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Patrick G. Donnelly

*University of Dayton*, [pdonnelly1@udayton.edu](mailto:pdonnelly1@udayton.edu)

Brian E. Forschner

*University of Dayton*

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# Predictors of Success in a Co-Correctional Halfway House: A Discriminant Analysis

Patrick G. Donnelly  
Brian E. Forscher

## Abstract

*Considerable research and debate have focused on the effectiveness of community correctional programs. Much of the research does not address the issue of the effectiveness of programs for persons with different types of problems or criminal histories. This article utilizes discriminant analysis to determine the characteristics of persons most likely to succeed in one halfway house. The results indicate that strong socializing and integrating ties in the community and few previous contacts with the criminal justice system are major predictors of success in a halfway house program. The seven discriminators for females are used to accurately predict 87 percent of the female misdemeanants while the nine discriminators for male felons correctly predict 63 percent of the cases.*

## Introduction

While halfway houses existed in the United States as early as 1864, most of the interest and growth in the halfway house movement occurred in the 1960s and '70s (Reid, 1981). The federal government did not use halfway houses until 1961 and, by 1965, there was no more than a few dozen correctional-oriented houses. Recently the International Halfway House Association listed almost 2,300 facilities containing over 100,000 beds (Gatz and Murray, 1981).

This growth may be attributed to both practical and ideological factors. The parole system was expanding and frequently it required that offenders have employment before their release. Since most prisoners found themselves in rural areas far removed from their home communities, finding a job was often difficult. Halfway houses enabled prisoners to return to their communities to search for jobs while the correctional system maintained control over them. In addition, during the 1960s and '70s, many people began to recognize the failure of many rehabilitative efforts in prison. Bailey (1966) and Lipton, Martinson and Wilks (1975) provided much of the evidence of this failure in their reviews of studies evaluating various treatment programs. Finally, the perceived cost-effectiveness of halfway houses over prisons contributed to their growth (Gatz and Murray, 1981).

While these practical considerations gave impetus to the increased use of halfway houses, other factors also played a role. Humanitarian interests sought to eliminate the devastating psychological and economic effects of prisons and the prisonization process. Prisons were suffering from overcrowding, gross idleness of prisoners, and unsafe and unhealthy physical plants. The President's Commission in 1967 stated that "Life in many institutions is at best barren and futile, at worst unspeakably brutal and degrading" (1967:159). There was also a growing realization that criminal behavior originates in the community, that it is a response to a whole set of factors present in the community including school systems, economic conditions, urban decay and racism. This led some reformers to argue that the responsibility for dealing with criminal behavior must begin in the community. The development of the reintegrative model, which found expression in the President's Task Force on Corrections (1967), called for greater emphasis on rebuilding strong ties between the offender and family and community institutions.

More recently, there has been an increasing number of attacks on community-based corrections and louder calls for a renewed emphasis on institutionalization (Allen and Seiter, 1976; Reid, 1981; Scott, 1978). These changes are also due to practical and ideological factors. They result, at least in part, from the findings of numerous research projects that show that the reintegration or community rehabilitation programs

are not effective in reducing future criminality (van den Haag, 1975). Segments of the public create political pressure and call for reinstitutionalization when the local media report that parolees in the community repeat the same heinous violent crimes for which they were originally incarcerated. The ideological element underlying many of the attacks on community-based corrections is the turn toward a more conservative political climate in the country during the late 1970s and early 1980s. This climate leads to efforts to punish rather than rehabilitate individuals for their criminal acts. This movement finds support in the just deserts model of criminal justice which generally emphasizes retribution rather than treatment, recommends flat sentencing and the elimination of parole (Fogel, 1975).

What is underemphasized or ignored by many critics of community-based programs is that these programs may work for many people. Newspapers do not report when parolees and probationers do *not* commit crimes again. Critics may claim that 50 percent of the clients in one program or another later commit another crime. They do not emphasize that 50 percent did not. Frequently, the researchers or evaluators of a program are at fault. Researchers evaluating programs frequently do not examine the effectiveness of the programs for subgroups of the population. They do not analyze whether the programs are more effective for people with certain types of problems or histories (Glaser, 1975; Palmer, 1974). Correctional programs with an overall success rate of 50 percent may be successful 80 percent of the time for one subgroup and 20 percent of the time for another group. Before old programs are thrown out or new programs are created, researchers need to focus on this issue.

