

# Community Service Center Recidivism Evaluation

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COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
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I am pleased to present this assessment of the relative impact of types of prison release upon post-release recidivism rates.

Since the primary purpose of our State Correctional System is to bring about the rehabilitation of the convicted offender, any thorough evaluation of this system must, at some point, direct itself to an investigation of post-prison release performance. This study focuses on this need for correctional system performance data, although its usefulness may lie equally in its contribution to the development of correctional evaluation methodologies.

It is my hope that the results of this evaluation will assist in the further development of offender rehabilitation programs in the Commonwealth, and at the same time, encourage continuing evaluation of these much needed programs.

Sincerely,

*Charles P. McIntosh*

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BUDGET SECRETARY

NCJRS

MAY 24 1978

ACQUISITION

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Part I — Title of Study

Community Service Center Recidivism Evaluation

### Part II — Program Title and Responsible Agency(s)

Program — Reintegration of Adult Offenders

Responsible State Agencies — Department of Justice, Bureau of Correction, Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole

### Part III — Purpose of Study

This evaluation was undertaken to assess the relative effectiveness of the Bureau of Corrections's Community Service Center pre-release program (CSC) by comparing recidivism rates of those released on parole or final discharge from this program to those released directly from a State Correctional Institution (SCI) either on parole or by final discharge.

For the purposes of this study recidivism is defined as a subsequent criminal conviction resulting in incarceration in the State of Pennsylvania within three years of an initial term served in a Pennsylvania SCI.

### Part IV — Conclusions and Justifications

During the course of the study, several factors were identified that could possibly influence the conclusions drawn. These factors relate to the nature of the populations under study; however, none are believed to invalidate the findings. Part V of the Executive Summary briefly outlines these possible biases and they are more thoroughly discussed in the study design and methodology section of this study. The reader is urged to interpret the following conclusions in light of these possible biases.

**Conclusion A:** The Community Service Centers were more effective in terms of reduced recidivism than either release by parole or final discharge from an SCI.

**Justification:** Conclusion A is supported by findings which show that the statewide recidivism rate for male offenders released to a CSC in 1971 was 14.8% while the overall rate was 20.4%. The other release types, final discharge and parole, had recidivism rates of 18.0% and 21.4% respectively. The difference was found to be significant to  $P < .05$  according to the Chi-Square test.

**Conclusion B:** The Community Service Centers were most effective for youthful offenders as well as those having no prior commitments to an SCI.

- Justification:** Conclusion B is supported by findings which show significantly lower recidivism rates among younger offenders (21 through 25) and substantially lower rates for the under 20 age group. The remaining age groupings were tightly clustered around their respective overall averages. Among those with no prior SCI commitments, the CSC group experienced a 12.3% recidivism rate while the overall average was 18.9%. Again, the remaining groups defined in terms of prior commitments were tightly clustered around the averages which ranged from 31.4% to 33.7%.
- Conclusion C:** The CSC's did not show a statistically significant impact on the perpetrators of crimes for which recidivism has generally been high.
- Justification:** It is a well documented phenomenon that offenders against persons recidivate less than offenders against property. No significant differences in recidivism rates could be found between method of release and type of crime leading to original commitment. Although, with few exceptions, recidivism among the CSC group was lower across all crime categories.

#### **Part V — Caveats**

While the conclusions drawn are entirely consistent with the data presented in this study, the reader should be aware of several factors which may influence the interpretation of the results. There are five possible areas of contention in this recidivism study but none are believed to invalidate the findings.

1. **The use of recidivism rates as indicators of system performance** — Many criminologists and other social scientists argue that recidivism rates are not accurate measures of the ability of a correctional system to perform its rehabilitation objective. Basically, their argument is that recidivism rates do not really describe the effects of an individual's, or group of individuals', correctional experience after release. While this lack of depth is conceded, the fact is, recidivism rates provide a readily available and objective measure of, at least, the ability of a correctional system or program to release offenders who do not return to prison for new convictions. As an indicator of program performance in the field of corrections, a measure of repeated involvement in the program is clearly important.
2. **The determination of the recidivism rates** — Measuring recidivism presented both technical and conceptual problems. The major technical problem involved the inability to identify those released from an SCI or CSC in Pennsylvania who may have returned to prison because of a later conviction in another state. The investment required to discover later out-of-State incarcerations was judged to be too great relative to small gains in accuracy.

The conceptual problem centers around the definition of recidivism which differs widely among studies of this sort. This study considered only those who returned to prison because of a new conviction as recidivists, thereby ignoring those who returned for parole violation. The definition of recidivism here is, therefore, a narrow one and follows from a conceptualization of reintegration as a process of returning ex-offenders to society in such a way so as to minimize the chances of their returning to prison because of the commission of a new crime.



3. **Controlling for differences in the three release populations** — Essentially, this problem involved standardizing the three release populations so that the comparative recidivism rates reflected only the results of the method of reintegration (direct release, straight parole or Community Service Center) and not other factors such as the offender characteristics within the population.

While controls were introduced for many of these offender characteristics such as age and offense type, there was no way to guarantee against the possibility that somehow the CSC intake process involved the selection of those who were not likely to recidivate. If such selection did exist in the intake process, the rates would be biased in such a way that CSC release would appear a more effective method of reintegration than straight parole or direct release when, in fact, this was a factor of the type of offenders (i.e., low risk) received by the CSC's.

An in-depth consideration of the CSC intake process failed to reveal any attempt to select only offenders with a low chance of becoming recidivists. Studies of CSC intake show that while the process may work to screen out both those offenders who may pose a danger to the community and those who most definitely would fail on the outside, it cannot possibly identify and reject from intake potential recidivists. Indeed, a truly valid and accurate technique for identifying possible future recidivists on a case-by-case basis has yet to be developed in the criminal justice field. The assumption that the CSC release population will have lower recidivism rates because the intake process selects those less likely to recidivate is, therefore, unjustified.

4. A precondition must be stated before interpreting the results of this evaluation. Due to the nature of the possible biases, (see study design and methodology section) the recidivism rates should be regarded as the lowest that could have been achieved. That is, if the biases were in operation, the effect would have been to increase the recidivism rates shown.
5. The final factor concerns the extent to which the findings of this study can be generalized over time. As with any human system and as other studies in the corrections field have shown, the results depicted here will inevitably vary over time. However, certain precautions have been taken to minimize the drawing of false conclusions; factors such as age, prior commitment pattern and so on have been controlled for and the conclusions drawn are confined to statistically significant patterns within the data examined. In this case, the Community Service Center method of release showed a consistent pattern of lower recidivism; although this was not always significant.

## **Part VI — Corroboration**

While this study is currently the only performance evaluation of the Community Corrections Program vis-a-vis the other two forms of release, three other studies proved useful in supporting these findings.

First, a study done for the Bureau of Corrections by Informatics, Inc. (See Bibliography) tested recidivism performance between parole and community treatment centers. While the absolute levels of recidivism differed with those in this study, the differences between parole and CSC's were very much the same.

A study conducted by a group of researchers at The Pennsylvania State University, headed by Dr. David Duffee (See Bibliography), provided two useful inputs:

1. The CSC intake process involves poorly developed referral criteria so that referral decisions are often highly discretionary and are made informally by counselors at the institutions.
2. The findings that, "The social climate of the CSC's is considerably healthier and more humane than the social climate of the institutions" and that "The CSC's are managed considerably more democratically and with considerably more staff cohesion and teamwork than we would find in institutions," demonstrate the CSC's conformity to the concept of reintegration.

