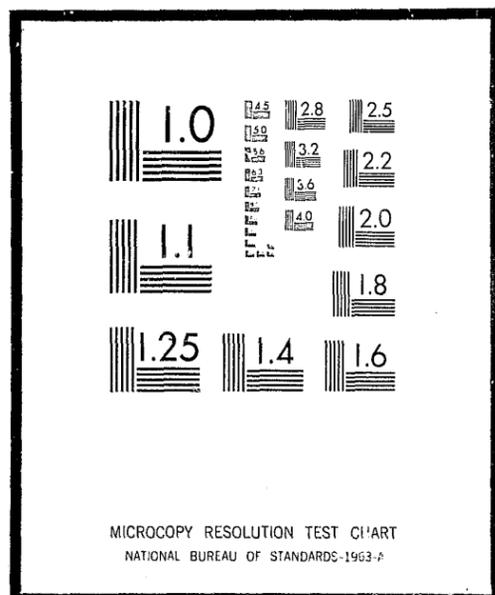# NCJRS

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AN ANALYSIS OF RECIDIVISM AMONG MEN RELEASED
FROM M.C.I., WALPOLE DURING 1966

Massachusetts Department of Correction

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date August, 1972

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I. INTRODUCTION

During the past decade a growing number of studies concerning recidivism among offenders released from Massachusetts' correctional institutions have been published. An earlier set of reports examined recidivism among offenders released around 1959 and 1960 from M.C.I. Norfolk[1], M.C.I. Walpole[2], M.C.I. Concord[3], M.C.I. Framingham[4][5], and the three state forestry camps[6]. The present study is one of a set of follow-up studies that have examined recidivism among offenders released during 1966 from the state correctional facilities just mentioned with the exception of M.C.I. Framingham.

A statistical report[7] has been published which presents figures describing the characteristics and return rates of men released during 1966. In the near future two new base expectancy of recidivism tables will be available on men committed to M.C.I. Walpole and M.C.I. Concord respectively.

The present study of recidivism among men released from M.C.I. Walpole during 1966 has three major purposes. These purposes can be briefly stated as follows:

1) To present recidivism rates for men released from M.C.I. Walpole during 1966. Certain types of descriptive data such as reasons for return and time elapsed before return will also be included.

2) To spotlight the various types of men who are either more likely or less likely to be returned to correctional institutions. This will involve the identification of single variables that are most closely associated with recidivism.

3) To compare and contrast, whenever possible, various patterns of recidivism among men released from Walpole in 1966 as opposed to those released in 1960.

II. Recidivism as a Measure of the "Success" or "Failure" of the Offender and as an Indicator of the Effectiveness of the Correctional System

A rapidly growing interest in studies germane to the area of recidivism has generally reflected an overall growth in concern for what happens to offenders after their release from correctional institutions. Increased attention has been focused on numerous programs falling under the rubrics of "rehabilitation" and/or "reintegration" respectively. Questions pertaining to efforts to evaluate programs such as individual and group counseling, academic education, vocational training, pre-release guidance and several community-based correctional efforts have become vital ones to all those concerned with improving the correctional systems of this nation.

One of the central issues in the area of correctional evaluation is the choice of criteria to be employed in determining the "success" or "failure" of post-release behavior. The philosophy of the Department of Correction provides a useful framework for a discussion of this important issue. The goals of the Department of Correction have been stated in the following manner:

> The basic obligation of the Massachusetts Department of Correction is the protection of society. Part of this duty is to provide for the humane care and custody of those whom the courts have sentenced to a state correctional institution. A more challenging aspect of this obligation is to provide a truly corrective experience for sentenced offenders so that they will be better equipped to lead productive and law-abiding lives. For, if a man is returned to society more embittered, vengeful, demoralized, and incapable of social and economic survival than when he first came to prison, then we certainly will have failed in our obligation to protect society. Our goal is to return a man to society with the knowledge and skills necessary to earn an honest living, with a reasonable sense of social responsibility and self-value, and with an increased capacity for self-control, judgment, and realistic optimism. Thus, the reintegration of the offender into the community life is a primary concern of the philosophy of the Department of Correction.[8]

