

# **THE PRISON EXPERIENCE OF CAREER CRIMINALS**

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## PREFACE

This report was supported by the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA), under Grant 77-NI-99-0072.\* It analyzes results from a survey administered to prison inmates during the period October 1978 to January 1979.

The study represents a continuation of previous work by The Rand Corporation on the characteristics and behavior of career criminals. The overall research program is under the direction of Peter Greenwood, director of Rand's Criminal Justice Program. Reports from other studies include:

- P. Honig, *The Prison Experience of Career Criminals: Current Practice and Future Considerations*, The Rand Corporation, 1978 (P-6178).
- J. Chaiken, J. E. Rolph, *Selective Incapacitation Strategies Based on Estimated Crime Rates*, The Rand Corporation, 1978 (P-6116).
- J. Petersilia, "Developing Programs for the Habitual Offender: New Directions in Research," in C. Ronald Huff, *Issues in Contemporary Corrections: Social Control and Conflict*, Sage Publications, 1978.
- J. Petersilia et al., *Criminal Careers of Habitual Felons*, The Government Printing Office, 1978.
- J. Petersilia, "The Validity of Criminality Data Derived from Personal Interviews," in Charles F. Wellford (ed.), *Quantitative Studies in Criminology*, Sage Publications, 1978.
- J. Petersilia, M. M. Lavin, *Targeting Career Criminals: A Developing Criminal Justice Strategy*, The Rand Corporation, 1978 (P-6173).
- J. Petersilia, P. W. Greenwood, "Mandatory Prison Sentences: Their Projected Effects on Crime and Prison Populations," *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, Vol. 69, No. 4, 1978.
- M. Peterson, H. Braiker, with Suzanne M. Polich, *Doing Crime: A Survey of California Inmates*, The Rand Corporation, 1980 (R-2200-DOJ).
- J. Petersilia, "Criminal Career Research: A Review of Recent Evidence," in Norval Morris and Michael Tonry (eds.), *Crime and Justice: An Annual Review of Research*, University of Chicago Press, Volume II, forthcoming.
- P. Greenwood, "Career Criminal Prosecution: Potential Objectives," *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, Vol. 71, No. 2, Summer 1980.

Publication of this report completes the first phase of analysis planned from the Inmate Survey. The report is being produced at this time to assist LEAA in discussions concerning the desirability of expanding the Comprehensive Career Criminal Program into the area of corrections. Future reports will address such issues as the

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\*The Justice System Improvement Act of 1979 has been signed since the preparation of this report. The Act significantly reorganized both LEAA and the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice (NILECJ). The Act created an Office of Justice Assistance, Research, and Statistics (OJARS), the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA), the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). OJARS is the umbrella agency that coordinates LEAA, NIJ, and BJS. The new National Institute of Justice (NIJ) now assumes the functions of NILECJ.

type and extent of crime committed by offenders, their motivations, and their involvement with drugs and alcohol. The principal investigators for the additional analysis are Peter Greenwood and Jan Chaiken.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### BACKGROUND

Most observers agree that the performance of law enforcement and criminal justice agencies is far from ideal. A substantial proportion of reported crimes result in no arrest. Of those suspects arrested, a majority are not convicted. Of those convicted, few are punished by prison confinement. And of those imprisoned, many resume criminal activity after release—the “revolving-door” syndrome.

Revolving-door justice seems to be associated with *career criminals*—those persistent offenders who make repeated transits of the criminal justice system. They sometimes avoid conviction entirely, or are convicted of only a few of many alleged crimes, or are incarcerated for a short period. The return of career criminals to the streets and to a renewal of their crimes presents a dismaying image to society. There is a widespread belief that these offenders are responsible for a disproportionate amount of the serious crime in America.

In 1974, the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) undertook an important initiative to forestall revolving-door justice for serious offenders. Under the Career Criminal Prosecution Program, it provided federal funding to more than 20 local prosecutors’ offices, enabling them to create special units to concentrate on career criminals. The program focused on the prosecutor for two reasons: First, there was a belief that the prosecutor’s role had evolved to the point where his decisions determined to a great extent the quality of justice in America’s courts. Second, the increases in crime had resulted in a proliferation of cases that far outstripped the growth of prosecutory and court resources.<sup>1</sup> Career criminal units, composed of the most experienced prosecutors using “vertical” case representation, sought higher bail, increased conviction rates, speedier dispositions, higher incarceration rates, and lengthier prison terms for defendants who met objective selection criteria.

Performance data on the career criminal prosecution units seem impressive. However, since their operations have not yet been fully evaluated on a national basis, it is not clear how much of the improvement in performance is due simply to the selectiveness with which they obtain their defendants. Nevertheless, the Career Criminal Prosecution Program is widely regarded as a significant success and has stimulated the formation of other units under state and local funding—a total of more than 100 programs nationwide by 1980.

As prosecutorial efforts against career criminals expanded and intensified, LEAA addressed the possibility that efforts to counter career criminals were appropriate on a comprehensive, systemwide basis. For example, through its Integrated Criminal Apprehension Program, LEAA has provided over 30 law enforcement agencies with funding to upgrade their investigation and crime analysis capabilities. In part, this program has facilitated the identification and arrest of career

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<sup>1</sup>Charles R. Work, “The Career Criminal Program,” statement before the Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate, September 27, 1978.

criminals. While these police efforts have been vigorous, it remains for future evaluations to show the amount of their impact on the career criminal area.

The question of whether a special approach to career criminals should be extended to the correctional system is a current concern of LEAA. This Rand study reflects that concern. In this report we explore the treatment needs and custodial problems associated with career criminals and inquire whether these inmates are currently handled selectively. We are interested, for instance, in the implications of policies that would involve career criminal inmates more heavily in major prison treatment programs, e.g., education and vocational training. It could be argued that since these persons are the most dedicated and serious criminals, a concerted effort should be made to assure that they participate in relevant treatment programs while incarcerated. Also, since the federal government is expending vast resources to assure that career criminals are arrested and imprisoned, perhaps it also has an obligation to encourage programs of rehabilitation once those criminals are imprisoned. Before moving in this direction, however, LEAA needed an assessment of the types of programs needed by career criminal inmates and of how changes in policies would affect current prison programming. This report describes our assessment. It is intended to inform LEAA about the desirability of special efforts toward career criminals in the corrections area and, if desirable, the appropriate directions for those efforts.

## **RESEARCH SCOPE**

While the study focuses on the career criminal in the corrections area, inmates whose imprisonment resulted from only the work of the special Career Criminal Prosecution Program constitute a very small component of the prison population, and their nationwide distribution is uneven. Therefore, it was necessary to consider a much broader slice of the inmate population, namely, those inmates who probably would have qualified for Career Criminal Prosecution had they been in a jurisdiction where such a program existed. Furthermore, to compare the prison experiences of career criminals with those of other inmates, it was necessary to apply information on general prison populations. To do this, we obtained detailed data on inmates representative of the prison populations in three diverse states: California, Michigan, and Texas. As a fortunate consequence, we are able to present findings on the association among inmate characteristics, treatment need, treatment program participation, and institutional behavior not only for inmates resembling career criminals but for other inmate groups as well (e.g., racial).

The scope of the work reported here is expressed in the form of these research questions:

- What proportion of prison inmates demonstrate a need for treatment in the areas of education, vocational training, alcohol rehabilitation, and drug rehabilitation?
- What proportion of inmates with an identified treatment need participate in a corresponding treatment program?

- Is the likelihood of receiving needed treatment related to particular inmate characteristics?
- How do inmates assess the effects of the treatment programs in which they have participated, for example, in terms of prison adjustment, coping with personal problems, and discouraging recidivism?
- Which inmate factors are associated with negative institutional behavior (e.g., age, race, program participation, career criminality)?
- Is it desirable to expand the career criminal program to the corrections area, in light of the answers obtained to the questions above?

## SOURCES

Findings on these questions are based on information from inmate samples in eleven prisons in California, Michigan, and Texas. These samples, totaling approximately 1300 inmates, were selected by a process which ensures that they are representative of the incoming inmates in their respective states.

The three states were chosen for a number of theoretical and practical reasons. Each has a large prison population with adequate numbers of inmates in the various categories of interest. The three are widely separated geographically and reflect differing correctional orientations and concerns. Importantly, each has a computerized criminal history system, which facilitated the selection of the inmate samples. And all have a variety of treatment and work programs available to inmates.

Inmate information was derived from two sources: official corrections records, and the Inmate Survey—a detailed questionnaire completed by the inmate. From official records, we drew sociodemographic and criminal history information, assessments as to treatment needs made during the intake process, and officially recorded institutional infractions. From the inmate questionnaires, we obtained data on inmate-perceived treatment needs, the extent of participation in treatment programs prior to the survey, motivations for or against participation, assessments as to the effects of treatment, institutional infractions, time in segregation, and prison problems.

Our analysis of the extent of participation in treatment and work programs relies on what might be visualized as a “snapshot” of these prisons on a given day. That is, some of the inmates were near the end of their prison term, some in the middle, and some in the beginning. The reports of inmates near the end of their term represent their total treatment experience during that term. Those who have been in prison a shorter time, of course, reported on program participation over a shorter time period.

This artifact of the sample requires care in interpreting the results. If treatment were given to inmates only toward the end of their term, one would expect the rates of participation to increase as the proportion of sentence served increased. In this case, sampling offenders at random points in their term would underestimate the percentage of the population who will eventually become involved in programs. However, preliminary research conducted by the authors in preparation for this study found that programs are generally available to all inmates who wish to

participate, regardless of sentence length or time served.<sup>2</sup> The present study lends further support to the earlier finding: We found no association between the number of months an inmate has been in prison and his participation in prison treatment or work programs.<sup>3</sup> Thus, in our program participation analysis, we did not control for the number of months served. All of our results represent the programs the inmates were currently involved in, or had been involved in prior to the Inmate Survey.

## FINDINGS

### Broad State Differences

California, Michigan, and Texas contrasted strongly in nearly every area of interest. For example, emphasis on the level of treatment and the encouragement given to participation in particular treatment programs differed among these states. Inmates in Michigan participated more frequently in rehabilitation programs than inmates in California or Texas.<sup>4</sup> California, traditionally a leader in developing innovative treatment programs, has large-scale programs concentrated in the areas of education and vocational training. Programs in counseling, alcohol rehabilitation, and drug rehabilitation have been diminished both because of budget cuts and an inability to demonstrate positive effects. Texas has an extraordinary emphasis on work assignments, and education is its primary treatment program.

As another example, the three states differed considerably in the incidence of misconduct by inmates, whether measured by officially recorded or inmate-reported incidents. Michigan inmates in our sample exceeded those of the other two states both in serious and in administrative infractions. For instance, 27 percent of the sampled inmates in Michigan had an official infraction for violence (without injury) during their current term. This was true for only 15 percent of the California inmates and 18 percent of the Texas inmates.

Because the differences among the states were so pronounced, it was not appropriate to combine the data across states for the analysis. Thus most of the findings are presented on a state-by-state basis.

### Inmate Participation in Treatment and Work Programs

Prison treatment programs are currently quite controversial. The disputes have been exacerbated by a growth in prison populations coupled with a failure in

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<sup>2</sup>See J. Petersilia, "Which Inmates Participate in Prison Treatment Programs?," *Journal of Offender Counseling, Services, and Rehabilitation*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1980; and P. Honig, *The Prison Experience of Career Criminals: Current Practice and Future Considerations*, The Rand Corporation, P-6178, July 1978.

<sup>3</sup>Participation in special pre-release programs was the exception; there, participation increased as the proportion of the sentence served increased.

<sup>4</sup>"Major" programs were defined as education, vocational training, alcohol and drug rehabilitation, and individual and group counseling.



budgets to keep pace, and by increasing skepticism that rehabilitation works. Policy trends appear to be in the direction of allocating limited treatment resources to willing inmates of selected types. Whether career criminals should be recognized as an inmate type for special treatment is the central policy issue of this study. An adequate grasp of the degree to which inmates currently participate in prison treatment programs is a necessary foundation for considering future policy in this area.

In California, 64 percent of the inmates surveyed had participated in a major treatment program during their current term; an additional 14 percent had been involved in a more minor prison program (e.g., self-help groups, home visitation). Only 9 percent of the California prison population were involved in neither treatment nor work programs, i.e., were idle. In Michigan, 80 percent of the inmates were in a major treatment program, with an additional 5 percent in minor prison programs; 5 percent held a work assignment only, and 10 percent were idle. In Texas, 66 percent were in a major program, 11 percent in a miscellaneous program, 11 percent in work assignments only, and 12 percent idle.

A goal shared by these three prison systems is to keep inmates usefully occupied, either in work assignments or in treatment programs. In general, they fall short of fully attaining this goal. Perhaps Texas is an exception in that the prison system's ownership of vast acreage of farmland affords unlimited opportunities for unskilled field labor. On the average, however, as is the situation nationally, approximately 9 to 12 percent of the inmates sampled were idle during their current prison term.<sup>5</sup> This idleness was shown to be associated with negative prison behavior.

Basic adult education and vocational training are the main treatment programs in each of the three states. Participation in alcohol rehabilitation programs varied from 11 to 20 percent of the inmates surveyed. Only in Michigan did a nontrivial proportion, 28 percent, of the inmates participate in a drug rehabilitation program.

### **Prison Treatment Programs—Needs vs. Participation**

Participation in treatment programs does not necessarily equate to need for treatment. The correspondence between these two factors is a crucial aspect of present corrections practices.

While the degree of an inmate's need for a particular treatment involves complex, somewhat subjective considerations, our purposes require objective criteria based on the data available from the official records and the Inmate Survey. We constructed these criteria denoting several progressing levels of education, vocational training, alcohol rehabilitation, and drug rehabilitation treatment needs. The criteria for "high need" for treatment, the main focus of our analysis, were as follows:

Education: less than 9th-grade education, as shown by the official corrections record; or reading level at or below 9th grade.

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<sup>5</sup>See Petersilia (1980).

Vocational training: no employment and no other legitimate activity (e.g., school attendance, military) during the “window” period (up to 2 years of street time) preceding the current term of imprisonment, as shown by Inmate Survey self-report.

Alcohol rehabilitation: self-report of serious drinking problems during the window period.

Drug rehabilitation: self-report of daily use of hard drugs (i.e., heroin, barbiturates, amphetamines) during the window period.

Once each inmate was classified as to his degree of need for a particular form of treatment, we were able to determine how many inmates with a high need for treatment actually participated in a corresponding treatment program. Figure S.1 shows the percentage in each state classified as having a high need, and the percentage of those with a high need who participated in relevant treatment prior to the survey.

In all three states the likelihood that inmates in need of treatment will participate in a corresponding program is highest in the education area. In California, 45 percent of those with a high need for education had participated in an education program prior to the survey. In Michigan, 71 percent of those with a high need for education received treatment; and in Texas, the corresponding figure was 59 percent.

In vocational training programs, the match between high need and participation is a poorer one. Only about 30 percent of the high-need inmates, who for the most part were unemployed before their current prison term, participated in a vocational training program prior to the survey.

In all three states a large percentage of inmates had serious drug and alcohol problems. The results here show that the majority of inmates with these problems failed to receive treatment while imprisoned. In each of the three states, about 30 percent of the population was classified as having a high need for alcohol treatment. In Michigan, 37 percent of those with a high need had participated in an alcohol program prior to our survey; in California, 19 percent; and in Texas, 36 percent.

In drug rehabilitation, there is even less correspondence between high need for treatment and treatment received. This seems especially disturbing since only inmates who had reported using hard drugs on a *daily* basis were defined as high-need. Recall that this self-report measure typically identifies inmates who have also been classified as addicts on their official records. About 33 percent of the California inmate population was classified as having a high need for drug rehabilitation, but only about 5 percent of those inmates participated in a drug treatment program prior to the study. In Texas, also, less than 5 percent of the inmates with a high need for drug rehabilitation received treatment. Only in Michigan does there appear to be a serious attempt to involve inmates in such programs, where 55 percent of the high-need inmates participated in a drug treatment program.

### **Association of Inmate Characteristics with Needed Treatment Participation**

As mentioned above, we examined a number of inmate factors other than career criminality—including race, age, time already served, commitment offense,

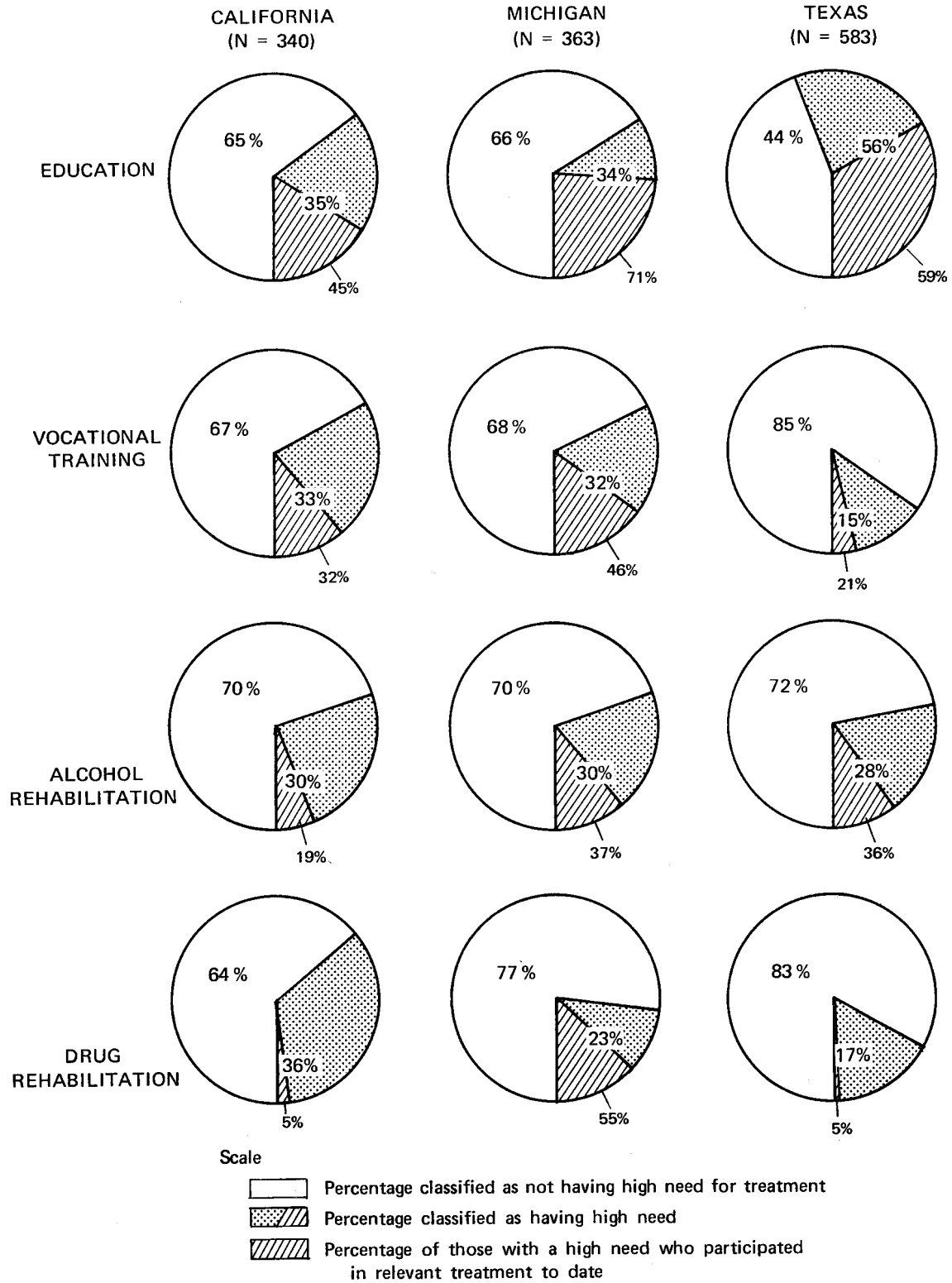


Fig. S.1—Correspondence between high need for treatment and treatment received

tween need for treatment and treatment received. Of these factors, race and age were the two most strongly advanced by prison administrators (responding to our telephone survey) as possibly the most instrumental.

Overall, we found prison programs to be allocated quite randomly, involving inmates of varying ages, races, criminal histories, and sentence lengths. This was particularly true in the areas of education and vocational training. Only alcohol and drug rehabilitation programs had a slight overrepresentation of a particular racial group. There we found that white inmates with alcohol problems are slightly more likely to receive alcohol treatment than other minorities with similar alcohol abuse histories. Conversely, black inmates are more likely to enter drug treatment programs than white inmates with similar drug abuse histories. These racial associations remain inconclusive because of the small number of inmates in these programs. However, in an earlier study by one of the authors, this racial association was statistically significant.<sup>6</sup>

### **Career Criminal Participation in Treatment Programs**

The essence of the career criminal is his criminal history; we identified a component of prison population grossly resembling career criminals by means of a simple age-dependent criminality scheme. For inmates 25 years of age or older, having a prior prison commitment sufficed for designation as a career criminal. For younger inmates, a career criminal was one who had served a prior prison term, or had three or more serious felony convictions, or one serious felony conviction plus a serious juvenile record. By our definition, career criminals comprised the following percentages of the inmate samples: California, 49; Michigan, 43; and Texas, 42.

Our career criminal definition includes a larger proportion of the inmate sample than we would have liked for analytic purposes. Unfortunately, the definition had to closely approximate the one already in use by police and prosecutors. If we had arbitrarily chosen a more limiting definition, the findings would have little policy relevance. Thus, with some latitude, this career criminal definition was imposed on the research from the beginning.

We found that a slightly larger percentage of career criminals had high needs for treatment in each of the program areas, but only in two instances were these differences statistically significant. In California, more career criminals had high needs in the area of education; in Texas, career criminals had a higher incidence of need for drug rehabilitation.

When high-need career criminals who participated in an appropriate treatment program were compared with non-career criminals, we found few differences. In Texas, high-need career criminals were underrepresented in education programs; in California, they were underrepresented in vocational training; and in Michigan, they were underrepresented in drug counseling.

We thus conclude that, except in scattered instances, career criminal inmates do not differ from the general prison population in their need for treatment or in

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<sup>6</sup>See Petersilia (1980).

juvenile record, prior prison terms, etc.—seeking to explain the association between program participation.

### **Motivations and Reactions to Program Participation**

Each inmate surveyed was asked to rate on a four-point scale the importance of each of five reasons for participating in the various rehabilitative programs. The results indicate that 40 to 60 percent of inmates in various programs cited “help me make parole” as a very important reason for their participation.

We asked inmates who had participated in programs to assess the help each program had provided them in terms of adjusting to prison, dealing with personal problems, obtaining a skill or education that would assist in future employment, and reducing future criminality. The effects of the programs were judged similarly, regardless of the type of program. For each program type, approximately 20 percent of the participants said the programs helped them “a lot” in terms of adjusting to prison; about 50 percent said they had attained the intended goal of the program; and between 40 and 50 percent of the participants thought the programs would help them in staying out of future crime. As expected, the program rated the best aid in getting a job after release was vocational training. Also, half of the inmates who participated in drug or alcohol programs said those programs had helped in curtailing their dependency on these substances; less than 20 percent said these programs were no help.

We subsequently explored the association between the reasons an inmate gives for enrolling in a program and his assessment of the program’s benefits. One might assume that inmates who enroll in programs primarily to impress parole authorities get fewer benefits from the program. On the other hand, it might be that benefits are obtained regardless of an inmate’s particular reason for initially entering a program.

Of the inmates who said they enrolled in a specific program primarily to help them make parole, 57 percent thought their program participation would help them get and keep a job, and 51 percent said they thought their participation would help them stay out of crime. Therefore, some positive effects are being obtained by program participants who say they became involved in the program for what might be termed the “wrong reasons.” Also, we found that 78 percent of those who said they entered the program to obtain the specific objectives of the program (e.g., get a degree, solve a drug problem) felt they actually achieved those specific goals. Unfortunately, only 58 percent of that group thought their participation in the program would reduce their future criminality.

