

Spring 1978

Impulsive and Premeditated Homicide: An Analysis of Subsequent Parole Risk of the Murderer

Alfred B. Jr. Heilbrun

Lynn C. Heilbrun

Kim L. Heilbrun

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarlycommons.law.northwestern.edu/jclc>

 Part of the [Criminal Law Commons](#), [Criminology Commons](#), and the [Criminology and Criminal Justice Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Alfred B. Jr. Heilbrun, Lynn C. Heilbrun, Kim L. Heilbrun, Impulsive and Premeditated Homicide: An Analysis of Subsequent Parole Risk of the Murderer, 69 J. Crim. L. & Criminology 108 (1978)

This Criminology is brought to you for free and open access by Northwestern University School of Law Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology by an authorized editor of Northwestern University School of Law Scholarly Commons.

CRIMINOLOGY

IMPULSIVE AND PREMEDITATED HOMICIDE: AN ANALYSIS OF SUBSEQUENT PAROLE RISK OF THE MURDERER

ALFRED B. HEILBRUN, JR.,* LYNN C. HEILBRUN** AND KIM L. HEILBRUN**

The prevalence of violent crime in the United States has become a growing concern for law enforcement agencies and the general public alike. Considering that a large number of crimes against persons are not identified as such by the courts¹ or go unreported by the victims,² the crisis of mounting violence is undoubtedly worse than official statistics indicate.

The accumulated evidence suggests that membership in minority groups subject to prejudice increases the risk of violence. The rate of violent crime for blacks in the United States far exceeds the rate of violent crime for whites. Impersonal crimes directed toward property are far less characteristic of the black criminal than the white criminal.³ The prevalence of violent crime within a minority group has been reported in other countries as well. The higher rates of violent crime in England among the Irish and West Indian minorities of London⁴ and Birmingham⁵ are a matter of record. More general analysis of Commonwealth immigration into England has led to the conclusion that delinquency rates were generally low, except for violent crimes.⁶ Migrant workers of various

European nationalities more frequently committed crimes against persons, although their overall prevalence figures were actually lower than for the populations of the host countries.⁷ Homicides committed in Israel between 1950-1964 were more frequently committed by non-Jews (mostly Arabs) than by oriental and western Jews.⁸

Various theories have been proposed to explain the high rate of criminal violence observed in minority groups subject to prejudice. Dollard⁹ suggested that the built-up anger produced by racial discrimination finally culminates in assault or homicide. The fact that violent crimes perpetrated by blacks are almost always intraracial¹⁰ was anticipated within the Dollard theory by the assumption that blacks' displace pent-up hostility onto members of their own race because of the power attributed to whites.

Wolfgang and Ferracuti¹¹ have offered a theory of the "violent subculture" to account for the relationships among (1) the frustrations of minority group membership, (2) the aggressive violence found in the minority criminal and (3) the displacement of violence on to other minority group members rather than on to the source of the prejudice itself. They have proposed that the lower-class subculture, frustrated by deprivation, adopts values which include quick resort to physical aggression as a sign of daring, courage, or defense of status. Allegiance to these values of violence could

* Professor of Psychology, Emory University.

** Research Assistants, Department of Psychology, Emory University.

¹ Mann, Friedman & Friedman, *Characteristics of Self-Reported Violent Offenders versus Court Identified Violent Offenders*, 4 INT'L J. CRIMINOLOGY & PENOLOGY 69 (1976).

² NATIONAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE INFORMATION AND STATISTICS, LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION, U.S. DEP'T OF JUSTICE, CRIME IN THE NATION'S FIVE LARGEST CITIES, NATIONAL CRIME PANEL SURVEYS OF CHICAGO, DETROIT, LOS ANGELES, NEW YORK AND PHILADELPHIA (1974).