This statement of purpose implies a wide variety of ways in which to describe and measure what happens to offenders after their release. Some

workers in this field feel a distinction should be made between measuring how law-abiding an offender is after release (e.g., subsequent rearrests or reincarcerations) and measuring how "productive" or "well-adjusted" he is within the community. It has been argued by Wilkins[9] and others that there are worse things than committing some types of new offenses (e.g., collapsing into alcoholism and allowing one's family to be supported by public welfare as opposed to occasional petty theft.) However, such a comparison, while illustrating a valid point, represents and exception to the more "normal" patterns of recidivism. Such patterns have been shown by researchers like Glueck and Glueck[10] to be strongly associated with various criteria of community maladjustment (e.g., serious involvement with alcohol or unstable employment at low paying jobs, etc.) Indeed, since parolees, who make up the bulk of releasees from correctional institutions can be returned for simply being "social failures" in the judgment of their parole officers (e.g., inability to adjust or indiscreet conduct), the entire issue seems to be a rather moot one at best.

Of far more concern to community at large are the return rates that indicate in a rough manner the percentage of offenders who are not being successfully rehabilitated by the correctional process. McGerigle has observed this and commented further that:

> "Not only does the general public make clear its belief that an offender who breaks the law represents in some sense a failure of the correctional system, even men and women who contribute many hours of devoted volunteer service in helping offenders freely express the same opinion. In addition, most definitions of recidivism are easily quantifiable and rely upon data which can be obtained from official records."

Recidivism when clearly defined is usually, as McGerigle suggests, a relatively simple measure to collect data on and the official records of its occurrence are quite reliable. However, recidivism like any other criterion

that could be used for our purposes is imperfect. It is important to have a balanced appreciation of both the strengths and weaknesses of its use in the type of study being reported here.

One of the major problems with recidivism per se is that it does not refer directly to subsequent criminal behavior, but rather to the percentage of offenders who are caught either committing new criminal offenses or violat´ g the technical conditions of their parole. Furthermore, when emplo; .ng the definition traditionally used in Massachusetts, this act of being caught must be followed by a decision to return the offender for at least thirty days before recidivism is said to have occurred.

Another practical restriction on the use of recidivism centers on the necessity of using definite follow-up periods when determining recidivism rates for specific groups of releasees. Researchers, unlike journalists in this area, are not free to use the term "recidivism" as though it represented something that occurs independently of time considerations. Administrative needs dictate that research and/or evaluation efforts be done within distinct time periods. Hence, those doing recidivism research are constrained by practical considerations to define recidivism as behavior that occurs within specific time periods.

It is easy to fall into the habit of reifying both "recidivsm" and "recidivism rate". It is of paramount importance to always be aware of just how these terms are defined within any given study. It is well known that recidivism can conceivably be made to represent just about anything that is desired by its definer.

Specifically, for the study reported here, recidivism was defined as being (a) reincarcerated (b) within two years of release (c) for thirty days or more (d) in a county, state or federal correctional institution (e) whether as a parole violator or as a result of a conviction for a new

criminal offense. "Paro.. violator" means anyone who has his parole revoked for either a new criminal offense or for a technical violation of parole conditions. The recidivism rate refers to the percentage of releasees who are recidivists according to the definition just given.

III. An Examination of the Potential Uses of Base Expectancy of Recidivism Tables

Clearly, every offender does not have the same likelihood of being returned after his release. The second major focus of this study was directed at the identification of various types of subgroups of offenders with different chances of regarding recidivism. One means of doing this was to construct base expectancy of recidivism categories through the use of a technique known as successive dichotomization. Using this technique, it is possible to spotlight combinations of variables that are associated with higher or lower recidivism rates. This statistical technique is further explained in the methods section on page 9. The Base Expectancy of Recidivism Table for the 1966 Walpole releases is presented on pages 19-21 of the report.

There are several potential uses for base expectancy of recidivism categories. For research purposes they can be used as a control group. As such they can help in determining whether or not a given type of correctional program is having a favorable, neutral or unfavorable influence on inmates in general or on specific types of inmates in particular. Thus, they can supply correctional decision makers with valuable information which can aid them in directing various types of offenders into appropriate correctional programs.

Another potentially important application of base expectancy tables could be in the area of parole supervision. Base expectancy tables could be used to allocate various types of offenders into different types of caseload supervision. Lower risk offenders could be assigned to minimal supervision caseloads while higher risk types could be assigned to more intensive supervision caseloads. Two major research efforts done in California[12][13] have shown that significant differences in recidivism occur within medium risk groups when parole officers have more time to devote to each individual

in their caseloads.