A study involving comparisons of offender characteristics between CSC entrants and SCI entrants during 1974 conducted by the Planning and Research Division of the Bureau of Corrections, (See Bibliography) showed that, based on differences in offense type distributions between the two entrant populations, the Centers are not taking the "cream of the crop." On the contrary, "they are taking the worst parole risks." This was taken as further evidence that the recidivism rates in the study before you are not biased in favor of the CSC release population.

## ABSTRACT

Much of the literature on corrections asserts that prison life, as it is presently constituted, tends to further criminalize the individual rather than rehabilitate him/her. Hence, a process of reintegration involving "desocialization" from prison life and "resocialization" to outside society, is frequently advocated. Awareness of this need for a reintegration process has been the impetus behind the development of Community Service Centers (CSC) in Pennsylvania.

Community Service Centers are designed to provide pre-release rehabilitation services to individuals in a programmed community setting. The programs are structured so that employment, training or education is mandatory, and counseling and supervision are provided by a trained staff. The offender's community and family are involved in the rehabilitation process with the intent of easing the offender's transition to society.

Basically, the Bureau of Correction's Community Service Centers are designed to provide an alternative to the two traditional types of release: final discharge upon expiration of maximum sentence; and parole. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the relative effectiveness of the CSC's by comparing recidivism rates for the three types of release groups.

Specifically, the study investigates the post-release incidence of new convictions for three cohort release populations of male offenders corresponding to these three types of release. Every offender released from an SCI in 1971 is included in one of these release populations. The post-release follow-up period ranges from the date in 1971 that an inmate was released until December 30, 1973.

Recidivism rates used to assess the relative effectiveness of the three types of release are defined as the proportions of offenders in a release population who were convicted in a Pennsylvania Criminal Court of a crime for which they received a prison term during the follow-up period (1971 through 1973).<sup>\*</sup> Important offender characteristics, including age and prior commitments, are introduced at different points in the analysis in order to control for the influence such factors may have on recidivism among the populations under study. Controlling for these factors adds confidence that differences in recidivism rates indicate differences in effectiveness among the types of release.

The following are the major findings of this analysis:

1. A statistically significant relationship existed between type of release and recidivism. Release to a Community Service Center (CSC) had the lowest rate of recidivism (14.8%) and parole release the highest (21.4%). Delineating these results by offender characteristics, the statistically significant relationship was later found to exist only for offenders who were white, were between 21 and 25 years of age, and had either no minimum sentence or minimum sentence of over five years.
2. Statistically significant relationships were found among the individual SCI's between the parole and overall recidivism rates. This may indicate a differential ability to rehabilitate offenders between the SCI's, although differences in offender characteristics between the release populations of the SCI's may actually have accounted for any differences in rates.

The following are some additional findings of secondary importance and obtained from less rigorous analysis:

1. An inverse relationship between length of minimum sentence and the recidivism rate was found. This tends to reinforce previous findings which show that less serious crimes are more likely to be repeated.

<sup>\*</sup>The vast majority of recidivists are felons, however, within the release population are convicted parole violators who include both felony and misdemeanants.

2. The relative success of the release types in terms of lower recidivism was found to be independent of the types of offenses which led to the original commitments.
3. No statistically significant relationship was found between the recidivism rates of CSC releases and the individual centers to which an offender was admitted leading to the conclusion that there was no significant difference in rehabilitative effectiveness between the individual CSC's.
4. Recidivism, and possibly criminal activity as a whole, diminishes with increasing age of the offender.

# **Study Design and Methodology**



## STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### A. The Design

Comparisons between the recidivism rates for the parole release population, the Community Service Center release population and the final discharge population are made in order to assess the impact of pre-release, community correctional programs as a prelude to parole or final discharge.

In total, the three populations number 4,326; 417 in the final discharge groups, 3,476 in the parole group\* and 433 released to Community Service Centers. The groups represent all those released during 1971; a list of these releases was obtained from the Bureau of Correction. This list was then compared to conviction lists compiled by the Governor's Justice Commission for 1971-1973 inclusive. To assure that identities could be matched, several control factors were used:

- a. Full Name
- b. Date of Birth
- c. Bureau of Correction's Identification Number
- d. Sex
- e. Race
- f. County of Residence

When a majority of these factors agreed on the two listings, an identity match was assumed. Both convicted felons and convicted parole violators were drawn from the conviction lists.

This analysis is not directed to the identification and assessment of program (treatment) variables in the release modes that account for lower recidivism but to an investigation of the overall impact of the utilization of each mode on recidivism. For example, if release to a CSC seems in general to lead to lower recidivism rates than parole release, the lower rates cannot be attributed within the framework of this study to such programmatic factors as the CSC's "resocialization" or "reintegration" treatment which are missing in a parole program, but rather to all factors that comprise the CSC program.

Essentially, this design involves an investigation of the effect of release modes as reflected by recidivism rates while controlling for the following variables, one at a time:

1. Race
2. Offense leading to original incarceration
3. Length of minimum sentence
4. Number of prior commitments
5. Age at release

These control variables are employed in order to assess the degree of association between type of release and recidivism when these outside influences are held constant.

Using these control variables helps provide a "truer" picture of the relationship of interest by removing the effects of confounding or biasing variables. For instance, if younger releasees are known to have higher recidivism rates, and most releasees accepted into CSC's are young, a CSC might seem to produce more than its share of recidivists. By controlling for age, greater confidence can be placed in the degree of relationship between type of release and recidivism. Also, added information is provided as to which release modes work better for the different age groups.

Chi-Square, which indicates the degree to which the relationship between two variables did not occur by chance alone and, therefore, may be significant, is used to uncover possible significant relationships between methods of release and recidivism for the different categories of the control variables.<sup>1</sup>

\*This group includes not only those under Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole supervision but those paroled by the Courts for county supervision as well.

## B. Treatment of Possible Biasing Factors

### 1. Composition of Study Populations

No effort was made during the course of this study to control the released populations in the sense of establishing rigid experimental and control groups. Had an experimental design been employed releasees would have been assigned to the three types of release at random. This procedure would have assured that no particular characteristic present in the population would have been misrepresented in the groups selected for any one type of release. In this study, all the administrative processes normally responsible for the selection of prisoners for the various type of release were operable. In addition, administrative selection processes continued to operate while an offender was under supervision in a parole or CSC situation.

#### a. *Final Discharge Population*

The study population released by final discharge can only be recommitted as a result of a new conviction; hence unlike the other two groups, the members of this group essentially have an equal opportunity to become recidivists. The only exception would rest on the assumption that a disproportionate number of those disposed to criminal or non-criminal behavior leave the State, thus substantially changing the remaining group.\* This group, however, bears one outstanding characteristic that the other two groups lack, that being, this group undergoes no post-release supervision. Thus, this group may have less difficulty in avoiding detection for a new crime than the other two groups. Since there is no information to measure this possible biasing phenomenon, it is not explicitly treated in this study. If the bias were present the influence of its removal would be to raise the recidivism rates shown here. The reader may properly interpret the rates shown as the lowest that would be experienced.

#### b. *Parole Release Population*

The parole group, as with that released to a CSC, remains under the sentence of the court and thus under supervision by either the State or County levels. This allows members of this group to be returned to prison for reasons other than the commission of a new crime.

A Uniform Parole Report statistical analysis examined the parole outcomes of a 25% sample of Pennsylvania parolees in 1971 found that within 24 months:

- 13% had been returned to prison as technical parole violators;
- 10% had absconded and not been apprehended;
- 14.5% had been convicted of a new offense.<sup>2</sup>

It must be kept in mind that the level of parole recidivism found in this study is not directly comparable to the above figure since the population used here is not only larger than that supervised by the State Board but also somewhat younger. This being the case and together with other evidence which suggests that greater recidivism levels can be expected from younger groups, could account for the rather large difference in parole recidivism between the two groups.

