

FACTORS RELATED TO INMATE ADJUSTMENT IN
A MEDIUM SECURITY CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION:
A STUDY AT MCI-NORFOLK

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most important decisions of the Walpole - Norfolk Classification Committee is that concerning the institution in which each inmate will begin to serve his sentence. In making this decision the Committee must take into account many factors, such as: security, the needs of the inmate, the availability of treatment facilities, etc. Possibly the most important of these factors is security. In general, inmates whom the Committee decides require the stricter controls of maximum security are retained at M.C.I. Walpole. If, on the other hand, the Committee decides that the inmate can function successfully in the less structured atmosphere of a medium security institution, he is often transferred to M.C.I. Norfolk.¹ The goal of this study will be to provide a systematic aid to the transfer procedure of the Classification Committee by highlighting the types of inmates who are most likely, (and those least likely), to make a positive adjustment at M.C.I. Norfolk.

METHOD

There are several ways for an inmate to be transferred to Norfolk. These are by means of the Transfer Board, by order of the Commissioner, by returning from the prison camps, etc. In this study, however, only men who have been processed by the Classification Committee at Walpole will be included in the samples. There are two reasons for this: first, it makes the sampling process more definitive; and, secondly, it gives the Committee an idea of just what types of men adjust after they have gone through the screening procedure of Classification.

432 men have been screened and sent to M.C.I. Norfolk between the date that the Walpole - Norfolk Classification Committee first met, (2-20-67), and the date that data collection began for this study, (4-1-69). From this number two samples were

1. There are certainly other institutional options which the Committee has open to it, such as: transfers to M.C.I. Concord or the Forestry Camps. However, this study will be concerned only with Norfolk - Walpole transfers.

derived. The first sample, which will be called the Non-Adjustment sample, was made up of men who were disciplinary problems at Norfolk, and were therefore returned to maximum security at either M.C.I. Walpole or the Segregation Unit at Bridgewater. A total of 37 men were returned between 2-20-67 and 4-1-69.

The second sample included men who were classified and sent to Norfolk, but who were not returned to maximum security. For this sample a cut off time period had to be established to determine "adjustment". This was arbitrarily established at 1.5 years, (i.e., anyone who spent a year and a half at Norfolk after being transferred, and was not returned to Walpole or Bridgewater, was considered an adjustment).

There are, however, two exceptions to this definition. Seventeen inmates were either released to the community or transferred to forestry camps before spending 1.5 years at Norfolk. In these cases it was felt that the status changes were clearly indicators of adjustment and the 17 men were therefore included in the Adjustment sample. In total there were 83 men in the Adjustment sample. Of these 83 men, 2 were returned to M.C.I. Walpole after they had spent 1.5 years at Norfolk.

One final sample was collected of men who were retained at M.C.I. Walpole by the Classification Committee. This sample was made up of 36 men who were retained and who then spent at least 1.5 years at Walpole without being transferred for other than short periods due to medical problems. The reasons why the men were retained were various, such as; the inmate had a history of drug use or homosexual behavior, the board felt he needed maximum security, the inmate expressed a desire to remain, etc.

Information on this sample, which will be called the Retained sample, was collected for two reasons. It will provide a description of the kinds of men who are being kept at Walpole, and, for comparative purposes, it will be used to discover if there are any major similarities or differences with respect to the other two

samples. The focus of this paper, however, will primarily be on the differences between the Adjustment and Non-Adjustment samples and will only briefly deal with those retained at M.C.I. Walpole.

Data Collection

The data in this study were collected from inmate folders. In total, 21 variables were analyzed. The variables were organized into three general categories: (A) Background Factors, (B) Criminal History, (C) Present Offense and Incarceration. The results are presented in Appendix A.