A number of criminologists who worked on the San Francisco Project on Probation and Parole[14] have suggested that a "vertical" model of caseload management would be more efficient than the conventional ones now in use. Under such an alternative method of caseload allocation various types of caseloads (i.e., minimal, regular, ideal and intensive) would be used for different offender risk groups. The implementation of any such model would, of course, depend on the extensive development and use of base expectancy categories or scores for all offenders.

The use of base expectancy scores in parole board decision making has long been a controversial issue. Hayner[15] has reported the most frequently given reasons why many parole board members are hesitant to use prediction devices as aids in their decision making activity. Many of the reasons given are valid ones and are realistic observations of the limitations of prediction devices in this area. However, they seem to point out the need for cautious and intelligent use of such devices rather than the advisability of discontinuing their use altogether.

Few would favor a total reliance on base expectancy tables or scores in making crucial decisions about whether or not to release offenders to the community. However, insofar as these decisions are to be made on the basis of an offender's risk of being returned, prediction devices should be considered as vitally important decision making aids.

As Sheldon Glueck[16] has written:

"...the creators of prediction devices do not urge that such devices be applied in any mechanical fashion; they are adjuncts to both the individual case history and individual experience of the parole board members."

Just as prediction devices could be used in the decision to either grant or deny parole they could also be used to assist board members in making parole revocation decisions. Issues relevant to the use of technical

violations in revocation procedures are becoming crucial ones in parole supervision. Massachusetts in particular has experienced a marked increase in the number of returns for technical violations as opposed to returns for new criminal offenses.[17] The development of base expectancy categories for parolees which would consider factors related to the commission of technical violations might prove to be of great value. An analysis of the relationships between technical violations and subsequent criminal involvement might well be of considerable utility.

It is once again prudent to introject some words of caution. The ones here were supplied by John Conrad,[18] a notable observer of correctional systems throughout the world. He wrote:

"This decision (i.e., revocation) can not be made by statistics alone, but a statistical estimate of the probable success of a plan to maintain a paroled person in the community as opposed to his return to prison could add support to the painful judgment which must ultimately be made on the basis of other factors."

Another possible area which might benefit from prediction devices could be the criminal court system. Perhaps prediction tables could be developed that would aid judges in their sentencing decisions. Just as they can add a degree of objectivity to parole board decision making such devices could assist judges in what many consider to be their most difficult and frustrating task (i.e., that of imposing sentences on criminal offenders). Also, on the court level, probation agencies could use them much in the same manner that has been suggested they be used in parole supervision.

Clearly then, parole is not the only portion of the criminal justice system that has failed to make constructive use of well-developed statistical methods.

IV. Methods Employed in the Analysis of the Walpole Data

The sample consisted of all 194 inmates who were released from M.C.I. Walpole during 1966. Data was collected from the files of the Department of Correction, the Parole Board, and the Board of Probation. The results are presented in the following section of this report.

There were two closely related methods used to analyze the single variables of the Walpole base expectancy data. The first method used was that of simple dichotomization. This method has been used by the DOC research unit in most of its past recidivism studies. Using this method, data on each of the variables are divided into two mutually exclusive categories. These two categories necessarily included each datum in the entire sample on any given variable (e.g., number of disciplinary reports: none vs. some).

A second method of analyzing single variables was used whereby special groupings within variables were compared with each other. These groupings were not the result of dichotomization and did not contain all the data available on the variables being analyzed. In order to distinguish between these partial breakdowns of certain variables and simple dichotomization, such breakdowns will be referred to as "special breakdowns".

It was noted that the practice of dichotomizing single variables did have an inherent weakness if used exclusively. In certain cases this practice can serve to obscure important differences within a given variable. In analyzing the base expectancy data for Norfolk, Concord and Walpole it was observed that significant[19] differences did occur between certain subgroups within variables that did not materialize when simple dichotomization was employed. For example, in the Concord data the variable of length of incarceration was not found to be of significance when it was divided into a high group and a low group respectively. However, when the middle group

consisting of all those who had between one year and two years as their length of incarceration, was compared to the high group (two years or more) on this variable significant differences occurred.

