TESTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A POINT-BASED CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM:

A COMPARISON OF DOC INITIAL CLASSIFICATIONS WITH THE NIC MODEL SYSTEMS APPROACH

Prepared by:

Michael W. Forcier, Ph.D.
Deputy Director of Research

and

Michael White
Research Analyst II

Massachusetts Department of Correction

Michael V. Fair
Commissioner

March 1989

PUBLICATION: #15,890-44 pgs.250 cps.03-31-89
APPROVED BY: Ric Murphy State Purchasing Agent

ABSTRACT

This report presents the results of a comparative validation analysis of initial classification decisions reached by the Massachusetts DOC Classification System with those of the National Institute of Correction's Model Systems Approach. The purpose of this analysis was to examine what security level distributions would be reached at initial classification if the DOC were to use the NIC objective, point-based model of classification.

The initial classification decisions on 180 inmates classified at MCI-Concord and MCI-Cedar Junction were compared to the decisions reached with the NIC model after these 180 cases were "reclassified" using NIC criteria. It was found that 49% of the sample was overclassified, 43% was same-level classified, and 8% was underclassified according to NIC criteria. Moreover, 97% of the sample was classified to medium or maximum custody in the DOC system, while the NIC system assigned 60% of the sample to medium or close custody. Conversely, only 3% were assigned to minimum security using DOC criteria compared to 40% using the NIC model.

It is concluded that the DOC classification system results in overclassification of nearly half of all offenders. In particular, first- and second-degree murderers, drug, sex, and property offenders are overclassified. Overclassification is primarily attributable to the time guidelines established in the Standard Movement Chronology. The effect of overclassification is a misuse of maximum and medium security bed space. While the feasibility of immediately assigning lifers to minimum security settings is questionable, at least some of the bed space shortage in medium security could be alleviated by the immediate assignment of drug offenders, and selected sex and property offenders to minimum security.

In response to these conclusions, four recommendations are offered. First, the DOC should place a decreased emphasis on sentence length as a classification factor. Second, the Standard Movement Chronology should be revised or abandoned. Third, the existing classification system should be supplemented by a point-based model of classification. Fourth, a full-scale validation study testing the NIC model on the Massachusetts state prison population should be conducted.

INTRODUCTION

In September 1987, the Massachusetts Department of Correction's (DOC) Research Division began a three phase evaluation of the inmate classification system. This report presents the results from the second phase of that evaluation which consisted of a comparative validation analysis of initial classification decisions reached by the DOC Classification System with those of the National Institute of Correction's (NIC) Model Systems Approach. The purpose of this analysis was to address the following question: "What security level decisions would be reached at initial classification if the DOC were to use alternative classification criteria to those currently used?" The alternative classification model selected to address this question was the NIC Model Systems Approach which is an objective, point-based model of classification.

Phase 1 of the overall evaluation consisted of system-wide interviews with DOC classification staff to obtain their perceptions of the inmate classification system and on-site observations of the classification process at MCI-Concord. A final report from that study titled "Survey of DOC Staff Perceptions of the Inmate Classification System" was issued in August 1988 (Forcier, 1988).

Phase 3 of the evaluation will begin shortly and will consist of an impact evaluation of a major component of the system called "Classification and Program Agreements" or CAPA. The CAPA is a voluntary program agreement offered to eligible and suitable inmates during a classification hearing where the DOC and

The authors wish to acknowledge the assistance of Lisa Palmisano in coding data for this report.

inmate agree to a scheduled reduction in security levels according to a "standard movement chronology" transfer timetable contingent upon positive institutional adjustment and program participation for the duration of the agreement.

Before presenting the study methods and results from Phase 2, a review and discussion of the history and types of classification systems is presented below.

CORRECTIONAL CLASSIFICATION: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The history of correctional classification has been marked by changes in philosophy, approach, and practice. The concept of classification itself can be traced to a significant turning point in correctional philosophy from the pre-19th century era which was characterized by a punitive orientation to the early 19th century which saw offenders as possessing the same inherent human dignity and potential as other individuals. The task for corrections was thus to correct those defects of offenders which resulted from improper socialization by society and which were seen as major etiological factors in criminal behavior. Corrections was to rehabilitate offenders by assisting them in redirecting their energies and capacities toward positive self-development and social adjustment.

In terms of classification trends, Hippchen (1978) has identified three general periods of development which emerged from this new philosophy. The "segregation period" of the early 19th century was simply classification of prisoners on the basis of age, sex, severity of offense, and mental functioning who were then sent to specialized institutions developed for rehabilitating these different types of offenders. The second period, that of "classification for diagnosis and treatment planning", arose in the early 20th century in partial response to the developing social and behavioral sciences. This period was marked by the first institutional

classification clinics or committees, forerunners of the centralized reception and diagnostic centers which began to develop after World War II. The third period cited in the development of classification began in the 1950s and was evidenced by the trend of "classification for treatment" as exemplified by the emergence of individual and group therapy, therapeutic communities, treatment teams, evaluative research, and classification at the community level. To these might be added a fourth period which emerged in the wake of Martinson's (1974) proclamation that rehabilitation efforts have not been shown to reduce recidivism. This final period is characterized by a move away from classification for rehabilitation purposes toward classification for security and custodial purposes.

Classification schemes have not been confined to the efforts of prison classification staff. Ever since Lombroso's efforts in 1876 to distinguish types of criminals on the basis of physical characteristics, scholars have devoted considerable attention to the development of typologies of offenders. In their review of the literature, Megaree and Bohn (1979) note that there have been offender typologies based on physiology; the instant offense; repetitive crime patterns and criminal careers; social class, subcultures, and reference groups; psychological, psychiatric, and psychoanalytic theories; and, developmental theories. Among the more recent research on typologies of offenders is the research on varieties of criminal behavior by Chaiken and Chaiken (1982) which identified ten subgroups of offenders who committed specific combinations of crimes which were distinguishable in terms of crime commission rates, persistence in committing crimes, and personal characteristics.[1]

[1] They labelled these groups: 1) violent predators (robbers-assaulters-dealers); 2) robber-assaulters; 3) robber-dealers; 4) low-level robbers; 5) mere assaulters; 6) burglar-dealers; 7) low-level burglars; 8) property & drug offenders; 9) low-level property offenders; and, 10) drug dealers.

Despite a literature replete with typologies of offenders, the utility and predictive validity of offender typologies has been called into question by some. For example, Gibbons (1975:153), who himself has devoted considerable attention to developing offender typologies, has commented in assessing the state-of-the-art: "After two decades of work in this tradition, relatively little progress in typological directions can be discerned." Similarly, in their review article, Megaree and Bohn (1979:71) have written: "Despite the proliferation of typologies, using a variety of approaches and data bases, there is no system currently available that meets the need for a broadly applicable, economical, reliable and valid classification system for adult offenders...". Offender typologies have proven to be of particularly limited value in the correctional classification of inmates where other variables are as, if not more important than, the instant offense which resulted in incarceration.

SUBJECTIVE VERSUS OBJECTIVE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS

The limited utility of offender typologies for correctional practice has not obviated the need for classification systems. As was true of offender typologies, a number of different classification systems incorporating different criteria and variables have been developed. Generally, however, systems may be divided into two types: subjective or traditional systems versus objective or point-based systems. Within these broad types exist a variety of classificatory schemes.

Subjective systems have typically relied on the subjective expertise and clinical judgements of individuals or teams in making security, custodial, and programmatic decisions on inmates. By contrast, objective systems usually assign points to inmates based on certain characteristics shown by research to be correlated with institutional adjustment which, when totalled, determine the level

of security to which the inmate is assigned.

Austin (1983) has distinguished between objective models which are predictive-based versus those which are equity-based. Predictive models attempt to differentiate inmates in relation to their potential for risk of escape, institutional adjustment, and future criminality on the basis of clinical, socio-economic, and criminal characteristics which are ranked, scored, and applied to each inmate to obtain an appropriate security level. Austin notes that this approach meets the goal of equity since all inmates are classified according to explicit criteria. However, the predictive validity of the characteristics needs to be established.

