

AN EVALUATION OF THE EFFECT OF THE FELLOWSHIP
PROGRAM AT M.C.I., NORFOLK ON RECIDIVISM

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INTRODUCTION

Research Personnel from the Department of Correction and the Division of Legal Medicine have undertaken a comprehensive study of the Fellowship Program which operates in the Massachusetts Correctional Institution at Norfolk. This church-related organization developed under the leadership of the Reverend Robert L. Dutton, Protestant Chaplain at the Institution since 1958. The Fellowship Program brings churchmen from neighboring parishes into the Institution for meaningful dialogue with the inmate members. In addition, these inmates and "outmates", as the churchmen are called, often maintain contact once the inmate has been released. One of the goals of this program is to help the inmate remain out of prison once he has been released.

A companion report which has been published by the Department provides a descriptive analysis of the inmates who join the organization. The purpose of the present report was to assess the effectiveness of the organization in terms of the recidivism of its membership. The standard of comparison was the expected recidivism derived from a sample of the average Norfolk population.

METHODOLOGY

The basic methodology in this study was to assess various attributes of inmates who had been in the program and relate these attributes to recidivism. The standard of comparison in each of the areas considered was the sample of inmates used in the Norfolk Base Expectancy Study.¹ In this study, a sample of inmates at Norfolk was broken down into mutually exclusive groups having particular characteristics which were predictive of recidivism. Predictive tables were derived which made it possible to take any inmate or group of inmates from the present sample and calculate an expected recidivism rate.

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Francis J. Carney, "Predicting Recidivism in a Medium Security Correctional Institution," Journ. Crim. Law, Criminol., and Police Sc. (Sept., 1967) pp. 338-348

The Norfolk Base Expectancy Study was originally based on a four year follow-up period for recidivism. However, the number of Fellowship members on whom information was available and who had been released four years prior to the date of this study was small so the follow-up period was shortened to 2 years, 9 months. Accordingly, the original Base Expectancy data was analyzed to yield predictive tables for a 2 year, 9 month follow-up rather than a four year period.

In each of the areas discussed, an expected return rate is presented in addition to the actual recidivism figure for that particular group. In this way, it was possible to assess the program's impact on the men who were involved. Recidivism as it is discussed in this report is defined as commitment to a state or federal prison or a House of Correction for 30 days or more during the 2 years, 9 month period following release from Norfolk.

Two groups were examined in the first section of this study. The first or "Release" group included those inmates who were in Fellowship at least three months and belonged to the organization at the time of release from Norfolk. The second or "Dropout" group consisted of those inmates who had joined Fellowship, but had dropped out before release. In deriving the expected recidivism rates for these groups, adjustment was made for the overrepresentation of Blacks - i.e. separate Base Expectancy Categories were derived for Blacks and Whites.

In the ^{Second} ~~section~~ section background factors such as age at first arrest and type of offense are considered as they related to recidivism. The third section is concerned with inmate involvement in the program both while in prison and after release. The final section is an analysis of the recidivism of the organization members in terms of length of time before return and the reason for being recommitted.

FINDINGS

Recidivism Rates for Releasees and Dropouts

The first major topic was a consideration of the expected vs. actual recidivism of the Fellowship Releasee and Fellowship Dropout group separately. These two groups were divided into their White and Black components to give a more accurate estimate of expected recidivism. For each group the components were then combined to give an overall expectancy rating. Consideration of the "Releasee" group revealed that the expected return of the Blacks was 55.2% while the actual return was 40.0% (Table I). The Whites in the Releasee group had an expected return of 42.8% and an actual return of 36.7% (Table II). When these data are combined the overall expected return becomes 47.0% and the actual return is 37.8%. This is a 9.2 percentage point reduction in recidivism (Table III).

The "dropout" data revealed that the Blacks in this group had an expected return of 66.1% and an actual return rate of 60.0% (Table IV). The Whites had an expected return rate of 45.3% and an actual return rate of 46.8% (Table V). When these data are combined the expected return rate becomes 51.5% and the actual return rate is 50.7% (Table VI). This table reveals only a 0.8 percentage point reduction in recidivism. These data indicate that the Releasee group was helped considerably more than Dropout group. In examining the actual and expected recidivism rates for Blacks and Whites in the Releasee and Dropout groups, it can be seen that the greatest reduction in recidivism was found in the Black releasee group.

Background Factors and Recidivism

In an attempt to determine which inmates benefited most from Fellowship, two variables, type of offense and age at first arrest, were found to be particularly important. Table VII presents a comparison of recidivism rates of Fellowship and Non-Fellowship subjects in which only the type of offense is considered.