Subsequent to this observation it was decided to employ similar special comparisons whenever necessary to complement the findings obtained through simple dichotomization.

The method used to derive the base expectancy of recidivism categories for the Norfolk releasees was that of successive dichotomization. Using this method, variables are successively divided until subgroups become too small to produce meaningful results. The initial step in using this technique is to find the most significant single variable to serve as a base for all the subsequent breakdowns to be made. Sometimes when the most significant variable produces two widely unequal subgroups it can not be used for the initial breakdown. In this case, the next most significant variable would be used.

After the initial dichotomization has been made the sample is then further dichotomized according to which variable best discriminates between the recidivists and non-recidivists contained within each subgroup. In order to determine the variable whose subgroups are the most discriminating on each breakdown a chi-square must be computed.

V. A Brief Description of the 1966 Walpole Base Expectancy Sample

As has been pointed out, all 194 releasees from M.C.I. Walpole were included in the 1966 base expectancy study. Of these 194 releasees: 79 (40.8%) were committed for offenses against the person; 27 (13.9%) for sex offenses; 68 (35.0%) for property offenses and 20 (10.5%) for "other" offenses (e.g., drug offenses or unauthorized use of a motor vehicle, etc.). The average age of this sample group at the time of their present incarceration was 31.9 years with an age range extending from 16 to 62 years. The average length of present incarceration for the sample was 26.8 months.[20]

The 1960 Walpole study did not contain sufficient descriptive information on its 155 man sample to permit valid comparisons with the 1966 sample group. Also, certain differences in coding practices make meaningful comparisons between the two samples virtually impossible even when information is available.

VI. A Presentation of the Major Findings of the 1966 Walpole Base Expectancy Study

The overall recidivism rate for the entire 194 man Walpole sample was 45.4% for the two year follow-up period. This compared favorably to the 57.8% return rate for the 1960 Walpole sample after a similar two year follow-up.

An analysis of the reasons for return among the recidivists in the 1966 Walpole sample will provide a useful background for understanding data that will be subsequently presented in this report. It should help to clarify just what is being discussed when the term "recidivism rate" is used repeatedly throughout the text of this report.

Table I Recidivism Data for the 1966 Walpole Base Expectancy Sample

A. Simple Breakdown

	N= 194	% of total
Recidivists	88	45.4
Non-Recidivists	106	54.6

B. Detailed Breakdown for Recidivists

	N= 88	% of total	% recidivists
I. Parole Violators	44	22.7	50.0
(a) Technical P.V.'s	22	11.3	25.0
(b) New Arrest P.V.'s	22	11.3	25.0
II. New Commitments	44	22.7	50.0
(a) to house of corr.	18	9.3	20.4
(b) to MCI-Concord	0	-	-
(c) to MCI-Walpole	18	9.3	20.4
(d) to MCI-Bridgewater	3	1.5	3.4
(e) Outside Mass.	5	2.6	5.7

Of the 88 recidivists in the study, 44 or 22.7% of the total sample were returned for parole violations. Twenty-two men, 11.3% of the 194 man Walpole sample, were returned for technical violations of their parole conditions. The same number of men were also returned because of new arrests while still on parole.

Table II below gives an indication of the specific time intervals within which the 88 recidivists were returned. In addition, it shows the percentage of recidivists who were returned as parole violators within the same one-half year intervals.

Table II Time within which Recidivists were Reincarcerated
Walpole 1966 Base Expectancy Sample

Time Interval	N	Percent of Recidivists	Cumulative Percentage	Percent of Recidivists who were P.V.'s
0-6 months	44	50.0	50.0	70.4
6-12 months	20	22.7	72.7	30.0
12-18 months	17	19.3	92.0	35.3
18-24 months	7	8.0	100.0	14.3
Totals	88	100.0	--	overall average= 50.0%

Among the Walpole recidivists precisely one-half were parole violators. This figure is far smaller than either the 77.2% figure for Norfolk recidivists or the 74.4% figure for those in the Concord sample. Some of this difference is due to the fact that Walpole has a much higher percentage of men leaving the institution after "wrapping-up" their sentence than the other institutions.

For Walpole releasees going out on parole the first six months after release proved to be extremely critical. It is quite probable that certain types of Walpole releasees would benefit greatly from the existence of well-planned community-based correctional programs during this critical reentry phase.

