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Correctional Service
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RESEARCH REPORT

COMMUNICATIONS AND CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT

Research Report

Unlawful Departures from Minimum Security Institutions: A Comparative Investigation

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=====**Research Report**=====

**Unlawful Departures from Minimum
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Investigation**

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***UNLAWFUL DEPARTURES FROM MINIMUM
SECURITY INSTITUTIONS: A COMPARATIVE
INVESTIGATION***

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April, 1992

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report, the second in a series on unlawful departures from minimum security facilities compares a group of 'walkaways' to a matched sample of similarly situated offenders who had remained in federal custody. While the first report examined both the "static" (e.g., criminal history) and "dynamic" or situational factors (e.g., personal crises) involved in 'walkaways', a third and final report will examine outcome information (i.e., capture, reclassification, recidivism).

The present investigation is basically an extension of the initial study which found that 'walkaways' were young, single, serving sentences of under four years for property-related offenses, had lengthy criminal records and histories of security incidents while in federal custody. In addition, a systematic review of 'walkaways' file documentation revealed that they were unlikely to have completed high school, had unstable employment records, have criminal associations and suffer from alcohol/drug problems.

Although the results of the initial study profiled 'walkaways' as forming a relatively high risk/high need group of offenders, it was clear that a comparative investigation (i.e., with offenders who had remained in custody) would have to be conducted before arriving at any definitive conclusions. In order to conduct the second study, a matched sample of 70 federal offenders who were similarly situated in minimum security institutions but had remained in custody ('non-walkaways') was randomly selected from the available population in the Ontario region. The matching criteria used for this comparative investigation consisted of the following: 1) date of admission into federal custody, 2) sentence length and 3) minimum security placement during the same time period.

Using the matching criteria, no significant differences were found between 'walkaways' and 'non-walkaways' with respect to sentence length, amount of time (days in) spent in custody before being transferred to a minimum security facility, and amount of time (days in) between placement in minimum security and warrant expiry date. Given that the 'non-walkaway' sample did not significantly differ from the 'walkaways' on any of the matching variables, it was decided that they could be used as a comparison group against whom analyses could be conducted.

Comparisons between 'walkaways' and 'non-walkaways' were conducted using the following: 1) general demographics, 2) criminal records, 3) prison incident history and 4) offender classification. The results of the comparative analyses revealed that 'walkaways' could not be distinguished from 'non-walkaways' on marital status or race. Also, there was a similar proportion of cases in both groups whose major admitting offence(s) was violent and who were serving their first federal term.

Of special interest were the comparisons made between 'walkaways' and 'non-walkaways' on criminal records and prison incident history. Comparative analyses demonstrated that 'walkaways' had significantly more criminal convictions on record than 'non-walkaways'. Moreover, the 'walkaway' sample was found to have significantly more criminal convictions for previous escapes and being Unlawfully at Large. It is perhaps worthwhile mentioning that the 'walkaways' also had more than double the number of convictions for Break and Enter offences. Interestingly, 'non-walkaways' had significantly more convictions for impaired driving and drug-related offenses than those who had unlawfully departed from minimum security facilities.

In examining the prison incident history of the two samples, it was found that 'walkaways' had significantly more security incidents while in federal custody than 'non-walkaways'. It is noteworthy that nearly three out of four offenders in the 'walkaway' sample had at least one security-related incident and more than a third had been involved in three or more incidents. While this study found that 'walkaways' were involved in three times as many incidents as 'non-walkaways', the 'walkaways' were also discovered to have been involved in more incidents of violence, contraband and escape while in federal custody.

After having retrospectively administered the Custody Rating Scale and the Statistical Information on Recidivism scale to both 'walkaway' and 'non-walkaway' groups, the 'walkaways' were found to be rated as requiring higher levels of custody and scored as poorer risks for recidivism. Upon closer examination of Custody Rating Scale subscale scores (i.e., Institutional Adjustment and Security Risk), it was found that 'walkaways' were significantly at higher risk for adjustment problems while in prison relative to their 'non-walkaway' counterparts.