By contrast, equity-based models discourage the use of inmate characteristics for predictive purposes, relying instead in classification decision-making on a few explicitly defined legal variables such as current and previous criminal attributes to achieve the goal of equity in decision-making. Non-legal variables such as demographic characteristics tend not to be used since their predictive validity is questionable and their use raises legal issues. Austin notes that in practice both models use similar variables to classify inmates but different methods for doing so. Whereas predictive models use empirical validation methodologies to determine classification factor weights and cutting points, equity models use consensus-building processes among practitioners and classification experts. These consensus building processes may be as subjective as traditional classification approaches.

What are the Features of an Objective Classification System?

There is no uniformity in definition or criteria as to what constitutes an objective classification system and thus, a system described as objective by one

person may be seen as subjective by another. As described by Buchanan et al., (1986:273), objective classification systems must have at least the following features:

- "uses test and classification instruments that have been validated for prison populations;
- contains the same components and scoring/classification approach for all offenders;
- arrives at decisions based only upon application of factors shown to be related to placement decisions;
- assigns offenders to security classifications consistent with their background;
- promotes similar decisions among individual classification analysts on comparable offender cases, while minimizing overrides;
- involves inmates and is readily understandable by both staff and offenders; and,
- is capable of systematic and efficient monitoring."

Objective classification systems are felt to perform more consistently and equitably than subjective systems, the three major functions of classification described by Kane (1986:368):

- "Risk Assessment-based upon certain factors, the inmate level of risk of involvement in serious disciplinary problems and escapes is estimated.
- Assignment of the inmate to membership in a group characterized by a likelihood of involvement in misconduct commensurate with his or her own.
- Minimization of misconduct by managing each group with the security and custody restrictions deemed appropriate."

Moreover, objective classification systems are felt to be more in line with the

following principles which experts agree should govern the classification process (Gettinger, 1982:28):

- "No inmate should be placed in a higher security classification than his/her individual background warrants;
- Inmates should be informed of the reasons for their current classification, should be present at classification hearings;
- Classification decisions should be objective and consistent;
- "Overrides" - placement of an inmate in a security classification other then the one he or she qualifies for should be defined, limited and open to review; and,
- Reclassification should occur at regular intervals, and inmates should know what they need to do in order to qualify for a lower security classification."

The extent to which classification systems, subjective or objective, are consistent with the above principles is something which needs to be determined empirically.

Recent years have witnessed the increased adoption and development of objective classification systems by states in response to five factors. First, inmate litigation resulting in court rulings that traditional or subjective classification systems were based on unfounded assumptions regarding inmate behavior and criteria that were not uniformly applied. Therefore, states should implement objective systems (Gettinger, 1982). Second, substantial evidence existed that subjective systems violated one of the cardinal rules of classification by "overclassifying" or, in other terms, unnecessarily placing many inmates in higher levels of security than required given the risks they posed. For example, using three objective models (i.e., the Federal Bureau of Prisons, the National Institute of Corrections, and the California Department of Corrections), Austin (1983) was able to reclassify 53 to 57 percent of Nevada's admission population from maximum

and medium to minimum security in contrast to the 16 percent rate historically produced by a subjective committee process. Third, pressured by overcrowding and fiscal constraints, many states have moved toward objective systems in the hope that the phenomenon of overclassification found with subjective systems, will allow them to classify to lower security and release sooner, those inmates who pose less risk. Fourth, empirical research has indicated that statistical predictions outperform intuitive or clinical predictions (S. Gottfredson, 1987). Finally, critics have contended, and there is some empirical evidence to support the view, that subjective classification decision-making processes are pre-determined or affected by the physical characteristics of the prison system itself. In other words, inmates are assigned to a particular security level based on available bed space rather than their characteristics or risks they pose. Austin (1983:565) found that to be the case in Nevada with a close fit between inmate classification decisions and the type of cells constructed, leading him to state: "This relationship is not surprising since correctional officials would have little reason to assign inmates to cells which did not exist."

Objective or point-based systems, however, are not without their critics. First, classification officials may resist them because they see their role as changed from that of a therapist to that of a bookkeeper. Second, correction officers and others concerned with security often fear that point systems will result in too many inmates classified to minimum security and thus a few mistakes (e.g., escapes) could result in a public backlash. Third, despite increasingly sophisticated statistical methodology for evaluating the validity of classification systems (see Gottfredson (1977) and Brennan (1987) for reviews), many of the new systems remain either unsystematic, untested, or based on little research (Bennett, 1986; Austin, 1983). Fourth, objective systems have also been criticized for classifying too many people as needing high security and making predictions of

escape or violence which are too unreliable to justify restrictive placements (Gettinger, 1982). Finally, there is some sentiment that overcrowding wreaks havoc with classification efforts and that once a correctional system reaches ninety percent of capacity, classification falls apart (Gettinger, 1982). By contrast, some (Clements, 1982) argue that properly conceived and properly implemented classification can be used as a management tool for combatting the effects of overcrowding.

Classification systems vary in terms of the factors or variables which are considered in classifying inmates and the points or weights assigned to each factor. For example, the National Institute of Corrections model considers the seriousness of the current offense, detainers and warrants, criminal record (prior escapes, felony convictions, and assaultive offenses), previous institutional behavior, and social factors (age, education, employment, alcohol/drug abuse). By contrast, the Federal Bureau of Prisons model considers only three variables: current offense; detainer; and, prior criminal record. Although the criteria used in classification decisions vary greatly, the most prevalently used criteria in initial classification are escape history, detainers and prior commitments, while in reclassification, most systems emphasize measures of in-custody behavior such as disciplinary violations, time to release, and institutional adjustment. Even across systems which examine the same factors or variables, the points, scores or weights may be set at different cutting points so that someone assigned to medium security based on three variables in one system may be assigned to minimum security in another system.

What is Known From Research

What has classification research indicated with respect to predictors of

inmate behavior? While many classification decisions are guided by the maxim, "the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior", Alexander (1986) has noted that no strong predictors have emerged out of over 100 studies of correlates of institutional disciplinary adjustment. Although prior history and disciplinary adjustment (e.g., escape history, detainers, and prior commitments) are among the most commonly used predictive criteria in intial classification, no research has considered these variables. Instead, only preincarceration variables have been tested, and aside from the weak but consistent predictors of age, marital status, and race, such variables are the least likely to have predictive value. A major national survey of objective classification systems funded by the National Institute of Justice, found that many of the 39 state correctional agencies responding reported that in making reclassification decisions, they placed considerable emphasis on measures of in-custody behavior such as disciplinary violations, time to release, and institutional adjustment (Buchanan et al., 1986). Reclassification decisions using such measures of in-custody behavior have been shown by research to tend to downgrade an inmate's custody level (Austin, 1986). Austin (1986) has criticized a reliance on sentence length as the principal factor in initial classification since it means that the courts, rather than corrections, are more influential in determining an inmate's classification level.

Stephen Gottfredson (1987) has best summarized the research by noting that empirical studies indicate that statistical methods out-perform intuitive or clinical predictions. Although there are a variety of statistical methods available for making predictions, no one method has been shown to possess a clear cut advantage over another. This is partly due to the poor quality of the data available in criminal records. Moreover, certain criterion measures such as escape are difficult to predict because they occur so rarely. As a result, the ability to predict inmate or offender behavior is modest.

SECURITY LEVEL ASSIGNMENT AT INITIAL CLASSIFICATION IN THE MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

The primary determinant of the level of security an inmate will be placed at initial classification in the DOC is **length of sentence.** This raises the important issue of how much time an inmate must serve on his or her sentence, other factors being equal, before becoming suitable for placement in medium, minimum, or pre-release security levels. In order to meet the classification principle of placing inmates in the least restrictive security level given the risks they pose to public safety, while simultaneously making such placements in an objective, rational, and consistent manner, the Standard Movement Chronology was developed.