Findings

One point should first be made. It is quite easy to misinterpret the relationship between the number of men returned to maximum security (37) and the number of adjustments (83). It may appear, at first, that there is a substantial percentage of men who are returned to maximum security. This is somewhat misleading. As was mentioned in the discussion of the samples, there is a difference between the samples in respect to the time periods in which each sample was chosen. The Non-Adjustment sample includes men who were returned to Walpole right up to the date data collection began (4-1-69), while the Adjustment sample includes only men who have spent 1.5 years at Norfolk. With 1.5 years as a cut-off point, this means that only men who were transferred to Norfolk prior to October 1, 1967 were included in the Adjustment sample. Actually, the true rate of return from M.C.I. Norfolk is 8.6%, i.e., 37 of the 432 transferred to Norfolk between 2-20-67 and 4-1-69. It is also interesting to note that the average length of time before these men were returned was 6.5 months.

The next step in this study will be to turn to the data in Appendix A in an attempt to spotlight some of the major differences between the Adjustment and Non-Adjustment samples. Discussion of the third sample, those retained, will be held until later in the study.

Background Factors

Information relating to the background of the inmate is found under the subheading A in Appendix A. These data indicate that those who are returned tend to be younger, white, single men, with no military experience and a 9th grade or more education. (A-1, 2,4,5,6) In two instances (A-3&7) the variables showed a statistically significant difference. Under religion (A-3), significantly more Protestants were found in the Adjustment sample than the Non-Adjustment sample. The difference is in the order of 25 percentage points ($P < .01$). Approximately 8 of every 20 adjustments were Protestants (40.9%), while approximately 3 of every 20 returns were Protestants (16.2%).

Interestingly enough, in past research done by the Department of Correction, religion has never been a significant variable. However, research done on the Fellowship Program at Norfolk, (which is both religiously oriented and predominantly Protestant, 62.0%), has shown that this organization has a positive effect in reducing recidivism among its membership.² Since the Fellowship does have this stabilizing influence on inmates who have been released to the community, it was theorized that the organization may also be acting as a stabilizing influence within the prison. As a result, participation in the Fellowship by members of both the Non-Adjustment and Adjustment samples was investigated. The results are shown in Table I.

Table I

The Relationship Between Participation in the Fellowship Program and Adjustment
at M.C.I. Norfolk

	<u>Non-Protestants</u>		<u>Protestants</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>% in Fellowship</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>% in Fellowship</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>% in Fellowship</u>
Adjustments	49	(24.5)	34	(52.9)	83	(36.1)
Non-Adjustments	31	(6.5)	6	(33.3)	37	(10.8)
Total	80	(17.5)	40	(50.0)	120	(28.3)

2. Lygere Panagopoulos and John E. Gardner, "An Evaluation of the Effect of the Fellowship Program at M.C.I. Norfolk on Recidivism", Department of Correction, Mimeo, (March, 1969)

Table I indicates a clear-cut relationship between participation in the Fellowship program and adjustment at M.C.I. Norfolk. For non-Protestants there was a statistically significant difference between the proportion of adjustments who were in the Fellowship (24.5%), and the proportion of non-adjustments who were in the Fellowship (6.5%). The same relationship between participation in the Fellowship and adjustment is found for Protestants. Over half of the Protestants who adjusted were members of the Fellowship (52.9%), while only one-third of the Protestants who were returned had joined the organization (33.3%).

The results of this table, however, should not be overemphasized. The non-Protestants who did adjust, obviously had much more time to join the Fellowship program since they were in the institution for a greater length of time than the non-Protestants who were returned.

In short, there is a relationship between adjustment at Norfolk and participation in the Fellowship, but it is not clear whether inmates adjusted more often because they were in the Fellowship or inmates were in the Fellowship because they adjusted more often and were therefore at Norfolk longer.

The second variable under background factors which showed a significant difference was (A-7) stability of employment. Two categories were created under stability of employment: a stable employment history and an unstable employment history. A stable history was defined as one which is characterized by fairly continuous employment. Specifically, the inmate in this category must have held a job for at least one year in a working life of five years or more, or for at least six months in a working life of less than five years. The second category, the unstable history, was a residual category made up of men who did not hold a job for more than a year in a working life of five years or more, or who didn't hold a job for six months in a working life of less than five years.