In addition to reconvicted offenders, who are counted as recidivists, a certain portion of the parole population had parole privileges revoked during the study period. Return to prison for reasons other than new convictions reduces the opportunity to recidivate as defined in this study. It is reasonable to assume that the individuals

\*It was believed that the time and effort necessary to check on releasees who might have recidivated out of State did not justify the presumably small gain in accuracy.



deemed most likely to recidivate are those most likely to experience parole revocation.\* This study has not deducted from the population those returned to prison for other than new criminal convictions. As a result, the recidivism rates shown should be interpreted as the lowest that could be achieved. Since recidivism is calculated on a full population count, reducing the total population by the number of persons no longer having the opportunity to recidivate could only increase the rates shown.

c. *The CSC Release Population*

The CSC population is made up of all those who entered a CSC in 1971. Past studies have shown that not all of those who enter a Center complete the program by being paroled or reaching maximum term.

A 1972 study of the CSC's done for the Pennsylvania Bureau of Correction shows that from May 26, 1969, when the first center opened, until April 1, 1972, 671 persons were admitted to a CSC. Among these 671, the following observations were noted:

- 285 or 42.5% were released on parole;
- 26 or about 4% were at some time released directly from a CSC;
- 47 or about 7% escaped (9 of these were subsequently returned to an SCI);
- 73 or about 11% were returned to an SCI;
- the remaining 240 probably remained in the Centers since the average daily population was 238 for the first quarter of 1972.<sup>3</sup>

In another study, the Pennsylvania Bureau of Correction employed a different methodology but the conclusions, with regard to inequality of opportunity to recidivate, were similar.<sup>4</sup> Depending on which of the studies is used, possibly as many as 15% were sent back to an SCI from a center during the follow-up period so that their opportunity to recidivate, relative to their CSC colleagues, was diminished. It was further indicated that 10% to 20% of those admitted to CSC's escaped and were never apprehended. These escapees, providing they remained within the State, would have been counted as recidivists if convicted of a new crime. The point here is to demonstrate that the members of the CSC population do not all have an equal opportunity to recidivate.

As with the Parole population and, to a lesser extent the full term release group, the existence and probable nature of biasing factors is known but their magnitude is not. As with the other groups, interpretation of the study results as the smallest probable rate of recidivism acknowledges the possible presence of bias while preserving the utility of the figures. That is, extreme accuracy in the absolute rates is less achievable than a ranking of the various rates. Due to the small number of those with reduced opportunities to recidivate, it is quite reasonable to assume that the rank order of the groups would not change if these were dropped from the population.

One final source of possible bias must be discussed. The selection process which determines entry into a CSC may systematically exclude "high risk" offenders. Investigations of the CSC intake and referral process have, this far, failed to document the existence of such a bias.<sup>5</sup>

\*283 or 8.14% of the parole population in this study were returned to prison during the follow-up period for technical violations. Three percent of the CSC release population were similarly returned.

Each SCI screens its residents as prospective CSC candidates based on such criteria as their behavior record while in the institution, performance on furlough or work/education release, their possible threat to the safety of the community and their need for a pre-parole or pre-direct release slow reintegration period. Once an inmate has been cleared by the institution's screening process, he must be accepted by a CSC which means being screened a second time with different criteria coming into play. The CSC's main concerns seem to be whether they have the facilities and staff to help the type of individual referred and whether the individual would pose a real threat to the safety of the surrounding community. The final factor involved is the decision of the sentencing judge who has the final say on an inmate transferral to a CSC. Apparently, the judges are sensitive to the opinions of both the institution and Center, but also weigh such things as the type of offense committed by the individual and the individual's record of prior convictions.

Further evidence that such an intake process, composed of many different criteria employed by several decision makers, does not result in an homogeneous group of low risk offenders, is provided in a study produced by the Pennsylvania Bureau of Correction. A comparison was made between the entire 1974 CSC population and the entire institutional population for the same year on a host of offender characteristics. The evaluation concluded that based on offense type, prior commitment, time served, age and race, the CSC's were not receiving those commonly considered the best risks.<sup>6</sup>

## **2. Recidivism Rates: Indicator of Program Effect**

The use of recidivism rates to directly represent the absolute level of program success or failure is probably unwarranted. Recidivism rates are simply the most accessible indicators of program effect and show only a single dimension of success or failure. No effort has been made here to explicitly account for absconders, those returned to prison without new convictions, or those committing new crimes but not apprehended. As a result, no accurate conclusions can be drawn from these data regarding those who were successfully reintegrated into society.

# Analysis



## DATA ANALYSIS

Overall, the recidivism rate for the population examined in this study was 20.4%. The following table delineates overall rates by type of release.

**TABLE 1**  
**Recidivism Rates By Type Of Release**

<u>TYPE OF RELEASE</u>	<u>RECIDIVISM RATES (POPULATION SIZE)</u>
Final Discharge	18.0% (417)
Parole	21.4% (3,476)
CSC	14.8% (433)
Overall ( $p < .05$ )*	20.4% (4,326)

According to the Chi-Square test, there is less than a 5% probability that these rates occurred simply by chance; hence, it is most probable that the differences in rates can be attributed to differences between the release modes. Release to a CSC is shown to have the lowest rate and parole release the largest. Apparently, both final discharge and release to a CSC, in general, lead to significantly lower rates than parole release.

By bringing in the control variables, conditions can be placed on these findings so that more specific statements can be made concerning such things as the age groups for which these findings are true, the particular offense categories for which they are true, etc.

### A. Age at Release

The tendency to recidivate and demonstrate criminal behavior, in general, as well as "responsiveness" to correctional treatment methods have often been found to be significantly associated with an offender's level of maturity.<sup>7</sup> Since emotional maturation generally occurs with time, there is reason to believe that recidivism rates will vary with offender age groupings.

The following data seem to support the past findings on this relationship:

**TABLE 2**  
**Recidivism Rates For Types of Release**  
**While Controlling For Age at Release\*\***

<u>TYPE OF RELEASE</u>	<u>AGE AT RELEASE</u>				
	<u>20 &amp; UNDER</u>	<u>21-25</u>	<u>26-30</u>	<u>31-40</u>	<u>OVER 40</u>
Final Discharge	21.4% (28)	27.1% (107)	15.0% (80)	17.7% (79)	15.9% (88)
Parole	30.0% (770)	23.4% (953)	23.5% (608)	14.8% (633)	9.6% (428)
CSC	18.2% (22)	14.0% (107)	16.8% (95)	15.6% (122)	12.3% (81)
Overall Rate	29.4% (820)	22.9% (1,167)	21.8% (783)	15.2% (834)	10.9% (597)
Significance Level	$p > .05$	$p = .05$	$p > .05$	$p > .05$	$p > .05$

\*Only  $p$ 's smaller than or equal to .05 are considered significant.

\*\*Populations do not sum to total population due to missing or invalid information.

Observing the overall rates from left to right, the consistent reduction of recidivism with increasing age is clearly shown.

For the two younger age groups, those released to a CSC showed lower rates than the other release types although this was only statistically significant for those in the "21-25" group.

For the three remaining age groups, no statistically significant differences are evident between the rates. Thus it seems that for these offenders (as well as those "20 and Under") the probability that they will recidivate is determined more by other factors than by the manner in which they leave the SCI's.

