SOCIETAL REINTEGRATION AND RECIDIVISM RATES

Daniel P. LeClair, Ph.D.

Social Science Research Specialist

Massachusetts Department of Correction, Boston, MA

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In June of 1972, following a series of prison disturbances and a general state of prison unrest, the Massachusetts State Legislature passed a "Correctional Reform Act". The legislation was strongly influenced by the growing national skepticism towards the traditional rehabilitation model. The Act specifically authorized the establishment of several correctional programs to be operated outside the confines of the existing correctional facilities. A program was developed providing for a graduated reintegration of the offender into the community. Two of the major components of this reintegration program were the Pre-Release Centers and the Home Furlough Program.

In the pre-release programs, the legislature allowed state prisoners who were within eighteen months of their parole eligibility date to be placed in small community residential centers to serve out the remainder of their prison sentences. The new Massachusetts Pre-Release Centers were modeled after the "Pre-Release Guidance Centers" initiated by the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Such programs were first established in Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles in 1961, and gradually extended to several other cities throughout the country.

Under the provisions of the Home Furlough Program, inmates were authorized to leave their correctional institutions for up to fourteen days in the course of a year but usually in periods of one to three days at any one time. These leaves were designed to maintain positive links with the inmates' family and community as well as to be used for job interviews and other functions anticipating the date of final release from prison.

Since the introduction of the graduated reintegration model in the Massachusetts Correctional System, the overall departmental recidivism rates have consistently dropped. In the year 1971, prior to the introduction of the reintegration model, the overall recidivism rate, with a one year follow-up period, was 25%. By contrast, in 1972 the recidivism rate was 22%; in 1973, 19%; in 1974, 19%; in 1975, 20%; and in 1976, 16%.

Departmental research (LeClair, 1978) has already demonstrated that participation in the Furlough Program has contributed to this reduction in recidivism rates. Controlling for selection factors, the data revealed significantly lower rates of recidivism for furlough participants than for non-participants. The data were interpreted as providing preliminary evidence that the use of the furlough program during the period of incarceration provides a positive reintegration function. The need for further research on the possible interactive effects of other community reintegration programs with the furlough program was recognized in the

previous study. The present research, therefore, represents a continued attempt to measure the effects of the Massachusetts Department of Corrections' programmatic contributions to the process of reintegrating the offender into society and reducing the incidence of recidivism. Interactive effects of the furlough program and pre-release participation will also be taken into consideration. It is hypothesized that prison releasees experiencing graduated societal reintegration, as measured by participation in pre-release centers and the furlough program, will have lower rates of recidivism than their counterparts without such programmatic benefits.

METHODOLOGY

Samples. For the purposes of the present study, a sample was drawn consisting of all males released from Massachusetts' state correctional institutions during the years 1973 through 1976 (N=3,244). This population was divided into a treatment sub-sample consisting of all males released in the respective years from pre-release centers, and a comparison sub-sample consisting of all males released directly from a correctional institution. A total of twenty-three correctional institutions contributed to the sample including two maximum, two medium, and four minimum security institutions; and fifteen pre-release centers.

Procedure. Recidivism was used as a standard for measuring the reduction of further criminal behavior. A recidivist was defined as any subject who was returned or sentenced to a state or federal correctional institution, a county house of correction or to a jail for 30 days or more within one full year from the subject's release from prison. Within the scope of this definition, it is important to note that a subject could be returned to prison either on a parole violation or on a new commitment. Follow-up included both in-state and out-of-state incarcerations.

Because of the possible existence of a non-random sample bias in transferring individuals to pre-release programs, a measurement contrasting treatment and comparison sub-samples was calculated. Specifically, Base Expectancy Tables were used to determine the separate Expected Rates of Recidivism for each of the sub-samples. This procedure allowed for a statistical determination of the existence of a recidivism risk differential between those selected and those not selected for pre-release participation. The degree to which the expected rate of the treatment group approximates the expected rate of the comparison group determines the degree to which non-random selection has occurred. The Chi Square Test was used to determine the statistical significance of any recidivism risk differential found. Additionally, the Base Expectancy Rates were used to determine whether or not participation in pre-release centers resulted in reduced rates of recidivism. By classifying

individuals according to the risks that would have been expected before assignment or non-assignment to a pre-release center, a base line is formed against which the outcome of treatment can be assessed.

The specific technique utilized to construct the Base Expectancy Table for the present study was Predictive Attribute Analysis as developed by MacNaughton-Smith (1965). The Base Expectancy Tables were constructed on the population of inmates released from Massachusetts Correctional Institutions in the year 1971. This population was chosen because it represents a period of time just prior to the introduction of the reintegration model. Thus, no one in the population had experienced either a pre-release placement or a furlough.