Using discriminant analysis, a statistical technique in which linear combinations of variables are used to distinguish between two or more categories of cases (i.e., 'walkaway' and 'non-walkaway'), we evaluated a prediction model based upon the following set of variables: age, criminal conviction record, prison incident history and classification scores. The overall classification rate was found to be nearly 81% (n = 113). This means that using a prediction model in this study we could correctly identify eight out of ten offenders as either a 'walkaway' (n = 59) or 'non-walkaway' (n = 54) case. Moreover, the classification results table showed that the analysis was most successful in classifying cases from the 'walkaway' group (84.3%).

Although this second study was limited to an examination of "static" (e.g., criminal history) factors, it confirms the findings of the initial study in that those offenders who unlawfully depart from minimum security settings appear to be high risk for adjustment problems while in prison and re-offending in the community. Perhaps most noteworthy in this investigation was the finding that objective intake assessment procedures for classifying criminal offenders could differentiate between those who remain in custody from those who unlawfully depart

from custody. It would appear that this study has also served to demonstrate the relative efficacy of these classification instruments in meeting important correctional objectives.

In conclusion, the findings suggest that objective classification instruments administered upon intake to prison, and the development of efficient and valid assessment procedures specifically adapted for inmates nearing release, would increase our ability to identify those offenders who are likely to experience adjustment difficulties while in minimum security facilities. Once identified, case management practices (i.e., intensive supervision and augmented service delivery) which have been adopted for managing high risk offenders in the community could be similarly applied to higher risk cases in minimum security settings.

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UNLAWFUL DEPARTURES FROM MINIMUM SECURITY INSTITUTIONS: A COMPARATIVE INVESTIGATION

I. INTRODUCTION

There have been only a few correctional studies examining unlawful departures from minimum security facilities (Camp & Camp, 1987). Perhaps the paucity of research in this area is due in part to the lack of drama that is inherent in having simply slipped away from custody on foot, as opposed to the daring feats associated with escapes (i.e., scaling walls, hiding in a truck). Nonetheless, the risk an offender poses for a 'walkaway' from minimum security facilities is still an area of critical concern to those tasked with managing offenders in these settings. For the most part, minimum security facilities are open environments which are resourced to provide offenders with programming opportunities to ease the transition from higher security settings to the community. Criminal offenders placed in these facilities are deemed to be manageable risks and are often nearing their release. In some cases, these individuals may be already on some form of conditional release.

The reasons offenders walk away appear to span a variety of personal, interpersonal and situational problems (Guenther, 1983; Murphy, 1984; Sturrock, Porporino, & Johnston, 1990). Recently, we found that some of the most important factors underlying 'walkaways' were the following: family problems, boredom, program unavailability, threats or muscling from other inmates, and intoxication (Johnston & Motiuk, 1992). However, before arriving at any definitive conclusions concerning the 'walkaway' phenomena it was determined that a comparative investigation was required.

II. PRESENT STUDY

The purpose of the present study was to compare a group of federal offenders who had walked away from minimum security facilities to a matched sample of similarly situated offenders who had remained in custody (i.e., 'non-walkaways') on a variety of relevant measures. In order to conduct a comparative investigation, offenders who had unlawfully departed from minimum security facilities over a specified time period were to be matched with offenders who had remained in custody, had the same sentence length, and had been in minimum security institutions at the same time. Aside from these matching criteria, 'non-walkaway' offenders would be randomly selected from listings of the available minimum security population.

Information on 'walkaway' and 'non-walkaway' offenders was retrieved from the following automated sources: Correctional Service Canada's (CSC) Offender Information System (OIS) and Security Incident System (SIS), as well as the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) system. These sources of information were also used to administer several standardized classification instruments: the Custody Rating Scale (Porporino, Motiuk, & Johnston, 1989) and the Statistical Information on Recidivism scale (Nuffield, 1982).

A series of comparisons was made between the 'walkaway' and 'non-walkaway' offenders in order to determine if there were any factors which might distinguish these two groups in terms of offender characteristics, criminal conviction record, prison incident history and classification.

III. METHOD

Subjects

A 'walkaway' sample of 70 federally sentenced male offenders who had unlawfully departed from minimum security facilities in the Ontario region over a 15 month period were selected for this study. The minimum security settings included: Bath Institution (n = 26), Beaver Creek Institution (n = 6), Frontenac Institution (n = 29) and Pittsburg Institution (n = 9). Each 'walkaway' in the sample was matched to an offender who had remained in custody on the basis of the following criteria: 1) date of admission, 2) sentence length and 3) minimum security placement.

