive to their inner world and thus prefer work activities that require a great deal of mental activity. Introverts seek understanding before experience (Myers, 1980).

The second scale in the MBTI is the Sensing-Intuition (SN) scale. This scale determines the way that a person prefers to acquire information. Those who prefer Sensing are more likely to acquire information through the five basic senses. These persons tend to be realistic and practical and are good at working with many facts and details. Those who prefer Intuition are more likely to seek information from beyond the five senses. Intuitives are more interested in meanings,

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relationships, and possibilities and thus tend to value imagination and creativity (Myers, 1980).

The Thinking-Feeling (TF) scale is the third measure comprising the MBTI. The TF scale determines the way that a person prefers to make decisions, reach conclusions, or form opinions. Those who prefer Thinking tend to be logical and objective in making decisions. Also, before making a decision, Thinkers are likely to weigh all available evidence, taking into account the probable effects of any decision that might be reached. Those who are Feeling-oriented, on the other hand, make decisions based on person-centered values. By emphasizing values, these persons tend to be sympathetic, appreciative, and tactful (Myers, 1980).

The final measure in the MBTI is the Judgment-Perception (JP) scale. This scale determines the method used in dealing with the outer world and the way that one orients in relation to it. Those who prefer Judging tend to live in a way that is planned, orderly, and regulated. These persons are likely to be structured, organized, and well-settled. Conversely, those who are Perceptives are likely to prefer flexibility and spontaneity. These persons tend to be open to new experiences and trust their ability to adapt to whatever situation might develop (Myers, 1980).

In summary, each of the above scales determines one's preferences as either Extraversion or Introversion, Sensing or Intuition, Thinking or Feeling, and Judging or Perceiving. With preferences determined on each of these four scales, persons are classified by MBTI "type" into one of 16 different categories—with each having unique characteristics. Using MBTI conventions, each of these 16 types is usually represented by a set of four letters. To take but one example, an ESFJ type refers to an Extravert (E) who prefers to process information with Sensing (S), who favors using Feeling (F) to make decisions, and primarily orients toward the outer world with a Judging (J) attitude.

Methods

Probation officers were selected for the study via two means. First, 89 probation officers attending two different training sessions at a statewide probation training academy in a large southwestern state were surveyed. Secondly, surveys were presented to probation employees attending certification training at sites located throughout the same state. Using this second procedure, 117 probation officers completed the survey while attending training sessions in seven different cities around the state. Altogether, a total of 206 probation officers were surveyed during the Spring of 1991.² Form G of the MBTI,³ along with a survey instrument, was presented to each probation officer

attending these sessions. Officers completed both instruments anonymously.⁴

Overall, 52.7 percent ($n=108$) of the subjects were males and 47.3 percent ($n=97$) were females. By race/ethnicity, 66.3 percent ($n=136$) were white, 23.9 percent ($n=49$) were Hispanic, 6.8 percent ($n=14$) were black, and another 4.0 percent ($n=7$) indicated preferences in other categories. Subjects ranged in age from 22 to 74 years, with a mean age of 34.3 years.

There was considerable variability among those studied in their reported years of experience in probation—ranging from a low of 0 to a high of 22. Although the average number of years experience was 3.01, fully one-third ($n=67$) reported having less than 1 year experience in probation. Another 30.4 percent ($n=61$) had between 1 and 2 years experience, 14.5 percent ($n=29$) had at least 2 but less than 5 years experience, and 14.0 percent ($n=28$) had at least 5 but less than 10 years experience in probation. Only 7.5 percent ($n=16$) had more than 10 years experience in probation.

The majority of those studied, 75.6 percent ($n=155$), were employed in adult probation. A minority, 18.0 percent ($n=37$), were employed in juvenile probation. Another 6.3 percent ($n=13$) marked the "Other" category and indicated that they worked in agencies serving both juvenile and adult offenders.

Finally, most of those studied were primary service delivery personnel. About 92 percent ($n=190$) indicated that they had current assignments involving the direct delivery of probation services. Only 7.8 percent ($n=16$) indicated that they were either supervisors or administrators.

Findings

The investigation began by examining preference groupings for the probation officers studied. Table 1 shows that while officers were split about evenly on Extraversion and Introversion preferences, there were distinct trends in the other three groupings. The majority of those studied were Sensing, Thinking, and Judging. Conversely, relatively few probation officers were classified in the Intuitive, Feeling, and Perceptive preference groupings.

Table 2 shows the MBTI type distribution for those studied. By far, the largest categories were ESTJ and ISTJ. Together, more than 40 percent of the probation officers studied were classified into one of these two categories. It is also instructive to note that few probation officers were classified as ISTP and INFP types.