The Standard Movement Chronology is a timetable which establishes transfer schedules to medium, minimum, and pre-release security levels by considering an inmate's sentence and earliest presumed parole eligibility date. The Chronology was developed by classification staff through consensus-building techniques who determined the optimum periods that inmates should serve in each security level based upon their own experiences in classifying offenders. It was then used by research staff to determine how many inmates in custody at that time would be placed in each security level if the Chronology alone was the only criterion for placement. Modifications were then made to the Chronology to account for the realities of the inmate population and the availability of beds.

It should be emphasized that the Standard Movement Chronology does **not** set eligibility criteria for placement in terms of time to be served by an inmate in the various security levels. It does, however, sharply define when inmates move to various security levels unless mitigating or aggravating circumstances exist. Thus, although the Chronology is to be strictly followed in determining transfer schedules, aggravating or mitigating circumstances might exist which warrant the

inmate serving more or less time in higher levels of security even though they may have already served substantial portions of time on their sentences. For example, mitigating circumstances warranting quicker placement in lower security levels might include: a limited or non-existent criminal history; exemplary institutional behavior and program involvement; strong community ties; and successful bail period. By contrast, aggravating circumstances making an inmate more suitable for maximum security would include: extensive and violent criminal history; extremely serious or heinous nature of offense; and, poor disciplinary history and institutional adjustment. In sum, although the Standard Movement Chronology does not set eligibility criteria for placement, it sharply defines when inmates should move to various security levels unless mitigating or aggravating circumstances exist. A copy of the Standard Movement Chronology and its corresponding sentence conversion tables are presented in Appendix A.

Criticisms of Sentence Length as a Classification Variable

A number of criticisms have been directed at classification systems which employ sentence length as a factor in assigning inmates to certain custody and security levels. First, length of sentence has been criticized for having no demonstrated validity as a classification factor and resulting in the arbitrary assignment of inmates to custody and security levels (National Institute of Correction, 1983). Second, sentence length is said to result in "overclassification" or the assignment of offenders to a higher security level than they require based upon the risks they pose. Finally, reliance on sentence length as the principal factor in initial classification means that the courts are more influential than corrections in determining an inmate's custody and security levels (Austin, 1986). This is especially problematical where sentencing disparity exists for similar offenses.

RESEARCH METHODS

The primary objective of this study is to conduct a comparative validation analysis of the DOC classification system. Validation analysis examines whether and how well the individual items in classification instruments are predictive of inmate behavior. This is related to what Alexander (1986:323) has labelled the "touchstone of classification effectiveness", namely the ability to predict inmate behavior accurately. The DOC classification system has never been subject to a validation analysis which could address whether the items used in initial classification are predictive of inmate behavior. Specifically, it is not known whether the main determinant of an inmate's security level in the Massachusetts system, viz., the Standard Movement Chronology is correctly classifying inmates commensurate with the risks they pose.

The purpose of validation analysis then is to address the relationship between the classification factors (i.e., predictor variables) and subsequent institutional disciplinary adjustment (i.e., criterion variable). There are two ways in which this can be done. First, one can study those relationships by collecting predictor and criterion data on a large number of inmates and performing statistical analysis to assess the nature and strength of the association between each of the predictor variables and the criterion variable. For example, one could test the relationship between the sentence length in years (the predictor variable) and subsequent institutional adjustment as indicated by the number of disciplinary problems (the criterion variable). One hypothesis to test might be: Inmates assigned to maximum security at initial classification on the basis of the classification factor "sentence length" will receive a higher number of disciplinary tickets than inmates assigned to minimum security. In other terms, inmates' involvement versus non-involvement in disciplinary incidents is a criterion measure appropriate for

evaluating the predictive validity of the classification factor, sentence length in years.

As Kane (1986) has noted, a major problem with this approach to validation is when it is applied to classification decision factors which have been derived through consensus building techniques that are based on the collective wisdom of classification staff about the predictive utility of prospective factors, the question of predictive validity for the factors remains unanswered. As mentioned previously, it was through such consensus building techniques that the primary determinant of DOC classification decision-making, the Standard Movement Chronology, was derived. Therefore, it was decided not to use this validation strategy in this study.

An alternative strategy for validation is the use of a classification instrument which has been validated for the inmate population of another prison system. This is the validation strategy used in this study. This approach is useful in addressing the question of what changes in security distributions would occur if an alternative classification system independent of facility constraints was adopted by that state. This was the approach used by Austin (1983) when he applied three alternative classification models (the Federal Bureau of Prisons, California Department of Corrections, and National Institute of Corrections) to Nevada's admission population and as a result, obtained major shifts in historic security level distributions.

The major advantages to this validation strategy are that certain alternative models (e.g., National Institute of Corrections), are being used in various jurisdictions and have been shown by research to perform relatively well in controlling escape and institutional misconduct. Moreover, these models are amenable to computerized simulation analysis.

The major disadvantages to this approach are, first, some research indicates

that the validity of classification instruments cannot be assumed to transfer from one population to another but must be established for each separately (Clear, 1988). This may be especially true in the case of Massachusetts which has the fourth lowest incarceration rate in the nation and where 85% of the state prison population are incarcerated for or have a history of violent offenses. Second, many alternative models are also often essentially derived from consensus building processes among correctional experts in selecting classification variable weights as opposed to the preferred technique of using statistical cross validation studies to establish appropriate weights for criterion variables. Third, excessive use of administrative overrides and incomplete records may defeat the intent of objectively derived and computed classification scores. Finally, some of the alternative models used for cross-validation purposes, such as the NIC model, require substantial resources to facilitate the implementation process.

Much of the validation research which has been done has pertained to validating classification instruments which are used in point-based classification systems. The DOC classification system is unique in that there is no classification instrument used per se, nor are points and total scores assigned to inmates when they are classified. However, this does not render useless the need for some sort of validation of those classification factors which are used in decision-making. In the Massachusetts DOC, the primary classification factor is "length of sentence."

DESCRIPTION OF NIC INITIAL INMATE CLASSIFICATION CUSTODY LEVEL

The instrument used by the NIC at initial classification to determine custody level for new admissions is attached as Appendix B. The instrument is used for new admissions only which are defined as inmates entering prison upon court

commitment or parole/probation revocation. It should be emphasized that the form is not to be used for any type of transfer.

Eight variables are considered by NIC in determing custody level at initial classification with point weights assigned to each variable category. They are in order of appearance:

1. History of Institutional Violence
2. Severity of Current Offense
3. Prior Assaultive History
4. Escape History
5. Alcohol/Drug Abuse
6. Current Detainer
7. Prior Felony Convictions
8. Stability Factors (age, education, employment)

If an inmate's score is 10 or above on the first four variables listed above, the inmate is assigned to close custody. If the score is under 10, items 5 through 8 are completed and a medium/minimum scale is use. Items 1 through 8 are then added to arrive at a total score. Persons whose total score is 7-22 are assigned to medium custody. Persons whose score is 6 or less are assigned to minimum custody.

Some Caveats

Three caveats should be kept in mind when interpreting the results in this report. First, the NIC also uses an instrument for initial inmate classification assessment of needs which should be used in guiding initial classification and reclassification decisions. However, that could not be used in this report since it

potentially requires, among other things, specialized testing and inmate input which were not available to us as researchers. This omission of the NIC needs assessment component means that we could not specify assignments to the community level but rather only the minimum level.

Second, the NIC model specifies five security level designations: community; minimum; medium; close; and, maximum. The security and custody designations are attached as Appendices C and D, respectively. It should be noted that in the NIC model, initial classification pertains to determining an inmate's custody level and not security level per se. By contrast, at initial classification, the DOC system pertains to determining security level. Although the terms security and custody are not synonymous they have to be treated as such in the analysis which follows because of this important difference between the DOC and NIC models. Hence, custody level serves as a proxy for security level in the comparative analysis.