Matching Procedure

The matching criteria were applied as follows. First, a sampling population was created of all federal male offenders who were in Ontario minimum security institutions (i.e., Bath, Beaver Creek, Frontenac, Pittsburg) during the time period in which the 'walkaways' took place. Then, offenders who had remained in custody were selected on the basis of their admission date to federal corrections and length of sentence. In total, 771 such offenders were in Ontario minimum security facilities during the sampling period. From this pool of potential candidates, 70 cases were randomly selected and formed a comparison group of 'non-walkaways'.

Table 1 presents comparisons between 'walkaways' and 'non-walkaways' on the three matching variables: 1) sentence length, 2) the amount of time (in days) spent in custody before being transferred to a minimum security facility, and 3) the amount of time (in days) between placement in minimum security and warrant expiry date. As Table 1 shows, 'walkaways' did not significantly differ from 'non-walkaways' on any of the matching variables used in this investigation.

Table 1.

Group Comparisons: Matching Variables

Variables	'Walkaways'	'Non-Walkaways'	p
Sentence Length*	3.73 years	3.81 years	ns
Days Until Minimum Placement	M = 300.4 SD = 417.5	M = 302.1 SD = 435.0	ns
Days from Minimum Placement to Warrant Expiry	M = 1,139.7 SD = 1,013.7	M = 1,123.2 SD = 1,004.9	ns

Note: M = Mean (average), SD = Standard Deviation, ns = non-significant.

* 'Sentence Length' excludes the lifers in each group (n = 1)

Data Gathering Process

Data were gathered on the entire study sample of 140 federal offenders from a variety of sources. The CSC's automated Offender Information System (OIS) provided general demographics (e.g., age, marital status), current offence characteristics (e.g., type), as well as correctional process variables (e.g., admission type, parole eligibility dates, warrant expiry date).

CSC's automated SIS database provided information on all recorded incidents (e.g., possession of contraband, inmate assault) that an offender was involved in during their period(s) of federal supervision. This information was broken down into the following categories: violence (e.g., assault on inmate, assault on staff, inmate fight), escape (e.g., prison breach, 'walkaway', fail to return from temporary absence), contraband (e.g., possession, under the influence, receiving/transporting), and general behaviour problems (e.g., theft, Protective Custody request, vandalism).

The CPIC system was also utilized. CPIC data are basically comprised of each offenders' criminal record. Here, the complete offence history of an offender is recorded, which includes all criminal convictions, the date of each conviction, as well as the sentence imposed for each conviction.

The above-noted sources were also used to apply several standardized classification instruments. These included the Custody Rating Scale (Porporino et al., 1989) and the Statistical Information on Recidivism (SIR) scale (Nuffield, 1982).

The Custody Rating Scale is an empirically derived scale used to assist in the initial penitentiary placement of offenders. It is composed of two separate subscales or dimensions:

1) Institutional Adjustment (IA) and 2) Security Risk (SR). Based on an offender's criminal history, age, offence type, prison history and personal adjustment, Institutional Adjustment and Security Risk scores are calculated and the intersection of these scales classifies an offender into one of three custody levels (i.e., minimum [IA < 79.5 and SR < 58.5], medium [IA < 94.5 and SR < 133.5 and (IA > 79.5 or SR > 58.50)], maximum [IA > 94.5 or SR > 133.5]).

The Statistical Information on Recidivism scale utilizes offence history, social history and personal information on offenders to calculate a score which rates the offender in terms of their risk for recidivism. These scores correspond to five different levels of risk; "Poor" (-30 to -9), "Fair to Poor" (-8 to -5), "Fair" (-4 to 0), "Good" (+1 to +5), and "Very Good" (+6 to +27). It should be noted, however, that since complete information on each offender could not be captured in order to precisely score several items on the Custody Rating Scale and Statistical Information on Recidivism scale (e.g., "street stability", degree of alcohol/drug abuse), it was decided to give offenders the benefit of the doubt and score in the positive direction (i.e., towards under-classification in terms of security and risk rating) where information was ambiguous or lacking. That is, if there was uncertainty on any of the rating questions, a minimum score was entered. There were few instances where these adjustments had to be made.