Discussion

The findings suggest that the majority of probation officers studied may be described by unique personality characteristics. A strong pattern in the preference groupings was found, with the majority classified as

TABLE 1. MBTI PREFERENCE GROUPINGS FOR PROBATION OFFICERS (N=202)

Preference	% of Probation Officers	Characteristics*
Extraversion	55.45% (n=112)	Draws energy from the outside world of people, activities, or things.
Introversion	44.55% (n=90)	Draws energy from one's internal world of ideas, emotions, or impressions.
Sensing	69.31% (n=140)	Acquires information through the five senses and noticing what is actual.
Intuition	30.69% (n=62)	Acquires information through a "sixth" sense and noticing what might be.
Thinking	67.82% (n=137)	Organizes and structures information to make decisions logically and objectively.
Feeling	32.18% (n=65)	Organizes and structures information to make decisions in a personal value-oriented way.
Judgment	70.79% (n=143)	Prefers to live a planned and organized life.
Perception	29.21% (n=59)	Prefers to live a spontaneous and flexible life.

*Descriptions of preference characteristics drawn from Hirsch and Kummerow (1987).

TABLE 2. MBTI TYPE DISTRIBUTION FOR PROBATION OFFICERS (N = 202)

ISTJ n=38 %=18.81 ■	ISFJ n=13 %=6.44 ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■	INFJ n=6 %=2.97 ■ ■ ■	INTJ n=14 %=6.93 ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■
ISTP n=3 %=1.49 ■	ISFP n=6 %=2.97 ■ ■ ■	INFP n=4 %=1.98 ■ ■	INTP n=6 %=2.97 ■ ■ ■
ESTP n=13 %=6.44 ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■	ESFP n=8 %=3.96 ■ ■ ■ ■ ■	ENFP n=8 %=3.96 ■ ■ ■ ■ ■	ENTP n=11 %=5.45 ■ ■ ■ ■ ■
ESTJ n=45 %=22.28 ■	ESFJ n=14 %=6.93 ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■	ENFJ n=6 %=2.97 ■ ■ ■	ENTJ n=7 %=3.47 ■ ■ ■

■ = 1% of sample.

having Sensing (S), Thinking (T), and Judging (J) preferences. Further yet, in terms of MBTI type, more than 40 percent of those studied were classified as either ESTJ or ISTJ types.

Drawing from the MBTI literature, it can be noted that several characteristics are common to S, T, and J types. The following discussion will begin by reviewing strengths of STJs and then point out some of their potential weaknesses.

Strengths of STJ Types

Recalling that the Sensing-Intuition (SN) preference describes the way that persons perceive or acquire information, there are several characteristics common to the majority of Sensing types in this study. In terms of their work environment, Sensors prefer to attack tasks from a practical perspective and rely upon what they've learned to solve problems in standard ways (Hirsch & Kummerow, 1987). Sensors prefer to perform tasks step-by-step (Hirsch & Kummerow, 1987), are patient with routine details, and seem especially interested in assignments with a practical bent. Because of their meticulous nature, Sensors seldom make errors of fact (Myers & McCauley, 1985).

Sensing types enjoy many characteristics amenable to probation work. Instead of regularly questioning why things are as they are, as their opposites the Intuitives are prone to do, Sensors tend to accept what they are given to work with and meticulously complete the tasks they are assigned (Myers, 1980). With the bureaucratic structures found in probation work, coupled with the continuous demands for proper documentation, Sensors are in many ways well-suited for standard probation work tasks.

The Thinking-Feeling preference reflects the way that people make decisions or judgments (Myers, 1980). The overwhelming majority of the probation officers in our study are classified as Thinking types. Those who prefer Thinking tend to make decisions in an impersonal, logical, and objective manner. Conversely, their opposites, the Feeling types, are likely to adopt a personal, value-oriented approach in deciding issues or reaching conclusions (Hirsch & Kummerow, 1989). When communicating with others, Thinkers tend to be brief and concise and are often intellectually critical and objective (Hirsch & Kummerow, 1987). Because of their personality traits, Thinkers are likely to be stronger in executive ability than in the social arts (Myers & Myers 1980).

Many offenders that probation officers come into contact with are manipulative, and Thinking types generally enjoy characteristics that enable them to deal with these persons effectively. Thinkers, for example, are firm-minded and can give criticism when appropriate (Hirsch & Kummerow, 1987). Thinkers

are also able to anticipate the logical outcomes of choices they make and have a talent for analyzing problems (Myers, 1980). Moreover, Macdaid et al. (1987) have suggested that Thinkers, because of their interests in pursuing justice, are likely to be attracted to criminal justice-related occupations. This interest in justice, however, is dual-edged since Thinkers also have the need to feel that they are treated in a fair and just manner (Myers & McCauley, 1985). Finally, when Thinking types complete a task that they consider to be well done, the accomplishment is seen as a reward itself (Hirsch & Kummerow, 1987).