³ H. BLOCH & G. GEIS, MAN, CRIME, AND SOCIETY 180-82 (1970); C. KELLEY, CRIME IN THE UNITED STATES: UNIFORM CRIME REPORTS (1972); Wolfgang, *Race and Crime*, in CHANGING CONCEPTS OF CRIME AND ITS TREATMENT 46-50 (H. Klare ed. 1966).

⁴ F. MCCLINTOCK, CRIMES OF VIOLENCE 39, 69 (1963).

⁵ J. LAMBERT, CRIME, POLICE AND RACE RELATIONS 63 (1970).

⁶ Bottoms, *Delinquency Amongst Immigrants*, 8 RACE 357 (1967).

⁷ Ferracuti, *European Migration and Crime*, in CRIME AND CULTURE: ESSAYS IN HONOR OF THORSTEN SELLIN 206-11 (M. Wolfgang ed. 1968).

⁸ Landau, *Pathologies Among Homicide Offenders: Some Cultural Profiles*, 15 BRIT. J. CRIMINOLOGY 157, 158-60 (1975).

⁹ J. DOLLARD, CASTE AND CLASS IN A SOUTHERN TOWN 283-85 (1937).

¹⁰ M. WOLFGANG, PATTERNS IN CRIMINAL HOMICIDE (1958); Pitman & Handy, *Patterns in Criminal Aggravated Assault*, 55 J. CRIM. C.L. & P.S. 462, 467-68 (1964).

¹¹ Wolfgang & Ferracuti, *The Subculture of Violence*, in THE SOCIOLOGY OF CRIME AND DELINQUENCY 382 (M. Wolfgang, L. Savitz & S. Johnston eds. 1970).

readily account for the high rates of assault and homicide crimes among lower-class members. Displacement of aggression from the source of frustration (*i.e.*, more privileged classes) to less threatening members of a lower-class minority is assumed. One limitation of the violent subculture theory, however, is that it applies equally to all residents of the slum culture, blacks and whites alike.¹² In short, the theory is a better explanation of class violence differences than of differences in rates of racial violence.

The tendency of violent crimes to involve less self-controlled actions¹³ suggests yet another way of explaining the extent of violence within minority groups. If the conditions of minority membership, produced by prejudice and poverty, are such as to deter the development of self-control, then the prevalence of crimes involving impulsive aggression within the minority could be expected. A review of the evidence on black and white attitudes and values¹⁴ reveals that blacks are characterized by estrangement, cynicism and expectations of dishonesty and double dealing in others. Such negativism should make it especially difficult for blacks to generate the trust or empathy necessary for effective self-control. For example, it is difficult to see why black minority members *should* defer motivated action, delay gratification or experience guilt, all essential ingredients of self-regulation. The importance of self-control was put to empirical test by comparing not only the degree of impulsivity in the violent crimes of blacks and whites but also by examining impulse control, assessed directly on a battery of measures.¹⁵ The results pointed toward the greater impulsivity of the black violent criminal on each comparison, relative to either white violent or black nonviolent criminals. It is noteworthy that the proposed problems in impulse control for blacks as an explanation of the high rate of violence is fully compatible with either the Dollard or the Wolfgang and Ferracuti proposals which attempt to account for the same phenomenon.

The hypothesis that self-control problems contribute to the prevalence of violent crime in the black minority within this country also holds po-

¹² Clinard, *The Nature of the Slum*, in *CRIME IN THE CITY* 20-22 (D. Glaser ed. 1970).

¹³ Heilbrun, Knopf & Bruner, *Criminal Impulsivity and Violence and Subsequent Parole Outcome*, 13 *BRIT. J. CRIMINOLOGY* 368 (1976).

¹⁴ Gynther, *White Norms and Black MMPIs: A Prescription for Discrimination?*, 78 *PSYCH. BULL.* 386 (1972).

