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PAROLE PREDICTION VARIABLES AND THE TIME FACTOR IN VIOLATIONS BY BURGLARS

Michael Hakeem

Michael Hakeem, who is a sociologist in the Division of the Criminologist, Illinois Department of Public Safety, undertook this study to determine what differences, if any, exist between subjects who violate parole after a brief period under supervision and those who violate only after a long period of ostensibly successful extramural adjustment has elapsed. Mr. Hakeem shows that differences do exist, and he points out the practical and theoretical implications of the research.—Editor.

Introduction

Parole prediction studies have shown that it is possible to determine, before an inmate is released from prison under parole supervision, what are his relative chances for making a successful extramural adjustment.¹ But these studies do not deal with another problem which they suggest. This problem has to do with the time factor in parole violation. It is known that persons who violate parole, either by a new offense or a technical violation of the parole rules, vary in the length of time which elapses between their release from the penal institution and their violation. The suspicion is strong that the same factors which are associated with success or failure on parole are related in some way to the length of time which elapses before an individual violates parole; there may be differences between those criminals who violate parole after a very brief period of post-institutional life and those who violate after only a long period of ostensibly successful extramural adjustment. This is our hypothetical basis.

This study is concerned with the problem of determining *when* a man can be expected to violate parole. We are interested here in determining what factors are associated with violation of parole after a brief period of post-institutional life and what factors are associated with violation after a long post-institutional period of parole "treatment."

If we can determine when a man is likely to violate parole we can apply that information to several practical and theoretical ends. When a man on parole reaches the point at which he is expected to violate, the parole supervision can be made stricter and closer. The factors which are associated with a long period or only a short period of successful parole adjustment may shed light on the problem of crime "causation," and this in turn may be of great value to penological research. Such a study may also

¹The material on parole predictions is scattered in the journals. Two good reviews of the material and the methods, both of relatively early date, are the following: Jerome Michael and Mortimer J. Adler, *Crime, Law and Social Science*, 1933, pp. 193-210, 212-214; W. F. Lane, "Parole Prediction as Science," New York, *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 26: 377-400 September, 1935. The whole problem of prediction in the social sciences, including prediction of criminality, is presented in the following: Paul Horst, *et al.*, *Predicting Personal Adjustment*, Bulletin 48, Social Science Research Council, 1941.

open the way for future studies with respect to the problem of the length of time an inmate should be incarcerated and when the psychological time for his release occurs. Principles, problems, and policies of parole supervision may be suggested by the information which is yielded. If the factors associated with violation after a brief period on parole are discovered, these factors can be appropriately changed as an aid to the extension of the period during which the parolee can make an acceptable law-abiding and socio-economic adjustment.

Methods and Materials of the Present Research

The basis for this study comprises 868 cases of burglars who were paroled from three penitentiaries of the Illinois Prison System and who have subsequently violated parole either by committing a new offense or by violating one or more of the parole rules.² These burglars were all paroled between January 1925 and December 1935, and they constitute the total number of burglars (exclusive of Negroes) from the three penitentiaries who violated their parole during those eleven years. One characteristic common to them all is that they have been returned to

TABLE I
PAROLEES CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO THE NUMBER OF MONTHS ON
PAROLE BEFORE VIOLATION

Months before Violation	Number of Parolees	Per Cent
Under 6	277	32.10
6 to 10.....	170	19.70
11 to 15.....	107	12.40
16 to 20.....	78	9.04
21 to 25.....	61	7.07
26 to 30.....	51	5.91
31 to 35.....	35	4.06
36 to 40.....	37	4.29
41 to 45.....	24	2.78
46 to 50.....	11	1.27
51 to 55.....	5	0.57
56 to 60.....	2	0.23
61 to 65.....	2	0.23
66 to 70.....	0	0.00
71 to 75.....	2	0.23
76 to 80.....	0	0.00
81 & over.....	1	0.12
Total	863	100.00

²The cases of violators which are used in this study are a part of the 1900 cases of parole successes and parole failures which are being used in connection with another research project which is now in progress.

the penitentiary as a result of their violation of parole.³ In five cases, information as to the length of time the inmates were on parole before violating was lacking, and therefore these cases are excluded, making the total number of cases actually dealt with in this research 863.