Third, there is not perfect correspondence between the security/custody levels to which an inmate can be assigned to at initial classification in the DOC and NIC models. Whereas, an inmate in the DOC system can be assigned at initial classification to anyone of four levels (maximum, medium, minimum, pre-release), in the NIC model, an inmate can only be assigned to one of three levels (close, medium, minimum). The highest level to which an inmate can be assigned at initial classification in the NIC model is close custody (with specific exceptions such as protective custody cases, temporary assignments for pending investigations, etc.). The NIC manual indicates that the decision to place an inmate in close custody should be based on past assaultive behavior and history of escape attemps. By contrast, maximum custody placements are to be reserved for those inmates who have demonstrated through past violent behavior that they are a serious threat to other inmates or staff. The NIC model only uses a maximum custody scale at reclassification or where there are special considerations (i.e., administrative

overrides) such as requested protective custody, temporary assignment, or pending litigation. Furthermore the "community level" placement cannot be assigned at initial classification but rather only at reclassification.

In addition to these caveats, there are some methodological coding limitations to the NIC model which the researchers encountered when classifying cases. These are discussed in Appendix E.

SAMPLE

Lists of 250 initial classifications recently conducted at MCI-Concord (Concord) and MCI-Cedar-Junction (Walpole) were obtained from those institutions. Those cases which could not be used were either transfers, had folders with missing initial classification reports or other essential information, or were signed out by other persons. Those folders which did not contain enough information to be able to answer each of the eight NIC scoring items were not used. Of the initial classification decisions made at each institution, 104 from Concord and 76 from Walpole were determined to be useful for research purposes yielding a total sample of 180 inmates.

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[2] The sample for this study is non-random. In actuality, the vast majority of initial classifications are done at Concord with only a small percentage done at Walpole. The only individuals classified at Walpole are lifers and other inmates serving very long sentences. The study sample of 180 reflects 104 or 58% of initial classifications done at Concord and 76 or 42% of initial classifications done at Walpole. It was necessary to "oversample" Walpole classification decisions for this study for two reasons. First, few inital classifications are actually done at Walpole as mentioned. Second, since virtually no one whose initial classification is held at Concord will be classified for maximum security, it was necessary to oversample Walpole classifications in order to provide an adequate cross-validation sample of maximum security cases for the NIC instrument. Although both Walpole and Concord use the same classification system, the "oversampling" of Walpole cases should be kept in mind when interpreting the study findings.

After "pulling" the 180 folders, the researchers proceeded to rescore or reclassify the inmates based on information contained in the folder using the NIC Initial Inmate Classification Custody Instrument and scoring guidelines. Total scores were derived for each inmate based on the NIC scoring system. On the basis of these scores inmates were assigned a custody level using the NIC custody designations. For each inmate, the DOC and NIC initial security and custody level assignments were recorded as well as the inmate's name, MCI number, and governing offense.

The analysis consisted of comparing for each inmate the security/custody level decision reached by DOC versus that reached by the NIC model. The purpose of the analysis was to determine how appropriate the DOC initial classification decisions are from the perspective of an alternative classification system. Thus, three categories were possible in this analysis: 1) overclassification; 2) same level classification; and, 3) underclassification. Each of these is defined below.

- Overclassification refers to those cases in which the DOC assigned inmates to a higher security custody level than necessary in light of the risks they posed, according to the NIC criteria. Thus, an inmate assigned to maximum security/custody in the DOC model and minimum in the NIC model would be an example of overclassification.

- Same level Classification refers to perfect correspondence between the DOC and NIC models. For example, both models result is an inmate classified for medium security/custody.

- Underclassification - refers to those inmates assigned by the DOC to a lower security/custody level than necessary in light of the risks they pose, according to the NIC criteria. Thus, an inmate assigned to minimum in the DOC model and medium in the NIC model would be an example of underclassification.

The two "problem categories" here are, of course, overclassification and

underclassification. Overclassification is a problem for two reasons. First, it violates a fundamental principle of classification in that inmates should be classified to the least restrictive security level required to protect society, staff and other inmates. Second, it results in wasting scarce and expensive resources in that inmates who require less security are assigned to higher, more expensive security level beds. By contrast, underclassification is a problem since it means that persons are assigned to lower levels of security than they should be given the risks they pose to society, staff, and other inmates.

Ideally, classification systems achieve a balanced match between risks and security/custody designation. In this research, this was represented by the "same level classification" category where both the DOC and NIC models were in agreement on the security/custody level to which an inmate should be assigned. Before presenting the results of the analysis, a definition of the concept of "risk" is provided.

A Note on the Definition of "Risk"

Throughout this report we refer to the issue of assessing "risk" in the classification of inmates. Defining the concept of risk is typically dependent upon the type of behavior under examination. Thus, risk can refer to the potential for escape or recidivism or violent behavior either within the institution or in the community. Assessing risk is complicated by the fact that an individual inmate's potential for engaging in any of these behaviors varies widely. Some inmates may pose a relatively low threat of escape but a high probability of assaultive behavior within an institution. Other inmates may remain free of disciplinary problems within an institution yet have a high probability of violence in the community.

The concept of risk used here broadly refers to the prediction of dangerous behavior. In addition to violence potential, correctional administrators and classification staff must assess at intake an inmate's problems and probability

for dangerous behavior in each of the following areas when determining the security and custody levels an inmate requires: escape; management problems (assaultive and non-assaultive); violence potential; community placement; and, the probability of continued criminality and recidivism. These were the factors which were considered in the concept of risk which served as a guide to the development of the NIC Model although violence potential was the only factor NIC considered relevant to maximum security placements.

It should be noted, however, that while correctional staff must be able to identify and deal with inmates who pose a threat of violence or dangerous behavior in each of the areas noted above, social science research indicates that little success has been achieved in making accurate predictions about dangerous and violent behavior. This is because violent behavior has a statistically low base rate of occurrence in the target group and thus predictions are difficult. It is only when the base rate of occurrence of any type of behavior is sufficiently high that behavior predictions can be made with some accuracy since one can determine the characteristics of the individuals likely to exhibit the behavior in question (National Institute of Corrections, 1983). As noted by Wenk, Robinson, and Smith (1972:194) this means that: "The best prediction that can be made, even for the most empirically refined set of offenders, is that a particular individual will not become violent in the future."

RESULTS

Results are presented for the overall study sample as well as for Concord and Walpole separately. The results are presented two ways. First, the number of inmates classified for all obtained DOC/NIC classification combinations are presented (see Table 1). In total, our analysis indicated nine different permutations

of classification ratings. Three combinations represented overclassifications, three represented same level classifications, and three represented underclassifications. The combined DOC/NIC classification ratings obtained in this study are listed below.

Overclassifications

DOC Maximum/NIC Medium

DOC Maximum/NIC Minimum

DOC Medium/NIC Minimum

Same Level Classifications

DOC Maximum/NIC Close

DOC Medium/NIC Medium

DOC Minimum/NIC Minimum

Underclassifications

DOC Medium/NIC Close

DOC Pre-Release/NIC Minimum

DOC Minimum/NIC Medium

Second, on the bases of these nine categories, the number and percent overclassified, same level classified, and underclassified are presented.

Overclassification

Forty-nine percent (88) of the total sample was overclassified according to NIC criteria. Of those classified at Walpole 64.5% (49) were overclassified. Of those classified at Concord, 37.5% (39) were overclassified. The specific numbers and percentages for each overclassification category may be found in Table 1.

Same Level Classification

Forty-three percent (77) of the total sample was assigned to the same level in both the DOC and NIC models. Of those classified at Walpole 31.6% (24) were assigned to the same level in both the DOC and NIC models. Of those classified at Concord, 51.0% (53) were assigned to the same level. The specific number and percentages for each same level classification category may be found in Table 1.

Underclassifications

Only 8% (15) of the total sample was underclassified according to NIC criteria. Of those classified at Walpole, only 3.9% (3) were underclassified. Of those classified at Concord, 11.5% (12) were underclassified. The specific numbers and percentages for each underclassification category may found in Table 1.

