

## CORRECTION OR CONFIRMATION

*An Inquiry into the Relationship between Recidivism and Age at Time of Commitment to the Waialeale Industrial Training School for Boys, Oahu, Hawaii*

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The role of the correctional or industrial school in reforming the youthful offender who is committed to such an institution has been widely discussed for many years. It has been contended by some authorities in the field that such institutions could correct and have corrected the anti-social behavior patterns of persons committed to them. It has been also contended that such institutions tended to confirm, i.e., crystallize and perpetuate the anti-social behavior patterns of persons committed to them. The question of recidivism, it could be argued under such circumstances, was entirely an academic one since the basic anti-social or criminal pattern, especially when exhibited at an early age, was never really changed.

The Waialeale Training School for Boys, established in 1900\* and in 1950 moved and named the Koolau Boys School, has similarly been discussed and "cussed" over the years. It has on several occasions served as a sort of laboratory for social research into the general question of "Correction or Confirmation." One study of the social adjustment of boys discharged from Waialeale was initiated by Mr. Denna Fronk, Superintendent at the School from 1938-1946. A list of boys discharged from Waialeale was compiled for the years 1938-1944. These lists were then compared with records of the Oahu Prison System to determine how many "graduates of Waialeale", so to speak, "matriculated at Oahu Prison." The findings of this study were analyzed by Mr. William Mottz, then Boys' Counselor at Waialeale (at present Deputy Warden at Oahu Prison), who concluded that:

of boys entering Waialeale on their twelfth birthday, 100 per cent will end up in Oahu Prison before they reach the age of twenty years and six months,  
of boys entering Waialeale during their twelfth and thirteenth years, 50 per cent will end up in Oahu Prison before they reach the age of twenty years and six months,  
of boys entering Waialeale after their fifteenth birthday, 15 per cent will end up in Oahu Prison before they reach the age of twenty years and six months.

These very alarming conclusions were publicized by the Territorial Department of Institutions for the purpose, according to Mr. Thomas B. Vance, Director, of:

1. arousing public awareness of the need for preventive programs especially geared to children below the age of twelve;
2. arousing public concern about the inadequacy of the existent institutional program; and
3. gaining legislative support for improvements in the institutional program.

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\*The original "Reformatory School" was established in 1865.

This 1944 study, unfortunately, was never published and even an official file copy does not seem to exist. The seriousness of the conclusions prompted this student inquiry into the nature of the 1944 study, a search for other studies on the subject, and an independent compilation of data on boys discharged from Waialeale during the years 1939 thru 1945 and subsequently committed to Oahu Prison. This student research clears up several questions, clearly challenges the conclusions of the 1944 study, and charts the way for more research on the entire subject.

1944 Study by Fronk and Mottz. The 1944 study, as far as can be ascertained was a serious, objectively handled piece of research.<sup>1</sup> The total number of boys studied, in the aggregate, is unknown. The study however, did include twelve boys who were actually twelve years of age at the time of commitment. This means that for these few youngsters at least, the community from whence they came had been concerned about their serious anti-social behavior for some time and that no appropriate social services existed in the community for handling them. The boys committed to Waialeale during their twelfth year, but not on their twelfth birthday, were counted in with the thirteen-year-old group. The study conclusions would have justified reexamination of the data on the boys in the twelve- and thirteen-year-old groups on a separate basis. The actual numbers of boys in these age groups are unknown but one can justifiably assume that there were not many of them. The facts, as compiled, were not to be repudiated. The conclusions drawn on the basis of the facts compiled, however, could be contested. It would have been more appropriate, on the basis of the data compiled, to conclude that a positive correlation seemed to exist between early commitment to Waialeale and failure in correction.

1938 Study by Miller. A "Follow-Up Study of Fifty Former Waialeale Training School Boys" made by Mrs. Elizabeth Miller in 1938, revealed some interesting findings on this point.<sup>2</sup> A very searching study was made of a sample of fifty boys released from Waialeale prior to 1932 who have been committed from Honolulu. These boys had been out of the institution at least five years before the study was conducted. It was found that out of the fifty cases studied, twenty were poorly adjusted. The following tabulation adapted from Miller's study<sup>3</sup> points up some interesting facts:

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<sup>1</sup>The inquiry into the 1944 study was made by Patrick E. Oka while registered in the Social Work 200 class, University of Hawaii, first semester, 1949-1950 school year.