This paper will review some of the literature that does attempt to assess the effectiveness of halfway houses, describe the program utilized in one halfway house, and use discriminant analysis to determine the characteristics of persons most likely to succeed in the halfway house environment.

## Review of the Literature

The traditional measure of the success or failure of a correctional program is recidivism. This is consistent with the goal of the whole criminal justice system to reduce crime. However, this may not be a realistic goal of any aspect of the criminal justice system. The causes of crime are too complex to be handled by one arm of the government. Measuring the effectiveness of correctional programs by recidivism rates may be inappropriate since they have only limited control over the conditions and causes of criminal behavior. Correctional programs cannot eliminate unemployment, poverty or discrimination. The

individual participating in the correctional program can acquire academic diplomas or degrees, extensive vocational training, psychological counseling, and interpersonal skills, yet still return to crime upon his release. The job market for his skills and educational level and the reaction of family and friends are two areas over which the correctional program has no control. If the well-trained ex-convict cannot find a job, despite an array of skills acquired in the correctional program, he may be pressured into returning to crime. If an ex-inmate's family and friends shun her upon her release from a halfway house, she may begin associating with those who will accept her—other criminals. This may induce her to return to crime. These are only two examples of conditions that lead some people to commit crime for which correctional programs today cannot be held accountable.

Considering these limitations, it might be expected that the rehabilitative and reintegrative capabilities of the halfway house would be tempered by the external conditions. Studies evaluating the post-release recidivism rates of halfway house clients suggest that this does occur. A report by Seiter et al. (1977) that was later updated by Latessa and Allen (1982) examines 44 studies addressing the post-release recidivism rates of halfway house clients. The degree of methodological rigor varies considerably in these studies. Neither of the two studies using true experimental designs found any significant difference between the recidivism rates of halfway house clients and a control group.

There were 23 studies that used a quasi-experimental design. Twelve of these reported lower recidivism rates (or better behavioral assessments) for ex-parolee halfway house residents than for the comparison group although only three of these 12 revealed statistically significant differences. Six of the quasi-experimental studies found no significant differences between the experimental and comparison groups. Five studies showed that ex-halfway house clients actually had slightly higher recidivism rates although none of these were statistically significant. There were 19 nonexperimental studies reporting recidivism or failure rates but because of the varying operational definitions and the lack of a control group, the authors could not indicate whether or not the halfway houses were effective in lowering recidivism.

A recent study that is not included in the Latessa and Allen evaluation was conducted on a California halfway house for female offenders (Dowell et al., 1985). It compared the recidivism rates of a group of female halfway house clients with rates of a comparable group of females released directly into the community. The former halfway house clients were significantly less likely to commit offenses in the follow-up period. When they did commit crimes, they were less serious offenses than those committed by the comparison group.

Seiter et al. (1977) conclude that there is some evidence to support

the idea that halfway houses reduce the recidivism rates of former clients in comparison to ex-offenders who are released directly into the community. They readily admit that the few significant findings do not lend much reliability to this claim. Latessa and Allen (1982) suggest that the more conservative conclusion is that halfway houses are at least as effective as parole in deterring recidivism. Given that halfway house clients are probably a higher risk group than parolees and that recidivism rates are similar for the two groups, halfway houses may be doing a better job than the evaluations can measure.

There are a number of other goals that correctional programs seek to attain. Seiter (1978) surveyed halfway house directors and staff, and probation and parole officers to determine what they perceived to be the goals of the halfway houses. Some 30 different goals were identified by the respondents. They ranged from very broad goals, such as reintegration of the offender and providing for the safety of society, to very specific ones including the provision of particular programs dealing with the educational, vocational, psychological and spiritual needs of clients. One of the more obvious but often unstated goals of halfway houses is that clients utilize these existing services and programs. Clients who do not volunteer to participate or who refuse to participate in the programs obviously are not fulfilling the tasks assigned to them by the correctional authorities. The success or failure of a halfway house is often defined in terms of the number or percent of the residents who complete the halfway house program. Seiter et al. (1977) report success rates ranged from 26 percent to 93 percent of the clients who entered the program.