It will be noted that the subjects were on parole for varying periods of time before violating. Table I shows the distribution of cases, when all cases are included, according to the number of months which elapsed between the time when the subjects were released from penitentiaries and the time when they violated.

For purposes of setting up contingency tables, the original data for the independent variable used in this study, namely, the number of months during which the subject was on parole before violating, were combined in one of several ways, depending upon which scheme of combination seemed necessary for each table. The primary consideration which dictated the method of combining the data of the independent variable was that no cell should have fewer than five cases. In an insignificant number of instances this was not possible. Table II, one table of original data which has been reproduced here for purposes of illustration, shows how the figures have been combined.⁴ In some tables the original data, not only of the independent variable but also of the dependent variable, were combined.

The dependent variables (the same factors which are used in the Burgess method of parole prediction) used are as follows: sentence, time served on last sentence, number of associates, previous criminal record, criminal mobility, type of offender, disciplinary record, family interest, age, nativity of parents, home condition, pre-institutional community, marital status, work record, employment status at arrest, parole community, post-institutional job, use of alcohol, venereal infection, intelligence rating, social type, personality classification, and psychiatric prognosis.⁵ The following additional factors—type of offense, race, last (before parole) work assignment in the institution, neighborhood (residence before commitment to the prison), and parole neighbor-

³The "leniency-strictness differential" could not be controlled in this study. This differential is the relative degree of leniency or strictness shown by various parole officers toward their charges in demanding that they adhere to the parole rules. Also it refers to the differences in the readiness shown by various parole officers to return parolees to prison. Such a differential may introduce some undetected influences into the results of this study, for such a differential may affect the length of time different parolees can stay out of prison. On the other hand, the results may be unaffected because the inconsistencies and variabilities in practices of parole supervision are so great that they probably neutralize each other. Even in the same jurisdiction, probably only a few uniformities of practice in the direction of invariable leniency or invariable strictness in dealing with certain types of cases can be found.

⁴There is a total of 23 tables of original data, one for each of the 23 dependent variables used in the study. Only one of these tables can be presented here. Original data can be furnished by the author.

hood—which are used by the sociologist-actuary who applies the Burgess method of parole prediction in the Illinois State Penitentiary have been excluded from the present study for several reasons.⁶ Type of offense and race were not used because the study was restricted to offenders whose crime had been burglary and because it was restricted to white offenders. The reasons for the exclusion of the other variables need not be rehearsed in great detail here. Usually, the raw data were so defective in a number of respects that the variable had to be omitted.

Following are definitions and descriptions of the dependent variables and the sub-classifications which they embrace:

1. Sentence: Sentence which the parolee was serving when paroled; if he was serving more than one sentence, the longest sentence was used.

2. Time Served on Last Sentence: Time elapsing between date of commitment and date of parole.

3. Number of Associates: Number of associates with him in the commission of the crime for which he was originally committed.

TABLE II
NUMBER OF MONTHS ON PAROLE BEFORE VIOLATION BY TYPE OF OFFENDER

Months before Violation	Type of Offender				Total
	First	Occasional	Recidivist	Habitual	
Under 6	85	71	86	35	277
6 to 10.....	46	57	52	15	170
11 to 15.....	40	32	26	9	107
16 to 20.....	30	25	16	7	78
21 to 25.....	25	9	19	8	61
26 to 30.....	26	10	11	4	51
31 to 35.....	17*	8*	9*	1*	35*
36 to 40.....	16	10	9	2	37
41 to 45.....	6	6	9	3	24
46 to 50.....	5	1	5	0	11
51 to 55.....	1	1	2	1	5
56 to 60.....	0	1	1	0	2
61 to 65.....	1*	0*	1*	0*	2*
66 to 70.....	0	0	0	0	0
71 to 75.....	0	0	2	0	2
76 to 80.....	0	0	0	0	0
81 & over.....	0	0	1	0	1
Total	298	231	249	85	863

*For setting up a contingency table, entries in brackets have been combined.