Table 1

DOC INITIAL CLASSIFICATIONS VERSUS NIC MODEL SYSTEMS APPROACH

	WALPOLE		CONCORD		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
OVERCLASSIFICATIONS						
DOC Maximum/NIC Medium	19	25.0	1	1.0	20	11.1
DOC Maximum/NIC Minimum	25	32.9	-	-	25	13.9
DOC Medium/NIC Minimum	5	6.6	38	36.5	43	23.9
Total Overclassifications	**49**	**64.5**	**39**	**37.5**	**88**	**48.9**
SAME LEVEL CLASSIFICATIONS						
DOC Maximum/NIC Close	19	25.0	1	1.0	20	11.1
DOC Medium/NIC Medium	5	6.6	49	47.1	54	30.0
DOC Minimum/NIC Minimum	-	-	3	2.9	3	1.7
Total Same Classifications	**24**	**31.6**	**53**	**51.0**	**77**	**42.8**
UNDERCLASSIFICATIONS						
DOC Medium/NIC Close	3	3.9	9	8.6	12	6.7
DOC Pre-Release/NIC Minimum	-	-	1	1.0	1	0.5
DOC Minimum/NIC Medium	-	-	2	1.9	2	1.1
Total Underclassifications	**3**	**3.9**	**12**	**11.5**	**15**	**8.3**
TOTAL SAMPLE	**76**	**100**	**104**	**100**	**180**	**100**

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

Table 2 shows the current distribution of the inmate population among custody levels along with the distributions derived from the sample using both the existing classification methods and the NIC Model Systems Approach. The sample distributions assigned much larger proportions of inmates to maximum custody than that found in the actual population because the sample was limited to initial classifications which tend to result in more restrictive placements than subsequent classifications. The most substantial finding which Table 2 reveals is that the existing DOC classification system assigns offenders to maximum or medium custody at a much higher frequency than the NIC's Model Systems Approach. Ninety-seven percent of the sample was classified to medium (60.5%) or maximum (36.1%) custody using the existing DOC system, while the NIC system assigned 60% of the sample to medium (42.2%) or close (17.8%) custody. Conversely, classifications using the NIC system resulted in assignments to minimum custody at a much higher frequency than the existing system. The relevant figures from the sample are 40% using the NIC system, and 3% using the existing system. This is a particularly significant finding for a correctional system plagued by severe bed space shortages and overcrowding in maximum and medium security, and empty beds in minimum security.

Table 2

COMPARISON OF ACTUAL CUSTODY CLASSIFICATION

WITH THE SAMPLE CLASSIFICATIONS[1]

	# OF INMATES	% OF TOTAL	CONCORD & WALPOLE SAMPLE USING DOC METHOD N	%	CONCORD & WALPOLE SAMPLE USING NIC METHOD[2] N	%
MAXIMUM	680	10.1	65	36.1	32	17.8
MEDIUM	4370	64.6	109	60.6	76	42.2
MINIMUM	1061	15.7	5	2.8	72	40.0
PRE-RELEASE & CONTRACT	649	9.6	1	0.5	---	---
TOTAL	**6760**	**100.0%**	**180**	**100.0%**	**180**	**100.0%**

NOTES

1. Actual custody classification figures are from DOC Daily Count Sheet for February 1, 1989.

2. This figure refers to the proportion of inmates from the sample who received Close Custody Classifications when using the NIC Model Systems Approach.

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Two major conclusions are offered based on the study findings.

First, the DOC classification system results in overclassification of nearly half of all offenders. In fact, Walpole had a higher percentage (64.5%) overclassified than did Concord (37.5%). Examination of the lists of inmates and their governing offenses indicates that, in particular, two classes of offenders are overclassified. For Walpole commitments, first and second degree murders with a minimal or no assaultive criminal, institutional violence, or escape histories are overclassified. For example the Standard Movement Chronology dictates that first-degree murderers spend three years in maximum and seven years is medium. In the NIC model, many of these offenders would be classified for medium or minimum immediately. The same is true of second degree murderers for whom the Standard Movement Chronology stipulates 18 months in maximum and six years in medium before becoming eligible for minimum. By contrast, persons serving sentences for armed robbery generally had lengthier assaultive criminal histories and were thus more likely to be scored for close custody in the NIC model. Of those classified at Concord, drug offenders stand out as the group most frequently overclassified. While the DOC system generally classified this groups of offenders for medium security, the NIC model would immediately assign drug offenders to minimum security. There was also some evidence that sex and property offenders were overclassified.

The overclassification of murderers and drug offenders, but other types of offenders as well, is primarily attributable to the time guidelines established in the Standard Movement Chronology. It is further confirmation of research which indicates that arbitrarily assigning inmates to certain custody and security level

based solely on sentence length is problematical because length of sentence has no demonstrated predictive validity of institutional and post-release adjustment. The primary usage therefore of the Standard Movement Chronology should be as a guide for reintegration. Its use for classification purposes results in overclassification.

Second, overclassification results in a misuse of maximum and medium security bed space. Ninety seven percent of the sample was classified to medium or maximum custody by DOC compared to 60% of the sample using NIC criteria. Conversely, NIC criteria classified 40% of the sample for minimum security compared to to 3% actually classified for minimum by DOC. While the feasibility of immediately placing lifers in minimum security settings is currently questionable, clearly some of the bed space shortage in medium security (and vacancies in minimum) could be alleviated by immediately assigning all drug offenders with minimal or no criminal, institutional, or escape histories to minimum security. The immediate assignment of drug offenders to minimum security at initial classification is both operationally feasible, and more consistent with the reintegration concept given the nature of their offenses. Consideration should also be given to screening for sex and property offenders with no criminal or escape histories as candidates for immediate assignment to minimum security.

In response to these conclusions, four recommendations are offered.

RECOMMENDATION #1: Decreased Emphasis on Length of Sentence as a Classification Factor

The DOC should place less emphasis on length of sentence as a classification factor for three reasons. First, it results in overclassification of inmates. This simply means that inmates are in a higher security level than required given the

risks they pose and exacerbates bed shortages in secure facilities. Second, research has shown that sentence length has no demonstrated validity with respect to predicting either institutional or post-release adjustment and is not correlated with risk. Third, it means that the courts are more influential than corrections in making classification decisions. This is especially problematic where sentencing disparity for similar offenses exists. It would be less problematic in a state with determinate sentencing. Placing less emphasis on length of sentence in the classification process means that the usage of the Standard Movement Chronology needs reconsideration. This leads to a second recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION #2: Revise or Abandon the Standard Movement Chronology

A reduced emphasis on sentence length could be obtained through either a revision or complete abandonment of the Standard Movement Chronology. By establishing a timetable and transfer schedule for each security level based on sentence length, the Standard Movement Chronology seeks to address the seriousness of the offense and length of sentence by stipulating longer periods of time in higher security for those with more serious governing offenses who also have presumably longer sentences than those with less serious offenses. There are a number of flaws to this concept.

A fundamental assumption underlying the Standard Movement Chronology is that movement from higher to lower levels of security will proceed according to the timetable set forth in the chronology. For example, second degree lifers will spend 18 months in maximum, 6 years in medium, 6½ years in minimum before becoming parole eligible. This assumes that ideally "all goes according to plan" and the inmate incurs no returns to higher security for various disciplinary reasons and that bed space at each security level is available when a move is due. This

assumption is flawed since experience indicates that inmates do incur disciplinary reports which result in returns to higher security or otherwise set-back moves, and there have been delays in moves to pre-release. For example, the Research Divison conducted an analysis of the actual placement of a sample of 689 offenders with their proposed placement according to the Standard Movement Chronology and found that 53% of the sample were in the security level expected, 42% were in a higher security level than expected, and 5% were in a lower security level expected. The fact that 42% were is a higher security level than expected is evidence of this problem and illustrates the problems attendant with classifying on the basis of length of sentence.