IV. RESULTS

A. General Demographics

Table 2 presents background characteristics for the 'walkaway' and 'non-walkaway' groups. Statistical analyses revealed that the 'walkaways' were younger than the 'non-walkaway' group ($p < .001$), and that the average age difference was approximately 9 years. There were no significant differences between the two groups in terms of the following: marital status, race, serving sentences for offenses falling under Bill C-67 definition (e.g., violent offenses against persons excluding homicide) or number of previous incarcerations or jail terms (defined as 30 days or more). Although there was a tendency for 'walkaway' offenders to have served shorter periods in higher security custody before their transfer to minimum security, the difference between them and 'non-walkaways' was not statistically significant.

Table 2.

Group Comparisons: General Demographics

Variables	'Walkaways'	'Non-Walkaways'	p
Age:	M = 27.2 yrs. SD = 6.2	M = 36.2 yrs. SD = 10.0	<.001
Marital Status:			
Single	58.5%	44.3%	
Married	41.5%	55.7%	ns
Race:			
Caucasian	97.1%	88.6%	
Other	2.8%	11.4%	ns
Violent Offence(s):	28.6%	25.7%	ns
First Federal Term:	55.7%	64.3%	ns

Note: M = Mean (average), SD = Standard Deviation, ns = non-significant.

B. Criminal Conviction Record

The criminal conviction histories of the 'walkaways' and 'non-walkaways' are presented in Table 3. We note that the most notable difference between the two groups was in relation to the number of Break and Enter convictions. 'Walkaways' had more than double the number of convictions for Break and Enter as compared to 'non-walkaways'. Interestingly, 'non-walkaways' were found to have had more convictions for impaired driving ($p < .05$) and drug-related offenses ($p < .01$).

Table 3.

Group Comparisons: Criminal Conviction Record

Type of Conviction	'Walkaways' Mean (SD)	'Non-Walkaways' Mean (SD)	p
2nd Degree Murder	.01 (.12)	.03 (.24)	ns
Manslaughter	.01 (.12)	.01 (.12)	ns
Assault	.76 (1.09)	.77 (1.26)	ns
Sexual	.03 (.17)	.06 (.29)	ns
Robbery	1.04 (1.62)	.71 (1.47)	ns
Escape	.50 (.94)	.13 (.44)	< .01
UAL	.36 (.85)	.06 (.29)	< .01
Fail Supervision	.70 (.89)	.70 (1.36)	ns
Break and Enter	9.63 (13.38)	4.14 (7.59)	< .01
Theft	1.99 (3.40)	1.64 (2.90)	ns
Possession of Stolen Property	2.99 (4.75)	2.50 (6.75)	ns
Impaired Driving	.60 (1.19)	1.49 (3.62)	< .05
Drugs	.70 (1.20)	1.77 (2.95)	< .01
Auto/Traffic	.83 (1.38)	.83 (2.21)	ns
Weapons	.51 (1.03)	.51 (.76)	ns
TOTAL	31.11 (27.34)	22.87 (19.66)	< .04

Note: Mean = Average, SD = Standard Deviation, ns = non-significant.

C. Prison Incident History

In Table 4, we present the number of security incidents (i.e., violence, contraband, behavior problems, escape, etc.) recorded while in federal custody for both the 'walkaway' and 'non-walkaway' samples. Statistical analyses revealed that 'walkaways' were significantly more likely to have had security incidents than the matched 'non-walkaway' sample ($p < .01$). It is noteworthy that nearly three out four offenders in the 'walkaway' sample had at least one security incident and more than a third had been involved in three or more incidents.

Table 4.

Group Comparisons: Prison Incident History

Number of Incidents	'Walkaways'	'Non-Walkaways'
None	24.3%	65.7%
One	24.3%	11.4%
Two	14.3%	8.6%
Three or more	36.9%	14.1%

Table 5 presents the mean number of types of security incidents for both the 'walkaway' and 'non-walkaway' groups. Overall, the results indicated that 'walkaways' as a group were involved in three times as many incidents as 'non-walkaways'. Furthermore, 'walkaways' were found to be significantly more involved in incidents of violence ($p < .01$), contraband ($p < .02$) and escape ($p < .01$) as compared to 'non-walkaways'.

Table 5.