VII. Single Factors Most Significantly Related to Higher Recidivism Among 1966 Releasees from M.C.I. Walpole

A. Using Dichotomization

There were eleven single variables that were significantly related to recidivism when dichotomized. These were, in order of significance: (1) number of prior arrests (2) occupational status (3) military status (4) total time incarcerated in houses of correction (5) number of house of correction commitments (6) last civilian address (7) number of school years completed (8) number of prior property offenses (9) prior probation status (10) total time incarcerated as a juvenile (11) age at first arrest.

The single factor most closely related to recidivism in the Walpole study was number of prior arrests. Releasees having 11 or more prior arrests had a 60.9% rate of return. In contrast to this, those who had 10 or fewer prior arrests had a return rate of only 32.7%

Occupational status was the second most significant variable for the Walpole sample. This variable was divided into an "unskilled" category and a "not unskilled" category respectively. Those in the unskilled grouping showed a significantly higher rate of return (56.4%) than did those in the "not unskilled" grouping (28.0%). This latter grouping consisted of the following categories: semi-skilled, skilled, sales or clerical, professional or managerial, general services, farming or fishing, student and armed services.

Offenders without any military experience at all had significantly higher reincarceration rates than did those who did have some form of military experience on their records. The former group of offenders had a

58.1% rate of return, while the latter group had a recidivism rate of 31.0%. This variable was not found to be of significance in either the Norfolk or Concord base expectancy samples.

The next two variables related to higher reincarceration rates were "total time incarcerated in houses of correction" and "total number of house of correction commitments" respectively. Inmates who had served at least six months in a house of correction had a 55.5% return rate, while those with less than six months total time served in a house of correction had only a 32.5% rate of return. Also inmates who had some house of correction commitments had significantly higher return rates than did those who had no such prior commitments.

The sixth most significant variable was that of last civilian address.[21] Offenders who listed Boston as their last civilian address had a reincarceration rate of 55.9%. In contrast to that, those categorized as "non-Boston" had a 37.6% rate of return.

Another significant variable was that of number of school years completed. It was found that among those who had failed to complete the ninth grade there was a return rate of 52.3%. For the lower return rate group, those inmates who had completed nine grades or more, there was a 32.8% rate of reincarceration.

Number of prior property offenses, which was the most significant variable in the Norfolk study and second most significant in the Concord study, was only the eighth most significant in the Walpole study after dichotomization. Offenders with five or more prior property offenses had a return rate of 53.7%. Those with four or less had only a 36.4% return rate. The great importance of this variable seems to occur when those with very few prior property offenses are contrasted with those who have a high number of such offenses. A special breakdown of this variable

yielded the highest chi-square in the Walpole study. This is discussed more fully in the next section.

The ninth most significant variable in the Walpole study was that of prior probation status. Men who had never been on any kind of probation had only a 27.8% rate of return. On the other hand, those with some kind of previous probation experience achieved a 52.0% rate of reincarceration. (See page 22 of the discussion section for further comments on this variable.)

The variable of total time incarcerated as a juvenile was the tenth most significant dichotomized variable. Those offenders who had served some time in a juvenile institution had significantly higher rates of return (55.3%) than did those with no such incarcerations (39.1%).

Barely significant at the p<.05 level was the variable of age at first arrest. Offenders under twenty years old at the time of their first arrest had a return rate of 49.3% as compared to a 33.3% return rate for those who were twenty-one or over at the time of their first arrest.

Table III. Dichotomized Variables Listed in Order of Statistical Significance
(1966 Walpole Base Expectancy Study)

Variable	Dichotomization	Recidivism Rate	x^2
1. Number of Prior Arrests	11 or more / 10 or less	60.9 / 32.7	15.41 p<.001
2. Occupational Status	Unskilled / Not Unskilled	56.4 / 28.0	14.89 p<.001
3. Military Status	None / Some	58.1 / 31.0	14.03 p<.001
4. Total Time Incarcerated House of Correction	6 months and over / less than 6 months	55.5 / 32.5	10.22 p<.01
5. Number of House of Correction Commitments	Some / None	52.2 / 28.6	8.95 p<.01
6. Last Civilian Address	Boston / Non-Boston	55.9 / 37.6	6.43 p<.02
7. Number of School Years Completed	under 9 years / 9 years or over	52.3 / 32.8	6.37 p<.02
8. Number of Prior Property Offenses	5 or over / less than 5	53.7 / 36.4	5.72 p<.02
9. Prior Probation Status	Some / None	52.0 / 27.8	5.23 p<.05
10. Total Time Incarcerated Juvenile	Some / None	55.3 / 39.1	4.80 p<.05
11. Age at First Arrest	under 20 years old / 20 or over	49.3 / 33.3	3.86 p<.05