With these definitions of work history, the Adjustment sample was found to have significantly more inmates with stable employment histories than the Non-Adjustment sample ($P < .01$). Over half of the Adjustment group (52.4%) were in the stable category compared to approximately 1 of every 4 of the Non-Adjustment sample (27.0%).

Criminal History

The first variable under Criminal History, age at first arrest (B-1), indicated that the Non-Adjustment sample was significantly younger than the Adjustment sample when first arrested. 35.4% of the Adjustment sample were 15 years of age or younger at first arrest compared to 58.3% for the Non-Adjustment sample.

The next six variables under Criminal History measure the frequency of contact that the individual has had with authorities, i.e., number of prior arrests (B-2), prior drunk and narcotic arrests (B-3&4), prior state, federal, house of correction or juvenile incarcerations (B 5 through 7). In each of the 6 variables (B2 through 7) the Adjustment sample had consistently fewer contacts with law enforcement and correctional authorities.

Of these six variables, one was found to have a significant difference. This involved the number of prior state or federal incarcerations (B-5). Approximately 1 out of every 3 subjects in the Adjustment sample had one or more prior state or federal incarcerations (32.5), while over half of the Non-Adjustment sample (54.1) had some commitments. In general, the variables under Criminal History indicate that the Non-Adjustment sample has a more extensive criminal history than the Adjustment sample; that they begin their criminal behavior at an earlier age; and that they have been incarcerated more often in major institutions.

Present Offense and Incarceration

Under the category of Present Offense and Incarceration three of seven variables yielded a statistically significant difference between the two samples. First, on present offense, (C-1) there were significantly fewer sex offenders in the sample of men returned to maximum security. In fact, of the 37 men in the Non-Adjustment sample none were incarcerated for a sex offense. On the other hand, the Adjustment sample had 18 sex offenders, which was 21.7% of the sample.

The samples were not appreciably different with regard to the variables, length of minimum sentence (C-2), and whether the present offense was a violation of the "2/3rds law" (C-3).

The next three variables (C, 4-6) assessed the inmates' suitability for specialized institutional programming. Specifically, the programs were Forestry, Youthful Offenders and Work Release. In the case of the first two variables, Forestry and Youthful Offenders, no significant differences were obtained. The third variable, (C-6), however, showed that significantly fewer members of the Non-Adjustment sample were acceptable for Work Release. 6.5% of the Non-Adjustment sample were acceptable compared to 26.9% for the Adjustment sample.

The final variable that was significant was the number of disciplinary reports (C-7). The fact that this variable was significant was to be expected, since, by definition, the Non-Adjustment sample was made up of men who were disciplinary problems. The difference between the samples in the category of no disciplinary reports was nearly 40 percentage points (67.5% of the Adjustment sample had no disciplinary reports while 28.9% of the Non-Adjustment sample had none).

Retained Sample

Discussion of the Retained sample will be limited to a presentation of the major differences between it and both the Non-Adjustment and Adjustment samples.

A comparison of the Non-Adjustment sample with the Retained sample revealed a statistically significant difference on three variables in Appendix A.

All three variables are in the final section of the Appendix - Present Offense and Incarceration (C). First, on the variable type of offense (C-1), the Retained sample had significantly more sex offenders and fewer offenders against person than the Non-Adjustment sample. The Retained sample also had significantly fewer people acceptable for the Youthful Offender program (C-5) and significantly fewer subjects with disciplinary reports (C-7).

In comparing the Retained sample with the Adjustment sample, several variables were found to be significantly different. In fact, of the 21 variables in Appendix A, nine were found to be significant. These variables and the direction of their significance is presented in Table II.