In this comparison, the "Fellowship" group was made up of the Fellowship Releasees mentioned above and the "Non-Fellowship" group was composed of the entire sample of inmates used in the Norfolk Base Expectancy Study. As the Table indicates the actual recidivism rate of Fellowship members who were offenders against the person was 26.1% while the actual recidivism rate of the Non-Fellowship members in this category was 50.4%. This difference of 24.3 percentage points between the two groups suggests that Fellowship is particularly effective in reducing the recidivism of offenders against the person.

The second variable which was examined was age at first arrest. As indicated in Table VIII of those whose first arrest was at 15 or older there is a difference of 16.6 percentage points in actual recidivism rates between Fellowship members (30.0%) and Non-Fellowship members (46.6%). The opposite effect was found in those under 14 at first arrest. The Fellowship group had a return rate of 54.2% while the Non-Fellowship members had a return rate of 46.4%. Thus, it seems that offenders against the person and inmates whose first arrest was at 15 or older benefit most from Fellowship.

Table IX shows recidivism rates in which age at first arrest and type of offense are considered jointly. Fellowship inmates 15 and older with offense against the person had a recidivism rate 31.8% below their Non-Fellowship counterparts. This indicates that membership in the Fellowship produced a marked reduction in recidivism for this group. Table IX also points out that Fellowship inmates who committed an offense other than against the person and whose first arrest was at 14 or younger not only did not benefit in terms of recidivism but in fact returned at a rate higher than similar inmate who were not in Fellowship. The recidivism rate for Fellowship members with these characteristics was 14.1 percentage points higher than Non-Fellowship members. It is interesting to note that a similar negative effect occurred in the Psychotherapy study at Walpole, in which it was found that younger inmates with longer records not only did not benefit but actually had a higher recidivism rate if they were involved in therapy.

Table IX considered as a whole, indicates that offenders against the person whose first arrest was at 15 or older benefit most from their Fellowship experience, while offenders other than vs. person whose first arrest was at 14 or younger benefit least.

Degree of Involvement and Recidivism

The third major topic that was considered important in the study was the degree of involvement in the Fellowship program. The data available provided a quantitative rather than a qualitative measure of involvement and thus the degree of involvement is measured as a function of time. In order to present a clear picture of involvement in the programs as it relates to recidivism, depth of involvement will be considered in three different ways: involvement in the program while in prison alone, involvement in the program once released, and the combinations of involvement both inside and after release. Again, the measure of effectiveness of this involvement is the recidivism rate.

The first area of concern was involvement in the Fellowship program while in prison. For purposes of the study, involvement of this type was divided into a "high" and "low" dichotomy. "High" involvement was defined as active membership in Fellowship for a year or more. "Low" involvement was membership in the organization from 3 months up to a year. The expected return rate of those with high involvement was 44.3% and the actual return was 31.1%. Expected return of the low involvement was 52.3% and the actual return was 48.3% (Table X). These data indicate that more extensive involvement with the Fellowship program is instrumental in reducing recidivism.

The second area was consideration of involvement in the Fellowship after release. This category was divided into three levels of involvement: those who had no further contact with Fellowship, the "lows" who had one contact per month and the "highs" who had two or more contacts per month. The expected return of those with no further involvement was 59.6% and the actual return was 64.7%, for a difference of 5.1 percentage points. The expected of the "low" contact group was 36.9% and the actual

return was 26.9% for a difference of 10 percentage points. There was a 16.3 percentage point difference between the expected return rate of the "high" involvement group of 48.6% and the actual return rate of 32.3% (Table XI). These data clearly indicate that the greater the involvement in Fellowship after release, the greater the reduction in recidivism.

The final analysis undertaken was to assess the effectiveness of combinations of involvement both inside and outside of the institution. Inside involvement was defined in the same manner as above, i.e. 3-11 months was called "low" involvement and involvement of a year or more was termed "high". Outside involvement was redefined to place participation into two rather than three categories. Those with no involvement were combined with those who had only one contact per month with the organization, and this new group constituted the "lows". The "highs" were defined as those having two or more contacts per month. This method of comparison produced four distinct groups: those with low involvement inside and low outside, low inside and high outside, high inside but low outside and finally high inside and high outside involvement. An expected and an actual recidivism rate was derived for each of the four groups.