Some of these studies and others published since then examine the characteristics of persons who are most likely to succeed in the programs. A study by Moran et al. (1977) of one halfway house found that the most important predictors of success were the length of time on a single job prior to admission and the highest grade completed in school. Persons with longer periods of time on one job and those with more years of schooling were more likely to be successful in the halfway house. For males, age and IQ were also important. Older males and those with higher IQs were more likely to succeed. Females who were older when they were first arrested and admitted, who were incarcerated for longer periods of time and who did not have a psychiatric history were more likely to succeed in the halfway house program. A study by Moczydlowski (1980) found that clients with fewer prior arrests, no history of alcohol problems and higher levels of educational achievement were more likely to succeed in the halfway house program. Beha's (1977) study of Brooke House in Boston found that clients without a history of drug use, who had been on a single job for longer periods of time and who came from outside Boston were more likely to succeed in the

program. Clients with more limited previous experience with the prison system were also more likely to be successful.

A 1984 study by Donnelly and Forschner indicated that gender, education, length of time on a single job, referral source, previous outpatient therapy, age at first arrest, the number of adult convictions and incarcerations, the number of months incarcerated and the number of days in the halfway house were all related to success or failure. Females and persons with more years of education and longer periods on a single job were more likely to be successful. Persons referred from municipal and federal sources were more likely to be successful than those referred from state or county sources. Clients with fewer convictions and incarcerations and fewer months of incarceration were also more likely to succeed. The client's success or failure was also related to his or her age at first arrest. Those whose first arrest came later in their lives were significantly more likely to succeed in the halfway house than were those who were arrested earlier in their lives.

These findings may not hold up in all halfway houses either because houses may have very different programs and services or they may deal with different types of clients. Even those with similar programs may have slightly different emphases. These differences may make a difference in terms of who is successful and who is not.

While in-program success rates may not impress those who argue that the real goal is reduced recidivism, it should be noted that there is an inverse relationship between program completion and recidivism. Persons who successfully complete the halfway house program are significantly less likely to be recidivists than those who failed in the program (Beha, 1977; Meta Metrics, 1983) or those parolees released directly into the community (Meta Metrics, 1983).

This research will utilize program completion as its measure of successful clients. Like some of the previous research, we examine the characteristics of successful and unsuccessful clients. Unlike previous research, we are examining a halfway house with a very heterogeneous population. It is made up of referrals from federal, state, county and city agencies. Its clients include felons and misdemeanants, parolees, probationers and pre-releasees. Another major difference is that this study will examine female and male residents in a co-correctional halfway house. Like most of the research on criminals and criminal justice, most of the previous research on halfway houses focuses only on men. Studies of female clients generally examine all-female halfway houses. Finally, this research will use a sophisticated, multivariate statistical analysis to examine the relationship between a set of independent variables and the outcome measure. While bivariate analyses are helpful in suggesting what factors might be helpful in predicting success or failure in the halfway house program, they suffer

from a number of weaknesses. Frequently, a fairly large number of variables are related to the outcome making it difficult to determine which factors are the most important. More importantly, bivariate analysis fails to control for the interaction between the variables.

### **Description of Cope House**

Cope House is a nonprofit, community-based correctional agency whose primary function is the rehabilitation and reintegration of adult offenders. Founded in 1975 under the aegis of Talbert House, Inc., of Cincinnati, Ohio, it became independently incorporated, with its own Board of Trustees, in 1976. It is a diversified halfway house which accepts adult male and female referrals from the Federal Bureau of Prisons, the Department of Corrections of the State of Ohio, the Montgomery County Probation Department, and female referrals only from the city of Dayton Municipal Court. Cope House became co-correctional in January of 1981. Its clientele is a mixture of Federal pre-releasees, State parolees, County probationers, and City misdemeanants doing workhouse time.

Cope currently has a 22-bed capacity. Cope administrators select residents on the basis of information sent from institutions, probation and parole departments, as well as other available social data. Where it is possible, residents are interviewed. Not all types of offenders are admitted. Generally, chronic violent offenders, rapists, severe drug and alcohol users, those clinically diagnosed as arsonists, psychotics or severely retarded are not accepted. However, Cope does accept offenders with a broad range of social and psychological problems, as can be seen in Table 1.

Upon arrival, clients are restricted to the house for a 48-hour period of orientation. During this time they are introduced to the staff, residents, rules, and regulations of the facility. A distinction should be made between internal and external rules and regulations. While Cope House rules and regulations are generally the same for all clients, external ones differ according to referral source. Federal clients tend to have the greatest structure and restrictions placed upon them, with State parolees having the least.