Table II

Significant Differences Between the Adjustment and Retained Samples

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Direction of Significance</u>
1. Race (A-2)	More Whites in the Retained Sample
2. Stability of Employment (A-7)	More Unstable Employment Among those Retained
3. Number of Prior Arrests (B-2)	More Prior Arrests Among those Retained
4. Prior Narcotic Arrests (B-4)	More Narcotic Arrests Among Retained
5. Prior State or Federal Incarcerations (B-5)	More Prior Incarcerations Among Retained
6. 2/3rds Violation (C-3)	Fewer 2/3rds Violators Among Retained
7. Acceptable as Youthful Offenders (C-5)	More Acceptable in Adjustment Sample
8. Acceptable for Work Release (C-6)	More Acceptable in Adjustment Sample
9. Number of Disciplinary Reports (C-7)	More D.R.'S Among Retained

One generalization which emerges from analysis of these data is that the Retained sample is much more similar to the Non-Adjustment sample than it is to the Adjustment sample. Nine variables indicated how different the Retained sample was from the Adjustment sample while only three variables yielded significant differences between those retained and those in the Non-Adjustment group.

Base Expectancy Categories

In order to more clearly spotlight the characteristics of the inmates who "adjust", base expectancy categories were derived. The categories were created from the combined Adjustment and Non-Adjustment samples (N=120). As indicated in Appendix B, the rates of adjustment range from 100.0% to 33.3%.

The 100.0% category was made up of men who were incarcerated for sex offenses. Of the 18 men in this category none was returned to maximum security. It would seem clear that, for whatever the reason, sex offenders are not found to be severe disciplinary problems at Norfolk.

The lowest category, (33.3%), was derived from successive dichotomizations of 77 offenders vs. person. First, this group was divided into categories of stable and unstable employment histories, and secondly, they in turn were dichotomized with regards to the inmates' marital status and military record. Possibly the most interesting aspect of these dichotomizations, is that each of these variables (i.e., work history, marital status and military service) touch on the degree of successful integration of the individual into what one might call societies "institutions". It would appear from these findings that the inmate who best adapts to the institutions of society on the outside (i.e., through stable work, through marriage, and through honorable service in the military) also is the most likely to make a positive adjustment to the prison setting. For example, among the offenders vs. person only 33.3% of those who never married and who had unstable employment histories were able to adjust. On the other hand, 89.5% of those with honorable discharges and stable employment histories were adjustments.

Table II provides a description of all the categories derived.

Table II

Base Expectancy Categories

	<u>Number of Cases</u>	<u>% of Adjustment</u>
1. Offense vs. Person, Unstable Employment, Single	21	33.3%
2. Offense vs. Person; Unstable Employment; Married, Divorced, Separated, etc.	17	58.8%
3. Other Offenses (primarily vs. property)	25	68.0%
4. Offense vs. Person, Stable Employment, None or Other than Honorable Discharge	19	68.4%
5. Offense vs. Person, Stable Employment, Honorable Discharge	19	89.5%
6. Sex Offense	18	100.0%

SUMMARY

The purpose of this paper has been to spotlight the types of men who are most likely (and the types least likely) to make a positive adjustment to the medium security institution at M.C.I., Norfolk. Two samples were compared for this purpose. One sample included men who were returned to maximum security from M.C.I., Norfolk as disciplinary problems, the Non-Adjustment sample. The other was made up of men who were not returned, the Adjustment sample. Data on these samples were collected in three general areas: Background Factors, Criminal History, and Present Offense and Incarceration. Overall, 8.6% of the men who were classified and transferred to Norfolk were later returned to maximum security at either M.C.I., Walpole or the Segregation Unit at M.C.I., Bridgewater, i.e., Non-Adjustments.

When the two samples were compared with respect to Background Factors, the adjustments were found to have significantly more Protestants. This appears to be related to participation in the predominantly Protestant Fellowship organization at Norfolk. Although there was a significant relationship between participation in the Fellowship and adjustment at Norfolk, it is not completely clear whether inmates adjusted more often because they were in the Fellowship or whether they were in the organization simply because they were adjustments and, therefore, at Norfolk longer than those returned.

