Contemporary with the experimental determination of perseveration as a mental function, there have been effected correlative explorations of the possible relationships between this function and personality features. Spearman has indicated that the so-called 'type' psychology bears on this problem, and perseverative function as a common basic feature of these various personality dichotomies is suggested. Certain investigations would appear to have established a definite relationship between perseveration and personality characteristics. Apart from intelligence, perseveration offers one of the more important contributions toward the delineation of individual differences on a functional basis.

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From experimental observations, two hypotheses are suggested to account for the facts. One is that perseveration is essentially an indication of nervous debility—high perseveration indicating nervous exhaustion. In agreement with this, lack of initiative, absent-mindedness, dreamy contemplative outlook, and a frequent history of illness are found in such types. No difference, however, could be discovered in the number of hours of sleep required by low and high perseverators. The other hypothesis is that high perseveration is an indication of conflict, discouragement and inhibition induced in early life. The temperament traits of low perseverators seem to arise from a somewhat strict discipline and supervision. The child who is brought up in a framework of consistent strict and objective discipline is less likely to suffer from emotional conflict and frustration than the child who lives in a lax but emotional and inconsistent home atmosphere. One can suppose that a person's perseveration score at any moment depends upon three things: (1) racial hereditary endowment, (2) degree of general fatigue, (3) amount of deep frustration incurred in emotional development. By 'deep frustration' is meant frustration of some major instinct, particularly the self-assertive instinct, not occurring at a fully conscious level, which may no longer be caused by environment itself, but may be the product of conflict (discouragement and an ensuing deadlock of impulses) engendered by the environment of early childhood. The character failings of the low perseverator are those arising from inadequate inhibition and thoughtfulness, those of the high perseverator from too profound conflict and discouragement.

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