¹⁵ Heilbrun & Heilbrun, *The Black Minority Criminal and Violent Crime: The Role of Self-Control*, *BRIT. J. CRIMINOLOGY* (publication forthcoming).

tential relevance for understanding parole behavior. If impulsivity of the lower-class black makes it more likely that he will breach the law in a violent way, it follows that the same impulsivity will interfere generally with adherence to the strict expectations of parole and will increase the specific risk of violent recidivism. However, this logical expectation is either contradicted or left unsupported by vast evidence on parole outcome. Numerous studies published over the past half century¹⁶ have consistently reported that violent criminals were better—not worse—parole risks than nonviolent criminals. Furthermore, a review of the parole outcome literature¹⁷ showed that there was no evidence of racial differences in the rates of success or failure on parole. Perhaps the most discouraging empirical note was struck by a study from our own laboratory,¹⁸ which found that the rated impulsivity of the index crime was a positive predictor of parole success. The more impulsive the prior crime, the more likely the criminal would succeed on parole. In fact, Stanton¹⁹ actually identified the impulsive nature of the violence involved

¹⁶ L. OHLIN, *SELECTION FOR PAROLE: A MANUAL OF PAROLE PREDICTION* (1951); G. VOLD, *PREDICTION METHODS AND PAROLE* (1931); Babst & Mannering, *Probation versus Imprisonment for Similar Types of Offenders: A Comparison by Subsequent Violations*, 2 *J. RES. CRIME & DELINQUENCY* 60, 69 (1965); Carney, *Predicting Recidivism in a Medium Security Correctional Institution*, 58 *J. CRIM. L. & C.* 338, 342 (1969); Davis, *A Study of Adult Probation Violation Rates by Means of the Cohort Approach*, 55 *J. CRIM. L. & P.S.* 70, 76-77 (1964); Fildes & Gottfredson, *Cluster Analysis in a Parolee Sample*, 9 *J. RES. CRIME & DELINQUENCY* 2, 9-10 (1972); Gottfredson & Ballard, *Differences in Parole Decisions Associated with Decision-Makers*, 3 *J. RES. CRIME & DELINQUENCY* 112 (1966); Gottfredson, Ballard & O'Leary, *Uniform Parole Reports: A Feasibility Study*, 3 *J. RES. CRIME & DELINQUENCY* 97, 107-08 (1966); Gottfredson, Neithercutt, Nuffield & O'Leary, *Four Thousand Lifetimes: A Study of Time Served and Parole Outcome*, NATIONAL COUNCIL ON CRIME & DELINQUENCY MONOGRAPH (1973). Neithercutt, *Parole Violation Patterns and Commitment Offense*, 9 *J. RES. CRIME & DELINQUENCY* 87, 89 (1972); Tibbits, *Success or Failure on Parole Can Be Predicted: A Study of the Records of 3,000 Youths Paroled from the Illinois State Reformatory*, 22 *J. CRIM. L. & C.* 11, 22 (1931-32); Warner, *Determining Parole from the Massachusetts Reformatory*, 14 *J. CRIM. L. & C.* 172, 188 (1923-24); Wenk, Gottfredson & Radwin, *A Modern Information System for Uniform Parole Reports Data*, 7 *J. RES. CRIME & DELINQUENCY* 58, 61 (1970); CALIF. DEPT. OF THE YOUTH AUTHORITY, *A METHOD OF DETERMINING BASE EXPECTATIONS FOR USE IN THE ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTIVENESS OF CORRECTIONAL TREATMENT* (Research Report No. 3, 1959).

¹⁷ THE FUTURE OF PAROLE 150-51 (D. West ed. 1972).

¹⁸ Heilbrun, Knopf & Bruner, *supra* note 13, at 371-73.

¹⁹ Stanton, *Murderers on Parole*, 15 *CRIME & DELINQUENCY* 149, 154 (1969).

as the theoretical basis for explaining why murderers were especially good parole risks. He concluded that their criminal acts were motivated by momentary passion, aroused under extraordinary conditions, and the loss of control involved in the murder was an exceptional circumstance unlikely to be repeated.