Cope's programming revolves around a behavioral contract called a Mutual Agreement Plan (MAP), a plan modeled after that used by the Massachusetts Halfway House Association. This contract is client need-oriented and focuses on employment, education and training, finances, housing, and social service needs. Needs are mutually identified between the client and counselor during the orientation period. Specific



completion dates and times are emphasized. This MAP is monitored and updated when necessary.

Clients leaving the house during the day for education, training, job seeking or employment are monitored by phone contacts with representatives at their destinations. These contacts are made randomly and without jeopardizing the client's position. All residents are required to see their counselor weekly, and attend the weekly house meeting. Unemployed clients are expected to meet daily for a "job seeking" meeting where results of the day are analyzed. Job seeking classes are held weekly at Cope House for the unemployed. These may be formal or informal depending on the size.

Residents are also assigned weekly house chores, and are expected to keep their beds made and rooms tidy. They are also required to perform two hours of community service work weekly. Residents are also informed that they may be subjected to periodic urine monitoring for drugs and alcohol. Observance of rules and regulations leads to greater liberty in the form of extended curfews, overnight and weekend passes. Major and minor infractions of rules and regulations can lead to sanctions. These sanctions range from minor ones such as house restriction and loss of curfew and passes, to removal from the program and return to prison.

Staffing at Cope House generally includes four to five full-time professional staff and five to seven part-time staff. The staff seeks to avoid duplication of existing community services when trying to provide for the clients' needs. This not only reduces costs but also allows residents to reintegrate into the community and begin socializing with the non-offender population. For example, instead of offering an Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) program in-house, clients are encouraged to attend the weekly A.A. programs in the community. A primary emphasis of all programs is to enable residents to begin developing life skills and support groups in the community. In order to complete the program, they must be able to address the issues of employment, finances, and housing. More generally, however, the program seeks to allow residents to answer the question, "Where do you belong?" Consequently, the program emphasizes social and psychological integration in the community. It is a strong programming belief that these "roots" will inhibit recidivism as much as, or more than, employment.

## Methods and Data

Upon entering Cope, all clients are interviewed by a staff member who administers a standard intake questionnaire to them. This questionnaire was developed by the International Halfway House Association and

meets the requirements of the Commission on Accreditation for Corrections. Another standard form is completed upon the client's termination from Cope. The data collected on these forms, therefore, rely on client self-disclosure. If warranted, some of the information is verified by a check of the client's file. These questionnaires provide the data for this study.

Information on the intake forms deals with the demographic characteristics, social background and legal history of the client. The client's age, race and gender are recorded. The social background characteristics include marital status, living arrangements prior to incarceration, employment history, and previous psychological or drug treatments. Among the legal characteristics are the referral source, age at first arrest, number of adult arrests and convictions and the number of times and length of incarceration as an adult.

The data were collected on all 417 clients entering Cope between January 1, 1980, and December 31, 1982. Table 1 presents a profile of the 276 men and 129 women on whom complete or near complete information was available. In general, females tended to have less education, fewer community ties (family and employment) and less previous involvement with the criminal justice system (arrests, convictions and length of incarceration) than did the males.

Large proportions of both groups had less than 12 years of schooling, unstable if any employment records, and were legally and residentially separated from spouses and other family members. This profile is not surprising since these characteristics of Cope clients are generally consistent with those of prison inmates and persons in other stages of the criminal justice system.

The vast majority (80 percent) of the women admitted to Cope House during the three year period were referred by municipal sources for misdemeanor offenses. The majority of the men, on the other hand, were from federal, state or county sources for felony offenses (91 percent). Because of these significant differences we therefore decided to do a separate analysis for men and women and limit our analysis to the 103 female misdemeanants and to the 252 male felons. Eighty-two percent of the females and 58 percent of the males in these groups successfully completed the program.

The dependent variable is the client's success or failure in the Cope program. This is determined by the reason the client leaves the program. There are three ways in which clients failed in the program: they absconded from the house; they committed a different, new criminal offense and were removed; or they were removed due to misbehavior in the house. This usually occurred when clients consistently broke house rules and regulations. When this happened, they were sent back to their referral source. Success in the program is simply the converse