The samples also differed significantly under the category of employment history. The adjustments were much more likely to have a stable employment history than the non-adjustments. Of the remaining five variables under Background Factors, none yielded appreciable differences. These variables did,

however, indicate that those who adjust at Norfolk tended to be older, to be black, to be (or have been) married, to have had military experience, and to have had a eighth grade or less education.

Under the heading, Criminal History, it was found that adjustments began their criminal behavior later; that they had been incarcerated less often in major institutions; and that they consistently had fewer contacts with law enforcement and correctional authorities.

In terms of variables relating to the inmates' Present Offense and Incarceration, the Adjustment sample had significantly more sex offenders. They were also much more likely to be acceptable by the Classification Committee as possible candidates for Work Release. And, finally, since, by definition, the Non-Adjustment sample was made up of disciplinary problems, it was found that the Adjustment sample had significantly fewer disciplinary reports. No significant differences were found between samples with regard to the following variables: length of minimum sentence, whether the present offense violated the 2/3rds law, and whether the inmate was acceptable for the Forestry or Youthful Offenders programs.

Base expectancy categories also were derived from the combined Adjustment and Non-Adjustment samples. They clearly show that inmates incarcerated for sex offenses are the least likely type of inmate to be returned to maximum security. The categories also show that the inmate who has the greatest success outside the confines of prison, in terms of conformity and stability, is also the most likely to adjust within the prison setting.

Another facet to this study was to compare a sample of men, who were retained at M.C.I., Walpole by the Classification Committee, with the

Adjustment and Non-Adjustment samples. This sample provided information on the types of men being retained by the committee (see Appendix A, Column 3), and also was used to discover the major similarities and differences between the Retained sample and both the Adjustment and Non-Adjustment samples. Basically, the findings indicate that the types of men who did not adjust at M.C.I., Norfolk were much more similar to the men who were retained at M.C.I., Walpole than they were to the men who did adjust at M.C.I., Norfolk.

APPENDIX A

<u>Variables</u>	<u>Adjustment</u>		<u>Non-Adjustment</u>		<u>Retain</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
	83	(100.0)	37	(100.0)	36	(100.0)
A. <u>Background Factors</u>						
1. <u>Age at Present Incarceration</u>						
26 or younger	39	(47.0)	20	(54.1)	14	(38.9)
27 or older	44	(53.0)	17	(45.9)	22	(61.1)
2. <u>Race</u>						
White	54	(65.1)	29	(78.4)	29	(80.6)
Black	29	(34.9)	8	(21.6)	6	(16.7)
Other	0		0		1	(2.8)
3. <u>Religion</u> *						
Protestant	34	(41.0)	6	(16.2)	9	(25.0)
Other	49	(59.0)	31	(83.8)	27	(75.0)
4. <u>Marital Status</u>						
Married	26	(31.3)	7	(18.9)	13	(36.1)
Single	30	(36.1)	21	(56.8)	17	(47.2)
Divorced, Separated, Widowed	27	(32.5)	9	(24.3)	6	(16.7)
5. <u>Service</u>						
None	49	(59.0)	26	(70.3)	19	(52.8)
Honorable	26	(31.3)	6	(16.2)	10	(27.8)
Other than Honorable	8	(9.6)	5	(13.5)	7	(19.4)
Note: Other than Honorable includes Dishonorable, Undesirable, etc.						
6. <u>Education</u>						
8th Grade or less	47	(57.3)	18	(48.6)	20	(55.5)
9th Grade or more	35	(42.7)	19	(51.4)	16	(44.5)
7. <u>Stability of Employment</u> *						
Stable	43	(52.4)	10	(27.0)	12	(34.3)
Unstable	39	(47.6)	27	(72.9)	23	(65.7)
*An asterisk beside a variable indicates that there is a significant difference between the Adjustment and Non-Adjustment samples.						
B. <u>Criminal History</u>						
1. <u>Age at First Arrest</u> *						
15 or younger	29	(35.4)	21	(58.3)	17	(47.2)
16 or older	53	(64.6)	15	(41.7)	19	(52.8)
2. <u>Number of Prior Arrests</u>						
9 or fewer	53	(63.7)	19	(51.4)	12	(33.3)
10 or more	30	(36.3)	18	(48.6)	24	(66.6)