An additional flaw of the Standard Movement Chronology is that it fails to account for changes in the nature of commitments and the population. A sharp increase in commitments of a particular offender type has the potential to dramatically affect the distribution of inmates across security levels when one is classifying on the basis of sentence length. For example, in 1987, drug commitments were up by 552% (320) at Cedar Junction, by 321% (135) at Concord, and by 251% (123) at Framingham. It is this very population of drug offenders which this study has shown to be overclassified. Moreover, within offender types (and sentence lengths) there is substantial variation which the Standard Movement Chronology misses.

These facts, coupled with the results of the cross-validation analysis using the NIC model, calls for either a revision of the existing timetable in the Standard Movement Chronology or its complete abandonment. Revision of the Standard Movement Chronology would no doubt have to be done on a periodic basis to account for changes in the commitment population. While a more prudent course of action might be to abandon the Chronology since sentence length results in overclassification and is not predictive of risk, this leads to a problem for

classification staff who need some sort of guide in making classification decisions.

If abandoned, it will be necessary to substitute a new classification framework. While the NIC Model Systems Approach represents one possible alternative system, the point-based scheme and weights in the NIC model would result in the immediate classification to lower security of certain offender groups such as first-degree lifers whom current DOC policy prohibits from minimum security. In short, it is very difficult to justify the immediate classification to minimum security of offenders who are serving a sentence of life without parole. Finally, an earlier study of DOC staff perceptions of the inmate classification system found that the majority of survey respondents prefer a subjective classification system which is what they perceive the current system to be. Moreover, the Standard Movement Chronology was seen by the majority of survey respondents as an objective and consistent method for placing inmates in the appropriate security level. Although few would prefer an exclusively point-based system, a sizeable minority would like to see a combined subjective and objective point-based system. This leads to two final recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION #3: Existing Classification System should be Supplemented by a Point-Based Model of Classification

RECOMMENDATION #4: A Full-Scale Validation Study Testing the NIC Model on the Massachusetts State Prison Population should be Conducted

The existing classification system should be supplemented by usage of a point-based model of classification. While the NIC Model Systems approach represents a logical choice, it has not been fully validated for the Massachusetts state prison population. Therefore, before the NIC, or any other point-based model of classification is adopted wholesale, it is recommended that a full scale revalidation study be conducted in which the model of choice is tested on the

Massachusetts state prison population. This is an essential step since research indicates that the transferrability of classification and risk screening instruments is problematic and variable across different prison populations (although the reasons why an instrument transfers well in some cases but not others is not well understood) (Clear, 1988). A full-scale validation study of this sort, however, takes one to two years since the validation strategy requires that one statistically examine the nature and strength of the relationship between predictive classification criteria (e.g., prior assaultive offense history) and criterion measures such as subsequent institutional disciplinary adjustment on a large number of inmates over a period of time.

Therefore, in the interim, it is recommended that the NIC point-based model be pilot-tested as a supplement to the existing system while a full-scale validation study of the NIC model is mounted. The NIC instrument is short, easy-to-administer, and can be done in a relatively short period of time (e.g., about 15 minutes). While the NIC model is not without the drawbacks of a point-based model, it does include variables currently missed by the DOC classification system which have been shown to have some predictive validity. Again, it is recommended that the NIC model be used as a temporary supplement to the existing system and not as a total substitution. It can be expected that if the DOC continues to rely primarily on sentence length as a classification factor, there will also continue to be discrepancies between results from the DOC system and those of the NIC instrument. Ultimately, decisions with respect to resolving those discrepancies will have to be made by counselors, classification boards, Superintendents, and Central Office staff in light of suitability, eligibility, bed space, and resource considerations.

APPENDIX A

STANDARD MOVEMENT CHRONOLOGY

STANDARD MOVEMENT CHRONOLOGY
AND SENTENCE CONVERSION TABLES

Massachusetts Department of Corrections

STANDARD MOVEMENT CHRONOLOGY FOR INITIAL CLASSIFICATION

	Maximum	Medium	Minimum	Pre-Release/Contract
First Degree Lifers	3 yrs.	7 yrs.	4 yrs.	3 yrs. Cadre
2nd Degree Lifers	18 months	6 yrs.	6½ yrs.	12 months
2/3 Walpole sentence more than 20 yrs. minimum	10%	50%	20% (or no more than 6 yrs.)	20% (or no more than 12 months)
(2/3rds) Walpole sentences 10-20 yrs. minimum	10%	40%	30%	*20% (or no more than 12 months)
(2/3rds) Walpole sentences less than 10 yrs. minimum	0%	50%	30%	20%
(1/3rd) Walpole sentence more than 10 yrs. minimum	0%	30%	50%	*20% (or no more than 12 months)
(1/3rd) Walpole sentence less than 10 yrs. minimum	0%	30%	30%	40%
Concord sentences 6 months to PE	0%	1 month	0%	5 months
Concord sentences 12 months to PE	0%	1 month	0 months	11 months
Concord sentences 18 months to PE	0%	1 month	5 months	12 months
Concord sentences 24 months to PE	0%	6 months	6 months	12 months

Percentage of time served will be calculated from effective date of sentence to the earliest parole date.

*If the time spent in pre-release exceeds 12 months, the balance shall normally be spent in minimum security. If the time spent in mimimum exceeds 6 years the balance will be spent in medium.

Standard Movement Chronology for Returns & Higher Security or Escape

Escapes (Current Incarceration Only) Agreement Placement Consequences	Maximum		Medium	
	Crime On Escape	No Crime On Escape	Crime On Escape	No Crime No Escape
Escape (or Attempt) from extension of confinement (escape or attempts from furlough, work release, P.R.A., or any other community)				
Returned voluntarily within 24 hours of escape			1 year	6 months
Returned after 24 hour period voluntarily or involuntarily			2 years	12 months
Returned after 2nd escape of any nature			Remainder of Sentence	Remainder of Sentence
Escape (or attempt) from confinement (includes grounds of a correctional institution, hospital program, and industry crew site.)				
Returned voluntarily within 24 hours of escape		6 months		2 years
		12 months	18 months	
Returned after 24 hour period voluntarily or involuntarily		1 year		1 year
		2 years	2 years	
Returned after 2nd escape of any nature		12 months		Bal. of Sent.
		2 years	Bal. of Sent.	

Returns to Higher Custody Agreement Placement Consequences	Maximum	Medium
From minimum or Pre-Release security of a non-violent, non-assaultive nature.		60 Days
From minimum or Pre-Release security of a violent or assaultive nature.		6 months
Each subsequent return of any nature from minimum or Pre-Release security.		1 year
From minimum or Pre-Release security resulting in a new crime(s) and conviction.	6 months	1 year
From medium security of a non-violent or non-assaultive nature.	6 months	
From medium security of a violent or assaultive nature.	1 year	
Each subsequent return of any nature from medium or close custody.	18 months	
From medium security resulting in a new crime(s) conviction.	1 year	
Each return to higher custody resulting in DSU Commitment	DSU Plus	

SENTENCE CONVERSION TABLE FOR CONCORD OFFENDERS

Time	Maximum Time	Medium Time	Minimum Time	Pre-Release Contract Time
6 Months	0	1 Month	0	5 Months
12 Months	0	1 Month	0	11 Months
18 Months	0	1 Month	5 Months	12 Months
24 Months	0	6 Months	6 Months	12 Months