<sup>2</sup>A thesis submitted to the Graduate Division of the University of Hawaii in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education, June, 1938.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 75, Table VI.

TABLE I. A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE WELL-ADJUSTED AND THE POORLY ADJUSTED GROUP

Characteristics	Totals	Well Adjusted	Poorly Adjusted
Totals	50	30	20
Racial Ancestry			
Caucasian	5	4	1
Chinese	3	3	0
Hawaiian	7	2	5
Japanese	3	2	1
Part-Hawaiian	21	12	9
Portuguese	9	6	3
Puerto Rican	2	1	1
Above median age at commitment	22	18	4
Below median age at commitment	28	12	16

An analysis of the relationship between post-discharge adjustment and age at time of commitment, according to Miller, showed that

“Of the twenty-two who were above the median age at commitment, i.e., age 13.9 years, eighteen or 81.8 percent were well adjusted. Of the twenty-eight who were below the median age at commitment, twelve or 42.9 per cent were well adjusted. Of the twelve men in prison and on parole, ten were under the median age at commitment.”<sup>4</sup>

The Miller study, as far as can be ascertained, was not referred to at the time of the 1944 study, though the two studies did arrive at certain conclusions which could have been somewhat correlated. The Miller study, however, revealed some diffusion or “scatter” and analysis of the data suggested at best, only a higher correlation between low age at time of commitment to Waialeale and poor adjustment after discharge from the institution. There were five boys out of the fifty studied by Miller, who were committed to Waialeale before becoming age twelve and four boys committed at age twelve, one of whom was in Oahu Prison at the time the study was being conducted. These nine boys, representing 18 per cent of the group studied, were not singled out for special examination. 5

1950 Study by Hara. A completely independent study<sup>6</sup> of boys discharged from Waialeale during the years 1939 thru 1945, was made in 1950 for the purpose of finding out

1. the extent of recidivism in general, and
2. the relationship between recidivism and age at time of commitment to Waialeale School.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., page 82.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., page 26.

<sup>6</sup>This research was done by Clarence M. Hara while registered in the Social Work 200 class, University of Hawaii, second semester, 1949-1950 school year.

The records of the Division of Parole and Home Placement of the Territorial Department of Institutions were used to set up an alphabetically arranged list of boys according to year of discharge from the Waialeale School. The index card records of the Department of Parole and Home Placement were set up alphabetically but no record, according to actual year of discharge, was being kept. The index cards showed "date of majority", i.e., time of twentieth birthday, and the lists of "discharged boys" therefore really represent boys who were technically, i.e., legally and/or actually discharged. The actual number of boys discharged in each of the years reviewed, would really be different from the number gotten by the method which had to be used. It is impossible to estimate what difference, if any, this factor bears on the final results.

The full name, birth date, race, and date of first commitment to Waialeale were secured for each boy listed. The Oahu Prison card index file on inmates was subsequently searched for names of the boys on the Waialeale list. The case folders at both places had to be used for purposes of verifying "mated records" and securing data not shown on the index cards.

A total of approximately 20 names were excluded from the lists of discharged boys due to recorded reasons of

1. death,
2. transfers to other institutions, such as hospitals, and institution for the mentally deficient,
3. releases to other jurisdictions, e.g. Mainland.

A total of 323 boys were listed as having been discharged from Waialeale during the years 1939 thru 1945. The overall amount of recidivism for this group of boys, as measured by commitment to Oahu Prison, and the amount of recidivism within each "annual crop" of discharges, is shown in Table II.

TABLE II. BOYS DISCHARGED FROM WAIALEALE, BY YEAR OF DISCHARGE, AND SUBSEQUENTLY COMMITTED TO OAHU PRISON, FOR THE YEARS 1939 - 1945.

Year	Discharged from Waialeale	Subsequently Committed to Oahu Prison	Percent of Recidivism
Totals	323	62	19.2
1939	17	4	23.5
1940	38	9	23.7
1941	58	12	20.7
1942	64	14	21.9
1943	39	6	15.4
1944	72	9	12.5
1945	35	8	22.9

The slightly lower rate of recidivism among the boys discharged in 1943 and 1944 may be partly explained by the fact that these were "war years" and the boys were either drafted or found opportunities for adjusting well on jobs which were relatively abundant and which paid well. The pretty

constant figure on rate of recidivism, except for the years 1943 and 1944, may in itself be suggestive of a constant factor of some sort.