Ignoring the statistical significance of the difference between rates for the moment in order to compare the rates simply on their relative sizes, parole release shows up as being more effective than both of the other release modes for those over 30 and "at least better" than final discharge for those 21-25 (this latter comparison possibly being statistically significant). Parole and CSC release both were apparently less effective than final discharge for the "26-30" group, and parole had considerably less effect for the "20 and Under" group. Again these apparent differences lack statistical significance.

## B. Minimum Sentence

A minimum sentence determines the minimum time to be served before an inmate can qualify for parole. In those cases where a minimum sentence is not given, the Board of Probation and Parole (PBPP) and/or the court have authority to parole at any time upon application made by the prisoner or on its own motion. In most cases where a minimum sentence is not given, a parole application is not considered unless the convict has either served at least one-half of his maximum sentence or, in the case of a general sentence, received a good recommendation from the superintendent (see the PBPP Manual—Services for the Adult Offender in the Community.)

For the purpose of this study, length of minimum sentence can probably best be viewed as an indicator of both the time spent in prison and the seriousness of the offense committed.

The former variable time served, has in the past, been found to have no bearing on parole outcome,<sup>8</sup> but because the length of minimum sentence is representative of the latter variable (seriousness of crime), perhaps it can to some degree be considered a predictor of each offender's tendency toward future criminal behavior and, it follows, recidivism.

TABLE 3  
Recidivism Rates For Types of Release  
While Controlling For Length of Minimum Sentence

<u>TYPES OF RELEASE</u>	<u>NO MINIMUM</u>	<u>LESS THAN 2 YEARS</u>	<u>2-5 YEARS</u>	<u>OVER 5 YEARS</u>
Final Discharge	13.2% (159)	24.1% (162)	13.6% (88)	37.5% (8)
Parole	26.7% (637)	23.0% (1,649)	17.8% (975)	9.7% (215)
CSC	18.2% (22)	15.8% (120)	13.8% (225)	15.2% (66)
Overall rate	23.8% (818)	22.7% (1,931)	16.8% (1,288)	11.8% (289)
Significance level	$p < .05$	$p > .05$	$p > .05$	$p < .05$

These results show an inverse relationship between recidivism and length of minimum sentence, i.e., larger rates are associated with smaller sentences and vice-versa. Since it is impossible to determine the extent to which length of minimum sentence is a reliable predictor of the tendency toward recidivism from the data available, this inverse relationship can only be interpreted as an illustration of the effects of time spent in prison on recidivism.

While the data and methodology do not permit rigorous conclusions on this point, there is some evidence in this inverse relationship that longer prison terms (as represented by larger minimum sentences) might be effective at deterring future crime (as represented by lower recidivism rates.)

For those with "No Minimum", CSC release and final discharge both had lower rates than parole and these differences were statistically significant. The distribution of the rates is quite different for the "Over 5 Year" group where parole's rate is far below final discharge and somewhat smaller than CSC's, but, again, there is statistical significance.

The rate comparisons for those in the other two minimum sentence categories lead to small and statistically insignificant results.

Since about 75% of the total study population falls into one of these two latter minimum sentence categories, it would seem that the minimum sentence variable and whatever other variables it might represent or indicate, leads to little worthwhile additional information on the relative effectiveness of the three release types.

### C. Race of Offender

Although past research has shown little difference between the recidivism rates of different racial groups,<sup>9</sup> the anticipated interest in information on the difference or similarity in the relative effectiveness of the three release types between races led to the inclusion of a racial delineation of the rate comparisons here. It was assumed that recidivism rates would vary more due to race than sex therefore Table 4 reflects male and female rates combined.

TABLE 4  
Recidivism Rates For Types of Release  
While Controlling For Race  
(Male and Female Combined)

TYPE OF RELEASE	RACE	
	WHITE	BLACK
Final Discharge	17.1% (263)	16.6% (199)
Parole	19.8% (1,635)	21.9% (1,946)
CSC	11.6% (190)	17.2% (244)
Overall rate	18.7% (2,088)	21.0% (2,389)
Significance level	$p < .05$	$p > .05$

There apparently is little difference between the overall recidivism rates for blacks and whites.

For the white study population, the statistically significant differences between the rates for the three release types are evidence that release to a CSC was, perhaps, more effective than release by either of the other two types; while for the black study population, none of the three release types appeared to be any more effective than the others. What is most significant is that there is little difference between rates for blacks and whites for both final discharge and parole, while a major difference exists between the CSC rates.

The question is whether this inconsistency is caused by the failure of the CSC method to meet the needs of black offenders or whether there is simply something characteristic of many black offenders that leads to their failing in a CSC-type method? Further study is needed in order to answer this question.

#### D. Type of Offense Leading to Original Commitment

The following table shows National, State and study data comparing recidivism rates by offense type. The National and State figures are from the Uniform Parole Reports of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency Research Center in California.

**TABLE 5**  
**National, State and Study Recidivism Rates**  
**by Original Commitment Offense**

<u>ORIGINAL COMMITMENT OFFENSE</u>	<u>NATIONAL*</u>	<u>STATE**</u>	<u>STUDY</u>
Homicide and Negligent Manslaughter	4.0%	20.0%	13.0%
Robbery	15.0%	12.0%	22.0%
Aggravated Assault	7.0%	20.0%	20.0%
Rape	7.0%	0.0%	18.0%
Other Sex Crimes	6.0%	13.0%	16.0%
Burglary	14.0%	12.0%	22.0%
Theft or Larceny	12.0%	4.0%	22.0%
Vehicle Theft	20.0%	20.0%	30.0%
Forgery Fraud or Larceny by Check	13.0%	24.0%	35.0%
Other Fraud	8.0%	5.0%	10.0%
Narcotics	14.0%	10.0%	18.0%
All Other Crimes	11.0%	5.0%	19.0%
Total Rate	12.0%	9.0%	20.0%

- (Note: 1) The new offense was almost always a different type than the original.  
 2) The State rates are highly unreliable because of very small sample sizes.  
 3) The study data was obtained for more than just persons paroled.)  
 4) All rates are rounded to nearest whole percent.

\*New major convictions for allegations with prison return in first three years for persons paroled in 1969

\*\*New major convictions for allegations with prison return in first two years for persons paroled in 1969.



Because of the discrepancies between these three groups of data, an analysis of comparative rates based on these figures would be almost totally worthless. What they do illustrate, however, is that the type of original offense can possibly be useful for providing knowledge concerning who is more likely to recidivate. Offense types like theft of property appear to be more commonly associated with the commission of later crimes.

Hence, it may be reasonable to choose offense type as a control variable since there may indeed be some similarity between persons convicted for similar crimes as this relates to a tendency to commit later crimes.