Most germane to our interests are the reasons given by high-need inmates for *not* participating in treatment programs. Are programs unavailable to them, does the staff discourage participation, or do inmates feel they don’t need treatment? For the most part, inmates we had classified as high-need were not in programs because they didn’t feel they needed treatment. Table S.1 presents these findings for the three states combined.

The large incidence of high-need inmates who did not feel they needed treatment for deficiencies they readily acknowledged is noteworthy. We also observe that lack of prison resources was, with the exception of drug programs, rarely given as a reason for not participating.

Table S.1

**REASONS GIVEN BY "HIGH NEED" INMATES FOR NOT PARTICIPATING IN  
RELEVANT PROGRAMS: ALL STATES COMBINED**  
(Percent of inmates with high need)

Reason	Program				
	Adult Education	High School Education	Vocational Training	Alcohol Rehabilitation	Drug Rehabilitation
I don't feel I need this program	61	60	38	65	36
The program is unavailable at this prison	11	3	11	3	33
I have heard bad things about this program	1	1	2	3	3
Staff discouraged my participation/custody, security reasons	18	22	30	15	15
I was too busy/I was in other programs/I had work assignment	9	14	19	14	12

### The Association Between Inmate Characteristics and Prison Infractions

We examined institutional behavior both in terms of inmate characteristics and in-prison experiences (e.g., whether the inmate had a work assignment). The sources of our data on inmate infractions—which ranged from escape attempts and inflicting major injuries to violating administrative rules—were the official records and the inmate self-reports. Because the two sources turned out to be highly correlated, our analysis was applied mainly to the officially recorded infractions data.

The percentage of the total inmate population having at least one infraction during their current term is listed below, by type of infraction.

	California	Michigan	Texas
Administrative	45	60	48
Contraband	24	30	8
Threat	4	14	1
Violence without injury	15	28	18
Minor injury	2	5	1
Major injury	3	1	1
Escape	1	8	0

While this tabulation suggests a higher level of inmate misbehavior among Michigan inmates, we believe (on the basis of our interviews of prison administrators) that the differences among states is due in part to the differences in "writing up" minor acts of misbehavior—that is, minor infractions were more likely to be handled unofficially in California and Texas.

In examining the relationship between inmate characteristics and the frequency and severity of infractions, we found that inmate age was a characteristic significantly associated with the severity of infractions in all states. Inmates in their early twenties accounted for a greater number of serious infractions than did any other age group. Infractions declined dramatically with age, so that by age 30 they seldom occurred, and were less serious. Escape attempt was the only type of infraction that tended to increase with age.

In all three states, prison programming was associated with inmate misbehavior. Inmates without a work assignment displayed more negative prison behavior than their working counterparts. Similar results were obtained for treatment participation: fewer disciplinary problems were found among inmates with high levels of treatment participation, all other things being equal.

Table S.2 shows the average annual rate of infractions per inmate, by type of prison activity.

In examining the combined effects of prison work and treatment programs, we found that larger decreases in infractions were obtained by a change in prison work status than by merely increasing treatment program participation. However, best results were achieved by providing both treatment participation and a work assignment.

Note, however, that no causal inference can be made. It must be remembered that we are unable to determine from our data whether idle inmates commit more violations than active inmates or whether inmates who commit more violations become idle, i.e., lose their jobs or are removed from treatment programs.

Generally, in Michigan an inmate was more likely a source of disciplinary problems if he was young and currently serving time for a non-violent offense; in Texas, he was young, black, and had few serious convictions, no prison work assignment, and limited contact with treatment participation; and in California, he was

Table S.2

AVERAGE ANNUAL RATE OF INFRACTIONS PER  
INMATE, BY PRISON ACTIVITY  
(All states combined)

Type of Activity	Rate of Serious Infractions <sup>a</sup>	Rate of Total Infractions <sup>a</sup>
With work assignment	.2	1.4
Without work assignment	.4	2.5
With treatment program participation	.3	1.8
Without treatment program participation	.3	2.3
In some prison activity	.3	1.8
In no prison activity (i.e., idle)	.5	3.2

<sup>a</sup>Serious infractions include escape, major injury, minor injury, and violence without injury. Total infractions include serious infractions plus threat, possession of contrabrand, and administrative rule violations.

young, white, and had no prison work assignment and limited treatment participation.

We noted few significant differences in institutional behavior between career and non-career criminals. In all three states, career criminals average slightly higher infraction scores, all things being equal. However, the associations were not statistically significant.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The broad treatment picture is mixed. Education and vocational training programs appear to be vigorous, while alcohol and drug rehabilitation programs, as well as counseling efforts, seem quite minimal. Inmates do not universally disavow the effectiveness of treatment, as some anticipated following the critical reviews of Martinson and others. Over all program types, nearly half of the inmates who had participated felt that the program would reduce their future criminality. However, since this grant did not support the collection of outcome measures, the actual effectiveness of programs cannot be assessed. As noted above, our concern is with the degree to which programs are utilized by various inmate subgroups.

Inmates who wanted to participate in treatment programs were usually able to do so. Limited prison resources were not an important explanation by inmates of their failure to seek needed treatment. Only in the area of drug rehabilitation was there evidence that inmates wanted programs that were unavailable in their institution. In general, there was close correspondence between the recommendation made by the intake counselor regarding an inmate's treatment needs and those treatments the inmate reported he needed. Thus, failure to participate in needed treatment was usually explained by lack of proper motivation or by conflicts of activities rather than by unavailability of programs or unawareness of need.

There was no evidence, except in scattered instances, that career criminal inmates have greater treatment needs than the general prison population, or that they participate less in relevant prison rehabilitation programs. We therefore find no support for the contention that inmates with long criminal histories have the most serious treatment problems, but for some reason do not become involved in rehabilitation programs. If such evidence had been uncovered, we might encourage LEAA to devise policies to involve career criminal inmates selectively in treatment activities, perhaps by mandating participation or creating special incentives. However, we suggest no such strategy.

We found that, in the current correctional environment, prison staffs did not identify and selectively handle those inmates who met our career criminal definition. They were neither encouraged nor discouraged from treatment participation compared with others, and were not impeded by differences in security classifications. Their lengthy sentences also did not appear to affect their participation in treatment. They were neither more nor less likely than other inmates to have work assignments or to be completely idle.

Contrary to some expectations, career criminal inmates were not the source of the greatest prison violence. Younger inmates committed more serious and frequent infractions of every type. Thus, we found no evidence to suggest that career



criminals should be further penalized during their incarceration—for instance, not allowed in community sponsored programs, denied recreation, etc. Despite the negative behavior of some career criminal inmates, there still remains a large proportion who do not present institutional problems. We obtained stronger and more consistent associations between inmate behavior and other measures, e.g., inmate age and race, treatment participation, and prison work status.

It would be self-defeating to shape policy toward certain inmates based on external concerns (pressures for a systemwide approach to the career criminal) rather than internal concerns (institutional behavior). We recommend that the corrections system continue its policy of utilizing criminal history information in determining initial custody rating and, as time passes, allowing placement and privileges to be governed by institutional behavior.

The authors feel strongly that no special rehabilitation programs designed for career criminal inmates should be instituted at this time. In particular, we believe that programs tailored to those inmates who have been prosecuted and convicted through the efforts of the special career criminal prosecution units are inappropriate. It would be unjust to subject inmates with similar criminal histories to different correctional treatment depending on whether or not the jurisdiction in which they were convicted had a career criminal prosecution system. Fairness in correctional handling implies statewide uniformity of classification, at least at the time of prison intake. Prison officials do not now feel that prior criminal record—the hallmark of career criminals—is an appropriate basis for distinguishing inmates for special correctional handling, even though it is useful in the determination of initial custody rating. Experience has convinced these officials that institutional behavior should be relied upon to govern the placement and custody rating of inmates. And our findings are consistent with the view that career criminals are not distinguished as a class by their institutional behavior. And as we argued above, it is problematical at this time that career criminals should be selectively involved in treatment programs. Stronger evidence in favor of this selective treatment will be required to justify such an approach.

A final point related to the discussion of the career criminal and the corrections system should be made. Although this study suggests that career criminals are not more likely to exhibit negative prison behavior or attempt escape, the situation may change in the next few years. A trend developing within the Career Criminal Prosecution Program may significantly change the “client” of the program. The program initially focused on arrestees with lengthy adult criminal histories; the average age of the persons these units prosecuted was from 28 to 30. Recent evidence has shown that criminal activity peaks in the late teens or early twenties. Thus, imprisoning older offenders may well provide retribution with little effect on the overall level of crime. Aware of such evidence, Career Criminal Prosecution Units are concentrating more heavily on younger criminals in an attempt to incarcerate them early in their careers. If this trend continues, a larger percentage of the prison population will include young inmates who have serious criminal histories. This change in inmate composition holds potentially explosive consequences for our nation’s prisons. Correctional officials would be wise to recognize these possibilities and devise strategies to prevent or minimize such outcomes.

## Research Recommendations

The data base assembled for this research can be useful in analyzing a variety of correctional issues, for example, treatment need, allocation of prison resources, and prison violence. The authors will continue the research begun here, turning away from the distinction between career and non-career inmates.

Using this data base, and supplementing it with information on the characteristics of the prisons in which the surveys were conducted, the authors hope to undertake studies on the factors associated with prison violence. Several questions would be addressed:

- *How are street criminality and prison violence related?*

Inmate Survey data on the extent and type of crime committed by the inmates prior to their imprisonment would be related to the amount and form of prison misbehavior of those inmates.

- *How does the extent and type of prison misbehavior vary over the course of the sentence?*

Infraction dates are available in the Texas data and, upon analysis, will illuminate questions about changes in the extent and type of institutional behavior as a term progresses.

- *What type of inmates interact with what type of prison environment to produce high levels of violence?*

This question will require the collection of supplemental prison information (for example, on housing arrangements, population, staff orientation, security measures, recreation facilities) and its correlation with incidents of violence by inmates with specified characteristics.

- *What is the detailed nature of the apparent relationship between idleness and prison violence?*

In addition, the authors hope to collect post-release information on the inmates surveyed in order to relate recidivism to the amount and type of correctional treatment received and to other information developed in this study, including treatment need and motivation. With recidivism data in hand, our data base will enable us, for example, to match inmate subgroups on such factors as age, race, and criminal record; to control for the amount and type of treatment received; and to perceive possible crime reduction effects.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Within the past decade the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) has applied federal resources in various efforts to curtail the incidence of crime nationwide. Central to these efforts have been programs aimed at the most serious criminals, namely, the offenders with extensive criminal histories or extremely serious current offenses, or both. The term *career criminal* has been widely adopted to denote offenders with significant criminal histories.

Career criminals persist in serious crime despite efforts by the criminal justice system to deter, apprehend, imprison, and rehabilitate them. A national strategy for improving the criminal justice system's handling of these offenders emerged in 1974 when the LEAA began funding the Career Criminal Prosecution Program, which enabled prosecutors to give special attention to defendants who had been designated as career criminals after their arrest. Special prosecutorial measures, striving for conviction on charges sufficiently serious to justify imprisonment, seemed an appropriate response to evidence which indicated:

- Career criminals, a minority of offenders, commit a disproportionately large amount of the serious crime in the United States. It has been estimated that perhaps 10 percent of the criminal population accounts for 60 percent of the violent crime committed.<sup>1</sup>
- Although some career criminals commit crimes at a high rate, they are unlikely to be arrested for any single crime; the probability of their being arrested has been estimated to be less than 10 percent per crime commission.<sup>2</sup>
- Even when arrested, conviction and imprisonment of a career criminal has been far from certain.<sup>3</sup> For some of these offenders, return to the streets and resumption of crime occurs so soon as to create a dismaying image of "revolving door" justice.

The revolving-door concept suggests that career criminals are not being handled by the criminal justice system in a sufficiently selective way to assure that they receive their just punishment. This situation is caused in part by inadequate resources or defective operations in the system, and in part by a lack of clear policy direction. For example, some cases are dismissed or settled by a plea to a reduced

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<sup>1</sup>The Philadelphia birth cohort study performed by Wolfgang et al. found that a small group of juvenile offenders, 18 percent, was responsible for a large proportion of the juvenile crime committed by the cohort, 52 percent. See M. E. Wolfgang, R. M. Figlio, and T. Sellin, *Delinquency in a Birth Cohort*, The University of Chicago Press, 1972. Lyle Shannon at the University of Iowa found a similar pattern for adult crime as well. See Shannon et al., *Assessing the Relationship of Adult Criminal Careers to Juvenile Careers* (forthcoming).

<sup>2</sup>See J. Petersilia, P. Greenwood, and M. Lavin, *Criminal Careers of Habitual Felons*, National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, LEAA, U.S. Department of Justice, Government Printing Office, 1978; and P. Greenwood, *Rand Research on Criminal Careers: Progress to Date*, The Rand Corporation, N-1286-DOJ, August 1979.

<sup>3</sup>An unpublished Rand analysis of an extensive file of 1973 California police and court data disclosed that 22 percent of the robbery arrestees with a prior prison record were convicted and sentenced to a new prison term; similarly, 7 percent of burglary arrestees with a prior prison term received a new prison term.

charge because heavy workloads discourage the police from performing thorough follow-up investigations. Adequate trial preparation for all cases is usually precluded by excessive prosecutorial caseloads, so lenient plea settlements serve to relieve the caseload pressure and thereby to benefit some recidivist defendants. In some cases, serious convictions may be unattainable because of the loss of key witnesses or the absence of criminal records needed in the proceedings. The sentence imposed is sometimes light because a judge perceives, despite the defendant's unfavorable criminal record, prospects of rehabilitation or because the judge is affected by poor prison conditions in the jurisdiction. And, of course, competent defense counsel will seek to minimize the likelihood of conviction and stringent punishment at every opportunity the system provides.

The Career Criminal Prosecution Program, which originally involved about 20 jurisdictions, created special prosecution units intended to obtain a higher rate of conviction for selected defendants than would otherwise be realized through routine prosecution. These special units had prosecuted over 7500 defendants by 1978. Data analyzed by the National Legal Data Center reveal that 83 percent of these prosecutions produced convictions, and that 91 percent of those convicted received prison sentences, the minimum term averaging 12 years. To date, more than 36 units have received a total of \$19 million in federal funding. There has been a gradual transition to state and local support; in fact, several of these special prosecution units have been formed entirely with state and local funding. LEAA recently estimated that over 100 career criminal programs were in existence by 1980.

Career criminal prosecution programs vary in detail among jurisdictions, but the major elements are these:

- The unit is a separate component of the prosecutor's office manned by full-time, experienced attorneys. The hallmark of these units is vertical case representation, that is, the responsibility for prosecuting a specific case rests with a single attorney throughout the proceedings.
- Objective criteria are established beforehand to govern the designation of an arrestee as a career criminal for selective prosecution.
- Formal and systematic case screening is conducted promptly after arrest.
- Offense charging and plea negotiation policy is stringent.
- A readiness-for-trial prosecution posture is maintained, and priority case scheduling is arranged.

The choice of criteria for designating career criminals is an important aspect of the program. Prosecutorial criteria differ among jurisdictions in the degree to which they are offense-specific and in the weights assigned to facets of the defendant's criminal history, presently charged offenses, and the strength of the case against him. Such disparities in the career criminal label for prosecution purposes are thought to be appropriate because of differences in local concerns and resources.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Detailed descriptions of the operation of career criminal prosecution units have been published for Bronx County, New York; Suffolk County, Massachusetts; Orleans Parish, Louisiana; San Diego Coun-

Because national evaluation of the Career Criminal Prosecution Program has not yet been completed, it is not clear whether the impressive output statistics reflect a real improvement in prosecutorial performance, or whether they are simply an artifact of which defendants are selected for handling by the unit.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, these units are widely regarded as successful. Their favorable reception encouraged the LEAA to expand the concept of selective treatment of career criminals to other parts of the criminal justice system. The expanded approach is called the Comprehensive Career Criminal Program (CCCP).<sup>6</sup>

The principal police component of the CCCP is the Integrated Criminal Apprehension Program (ICAP). ICAP is an LEAA-funded program by which more than 30 police agencies are seeking to improve their capabilities in crime analysis, structured decisionmaking, patrol and criminal investigation management, and serious offender arrest and prosecution.<sup>7</sup> Each of these capabilities impinges in various ways on the career criminal problem. For example, an important product of crime analysis is the identification of crime patterns. Such intensive, connected criminal activity tends to be the hallmark of offenders who meet career criminal criteria. In this way crime analysis can facilitate the identification and arrest of career criminals. Another example is the upgrading of the initial crime investigation performed by patrol units—one of LEAA's emphasized concerns in providing ICAP grants. Studies have shown that in a preponderance of cases, the initial investigation is decisive in whether or not an arrest is made.<sup>8</sup> Improved initial investigation implies a higher likelihood of arrest, career criminals included. Still another example of how ICAP support impinges upon the career criminal is that it enables police agencies to introduce a special investigative function both to identify these offenders before they are arrested and to support the special prosecution units in the case preparation after an arrest.

In general, whether or not the police are involved in ICAP, there appear to be three avenues along which the police can proceed to complement prosecutorial efforts against career criminals: strengthening their assistance to the prosecutor on pending career criminal cases; applying specific apprehension efforts against suspected career criminals; and upgrading investigation and crime analysis activities intended to identify career criminals. Where both Career Criminal Prosecution

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ty, California; Franklin County, Ohio; and Kalamazoo County, Michigan. See *The Major Offense Bureau, Bronx County District Attorney's Office, New York, An Exemplary Project*, LEAA, U.S. Department of Justice, 1976; *Evaluation of the Suffolk County Major Violators Project*, The New England Bureau for Criminal Justice Services, 1977; and J. S. Dahmann and J. L. Lacy, *Criminal Prosecution in Four Jurisdictions: Departures from Routine Processing in the Career Criminal Program*, METREK/MITRE, Mitre Technical Reports 7550-7554, 1977, respectively.

<sup>5</sup>The national-level evaluation is being conducted by the Mitre Corporation by means of in-depth studies of career criminal prosecution programs in four locales: Orleans Parish, Louisiana; San Diego County, California; Franklin County, Ohio; and Kalamazoo County, Michigan. See Dahmann and Lacy (1977).

<sup>6</sup>See the *Comprehensive Criminal Program Guide*, LEAA, U.S. Department of Justice, 1977; see also *Comprehensive Career Criminal Program: A Review of Meeting Results*, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, September 21-23, 1977, prepared by J. W. Burrows, R. P. Grassie, and S. M. White, Westinghouse National Issues Center, 1977. For a description of sites involved in CCCP, see *Comprehensive Career Criminal Program: Findings of the Assessment Visits*, LEAA, 1978.

<sup>7</sup>LEAA has published a series of documents describing the ICAP program. They cover such topics as crime analyses, records, communications, training, patrol, and data processing. The summary report is entitled *Integrated Criminal Apprehension Program: Status Report on Program Implementation and Development*, LEAA, 1978.

<sup>8</sup>See P. W. Greenwood et al., *The Criminal Investigation Process*, D. C. Heath Co., Lexington, Massachusetts, 1977.

Programs and ICAP have been formally created in the same locale, a variety of issues and concerns must be resolved in linking the two efforts.<sup>9</sup> These issues and concerns stem mainly from the pronounced differences between the police and prosecutorial programs in areas such as the timing of implementation, focus, nature of locational overlap, and the need for technical assistance. The form of the linkages between police and prosecutor varies widely among jurisdictions which are acting to counter career criminals.

## THE SCOPE OF THIS RESEARCH

Against this backdrop of developments in career criminal programs in prosecution and policing, the question of how career criminals fare in prison must be examined as a foundation for possible policy changes in the correctional field. This report details our research on the prison experiences of inmates who resemble career criminals.<sup>10</sup> In particular, the study has three basic purposes. First, we are interested in the career criminal's treatment needs, that is, is he different from other criminals in terms of his experiences with alcohol, drugs, education, and employment? We are specifically interested in whether he evidences more acute problems in these areas than the general prison population. Second, given his treatment needs, is the career criminal participating in relevant programs to the same extent as other offenders? If the data show that career criminals have greater problems in particular areas, but are participating in programs less often than the general prison population, then alternative corrections policies may be warranted. We are also interested in understanding why inmates, career and non-career, do or do not participate in treatment programs, and how they assess program effects in terms of adjusting to prison and of future criminality. Third is the issue of whether career criminals pose unique behavioral problems in prison. Data were collected on prison infractions, escape attempts, days in segregation, and inmate problems. If career criminals are unique in these respects, policies designed to handle these inmates selectively might be warranted.

What might constitute selective handling of career criminal inmates? Prison administrators could place these persons in particular institutions, or assign them unique custody ratings, at least initially and perhaps throughout their terms. Such policies would respond to the view of some prosecutors that career criminals belong in maximum security institutions with close custody supervision. Similarly, policies which limit or deny access to treatment and work programs could be adopted for these inmates. This handling would be in accord with the view that past rehabilitative efforts have failed, and therefore that scarce prison resources should be focused on others. On the other hand, selective handling could entail special treat-

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<sup>9</sup>These matters are discussed in Burrows, Grassie, and White (1977).

<sup>10</sup>The intake of formally labeled and specially prosecuted career criminals into prisons during the period in which special prosecution units have operated is only a few percent of the total prison intake. Furthermore, their distribution among penal institutions is quite irregular. Rand's telephone survey of correctional administrators disclosed that they generally lacked knowledge of the special prosecution programs and had not considered specific responses to this class of offenders. Thus, it would have been self-defeating to limit our attention to only the output of these units. Our research thus concentrated on the prison experiences of inmates who would qualify as career criminals under various interpretations of the term.

ment programs to enhance rehabilitation efforts or to meet special severe pre-release needs. Further, special parole eligibility standards or parole procedures could be applied to career criminals. For instance, prosecutors might wish to be notified when a career criminal is coming up for a parole hearing so they can ensure that the paroling authorities are aware of the repetitive and serious nature of the inmate's criminality. Conceivably, one could adopt policies that would treat the career criminal uniquely at every stage of his imprisonment. This report is intended to shed some light on whether such policies are justified and feasible.

The National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice (NILECJ), the research arm of the LEAA, funded this study to clarify the desirability of expanding career criminal programs into the corrections arena. If expansion seems warranted, this research might indicate appropriate directions. The general research questions are:

- Do policies or programs for the selective handling of career criminal inmates currently exist in the state prisons? If they do, how have they fared?
- What are the views of prison administrators on the desirability and feasibility of programs tailored to career criminals?
- Is there empirical evidence to justify special treatment programs for the imprisoned career criminal? Specifically, are career criminals distinguishable in terms of their histories of alcohol and drug abuse, employment, and education?
- Are career criminals unique in terms of their participation in prison treatment and work programs?
- Are the institutional problems (e.g., escapes, rule infractions) of career criminals different from those of other inmates?
- Are special efforts toward career criminals in the corrections area desirable in light of the answers obtained to the questions above? What are the appropriate directions for these efforts?

Although this research was undertaken specifically to examine the prison experiences of career criminals, the results can be used to address broader corrections issues. To compare the experiences of career criminals with non-career criminals, data were collected on a large number of prisoners selected to represent an incoming cohort. As a result, this study is an information source on the overall percentage of inmates who appear to need specified treatment programs. It compares the percentage of inmates who need treatment with the percentage who actually receive it. We obtained unique data on the breadth of treatment programs employed in prisons, and on the number and kinds of inmates who participate in those programs. Our research presents information supplied by the inmate on why he did not participate in a needed program, the influence of prison staff on his decision, and his opinion concerning the program's effects. Given that participation in most prison programs is now voluntary, it is useful to learn more about the reasons for, and characteristics of, inmates who choose to become involved.

Further, our data help to show what inmate characteristics (e.g., age, race, prior record) are associated with various aspects of prison behavior. From official records, which inmates cause greater than average disciplinary problems, have attempted escape, etc.? Given the prospects of increased prison overcrowding, this information should be useful in ascertaining the characteristics of troublesome inmates.

