



Dyslexia linked to increased psychological impairment in prisoners

Dyslexia occurs at a high rate among criminals, and a new Swedish study suggests that dyslexic prison inmates are more impaired behaviorally than other inmates.

J. Jensen and colleagues studied 63 prison inmates between the ages of 19 and 57. They found that 26, or 41 percent, were dyslexic.

"As expected, the dyslexic group performed more poorly on verbal tests as compared to the normal readers among the prison inmates," the researchers say, "but they also performed more poorly on tests measuring nonverbal abilities." In addition, they say, **prisoners with dyslexia had higher rates of paranoid and avoidant personality disorders, exhibited higher levels of anxiety and suspicion, and evidenced "a lower degree of socialization."**

While the rate of dyslexia among Jensen et al.'s sample of prisoners seems high, other recent studies have revealed even higher rates. A 1998 study in Britain found that more than half of 150 prison inmates showed signs of dyslexia, and a 1995 study in Puerto Rico identified 78% of a group of juvenile delinquents as dyslexic.

"Dyslexia among Swedish prison inmates in relation to neuropsychology and personality," J. Jensen, M. Lindgren, A. W. Meurling, D. H. Ingvar, and S. Levander, *Journal of the International Neuropsychological Society*, Vol. 5, No. 5, July 1999, pp. 452-461. Address: J. Jensen, Department of Psychiatry, Malmo University Hospital, Malmo, Sweden.

--and--

"Study links crime with literacy skills," *BBC News Online*, November 3, 1998.

--and--

"Visual and educational dysfunctions in a group of Hispanic residents of a juvenile detention center," Hector C. Santiago, presentation to the American Academy of Optometry, 1995. Address: Hector C. Santiago, School of Optometry, Inter American University of Puerto Rico, San Juan, PR.