d.f.=1
in all cases

B. **Using Special Breakdowns**

The highest chi-square in the Walpole data ($x^2 = 18.10$) occurred when a "special breakdown" of the variable, number of prior property offenses, was made. Those offenders with no or only one prior property offense had a much lower return rate (21.9%) than did those who had ten or more such previous offenses (79.2%).

The variable, stability of employment,[22] was found to be of significance when "casual" workers were compared to those classified as either regular or irregular workers. Casual workers had a 53.7% rate of return, while the more stable grouping on this variable had a 34.6% return rate.

Table IV 2 Variables Significantly Related to Recidivism after Special Breakdowns

1. Number of Prior Property Offenses

10 or more	79.2	$x^2 = 18.10$
None or one	21.9	p≤001

2. Stability of Employment

Casual (Law)	53.7	$x^2 = 6.46$
Regular or Irregular	34.6	p≤05

d.f.= 2 in all cases

IX. **Base Expectancy of Recidivism Categories for Walpole**

A presentation of the base expectancy of recidivism categories for the 1966 Walpole releasees is included on the following pages in two different forms. A brief explanation of how these categories were derived was given on page 9 of this report. The reader may find it useful to review that section before interpreting these data.

VIII. <u>Important Variables not Significantly Related to Recidivism Among the 1966 Releasees from M.C.I. Walpole</u>

A. Criminal History Variables

    1) Present Offense
        (a) property offense
        (b) person offense
        (c) sex offense
        (d) "other" offense

    2) Number of Prior Arrests for:
        (a) narcotics
        (b) drunkenness
        (c) sex crimes
        (d) crimes against the person

    3) Total Time Incarcerated
        (a) state or federal
        (b) overall (state, federal, house of correction or juvenile)