Before proceeding it must be made clear that this study *does not* evaluate the effectiveness of particular forms of treatment. At this time, we have no information on the post-release behavior of the inmates surveyed. Rather this study is concerned with the allocation of prison resources—the type, availability, and utilization of rehabilitation programs in prison. Participation in programs is examined in relation to two primary independent variables: inmate characteristics (e.g., career criminality, race) and need for treatment. This research can be seen as an assessment of the effects that a change in policy directed solely at career criminal inmates would have on a number of facets of prison programming.

Our findings derive primarily from questionnaires administered to approximately 1300 prison inmates in California, Michigan, and Texas. For each inmate who completed the questionnaire, additional information was collected from his official correctional records. Before initiating the survey, we conducted telephone interviews with correctional administrators in 30 states.<sup>11</sup>

The telephone interviews sought to elicit the attitudes of correctional officials about appropriate prison responses to career criminal inmates. Two broad areas were covered: correctional decisionmaking, and treatment programs. On the subject of correctional decisionmaking, administrators were asked about the role that an inmate's criminal history plays in management decisions; the interaction among age, criminal history, and institutional behavior; and their attitudes regarding selective correctional handling of career criminals. As to treatment programs, the interaction among inmate characteristics, treatment needs, and program participation was emphasized. The findings from these interviews guided the design of the Inmate Survey.

A pervasive finding in our telephone interviews was that there are few selective correctional responses to prosecutorially designated career criminals (or similar offenders) as a class. Further, the overall reaction from the corrections officials interviewed was that they would oppose any selective handling of career criminals at this time. The principal reason for their objection is that given the diversity of the career criminal selection criteria, these offenders are too disparate to be handled as a class. Career criminals may be young, mature, or burnt-out; they may or may not have engaged in crimes of violence; they may be aggressive or passive. Thus they require consideration as individuals or at least as a type with which corrections officials are already accustomed to dealing. Commonalities among career criminals are uncertain. Corrections officials felt that research into the unique problems of career criminals, or the special risks they pose, is needed before any action program is undertaken. Our research responds to this need for information.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Results from the telephone survey are reported in P. Honig, *The Prison Experience of Career Criminals: Current Practice and Future Considerations*, The Rand Corporation, P-6178, July 1978. The states surveyed were Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin. The selection of the particular states reflected regional representativeness, accessibility, and willingness to participate.

<sup>12</sup>The Massachusetts Department of Corrections is currently investigating the need for differential handling of inmates prosecuted by the Career Criminal Prosecution Program in Boston, Massachusetts. See Ellen Chayet, *The Institutional Experience of Major Violators in Massachusetts*, Massachusetts Department of Corrections, 1979. The Mitre Corporation, as part of its evaluation of the Career Criminal Prosecution Program, has examined the impact the program will have on corrections. Findings are



## THE ORGANIZATION OF THIS REPORT

Section II describes the methodology for the prison inmate surveys in California, Michigan, and Texas. The discussion includes information about the selection of the three states and the inmate samples therein; the design of the questionnaire; the response rates; and the collection of official criminal record data on the inmate samples. Section II also summarizes the characteristics of inmates who participated in the surveys.

Section III provides a brief overview of the correctional systems in the states where surveys were conducted. Among the topics discussed are differences in sentencing structures, correctional philosophies, treatment program availability, security, and staffing.

Section IV begins our presentation of results. Overall rates of inmate participation in various prison programs are first presented. We then discuss the criteria used to assess whether or not an inmate has a need for treatment in the areas of education, vocational training, and alcohol and drug abuse. Subsequently, we look at the association between treatment need and treatment participation to see what percentage of those inmates classified as having a "high need" for treatment actually participate in a corresponding prison treatment program.

Section V examines whether certain inmate factors are associated with particular treatment needs, and whether such factors affect an inmate's decision to receive needed treatment. Among the factors included in this examination are career criminality, age, race, and length of sentence. Particularly germane to our interests is the association between career criminality, treatment need, and treatment received.

In Section VI, we present the reasons inmates give for participating or not participating in prison treatment programs. Especially interesting in this respect are the factors that are cited by high-need inmates as discouraging program participation. The section also contains inmate assessments of each of the programs in which they participated. Their assessments are grouped as to whether the programs assisted them in adjusting to prison, in attaining an immediate goal (i.e., securing a diploma), in making them more employable, or in helping them refrain from further criminality.

Section VII examines the institutional behavior of career criminals. The associations between inmate characteristics and aspects of behavior such as institutional infractions, escape attempts, and susceptibility to prison problems are considered. The relevance of this information stems from the overriding importance of institutional behavior in correctional decisionmaking about the handling of inmates.

The final section interprets the results and relates them to the implications for correctional policy changes.

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contained in a report entitled, *Correctional System Aspects of the Career Criminal Program: An Examination of Correctional Handling of Serious Offenders in the Four Career Criminal Program Sites of the National Evaluation*, The Mitre Corporation, September 1978.

## II. THE PRISON INMATE SURVEY<sup>1</sup>

### INMATE SAMPLE SELECTION

In each state we sought to obtain a sample of inmates whose characteristics approximated the statewide intake of male prisoners, while at the same time limiting the sample to inmates whose convictions occurred in counties where the Rand criminal justice research staff was also conducting a jail survey. To approximate an "incoming cohort" in each state, it was not possible merely to select a simple random sample of current inmates. Such a sample, where each inmate serving a prison term has an equal likelihood of being selected, would have an overrepresentation of prisoners serving long sentences and an underrepresentation of prisoners with very short sentences because those with long sentences are more likely to still be in prison to be selected. The person serving a 5-year sentence is five times as likely as the person serving 1 year to still be in prison at the time the sample is selected. To compensate for this bias, we gave each current inmate a weight equal to the reciprocal of the expected length of his current term as a sample selection factor.<sup>2</sup> For purposes of this formula, expected prison time was either taken directly from computerized information supplied by the prison about the specific inmate or estimated from average time served within the state by prisoners with similar conviction offenses. Lists of inmates selected were prepared prior to our prison visits. These lists were sent to each institution so that the survey sessions could be scheduled; the institutions then notified these inmates about the sessions. Separate inmate notification was given by the Rand staff as well.

To assure that a nonbiased inmate sample would result, a "replacement" procedure was devised. For each inmate selected for the sample, another inmate of similar race, age, and county of commitment was also selected as his "replacement." When the initially selected sample member did not appear at the survey sessions, or chose not to participate, his replacement was sought.

The characteristics of our inmate samples are summarized in Table 1. This tabulation compares the distribution of four characteristics—race, age, conviction offense, and prior prison commitments—for the statewide prison population and the resulting Rand samples. There are no statistically significant differences between the Rand samples and the statewide prison population except in two instances. For California, the Rand sample contains a larger proportion of whites; and for Texas, the Rand sample is somewhat older ( $\chi^2 < .05$ ).

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<sup>1</sup>The prison Inmate Survey served the needs of two Rand research projects. The survey methodology is quite complex and will be described in detail in a separate Rand report being prepared by M. Peterson. The present report includes the design and pretesting of the survey questionnaire; the selection of the survey sites and the inmate samples; the factors affecting the response rates; and a minimal description of the methodology.

<sup>2</sup>This formula derives from stochastic models of the behavior of criminal offenders, developed by J. Chaiken. The foundation for the formula will be included in the forthcoming Rand report by M. Peterson on the prison and jail surveys.

Table 1  
COMPARISON OF INMATE CHARACTERISTICS BETWEEN STATEWIDE  
PRISON POPULATION AND RAND SAMPLES  
(Percent)

	California		Michigan		Texas	
	Statewide Prison Population <sup>a</sup>	Rand Sample	Statewide Prison Population	Rand Sample	Statewide Prison Population	Rand Sample
Race						
Anglo	35.8	44.4	29.9	31.7	39.6	36.7
Hispanic	23.8	19.7	1.4	0	10.2	10.3
Black	38.6	35.9	68.3	68.3	50.3	53.0
Other	1.8	0	0.5	0	0	0
Age <sup>b</sup>						
23 or less	24.7	27.3	38.8	43.4	52.2	36.3
24-30	49.1	50.0	30.8	33.4	22.8	36.8
31 or more	26.2	22.6	30.4	22.6	25.0	26.7
Conviction Offense <sup>c</sup>						
Homicide	8.4	9.7	8.4	8.2	5.5	5.5
Robbery	34.6	37.1	15.8	17.6	17.7	18.5
Assault	5.5	6.2	14.0	14.5	4.7	4.9
Burglary	24.2	22.4	24.4	23.9	35.6	35.3
GTA	3.0	1.8	3.0	2.4	3.2	2.0
Forgery, Fraud	5.5	5.9	2.6	2.6	4.7	4.8
Rape	2.5	2.9	9.3	8.9	2.5	2.9
Drugs	10.3	8.8	5.8	6.6	9.7	9.9
Other	5.8	5.3	16.9	14.6	16.4	15.9
Prior Prison Commitment(s)						
No	63.4	66.7	60.5	59.6	66.9	63.8
Yes	36.6	33.3	39.5	40.4	33.1	36.2

<sup>a</sup>As approximated by the initially selected sample.

<sup>b</sup>At time of completing the questionnaire.

<sup>c</sup>Most serious of conviction offenses.

## THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The questionnaire used in the Inmate Survey contained 174 questions, some multi-parted. It required approximately one hour to complete. The questions were divided into six sections, with only the final section—Part F—being devoted exclusively to the interests of this project. The majority of questions in the other sections are not germane to the present report.

Part A of the questionnaire covered the respondents' initial crimes, their juvenile criminality, and their prior adult criminal history. Part B contained questions concerned with the psychological correlates of criminality, as well as with criminal attitudes and the expected outcomes of a criminal versus a noncriminal lifestyle. Part C asked about the inmate's lifestyle in the months he was on the street prior to his current imprisonment. It then proceeded to elicit detailed information about the nature and frequency of criminal activities during those street months. Part D presented a limited number of questions that characterized the lifestyle and crimi-

nal activity in the 2-year period preceding the period covered in Part C. Part E covered certain demographic information.<sup>3</sup>

Questions in Part F referred to the treatment and work programs in which an inmate had been involved during current and past prison terms. He was asked specifically about experiences in education, vocational training, alcohol, drugs, individual and group counseling, pre-release programs, and others. He was also asked whether he currently held a prison work assignment. Part F also covered behavioral problems, such as disciplinary reports received, segregation periods imposed, escapes attempted, and reasons for trouble in prison.

### **SURVEY SITE SELECTION**

California, Michigan, and Texas were chosen as the sites of the Inmate Survey for several reasons. Each has a large prison system with a substantial inmate population. Each state maintains computerized prison records, which facilitated the selection of inmate samples. The three states are geographically dispersed, and each contains at least one major metropolis as well as a number of smaller but important cities, which provide a natural basis for intrastate stratification of the inmate samples. In each instance the major metropolis is sufficiently interior to the state so that state arrest records would suffice for follow-up recidivism studies on the inmate samples subsequent to the surveys. The three states reflect interesting and different correctional orientations and concerns. These state differences are discussed more fully in the next section.

Within each state we identified three or four prisons that provided an adequate cross-section of the male state prison population. (It will be shown later that our inmate sample closely approximates the characteristics of the entire male prison population within each state.) The following prisons were chosen:

California:	California Correctional Institution (Tehachapi) Correctional Training Facility (Soledad) Deuel Vocational Institution (Tracy) San Quentin Penitentiary (San Rafael)
Michigan:	Ionia Reformatory (Ionia) Michigan Training Unit (Ionia) State Prison of Southern Michigan (Jackson)
Texas:	Ellis Unit (Huntsville) Coffield Unit (Tennessee Colony) Ferguson Unit (Midway) Wynne Unit (Huntsville)

### **ADMINISTRATION OF QUESTIONNAIRE**

Inmates who appeared at the survey sessions in response to their notification received a concise explanation of the research project, the survey instrument, and

<sup>3</sup>A copy of the survey instrument can be obtained from Joan Petersilia.

the statutory requirement that information furnished by them would be kept confidential and was immune from legal process (except possibly a congressional subpoena). Only those who indicated their understanding and a willingness to participate by signing an agreement were permitted to proceed. The questionnaire was administered usually to inmate groups ranging from several individuals to as many as 40 or 50 (typically there were about 20 respondents). Each inmate who completed the questionnaire received \$5 as compensation. Because certain inmates within segregated custody were regarded by prison officials as posing security risks if assembled into a group for the survey, the questionnaire was administered to them individually within their segregated custody. Completed questionnaires were obtained from nearly all selected inmates having this status. Also, some inmates could not read English; this was especially true of Spanish-speaking inmates in California. The survey instrument was translated and printed in Spanish for those persons.

### **OFFICIAL RECORDS INFORMATION**

To complement the completed questionnaires, we compiled official records data from hardcopy corrections files on the participating inmates. The categories of data coded for our purposes were the following:

- Staff recommendations made during intake as to whether the inmate should participate in specific treatment programs, e.g., educational, vocational, alcohol and drug abuse, or counseling programs.
- Treatment need criteria, e.g., reading achievement level, last school year completed.
- Disciplinary reports, e.g., for possession of contraband, for violence resulting in minor injury, for administrative infractions.
- Current conviction offense(s).
- Number of arrests for specified offenses in periods defined by the questionnaire.
- Miscellaneous criminal justice system contacts, e.g., probation or parole revocation.
- Juvenile justice system criminal contacts, e.g., age at first arrest.

The official record data served both in the analysis and in the verification of some of the survey information.

### **SURVEY RESPONSE RATES**

Completed questionnaires were obtained from a total of 1503 inmates in the three states, including those who were replacements for initially selected inmates who failed to appear. The overall response rate was 73 percent, with component rates in percent as shown in the following table.

	Initially Selected			Initially Selected plus Replacements
	Appearing at Session	Beginning Questionnaire	Completing Questionnaire	Completing Questionnaire
California	64	52	50	61 (N = 369)
Michigan	62	53	48	64 (N = 457)
Texas	97	85	83	92 (N = 677)
Combined	75	64	61	73 (N = 1503)

We believe that the disparities in response rates among states primarily reflect differences in control and administration of the various institutions. Clearly, the major source of nonresponse was failure to appear at the survey sessions. We attribute these absences mainly to inadequate notification.

Only inmates whose completed questionnaires could be paired with official records data are analyzed in this report. The resulting sample sizes are: California, N = 340; Michigan, N = 363; and Texas, N = 583. The combined total is N = 1286.

### **III. CORRECTIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR STATES SURVEYED**

This section provides a brief overview of the correctional systems in the three states, including sentencing structure, budget, staff-to-inmate ratio, philosophy regarding rehabilitation, and types of programs the institutions emphasize. The states surveyed differ vastly in correctional philosophies and concerns. These differences enabled us, by design, to examine a number of issues among disparate correctional contexts.

#### **INMATE POPULATION**

Each state has a large prison system with a substantial inmate population. Texas has the largest prison population of any state, with approximately 23,000 inmates, and California holds the second largest—currently exceeding 22,000. The Michigan inmate population, ranking fifth among states, is approaching 16,000.

All three states are experiencing serious problems of overcrowding. Texas is said to have the most crowded prison system in the nation at 240 percent of capacity (prior to the completion of a new 4000-bed unit). California's system has recently exceeded its design capacity and has initiated "double-bunking" of inmates. Eleven new prisons, each of about 400 beds, are planned and await legislative funding. The design capacity of Michigan's prisons is about 13,000, which has been exceeded by the actual population since 1977. Seven expansion projects involving either new construction or extensive remodeling are under way or in advanced planning.

Each state differs with respect to the organization of its facilities. The Texas system comprises 16 individual prison units, ranging in population from about 600 to 2600 inmates. The units of the system are nearly uniform in the degree of security and the orientation of their programs. All Texas prisons are operated under maximum security conditions. Texas has newer facilities than most states. Only a few hundred cells remain from before 1950; most are considerably newer. Most buildings have multi-tiered wings with long rows of cells, arranged around a central building. The buildings were erected quickly and solidly with inmate construction labor.

California's corrections system has 12 institutions (including one limited to female felons and one devoted to civilly committed drug addicts), with populations ranging from 900 to nearly 3000. The individual institutions are disparate in degree of security and specialization.

Eleven adult institutions, 12 corrections camps, and numerous community corrections centers are the facilities of Michigan's correctional system. Individually, their populations range from fewer than 100 to more than 5000 at the world's largest walled prison (State Prison of Southern Michigan at Jackson); they are heterogeneous in security level and programs.

## SENTENCING STRUCTURE

California's determinate sentencing structure became operational in mid-1977. Michigan and Texas have a modified indeterminate sentencing structure. The California determinate sentencing law provides primarily a presumptive type of sentencing with a limited range of discretion to judges. In stating that the purpose of imprisonment is punishment and in creating presumptive sentences, the California Legislature formally retreated from rehabilitation motives underlying indeterminate sentencing. It removed the discretion of administrative bodies to fix and modify terms of imprisonment in attempts to create incentives for rehabilitation.

In California's sentencing structure the great majority of crimes have been placed in one of four sentencing categories. Within each category there are three possible sentences, whose lengths have been related to the median time served under the former sentencing system for offense types placed in the category. The court retains its discretion—with some exceptions where mandatory prison terms are prescribed by law—to place a defendant on probation, to suspend imposition or execution of sentence, to impose fines, and to commit to a county jail as dispositional alternatives. But if the court decides to commit the offender to state prison, it must sentence him to the middle of the three terms provided for the category of his offense, unless it finds that there are circumstances in aggravation or mitigation of the crime. The total fixed term, which may reflect consecutive sentences as well as enhancements, could be reduced by as much as one-third by good behavior and program participation credits earned by the inmate.

Michigan has a modified indeterminate sentencing structure. An offender is given a maximum sentence established by statute for the crime of which he is convicted. The judge imposes a minimum sentence that can be at most two-thirds of the statutory maximum. "Good-time" credit is earned at a rate that increases with the length of the sentence. Minimum parole eligibility occurs at the end of the minimum term less good-time credit, but special earlier parole release can be awarded for exemplary conduct if the sentencing judge concurs. The average parole period is about 2 years—except for life-term parolees, for whom it is about 4 years. Mandatory minimum terms have been established for first-degree murder, armed robbery, burglary with explosives, and felonies committed with a firearm.

Texas also has a modified indeterminate sentencing structure in which the maximum term for an offense is set by statute and the minimum term is imposed, at the defendant's choice, by a jury or the judge. The provisions for repeat offenders are stringent: a second (non-capital) felony conviction mandates the maximum term; a third (non-capital) felony conviction mandates a life sentence; and a second conviction of any offense for which death is an alternative punishment mandates at least life imprisonment.<sup>1</sup>

Recent legislation has significantly increased the time serious offenders must spend in prison: Persons convicted of murder, aggravated kidnapping, robbery, rape or sexual abuse, or those who exhibit a deadly weapon while committing a felony must serve one-third of their term or 20 years, whichever is less, before they

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<sup>1</sup>American Bar Association, Commission on Correctional Facilities and Services, *Sentencing Computation Laws and Practice, A Preliminary Survey*, prepared by R. Hand and R. Singer, Resource Center on Correction Law and Legal Services, Washington, D.C., January 1974.



can be considered for parole. The general provision for minimum parole eligibility had been as follows: 1 year or the minimum term, whichever is greater, less good time; life sentence, 25 years less good time; habitual offender, after 30 years. Good-time credit is earned on an increasing scale based on length of sentence and applied against both minimum and maximum terms. A habitual offender earns no good time.

Texas has been reluctant to use probation as an alternative to a prison sentence. In the early seventies, while 83 percent of felons nationwide were receiving probation, approximately 50 percent of Texas felons were given probation sentences. In 1977 the legislature enacted a statewide probation program, together with a shock probation bill applying to first-time offenders.<sup>2</sup> Whether these measures will be used to relieve prison crowding is an open question, given that the 10-year-old community corrections statute which legalizes work-furlough programs has been virtually unused and that the Texas Department of Corrections is regarded as having the most pronounced resistance to community-based corrections of any system in the nation.

## CORRECTIONAL POLICIES AND POSTURE

The three states reflect interesting and differing correctional orientations and concerns. The California correctional system has been and remains one of the most progressive in the nation. It has been a leader in undertaking innovations in the housing and handling of inmates. It has provided and emphasized a variety of treatment, work, and academic programs with particular attention to community-based corrections.

In 1978, the California Department of Corrections formally acknowledged that it was limited in the extent to which it could change the long-term behavior of unwilling inmates, determine which individuals would commit violent acts in prison or after release, reduce recidivism, or cure various addictions.<sup>3</sup> With this acknowledgment, the system abandoned policies which mandated inmate participation in any program. California now provides a variety of educational and work opportunities, as well as groups to develop other social skills, in which inmates are encouraged but not forced to participate.

While it is the policy of the California system to place high priority on realistic inmate work assignments, it is now unable to produce sufficient work opportunities and incentives. In large part, this situation results from the unwillingness of the state legislature to raise the statutory limit on inmate pay (currently 35 cents an hour); to authorize outside sales (at least to nonprofit organizations) of the products of prison industries; and to permit inmate labor to be used for correctional construction.

Two salient management problems in California are institutional violence caused by prison gangs, and narcotics trafficking.

Michigan, like California, has a correctional system noted for its progressive-

<sup>2</sup>Shock probation combines probation with short-term incarceration.

<sup>3</sup>California Department of Corrections, *Program and Facilities Planning Report*, March 15, 1979, repeated the Statement of Principles that appeared in the 1978 Program Planning Report.

ness and innovations. It has emphasized classification of inmates, especially for purposes of security and parole decisionmaking. The system advocates community-based correctional treatment and has developed a broad correctional center program. It seeks to provide a variety of inmate opportunities to participate in education, vocational training, prison industries, and work-pass programs. It acknowledges that the physical condition of many of its facilities is substandard and is attempting to remedy the disparities with standards for correctional institutions. The system has had an inmate grievance procedure since 1973; in 1978 over 2600 grievances reached the director's office after failing resolution at three earlier steps in the procedure. (About 29 percent of the grievances reaching the director have been settled in favor of the complainant.) The theme of the system, as expressed by the director, is change. And its key policy is to minimize the need for secure institutions by accurately identifying those convicted felons who can be managed safely outside of such facilities, while concentrating public protection resources on dangerous offenders.

The Texas prison system is conservative. Centralization and efficiency dominate the administration of the system. Innovation, rehabilitation, and reintegration are not prominent concerns. As expressed by its director, the demands on the system by the citizens of Texas are that it hold offenders securely and assure that they work to defray the cost to the taxpayers of their imprisonment. In achieving these goals, the Texas prison system is regarded as the most successful and efficient in the nation. Critics maintain that the orderliness and efficiency in the system make it dehumanizing and repressive. All inmates, with few exceptions, serve under rigorous maximum security conditions and are kept on a strict daily regimen of activity. Work-release and other community programs are almost nonexistent. Escapes are rare.

About one-half of the inmates are in highly regimented work squads doing agricultural labor. Ten percent work in the 21 prison industries. Ten percent are in construction and maintenance jobs, building and remodeling their own prisons. Thirty percent hold operational jobs, for example, porters, kitchen workers, and other menial jobs. Inmates are not paid even a nominal wage for their work. The result is that the Texas system is the most economical in the nation. Its budget, when the prison population was 21,000, amounted to \$57 million—about \$6.00 per day per prisoner compared with nearly \$30 per day per prisoner in California.

The rationale of the system is that full employment, along with consistently tight security, have made not only a productive prison system but also a clean and safe one for both staff and inmates. The facilities are extraordinarily clean and free from disturbances.

## **PROGRAM INFORMATION**

### **California**

Vocational training and academic education have been the core of California's program efforts. Academic instruction is available at all grade levels, including college-degree programs. Depending on the institution, the number of trades in

which instruction is given varies from a few to 20 or more. Inmates are not compensated for training or educational activities. Correctional industries, in which inmates are offered work assignments at minimal pay, produce goods and services within more than 30 manufacturing and agricultural enterprises. Their operations, however, have been beset with difficulties attributed in part to statutory restrictions on pay, products, and markets. The California system has been a pioneer in correctional counseling. Professional counselors, at a ratio of perhaps 1 per 100 inmates, create opportunities for individual and group counseling. Community-based correctional programs have a mixed history, with both work-furlough and home-furlough efforts having been greatly curtailed after ambitious beginnings. Nonetheless, the system is now aiming toward expanded use of community-based programs and, in particular, toward inmate placement in pre-release community centers.