<u>Variables</u>	<u>Adjustment</u>		<u>Non-Adjustment</u>		<u>Retain</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
3. <u>Prior Drunk Arrests</u>						
None	34	(40.9)	13	(35.1)	17	(47.2)
Any	49	(59.0)	24	(64.9)	19	(52.8)
4. <u>Prior Narcotic Arrests</u>						
None	82	(98.8)	31	(83.8)	30	(83.3)
Any	1	(1.2)	6	(16.2)	6	(16.6)
5. <u>Prior State or Federal Incarcerations *</u>						
None	56	(67.5)	17	(45.9)	12	(34.2)
Any	27	(32.5)	20	(54.1)	23	(65.7)
6. <u>Prior House of Correction Incarcerations</u>						
None	40	(48.2)	12	(32.4)	14	(40.0)
Any	43	(51.8)	25	(67.6)	21	(60.0)
7. <u>Prior Juvenile Incarcerations</u>						
None	55	(66.3)	22	(59.5)	22	(62.9)
Any	28	(33.7)	15	(40.5)	13	(37.1)
 <u>G. Present Offense and Incarceration</u>						
1. <u>Type of Offense*</u>						
Offense Against Person	48	(57.8)	29	(78.4)	17	(47.2)
Sex Offense	18	(21.7)	0	(0.0)	7	(19.4)
Other	17	(20.5)	8	(21.6)	12	(33.3)
2. <u>Minimum Sentence</u>						
5 yrs. or less	49	(59.0)	24	(64.8)	19	(52.7)
6 yrs. or more	34	(41.0)	13	(35.1)	17	(47.2)
3. <u>2/3rds. Violation</u>						
Yes	66	(79.5)	28	(75.7)	22	(61.1)
No	17	(20.5)	9	(24.3)	14	(38.9)
4. <u>Acceptable for Forestry</u>						
Yes	9	(18.0)	5	(16.1)	1	(3.8)
No or Questionable	41	(82.0)	26	(83.9)	25	(96.2)
5. <u>Acceptable as Youthful Offender</u>						
Yes	37	(55.2)	17	(54.8)	8	(22.9)
No or Questionable	30	(44.8)	14	(45.2)	27	(77.1)

<u>Variables</u>	<u>Adjustment</u>		<u>Non-Adjustment</u>		<u>Retain</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>C. Present Offense and Incarceration (continued)</u>						
<u>6. Acceptable for Work Release*</u>						
Yes	18	(26.9)	2	(6.5)	3	(8.6)
No or Questionable	49	(73.1)	29	(93.5)	32	(91.4)
<u>7. Number of Disciplinary Reports*</u>						
None	56	(67.5)	7	(28.9)	17	(47.2)
Any	27	(32.5)	30	(81.1)	19	(52.8)

Note: In some instances the (N) is somewhat less than the total sample population. This indicates that there was no information available in some cases and that the percentages were calculated on the basis of a new (N).

APPENDIX B

TOTAL SAMPLE N=120 69.2%	Offense vs. Person N=77 62.3%	Unstable Employment History N=38 44.7%	Single N=21 33.3%
		Stable Employment History N=38 78.9%	Married, Divorced, Separated, etc. N=17 58.8%
Other Offenses N=25 68.0%	Sex Offenses N=18 100%	Honorable Discharges N=19 89.5%	Other than Honorable Discharges, or those Never in the Armed Forces N=19 68.4%