SENTENCE CONVERSION TABLE FOR WALPOLE 1/3 OFFENDERS

Minimum Sentence (Years)	Time (Yrs./Mos.)	Maximum Time (Yrs./Mos.)	Medium Time (Yrs./Mos.)	Minimum Time (Yrs./Mos.)	Pre-Release Contract Time (Yrs./Mos.)
2.5	1/0	0/0	0/4	0/4	0/4
3	1/0	0/0	0/4	0/4	0/4
4	1/4	0/0	0/5	0/5	0/6
5	1/8	0/0	0/6	0/6	0/8
6	2/0	0/0	0/7	0/7	0/10
7	2/4	0/0	0/8	0/8	1/0
8	2/8	0/0	0/10	0/10	1/0
9	3/0	0/0	0/11	1/1	1/0
10	3/4	0/0	1/0	1/8	0/8
11	3/8	0/0	1/1	1/10	0/3
12	4/0	0/0	1/2	2/0	0/10
13	4/4	0/0	1/4	2/2	0/10
14	4/8	0/0	1/5	2/4	0/11
15	5/0	0/0	1/6	2/6	1/0
16	5/4	0/0	1/7	2/9	1/0
17	5/8	0/0	1/8	3/0	1/0
18	6/0	0/0	1/10	3/2	1/0
19	6/4	0/0	1/11	3/6	1/0
20	6/8	0/0	2/0	3/8	1/0
21	7/0	0/0	2/1	3/11	1/0
22	7/4	0/0	2/2	4/2	1/0
23	7/8	0/0	2/4	4/4	1/0
24	8/0	0/0	2/5	4/7	1/0
25	8/4	0/0	2/6	4/10	1/0
26	8/8	0/0	2/7	5/1	1/0
27	9/0	0/0	2/8	5/4	1/0
28	9/4	0/0	2/10	5/6	1/0
29	9/8	0/0	2/11	5/9	1/0
30	10/0	0/0	3/0	6/0	1/0

SENTENCE CONVERSION FOR WALPOLE 2/3 OFFENDERS

Minimum Sentence (Years)	Time To P.E. (Yrs./Mos.)	Maximum Time (Yrs./Mos.)	Medium Time (Yrs./Mos.)	Minimum Time (Yrs./Mos.)	Pre-Release Contract Time (Yrs./Mos.)
2.5	2/0	0/0	1/0	0/7	0/5
3	2/0	0/0	1/0	0/7	0/5
4	2/8	0/0	1/4	0/10	0/6
5	3/4	0/0	1/8	1/0	0/8
6	4/0	0/0	2/0	1/2	0/10
7	4/8	0/0	2/4	1/5	0/11
8	5/4	0/0	2/8	1/7	1/0
9	6/0	0/0	3/0	2/0	1/0
10	6/8	0/8	2/7	2/4	1/0
11	7/4	0/8	2/11	2/8	1/0
12	8/0	0/10	3/2	3/0	1/0
13	8/8	0/11	3/5	3/3	1/0
14	9/4	0/11	3/8	3/8	1/0
15	10/0	1/0	4/0	4/0	1/0
16	10/8	1/1	4/2	4/4	1/0
17	11/4	1/1	4/6	4/9	1/0
18	12/0	1/2	4/10	5/0	1/0
19	12/8	1/4	5/0	5/3	1/0
20	13/4	1/4	5/4	5/8	1/0
21	14/0	1/5	7/0	4/7	1/0
22	14/8	1/6	7/4	4/9	1/0
23	15/4	1/6	7/8	5/2	1/0
24	16/0	1/7	8/0	5/5	1/0
25	16/8	1/8	8/4	5/7	1/0
26	17/4	1/8	8/8	6/0	1/0
27	18/0	1/10	9/2	6/0	1/0
28	18/8	1/11	9/8	6/0	1/0
29	19/4	1/11	10/5	6/0	1/0
30	20/0	2/0	11/0	6/0	1/0

APPENDIX B

NIC INITIAL INMATE CLASSIFICATION
CUSTODY INSTRUMENT

INITIAL INMATE CLASSIFICATION
CUSTODY

NAME _____ **NUMBER** _____
Last First MI

CLASSIFICATION CASEWORKER _____ **DATE** ___/___/___

1. **HISTORY OF INSTITUTIONAL VIOLENCE**
(Jail or Prison, code most serious within last five years) ____ score
None 0
Assault and battery not involving use of a weapon or resulting in serious injury 3
Assault and battery involving use of a weapon and/or resulting in serious injury or death 7

2. **SEVERITY OF CURRENT OFFENSE**
(Refer to the **Severity of Offense Scale** on back of form. Score the most serious offense if there are multiple convictions.) ____ score
Low 0
Low Moderate 1
Moderate 2
High 4
Highest 6

3. **PRIOR ASSAULTIVE OFFENSE HISTORY**
(Score the most severe in inmate's history. Refer to the **Severity of Offense Scale** on back of form.) ____ score
None, Low, or Low Moderate 0
Moderate 2
High 4
Highest 6

4. **ESCAPE HISTORY** (Rate last 3 years of incarceration.) ____ score
No escapes or attempts (or no prior incarcerations) 0
An escape or attempt from minimum or community custody, no actual or threatened violence.
Over 1 year ago 1
Within the last year 3
An escape or attempt from medium or above custody or an escape from minimum or community custody with actual or threatened violence
Over 1 year ago 5
Within the last year 7

CLOSE CUSTODY SCORE (Add items 1 through 4) ☐
(If score is 10 or above, inmate should be assigned to close custody. If score is under 10, complete items 5 through 8 and use medium/minimum scale.)

5. **ALCOHOL/DRUG ABUSE** ____ score
None 0
Abuse causing occasional legal and social adjustment problems 1
Serious abuse, serious disruption of functioning 3

6. **CURRENT DETAINER** ____ score
None 0
Misdemeanor detainer 1
Extradition initiated - misdemeanor 3
Felony detainer 4
Extradition initiated - felony 6

7. **PRIOR FELONY CONVICTIONS** ____ score
None 0
One 2
Two or more 4

8. **STABILITY FACTORS** ____ score
(Check appropriate box(es) and combine for score.)
Age 26 or over . . . . . – 2
High school diploma or GED received . . . . . – 1
Employed or attending school (full or part-time) for six months or longer at time of arrest . . . . . – 1

MINIMUM/MEDIUM SCORE (Add items 1 through 8.) ____ TOTAL SCORE

MEDIUM/MINIMUM SCALE:
Medium Custody 7-22
Minimum Custody . . . . . 6 or less

SEVERITY SCALES
EXAMPLE A*: SEVERITY OF OFFENSE SCALE

HIGHEST:	Armed robbery (multiple, threat) Assault and battery with dangerous weapon (serious injury, risk of death or disfigurement) Escape (closed institutions) Explosives (detonation - potential risk of injury) Kidnapping Murder Rape
HIGH:	Armed robbery, other (e.g., demand note) Explosives (possession, transportation) Extortion Manslaughter
MODERATE:	Breaking and entering Bribing of public official Contempt of court Counterfeiting (over $20,000 -- manufacturing, passing, possession) Drugs (between $5,000 to $100,000) Escape (open institution or program -- includes bail jumping) Property Offense (over $100,000 -- includes burglary, embezzlement, forgery, fraud, interstate transportation, larceny, theft) Sexual molestation (no injury) Theft, motor vehicle Weapons (possession)
LOW MODERATE:	Alcohol law violation Assault and battery (no injury) Counterfeiting ($1,000 to $20,000) Drugs (under $5,000) Property offenses ($1,000 to $100,000) Solicitation for sexual activity
LOW:	Counterfeiting (under $1,000) Drugs (own use) Property offenses (under $1,000)

SCHEDULE A (Items 1-4)

Maximum	15 or more
Close	10-14
Use Schedule B	9 or under

SCHEDULE B (Items 1-9)

Close	17 or more
Medium	12-16
Minimum	7-11
Community	6 or under

*This scale will appear on the reverse of the Inmate Classification and Reclassification Forms

APPENDIX C

NIC SECURITY DESIGNATIONS

TABLE 1 - SECURITY DESIGNATIONS

	COMMUNITY	MINIMUM	MEDIUM	CLOSE	MAXIMUM
PERIMETER	None	Clearly designated by single fence or unarmed "posts."	Secure	Secure	Secure
TOWERS	None	Optional (manned less than 24 hours)	Manned 24 hrs.	Manned 24 hrs.	Manned 24 hrs.
EXTERNAL PATROL	None	Intermittent	Yes	Yes	Yes
DETECTION DEVICES	None	None	Yes	Yes	Yes
HOUSING	Single rooms and/ or multiple rooms.	Single rooms and/ or multiple rooms and/or multiple dorms.	Single cells or rooms and/or dormitories.	Single outside or inside cells.	Single inside cells corridor grills.