**TABLE 6**  
**Recidivism Rates For Types of Release While**  
**Controlling For Type of Commitment Offense**

<u>TYPES OF RELEASE</u>	<u>TYPE OF COMMITMENT OFFENSE</u>					
	<u>NARCOTICS</u>	<u>RAPE</u>	<u>HOMICIDE</u>	<u>BURGLARY</u>	<u>ROBBERY</u>	<u>FORGERY FRAUD</u>
Final Discharge	25.0% (8)	20.0% (10)	22.2% (9)	24.7% (93)	25.0% (52)	28.6% (7)
Parole	18.7% (225)	18.0% (139)	12.9% (255)	22.6% (880)	22.1% (719)	36.9% (46)
CSC	8.0% (25)	19.0% (21)	12.7% (63)	13.5% (96)	17.8% (112)	30.8% (13)
Overall rate	17.8% (258)	18.2% (170)	13.1% (327)	22.0% (1,069)	21.7% (883)	34.8% (66)
Significance level	$p > .05$	$p > .05$	$p > .05$	$p > .05$	$p > .05$	$p > .05$

  

<u>TYPES OF RELEASE</u>	<u>TYPE OF COMMITMENT OFFENSE</u>					
	<u>ASSAULT</u>	<u>LARCENY</u>	<u>VEHICLE THEFT</u>	<u>OTHER FRAUD</u>	<u>OTHER SEX CRIMES</u>	<u>ALL OTHER CRIMES</u>
Final Discharge	10.8% (37)	15.8% (19)	16.7% (18)	50.0% (2)	6.7% (15)	14.2% (127)
Parole	22.2% (279)	22.6% (234)	33.0% (103)	0.0% (5)	17.6% (102)	20.9% (468)
CSC	14.8% (27)	16.7% (12)	0.0% (1)	0.0% (3)	10.0% (10)	12.5% (48)
Overall rate	20.4% (343)	21.9% (265)	30.3% (112)	10.0% (10)	15.7% (127)	19.0% (643)
Significance level	$p > .05$	$p > .05$	$p > .05$	$p > .05$	$p > .05$	$p > .05$

None of the offense types show a statistically significant relationship between types of release and recidivism at the .05 level (all p's are greater than .05). As might be expected, CSC-type release had almost consistently lower rates throughout; but again, the differences were not significant.

The success of any of the three release types in terms of lower recidivism would, therefore, seem to be independent of the types of offenses that had led to the original incarcerations of the releases.

## E. Institutions

In order to control for possible differences between particular SCI's (e.g. administrative differences, staff differences, etc.) that might effect the tendency to recidivate after release, the results are examined here by institution.

The institutions examined here were:

State Correctional Institution — Dallas (SCID)  
State Correctional Institution — Graterford (SCIG)  
State Correctional Institution — Huntingdon (SCIH)  
State Correctional Institution — Pittsburgh (SCIP)  
State Correctional Institution — Rockview (SCIR)  
State Correctional Institution — Camp Hill (SCIC)  
Regional Correctional Institution at Greensburg (RCIG)

For all intents and purposes, these seven facilities comprise the Pennsylvania State conventional Institution system for male offenders.

TABLE 7  
Rates of Recidivism For Types of Release While  
Controlling For Discharging Institution\*

<u>TYPES OF RELEASE</u>	<u>SCIC</u>	<u>SCID</u>	<u>SCIG</u>	<u>SCIH</u>	<u>SCIP</u>	<u>SCIR</u>	<u>RCIG</u>
Final Discharge	25.0% (8)	23.7% (38)	20.2% (84)	16.9% (59)	22.9% (48)	15.9% (44)	11.8% (119)
Parole	28.2% (632)	18.2% (406)	21.4% (753)	22.3% (466)	13.8% (276)	20.5% (718)	15 % (113)
CSC	13.2% (38)	0% (12)	16.5% (224)	23.2% (43)	8.6% (58)	12.2% (41)	20 % (15)
Overall rate	27.3% (678)	18.2% (456)	20.3% (1061)	21.8% (568)	14.1% (382)	19.8% (803)	13.8% (247)
Significance level	p> .05	p> .05	p> .05	p> .05	p> .05	p> .05	p> .05

While no statistically significant differences between the three types of release were found for any of the institutions, differences were found between the parole rates for each institution, and perhaps as a consequence of this, between the overall rates. This may indicate that some institutions better prepare their residents for parole release.

Differences in the characteristics of each institution's release population were examined in order to explore the possibility that these, rather than program or administrative differences, could explain the significant differences in the parole and overall recidivism rates.

\*Populations do not sum to total populations due to missing or invalid information.

**TABLE 8**  
**Comparison of Parole and Overall Recidivism Rates**  
**With Median Ages of Institutional Release Population**

	<u>INSTITUTION</u>	<u>MEDIAN AGE</u>	<u>PAROLE RATE</u>	<u>OVERALL RATE</u>
1.	SCIC	18.1 years	28.2%	27.3%
2.	SCIR	24.7 years	20.5%	19.8%
3.	RCIG	25 1 years	15 %	13.8%
4.	SCID	27 years	18.2%	18.2%
5.	SCIH	27.3 years	22.3%	21.8%
6.	SCIG	31.7 years	21.4%	20.3%
7.	SCIP	35 years	13.8%	14.1%

Note that SCIC had the lowest median age and highest parole and overall rates while SCIP had the highest median age, lowest parole rate and second lowest overall rate. Except for RCIG, the remaining institutions center around a median age of 27 and a recidivism rate of 20%. RCIG's deviation from these tendencies may stem from the fact that it is an unique institution having a resident population made up of less serious offenders incarcerated under less stringent conditions (e.g. minimum security arrangements, emphasis on counseling, etc.)

A similar comparison of the parole and overall rates, and the "Length of Minimum Sentences" distribution shows that 76.3% of the SCIC release population, which had the highest recidivism rates, had no minimum sentences as compared to 5.2% of SCIP's population which had the lowest overall rates. All of the other institutions except RCIG had both similar recidivism rates (again, around 20%) and similar percentages of released offenders with no minimums (around 6%). As before, RCIG's population more closely resembled SCIC's with 48% having no minimum sentences but had recidivism rates more comparable to SCIP's low rates.

Again, RCIG's deviation from an otherwise consistent pattern may be the result of its unique status among the SCI's.

Although these two comparisons lack the rigor needed to support definitive statements, they do provide strong evidence that, except in the case of RCIG, the differences between the rehabilitational impacts of the institutions themselves, may be more a factor of population characteristics than of program or administrative differences. In RCIG's case, there are indications that this institution's relatively unique program and concept may have been more effective than those of the traditional SCI. Contrary to the large amount of recidivism that would be expected from a release population such as RCIG's (i.e. one that is made up mostly of young, less serious offenders) according to the associations between recidivism and offender population characteristics found in this study and others, RCIG releases had relatively low rates. This increases the likelihood that some aspects of this institution's unique program could have accounted for the lower rates.

## F. The Community Service Centers

Since throughout this analysis those released to CSC's have generally demonstrated lower rates, which in some cases were even statistically significant, a comparison of rates between the individual CSC's is of interest.

In 1971, four centers were in operation throughout the state\*.

- 1) Community Treatment Center in Harrisburg
- 2) Community Treatment Center in Erie
- 3) Community Treatment Center in Pittsburgh
- 4) Community Treatment Center in Philadelphia

TABLE 9  
RECIDIVISM RATES OF COMMUNITY  
SERVICE CENTERS FOR 1971 ADMISSIONS

<u>CSC's</u>	<u>RATES (POPULATION SIZE)</u>
Harrisburg	19.2% (78)
Erie	14.6% (41)
Pittsburgh	7.2% (97)
Philadelphia	15.3% (222)
Overall	14.2% (438)**
Significance level	$p > .05$

Although these results are not statistically significant, the relatively low rate for the Pittsburgh CSC deserves some note. This low rate is consistent with the relatively low rates found above for SCIP releasees as is the relatively high rate for the Harrisburg CSC consistent with the higher SCIC rates.

Possibly, the same population characteristics believed to account for the institutional rates for SCIP and SCIC, also account for the CSC rates shown here.

\*The CSC's nomenclature changed to "Community Service Center" after 1971.

\*\*The population size and number of recidivists are not the same as those used in previous tables. This is due to a difference in the data sources.

## COST ANALYSIS

Since time spent in a CSC is an alternative to time spent in a correctional institution, rather than an alternative to time spent on parole, a comparison of cost between correctional institutional confinement and CSC confinement is an appropriate subject for examination.