⁶Information about these items was originally obtained by other investigators from the folder kept in the prisons on each inmate. The information had been accumulated during the period of imprisonment and its sources were interviews with the inmate, examinations by specialists and prison officials, and correspondence received *in re* inmate, which were occasioned by numerous routine matters in connection with each inmate's case. All the information pertaining to the 23 variables had already been entered on schedules in connection with another research, and these schedules were the direct source of data for this study.

⁶For samples of the parole prediction reports prepared by the sociologist-actuary in the Illinois State Penitentiary see Walter C. Reckless, *Criminal Behavior*, New York, 1940, Appendix H, pp. 491-502.

4. Previous Criminal Record: Previous to the offense which resulted in the original commitment.

5. Criminal Mobility: Classified as "resident" if the subject lived for more than one week in the locality where he committed the crime, unless it was apparent that he moved to the locality to commit the crime; "transient" if he lived in one locality and committed the crime in another.

6. Type of Offender: Classified as "first" if the subject had no previous criminal record whatsoever; "occasional" if the subject had a police record but was without convictions or commitments for felonies (those whose record showed misdemeanors only were included here); "recidivist" if the subject had a record of one or more convictions for felonies; "habitual" if he had been dependent chiefly on crime for his livelihood.

7. Disciplinary Record: Number of minor and major infractions of the prison rules for which the person was punished while incarcerated.

8. Family Interest: Classified as "none" if the parolee received no letters from relatives and friends during his incarceration; "sustained" if the parolee received only one letter a month; "passive" if he received two to five; "active" if he received more than five letters a month.

9. Age: When the subject was paroled.

10. Nativity of Parents: Classified as "native-born" if both parents were born in the United States; "foreign-born" if both parents were born in the same foreign country; "mixed" if one parent was born in the United States and the other in a foreign country.

11. Home Condition: Classified as "left home," "broken," "inferior," "average," "superior;" judgments were made on the basis of material prepared by sociologists and psychiatrists, and these judgments depended upon an appraisal of family relationships, economic condition, absence or presence of constructive supervision in the home, absence or presence of cultural conflict, etc.; "left home" means that the individual was on his own since early adolescence.

12. Pre-institutional Community: Size of the community where the person lived before his commitment, classified as "rural" (under 2,500 population), "town and village" (2,500 to 10,000), "small city" (10,001 to 25,000), "city" (over 25,000), "Chicago and Cook County."

13. Marital Status: Classified as "single," "widowed," "divorced," "separated," "married."

14. Work Record: Classified as "irregular" and "casual"; "irregular" if the individual had high occupational mobility but was a more regular worker than a "casual" worker.

15. Employment Status at Arrest: Classified as "unemployed" if the individual did not have a job at the time of his arrest for the original crime; "employed" if he had a job at that time.

16. Parole Community: Size of the community to which the subject was paroled (see item 12).

17. Post-institutional Job: Classified as "unskilled," "skilled," "farmer or farm hand," "special agreement" (special arrangements made between the parolee, parole authorities, and employer for the post-institutional job).

18. Use of Alcohol: Classified as "temperate" or "intemperate."

19. Venereal Infection: Classified as "gonorrhoea," "syphilis," "both;" if the subject had at any time in his life contracted either or both of these diseases this fact was recorded.

20. Intelligence Rating: Classified as "mentally defective," "borderline mentally defective," "dull," "low average," "average," "high average," "superior and very superior" on the basis of the score made on either

the group or individual intelligence test routinely administered to all incoming inmates.

21. Social Type: Classified as "average," "floater and ne'er-do-well," "inadequate," "maladjusted," "drug addict or drunkard." These classifications are based upon loose working definitions and are arranged here in a gradation showing what is believed to be increasingly disorganized and maladjusted types.