Table 1  
**Characteristics of Male and Female Halfway House Clients (in Percents)**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Age		
18-24	36.9	40.8
25-35	45.2	43.8
36 +	17.9	15.4
Highest Grade Completed		
0-11	44.4	56.9
12	41.9	30.0
13 +	13.7	13.1
Marital Status		
Married	13.0	7.0
Never Married	46.7	45.7
Divorced/Separated/Other	40.2	47.3
Last Community Residence		
With Relatives/Friends	75.3	64.1
Alone/Other	24.7	35.9
Number of Jobs Held in Last Two Years		
0	22.8	41.1
1-2	52.2	46.5
3 +	12.0	12.4
Number of Months on Longest Job		
Less than 8	56.9	70.5
8 +	43.1	29.5
Percent of Weeks Full-Time Active		
50. and less	66.2	80.6
51-99	12.0	5.4
100	21.8	14.0
Prior Admission to Drug Treatment Program		
No	76.1	79.2
Yes	23.9	20.8
Prior Alcohol Treatment		
No	80.7	90
Yes	19.3	10
Outpatient Therapy for Psychological Problems		
No	80.4	76.2
Yes	19.6	23.8
Hospitalized for Psychological Problem		
No	86.0	85.4
Yes	14.0	14.6

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Age at First Arrest		
8-17	56.9	26.4
18-25	34.1	46.3
26 +	9.0	27.3
Number of Adult Arrests		
1	16.3	28.2
2-5	51.8	47.7
6 +	31.9	24.1
Number of Adult Convictions		
1	31.0	43.8
2-5	59.1	46.9
6 +	9.9	9.3
Number of Adult Incarcerations		
0	4.7	34.6
1-2	59.5	41.6
3-15	35.8	23.8
Number of Months Incarcerated as Adult		
0	7.0	45.4
1-2	4.1	23.1
3-12	30.5	14.5
13 +	58.4	17.0

of failure. Most often, it means that the clients completed the halfway house program. However, it is not limited to this. It also includes those who had their legal status discontinued and those removed by the referral source. This latter circumstance usually occurred when Cope was only meant to be a temporary assignment. These persons are considered successful because, at the time of the departure, they were making satisfactory progress in the Cope program and had not committed any law or rule infractions.

The independent variables used in this analysis are presented in Table 1. These were chosen based on their significance as determined by previous research. Because separate analyses are done for males and females, gender is not used as an independent variable. For the discriminant analysis, the marital status variable was made into two dummy variables. One represents a married-nonmarried distinction while the other is a divorced or separated versus a nondivorced or nonseparated category.

The relative importance of these characteristics in determining the success or failure of clients in the halfway house is examined using

discriminant analysis. This technique is most helpful when the dependent variable is a dichotomy. In this case, clients either fail or succeed in the Cope program. Discriminant analysis provides the independent variable set that is most useful for distinguishing between the groups of clients that fail in the program and those that succeed. A stepwise discriminant is used with variables selected for inclusion in the set based on minimizing Wilks lambda.<sup>1</sup>

## Results

Because Cope House is somewhat unique in that it is co-correctional, separate analyses are run for males and females. The number of cases in the discriminant analyses was reduced to 93 females and 228 males due to missing data on one or more of the independent variables. The data presented in Table 2 suggest the set of independent variables that is useful in discriminating between successful and unsuccessful halfway house clients. For female misdemeanants, the Wilks lambda, an inverse measure of discriminating power, is utilized for distinguishing between the successful and unsuccessful female clients. Thirty-six percent of the variance in the derived function is explained by the composition of the two groups of women.

Table 2 also presents the relative impact of the variables on outcome. The magnitude of the standardized discriminant coefficients ranges from  $-.574$  for prior admissions to a drug treatment program to  $.217$  for outpatient therapy for psychological problems.

Women with a history of admissions to drug treatment programs are less likely to successfully complete the program. This may indicate that their drug or drug-related problems are continuing and that the halfway house program is not meeting the needs of these clients. The second highest discriminant function is that for the number of adult arrests. Women with many previous arrests may be more firmly committed to a criminal career and may not accept the structured program that the halfway house offers. While the remaining standardized coefficients are somewhat smaller, they indicate that successful clients are likely to be older, have completed more years of school, have been living alone and have no experience with outpatient therapy for psychological treatment. These findings indicate that more mature or socially stable women with no history of psychological or drug problems are more likely to succeed in Cope House.