**Inmate Work Programs.** Idleness and underemployment are growing problems in California. The correctional industries system is searching for new manufacturing or service activities but is hampered by statutory restrictions. Use of inmate labor for correctional construction remains politically untenable. Participation in the conservation camp system of the Department of Forestry is being considered, but will depend on the availability of a sufficient number of minimal custody inmates.

**Vocational Education Programs.** These programs involve 116 shops and 4 skill centers in 48 occupational areas. Five hundred hours are considered the minimum length of training to develop basic operative skills. At 1000 hours trainees have developed sufficient competence for entry into the job market. Most vocational courses are offered on a flexible entry and exit basis as dictated by an inmate's specific needs. Some programs have been approved for indenturing of inmates as apprentices and provide credits toward the completion of apprenticeship programs in the community.

Approved requests for enrollment in vocational programs result in direct entry or placement on a waiting list by date and ethnic background. (These programs try to maintain an ethnic ratio that matches that of the correctional institution as a whole.) The average man-day inmate enrollment in vocational training for fiscal year 1977-78 was 2203, approximately 89 percent of capacity.

**Academic Education.** There are three levels of adult education—below the 6th grade, 6th grade to 9th grade, and 9th grade to high school diploma or equivalency certificate—augmented by a college program. The programs are conducted by credentialed teachers and administrators. Students may enroll at any time during the year. The academic school year is generally 35 weeks of instruction. Most institutions also conduct a 6-week summer program. Courses are designed both for formal classrooms and for individual study. The instruction is as individualized as possible. Course credits earned in the adult school are transferable to public high schools and adult schools. Vocational course credits apply toward a high school diploma. College course credits are transferable in some circumstances.

Inmate participation in academic education is voluntary. If a request for enrollment is approved, the inmate will be placed in a class immediately unless it is full, in which instance he is placed on a waiting list in chronological order. Over 28 percent of the total inmate population has recently been participating in academic

education. Expenditures for academic education in fiscal year 1978-79 totaled approximately \$6 million.

## Michigan

The Michigan system has had a parole contract program on a permanent basis since 1973. These contracts are three-party agreements: The inmate agrees to follow the treatment programming and other stipulations; the Department of Corrections agrees to make available the specified programs; and the Parole Board agrees to parole at the minimum release date if the terms of the contract are met. In recent years overcrowding has caused considerable difficulties in program delivery. Large numbers of contracts have been terminated for rules infractions or have been voluntarily terminated. The parole contract program was cut back in 1977 when eligibility criteria were changed to focus on inmates with longer sentences. The future of the program is currently in doubt, pending the outcome of a study to measure its relation to parole success.

By contrast, the work-pass program is expanding, with over 1200 jobs being provided to enable prisoners to earn a competitive wage while serving a prison term. Similarly, continued growth marks the prison industries, which currently employ about 1200 inmates and sell about \$10 million in products per year to any tax-supported agency in Michigan. Legislation has been introduced to reduce statutory limitations on markets, products, and prisoner wages.

By the end of 1977, all basic academic programs were being tailored to the individual needs of the students through a method called Competency Based Instruction. This approach is focused on the problem of educating prisoners who may be transferred from one institution to another at times that do not correspond to traditional class schedules.

Program information specific to the three Michigan institutions surveyed follows.

**State Prison at Jackson.** At the close security facility (central unit), paid employment had been required of all physically capable inmates not enrolled in educational programs, but overcrowding has produced considerable idleness. The available jobs are in service areas such as laundry, kitchen, and maintenance as well as the industries, the last including federally approved apprenticeship programs in ten skilled trade areas. Education has a high priority, with about one-half of the inmates enrolled in classes ranging from remedial reading to college-degree programs. Training in vocational trades is available, with certifications given in welding, engine repair, building trades, graphic arts, drafting, business machine repair, auto mechanics, electronics, etc. Programs other than education and job skills training are offered, for example, group counseling sessions and alcohol and drug treatment.

The minimum custody facility (south unit) offers many of the programs and activities described above for the central unit, but in a minimum custody environment. The same academic programming is available, but the types of vocational training available differ somewhat. Also, night vocational training classes on a junior college campus are offered. Standard service areas and routine farm work provide employment for those not in the academic program. The work-pass program and the home-furlough program are opportunities for these inmates.

The medium security facility (Northside unit) is the newest at Jackson. Prisoners work in the main textile plant, in institutional maintenance, and in the print shop. The traditional educational programs are available. A variety of vocational classes are conducted, including lens grinding, apartment building maintenance, dental technology, television production, and videotaping.

**Michigan Reformatory at Ionia.** This close security facility for youthful offenders offers remedial education up to a junior college degree. The high school diploma can be obtained either by course credits or by passing the General Educational Development (GED) test. Vocational training courses are taught in conjunction with related academic courses. On-the-job training can be obtained in various maintenance areas. Job assignments, for example, in maintenance, food service, health care, and library duties are available to inmates not in educational programs and able to work. The industries include a garment factory, a furniture factory, and a central laundry. There are counseling groups, psychological treatment services, and rehabilitation programs in the areas of substance abuse.

**Michigan Training Unit at Ionia.** The inmates at this medium security facility are referred to as students rather than residents. Roughly 85 percent are enrolled in some type of schooling. About one-half are in the academic program, which has courses through grade 12, augmented by a junior college program. About one-third of the population participates in a vocational training program in ten areas, the culmination of which is certification. Both group and individual counseling are offered. There is access to Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous. Psychological services are provided by a professional. Job assignments are in three areas: maintenance and grounds care, clerks, and building custodians.

## Texas

**Academic Programs.** Arrangements for education in the Texas prison system are unique. A school district, titled the Windham School District, was created by the state legislature in 1969 to conduct education programs at the various Texas prisons. Except for its lack of power to levy a property tax and the absence of student age limits, this school district resembles others. It receives both state and federal financial aid and uses state-adopted textbooks. Thus it does not have to compete for support within the corrections budget. The prison system provides only space, utilities, and maintenance at a cost of about \$1 million per year. Windham, which gained full accreditation in 1976 from a regional educational association, was the first state correctional educational system to do so.

About 9000 inmates attend classes, most part-time—the equivalent average daily attendance being 3000. In addition, about 1200 inmates are enrolled in junior college vocational programs and another 1000 attend academic college courses. The school district's classes reflect ungraded, year-round programs. Special classes are offered for bilingual, retarded, emotionally disturbed, or disadvantaged students.

Two philosophical concepts, attributed to the corrections director who was responsible for the creation of the Windham School District, underlie the school system. One is that academic education is superior to vocational training in improving an inmate's view of life. The other is that education should be mandatory for those who need it. All entering inmates who do not score at least the 5th-grade level

on educational achievement tests are required to go to school at least one day a week. Actually, for most inmates, school is a sought-after assignment. New inmates earn the privilege of spending more than one day a week in class instead of working in the fields. Punishment for bad behavior means a return to field work with a loss of education privileges. In the period that the Windham School District has been operational, it has raised the mean education level of inmates by a full grade.

**Work Programs.** As already noted, security and work are the paramount concerns of the Texas prison system. Idleness is not tolerated. About half of the population works on prison farms, mainly in stoop labor; nearly all of the remainder work in either the 21 prison industries (10 percent), in construction jobs (10 percent), or in routine operational tasks that keep the prisons running (30 percent). The ownership of over 100,000 acres of farmland, however, is the primary reason why full employment is always maintained. Agricultural hand labor continues to dominate work activities despite the gradual growth of industrial programs, which began in 1962. The farms and the industries are linked through the raw materials (e.g., broomcorn, wood, leather, cotton) that move from the one to the other. Many of the industries' products are sold to tax-supported agencies.

Some of the industrial employment involves sophisticated skills, for example, data processing, microfilming, denture-making, and rehabilitating school buses and fire trucks. These skills are generally acquired by on-the-job training. Many of the factory jobs are at best routine, semi-skilled activities. The extensive construction and remodeling programs provide regular work for masons, carpenters, electricians, and other skilled workers; inhibiting pressures by outside labor unions are relatively weak in Texas, in contrast with most other states.

The system administrators expect the work programs to teach inmates to respond to authority and to form good habits in a productive situation. Another objective is to put the inmates in good physical shape. Still another is to deter violence by a constant regimen of activity. The carrot-and-stick technique is pervasive: To get a good job, the inmate must first perform creditably on a bad one; bad performance on a good job means a return to a bad one.

Most of the plants in the prison industries are spacious and well-lighted, and have modern equipment. In some, however, working conditions do not meet outside standards, either in comfort or safety. The plants were built by inmates. A 40-hour work week is typical.

An inmate may not quit a work assignment, as is permitted in most other states. Failure to work as assigned results in a stay in solitary confinement, no accumulation of good time, loss of earned good time, loss of incentive points required for education eligibility, and other such penalties.

**Other Programs.** So-called rehabilitative programs are few. The Psychological Services Office provides "group rap sessions" in drug abuse for 400 to 500 inmates once a week. About 900 inmates participate in a similar alcohol program. The sessions are voluntary, and incentive points for eligibility to education programs are awarded for participation. The psychology office supervises chapters of Alcoholics Anonymous, to which about one-third of the inmates belong and which meet every week in most units. These meetings are another source of incentive points.

Among the system officials, rehabilitation is viewed as at best peripheral to the work program. The system mainly seeks to keep the inmate functional enough to

participate in the work program and in education. The treatment office helps some released inmates find jobs, provided they ask for this help. It has placed about 10 percent of prisoners discharged since 1973, about one-third of them in skilled jobs.

### **Inmate-to-Staff Ratios**

The information provided in this section has suggested that Texas is less oriented toward rehabilitation programs than either California or Michigan. If we look at the ratios of custody and treatment staff to inmates, this point is quite obvious. For each of the institutions surveyed, we obtained information on the type of position held by full-time employees.<sup>4</sup> In California, there is 1 custodial person (guard) for every 5 inmates; 1 full-time service person (teachers, social workers, psychologist, counselor, etc.) for every 17 inmates. In Michigan, there is 1 guard for every 6 inmates, and 1 service person for every 21 inmates. In Texas, there is 1 guard for every 16 inmates, and 1 service person for every 114 inmates.

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<sup>4</sup>This information was made available to Rand by Dr. Brad Smith, Abt Associates, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

#### IV. THE EXTENT OF PARTICIPATION IN PRISON TREATMENT AND WORK PROGRAMS

Prison treatment programs have been, and remain, a criminal justice issue marked by intense controversy. Particularly in recent years, strong positions have been expressed on the futility of prison treatment programs.<sup>1</sup> These voices—against a backdrop of mounting prison populations and budgetary pressures—seemingly propelled punishment and incapacitation into greater prominence as prison goals.

But the advocates of treatment are being heard, too. Rebuttals to the criticisms of these treatment programs have been advanced recently.<sup>2</sup> Palmer, for example, pointed out that various types of treatment, when used with certain types of offenders, can be differentially effective. According to Palmer, "Martinson referred to 39 studies—48 percent of the total—as having yielded positive or partially positive results. In light of this finding, it was surely amiss to have elsewhere characterized these same studies as being few and isolated exceptions."<sup>3</sup>

Thus a substantial percentage of treatments have worked selectively, even though they could not be regarded as reducing recidivism for all offenders. This differential impact has become the basis for a middle-of-the-road position: prison treatment programs should not be abandoned but instead should be tailored to specific types of offenders for whom particular treatments have been shown to be effective. Differential treatment is being forcefully argued as an appropriate correctional policy for the future. To implement it, corrections personnel must ask: "Which methods work for what types of offenders under what conditions and in what settings?"<sup>4</sup> Even though corrections may not be able to prescribe the "right" treatment modality for each offender type, it can pursue the goal of linking offender types and treatment types, so as to involve as many offenders as possible in treatments that are potentially effective. By allocating treatment resources accordingly, the differential treatment proponents argue, the corrections system could be more effective in reducing recidivism rates.

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<sup>1</sup>See W. C. Bailey, "Correctional Outcomes: An Evaluation of 100 Reports," *Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology and Police Science*, 1966, pp. 57, 153-160; G. Kassebaum, D. A. Ward, and D. M. Wilner, *Prison Treatment and Parole Survival: An Empirical Assessment*, John Wiley, New York, 1971; J. Robinson and G. Smith, "The Effectiveness of Correctional Programs," *Crime and Delinquency*, 1971, pp. 67-80; D. A. Ward, "Evaluative Research for Corrections," in L. E. Ohlin (ed.), *Prisoners in America*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1973, pp. 184-203; D. F. Greenberg, "The Correctional Effects of Corrections: A Survey of Evaluations," in D. Greenberg (ed.), *Corrections and Punishment*, Sage Publications, Lexington, Mass., 1977; D. Lipton, R. M. Martinson, and J. Wilks, *The Effectiveness of Correctional Treatment*, Praeger, New York, 1975.

<sup>2</sup>D. Glaser, "Remedies for the Key Deficiency in Criminal Justice Evaluation Research," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 1974, pp. 11, 144-154; T. Palmer, *Correctional Intervention and Research*, Lexington Books, Lexington, Mass., 1978; S. N. Adams, "Evaluating Correctional Treatments," presented at the meeting of the American Psychological Association, Washington, D.C., 1976.

<sup>3</sup>An objective panel reviewing the details of the Martinson study concluded that Martinson's appraisal of the rehabilitation literature was reasonably accurate. See "An Assessment of the Accuracy of the Effectiveness of Correctional Treatment," by Stephen Fienberg and Patricia Grambsch, in Lee Sechrest, Susan O. White, and Elizabeth D. Brown (eds.), *The Rehabilitation of Criminal Offenders: Problems and Prospects*, National Academy of Sciences, Washington, D.C., 1979.

<sup>4</sup>See Palmer (1978).



Future policy concerning prison treatment is expected to center on the allocation of scarce treatment resources to selected types of inmates. Some programs, for example, are likely to be oriented to first-time offenders who are thought to be least committed to a criminal lifestyle and who are expected to benefit the most. At the other extreme, the federal government is considering tailoring certain programs to career criminals with specific treatment needs (which prompted this Rand study). To formulate future policy concerning prison treatment, one should begin with a full grasp of present practice. To this end, two questions must be answered: (1) What treatment programs are currently employed in prisons, and how many inmates of what types are participating? (2) What is known about the rehabilitative effectiveness of these programs?

An examination of corrections literature reveals that attention has been given primarily to the second issue: effectiveness. *This study is concerned with the first issue: the extent to which inmates participate in prison programs.* Heretofore, no broad attempt has been made to survey the breadth of treatment programs employed in prisons and the number of inmates of specified characteristics who have participated. Given the paucity of empirical data on how much use has been made of what rehabilitative programs, it could be argued that the majority of inmates have served only punitive terms with inconsequential exposure to rehabilitative efforts. Hawkins comments: "It is simply that despite the theoretical emphasis on reform and the widespread use of the terminology of rehabilitation, the actual experience of imprisonment for most persons imprisoned in this country in this century has been simply punitive." He observes further:

Ask a state prison administrator if there is any effective rehabilitative effort being made in his system and he will instantly begin talking about shortage of money, the problems with security and "troublemakers." He will not answer the question "yes" or "no." But if you should manage to confront him with the direct question, he would have to say "no" in at least forty-six of the fifty states' prison systems in this country.

We do not have in America, and we never have had, any rehabilitation program on a significant scale for a significant length of time.<sup>5</sup>

But a markedly contrary view is also often advanced. For instance, Conrad states, "The ideology of people-changing permeates corrections. Modern prisons remain committed to treatment; echelons of personnel to carry it out are established on every table of organization."<sup>6</sup>

The need for information concerning the extent to which prison inmates actually participate in treatment programs prompted this study to examine the following questions:

1. What percentages of the sampled inmates in these states appear to need specified treatment programs?
2. Of those with identified treatment needs, what percentages are participating in appropriate prison treatment programs?
3. What inmate characteristics (e.g., career criminality, age, race, prior

<sup>5</sup>G. Hawkins, *The Prison: Policy and Practice*, The University of Chicago Press, 1976, p. 50.

<sup>6</sup>John Conrad, "Corrections and Simple Justice," *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, Vol. 64, 1973, pp. 208-217.

record) are associated with an inmate's decision to participate in a treatment program?

A word of caution must be given before we proceed. Our analysis of the extent of inmate participation in treatment and work programs relies on what might be visualized as a "snapshot" of these prisons on a given day. Our sample was selected in such a way as to include persons at random points in their current term. Some of the inmates will be near the end of their prison term, some in the middle, and some at the beginning. Reports by inmates near the end of their term represent their total treatment experience during that term. Those who have been in prison a shorter time will of course be reporting on program participation over a shorter time period.

This artifact of the sample requires care in the interpretation of the results. If treatment were given to inmates only toward the end of their term, one would expect the rates of program participation to increase as proportion of sentence served increased. In this case, sampling offenders at random points in their term would underestimate the percentage of the population who will eventually become involved in programs. However, a national telephone survey of prison administrators,<sup>7</sup> and previous empirical research,<sup>8</sup> have indicated that prison programs are not allocated in this manner. Programs are generally available to all inmates who wish to participate, with little attention paid to sentence length or time served. Participation in vocational training programs was the only case where rates increased slightly as the inmate neared the end of his sentence.

This led us to believe that approximately the same percentage of inmates would become involved in treatment and work programs whether they were at the beginning, middle, or end of their sentence. Table 2 shows that this was basically true for the current sample.

We found no association between the number of months an inmate had been in prison and his participation rate in either prison treatment or work programs. Thus it was unnecessary to control for months served in the subsequent analysis. However, in interpreting the analysis, it must be remembered that we are examining participation in prison programs by taking a snapshot picture rather than interviewing inmates as they are released. All of our results represent the programs the inmate was currently involved in, or had been involved in prior to the point of the Inmate Survey.

We now turn our attention to the main subject of this section: the allocation of correctional treatment resources. Who needs treatment, as compared to who receives treatment?

## **THE PERCENTAGE OF INMATES PARTICIPATING IN SPECIFIC PROGRAMS**

To begin, Table 3 shows the percentage of inmates who are currently in, or have previously participated in, specific programs. These percentages reflect responses to the questions: "During your current prison term (at any prison, but only for this

<sup>7</sup>See Paul Honig, *The Prison Experience of Career Criminals: Current Practice and Future Considerations*, The Rand Corporation, P-6178, July 1978.

<sup>8</sup>See J. Petersilia, "Which Inmates Participate in Prison Treatment Programs?," *Journal of Offender Counseling, Services, and Rehabilitation*, No. 2, 1980.

Table 2

**PRISON POPULATION IN PROGRAMS, BY LENGTH  
OF SENTENCE SERVED TO DATE<sup>a</sup>**  
(Percent of sample; all states combined)

Prison Programming	Months Served to Date			
	1-6	7-12	13-18	19+
In both treatment and work	38	37	43	44
In treatment only	44	38	34	38
Have participated in a treatment program	82	75	77	82
In work only	9	10	13	9
In neither treatment nor work, i.e., idle	9	14	9	9
Total	100	100	100	100
Currently working	37	47	56	53

<sup>a</sup>Participation in treatment programs reflects current program participation as well as participation during the current prison term.

Table 3

**INMATES IN SPECIFIED PRISON PROGRAMS,<sup>a</sup> BY STATE**  
(Percent of inmate sample)

Program Type	California (N = 340)	Michigan (N = 363)	Texas (N = 583)	Chi-Square Significance
<b>Education</b>				
Adult basic education	26	39	35	NS
High school education	19	39	35	NS
College education	15	27	21	NS
Any education	34	56	49	<.001
Vocational training	36	42	18	<.001
Alcohol rehabilitation	11	19	20	<.001
Drug rehabilitation	4 <sup>b</sup>	28	3	<.001
Psychological counseling <sup>c</sup>	29	42	9	<.001
<b>Other</b>				
Community activities	3	5	1	NS
Religious activities	14	20	18	NS
Inmate self-help groups	16	19	5	NS
Pre-release programs	4	2	0.7	NS
Work furlough	2	2	2	NS
Current work assignment	59	46	58	<.001

<sup>a</sup>Rates do not sum to 100 percent since inmates can be in more than one program.

<sup>b</sup>The low participation in California drug rehabilitation programs reflects the disposition of those heavily involved with drugs to a specialized institution, the California Rehabilitation Center, usually

<sup>c</sup>Includes individual and group counseling.

term) have you been in [program specified]?" and "Do you currently have a prison job (excluding vocational training activities)?"<sup>9</sup>

These figures suggest some marked contrasts among the states in participation. The data reveal that the proportion of inmates with a prison work assignment is larger in California and Texas, whereas for nearly all treatment programs, the proportion of inmates participating is larger in Michigan. Further, treatment in California prisons appears to consist largely of education programs, vocational training, and psychological counseling. Participation in alcohol and drug abuse programs is quite low in California; and participation in drug and counseling programs is low in Texas.

It was also true that 30 percent of the California inmates, 54 percent of Michigan inmates, and 26 percent of Texas inmates had participated in three or more prison programs during their current term. These figures are for programs of any type, e.g., furloughs, religious, home visitation. When only the major treatment programs are considered (education, vocational training, alcohol and drug abuse, and counseling), 17 percent of the California inmates had participated in three or more, 39 percent of the Michigan inmates, and only 12 percent of the Texas inmates.

It is interesting to learn what percentage of the prison population had participated in a treatment program of any type prior to the survey. Table 4 provides this information.

Table 4  
INVOLVEMENT OF PRISON POPULATION IN PRISON PROGRAMS, BY STATE  
(Percent)

	California (N = 340)	Michigan (N = 363)	Texas (N = 583)
Participating in a major treatment program <sup>a</sup>	64	80	66
Participating in miscellaneous prison program <sup>b</sup>	14	5	11
Having prison work assignment only (no treatment)	13	5	11
In neither treatment nor work assignment (i.e., idle)	9	10	12
TOTAL	100	100	100

<sup>a</sup>"Major" programs include education, vocational training, alcohol and drug rehabilitation, individual and group counseling.

<sup>b</sup>Miscellaneous prison programs include community activities, religious programs, self-help groups, pre-release programs, and work furloughs.

In all of the subsequent analysis, where we examine program participation in more detail, we concentrate only on the major prison treatment programs: education, vocational training, alcohol and drug rehabilitation, and individual and group counseling. We exclude all of the programs listed under "Other" in Table 3 from further analysis, because they generally involve too few inmates to permit meaningful analysis of the type of inmate who participates.

<sup>9</sup>During pre-tests of the survey, it became obvious that inmates were quite clear as to whether their work was classified as vocational training or a prison job. Prison jobs involved activities designed to maintain the institution (e.g., cafeteria), whereas vocational training activities were designed to prepare the inmate for employment upon release (e.g., television repair courses).

## THE INTENSITY OF TREATMENT PROGRAMS

The overall percentage of inmates participating in treatment programs is some indication of the amount of treatment received; however, it does not inform us about the intensity (e.g., hours per week) of the treatment. Each inmate who reported participating in a specific program was asked the average number of hours per week he participated. Using this information, we can better assess the degree to which inmates actually participated in programs of different types.

Previously it was shown that a greater percentage of Michigan inmates participate in major treatment programs. This might be seen as evidence that Michigan is a more treatment-oriented state than either California or Texas. However, it is possible that a larger percentage of Michigan inmates enroll in programs, but that the actual amount of treatment they receive is no greater than in the other two states. It could be that in California and Texas fewer inmates enroll, but once enrolled they receive more intensive treatment. Table 5 presents the average number of hours of treatment inmates received per week once enrolled in a program, by state and program type.

Earlier results showed that a larger percentage of Michigan inmates participate in education programs; Table 5 shows that these participants receive the same number of hours of treatment per week as participants in California, and more hours than participants in Texas. A larger percentage of Michigan inmates also entered vocational training programs; however, this more detailed analysis suggests that inmates in California and Texas, once enrolled, receive more intensive vocational training. In terms of alcohol rehabilitation, California inmates who participate in alcohol programs receive more hours of treatment, but a smaller proportion enroll than in Texas or Michigan. Michigan is the only state surveyed to use individual counseling to any extent; California and Texas utilize group counseling programs more than individual counseling.