22. Personality Classification: Classified as "normal," "egocentric," "inadequate," "unstable," "other;" "other" includes drug addicts, psychotics, sex perverts, chronic alcoholics, etc.; these terms are used by the psychiatrist merely as convenient constructs to describe certain personality traits and tendencies which are clinically determined.

23. Clinical Prognosis: This is the clinical impression which is expressed by the sociologists and psychiatrists with respect to the probable future course of the inmate's adjustment and the relative probability that he will continue in criminal behavior. The prognosis is designated as "favorable," "doubtful," "unfavorable." These prognoses depend upon somewhat loose working definitions.⁷

The original data were set up in 23 contingency tables with the number of months before violation as the independent variable in each case and one of the 23 parole prediction factors as the dependent variable. The Chi-square test was undertaken to test the probability that differences between the actual and the theoretical frequencies would occur by chance.⁸ In these instances where the probability that the differences were due to chance was very small the coefficient of mean square contingency was determined in order to measure the *amount* of the relationship which exists between the variables. Whether the relationship is a positive or a negative one was determined by inspection of the data and the signs of the differences.

Results and Conclusions

Of the 23 variables which were tested for their relationship to the length of time on parole before violation six were found

TABLE III
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SIX PAROLE PREDICTION FACTORS AND THE LENGTH OF
TIME ON PAROLE BEFORE VIOLATION

Parole Prediction Factor	Chi-square	Approximate Probability	Coefficient of Contingency	Direction of Relationship
Type of offender (length of previous record)	31.379	.038	.187	negative
Extent of family interest.....	63.971	.0001	.265	positive
Size of pre-institutional community	34.634	.03	.197	negative
Regularity of work record....	28.382	.009	.180	positive
Employment status at arrest (employed or unemployed)...	16.600	.075	.137	positive
Size of parole community.....	48.074	.011	.233	negative

⁷Very brief definitions of these prognostic labels can be found in the following publication: *Annual Report of the Criminologist*, p. 34, reprinted from the 1940 annual report of the Illinois State Department of Public Welfare.

⁸The customary five per cent level of significance was used so that any value less than .05 was deemed significant.

to show a significant relationship. These six variables are presented in Table III, and each is followed by the Chi-square, the approximate probability, the coefficient of contingency, and the direction of the relationship. The remaining 17 variables showed no significant relationship.

From an examination of this table it is clear that there exists a low but significant relationship between each parole prediction factor listed and the length of time during which a parolee can satisfy the conditions of his parole so that his return to the penitentiary will not be necessitated. The various categories under "type of offender" are based upon the criminal record of the individual. These categories—"first," "occasional," "recidivist," and "habitual"—represent, in the order given, a gradation from those offenders having the least serious to those having the most serious criminal record. On the basis of the findings in the present study, it appears that those parolees who had the longest criminal record violated parole earlier than those whose criminal record was not so extensive. In other words, those who have had greater experience in criminal activity and who have been apprehended and acted upon officially for their depredations a number of times return to crime after only a brief period of time on parole, while those who are "first offenders" or who have only a short previous criminal record relapse only after a longer period of ostensibly successful extramural adjustment. It would seem that the "habitual offenders" (those who can best be characterized as "professional criminals") react to imprisonment merely as an unavoidable interlude which occasionally interferes with the pursuit of their criminal career and that they return to crime, or other forbidden activities, as soon as possible after their release from prison. It is probable that they resume their criminal activities where they left off, return to old haunts, and assume their place among associates and in activities which have been awaiting them, shortly after being paroled. Those who violate parole after a longer period of time has elapsed have probably never been so closely integrated and identified with a criminalistic milieu. Incarceration may have made some impression upon them, and they make a reasonably acceptable adjustment for some time before violating parole. Their relapse is not occasioned by a strong criminalistic orientation as in the case of the "habitual" and possibly the "recidivist" offenders, but rather their relapse arises in much the same way as their first offense, and it constitutes an isolated offense for which there is really no valid explanation as yet.⁹