Data. Variables used in the construction of the Base Expectancy Table included the subject's personal background characteristics, criminal history characteristics, and the history of present offense characteristics. For a more complete discussion of the Base Expectancy methodology used by the author, see LeClair, (1976, 1977A and 1977B).

Data were primarily derived from the computerized data base of Massachusetts Correction and Parole Management Information System. Additional data were collected from the files of the State Department of Correction, the State Parole Board, and the State Board of Probation.

FINDINGS

It was found that individuals who end the term of their incarceration in a pre-release center have significantly lower rates of recidivism than those released directly from the correctional institution. For the 884 individuals who had been released from prison following a placement in a pre-release center, the recidivism rate was 11%. By contrast, the 2,360 individuals released directly from the correctional institutions had a recidivism rate of 22%. This difference between sub-samples was found to be statistically significant ($X^2=43.33$; df=1; $p < .001$).

In determining the effect of the selection process on the recidivism rate differential between treatment and comparison sub-samples, the Base Expectancy Tables revealed that the pre-release sample had a slightly lower expected rate of recidivism than the non-pre-release sample. Whereas the pre-release sub-sample had an expected rate of 22.3%, the non-pre-release sub-sample had an expected rate of 25.7%. The difference between samples, however, was not found to be statistically significant ($X^2=2.11$; df=1; $p > .05$). Selection factors, therefore, were not viewed as an important contribution to the lower recidivism rates for pre-release participants.

When the calculated expected recidivism rate for each of the sub-samples was compared to their actual recidivism rate, it was found that the actual rate was lower than expected in both cases.

Individuals in the pre-release group had an expected recidivism rate of 22.3% but an actual rate of 11%; those in the non-pre-release group had an expected rate of 25.7% and an actual rate of 22%. Though the reduction for the pre-release group was greater, it is important to stress the point that both groups did exhibit statistically significant differences between expected and actual. (For pre-release, $X^2=60.50$; df=1; $p < .001$; for non pre-release, $X^2=20.62$; df=1; $p < .001$).

If the reduction between expected and actual recidivism rates for the pre-release group is to be attributed to participation in pre-release centers, the question arises as to why a similar reduction also occurred for the non-pre-release group. Since furlough participation also constitutes a reintegration program, and since non-pre-release participants may have participated in the furlough program, the furlough variable was looked at as a possible explanation. Therefore, in the next stage of analysis, each sub-sample was divided according to the variable, participation in the Home Furlough Program. A fourfold matrix was constructed creating the following categories:

I. Individuals who ended the term of their incarceration in a pre-release center and who had also participated in the furlough program. (N=769)

II. Individuals released from prison without placement in a pre-release center but who had participated in the furlough program. (N=1393)

III. Individuals who ended the term of their incarceration in a pre-release center but who had not participated in the furlough program. (N=115)

IV. Individuals released from prison without participation in either pre-release or furlough programs. (N=967)

The following matrix resulted:

TABLE I

DIFFERENTIAL MATRIX

	Category	Number	Espected Recidivism Rate	Actual Recidivism Rate
I	Pre-release-Furloughs	769	22.2%	9%
II	Non-Pre-release-Furloughs	1393	25.2%	17%
III	Pre-release-Non-Furloughs	115	23.0%	26%
IV	Non-Pre-release-Non-Furloughs	967	26.3%	29%

Analysis revealed that the greatest reduction in recidivism occurred in the combined situation in which individuals participated in both components of the graduated reintegration model - that

is, receiving both furloughs and pre-release center placements. For this group an expected recidivism rate of 22.2% reduced to an actual recidivism rate of 9%. The difference was statistically significant ($X^2=74.87$; df=1; $p < .001$).

The category in which individuals did not participate in pre-release programs but who had participated in the furlough program also exhibited a reduction from expected to actual recidivism rates. For this group an expected recidivism rate of 25.2% reduced to an actual recidivism rate of 17%. Again, the difference was statistically significant ($X^2=54.88$; df=1; $p < .001$).

In contrast to the above findings, however, individuals in the two remaining categories exhibited higher actual rates of recidivism than their calculated expected rates. In these cases, therefore, no reduction in recidivism occurred.

DISCUSSION

Analysis provided clear evidence that participation in graduated reintegration programs such as pre-release centers and the home furlough program reduces the probability that an individual will recidivate upon release from prison. Data supported the research hypothesis and it was therefore concluded that these programs which contribute to the process of societal reintegration are effective in reducing recidivism. It is noteworthy that the most significant impact on recidivism occurred for those individuals who participated in both pre-release programs and furlough programs. The results of this study underscore the fact that the furlough program is a critical element in the reintegration process.

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