It appears, therefore, that even when the intensity is taken into account, Michigan could still be regarded as a slightly more treatment-oriented state, using all programs except possibly vocational training, than either Texas or California. Our analysis suggests that the three states fall into a continuum with respect to their utilization of the specific rehabilitation programs under study here: Michigan, the most treatment-oriented; California, the next; and Texas, the least treatment-oriented. These state differences are interesting for analytic purposes, because we can examine how our "treatment-oriented" continuum is related to a number of factors,

Table 5

AVERAGE HOURS OF TREATMENT RECEIVED PER WEEK BY PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS,  
BY STATE AND PROGRAM TYPE  
(Entries in hours of treatment)

State	Type of Program						
	Adult Education	High School Education	Vocational Training	Alcohol Rehabilitation	Drug Rehabilitation	Individual Counseling	Group Counseling
California	17	17	26	5	3	1	3
Michigan	17	16	18	3	5	1	3
Texas	7	6	24	2	5	1	2
All states combined	12	11	22	3	5	2	3

e.g., institutional adjustment. However, because of the differences among the states in terms of the use of prison treatment, all of our subsequent analysis must proceed on a state-by-state basis.

## **ASSESSING PRISON WORK ASSIGNMENTS**

The results in Table 3 show that 59 percent of the California inmates, 46 percent of the Michigan inmates, and 58 percent of the Texas inmates had a work assignment at the time they completed the Survey. Prison jobs generally refer to assignments which assist in the maintenance of the institution (e.g., gardening, laundry, cafeteria). Although this experience may prove useful to the inmate in securing future employment, that is not its primary purpose.

For inmates with prison jobs, we were interested in the number of hours per week they worked, as well as their opinion of the help the prison job would be in terms of securing employment once released. Inmates without jobs were asked the reason why.

Inmates without jobs do not appear to desire them. In both California and Michigan, inmates without jobs generally say they are too busy with other activities or they simply don't want a job. Only about 20 percent of those without a prison job say that jobs are unavailable at their institutions. In Texas, about 25 percent of the inmates without jobs say that jobs are unavailable, but a greater percentage say they lost their jobs as a result of punishment. It is also true that 27 percent say they don't have prison jobs for "other" reasons. These other reasons primarily involved working in the agricultural fields; inmates generally did not see this as a "work assignment."

Prison work assignments appear to be providing skills that the inmates feel will help them gain employment upon release. About one-third of the inmates with prison jobs thought they would provide "a lot" of help to them in terms of future employment. This is a rather large percentage, considering that only 66 percent of the inmates enrolled in vocational training programs judged them to be a lot of help in terms of future employment.

Across all three states, inmates worked an average of 30 to 40 hours a week at their prison jobs.

## **DEFINITIONS OF TREATMENT NEED**

The overall percentage of inmates participating in a given treatment program is a gross measure, inadequate for examining the "match" between inmate need for treatment and treatment actually received. Given that nearly all of these programs are voluntary, we are particularly interested in the extent to which treatment programs are utilized by those inmates who appear to need them the most.

An inmate's need for a particular rehabilitative treatment is a subjective matter, influenced by a number of factors including the evaluator's own experience, the relevant resource constraints, the inmate's history of other such treatment, his motivation, and so forth. For this research, however, we required objective criteria of an inmate's need for specified treatments. Unfortunately, there have been no

previous attempts to systematically examine the characteristics of prison program participants or the percentage of inmates who have been judged to need treatments and who subsequently receive them. And the literature provides little guidance on appropriate treatment-need definitions. The definitions we chose reflect our own judgment as well as the judgment of intake officers and correctional administrators interviewed through the course of this research.

In choosing criteria we relied on information supplied by the inmate concerning his assessment of his problem areas, and on official records which contained staff recommendations concerning treatment needs. The information contained in the official record is the result of staff interviews with the inmate, pre-sentence investigation reports, and psychological testing performed during the intake process. The resulting definitions are presented below, together with tabulations that show the distribution within the samples in terms of these definitions.

### Education Needs

Each inmate was classified into one of three levels of educational need: high, moderate, and none. Inmates with less than a 9th grade education were judged to have a high need; inmates who had completed the 9th, 10th, or 11th grade, a moderate need; and those who had completed the 12th grade or who had a GED (i.e., high school equivalency), no need. To make this determination, we used information in the official corrections record. If grade level was missing from the records, persons were assigned according to their reading level. Persons with a reading level below or equal to the 9th grade were judged to have a high need, while a reading level above the 9th grade corresponded to a moderate need. Table 6 shows the distribution of education needs according to these definitions.

Table 6

DISTRIBUTION OF INMATE EDUCATION NEEDS, BY STATE  
(Percent)

Education Need Level	California (N = 340)	Michigan (N = 363)	Texas (N = 583)
No need	32	26	19
Moderate need	33	40	25
High need	35	34	56

### Vocational Training Needs

To define vocational training needs we relied on the Inmate Survey, which asked the inmate about his activities for a specified period prior to the arrest which led to his current imprisonment. (The period was defined as up to 2 years of "street time" prior to this arrest.) If an inmate reported that he held no job and did not attend school during that "window" period, he was classified as having a high need for vocational training. If he held no job but attended school regularly in the period,

the inmate was excluded from classification for lack of a dependable indicator of need.<sup>10</sup>

If an inmate reported having any job during the window period, he was classified as having a moderate need if his monthly job income was at or below the state sample median, and as having no need if his income was above the median.<sup>11</sup>

The distributions of the inmate samples according to their vocational training needs are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

DISTRIBUTION OF INMATE VOCATIONAL  
TRAINING NEEDS, BY STATE  
(Percent)

Vocational Training Need Level	California (N = 335)	Michigan (N = 345)	Texas (N = 565)
No need	33	35	43
Moderate need	34	33	42
High need	33	32	15

### Alcohol Rehabilitation Needs

Three alternative criteria were chosen to identify a need for alcohol rehabilitation treatment. The first was simply an indication on the official corrections records, made at the time of intake and diagnosis, that the inmate had an alcohol abuse problem. The second criterion was an affirmative answer by the inmate to the question in the survey asking if he drank heavily, got drunk often, or had a drinking problem during the period preceding his current imprisonment. *This is the criterion we chose to use in the subsequent analysis to identify inmates who had a high need for alcohol treatment.* The third was the inmate's rating of alcohol as an important reason for his crimes during the window period, where he was asked to rate the importance of an extensive list of factors contributing to his criminal activity.

Table 8 shows the percentage of inmates who met all of the criteria for alcohol treatment need. At the individual (inmate) level, the three alcohol abuse measures had a high degree of intercorrelation ( $p < .001$ ).

### Drug Rehabilitation Need

Identifying a need for drug rehabilitation was handled similarly to alcohol rehabilitation, using three alternative criteria. The first was the indication by the official prison records that the inmate had a drug abuse problem. (The inmate

<sup>10</sup>Thus excluded were about 1 percent of the California sample; 5 percent, Michigan; and 3 percent, Texas.

<sup>11</sup>The percentages of the state samples reporting some employment in the window period were 66 percent for California, 65 percent for Michigan, and 83 percent for Texas. The median monthly pay was approximately \$500 in each state.



Table 8

INMATES WITH AN ALCOHOL TREATMENT NEED, BY STATE  
(Percent)

Need Criterion	California (N = 340)	Michigan (N = 363)	Texas (N = 583)
Alcohol abuse problem noted in official records	30	22	(a)
Self-report of drinking problems in window period <sup>b</sup>	30	30	28
Self-report that drinking was important in crimes	33	33	27

<sup>a</sup>The official corrections records in Texas did not specify whether an inmate had an alcohol abuse problem.

<sup>b</sup>This is the criterion used to identify inmates with a "high" need for alcohol treatment.

folder in California also distinguished between use and addiction.) The second was an affirmative response to the question in the Inmate Survey concerning the use of hard drugs (heroin, methadone, barbiturates, and amphetamines) during the window period preceding imprisonment. Here the responses enabled us to distinguish between daily use and less than daily use. *Inmates who reported using hard drugs on a daily basis were judged to have a high need for drug rehabilitation. This is the criterion used in the subsequent analysis to identify inmates who had a high need for drug treatment.* The third was the inmate's rating of his use of drugs as an important reason for his crimes during the window period.

Table 9 shows the percentage of each state's sample that met each of these criteria for needing drug rehabilitation.

Table 9

INMATES WITH DRUG TREATMENT NEED, BY STATE  
(Percent)

Need Criterion	California (N = 346)	Michigan (N = 363)	Texas (N = 583)
Drug abuse addiction noted in official records	41	36	—
Self-reported daily use of hard drugs during window period <sup>a</sup>	36	23	17
Self-report that drug use was important in crimes	38	31	25

<sup>a</sup>This is the criteria used to identify inmates with a "high" need for drug treatment.

### Psychological Counseling Need

Unlike the other treatment needs, it is difficult to apply objective criteria to determine whether an inmate has a need for psychological counseling. Psychologi-

cal counseling may be recommended for a multitude of problem areas including family, personal, community adjustment, and so forth. Counseling might also be needed as a result of problems that have occurred since imprisonment, e.g., loneliness, depression, suicide attempts. Although there may be a few objective criteria to indicate whether a person has a counseling need, we considered this particular program area too complex to rely on a few bits of information. The official-record information was also judged insufficient, since evaluators tend to recommend counseling for inmates who have a history of any problem—e.g., alcohol, drug, unemployment, adjustment—and most inmates have these difficulties. These complications prevented us from devising reliable criteria for psychological counseling need. We do, however, examine the characteristics of inmates who chose to participate in individual and group counseling programs (see Section V).

#### **ASSOCIATION BETWEEN HIGH NEED FOR TREATMENT AND TREATMENT PARTICIPATION**

Once each inmate could be classified as to his degree of need for particular forms of treatment, we were able to determine how many inmates with a high need for treatment actually participated in a corresponding treatment program while in prison. Figure 1 presents these results.

The figure is informative in several respects. Across all states, the correspondence between high need for treatment and treatment received is closer in the education area than in other areas. In California, 45 percent of those whom we judged to have a high need for further education had participated in an education program prior to completing the Inmate Survey. In Michigan, 71 percent of the inmates with a high need for education received it; and in Texas, the corresponding figure is 59 percent.

For vocational training, the match between high need and participation is poorer than in education. About one-third of the high-need inmates, who for the most part were unemployed prior to their current prison term, participated in a vocational training program.

In all three states, a large percentage of inmates had serious drug and alcohol problems. The results here show that the majority of inmates with these problems went untreated while imprisoned. In all three states, about 30 percent of the population reported serious alcohol problems. In Michigan, 37 percent of those with high needs had been treated prior to our survey; in California, 19 percent; and in Texas, 36 percent.

There is even less correspondence between high need for treatment and treatment received in the drug rehabilitation area. This seems especially disturbing since only inmates who reported using hard drugs on a *daily* basis are defined as high-need. Recall that this self-report measure typically identifies inmates who have also been classified as addicts on their official records.

Approximately 36 percent of the California inmate population was classified as having a high need for drug rehabilitation, but only about 5 percent of those inmates participated in a drug treatment program prior to the study. In Texas, also, less than 5 percent of the inmates with a high need for drug rehabilitation received

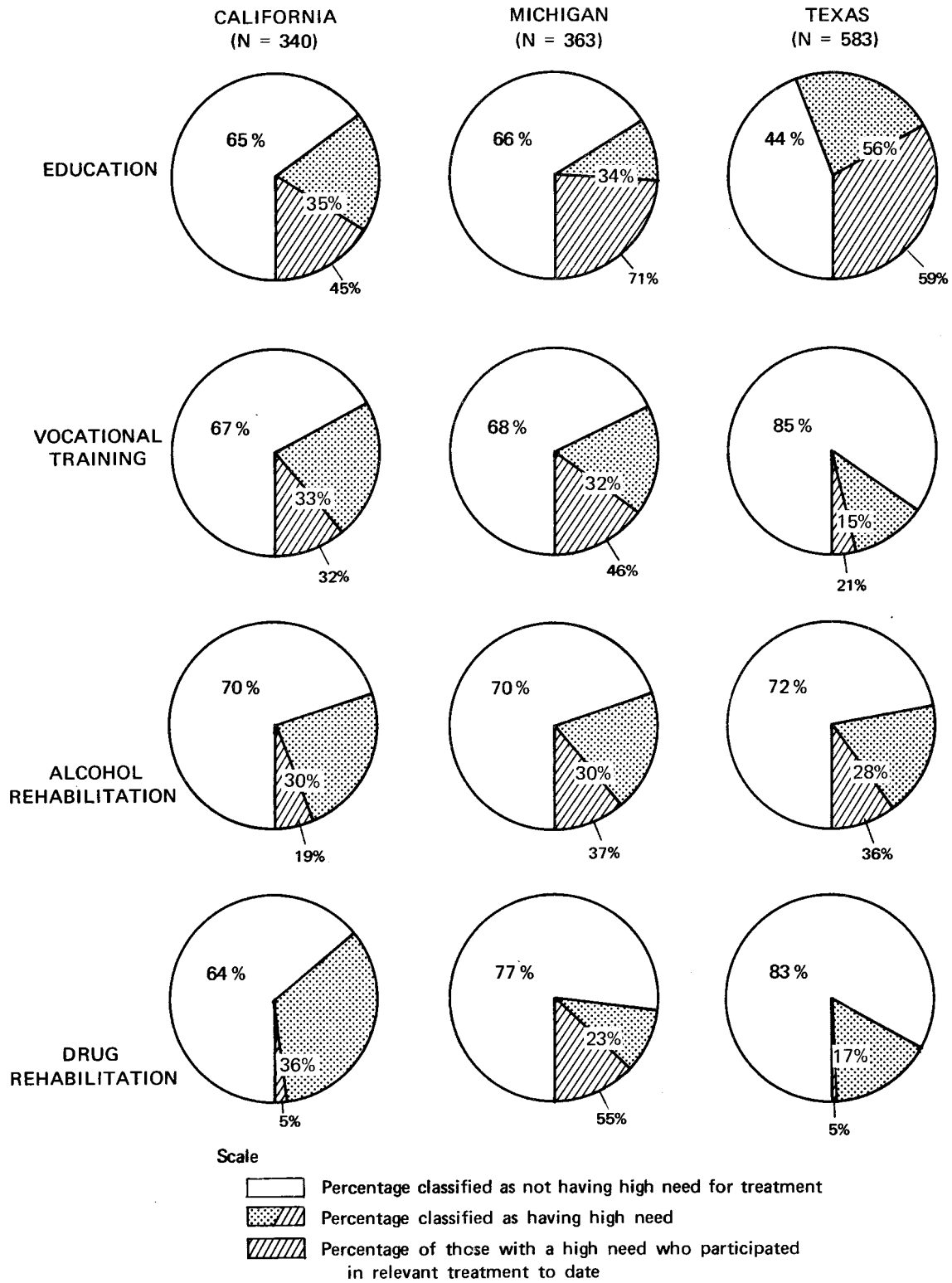


Fig. 1—Correspondence between high need for treatment and treatment received

treatment. Only in Michigan does there appear to be a serious attempt to enroll inmates in drug rehabilitation programs.

In this section we have examined the overall correspondence between high need for treatment and treatment received. We now turn our attention to an examination of the inmate factors associated with receiving needed treatment. Particularly germane to our interests is whether hard-core career criminals in need of treatment participate in relevant programs.

## V. PRISON TREATMENT PROGRAMS— NEEDS VS. PARTICIPATION

In the preceding section, we found that about one-third of the inmates surveyed had a high need for some type of treatment. Less than half of those needing treatment had received it prior to the survey. Now we shall further explore the correspondence between treatment need and treatment received. Specifically, we are interested in (1) whether certain inmate characteristics are associated with particular treatment needs, and (2) whether such factors are associated with an inmate's decision to receive needed treatment.

For instance, is it true that black inmates consistently demonstrate a high need for drug treatment, but that participants in prison drug programs are primarily white? Or, perhaps older inmates have greater vocational training needs, while younger inmates participate more readily in such programs. Of particular interest is whether career criminal inmates have unique treatment needs, and whether they participate in treatment programs similar to other inmates.

If our inquiry shows that a subset of the prison population has a high need for a particular program, but is participating at a low rate, policies to improve the allocation of correctional resources might be suggested. In this section we see which characteristics are useful for identifying inmates who have particularly high needs in a given area. More important, perhaps, we explore the association of these characteristics with program participation.

We begin by formulating a career criminal definition and using it to examine the association among career criminality, treatment need, and treatment received. Thereafter, we address the correlation among treatment need, program participation, and a number of other factors (i.e., age, race, sentence length, prior criminal history, commitment offense).

### DEFINING CAREER CRIMINALS

The term *career criminal* has no universally agreed upon definition, even though in the policing and prosecution fields it denotes an offender whose present offense and criminal history are sufficiently serious to justify special efforts to arrest and convict him. The specific operational definition of the career criminal depends on the role of the agency involved and on the purposes to be served. Each career criminal program, whether police- or prosecutor-developed, embodies a unique set of criteria by which career criminals are identified. (Concomitantly, as our survey of correctional administrators disclosed, prison systems have not employed definitions of career criminals for their purposes.)

Career criminal prosecutorial criteria vary, for example, in the degree to which they are offense-specific. Some prosecution units have focused on one broad offense type, e.g., robbery and robbery-related homicide in San Diego County; or burglary

in Santa Barbara County. Others have been concerned with all types of felonies, e.g., in New Orleans or Memphis. The remainder have concentrated on a selection of offense types prevalent in their communities, e.g., robbery, attempted murder, arson, kidnapping, rape, and child abuse in Bronx County, New York.

Prosecutorial criteria also differ in the weights, if any, assigned to various aspects of the defendant's criminal history, his currently charged offenses, and the strength of the case against him. In a majority of jurisdictions with career criminal prosecution units, a felony arrestee will qualify if his currently charged offense is of a specified type and his criminal record reflects prior convictions of a specified number and type. These criteria are strictly applied in some jurisdictions; in others, they are merely guides to the prosecutor's discretion in selecting cases for special attention.

These variations in police and prosecutorial definitions of career criminals occur even within the same state. Moreover, offenders arrested, prosecuted, and convicted under formal career criminal programs thus far constitute only a small percentage of prison populations. This would not yield a sufficient sample for our study. To make this research useful in devising further plans for LEAA's Comprehensive Career Criminal Program, our career criminal definition needed to closely resemble those definitions already operationalized by the Career Criminal Prosecution Program. The definition formulated for this research was created after a review of the career criminal definitions employed by the 20 jurisdictions initially funded under the Career Criminal Prosecution Program.

To distinguish between career criminals and non-career criminals in our sample, we employed a simple criminality structure that reflects the inmate's criminal history. It is age-dependent, distinguishing between inmates under and over 25 years of age. Within the older group, a record of a prior prison commitment sufficed for designation as a career criminal. This criterion applied to the younger group as well, but in addition, the inmates under 25 years of age who had no prior prison commitment were designated as career criminals if certain other conditions existed. Specifically, if an inmate had three or more prior serious felony convictions,<sup>1</sup> or if he had at least one serious felony conviction and a serious juvenile record,<sup>2</sup> he was designated a career criminal despite an absence of a prior prison commitment. These criteria for distinguishing between career and non-career criminal inmates are diagrammed in Fig. 2. The decomposition of the three-state inmate sample according to this criminality structure is given in Fig. 3. Using these criteria, 49 percent of the California prison population are designated as career criminals, 43 percent of the Michigan sample, and 42 percent of the Texas sample. We observe in Fig. 3 that the substantial majority of inmates designated as career criminals by our criteria are simply those who have served one or more prison commitments prior to their current term.

Conceivably, one could formulate a number of different career criminal defini-

<sup>1</sup>Serious felonies were taken to be arson, assault, burglary, major drug offenses, homicide, kidnap, rape, robbery, and weapons offenses.

<sup>2</sup>The definition of a *serious* record varies by state because of differences in the nature of juvenile record information available in the inmates' official records. For California, a serious juvenile record contains a commitment to the California Youth Authority, to a state school in another state, or to a forestry camp. For Michigan, it contains at least two of the following: an arrest prior to age 15, a juvenile probation sentence, or a juvenile commitment. For Texas, a serious juvenile record contains a reformatory commitment in Texas or another state.

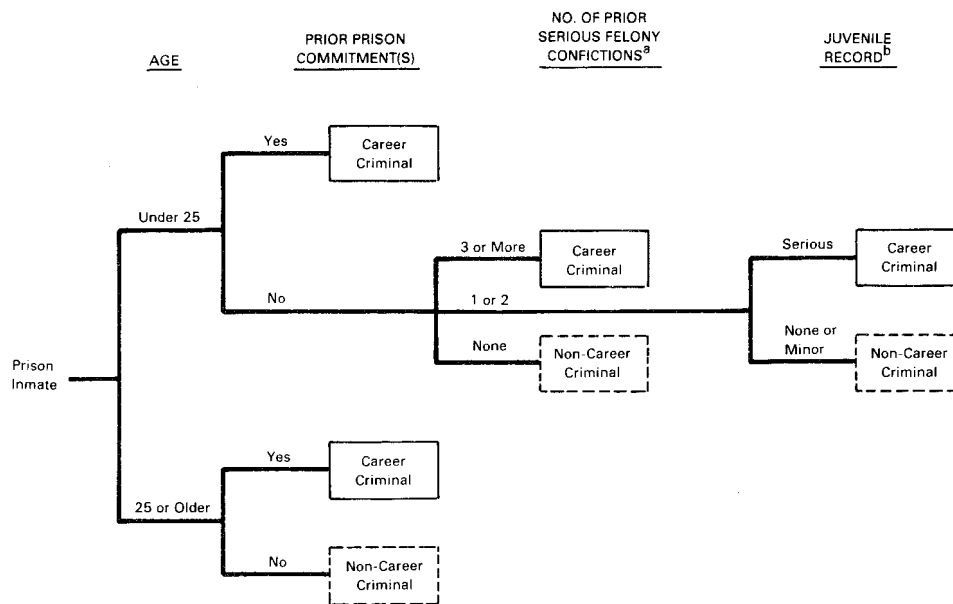
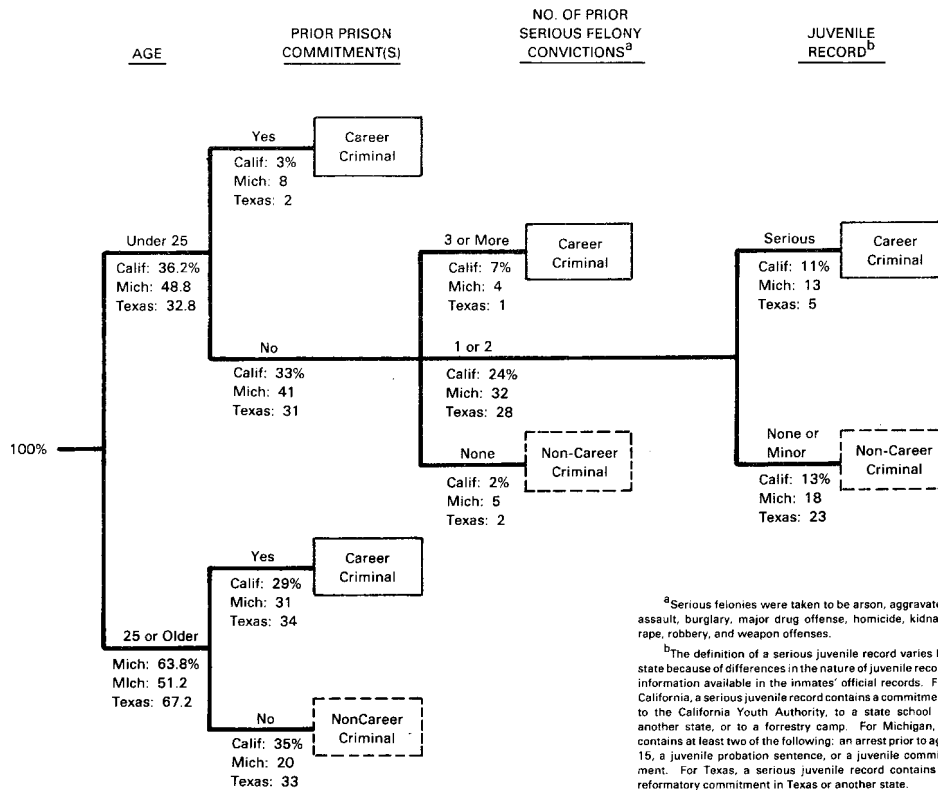


Fig. 2—Criteria for career criminal designation



<sup>a</sup>Serious felonies were taken to be arson, aggravated assault, burglary, major drug offense, homicide, kidnap, rape, robbery, and weapon offenses.