The discriminant procedure also serves as a classification technique. Based on a person's scores on the discriminating variables, cases are assigned to either of the two groups. These are then compared with the actual outcome of that case in the program. The set of discriminating

Table 2

**Discriminant Analysis for Male and Female Halfway House Clients**

<b>MALES</b>		
<i>Variable</i>	<i>Wilks Lambda*</i>	<i>Standardized Discriminant Coefficient</i>
Highest grade	.932	.530
Prior alcohol treatment	.912	.502
No. of adult incarcerations	.890	-.323
Outpatient psych. therapy	.872	.392
No. of jobs (last two years)	.860	.248
Age at first arrest	.849	.267
Married	.840	.269
No. admissions to drug treatment	.836	-.197
Pct. weeks full-time active	.832	.178
<hr/> Eigenvalue                      Wilks                      Canonical Lambda                      Correlation .202                      .832                      .410 Percent correctly classified: 63.49 <hr/>		
<b>FEMALES</b>		
<i>Variable</i>	<i>Wilks Lambda*</i>	<i>Standardized Discriminant Coefficient</i>
No. of adult arrests	.794	-.550
No. admis'ns to drug treatment	.742	-.574
Age	.708	.251
Months on longest job	.684	.343
Highest grade	.668	.260
Last community residence	.655	.229
Outpatient psych. therapy	.645	.216
<hr/> Eigenvalue                      Wilks                      Canonical Lambda                      Correlation .551                      .645                      .596 Percent correctly classified: 87.38 <hr/>		
* All values significant at <.001 level.		

variables for the female misdemeanor clients led to the correct classification of 87 percent of the cases.

For the male felony clients of Cope House, 9 of the 17 independent variables met the criteria to be discriminators. The Wilks lambda for the men, .832, indicates that this set of variables is not as powerful as the set for the female misdemeanants. Only 17 percent of the variance in the derived function is explained by the variables. The standardized discriminant coefficients range from a high of .530 for the education variable to a low of arrest. Men with more years of schooling were more likely to succeed in the program than those with less schooling. Men who had no history of outpatient therapy for psychological problems and those with some prior treatment for alcohol problems were also more likely to succeed. While the remaining relationships are somewhat weaker, there is some tendency for men who had been incarcerated fewer times, whose first arrest came at later ages, who are married, who held more jobs that kept them more active and with no admissions for drug treatment to be more successful than other groups. Using this set of discriminating variables, 63 percent of the cases in this sample would be correctly classified.

## Discussion

It would appear that for both males and females who fail in the program critical socializing and integrating factors have been retarded. Such traditional integrating factors as tenure relative to education, residency, and employment for females, and marriage, education and employment for men are important discriminators between successful and unsuccessful clients.

Both males and females were more likely to succeed in the program if they had no history of drug treatment or out-patient counseling. An individual's need for drug treatment and counseling might very well be symptomatic of the lack of social integration and educational and occupational skills characterized by the other discriminators in the study. The only exception to this appears to be males who have sought help for problems stemming from alcohol abuse. Due to the ready availability of such groups as Alcoholics Anonymous and the relative legitimacy of drinking versus drugs, this may not be a conflicting or confounding factor.

Age and contacts with the criminal justice system also appear to be strong discriminators. In males, this was witnessed by strong predictors, such as number of adult incarcerations, and, to a lesser extent, age at first arrest. Among females, the number of adult arrests was a very strong predictor while age was also important.

It should be emphasized that the female group was a very homogeneous grouping composed primarily of city misdemeanants, while, on the other hand, the males were a mixture of felons from diverse jurisdictions—federal, state, and county. This relative homogeneity possibly accounts for the strength of the predictive capabilities of the female discriminators. Using the seven discriminators for the female group, the analysis is accurate in correctly classifying 87 percent of the women, while the nine discriminators for the men allow the correct classification of 63 percent of that group.

Finally, the characteristics distinguishing between success and failure in the two groups were quite similar, with predictions of success centering around older ages, fewer contacts with the criminal justice system, absence of drugs, alcohol, and emotional problems, and strong socializing and integrating ties in the community—witnessed by higher educational levels, length of employment, and stability of residence.

### **Implications and Conclusions**

While no major changes or reforms in community based corrections should be made on the basis of a single study of one halfway house, the implications of this research need to be carefully considered. We show that most female misdemeanants are successful in this halfway house program while 58 percent of the male felons are successful. By using discriminant analyses, this research draws a profile of those characteristics which are most important in distinguishing between successful and unsuccessful clients. These findings can be utilized in either of two ways by halfway house administrators. First, halfway houses can choose to accept only those clients who are most likely to succeed. For example, halfway house administrators, where possible, may only accept older, well-educated women with stable employment careers who had limited previous involvement with the police. By not accepting those who are likely to fail in the existing program, the houses will have more room for those likely to obey house rules and regulations and successfully complete the program.