DEFINITIONS:

SECURE PERIMETER: Walled or double-fenced perimeter with armed towers. All entry and exit into and out of the compound is via sally ports.

INSIDE CELL: A cell which is contained on four sides within a cellblock; i.e., if an inmate escapes from the cell, he is still confined within the building.

OUTSIDE CELL: A cell with a wall or window immediately adjacent to the outside of the building; i.e., if an inmate escapes from the cell, he has escaped from the building.

APPENDIX D

NIC CUSTODY DESIGNATIONS

TABLE 2 - CUSTODY DESIGNATIONS

	COMMUNITY	MINIMUM	MEDIUM	CLOSE	MAXIMUM
DAY MOVEMENT	Unrestricted	Unrestricted	Unrestricted	All normal movement unescorted but observed by staff	Escorted only
NIGHT MOVEMENT	Unrestricted	Unrestricted	Under staff observation	Escorted or checkout/check-in basis	Only on order of Watch Commander and on escorted basis;
SUPERVISION	Periodic as appropriate to circumstances of work or activities	Supervised in groups by an unarmed officer or checked every hour	Frequent and direct observation by staff	Always observed and supervised	always escorted
LEAVE THE INSTITUTION	Daily and unescorted. Eligible for unescorted furloughs.	Under Supervision. Eligible for unescorted furloughs.	Under close and/or armed supervision. Eligible for escorted furloughs.	Armed one-on-one escort, and in handcuffs. Not eligible for furloughs.	Armed one-on-one escort, and in full restraints. Not eligible for furloughs.
ACCESS TO PROGRAMS	Unrestricted, including all community based programs/activities	All inside the perimeter and selected community based programs and activities	All inside the perimeter	Selected programs and activities inside the perimeter	Selected cell activity only
ACCESS TO JOBS	All, both inside and outside the perimeter	All inside, and supervised jobs outside the perimeter	All inside the perimeter	Only day jobs inside the perimeter	None
MEAL MOVEMENT	Unrestricted	Unrestricted	Under staff observation	Controlled and supervised	Fed in cell or on the cellblock

DEFINITIONS: CONTROLLED MOVEMENT: Performed under constant staff observation and direction, usually on a check-out/check-in basis.

APPENDIX E

LIMITATIONS OF THE NIC MODEL

The NIC's Model Systems Approach to classification can be categorized as an objective, point-based model. Before selecting folders in order to perform a test-implementation of this approach, the directions for using the Model Systems Approach seemed unambiguous. It was only after real data (in the form of inmate folders sampled for this project) entered the picture that we discovered that even a highly objective classification model can raise some issues which may require judgement calls. The purpose of this section is to point out the types of issues which the data forced us to confront, and the strategies we used to address these issues.

On the initial Inmate Classification-Custody form, there were three items where the approach we chose could conceivably differ from what another group using this instrument may choose. In all three instances, the ambiguities arose due to lapses in the instructions accompanying the classification instrument.

The directions for Item 1 - History of Institutional Violence - ask the user to "consider the individual's entire background of incarcerations for five years prior to the current admission date." A strict interpretation of this instruction would mean that an incident of institutional violence occurring after an inmate's commitment date, but before the date of the inmate's initial classification board should not be considered in determining that inmate's custody-level classification. This would conflict with the NIC's overall intent of producing a classification instrument which relies more heavily on measures of actual behavior rather than on the use of indicators derived from aggregate studies (e.g., age, race, socio/economic variables). In order to more closely follow the NIC's overall intent, and in order to test this instrument in the way we believe it will be used in practice, we decided to depart from the directions as literally stated and to include incidents of institutional violence (e.g., fights) occurring between an inmate's commitment date

and the date of the initial classification board.

The second item - Severity of Current Offense - presented some difficulties because the severity scale included in Appendix C of the NIC report was not perfectly mutually exclusive in allocating offenses to severity categories. Another problem with the severity scales was that the information in the inmates' folders frequently described the offense using terminology and standards which differed from those used in the severity scale. An example of the differences in terminology occurred when rating the severity of drug offenses. Massachusetts General Laws, and therefore the inmates' records, delineate drug offenses by the quantity (measured by weight) of the substance involved, while the severity scale delineated drug offenses by the dollar value of the substance involved. To overcome this problem we obtained a listing of Domestic Drug Prices from the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). The DEA list provides prices by weight by city for each class of drug for the years 1985-1987.

The lack of mutual exclusivity between offenses and severity categories was an issue primarily when the offense was armed robbery, unarmed robbery, or assault and battery. Armed robbery appeared on the severity scale in the categories of highest severity and high severity. The instructions were rather vague in explaining how a high severity armed robbery differed from a highest severity armed robbery. For the purposes of this project, the researchers agreed upon the condition that the official version of the offense must indicate that the perpetrators wielded dangerous weapons in a threatening manner in order for an armed robbery to be counted as an offense of highest severity.

Assault and battery appeared on the severity scale as assault and battery with dangerous weapon-serious injury (Highest Severity) and assault and battery -no injury (Low-Moderate severity). In our data we found several instances of assault and battery resulting in minor injuries. After consultation, we decided to code

these as offenses of moderate severity.

Unarmed robbery did not appear on the severity scale that we used for this project, but it did appear as a governing offense in our sample. After consultation, we decided to categorize this as an offense of moderate severity.

The overall point concerning the issues which arose in determining the severity of the governing offense is that if the DOC does decide to perform classifications using a point-based approach, then time and effort should be expended toward developing an offense severity scale which meets the following specifications.

1. It must include ratings for all offenses which can conceivably occur in the Massachusetts DOC offender population.

2. When one offense appears in more than one severity category (perhaps because of specific circumstances surrounding the commission of the offense), the severity scale must include clear and articulate standards for assigning a specific criminal incident to the appropriate severity category, and;

3. The severity scale must be arranged so that variants of similar offenses which are categorized at different levels of severity (e.g., sale of cocaine 100-199 grams, and sale of cocaine 200 + grams) are categorized using standards that are in alignment with the wording of the relevant statute. For example, if Massachusetts General Laws distinguishes drug offenses by the number of grams of the substance, then the severity scale should use grams as the distinguishing measure, and not use

different measures such as dollar value or weight in pounds.

Item 7 - Prior Felony Convictions - is the final item where our scoring system may differ from a strict interpretation of the NIC's instructions. The NIC's Instructions for this item are:

> Enter the appropriate number of points in the right hand column to reflect the inmate's prior felony conviction history, not including the present conviction.

It is conceivable that these instructions could be interpreted to mean that each felony conviction appearing on the court records is the unit to be counted. An alternative interpretation is to use the criminal event as the unit of analysis. A rationale for this interpretation is that while a single criminal action may involve multipe charges (and subsequently, convictions), the multiple charges are a pheneomenon of the litigation process, and therefore may provide a distorted measure of the offender's propensity to commit a crime.

We chose to use criminal event as the unit of analysis when scoring item 7 because criminal propensity seems to be more closely related to an offender's behavior than the actual number of felony convictions.

The major point of this section is that even a highly objective model of classification will have some loopholes where subjective judgements will have be made. If the DOC decides to pursue the development of a point-based classification system to make the classification process more objective, the NIC's Model Systems Approach seems to be a good starting point, but certain modifications to this system would be recommended. The specific recommendations that follow are based on our test of the NIC model:

1. The variable "History of Institutional Violence" should include

incidents of institutional violence up to the date of the classification board;

2. Time and attention should be devoted to developing a comprehensive severity of offense scale to accompany the classification instrument; and,

3 The offender's criminal history should be assessed using a measure of prior criminal events, rather than counting each felony charge resulting in a conviction.

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