One aspect of the methodology common to all of these parole outcome studies is the use of a limited time frame within which parole outcome was determined. While the tracking period ranged from six months to several years, in no study were all parolees followed until the outcome was confirmed by discharge from parole (success) or a return to prison because of technical violation or criminal recidivism (failure). This procedure runs the risk of classifying eventual parole failures as successes, since many who have met parole expectations up to the end of the tracking period may subsequently violate parole. The shorter the tracking period, the greater the potential error. This methodological problem was circumvented in a recent investigation²⁰ by tracking each parole case until a final outcome was determined by discharge or a return to prison. The results contradict the trend indicated by the prior evidence on parole outcome. Black prisoners were poorer parole risks than white prisoners, but, more specifically, black violent criminals were the poorest risk of all. The theoretical expectation that deficiencies in self-control would play a role in understanding not only the prevalence of violent crime in the black minority but also in understanding parole difficulties in the same group received at least indirect support from these results.

THE PRESENT INVESTIGATION

The present study was an attempt to investigate more directly the relationship between race, criminal impulsivity, violence and parole behavior. Two methodological considerations were paramount. First, the described methodology which allows all parole cases studied to be clearly defined as successes or failures was employed. Second, the potential contribution of impulsivity was evaluated within a group of parolees convicted of one particular violent and often impulsive crime (murder). Presumably, it would be a stricter test of the significance of prior impulsive crime in determining parole outcome if it were shown to be important

within a more homogeneous sample of prisoners.

Several predictions were made based upon prior theoretical proposals and empirical evidence relating deficits in self-control to violence and parole failure:

- (1) Criminals committing more impulsive murders will represent poorer parole risks than criminals committing more premeditated murders.
- (2) Black criminals will have committed more impulsive murders than white criminals.
- (3) Black murderers will be poorer parole risks than white murderers.
- (4) Black murderers will be more likely to violate parole by committing another violent crime than white murderers.
- (5) Impulsive murderers will be more likely to violate parole by committing another violent crime than premeditated murderers.

METHODOLOGY

The Parole Sample

The records of 164 male criminals were examined,²¹ with each subject meeting three criteria: (1) incarceration in the Georgia prison system following conviction for murder, (2) subsequent parole from prison and (3) parole completion, either by successful discharge or by termination due to a technical violation or commission of a new crime. The sample included fifty-eight whites and 106 blacks and represented all paroled murderers for whom there were final parole decisions in the three-year period between 1973 and 1976. The mean age of successful prisoners at the time of parole was 45.81 years and for unsuccessful prisoners, 40.78 years. Successful parolees had achieved a mean educational level of 6.69 years, and the mean educational level of the unsuccessful parolees was 5.45 years.

The success rate for this sample of parolees was only 44%, although the high success rate during the early phases of parole, found so frequently in other studies of violent criminals, was noted. At the end of the first half-year of parole, by which time Gottfredson, Ballard and O'Leary report nearly a quarter of the failures on parole are re-

²⁰ Heilbrun, *Race, Criminal Violence, and Length of Parole: A New Look at Parole Outcome*, BRIT. J. CRIMINOLOGY (publication forthcoming).

²¹ The investigators wish to express their appreciation to Mr. Cecil McCall, who was Chairman of the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles at the time of this study, for his permission to conduct it and to the Parole Board staff who facilitated our work.

ported to occur,²² only 4% of this sample of murderers had violated parole. The average length of time on parole prior to failure was 28.20 months, with a range of 1-91 months. The average period prior to discharge from parole was 54.39 months with a range of 26-133 months.