The relationship between age at time of commitment to Waialeale and recidivism as measured by subsequent commitment to Oahu Prison is shown in Table III.

TABLE III. BOYS DISCHARGED FROM WAIALEE DURING THE YEARS 1939 THRU 1945 AND SUBSEQUENTLY COMMITTED TO OAHU PRISON ACCORDING TO AGE (2 YEAR INTERVALS) AT TIME OF COMMITMENT TO WAIALEE SCHOOL.

Age on Commitment to Waialeale	Discharged from Waialeale	Committed to Oahu Prison	Percent of Recidivism
Totals	323	62	19.2
Under 12	3	1	33.3
12 thru 13	69	17	24.6
14 thru 15	148	30	20.3
16 thru 17	96	12	12.5
18 and Over	7	2	28.6

It is noteworthy that the three boys under age twelve were age ten and a half, nine, and eight respectively when committed. The one committed at age ten and a half was subsequently sent to Oahu Prison.

The same data, when tabulated according to one year age intervals, as shown in Table IV, rather than according to two year intervals, does not reveal any significant differences in the results on percentage of recidivism.

TABLE IV. BOYS DISCHARGED FROM WAIALEE DURING THE YEARS 1939 THRU 1945 AND SUBSEQUENTLY COMMITTED TO OAHU PRISON ACCORDING TO AGE (ONE YEAR INTERVALS) AT TIME OF COMMITMENT TO WAIALEE SCHOOL.

Age on Commitment to Waialeale	Discharged from Waialeale	Committed to Oahu Prison	Percent of Recidivism
Totals	323	62	19.2
Under 12	3	1	33.3
12 to 13	25	7	24.0
13 to 14	44	10	22.7
14 to 15	65	13	20.0
15 to 16	83	17	20.5
16 to 17	64	7	10.9
17 to 18	32	5	15.6
18 and Over	7	2	28.6

The racial antecedents of these boys are shown in Table V so that one may make some comparisons with the Miller data.

TABLE V. BOYS DISCHARGED FROM WAIALEE  
DURING THE YEARS 1939-1945 AND SUBSEQUENTLY  
COMMITTED TO OAHU PRISON ACCORDING TO RACIAL EXTRACTION.

Racial Extraction	Discharged from Waialee	Committed to Oahu Prison	Percent of Recidivism
Totals	323	62	19.2
Caucasian	20	4	20.0
Chinese	6	0	00.0
Filipino	26	7	26.9
Hawaiian	57	9	15.8
Japanese	38	6	15.8
Korean	10	1	10.0
Part-Hawaiian	98	18	19.4
Portuguese	31	6	19.3
Puerto Rican	20	3	15.0
All Others	17	8	47.1

The results of this study seem, by implication, to tie in more closely with the conclusions of Miller's research than with the findings of the 1944 study by Fronk and Mottz. The contention that the rate of recidivism increases as the age of commitment to Waialee decreases, and vice versa, was not borne out by this latest investigation. The study showed a random distribution of various, relatively low, rates of recidivism, and no definite pattern could be ascertained. The over-all rate of recidivism, i.e., 19.2 percent, seems low and it is undoubtedly fair to assume that the rate would be found to be actually higher if all of the relevant facts could be ascertained.

#### CONCLUSION

The three studies that have been done on this particular subject do not really answer any questions and therefore lead one to conclude that more research needs to be done regarding the causes of anti-social behavior and regarding methods of effective treatment and control. The 1950 study by Hara provides some basis for contesting the conclusions of the 1944 study by Fronk and Mottz which were, for various perhaps plausible reasons, widely publicized. It is certainly very apparent that systematic study of what happens to boys committed to the correctional institutions should be undertaken. The method utilized by Hara, assuming that better records were kept by the official agencies involved, could serve as a guide for compiling statistical data on a continuous basis. This would necessarily need to be supplemented by case studies of a sample of the same population. The case studies would undoubtedly produce information regarding the social-personal characteristics of the population and would also reveal the nature of the relationship between these boys and the various community agencies which work at controlling and correcting their respective situations. It is not likely that much real progress can be made in this field until more basic knowledge is acquired regarding the many elusive facets of human behavior and until this knowledge is applied in the everyday working relationships between law enforcement and social agencies and those persons in our population who are exhibiting anti-social behavior. It is further apparent from these particular studies that if anti-social behavior is not detected and treated early in a person's life, the social and personal consequences are quite likely to be serious and of long duration.