    4) Whether Incarcerated as a Parole Violator

B. Background Factors

    1) Race

    2) Religion

    3) Marital Status

    4) Birthplace

C. Institutional Variables

    1) Number of Disciplinary Reports

    2) Good Conduct Days Withheld

    3) Length of Incarceration

    4) Type of Release

TOTAL WALPOLE

RELEASEES

DURING 1966

N= 194

45.4%

Return

10 OR FEWER

PRIOR ARRESTS

N= 107

32.7%

Return

11 OR MORE

PRIOR

ARRESTS

N= 87

60.9%

Return

RESIDENCE PRIOR TO

COMMITMENT OTHER THAN

BOSTON

N= 61

21.3% Return

RESIDENCE PRIOR TO

COMMITMENT BOSTON

N= 46

47.1% Return

SERVED IN ARMED

FORCES

N= 37

43.2% Return

NEVER SERVED IN

ARMED FORCES

N=50

74.0% Return

SERVED IN

ARMED FORCES   N=31   6.5%

NEVER SERVED

IN ARMED FORCES   N=30   36.7%

2 OR FEWER

PRIOR ARRESTS FOR

PROPERTY OFFENSES   N= 17   29.4%

3 OR MORE

PRIOR ARRESTS FOR

PROPERTY OFFENSES   N=29   58.6%

3 OR FEWER PRIOR

HOUSE OF CORRECTION

INCARCERATIONS   N=21   28.6%

4 OR MORE PRIOR

HOUSE OF CORRECTION

INCARCERATIONS   N=16   62.5%

33 OR OLDER

AT COMMITMENT   N=21   52.4%

32 OR YOUNGER

AT COMMITMENT   N=29   89.7%

1966 Base Expectancy Categories M.C.I. Walpole

Description	N	Total N= 194 %of Sample	Return Rate
1. 10 or fewer prior arrests, Residence prior to commitment other than Boston, served in armed forces.	31	15.9%	6.5%
2. 11 or more prior arrests, served in armed forces, 3 or fewer prior house of correction incarcerations.	21	10.8%	28.6%
3. 10 or fewer prior arrests, residence prior to commitment Boston, 2 or fewer prior arrests for property offenses.	17	8.8%	29.4%
4. 10 or fewer prior arrests, residence prior to commitment other than Boston, never served in armed forces.	30	15.5%	36.7%
5. 11 or more prior arrests, never served in armed forces, 33 or older at present commitment.	21	10.8%	52.4%
6. 10 or fewer prior arrests, residence prior to commitment Boston, 3 or more prior arrests for property offenses.	29	14.9%	58.6%
7. 11 or more prior arrests, served in armed forces, 4 or more prior house of correction incarcerations.	16	8.2%	62.5%
8. 11 or more prior arrests, never served in armed forces, 32 or younger at commitment.	29	14.9%	89.7%

X. Discussion: Walpole Results

In several ways the Walpole sample turned out to be the most unusual one in the series of 1966 base expectancy studies. One of the more puzzling findings among the Walpole releasees was that the variable, type of release, was not found to be significantly related to recidivism. The 1960 base expectancy study also indicated that type of release was not significant among Walpole releasees.

Other rather unexpected findings surfaced upon an analysis of the Walpole data. The second and third most significant variables in the Walpole study were not even moderately predictive of recidivism when dichotomized in the other two studies. Occupational status, which was only marginally significant (i.e., after special breakdowns) in the other two studies, was the second most predictive variable among the Walpole releasees. The third most significant variable in the Walpole study, military status, was not significant at all in the other two major studies. The most significant single variable within the Walpole study was that of number of prior arrests.

One very interesting variable that turned out to be significant in the Walpole study was that of prior probation status. This variable has not usually been among those analyzed in previous departmental research studies. The predictive power of this factor appears to be related to two other variables that are in turn related to recidivism. The variables, number of prior property offenses and age at first arrest, were both related to recidivism. Having more than one prior property offense and having been arrested at an early age are two characteristics that generally place offenders into higher risk groups. Offenders with these characteristics are more likely to receive probation consideration than are, for example, older offenders who commit a serious crime against the person for their

first offense. This latter type of offender would, of course, fall into

a lower risk category than would the former type.

Recently, interesting evidence has indicated that Massachusetts relies

much more heavily on probation and other "non-prison" sentences than do

other states.[23] One result directly related to this is that Massachusetts

tends to have lower overall incarceration rates than the national average.

Hence, it is quite possible that this state has a larger percentage of

prison inmates who have failed on some form of non-prison sentence.

Unfortunately, the data did not permit a testing of this assumption.

In the 1960 series of base expectancy studies the Walpole sample did

not produce the rather unexpected results that were seen in the 1966

findings. The more typical combination of prior penal commitment, prior

criminal record and age variables were the most predictive ones in that

earlier study. Military status was not significant in the 1960 study.

Occupational status was not among the fifteen variables tested in that

earlier study.

The 1966 study results did contain a few variables significantly

associated with recidivism that can be altered through the use of existing

correctional programs. Both number of school years completed and occupational

status were significant after dichotomization. In addition, job stability

was significant after special breakdowns were used. These associations

can not tell us in any direct sense anything about the causes of recidivism

per se. However, they do suggest that the further development of both

vocational and academic programs may ultimately have some beneficial

influences on individual offenders who experience certain types of adjustment

problems.

FOOT-NOTES

1. Francis J. Carney, "Predicting Recidivism in a Medium Security Correctional Institution: Base Expectancy Categories for M.C.I. Norfolk", Dept. of Correction: mimeographed (June, 1966)

2. Francis J. Carney, "Predicting Recidivism in a Maximum Security Correctional Institution: Some Emerging Generalizations", Dept. of Correction: mimeographed (October, 1966)

3. Ralph Metzer and Gunther Weil, "Predicting Recidivism: Base Rates for M.C.I. Concord", Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology and Police Science (Sept. 1963) pp. 307-316

4. Barbara DeVault and David Haughey, "Base Expectancy Categories for Predicting Parole Failure", Dept. of Correction: mimeographed (June, 1965)

5. Francis J. Carney, "Base Expectancy Categories for Predicting Recidivism of Female Drunkenness Offenders: Combined Data, Division of Legal Medicine: mimeographed (August, 1965)

6. Francis J. Carney and Estelle D. Bottome, "An Analysis of Recidivism Among Inmates Released from the Forestry Camps", Dept. of Correction: mimeographed (March, 1967)