The expected return rate of those with low inside involvement and low outside involvement was 51.1%, while the actual was 50.0%, the expected return rate of those with low inside but high outside involvement was 55.1% and the actual return rate was 44.4%. The group with high involvement on the inside and low involvement on the outside had an expected return of 42.7% and an actual return of 34.8%. The final category of high inside involvement and high outside involvement revealed an expected return of 45.9% and an actual return of 27.3% (Table XII). If these data are put on a hierarchy relative to program involvement and resultant reduction in recidivism, low involvement inside and low involvement outside leads to the smallest reduction in recidivism, high inside and low outside leads to the next smallest reduction, low inside and high outside places next and finally high inside, and high outside leads to the greatest reduction. These data also suggest the high involvement on the outside is more instrumental in reducing recidivism than the type of involvement while on the inside.

Fellowship Recidivists

The last area that was considered in the study was recidivism of those inmates who were Fellowship members on release. This was undertaken in two ways: First, the reason for recommitment was considered and secondly, the length of time before return was analyzed. In both cases, the standard of comparison was the group used in the Norfolk Base Expectancy Study here referred to as the Non-Fellowship sample. It was found that 48.5% of the Non-Fellowship recidivists were returned for commission of a new crime while only 17.9% of the Fellowship recidivists were committed for a new offense (Table XIII). Viewed in another way this means that 51.5% of the Non-Fellowship recidivists were returned for Parole Violation while 82.1% of the Fellowship recidivists were returned for this reason. Thus, the Fellowship recidivists tended to be returned for less serious behavior than the Non-Fellowship recidivists. The second aspect of recidivism was length of time before return (Table XIV). It was found that 36.7% of the Non-Fellowship recidivists had returned within six months of their release while 25% of the Fellowship recidivists had returned within six months. This same trend continues when the data are reviewed after 1 year with 62.7% of the Non-Fellowship recidivists having returned and 53.6% of the Fellowship recidivists returning. These data indicate that the Fellowship members who do return, stay on the street longer than their Non-Fellowship counterparts.

CONCLUSION

This report discussed recidivism rates of Fellowship and Non-Fellowship groups. As noted above, expected and actual recidivism rates for Releasees and Dropouts were derived. It was found that the Releasees' actual recidivism was 9.2 percentage points lower than expected. In the Dropout group, the actual was only 0.8 percentage point lower than expected. These findings thus indicated that the Fellowship program helped those inmates who were members on release considerably more than

those who dropped out of the program prior to release. It is interesting to note that when race was considered, the greatest reduction in recidivism was found in the Black Release group. In an attempt to determine which Fellowship members benefited most and least from the program, among the Releasees, it was found that those who committed a crime against the person and were 15 or older at first arrest showed a marked reduction in recidivism. It thus appears that this group responds best to the program. The two other groups which showed a reduction but not quite as dramatic as this first group, were offenders other than against the person and first arrest at 15 or older and offenders against the person with first arrest at 14 or younger. For the fourth group, those who were offenders other than against the person and were 14 or younger at first arrest, the Fellowship seemed to have a negative effect.

Length of time involved in Fellowship both inside and after release was significant in reduction of recidivism. If an inmate is involved at Norfolk for at least one year there is a significant drop in recidivism. Likewise, the more intensely one is involved while on the outside, the more dramatic will be the drop in recidivism. It appears that the closer the contact of an ex-inmate with the Fellowship, the better are his chances of remaining on the street.

In discussing Fellowship recidivists, it is important to note that they were returned for less serious behavior, usually as a result of a parole violation, and that they tended to stay out longer than Non-Fellowship members.

In general, the Fellowship experience appears to be of benefit to its members when recidivism is used as the criterion for evaluation. This effectiveness varies as the membership is divided into the categories discussed in this report, but the net effect is a considerable reduction in the rate of recidivism.

APPENDIX

A Comparison of the Expected and Actual Recidivism Rates
of the Fellowship Releasee Sample

Table I

Black Releasees

Expected Recidivism Rate	55.2%
Actual Recidivism Rate	40.0%
Difference	-15.2

Table II

White Releasees

Expected Recidivism Rate	42.8%
Actual Recidivism Rate	36.7%
Difference	-6.1

Table III

Combined Black and White Releasees

Expected Recidivism Rate	47.0%
Actual Recidivism Rate	37.8%
Difference	-9.2

A Comparison of the Expected and Actual Recidivism Rates
of the Fellowship-Dropout Sample

Table IV

Black Dropouts

Expected Recidivism Rate	66.1%
Actual Recidivism Rate	60.0%
Difference	-6.1

Table V

White Dropouts

Expected Recidivism Rate	45.3%
Actual Recidivism Rate	46.8%
Difference	+1.5

Table VI

Combined Black and White Dropouts

Expected Recidivism Rate	51.5%
Actual Recidivism Rate	50.7%
Difference	-.8

Table VII

A Comparison of the Recidivism Rates of Fellowship and Non-Fellowship Subjects with Type of Offense Held