The final personality characteristic measured by the MBTI, the Judging-Perceiving preference, describes the manner that one adopts and orients to the outer world (Myers, 1980). Judging types, who make up most of those in our study, seek to live in a planned and organized manner (Hirsch & Kummerow, 1989), believing that life should be willed and decided (Myers & Myers, 1980). To contrast them with their opposites, Perceptive types see life as something to be experienced and understood (Myers & Myers, 1980) and thus prefer to live in a spontaneous, flexible, and impromptu way (Hirsch & Kummerow, 1989).

Judging types enjoy many personality characteristics that seem to enable them to cope and survive in the sometimes hectic world of probation. As compared to Perceptives, who dislike schedules and deadlines, Judging types actually seek structure by establishing timetables and realistic deadlines. An important characteristic of Judging types, given continually expanding probation caseloads, is their preference to control and plan their work. Although not always possible in probation, Judging types also are more comfortable and perform best when given the latitude to schedule and plan their work activities (Hirsch & Kummerow, 1987). A strength, and potential weakness as we discuss below, is the tendency for judging types to conclude issues by reaching decisions quickly. In communication settings, Judging types state their positions and decisions clearly and then expect others to follow through (Hirsch & Kummerow, 1987).

Finally, it was noted that STJ types may be characterized by their use of strong leadership styles that generally enable them to organize well, to get things done steadily and on schedule, and to be ready to exercise their personal authority (Myers & Myers, 1980). Also, the literature suggests that STJ types are likely to use and respect traditional hierarchical approaches in addressing problems and managing others (Hirsch & Kummerow, 1989; Myers, 1980). These characteristics seem especially important for probation officers. For example, nearly 56 percent of those in the study reported having offender caseloads of

more than 75 offenders. Officers additionally reported spending an average of 19 hours per week in face-to-face contact with probationers. The time commitments associated with these aspects of caseload management almost mandate the time management skills enjoyed by STJ types. Findings from the study also revealed that 50 percent of those surveyed worked in agencies with 20 or more employees. Given the traditional hierarchical structures in probation agencies, and because many officers in the sample were from moderate to large-size agencies, the STJ types' ability to work effectively in bureaucratic settings also seems particularly important.

The picture of personality characteristics that emerges from probation officers in the study is a fairly positive one. This is not surprising since type experts often refer to the "gifts" associated with each personality type (see, e.g., Myers & Myers, 1980). Although each type has strengths, the MBTI literature also notes the potential weaknesses associated with each.

Potential Weaknesses of STJ Types

Sensing types generally enjoy applying what they have already learned (Hirsch & Kummerow, 1987). Because of this characteristic, Sensors are prone to support the status quo, dislike new problems or procedures, and are content to fine-tune what exists. In addition, Sensors often become impatient when details become complicated. Therefore, an obvious problem for Sensing types is their reluctance to embrace change—unless they are first presented with evidence and facts of the value of any changes to be made (Myers & Myers, 1980). Because of their focus on facts and details, Sensors may not be able to "see the forest for the trees" (Hirsch & Kummerow, 1989).

In terms of their work, Thinkers are prone to be more interested in the task at hand than they are in developing social relationships. Because they are likely to deal with people firmly, and since they value objectivity in decision making, Thinkers run the risk of hurting others' feelings, often without being aware of this potential problem (Hirsch & Kummerow, 1989).

Thinking types, with their logical, analytical, and firm-minded orientation, may pay insufficient attention to others' wishes. Accordingly, they may be seen by those who deal with them as overly impersonal and narrow-minded. Myers & McCaulley (1985) have noted that although Thinkers can deal with a situation without showing emotion, they are also often uncomfortable dealing with others' feelings.

Because of their decisiveness and tendency to tightly structure their work to complete the task at hand, Judgers like to get things settled and finished (Hirsch & Kummerow, 1987). As a result, Judging types are likely to experience problems in the workplace. First,

they may not notice developments that create additional tasks to be completed (Hirsch & Kummerow, 1989; Myers & Myers, 1980). Secondly, because of their desire to get things settled, Judging types may fail to fully consider available options and thus may reach decisions too quickly. Finally, because they believe that others should conform to their standards, Judging types are prone to providing advice and developing expectations that others should follow that advice.

In sum, although they enjoy many strengths, STJ types may experience certain difficulties in organizational settings. For one, STJs are prone to overlook the long-range implications of their work, focusing their attention instead upon day-to-day problems (Hirsch & Kummerow, 1987). It is particularly important for the proper management of probation to have not only an appreciation for long-term plans, but also to understand the implications of present activities for meeting future goals. Therefore, unless they are attentive to these aspects of their personality, STJs typically short-term focus may create barriers in providing effective probation services.