<sup>b</sup>The definition of a serious juvenile record varies by state because of differences in the nature of juvenile record information available in the inmates' official records. For California, a serious juvenile record contains a commitment to the California Youth Authority, to a state school in another state, or to a forestry camp. For Michigan, it contains at least two of the following: an arrest prior to age 15, a juvenile probation sentence, or a juvenile commitment. For Texas, a serious juvenile record contains a reformatory commitment in Texas or another state.

Fig. 3—Decomposition of inmate samples by career criminal criteria

tions for analytic purposes. Perhaps other definitions could take into account the inmate's type of offense or prior arrests.<sup>3</sup> The operational definition chosen for this study reflects a conscious effort to select persons who would have been regarded as career criminals had they been handled by police- and prosecutor-developed career criminal programs now in operation.

### **CAREER CRIMINAL TREATMENT NEEDS AND PARTICIPATION IN PRISON PROGRAMS**

As stated earlier, this research was undertaken primarily to address the question of the prison experiences of career criminals compared with the general prison population, particularly with respect to institutional behavior and participation in prison programs. We sought information that may serve as a foundation for possible policy changes toward a more selective handling of career criminal inmates in prison. This selective handling might be justified because career criminals are among the most harmful offenders and require the most intensive rehabilitation efforts; an alternative would be that scarce correctional resources should not be expended on persons who have continually recidivated, despite past program participation. Before policy changes can be considered, we need to know what the current prison experiences of such persons are.

We learned from our telephone survey of correctional administrators that virtually no rehabilitation programs are devoted currently to inmates identified as career criminals per se.<sup>4</sup> Correctional officials appeared to be generally unfamiliar with police and prosecutor programs focused on career criminals and had not specifically examined the prison intake attributed to those programs. A majority of the respondents felt that a policy of handling career criminal inmates selectively would depend on identifying their treatment needs as a class and recognizing that these class needs are distinctive. Doubt was generally expressed that such an approach would be better than the traditional policy of handling inmates as individuals, where primary qualifications for rehabilitation are institutional behavior and a desire to participate in treatment.

### **THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN TREATMENT NEED, PROGRAM PARTICIPATION, AND CAREER CRIMINALITY**

If career criminal inmates exhibit unique problems in areas such as drug and alcohol abuse, special treatment programs might be tailored to those specific needs. Further, if they exhibit specific needs but participate in needed programs less than other inmates, special policies to encourage program participation might be con-

<sup>3</sup>A previous Rand study of the prison experiences of career criminals defined "career criminals" as inmates whose commitment offense was aggravated assault, robbery, sex offense, or homicide, and who had at least one significant prior incarceration. See P. Honig, *The Prison Experience of Career Criminals: Current Practice and Future Considerations*, The Rand Corporation, P-6178, July 1978. Few young persons qualified as career criminals because they had not experienced prior incarcerations. The career criminal definition used in the current study was designed to correct for this age bias.

<sup>4</sup>See Honig (1978), and J. Petersilia and M. Lavin, *Targeting Career Criminals: A Developing Criminal Justice Strategy*, The Rand Corporation, P-6173, August 1978.



sidered. It has been suggested by some that treatment programs should concentrate most heavily on the career criminal, given his lengthy criminal history. The idea is that effective treatment for these offenders might produce the highest payoff in terms of crime reduction. However, as noted earlier, we are not evaluating treatment effectiveness for career criminals, but simply the availability and use of programs by such persons.

Having established definitions of treatment need and career criminality, we next examine the association between these factors. This association is a central concern of this research.

### **Education Programs**

Figure 4 shows the percentage of inmates in each state who were found to have high educational treatment needs, when classified by career criminality. Further, the figure shows the percentage of high-need inmates who are participating in a corresponding treatment program.

The data show that a larger percentage of career criminals in all three states have a high need for education. However, only in Texas is the participation rate of high-need career criminal inmates significantly less than that of non-career inmates.

### **Vocational Training**

Across all three states, a larger percentage of career criminal inmates have a high need for vocational training, but these differences are not statistically significant (Fig. 5). Only in California do career criminals participate less in vocational training programs.

### **Alcohol Rehabilitation**

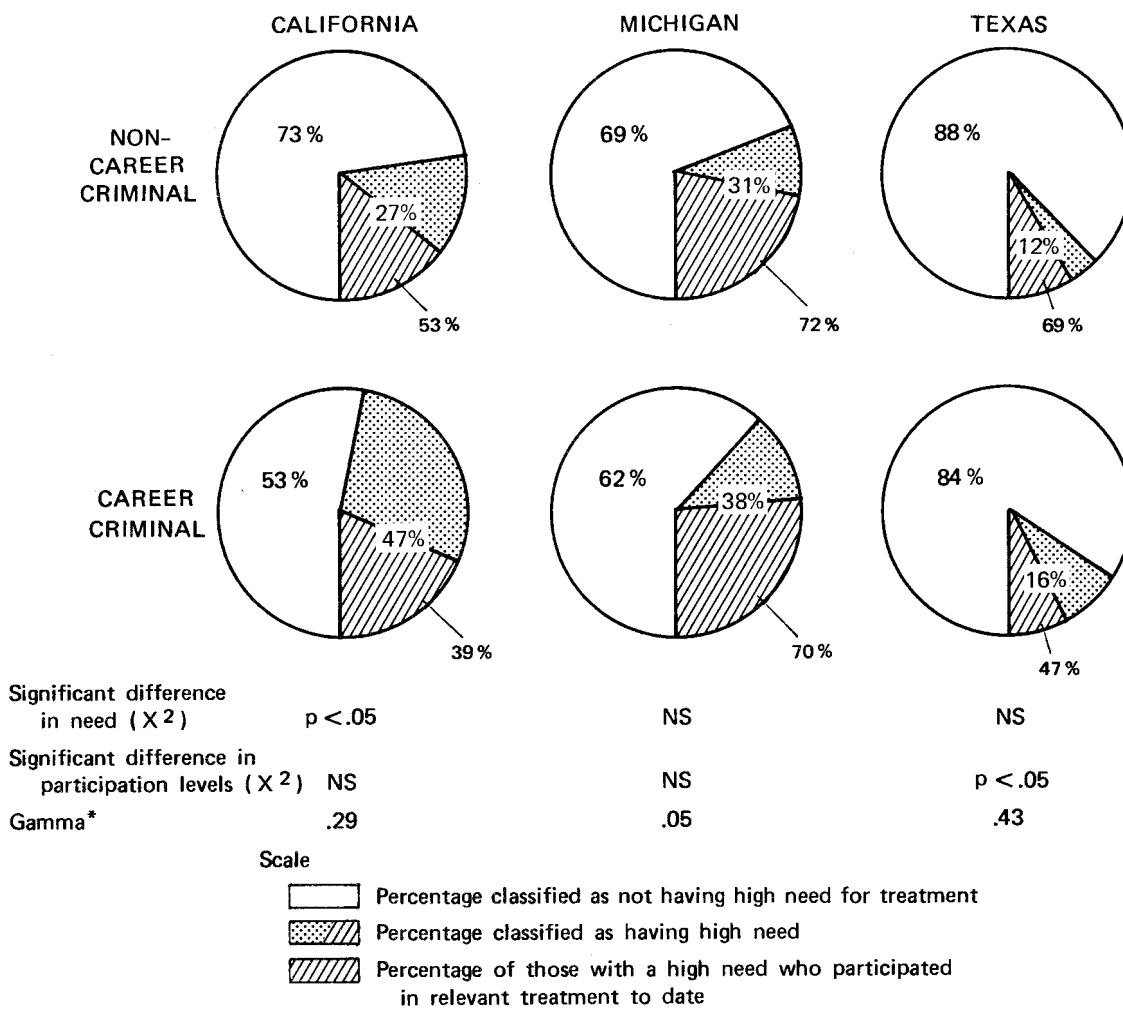
Career criminal inmates do not appear to have unique alcohol treatment needs, nor do they participate in programs less than other inmates (Fig. 6).

### **Drug Rehabilitation**

Career criminals do not have a disproportionate amount of drug problems, nor do they participate less in drug treatment programs (Fig. 7).

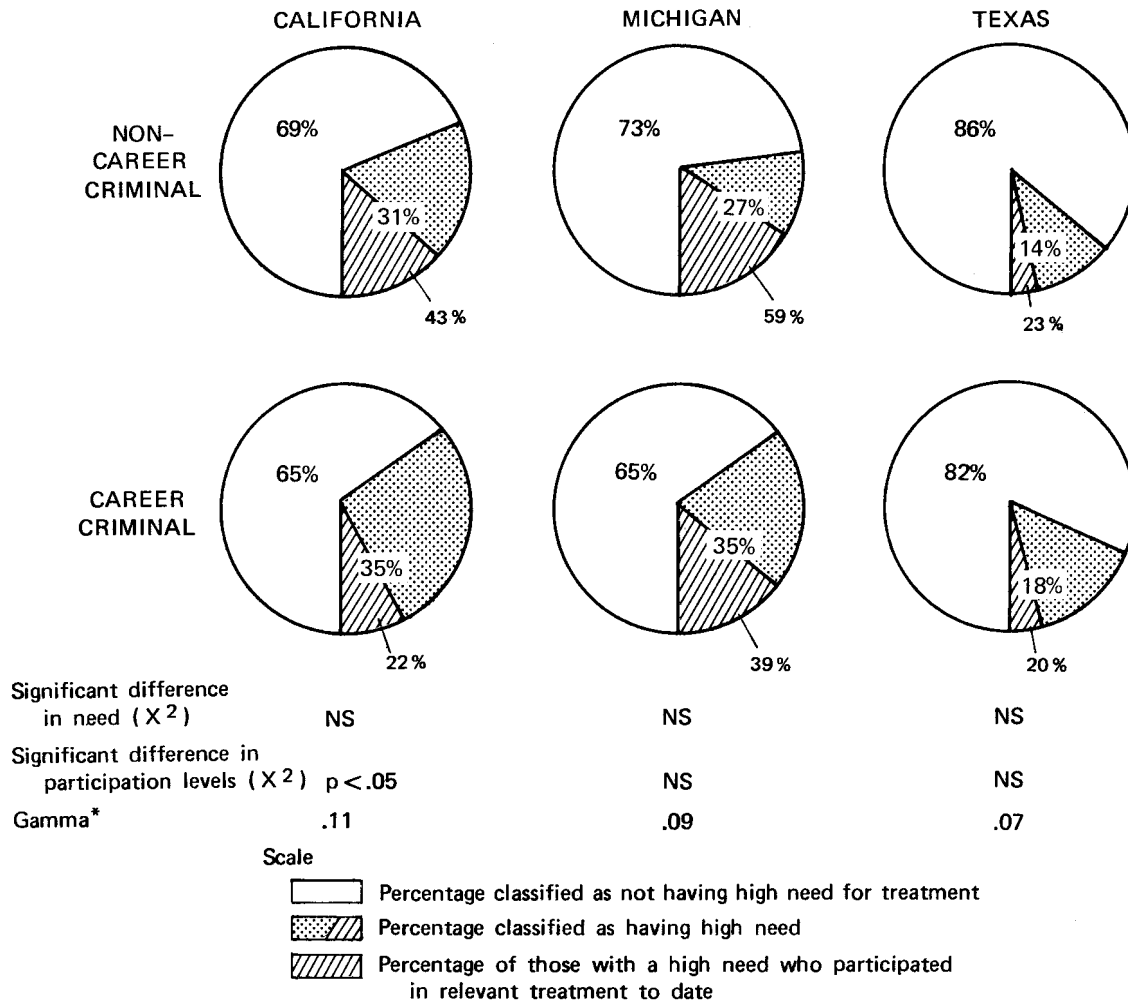
### **Individual and Group Counseling**

As previously mentioned, we did not devise need-level criteria for psychological counseling. However, it is still useful to note whether career criminals participate in counseling programs more than other inmates. In all three states, we found that career criminals participate less than non-career criminals in both individual and group counseling. (In Michigan and Texas, the results are significant,  $p < .05$ .) We suggest that this finding results from the fact that most of the counseling in these



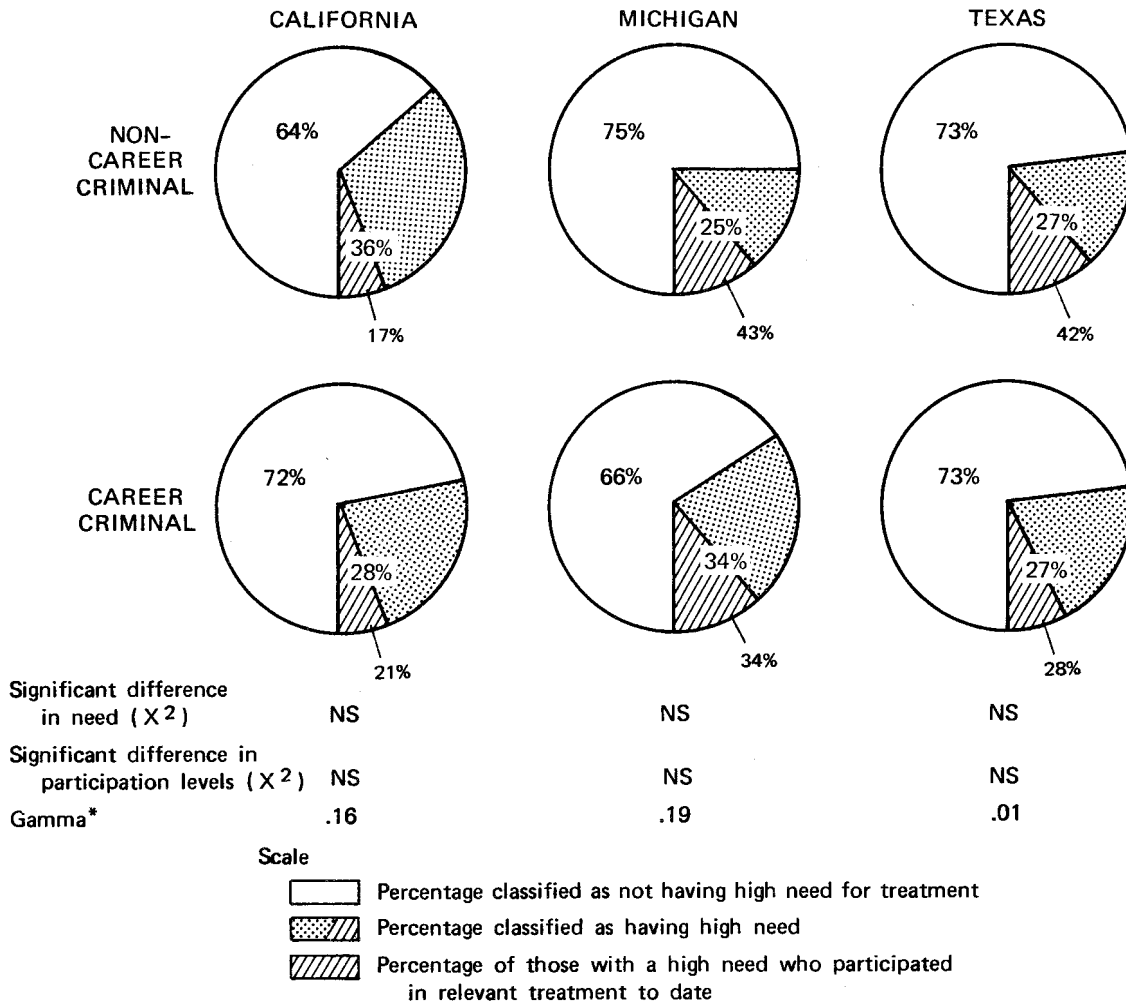
\*Gamma is a measure of association, i.e., a measure of the strength of the relationship. It measures the improvement in the ability to predict the dependent variable (here, participation in education programs), once the value of the independent variable is known (here, whether career or non-career). Gamma will be 0 when no relationship exists, and +1 when all variables are perfectly related.

Fig. 4—Participation of high need inmates in EDUCATION programs by CAREER CRIMINALITY



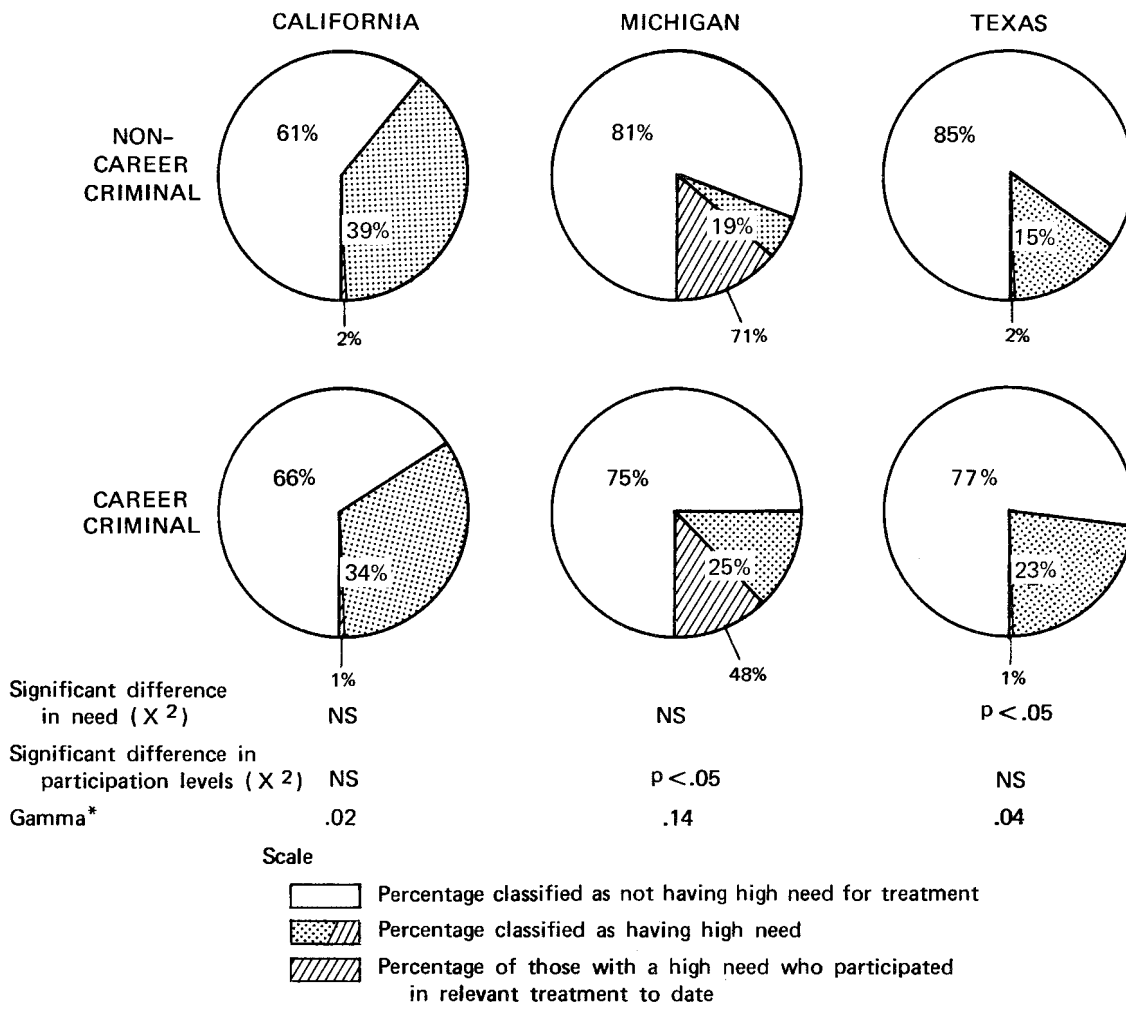
\*Gamma is a measure of association, i.e., a measure of the strength of the relationship. It measures the improvement in the ability to predict the dependent variable (here, participation in education programs), once the value of the independent variable is known (here, whether career or non-career). Gamma will be 0 when no relationship exists, and +1 when all variables are perfectly related.

Fig. 5—Participation of high need inmates in VOCATIONAL TRAINING programs by CAREER CRIMINALITY



\* Gamma is a measure of association, i.e., a measure of the strength of the relationship. It measures the improvement in the ability to predict the dependent variable (here, participation in education programs), once the value of the independent variable is known (here, whether career or non-career). Gamma will be 0 when no relationship exists, and +1 when all variables are perfectly related.

Fig. 6—Participation of high need inmates in ALCOHOL REHABILITATION programs by CAREER CRIMINALITY



\*Gamma is a measure of association, i.e., a measure of the strength of the relationship. It measures the improvement in the ability to predict the dependent variable (here, participation in education programs), once the value of the independent variable is known (here, whether career or non-career). Gamma will be 0 when no relationship exists, and +1 when all variables are perfectly related.

Fig. 7—Participation of high need inmates in DRUG REHABILITATION programs by CAREER CRIMINALITY

prisons takes the form of crisis counseling, resulting from problems in adjusting to incarceration. It is perhaps true, therefore, that inmates who have never been to prison before (i.e., non-career criminals) have a greater need for counseling.

### **Work Assignment**

There was no evidence to suggest that career criminals were less likely to obtain work assignments than other inmates.

## **THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN INMATE CHARACTERISTICS, TREATMENT NEED, AND PROGRAM PARTICIPATION**

Race and age were repeatedly suggested by prison administrators as the two factors most likely to affect the "match" between the need for treatment and treatment received. For example, particular racial groups might discourage participation in programs that are run by prison staff, or programs in which other racial groups are the most frequent participants. Certain programs get labeled, for instance, as "Mexican-run" or "white-run." A similar situation occurs with respect to age; certain age groups participate more readily in particular program types. Young inmates may be discouraged from participating in programs seen as "reserved" for older inmates.

It can also be hypothesized that the length of time an inmate has been in prison will affect the probability of his receiving needed treatment. As his exposure time increases, so should his chances of receiving treatment. We examined these factors as well as a number of other background factors (e.g., commitment offense, juvenile record, number of prior prison terms) for their association with treatment need and program participation.

### **Education Programs**

Figures 8a and 8b show, by age and race respectively, the percentage of inmates who evidenced a high need for education programs, compared with the percentage of such inmates who participate in a corresponding education program. ("High need" inmates were previously defined as having completed less than the 9th grade or able to read at below the 10th grade level.)

Similar analysis was done controlling for the type of commitment offense, and the length of time an inmate had served in the current term. Neither of these factors was significantly associated with high need for treatment or treatment received by high-need inmates.

The results above show that between 37 percent (California) and 64 percent (Texas) of inmates 26 years old or younger have a high need for education. Proportionately more Texas inmates have a high need for educational treatment than in the other two states.

In all three states, younger inmates were disproportionately the high-need type, and in California and Texas younger inmates were more likely to participate in education programs.

In each state, the minority inmates were more likely to have high needs for education. However, contrary to some expectations, the match between treatment need and treatment received in education programming is not significantly affected by race.

We explored more closely the participation of high-need inmates in education programs by comparing the participation rates across racial categories while controlling for age.<sup>5</sup> However, because the sample size within each state reduces rapidly with these further controls we present this analysis for the three states combined.