Measurement of the Variables

The impulsivity-premeditation variable was measured by means of ratings by the two junior investigators from the circumstances surrounding the crimes, gathered by the arresting authorities at the time of the crime's commission and contained within the parole board files. Discussion of the meaning of impulsive or premeditated homicide was held among the three investigators prior to initiating the rating procedures. Impulsive murder was commonly understood as the killing of another in which the thought or instigation to act did not arise prior to the immediate situation involving the fatal aggression. Premeditated murder was understood to mean the killing of another in which the thought and instigation to act had occurred before the immediate situation involving the homicide. Specific criteria identified within the descriptions of the criminal circumstances as useful in reaching these decisions included prior familiarity with the victim, special disinhibiting conditions such as drunkenness or strong emotional arousal and prior confrontations with the victim. Although both raters were cognizant of parole outcome at the time of the ratings due to the nature of the Parole Board filing system, neither was aware of the hypothesis or predictions under investigation until the study was completed. Neither rater could retrospectively identify any systematic bias in her ratings based upon prior knowledge of parole outcome.

The ratings were made along a four-point scale ranging from "clearly not planned and clearly a spontaneous act" (score = 1) at one end to "clearly planned and clearly not a spontaneous act" (score = 4) at the other. The intervening points were intended to convey less clear situations in which the killings were probably spontaneous (score = 2) or were probably planned (score = 3). The reliability of the impulsivity ratings was ascertained by having the judges rate twenty of the records in common. The high correlation between

the two independent sets of judgments ($r = .94$) indicates a very satisfactory level of agreement for the impulsivity scores.

Success on parole was defined by discharge, whereas failure involved return to prison following either technical violation of parole or criminal recidivism.

FINDINGS

Effect of Impulsivity and Race Upon Parole Outcome

The mean impulsivity ratings for the homicidal crimes of successful white ($\bar{X} = 2.62$) and black ($\bar{X} = 2.57$) parolees were compared to those obtained by unsuccessful white ($\bar{X} = 2.08$) and black ($\bar{X} = 2.38$) parolees by means of a factorial analysis of variance for unequal cell frequencies.²³ There was one significant effect: those who failed on parole had committed more impulsive homicides than those who subsequently were successful ($F = 4.07$; $df = 1,160$; $p = .05$). The predicted relationship between prior impulsive violence and parole failure was confirmed (prediction (1)).

A closer inspection of the parole outcomes for those prisoners who were unequivocally judged to have engaged in impulsive homicide (scores of 1) or premeditated homicide (scores of 4) offers a clearer picture of how the self-control factor may influence parole behavior for murderers. The frequencies of success and failure for these extremes (races combined) were:

	impulsive murderers	premeditated murderers
success on parole	13	22
failure on parole	29	18

The chi square value of 4.84 ($p < .05$ for 1 df) was significant, and these frequencies, examined horizontally, reflect the same poorer parole performance of impulsive relative to premeditated murderers as did the parametric analysis. However, vertical examination of these data suggests that this effect is due almost exclusively to the impulsive murderers. Over twice the number of impulsive criminals failed on parole than were successful, whereas almost equal numbers of premeditated murders were successful and unsuccessful.

The same analysis of parole outcome for prisoners receiving less clearcut impulsivity—pre-

²² Gottfredson, Ballard & O'Leary, *Uniform Parole Reports: A feasibility study*, 3 J. RES. CRIME & DELINQUENCY 97, 107-08 (1966).

²³ B. WINER, *STATISTICAL PRINCIPLES IN EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN* (1962).

meditation scores of 2 or 3 revealed no relationships ($X^2 = .58$ for 1 df , $p > .30$), as shown below:

	probably impulsive murderers	probably premeditated murderers
success on parole	26	11
failure on parole	28	17

The finding that parole failures had committed more impulsive murders relative to successful parolees was obtained without considering two potentially important variables. First, length of time on parole prior to violation or discharge was not included in the analysis. However, the negligible overall correlation between the temporal factor and impulsivity of the crime ($r = .10$) suggests that parole time is unimportant as a control variable. It remained a possibility that duration of parole might be related to impulsivity within the unsuccessful group only and that the overall correlation was misleading. To test this, parole failures were split into two groups using median time before violation (22 months) as the cutting-off point. A two-by-two (black/white versus short-term/long-term failure) analysis of variance then was conducted for degree of impulsivity. This analysis confirmed the correlational finding by showing no race, duration or interaction effects (all $F_s < 1.00$). There was no difference in impulsivity between prisoners who violated parole early and those who did so later.