A second way to utilize these findings is to implement new programs or redesign existing ones to assist those who are likely to fail. For example, since female clients who had participated in previous drug treatment or outpatient psychological treatment programs were less likely to be successful, administrators may seek to implement or strengthen programs designed to deal with these problems. This might mean that the halfway house would increase referrals to local community mental health agencies and to support groups for former drug abusers. Since the education variable was a discriminator for the male clients,



more emphasis might be placed on providing additional schooling for those in the program. This might involve enrollment in local two-year or four-year college programs in addition to the more common high school or GED programs.

Programs that teach job seeking skills might be developed. This can emphasize both the technical and social skills necessary to find and keep employment. For example, the program could include sessions on writing resumes and how to locate job openings. It should also provide the basic communication and interactional skills necessary to do well in interview situations and in the job itself.

Attempts should be made at all program levels to integrate clients into the community mainstream. One way that this can be done is by contracting for various drug, alcohol, and other social services outside the halfway house. This often has a twofold effect. It reduces costs and facilitates meeting new individuals and provides fresh feedback and interaction. Emphases should also be placed on community responsibility through restitution, community service work and voluntarism. Every area of programming should focus on treating the client, not as an isolated individual, but as a member of the community where he or she must find a niche.

While these implications are important, there is a broader issue that must be addressed not only by halfway house administrators but also by those in the political system who make policies affecting the criminal justice system. It is unlikely that any set of discriminating variables will ever predict human behavior with 100 percent accuracy. Even in this study, which correctly classified a very high percent of the outcomes for female misdemeanants, there are 13 percent of the cases which would have been incorrectly predicted. The discriminating variables found for this group predicted 26 failures and 77 successes. Ten of the 26 which were predicted to be failures were actually successful in the program. Only three clients predicted to be successful were unsuccessful. For the men, 75 of the 136 cases that were predicted to be failures were actually successful. Thirty-one of the 116 cases that were predicted to be successful were failures. In both male and female groups, the discriminating variables tended to overestimate the likelihood of failure. Any model or prediction table seeking to forecast human behavior is going to have this "error" factor since humans are complex actors in a world that may influence or constrain but not determine their actions.

Administrators and policymakers need to consider whether the predictive capability of this or any model or set of variables is sufficiently accurate to allow its use. While this research provides a set of variables that has a high-to-moderate predictive capability, and while it tends to predict on the conservative side, i.e., more predicted failures that

succeed and fewer predicted successes that fail, it is a model that needs to be tested on other programs before it is adopted.

In summary, this research demonstrates that a politically and sexually diversified program can be successful for certain groups of offenders. This is a critical point for halfway house administrators and trustees exiting an era when funding was abundant and when they will be called upon more frequently to justify their program's existence. In addition, this research suggests the need for a broader, more culturally defined concept of reintegration. Some criminologists call contemporary criminals "unmeltables," who have not been absorbed into the American "melting pot." Consequently, reintegration cannot be defined simply in terms of housing and employment factors. It must go beyond these physical and economic conditions to consider the more purely social factors such as relationships with family and friends and coping mechanisms that can help individuals avoid drug, alcohol and psychological problems.

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## Note

- <sup>1</sup> Discriminant analysis is a technique which statistically distinguishes between two or more groups. The appropriate multivariate analysis is largely determined by the measurement level of the dependent variable. If the dependent variable is continuous or if we can assume equal intervals, regression is appropriate. In this study, the dependent variable is a dichotomy. Clients either succeed or fail. The mathematical objective of discriminant analysis is to weight and linearly combine the discriminating variables to make the groups as statistically distinct as possible. The objective of this research is to determine the independent variable set that is most helpful for distinguishing between those that succeed and those that fail. This analysis utilizes a stepwise selection method which selects variables for entry into the analysis on the basis of their discriminating power. First, it selects the variable with the highest value on the selection criterion. The second variable selected is the one which, when it is paired with the first, produces the highest value on the selection criterion. The selection criterion utilized here is the overall multivariate F ratio for the test of differences among the group centroids. The variable which maximizes the F ratio also minimizes Wilks lambda which is a measure of group discrimination. Wilks lambda, then, is an inverse measure of discriminating power (Carter, 1979; Klecka, 1975).