Figures 8a and 8b reveal that, in general, a greater proportion of younger rather than older, and nonwhite rather than white, inmates who have a high need for education actually participate in such programs. Table 10 presents inmate participation rates across racial categories *within* age groups. We find no differences in the rates of participation across racial groups for younger inmates; but for older inmates, the participation rates are statistically significant across racial groups. Here we see that Hispanic inmates participate at a much higher rate than either black or Anglo inmates. In fact, while the rates of participation decrease for Anglo and black inmates as age increases, the rates for Hispanic inmates *increase* with age.

Table 10

PARTICIPATION OF HIGH NEED INMATES IN  
EDUCATION PROGRAMS, BY  
INMATE RACE AND AGE

Race	Age Groups	
	Less Than or Equal to Median	Greater Than the Median
Anglo	62	42
Hispanic	66	71 <sup>a</sup>
Black	65	53

<sup>a</sup>p<.05

### Vocational Training Programs

Inmates who had no job during the 2 years of street time preceding their current prison term, and were not attending school, were classified as having a high need for vocational training. We are interested in learning whether certain inmates are more likely to fall into this category and, more importantly for this research, whether particular inmate characteristics are associated with whether an inmate in need of treatment will participate in a relevant program. Figures 9a and 9b explore these issues.

Only in California was there evidence that a larger percentage of young inmates have high needs for vocational training. In Texas and Michigan, high need was not related to our age category. Also, participation in vocational programs was

<sup>5</sup>Similar analyses were performed for vocational training, alcohol programs, and drug programs; no significant differences were uncovered.

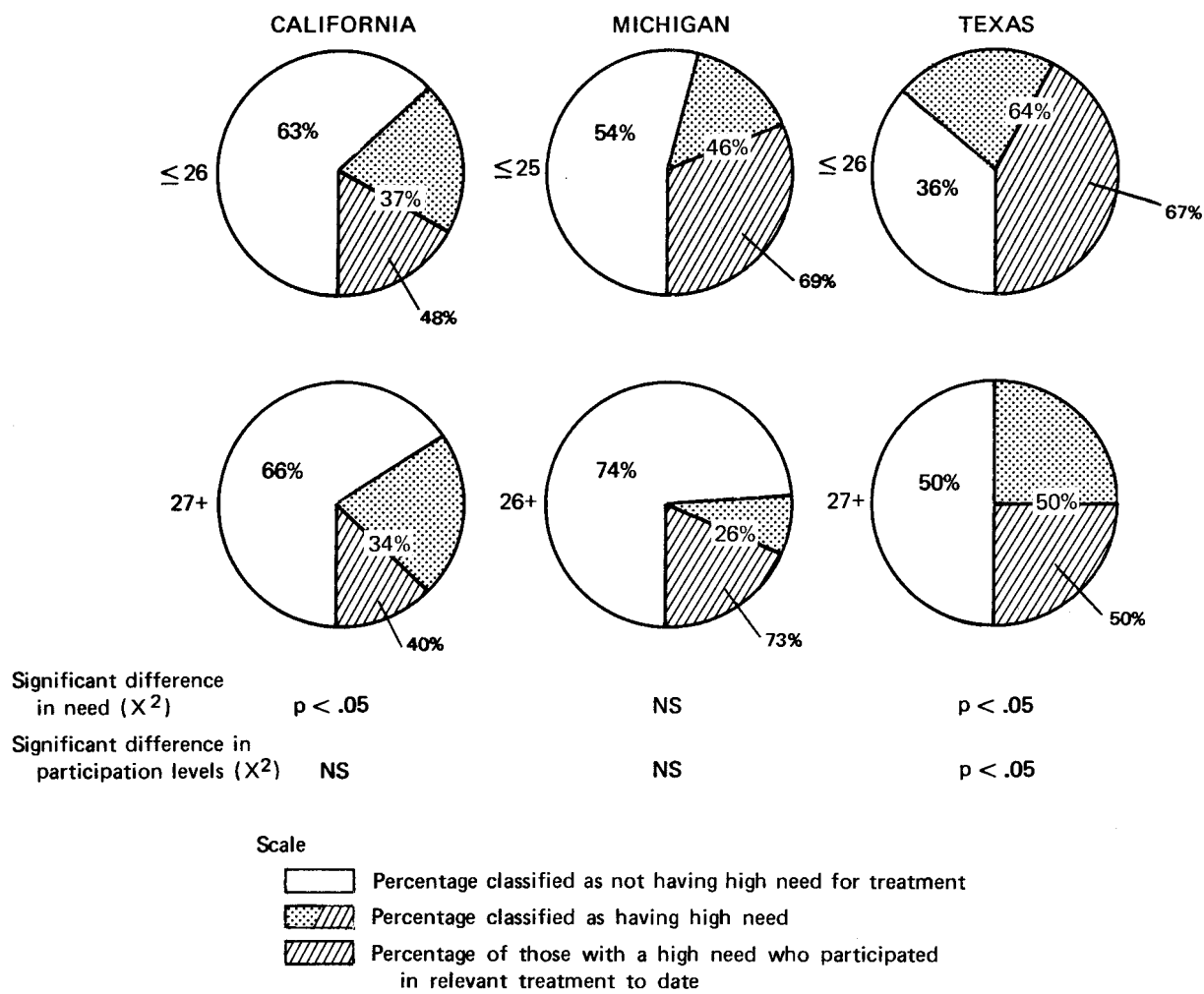


Fig. 8a—Participation in EDUCATION programs, by AGE<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>This age split represents the sample median in California and Texas. In Michigan, age 25 is the sample median and the age break utilized for that state.



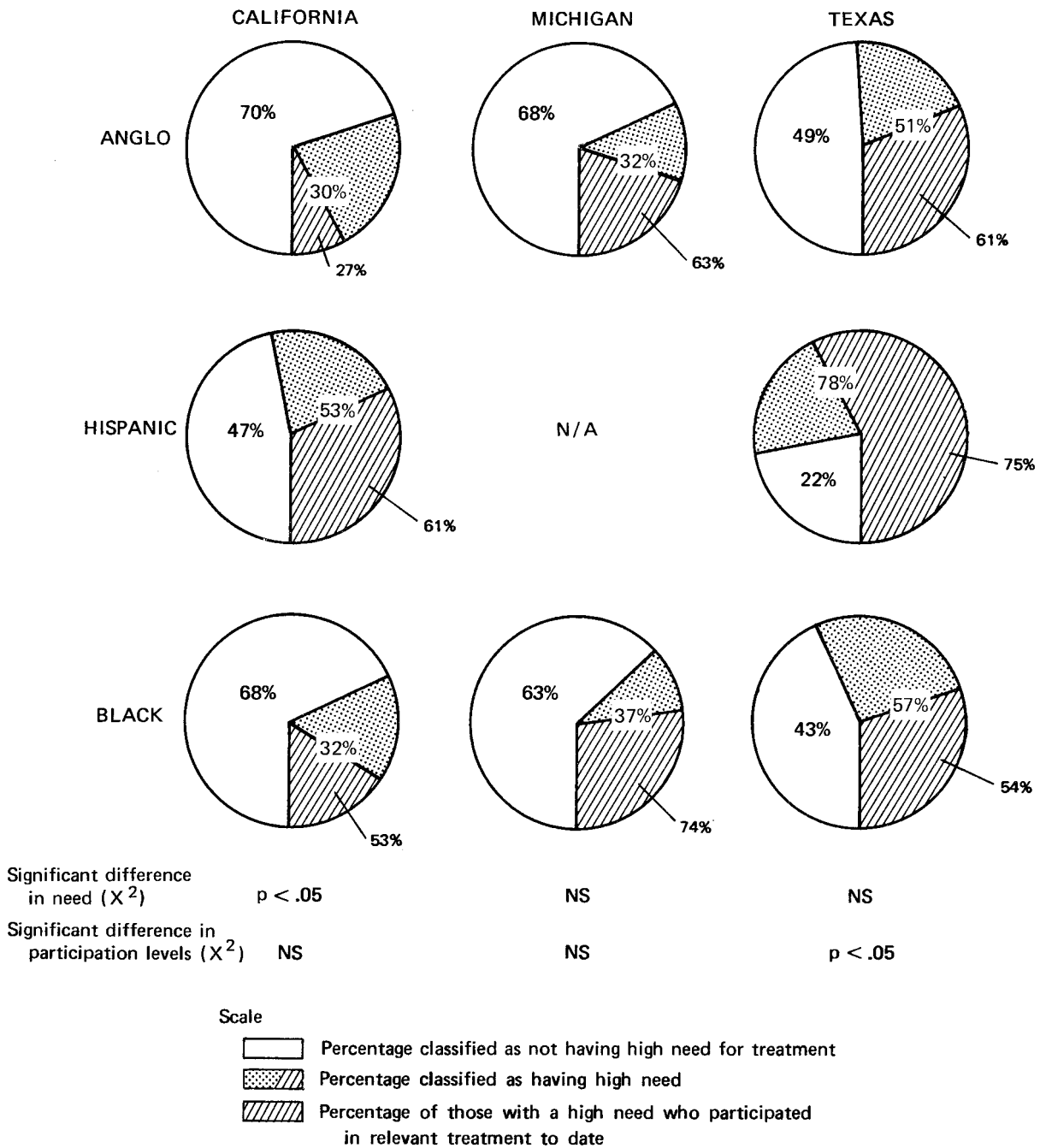


Fig. 8b—Participation in EDUCATION programs, by RACE

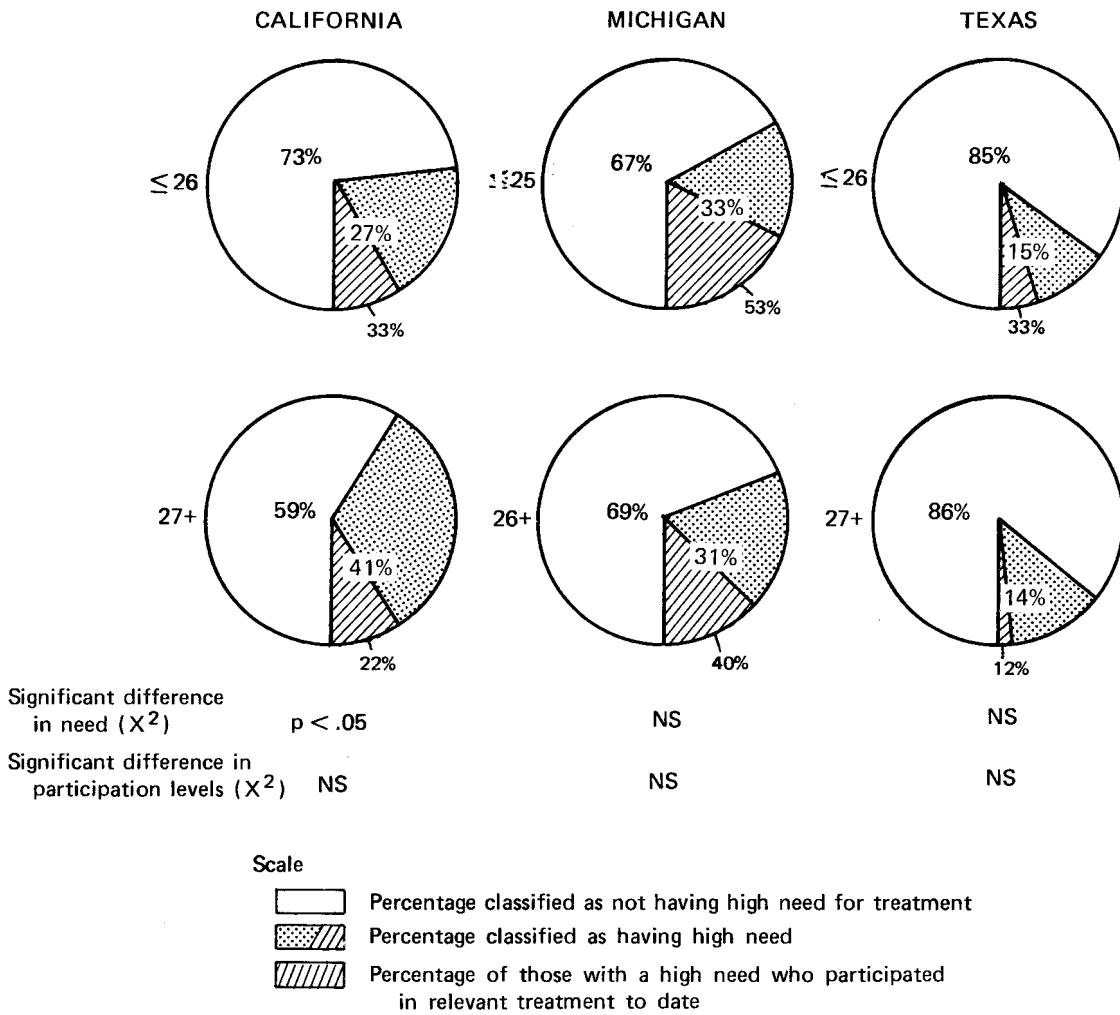


Fig. 9a—Participation of high need inmates in VOCATIONAL TRAINING programs, by AGE

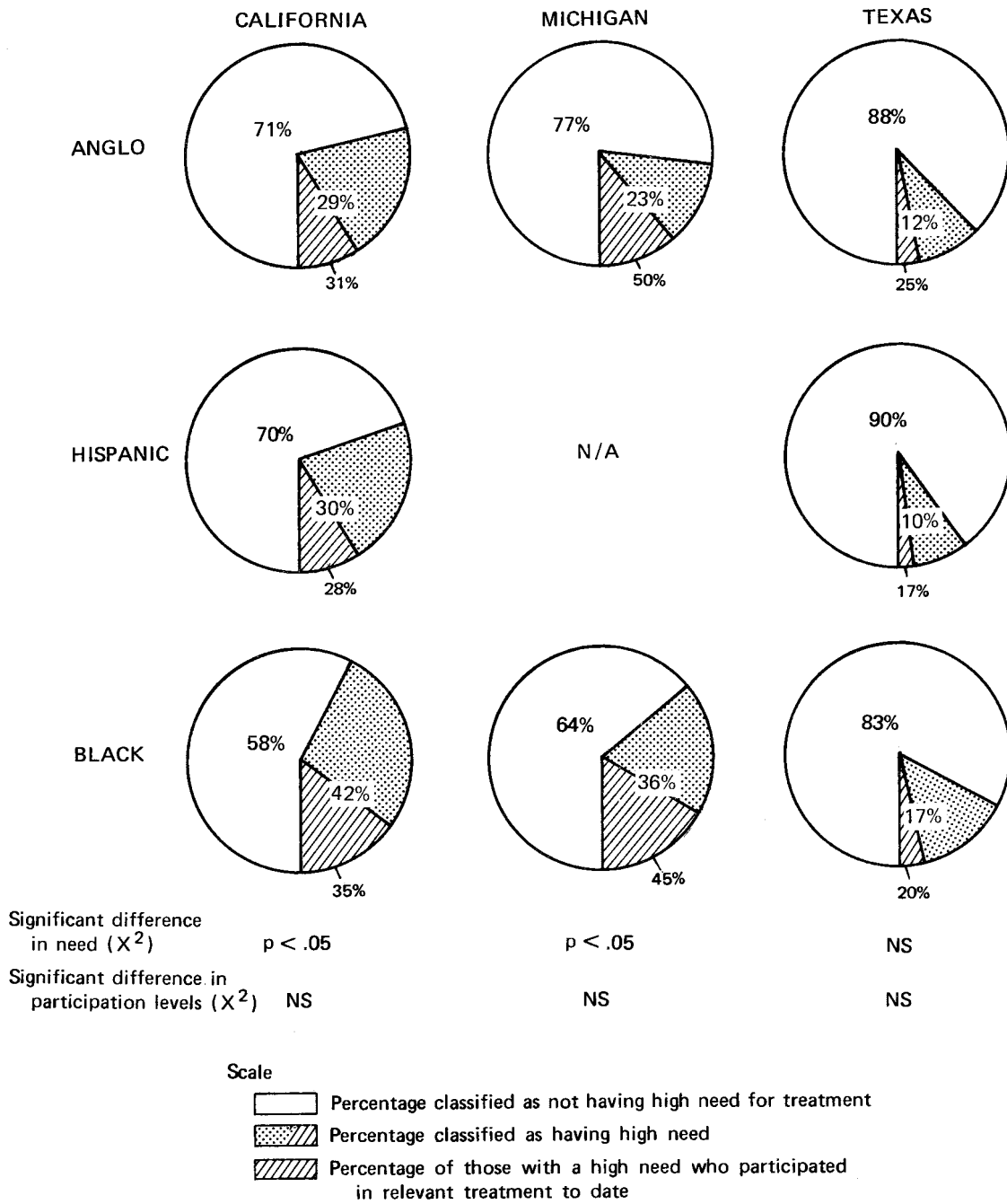


Fig. 9b—Participation of high need inmates in VOCATIONAL TRAINING programs, by RACE

not related to age in any of the states studied. It appears that inmates who need vocational training participate in such programs regardless of age.

In both California and Michigan, a disproportionate number of black inmates disclosed high needs for vocational training. However, it appears that an inmate's race was not significantly associated with his participation in vocational training programs. Across all states, an equal proportion of blacks, whites, and Hispanics participated in vocational training. Similarly (in analysis not shown here), the offense type for which the individual was currently in prison was not related to his program participation in vocational training. However, as we might expect, a high-need inmate's probability of being in vocational training increased as his length of time in prison increased. This was the only program type where such an association was found.

### **Alcohol Rehabilitation Programs**

The three states exhibit highly significant differences among races in the percentages needing alcohol rehabilitation, as shown in Fig. 10a. In each instance, Anglos outweigh the others in need, with blacks being the least needful. It is also true, especially in California, that disproportionately fewer black inmates participate in alcohol rehabilitation programs.

The finding that black inmates seldom participate in alcohol treatment programs is consistent with a previous study done by one author of this report. Using a nationwide prison sample, the study found that fewer black inmates have serious alcohol problems; but for those with problems a relatively smaller proportion will be treated.<sup>6</sup> It may be that alcohol problems are perceived as a white-class phenomenon, and the prison programs are predominantly made up of Anglo staff and participants. This situation may discourage black inmates from participating.

Participation in alcohol rehabilitation programs is not significantly associated with our age classification in any of the states, but there is at least a suggestion that older inmates participate more often in Texas (see Fig. 10b). There are also no significant associations between the length of time inmates have served and their participation in alcohol rehabilitation.

### **Drug Rehabilitation Programs**

A great percentage of older inmates in California have high drug rehabilitation needs when compared with younger inmates (see Fig. 11a). The pattern is for older offenders to be overrepresented among those who reported daily use of hard drugs, and younger offenders disproportionately among those who reported some, but less than daily, use. Both Michigan and Texas have the same pattern, but the differences between the age groups are not statistically significant. In all three states, older inmates tend to become involved in drug treatment slightly more than younger inmates. And there is evidence in all the states, albeit limited, that a larger percentage of white inmates have a high need for drug treatment, as compared with blacks and Hispanics. However, white inmates do not participate in programs to any greater degree than other racial groups (see Fig. 11b).

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<sup>6</sup>See J. Petersilia, "Which Inmates Participate in Prison Programs?," *Journal of Offender Counseling, Services, and Rehabilitation*, No. 2, 1980.

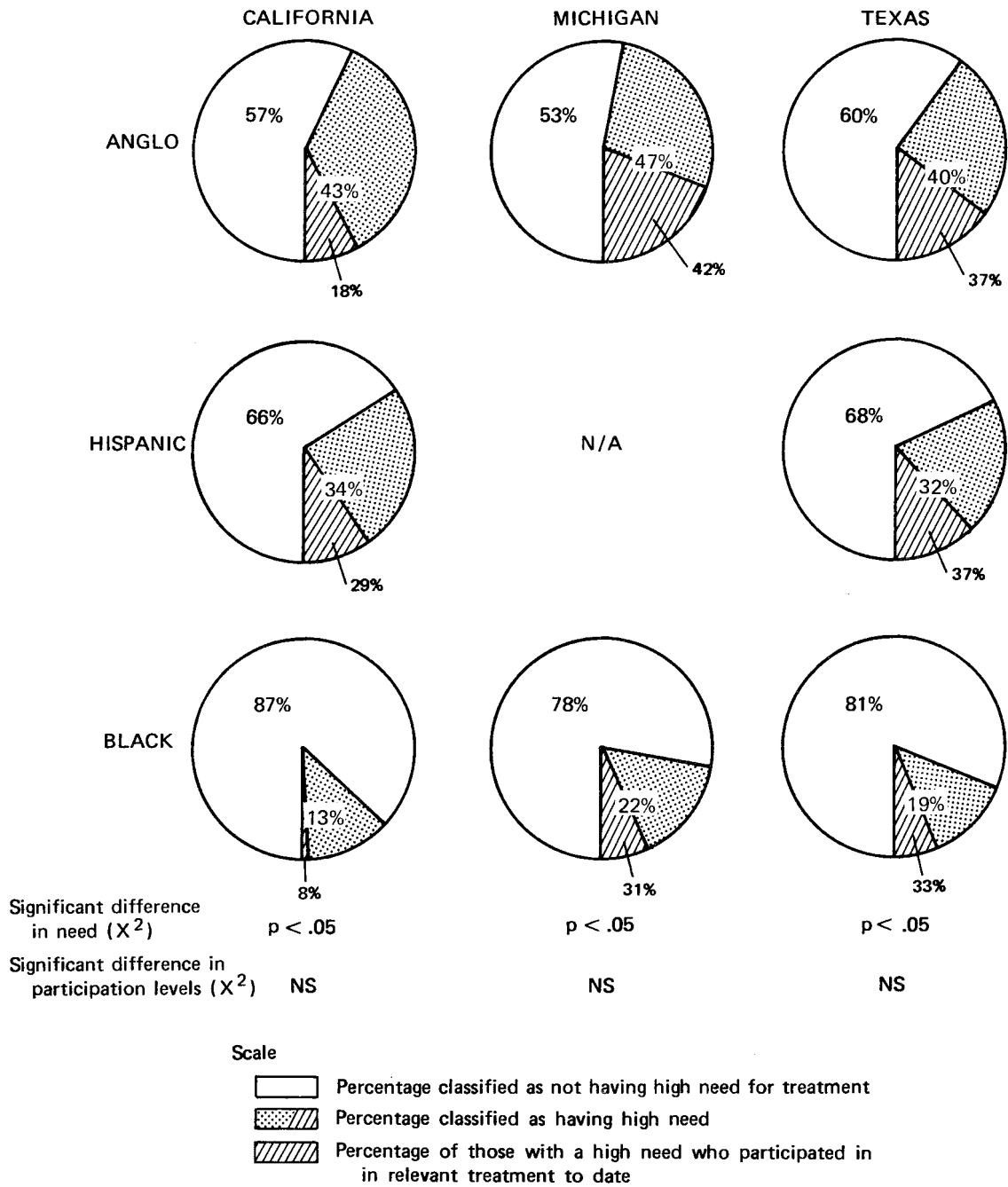


Fig. 10a—Participation of high need inmates in ALCOHOL REHABILITATION programs, by RACE