A second variable left uncontrolled in the race-by-parole outcome analysis of impulsivity scores was the age of the prisoner at the time of parole. As reported in the description of the parole sample, the unsuccessful prisoners were five years younger than those who succeeded on parole. Moreover, an inverse relationship between age and recidivism is a well-established finding. The age difference between our parole outcome groups allows for the possibility that age was the basic factor determining the finding that poor parole risks had been more impulsive in their crimes. If younger prisoners had committed more impulsive crimes and older prisoners less impulsive crimes, our results could be explained just as readily by age as by impulse control. This issue was addressed by determining the overall correlation between impulsiveness of the murder and subsequent age at parole. The fact that no correlation was found ($r = .03$) indicates that age cannot be used to explain the relationship found between impulsivity and parole outcome.

The race-by-parole outcome analysis of variance gave no hint of a race effect of impulsivity within the sample of murderers ($F < 1.00$). Black murderers ($X = 2.47$) had not committed more impulsive crimes than white murderers ($X = 2.28$). Prediction (2) received no support.

Nonparametric analysis of the ratio of success to failure on parole for black murderers (51:55) relative to the ratio for white murderers (21:37) disclosed no significant difference between them ($X^2 = 2.16$, $df = 1$, $p > .10$). Black murderers were not poorer parole risks than white murderers. Prediction (3) was not confirmed.

Impulsivity, Race and Type of Parole Failure

This analysis is particularly concerned with the type of violations evidenced by the 56% of the sample who eventually failed on parole. The first question to be answered is whether there is a difference in the parole violations of the white and black murderers. Table I summarizes the various bases for parole revocation. Considering three general categories of parole revocation (violent recidivism, nonviolent recidivism and technical violation), comparison reveals a substantial difference between white and black criminals ($X^2 = 25.95$, $df = 2$, $p < .001$). The most distinctive feature of this difference resides in the high rate of violent recidivism among the black murderers (47% of all parole failures) compared to the white (11% of all parole failures). Prediction (4) is confirmed.

Closer inspection of the technical violations reveals yet further parole failure differences between the two races ($X^2 = 27.91$, $df = 3$, $p < .001$). Whereas both groups had a substantial number of drinking-related violations (64% for white and 43% for blacks), firearm violations were far more characteristic of the black sample (43%) than of the white sample (7%). A greater potential for violence among the black technical violators might be inferred from the frequency of firearm possession offenses on parole.

Does the impulsivity of the prior homicide bear a relationship to the occurrence of violent crime on parole? To answer this, the impulsivity scores for the twenty-nine violent recidivists²⁴ were compared to those obtained for the remaining sixty-two parole violators (races combined). The violent

²⁴ This categorization is based upon the Federal Bureau of Investigation system of classification which defines violent crime as including murder, manslaughter, assault, robbery, sexual offenses and kidnapping. See C. KELLEY, *CRIME IN THE UNITED STATES: UNIFORM CRIME REPORTS* (1972).

TABLE I

Bases of Parole Revocation for White and Black Murderers

Type of Violation	Prevalence Among White Murderers	Prevalence Among Black Murderers
Recidivism by Violent Crime	(4)	(26)
Murder	1	7
Assault	0	15
Sexual	1	1
Robbery	2	3
Recidivism by Nonviolent Crime	(5)	(6)
Burglary	3	2
Forgery	0	1
Larceny	1	0
Theft	1	3
Technical Violation	(28)	(23)
Absconding	7	1
Drinking offense	18	10
Possession of a Weapon	2	10
Other	1	2

recidivists received a mean impulsivity rating of 2.83 compared to a mean score of 1.97 for all other parole violators. The difference is highly significant ($t = 3.74$, $df = 90$, $p < .001$); men who broke parole by committing another violent crime had more likely performed a premeditated act of murder than other parole violators. This finding is opposite to prediction (5).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The following summarizes the results of this investigation.