Constant

	<u>Offenders vs. Person</u> <u>(excl. sex offenders)</u>		<u>Offenders Other Than vs. Person</u> <u>(including sex offenders)</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>Recid. Rate</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Recid. Rate</u>
Fellowship	23	26.1%	51	43.1%
Non-Fellowship	135	50.4%	228	44.3%
Difference		-24.3		-1.2

Table VIII

A Comparison of the Recidivism Rates of Fellowship and Non-Fellowship Subjects with Age at First Arrest Held Constant

	<u>14 or Younger at</u> <u>First Arrest</u>		<u>15 or Older at</u> <u>First Arrest</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>Recid. Rate</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Recid. Rate</u>
Fellowship	24	54.2%	50	30.0%
Non-Fellowship	112	46.4%	251	46.6%
Difference		+7.8		-16.6

Table IX

A Comparison of the Recidivism Rates of Fellowship and
Non-Fellowship Subjects with Both Type of Offense and
Age at First Arrest Held Constant

	<u>Non-Fellowship</u>		<u>Fellowship</u>		<u>Difference in</u>
	<u>N</u>	<u>Recid. Rate</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Recid. Rate</u>	<u>Recid. Rates</u>
1. Offense vs. Person (excl. sex offenders) and First Arrest at 15 or Older	99	50.5%	16	18.7%	-31.8
2. Offense Other Than vs. Person (incl. sex offenders) and First Arrest at 15 or Older	152	44.1%	34	35.3%	-8.8
3. Offense vs. Person (excl. sex offenders) and First Arrest at 14 or Younger	36	50.0%	7	42.8%	-7.2
4. Offense Other Than vs. Person (incl. sex offenders) and First Arrest at 14 or Younger	76	44.7%	17	58.8%	+14.1
TOTAL	363	46.6%	74	37.8%	-8.8

Table X

A Comparison of the Expected and Actual Recidivism Rates
According to the Length of Time in the Fellowship Inside Norfolk

<u>Time in Fellowship</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Expected Recid. Rate</u>	<u>Actual Recid. Rate</u>	<u>Difference</u>
1 yr. or more	45	44.3%	31.1%	-13.2
less than 1 yr.	29	52.3%	48.3%	-4.0
TOTAL	74	47.0%	37.8%	-9.2

Table XI

A Comparison of the Expected and Actual
Recidivism Rates According to Degree of Involvement
In Fellowship After Release

<u>Degree of Involvement</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Expected Recid. Rate</u>	<u>Actual Recid. Rate</u>	<u>Diff.</u>
High Involvement	31	48.6%	32.3%	-16.3
Low Involvement	26	36.9%	26.9%	-10.0
No Involvement	17	59.6%	64.7%	+5.1
TOTAL	74	47.0%	37.8%	-9.2

Table XII

A Comparison of the Expected and Actual
Recidivism Rates According to Degree of Involvement
Both Inside and Outside Norfolk

	<u>N</u>	<u>Expected Recid. Rate</u>	<u>Actual Recid. Rate</u>	<u>Diff.</u>
1. Low inside, Low outside	20	51.1%	50.0%	-1.1
2. Low inside, High outside	9	55.1%	44.4%	-10.7
3. High inside, Low outside	23	42.7%	34.8%	-7.9
4. High inside, High outside	22	45.9%	27.3%	-18.6
TOTAL	74	47.0%	37.8%	-9.2

Table XIII

A Comparison of the Types of Recidivists in the Fellowship and Non-Fellowship Samples

<u>Category</u>	<u>Fellowship</u>		<u>Non-Fellowship</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Parole Violation	23	(82.1)	87	(51.5)
New Commitment	5	(17.9)	82	(48.5)
TOTAL	28	(100.0)	169	(100.0)

Table XIV

A Comparison of Fellowship and Non-Fellowship Recidivists on Length of Time Before Return

<u>Time Before Return</u>	<u>Fellowship</u>			<u>Non-Fellowship</u>		
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Cum. %</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Cum. %</u>
up to 6 mos.	7	(25.0)	25.0	62	(36.7)	36.7
6 mos. up to 1 yr.	8	(28.6)	53.6	44	(26.0)	62.7
1 yr. up to 2 yrs., 9 mos.	13	(46.4)	100.0	63	(37.3)	100.0
TOTAL	28	(100.0)		169	(100.0)	