The most obvious way (though misleading as will be seen below) to assess the relative costs of SCI and CSC would be to compare unit costs (per man) arrived at by simply dividing yearly maintenance costs by average yearly population figures. Although several attempts to show relative cost have been made, none are completely satisfactory since certain simplifying assumptions have been made the implications of such data tend to be overdrawn.

One such study which compared the per resident costs for CSC's and SCI's, was done in 1974 by a team of consultants from The Pennsylvania State University. The study considered only seven of the fourteen CSC's then in existence and assumed that the centers could expand to capacity at current budget levels (1973-74 fiscal year). At that time, the CSC's were operating at 93% of capacity (population = 110; capacity = 119). In addition, the study made no attempt to account for the costs of the Bureau of Corrections Regional Offices which can be properly charged to administration of the CSC system. With these assumptions the Penn State consultants derived a cost of \$5,019 per resident/year under the then current residency rates and \$4,639 with projected residency at capacity. At the same time institutional costs were calculated at \$7,966 while at 78% of capacity. Obviously, this comparison yields a highly favorable relative cost to the CSC's despite the fact that no adjustment was made for the differences in occupancy rates.

The Office of the Budget did a similar relative cost computation based on the 1975-76 fiscal year. The initial computations included the same seven CSC's considered in the Penn State study. It was found that CSC unit costs had risen considerably during the two years separating the studies without any appreciable increases in occupancy rates. CSC in-residents had increased to 112 from 110 raising the occupancy rate to 94%. Yet the combined budgets of these seven had increased by \$8,116/resident/year; an increase of some 62% over the 1973-74 fiscal year. Comparatively, the institutional occupancy rate rose to 88% which helped slow the rise in cost/resident/year to \$9,175; an increase of 15% over the 1973-74 fiscal year. The difference between current per resident costs is further reduced when the entire CSC system is considered.

Additional cost comparisons were made including all fourteen centers which comprised the entire CSC system. Further, the cost of operating the Bureau of Corrections Regional Offices were included since, as mentioned earlier, these could be properly charged to administration of the CSC system. All data used was for 1975-76 fiscal year. The occupancy rate for the fourteen CSC's was 79% of capacity, while institutional occupancy was, as noted, 88%. The CSC cost/resident/year came to within \$22 of that calculated for the institutional system; \$9,153 and \$9,175 respectively.

The considerably changed relative cost picture over the short time span of two years points to an important factor often neglected in such comparisons. That is, current cost is a product of circumstances existing within a discrete point in time. As a result, current cost tends to be transitory and, as illustrated above, can indeed produce very different conclusions regarding which system maintains offenders less expensively. Different occupancy rates for the CSC's and the institutions, together with other factors such as the inherent cost rigidities of the institutional system worked to close the gap in relative current costs.

More importantly, the fact that the unit cost (cost/resident/year) of CSC's is less than that for the SCI's may at first seem to be prima facie evidence of a saving that could be realized by simply expanding the CSC system. This, however, may be very misleading since it is not known the extent to which increased CSC capacity can be translated into costs avoided in the institutional system, which would hopefully be reflected in a net decrease in the total corrections system cost. While relative unit costs are important for comparative purposes, in the final analysis the implications on the total system cost must be determined. Due to inherent cost rigidities in operating an institutional system substantial savings cannot be expected given short-run or relatively small decreases in the inmate population. The prison system involves many fixed costs which would diminish only if a portion or an entire institution's operations were shut down. Obviously, a very large increase in CSC residents would result from a partial or entire closure of an institution and the extent to which such a circumstance

would change the total system cost or even the CSC unit cost is unknown.

Although the effect on the actual total system cost of maintaining an offender(s) for an entire term of Bureau custody, with part of the term served in a regular prison (SCI) and the remainder in a CSC, has not been precisely computed, certainly the costs of both systems are not purely additive nor purely substitutive, but rather at some point between these two extremes.

The pure cases, of course, represent the highest and lowest cost extremes. These boundaries are defined below:

Statement I: Greatest Net Addition In Total System Cost (TSC)

$$TSC = SCI \text{ Cost} + CSC \text{ Cost}$$

As inmates move from SCI to CSC;

$$\Delta TSC = \Delta SCI \text{ Cost} + \Delta CSC \text{ Cost},$$

if  $\Delta SCI = 0$

and if  $\Delta CSC > 0$

then  $\Delta TSC > 0$ .

In this statement, the SCI cost can be added to the CSC cost to obtain a cost figure for the total corrections system. As inmates move into the CSC system in greater numbers, the total system cost will reflect the new costs SCI's and the CSC's. There will be a net gain in total system cost if the SCI cost remains at least the same and the cost of operating the CSC's increases. The major point here is that none of the ongoing costs of operating the institutional system are avoided by moving additional inmates into the CSC's.

Statement II: Greatest Net Decrease In Total System Cost

$$TSC = SCI \text{ Cost} + CSC \text{ Cost}$$

As inmates move from SCI to CSC;

$$\Delta TSC = \Delta SCI \text{ Cost} + \Delta CSC \text{ Cost},$$

if  $\Delta SCI < 0$

and if  $\Delta CSC > 0$

It must be assumed that the total cost of maintaining an individual inmate in a SCI is avoided when the individual is sent to a CSC. Additionally, the costs avoided for individuals moving out of the SCI's must be greater than the cost increases resulting from expanded in-residency within the CSC system. If this condition holds:

then  $\Delta TSC < 0$ .

As in the first statement the total system cost is derived by adding SCI costs to the costs of the CSC system. In this case, however, as inmates are moved into the CSC's, an actual cost decrease occurs in the SCI system and a cost increase is experienced by the CSC portion of the corrections system. The total system cost will decrease by the largest possible amount only if the full cost of maintaining an inmate in the SCI's can be totally avoided through transfer to a CSC, and if the SCI cost decrease is greater than the increase in CSC cost resulting from the added population.

Consequently, making judgments as to which mode of inmate supervision (SCI or CSC) is less expensive is not simply a matter of comparing cost/resident/year computations. It is the effect on total system cost through levels of occupancy that must be thoroughly assessed. Even if the per unit cost of CSC supervision is substantially lower than that of the SCI's as formulated in the Penn State study, the fact remains that if the costs are not substitutive to some degree (approaching conformance to Statement 2), the CSC system may not represent a savings but rather an additional expense to the corrections system as a whole.

About \$2 million was budget in Fiscal Year 1975-76 (12 months) to maintain fourteen CSC's with a capacity of 281 in-residents. The Commonwealth funded approximately 80% of this amount with

the remainder coming from Federal LEAA monies. By Fiscal Year 1978-79, the State will assume very close to 100% of the funding responsibility.

The budgetary question that most naturally arises is whether it is worth \$2 million a year more (assuming that maintaining 14 CSC's is something of an additional expense which could be eliminated by closing the centers and transferring the residents back into a regular correctional institution) to reduce overall recidivism by as much as 3%.\* This figure is based on the findings of this study. More recent studies may show that this percent difference has either increased or decreased as the program has developed. Researchers at the Bureau of Corrections seem to feel that this percentage has increased because the program in 1970 and 1971 was relatively new and undeveloped and many problems have been worked out of the program since then. Whether this contention is tenable remains to be answered by subsequent evaluations.

Finally, considering the question of whether or not the State dollars paid into the program are offset by the possible savings realized from lower recidivism rates raises two other considerations. First, reduced recidivism rates can lead to both reduced costs in other sectors of the justice system (e.g., police, courts) and reduced costs to victims of crime which cannot always be translated into exact dollar figures. Also, since each case of recidivism usually represents a new incarceration, preventing enough returns to prison could eventually lead to a reduction of the prison population, resulting in reduced institutional costs. Hence, reduced rates can lead to savings which occur in areas outside of corrections and which may not be realized until a future time.