Both the community from which the parolee was sent to the prison and the community to which he went when paroled were

⁹Edwin H. Sutherland, *Principles of Criminology*, New York, 1939, pp. 3-4. See also Jerome Michael and Mortimer J. Adler, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

found to be important, since those who came from and went to a sparsely populated area violated parole later than those who came from and went to a densely populated area. Those who went to Chicago and Cook County and to other large cities relapsed earlier than those who went to rural areas and areas of small population. It is likely that those who came from areas of small population were not as criminalistic as those who came from large cities. Also, social controls are more effective in the rural areas and areas of relatively small population. In these areas, there are fewer of the influences which militate against the parolee's efforts to make a good adjustment. On the other hand, it is conceivable that parole supervision in the rural areas, towns and villages, and small cities may be more superficial, sporadic, and ineffective than parole supervision in large metropolitan areas. Also, police work and detection of offenders may be less efficient in the small area. Therefore, the parolee who goes to the smaller area may stay out of prison a longer time because he is not apprehended for violation of parole sooner, due to poor investigation and detection facilities available there as compared with such facilities available in metropolitan regions.

"Family interest" showed the most highly significant relationship to the length of time on parole before violation. Those parolees who, while incarcerated, had constant and active contacts with family and relatives, through correspondence, violated parole later than those who maintained little or no contact with their people. This would lead to the conclusion that such contacts were continued after the inmates were paroled, and such contacts helped the parolees make a good adjustment for a longer period of time than would otherwise have occurred. Those who were without the benefits of such active contacts violated parole sooner. It may be that loss of one's family through imprisonment has been a severe blow during the incarceration of the offender, and when he is released the reunion and the reconstruction of family relations are of such vital concern to him that they enable him to make a successful parole adjustment at least until his equilibrium is upset again. The individual with meager or no family contacts has no such stabilizing influences to enmesh him when he is released, and therefore he relapses sooner. The family stands ready to interpret behavior in the light of society and probably counteracts the influences impinging upon the parolee from sources constraining him to continue unacceptable conduct. The parolee who is without family ties finds it easier to succumb to delinquent influences and companions and to retain criminal values. The person with family ties does relapse into crime eventually, however. The reasons for this should be investigated.

Two other factors which were found to be significantly related

to the length of time on parole before violation are "Employment status at arrest" and "Work record." Since these factors are closely related they can be discussed together. "Employment status at arrest" refers to whether or not the parolee was employed at the time of the offense which led to his commitment. The parolee who was employed at the time of his arrest for the offense which eventuated in his commitment to prison (the last commitment before parole) violated parole after a longer period on parole than the parolee who was unemployed at that time. The parolee who was characterized as a relatively steady worker (irregular) violated parole after a longer period of time had elapsed than the individual whose work record was poor and who worked only very sporadically (casual). The assumption is that the person made the same kind of work adjustment when he was on parole as he had characteristically made, and the steadier workers can keep out of trouble for a longer time.

The implications of these findings for practices of parole supervision are quite clear. The necessity of good supervision for offenders who have long criminal records, the importance of the residential factor, the importance of maintaining outside contacts during incarceration, and the importance of good work habits and steady work are evident. It is interesting to note that the factors which proved important in delaying parole violation are factors which have been traditionally stressed by parole and prison authorities. The significance of such homely factors as steady work, attachment to family and friends, and residence in a simple environment, if not in preventing, at least in delaying relapse into crime has been borne out. A further point which needs to be investigated has to do with those who were able to remain on parole successfully for a comparatively long time but who violated parole eventually. An attempt should be made to determine why these individuals failed at the time they did. A leading question to be investigated in this connection is whether or not they eventually violated parole because the conditions which made for a long period of successful adjustment were modified. If it is found that the conditions were modified, then it is clear that extending the period of successful adjustment on parole calls for the amplification of and constant checking up on these conditions which have proven helpful, until the parolee can make an independent adjustment.