First, there was a tendency for murderers who had failed on parole to have committed more impulsive acts of homicide than murderers who were successful.

Second, the tendency for impulsive murderers to fail on parole was more evident than was the tendency for premeditated murderers to succeed.

Third, there was no difference in the degree of impulsivity characterizing the murders of black and white criminals.

Fourth, no difference in the success/failure rates for parole between black and white murderers could be found.

Fifth, white and black murderers differed in the type of parole failures which occurred. The major difference was in the higher rate of violent criminal recidivism among the black parole failures (47%) than among the white parole failures (11%).

Sixth, the types of parole offenses which led to technical violation and return to prison also dif-

ferred for white and black murderers. Whereas both groups had rather high violation rates for drinking-related problems (64% for whites and 43% for blacks), the black parolees were more frequently considered in violation of parole for possession of firearms (43%) than were whites (7%).

Seventh, murderers who subsequently were arrested for another violent crime while on parole had engaged in more premeditated acts of homicide than had murderers who breached parole by committing a nonviolent crime or by technical violation.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The analysis of murderers on parole produced results which to some extent were consistent with prior speculation and evidence regarding violent criminals in general, but to an even larger extent the present results were unanticipated. The most basic finding of the present study—murderers who failed on parole had demonstrated less self-control in the commission of their crimes—is in line with the theory that impulsiveness contributes to both violent crime and parole failure. Yet there were differences in these relationships when only murderers were considered rather than a cross-section of all types of violent criminals. The major difference was that race no longer emerged as a factor. Neither the greater impulsivity of the black violent criminal nor the stronger contingency between impulsive violent crime and parole failure for the black, both noted in earlier studies,²⁵ was found.

The race effect which did emerge in this study involved the *type* of parole violation demonstrated by white and black murderers. Black parolees were more frequently guilty of committing another violent crime on parole. Yet, it was not the poorer impulse control of the black violent criminal which could be held responsible for the repetition of violence, since the violent recidivist tended to be the man, black or white, who had committed a more premeditated homicide. Impulsivity in the index crime was linked to parole failure by nonviolent recidivism or by breaching the technical requirements of the parole.

If the exclusive goal of the present investigation was to contribute to improve actuarial prediction of parole outcome, the complexities of these results would not be of central concern. It could simply be recorded that murderers on parole turned out to be:

- (1) Moderately high risks of failure (56%)

²⁵ Heilbrun, *supra* notes 15, 20.

compared to prisoners committing other types of crimes;²⁶

- (2) Even greater risks of failure if the homicide were an impulsive act;
- (3) Higher specific risks of once again engaging in a violent crime if black or convicted of a premeditated killing.

However, the concern of the present study goes beyond sheer empiricism. The interest is in the theoretical understanding of self-control in criminal and parole behavior. For that reason, one further piece of evidence, bearing no *a priori* relevance to the study, will be reported.

It stands to reason that premeditation of a violent act will usually require some degree of familiarity with the victim prior to the crime. Reconsideration of the impulsivity-premeditation ratings in

terms of the closeness of relationship between the murderer and his victim verified this fact. A progression of means from more impulsive to more premeditated levels was observed for both blacks (2.18, 2.38, 2.67) and whites (1.70, 2.30, 2.68), depending on whether the homicide victim was a stranger, a friend or acquaintance, or a family member. The effect was statistically significant ($F = 3.83$; $df = 2,152$; $p < .05$). We can conclude that the preconceived murder of a friend or family member represents a common antecedent to repeated violence on parole, since violent recidivism on parole was found to be a correlate of earlier premeditated violence in the present study. More intensive case study will be required to establish how this contingency should best be understood. Is the man who contemplates and executes the murder of a familiar person a more violent individual to begin with or does such an act further erode the inhibitions of violent behavior?

²⁶ Heilbrun, *supra* note 20.