STJ types are also likely to neglect interpersonal niceties in the workplace by their focus on tasks rather than on relationships (Hirsch & Kummerow, 1987). In a field that is characterized by its reliance upon interpersonal communications skills, this may present special problems. Hence, STJ types may need to pay greater attention to the opinions, wishes, and needs of others when dealing with them.

Conclusion

This study began by noting the need for administrators to understand those who work for them. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is one tool that can provide a wealth of information in this regard. Acquainted with the employee preferences measured by the MBTI, administrators can begin to understand why different workers excel at different tasks. Similarly, an understanding of MBTI type can be instructive in explaining why some employees experience difficulties in certain situations.

The potential application of the MBTI in probation and other criminal justice agencies is much broader than simply supplying managers with information about employees, however. From an employee perspective, type differences can be useful in understanding and adapting to differences in management style (Hirsch & Kummerow, 1987). At another, and perhaps more important level, the instrument can be used to help workers better understand not only their own strengths and weaknesses, but also those of their coworkers. It is also worthy of mention that researchers have only recently begun to use the MBTI

to gain a better understanding of offenders (see, e.g., Lippin, 1990).

In this article, only the surface has been touched of some of the other applications of the instrument. MBTI type has been used extensively in education, for example, to develop effective teaching methods, understand student motivation for learning, and incorporate appropriate curricula. Type has also been used to build teamwork in groups, select task forces, improve group performance, and resolve conflict. Furthermore, an understanding of type can be useful in improving communication skills (see, e.g., Myers & McCaulley, 1985; Hirsch & Kummerow, 1987). The value of MBTI applications in criminal justice settings seems obvious.

While the MBTI has broad applications, it is not without its limitations. Type experts acknowledge that because of the complexity of human behavior, the MBTI does not pretend to explain everything (Myers & McCaulley, 1985). Hirsch and Kummerow (1989, p. 272) note the inability of type to describe a person entirely or precisely, suggesting that "Each person is unique, in spite of the patterns he or she shares with others."

For many reasons, MBTI personality characteristics should not be used to determine suitability for employment in probation-related work. Although it was found that most of those in our study were STJ types, it would be presumptuously circular to reason that only STJs should be hired in probation. As Hanewicz (1978) has noted, type distributions merely reflect what is, not what should be. What this means is that simply because STJ was the modal type in this study does not signify that those with this personality combination are the best possible probation employees. No measures were used in our study to explore, for example, whether STJ types were more effective employees than NFP types. In addition, type experts suggest that work environments are complimented by the presence of many different personality types since each offers unique contributions (Myers, 1980).

Further yet, the multifaceted nature of probation work suggests that a single measure, such as the MBTI, would obviously be an inadequate predictor of successful performance as a probation employee. Although the MBTI provides a wealth of information, its utility as a predictor of performance is limited—primarily because of the complex nature of probation work. Therefore, instruments designed for performance prediction would require a more multidimensional approach than has yet been developed (see, e.g., Hanewicz, 1978).

In closing, it is noted that there are several research implications that flow from this study. First, the discovery of the predominance of STJ types among pro-

bation officers is especially interesting in light of other studies of type distributions among criminal justice personnel. Two studies (Hanewicz, 1978; Burbeck & Furnham, 1985) found a predominance of ESTJ and ISTJ types among police personnel. And, very recently, Mactavish (1992) found that the two types most common among correctional managers were also ISTJ and ESTJ. Findings from these studies, when taken into conjunction with this one, seem to suggest a common personality pattern among criminal justice personnel. Clearly, there is room for additional research to determine if the STJ pattern is common among probation officers working in other geographical locations in the United States and employees in other parts of the criminal justice system.

Secondly, further research is also needed to determine whether certain MBTI types employed in probation are better performers, have higher levels of job satisfaction, or suffer higher levels of job burnout. This type of inquiry would enable researchers to begin to explore additional theoretical relationships suggested by the MBTI.

On a final note, a review of the literature revealed that while the MBTI has been used extensively in business, education, and other public agencies, researchers have only recently begun to use type theory to study those in the criminal justice system. Given its theoretical and practical applications, a well-developed body of accompanying literature, several supporting professional organizations, and extensive data for comparison purposes, the MBTI awaits further application in the criminal justice system.

NOTES

¹In 1990 alone, more than 2 million persons completed the MBTI (CAPT, 1991).

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³There are four basic versions of the MBTI currently in use. The 94-item Form G version was selected for this study because it does not contain additional research items and is recommended for use in workshop settings where time constraints are a factor in administering the instrument.

⁴Of the 206 probation officers in the study, 4 (1.9 percent) did not fully complete the MBTI but did complete the survey that accompanied the instrument.

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