Group Comparisons: Type of Prison Incidents

Type of Incident	'Walkaways' Mean (SD)	'Non-Walkaways' Mean (SD)	p
Violence	.73 (1.35)	.20 (.60)	< .01
Contraband	.60 (1.18)	.21 (.56)	< .02
Behaviour Problems	.30 (.64)	.16 (.44)	ns
Escape	.34 (.93)	.04 (.27)	< .01
Other	.59 (1.16)	.39 (1.12)	ns
Total Incidents	2.76 (3.86)	1.01 (1.97)	< .001

Note: Mean = Average, SD = Standard Deviation, ns = non-significant.

D. Offender Classification

Retrospectively, we administered to each 'walkaway' and 'non-walkaway' in the two study samples both the Custody Rating Scale and the Statistical Information on Recidivism scale. From the scores derived from these two classification instruments we statistically compared the 'walkaway' and 'non-walkaway' groups to determine whether there were any meaningful differences between them. An inspection of Table 6 reveals that the 'walkaways' were found to be rated as requiring higher levels of custody ($p < .001$) and that they scored as poorer risks for recidivism ($p < .001$). Interestingly, a further breakdown of Custody Rating Scale total scores into Institutional Adjustment and Security Risk components showed that 'walkaways' were significantly at higher risk to experience adjustment problems while in prison relative to their 'non-walkaway' counterparts ($p < .001$).

Table 6.

Group Comparisons: Classification Systems

Instrument	'Walkaways'		'Non-Walkaways'		p
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	
SIR	-9.93	(4.94)	.54	(8.90)	<.001
CRS: IA	43.69	(14.21)	25.34	(12.85)	<.001
CRS: SR	60.27	(11.00)	57.62	(19.63)	ns
CRS: Total	103.96	(20.48)	83.44	(25.71)	<.001

Note: Mean = Average, SD = Standard Deviation, ns = non-significant.

SIR = Statistical Information on Recidivism Scale

CRS = Custody Rating Scale; IA = Institutional Adjustment, SR = Security Risk

E. Prediction Model

In order to "discriminate" between 'walkaway' and 'non-walkaway' cases and predict into which category or group a particular case falls, we attempted to construct a prediction model based upon the values of the following set of variables: age, total number of convictions, number of convictions for break and enter, number of convictions for escape, total number of incidents while in federal custody, number of escapes while in federal custody, CRS Institutional Adjustment and SIR scores. Then, using discriminant analysis, a statistical technique in which linear combinations of variables are used to distinguish between two or more categories of cases, we evaluated our classification model. It was expected that this procedure would tell us what proportion of cases are classified correctly and if there is evidence of any systematic misclassification of cases.

In Table 7, we present the overall classification rate which is nearly 81% (n = 113). That is, we found that using our prediction model as described above we could correctly identify eight out of ten offenders as being either a 'walkaway' (n = 59) or 'non-walkaway' case (n = 54). Moreover, the classification results table shows that the analysis was most successful in classifying cases from the 'walkaway' group (84.3%).

Table 7.

Group Comparisons: Prediction Model

PREDICTED GROUP	ACTUAL GROUP	
	'Walkaway'	'Non-walkaway'
'Walkaway'	59 (84.3%)	16 (22.9%)
'Non-walkaway'	11 (15.7)	54 (77.1%)
Total	70	70

V. DISCUSSION

In comparing a sample of 'walkaways' to a matched group of similarly situated minimum security offenders who had remained in federal custody, a number of interesting and meaningful differences were found. With respect to general demographics, the only distinguishing factor found was that the 'walkaways' were significantly younger than the 'non-walkaway' comparison group (Mean = 27.2 yrs. versus Mean = 36.2 yrs., respectively). While there was a trend for 'walkaways' to be Caucasian, single, and sentenced for major admitting offences which were violent, none of these variables statistically distinguished them from 'non-walkaways'.