Second, there are many benefits derived from lower recidivism rates that escape translation into dollar figures. Also, there are benefits of programs such as CSC that cannot be reflected in recidivism rates. Many would argue against using recidivism rates as final measures of success or failure of a corrections program in favor of studies of the actual changes in attitudes or behaviors that occurred in offenders.

\*This figure was arrived at by applying the parole recidivism rate for males (21.4%) to the CSC release population to find how many more might have recidivated had they been released on parole (29 offenders.) This number of new recidivists represents 3% more recidivists. Note that this figure is sensitive to the number of offenders released from a CSC, i.e., if the CSC release population is doubled, this percentage should theoretically double. More recent evaluations of CSC may show a change in this percentage even without a sizable increase in the CSC release population.

## FOOTNOTES

1. See Blalock, H., **Social Statistics**, New York: McGraw — Hill, 1972, pp. 275-287 for a discussion of Chi-Square.
2. The National Council on Crime and Delinquency Research Center, **Uniform Parole Reports**, National Probation and Parole Institutes, Davis, California, 1974.
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8. *Op. Cit.*, Glaser.
9. *Op. Cit.*, Duffee, The CSC figure here was computed for only the 7 centers opened most recently using the total average annual resident population including out-residents. More recent figures show that, for the 14 Centers now in operation with an average annual in-resident population of about 200 (out-residency has been terminated), the actual yearly cost per man is about \$10,000. At full capacity, this per unit cost is estimated to be slightly over \$6,000. Contrary to the findings of the Penn State study then, the actual per unit cost for CSC residency is somewhat higher than the per unit cost of institutional confinement, at least under the present conditions faced by the program.



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# **Appendix I**

## **Program Description**



## APPENDIX I:

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

#### Introduction

Two offices, the Bureau of Correction and the Board of Probation and Parole (PBPP), are responsible for the administration and operation of the reintegration approaches that are examined in this study. All reintegration approaches are designed to reach the adult offender and to provide him with an individualized program that will meet his/her needs, facilitate a high degree of rehabilitation, and, hopefully, foster reintegration into the community.

The reintegration methods provided by the Bureau of Correction are aimed at the confined individual and seek to move him through various sequential steps from a highly-structured maximum security arrangement, where necessary, to a more relaxed community-based environment until he is ready for final release.

The PBPP is responsible for supervising an offender after he is paroled or during the time that he is on probation.

A number of steps intervene between the time that an individual is arrested for the commission of a crime and the time that he embarks upon a correctional program. Before the offender is sentenced, a probation officer conducts a pre-sentence investigation to provide information to the court concerning the defendant's life history and case. While this investigation can be made whenever the court decides to have one, it is required by law when the statutory maximum sentence is two or more years. This pre-sentence investigation serves multiple functions: it provides the court with information, helps the probation officer to formulate a treatment plan if the offender is placed on probation, and aids the institution in classifying him if he is incarcerated.

Following the sentencing, the offender is sent through a diagnostic-classification process. The purpose of this process is two-fold: (1) to try to identify the nature of the problem which led to the commission of a crime; and, (2) to determine the extent to which the offender needs to be removed from society. Those individuals identified as "dangerous" or a "threat to society" are sent directly to the traditional custody-oriented facilities and kept under maximum security arrangements. Those who are not considered to be particularly dangerous are permitted to begin their sentences in less restrictive environments.

Most offenders who are institutionalized are sent to one of the State's seven correctional institutions. Six of these are for men: Camp Hill, Dallas, Graterford, Huntingdon, Pittsburgh and Rockview; and one is primarily for women: Muncy.

#### The Pre-Release System

In response to a perceived need of offenders for a period of gradual readjustment to community life following institutionalization, the Bureau of Correction launched a system of pre-release programs to bridge the gap between institutional life and community life. These programs were authorized by Legislative Act No. 173 (1968) as amended by Act No. 274 in 1970. Participation in these programs is seen as a preparation for parole and not a replacement for it. Presently, there exist four components: furlough, work/education release, Community Service Center placements and Regional Correctional Facility placement. While the criteria for acceptance into each component differ, all have three basic requirements in common:

1. An institutional resident must have served at least one-half of his minimum sentence;

2. A resident must have served at least nine consecutive months in a State correctional institution; and,
3. A resident must have the written approval of his sentencing judge.

The temporary home furlough phase is the first step in the pre-release system. This phase permits the release of an individual from an institution for no more than one full week. Furloughs are supposed to help the offender to maintain family ties and to provide the opportunity to search for prospective jobs and make arrangements for life following release.

The work or educational release phase is designed to enable selected offenders to go out into the community to work or to attend classes and training programs at local colleges and universities. Participants are provided with transportation to and from classes and supervised by some designated person while in the community.

Community Service Centers make up the third component of the system. They are designed to afford selected offenders individualized treatment programs in the community. From fifteen to twenty residents live in group residences situated in urban areas while working or receiving training or education. While some degree of structure is imposed upon the lives of these participants, they are nevertheless given an opportunity to enjoy greater freedom and responsibility than is offered in any other environment within the correctional system.

To enter a Community Service Center, the eligible individual must first complete and submit an application. The staff at his institution evaluates the application and, on the basis of the individual's institutional record and performance in any of the other pre-release programs, decides whether or not to refer him to a Center. Participation in the other two programs is not, however, a prerequisite for consideration for this component. Once a referral has been made, the staff from the Center reviews the application and decides whether participation in this program would be beneficial to the individual and also whether the Center has the resources to handle the case. Those not accepted can either apply to other programs within the pre-release system or reapply to the Center at a later time.

### **The Regional Correctional Institutions Concept**

The Justice Department is presently considering a plan to create a system of regional correctional institutions. The concept of the Regional Correctional Facility provides for a unique institution whose environment falls someplace between that of a correctional institution and that of a Community Service Center. When implemented Statewide, the program offered at such a facility will focus primarily upon the offender who lacks the motivation to become rehabilitated and who needs encouragement to assume responsibility for himself. This facility will feed into the pre-release system by channeling offenders into the various phases. The only State Regional Correctional Facility currently operational is located at Greensburg.

### **Parole**

For those who are not accepted into a pre-release program or who do not desire to participate in a pre-release program the parole system provides an opportunity to be released before the expiration of maximum sentence.

The time of eligibility for parole depends upon the type of sentence imposed. Offenders at the present time receive four kinds of sentences:

1. *Indeterminate Sentence*—provides both a minimum and a maximum. The minimum term may not exceed one-half of the maximum term imposed. The Board cannot grant parole in such a case until the minimum term has been completed.

2. *Flat or Indefinite Sentence*—no minimum is provided, but the maximum is set. The Board has authority to parole at any time upon application made by the prisoner or on its own motion.
3. *General Sentence*—imposed only in cases sentenced to the State Correctional Institutions at Camp Hill and Muncy. A minimum and maximum is not provided and the sentence is entered in keeping with the statute for the particular crime committed.
4. *Barr-Walker Sentence*—from one day to life under which a person convicted of a sex crime may be sentenced to a State institution for one day to life at the discretion of the judge, upon the written report of a complete psychiatric examination made through the facilities of the Department of Public Welfare or by a psychiatrist designated by the court. An initial interview is held at the place of confinement within three months after a person has been sentenced under this Act, and it is mandatory that at least every twelve months thereafter, the Board of Probation and Parole must secure a further psychiatric report through the Department of Public Welfare and review the complete record of such person to determine whether or not he shall be paroled. Recently, the Barr-Walker Sentence was declared unconstitutional by the Superior Court.