7. Edward F. Callahan, "Statistical Tables Describing the Characteristics and Recidivism Rates of Men Released During 1966 from M.C.I. Norfolk, M.C.I. Walpole, M.C.I. Concord, and the Massachusetts Forestry Camps", mimeographed (January, 1971)

8. Taken from: Program Guide: A Review of Massachusetts Department of Correction Programs, (September, 1971)

9. Leslie T. Wilkins, Evaluation of Penal Measures, NewYork: Random House, Inc., 1969

10. Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, Delinquents and Non-Delinquents in Perspective, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968

11. Paul McGerigle, "Evaluating Correctional Enterprises", A Memorandum to the Joint Correctional Planning Commission, April, 1971. p.7

12. Joan Havel and Elaine Sulka, Special Intensive Parole Unit, Phase III, Research Report No.3, California Dept. of Corrections, March, 1962

13. Joan Havel, Special Intensive Parole Unit, Phase IV: The Parole Outcome Study, Research Report No. 13, California Dept. of Corrections Sept. 1965

14. Joseph D. Lohman, Albert Wahl, Robert M. Carter, and Leslie T. Wilkins, "The San Francisco Project Final Report", Research Report No. 12 (April, 1969)

15. Norman S. Hayner, "Why do Parole Boards Lag in the Use of Predictive Scores?" Pacific Sociological Review, (Fall, 1958) pp. 73-76.

Hayner listed five major reasons for the reluctance of parole board members to utilize parole prediction devices. They were as follows:
1) sensitivity to public opinion
2) the effect the decision might have on the use of prison time

    3) the uniqueness of cases
    4) legal and traditional restrictions
    5) reactions to prediction devices themselves

16. Quoted by Victor H. Evjen, "Current Thinking on Parole Prediction Tables", Crime and Delinquency, Vol. 8 (July, 1962) p. 217

17. A summary of the parole statistics for the years 1968-71 indicates that in Massachusetts revocations for new felony convictions have been decreasing at a very rapid rate. Between 1970 and 1971 alone, new felony convictions for parolees under supervision declined by 32%. Unfortunately, these reports included misdemeanor offenses in the same category with all the technical violations excluding "whereabouts unknown". This, of course, makes it impossible to give specific percentages on the increasing reliance there appears to be on technical violations in revocation proceedings.

    The technical violation of "whereabouts unknown" deserves special attention. This category accounted for only 21% of the technical revocations in 1960. By 1970 this percentage had grown to 35% and by 1971 to 45% of the total. It would appear that an examination of the use of this technicality is needed.

18. John P. Conrad, Crime and Its Correction, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967, p. 192

19. A note of explanation might well be useful here concerning the terms significance and level of significance.

    Statistical significance simply refers to the degree to which observed differences could have occurred through sheer chance. The level of significance indicates the probability that observed differences could have occurred by chance in a given number of instances. For example, a $p. < 001$ level of significance means that the observed differences had a probability of occurring by chance in less than one time out of a thousand. In order to determine the level of significance a chi-square must be computed in each case.

    For purposes of this research report the term "significant" will denote that a difference has been observed at the $p. < 05$ level of significance. This is generally considered the point at which social scientists can safely assert that real differences have, in fact, been observed.

20. See: Edward Callahan op. cit., for a more detailed statistical description of the group and the other base expectancy groups.

21. This variable should be interpreted with some caution. The sample was dichotomized into Boston and "non-Boston" respectively on this variable. It is essential to know that the <u>political</u> definition of Boston was used. Hence, many communities (e.g., Cambridge or Quincy) that are normally thought of as being both economically and culturally a part of Boston were classified as "non-Boston" for purposes of this study.

22. For purposes of this study the following terms were used to categorize stability of employment:

> <u>regular</u>- Working steadily all of one's working life at one or only a few jobs.
> <u>irregular</u>- Working in a fairly continuous manner but not holding any particular job for a considerable length of time.
> <u>casual</u>- Working in a highly discontinuous manner (i.e., only a few months at a time). Frequently is discharged or quits because of his indifferent attitude towards work in general.

23. See: Carroll Miller and James Circo, "Comparative Recidivism Rates of Parolees in Massachusetts and Other States", Massachusetts Department of Correction Study, June, 1972.

END