There were, however, a number of aspects of the 'walkaways' criminal records which served to distinguish them from 'non-walkaways'. Even though the 'walkaway' and 'non-walkaway' groups were found to have experienced the same number of previous incarcerations, the 'walkaways' had significantly more criminal convictions than their 'non-walkaway' counterparts. In particular, the 'walkaways' had been convicted more times for Break and Enter, and it is noteworthy that in a sample of 70 such offenders, the average number of these charges was nearly 10 per offender ... more than double than that for the 'non-walkaways'. The criminal records of the 'walkaway' sample also included significantly more convictions for previous escapes and being Unlawfully at Large (UAL). Again, the average number of escape/UAL convictions for the 'walkaways' was more than twice that of the 'non-walkaway' group. The 'walkaways' were also involved in significantly more

incidents of violence (e.g., fighting, assault) and contraband (e.g., possession, under the influence) than those who had not unlawfully departed from their minimum security institution.

On the other hand, the 'non-walkaway' group had significantly more convictions for impaired driving and drug-related offenses (e.g., trafficking, possession). In fact, the 'non-walkaways' average number of impaired driving and drug convictions was more than twice that of the 'walkaways'.

In examining the prison incident history of the two groups, the pattern for the 'walkaways' stood in significant contrast to that found for the 'non-walkaways'. Here, it was found that the majority of 'non-walkaways' (65.7%) had no record of prison incidents while for the 'walkaways', only 24.3% had no history of incidents while in federal custody. One out of every three of the 'walkaway' offenders were involved in at least three prior security incidents as compared to 14.1% for the 'non-walkaways'. Overall, the 'walkaways' had on average more than twice the number of security incidents than the 'non-walkaways'.

Another important finding was that 'walkaways' were found to have significantly more incidents of escape (which included previous 'walkaways', UALs, escort escapes, etc.) than the 'non-walkaways'.

When the Custody Rating Scale was applied retrospectively to the two comparison groups it was found that the scores for 'walkaways' were significantly higher than those of the 'non-walkaways'. Upon further examination, it was also found that the 'walkaway' group had significantly higher Institutional Adjustment scores than the 'non-walkaways'. This would indicate that as a whole, the 'walkaway' group would be more likely to

experience adjustment problems in a minimum security setting relative to their 'non-walkaway' counterparts.

The comparative analyses also revealed that the 'walkaway' offenders scored significantly poorer on the Statistical Information on Recidivism scale than the 'non-walkaways'. In fact, the average score obtained for the 'walkaways' categorized them as "poor" risks whereas the 'non-walkaways' fell into a "fair" risk group. This finding indicates that 'walkaways', as a group, pose a higher risk for re-offending in the community.

From a risk management perspective, then, it could be concluded that 'walkaway' offenders, aside from being younger than their 'non-walkaway' counterparts, have a number of distinguishing characteristics. In terms of criminal history, 'walkaways' are mostly property offenders, especially in terms of Break and Enter offenses. In addition, the 'walkaways' are distinguishable by virtue of their histories of custody avoidance, including prior 'walkaways', escapes, and UALs. In retrospect, the administration of objective classification instruments demonstrated that 'walkaways' would be likely candidates for experiencing adjustment difficulties when placed in minimum security environments as compared to the 'non-walkaways'. Moreover, their histories of institutional incidents would seem to support this finding.

The fact that we were able to construct a prediction model using a limited set of variables (i.e., age, conviction record, prison incident history, CRS institutional Adjustment and SIR scores) which could correctly classify nearly 81% of cases calls for some comment. Any objective classification procedure which can discriminate between 'walkaway' and 'non-walkaway' case has some practical value for correctional managers in minimum security

settings. However, before such a classification approach is adopted the model should be tested on another sample to see if it replicates.

Although this second study was limited to an examination of "static" (e.g., criminal history) factors, it confirms the findings of the initial study in that those offenders who unlawfully depart from minimum security settings appear to be high risk for experiencing adjustment problems while in prison and for re-offending in the community.

Perhaps most noteworthy in this investigation was the finding that objective intake assessment procedures for classifying offenders could differentiate between those who remain in custody from those who unlawfully depart from custody. It would appear that this study has also served to demonstrate the relative efficacy of these classification instruments in meeting important correctional objectives.

We could conclude the following: the use of objective classification instruments administered upon intake to prison, and the development of efficient and valid assessment procedures specifically adapted for inmates nearing release, would increase our ability to identify those offenders who are likely to experience adjustment difficulties while in minimum security facilities. Once identified, those case management practices (i.e., intensive supervision and augmented service delivery) which have been adopted for managing high risk offenders in the community could be similarly applied to higher risk cases in minimum security settings.

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