In a case where an indeterminate sentence has been given, the offender can begin to make application for parole approximately two months prior to the expiration of the minimum term. In the instances where no minimum term has been given, there is no specific time frame for the initiation of the application process. The applicant is given a form that he must complete himself which gives an account of his record, his experiences while incarcerated, and his plans after release.

Once completed, the application is sent to the Board of Probation and Parole by the institution along with a current record on the applicant, a recommendation from the warden or superintendent and a parole plan. The parole officer from the applicant's district office investigates the plan and recommends its acceptance or rejection.

After comments or recommendations have been solicited from the trial judge and district attorney, the applicant is interviewed by representatives of the Board who are familiar with his official record and application. The applicant is given an opportunity at this interview to supplement the information in his file and to plead his case.

The Board meets at an executive session following the interview to consider the applicant's case and to decide whether to grant parole, refuse parole or to continue the case for further investigation, additional information, or a better parole plan. If the Board decides either to refuse parole or to continue the case, it usually sets a time for review. If the Board continues to be dissatisfied, it will refuse parole repeatedly. An applicant who is not granted parole, however, is always advised of the reasons and sometimes shown the weak points in his application so as to give him the opportunity to improve his case for consideration at a later review.

Parole is not an offender's right; when it is decided that an applicant cannot benefit from parole or that it would not be in the best interest of society to parole this individual, the Board may require him to serve his maximum sentence. An offender who serves the maximum sentence is given a direct release. This individual, who upon the completion of this sentence is said to "max-out", is totally on his own. He is given no supportive services and no supervision.





**Appendix II**  
**A Brief Review of**  
**Recidivism Theory**



## APPENDIX II:

### A BRIEF REVIEW OF RECIDIVISM THEORY

#### Introduction

Recidivism, or the phenomenon of successive convictions and commitments to correctional institutions of individuals once released from such institutions, presents several problems as a measure of the success or effectiveness of a correctional policy or particular correctional method. As psychiatrist Seymour L. Halleck notes:

"Recidivism rates are notoriously misleading. They tell only whether or not a new crime is committed and whether the offender is free or not free of a legal status. They give only a superficial picture of the offender's behavior and say nothing about his community adjustment or his psychological status."<sup>1</sup>

While recidivism rates may not be ideal measures of effectiveness, they are nonetheless useful to the evaluator who sets out to assess institutional processes and who is, therefore, in need of institutional impact measures. Their usefulness, however, should be tempered by the realization that they are an indicator of an individual's repeated involvement with the justice system and not necessarily a measure of an individual's repeated involvement in crimes. A study using recidivism rates as measures of program success/failure is, therefore, a study of the institutionalized convict rather than of the criminal per se.

#### Early Views

Early studies on recidivism centered on the "habitual criminal." This followed from the belief during the early part of this century, especially in Great Britain, that certain individuals had an inherent, generalized disposition to criminality.

This view is well-expressed by a University of Melbourne law professor who devoted an entire book to the habitual criminal. His definition reads:

"... (an habitual criminal) is one who possesses criminal qualities inherent or latent in his mental constitution (but who is not insane or mentally deficient); who has manifested a settled practice on crime; and who presents a danger to the society in which he lives (but is not merely a prostitute, vagrant, habitual drunkard or habitual petty delinquent)."<sup>2</sup>

At one point he mentions that many criminologists would exclude the "settled practice in crime" element from this definition since, "we may well be able to recognize and to isolate the habitual virus even before that 'virus' has been involved in an appreciable number of offenses and punishments, or even before the criminal possessing it has become a recidivist. . ."<sup>3</sup> Later, Morris implies that while this element is not necessary for identifying habitual criminals, an individual who commits numerous crimes is clearly an "habitual criminal" and, therefore, this element still belongs in his definition.

The significant distinction in this older view, is that criminologists were interested in the recidivist (and one who was hard core) and not recidivism per se. This led them to identify and study what they thought was a congenitally ill, homogenous group, which precluded their making any serious study of the social or psychological causes of the "virus."

## Modern Theory

Contemporary theories on recidivism center around the consequences of being socialized to prison life (and at the same time, desocialized to the ways of "free" society) or "prisonization," as a crucial factor in the life of a recidivist.

Chapman clarifies this:

"This process (prisonization) results in their (former convicts) being so ill adapted to life in civil society that they are vulnerable to re-imprisonment or may even positively seek prison as the only social and physical environment in which they can survive."<sup>4</sup>

Psychiatrist Halleck notes that incarceration can contribute to a perpetuation of the criminal role. Many ex-convicts discover that they have the capacity to "do time" and survive in a system that is not as frightening as they had originally anticipated. In fact, they may even find prison less frightening than the harsh realities of their lives in the "free" world."<sup>5</sup>

Once the convict leaves prison, his chances of being "de-prisonized" and "resocialized" to the free world are quite remote. Because of the stigma placed on the ex-convict by society, he is often denied any legitimate means of survival by not being able to find work, he is often watched by the authorities and he is generally made to feel like a second class citizen. Maintaining some level of self-esteem is extremely difficult for the ex-convict and is likely to cause him to crystallize paranoid attitudes toward society, resulting in an even greater movement away from conforming values. Almost inevitably, he is tempted to relapse into crime and the ways of criminal society where he can feel accepted and secure.

A study of ex-offenders by a group of social scientists in Bulgaria<sup>6</sup> found a significant link between recidivism rates and the degree of deterioration of relationships with family, school, work and (non-convict) friends. They conclude that this deterioration results from the "desocialization" process occurring during incarceration. The results of this are manifested in the individual's personality by isolation, hostility toward family, oriented and non-oriented aggression and feelings of insecurity. These findings led them to the conclusion that any treatment of ex-offenders should involve a resocialization process toward bringing these individuals back into conformity with society's values.

The concept of resocialization in corrections theory is not a new idea. It has evolved from a history of belief in the reform and rehabilitation function of prison where the convict was viewed as someone whose criminal behavior was caused by such things as inadequate moral development and later as deficiencies in social, intellectual or emotional development.

Studies of treatment methods involving convict resocialization techniques, (education programs, counseling, group therapy, etc.) led to numerous inconsistent findings. Martinson<sup>7</sup> after surveying all studies of correctional research published since 1945—many involving studies of community-based treatment methods—concluded that:

"On the whole, the evidence from the survey indicated that the present array of correctional treatments has no appreciable effect—positive or negative—on the rate of recidivism of convicted offenders."

Many reasons for the failure of corrections methods based on resocialization or rehabilitation philosophies have been given. Studies of convict attitudes show that resocialization efforts are useless if the convict had never really been "socialized" in the first place. Others<sup>8</sup> have found many offenders who consider the goals of rehabilitation to be "morally confused and patently dishonest, a racket of 'the status seekers' operated by 'the hidden persuaders' and by 'the organization man' for the good and glory of 'the power elite' ". This cynicism is the product of a view of a corrupt society in which a criminal is someone who gets caught as opposed to someone who commits a crime and has the

influence to "beat the rap." The convict often wonders, "Why should they want to rehabilitate me so that I can re-enter a society that is widely corrupt?" Many convicts holding this cynical view were found to accept punishment as a more sincere societal reaction to their crimes.

Regardless of these problems and past failures, the future of correctional programming seems to have little other option but to try and develop workable rehabilitational and reintegrational methods.

After an intensive study of prevailing trends and ideas in the field of corrections in the United States, a group of researchers at Pennsylvania State University concluded that,

"Since it is virtually certain that the offender will eventually return to his community, society can only be protected in the long-run by a resocialization of the offender."<sup>9</sup>

## FOOTNOTES

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**END**