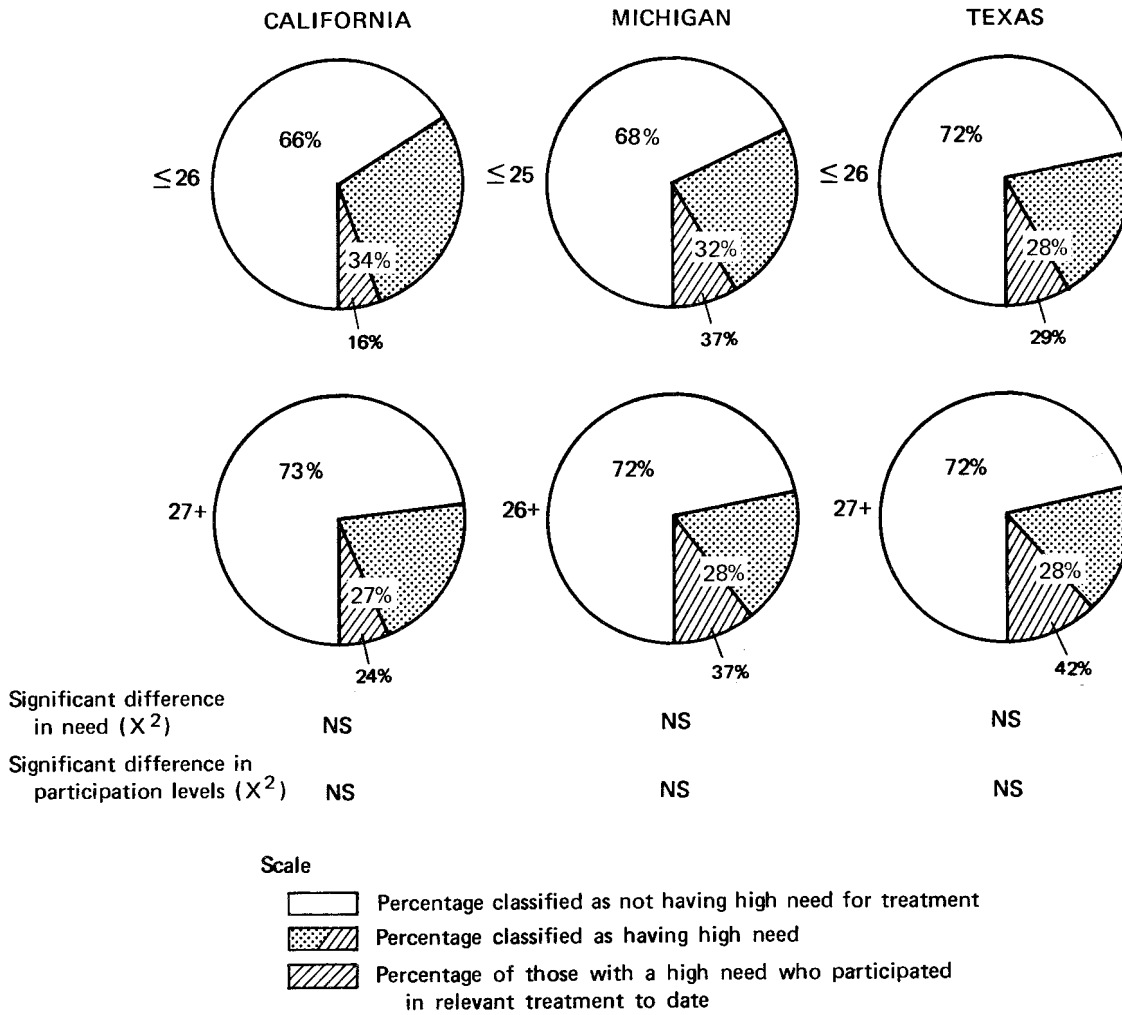


Fig. 10b—Participation of high need inmates in ALCOHOL REHABILITATION programs, by AGE

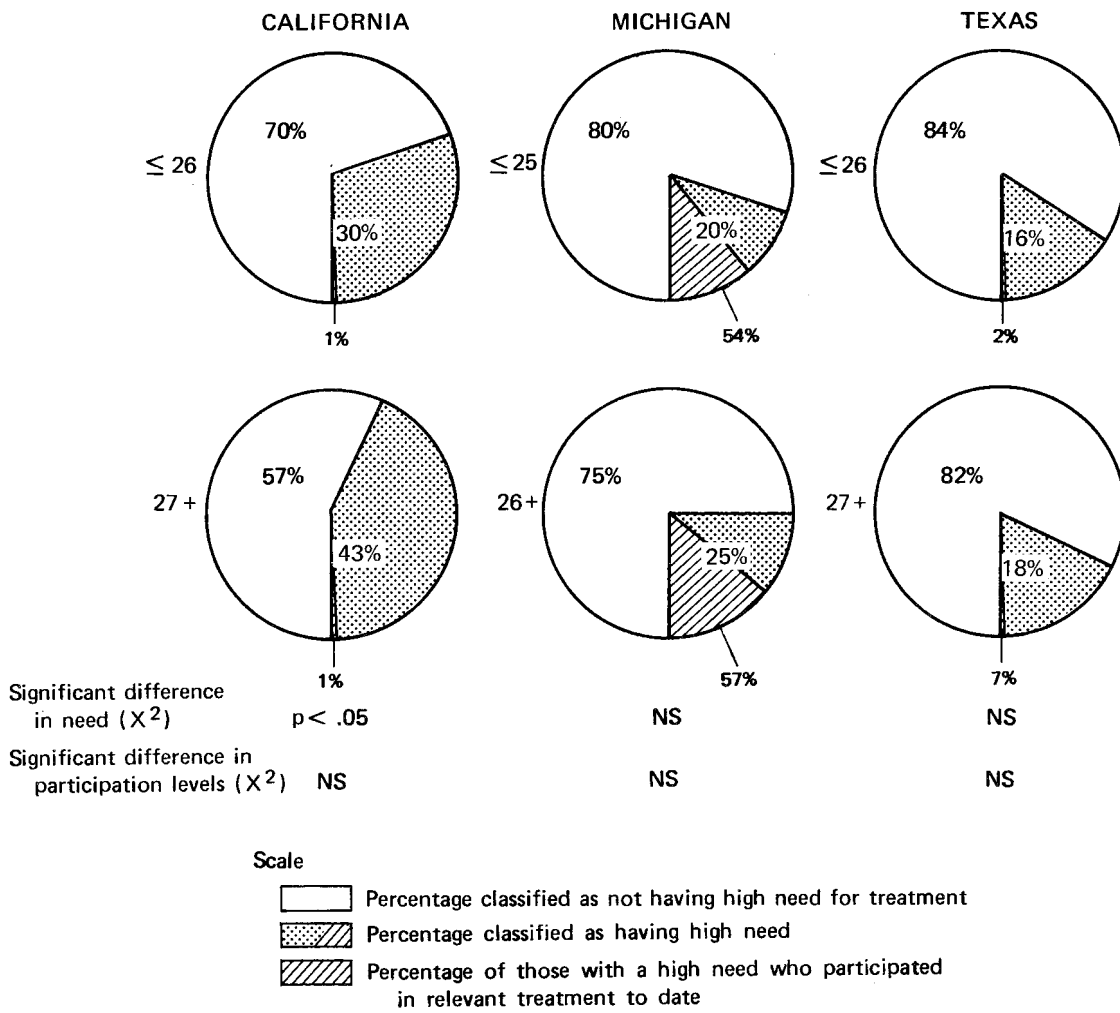


Fig. 11a—Participation of high need inmates in DRUG REHABILITATION programs, by AGE

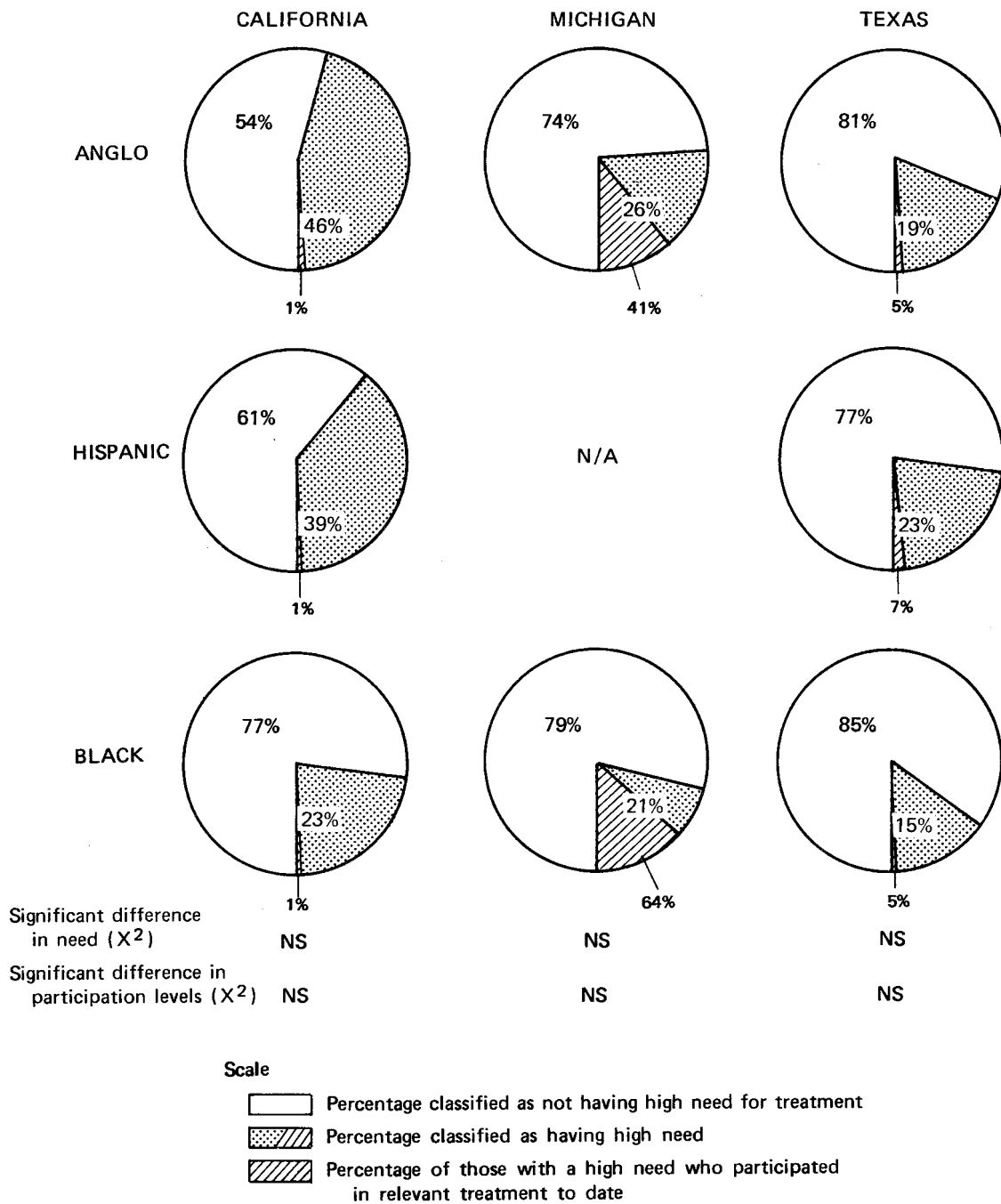


Fig. 11b—Participation of high need inmates in DRUG REHABILITATION programs, by RACE



Inmates classified as having a high need for drug rehabilitation were not more likely to be committed for particular offense types (i.e., property versus personal crimes).

### Individual and Group Counseling

In examining the association between inmate age and participation in counseling programs, we found that across all states younger inmates participate in counseling relatively more often than older inmates. However, the age differences were not statistically significant, due in part to the small number of inmates in counseling programs. No significant associations appeared between race and participation in counseling programs; all racial groups were equally represented.

### Work Assignments

The percentage of older inmates represented in prison work assignments was disproportionately high. This age association was statistically significant in each of the three states. We subsequently combined the state samples and examined which inmates held work assignments across racial categories, while controlling for inmate age. Among both younger and older inmates, a significantly lower percentage of blacks held work assignments than Anglo or Hispanic inmates (see Table 11). And, confirming the finding that a greater proportion of older than younger inmates held prison jobs, the table shows that this finding is consistent within racial groupings.

In this section we have examined the characteristics of inmates who choose to participate in prison treatment programs. But why certain inmates choose to become involved and why others do not is clearly an important issue in studying the utilization of prison treatments. The next section examines these questions.

Table 11

PERCENTAGE OF INMATES WITH A CURRENT  
WORK ASSIGNMENT

Race	Age Groups	
	Less Than or Equal to Median	Greater Than the Median
Anglo	54	67
Hispanic	54 <sup>a</sup>	64 <sup>a</sup>
Black	40	58

<sup>a</sup>p<.05

## VI. INMATES' ASSESSMENT OF MOTIVATIONS FOR, AND EFFECTS OF, PARTICIPATION IN PRISON PROGRAMS

To this point in the analysis, we have examined program participation in light of a number of inmate background characteristics. We discovered that, according to our criteria, about a third of the prison population had an acute need for at least one form of treatment under study here; however, depending on the type of need, from 5 percent to 71 percent participated in a corresponding treatment program. We subsequently sought to explain the match between the need for treatment and the treatment received on the basis of sociodemographic and criminal history variables. Clearly, participation in treatment programs cannot be explained solely in terms of an inmate's need for treatment or his background, for it is heavily influenced by the availability of treatment and his willingness to become involved.

Why do so many high-need inmates fail to participate in programs? Do they fail to recognize their need for treatment? Do they desire to be in programs that are unavailable to them? Understanding these factors could suggest policy changes to alleviate conditions that are discouraging needful inmates from program participation. For those inmates who choose to become involved, what factors do they cite as motivating their participation? And how are the effects of programs assessed by inmates who have participated? In this section, we turn our attention to these and related matters.

### MOTIVATIONS FOR AND AGAINST PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

Prison officials in all three of the states indicated that enrollment in the majority of treatment programs is strictly voluntary—the only possible exception being the education programs in the Texas prisons. In that state, inmates with less than a 5th grade education are strongly encouraged to participate in education programs if there is an opening. However, many researchers have questioned whether participation in prison programs can ever really be totally voluntary.<sup>1</sup> The inmate may feel some pressure toward program participation simply because it is likely to reflect positively on his institutional behavior and thus his release date. For each program in which an inmate reported participating, we asked him to rate as “very important,” “somewhat important,” “somewhat unimportant,” or “not important at all” a list of reasons motivating his participation. Table 12 displays the percentage of the population who rated a specific reason as “very important” to

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<sup>1</sup>N. Morris, *The Future of Imprisonment*, University of Chicago Press, 1974, and A. von Hirsch, *Doing Justice: The Choice of Punishment*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1976. See also G. Kassebaum, D. A. Ward, and D. M. Wilner, *Prison Treatment and Parole Survival: An Empirical Assessment*, John Wiley, New York, 1971.

Table 12  
 REASONS CITED AS "VERY IMPORTANT" FOR PROGRAM PARTICIPATION: ALL STATES COMBINED  
 (Percent of inmates participating)

Reason	Program Type						
	Adult Education	High School Education	Vocational Training	Alcohol Rehabilitation	Drug Rehabilitation	Individual Counseling	Group Counseling
Break up the prison boredom; see what it was like	26	23	23	33	23	14	16
Be with friends; make friends	12	13	12	20	10	—	13
Help me make parole	49	47	50	60	63	38	50
Learn or work toward a diploma	87	85	84	—	—	—	—
Help myself; learn how to deal with my personal problems	—	—	—	74	78	74	70

NOTE: Entries do not add to 100 percent. Reasons were rated on a scale from "very important" to "not important."

their participation. The table applies to all program participants, regardless of need level. No statistically significant differences appeared between the motivating factors of high-need inmates and other program participants.

These results indicate that 40 to 60 percent of inmates in various programs cited "help me make parole" as a very important reason for their participation. An inmate's desire to look good to paroling authorities has long been noted as a strong motivator for program participation. To avoid wasting valuable correctional resources on inmates who do not sincerely wish to better themselves, several prisons have adopted policies which dissociate an inmate's program participation from his release date. In fact, the Federal Bureau of Prisons has adopted this policy for all of its prisons.

The three states surveyed differ considerably with respect to sentencing structure and paroling policy, as reviewed in Section III. Because of these state differences, the response data enable us to compare reasons for program participation under different conditions. California inmates should feel little pressure to participate in treatment programs. Under California's Determinate Sentencing Law, which had been operational about a year and a half at the time of the survey, an inmate is sentenced to a definite prison term by the sentencing judge. When an inmate is processed through the prison intake procedures, his release date is computed. His release date equals his sentence length minus good-time credits. An inmate automatically receives good-time credits which amount to one-third of his sentence. However, good-time credits can later be taken away for misbehavior or failure to participate in work or treatment programs. An inmate therefore has a non-penalizing choice between participating and not participating in treatment; he will not lose good-time credits if he elects only to hold a prison job. There is no traditional parole hearing to determine suitability for release; an inmate is automatically released at the end of his sentence.<sup>2</sup>

Michigan is more traditional, with a parole board determining the exact date of release. Inmates enter prison with a minimum and maximum sentence. The actual time served can be influenced by a number of factors, one of which is successful participation in a treatment program.

Texas inmates also have a minimum-maximum sentence, where the actual time served is influenced in part by paroling authorities. According to Texas prison officials, participation in programs does not influence the date of release as much as an inmate's institutional behavior. If inmates do not misbehave, they are likely to be released close to their sentence expiration date even if they have not participated in programs. However, if an inmate does choose to become involved in a program, and appears to have benefited in some way, the effect on the parole board will be favorable.

Given these state differences, we might expect California inmates to feel the least pressure to impress paroling authorities through program participation; Texas inmates, perhaps a little pressure; and Michigan inmates, the most. To explore this hypothesis, we examined the reasons inmates give for program participation, by state. The findings were consistent with our expectations. For each program type, Michigan inmates cited "making parole" more frequently than inmates who

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<sup>2</sup>For a complete discussion of these provisions, see *Determinate Sentencing in California*, by Dick Howard, the Council of State Government, Lexington, Kentucky, 1978.

were participating in the other two states. In Michigan, 68 percent of those participating in a drug or alcohol program said that making parole was a very important motivating factor. And, for each program type, the state differences were statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ). As expected, California inmates cited this factor less often than participants in Texas.

Each inmate who indicated he had not participated in a specific program during the current prison term was asked to indicate the reason for his nonparticipation. We examined these reasons in light of the treatment need definitions we devised earlier. We were interested in the reasons high-need inmates give for not participating in treatment programs. Table 13 presents the results.

The table is interesting in several respects. In the area of alcohol rehabilitation, 65 percent of the inmates we classified as having a high need said they were not in alcohol treatment because they didn't feel they needed such a program. This is particularly surprising, because the criteria we used to judge whether an inmate had an alcohol need was the inmate's own assessment of whether he had an alcohol problem during the months prior to his imprisonment. A significant number of these inmates also said that alcohol had contributed to their criminal activities. In this instance, it appears that inmates admit to having alcohol problems, but don't feel they require treatment.

In all of the programs except drug rehabilitation, inmates in need of treatment did not say that relevant programs were unavailable to them. They simply chose not to participate. In the area of drug rehabilitation, however, 33 percent of the inmates judged to have a high need said they were not in programs because such programs were unavailable. It is also true that 8 to 19 percent of our high-need inmates were not in programs because they felt they were too busy.

Table 13

REASONS GIVEN BY HIGH NEED INMATES FOR NOT PARTICIPATING IN  
RELEVANT TREATMENT PROGRAMS: ALL STATES COMBINED  
(Percent of inmates with high need)

Reasons	Program Type				
	Adult Education	High School Education	Vocational Training	Alcohol Rehabilitation	Drug Rehabilitation
I don't feel I need this program/don't want to take	61	60	38	65	36
This program is unavailable at this prison	11	3	11	3	33
I have heard bad things about this program	1	1	2	3	3
Staff discouraged my participation/custody/security reasons	18	22	30	15	15
I am too busy/in other programs/have work assignments	9	14	19	14	12

## **INMATES' ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS OF PROGRAM PARTICIPATION**

Prison programs generally serve three broad purposes: to constructively occupy the inmate's time while he is in prison, to better equip him to deal with the outside community, and to discourage his future criminality. A matter of intense controversy in recent years is the degree to which prison programs can be expected to reduce recidivism. Some prison officials have become so disillusioned with their ability to reduce crime through rehabilitation that they have abandoned it as a primary goal of prison programs (e.g., see California in Section III). Still, the hope is that prison programs will help reduce an offender's future criminality. Although this study does not evaluate the effectiveness of treatment programs, we had an excellent opportunity to glean some information of the inmates' perceptions of the usefulness of the programs. However, the association between an inmate's perception of a program's effects and his post-release behavior remains an open question to be tested in later research.

We asked inmates who had participated in programs to assess the help each program had provided them in terms of adjusting to prison, dealing with personal problems, obtaining a skill or education that would assist in future employment, and reducing future criminality. Their responses are presented in Table 14.

Respondents assessed the effects of different programs quite similarly. For each program type, approximately 20 percent of the participants said it helped them adjust to prison "a lot"; and 40 percent to 50 percent said the program will provide "a lot" of help to them in staying out of crime. As expected, the program rated the best aid to getting a job after release was vocational training. Notice also that half of the inmates who participated in drug or alcohol programs said those programs had helped in curtailing their dependency on these substances; less than 20 percent said these programs were no help.

There were no differences in these program assessments when they were examined in light of whether or not the inmate was a career criminal.

### **Program Effects, As a Function of Motivation for Program Participation**

Are the reasons an inmate gives for enrolling in a program related to his assessment of the program's benefits? We might expect that inmates who enroll in programs primarily to impress parole authorities get fewer benefits from the program, whereas those who join the program out of a sincere desire to deal with their problems will judge the programs more effective. On the other hand, it might be that benefits are obtained regardless of an inmate's particular reason for initially entering a program. We explore this hypothesis below. Table 15 shows inmate assessments of program benefits, in light of the reasons stated for entering the program.

A couple of items appearing in this table are noteworthy. Of the inmates who said they participated in a specific program to make parole, 57 percent thought their program participation would help them get and keep a job, and 51 percent said they thought their participation would help them stay out of crime. Therefore,

Table 14

**INMATE ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTS OF THE PROGRAMS  
IN WHICH THEY PARTICIPATED**  
(Percent of responses of persons who had taken the  
specified program during this prison term)

Program Type/Effects	Level of Help		
	A Lot	Some/A Little	None
<b>Adult Basic Education</b>			
Helped me adjust to prison life	18	36	45
Helped me get a better education	69	24	6
Will help me get a job	51	34	14
Will help me stay out of crime	50	30	20
<b>High School Education</b>			
Helped me adjust to prison life	17	32	50
Helped me get a better education	68	28	4
Will help me get a job	48	37	15
Will help me stay out of crime	46	30	20
<b>Vocational Training Program</b>			
Helped me adjust to prison life	15	34	50
Helped me learn a trade/get a license	70	33	6
Will help me get a job	62	29	7
Will help me stay out of crime	56	29	15
<b>Alcohol Rehabilitation Program</b>			
Helped me adjust to prison life	20	41	39
Helped me control my drinking problem	47	35	18
Will help me get a job	42	33	25
Will help me stay out of crime	50	28	22
<b>Drug Rehabilitation Program</b>			
Helped me adjust to prison life	22	39	39
Helped me control my drug problem	52	30	18
Will help me get a job	47	27	25
Will help me stay out of crime	54	28	17
<b>Individual Counseling Program</b>			
Helped me adjust to prison life	17	48	34
Helped me learn about/deal with my problems	49	37	14
Will help me get a job	31	38	31
Will help me stay out of crime	41	29	30
<b>Group Counseling Program</b>			
Helped me adjust to prison life	20	43	38
Helped me learn about/deal with my problems	47	36	17
Will help me get a job	39	31	37
Will help me stay out of crime	41	25	34

Table 15

ASSESSMENT OF PROGRAM BENEFITS, BY MOTIVATION FOR PARTICIPATION:  
ALL PROGRAMS AND ALL STATES COMBINED<sup>a</sup>  
(Percent)

Reason for Participation	Inmate Assessment of Program Benefits			
	Helped Me Adjust to Prison Life	Obtained Objectives of Program	Will Help Me Get and Keep a Job	Will Help Me Stay Out of Crime
To break up prison boredom	39	75	62	64
To be with friends; make friends	48	76	64	69
To help me make parole	22	64	57	51
To obtain the objectives of the program (e.g., get degree, cure alcohol addiction)	19	78	59	58

<sup>a</sup>Only prisoners who said the particular reason was a "very important" factor in their participation are included here, as are only benefits judged "a lot of help."

some positive effects are being obtained by program participants who say they became involved in the program for what might be termed the "wrong reasons." Also, we find that 78 percent of those who said they entered the program to obtain the specific objectives of the program (e.g., get a degree, solve a drug addiction) felt they actually achieved those specific goals. Unfortunately, only 58 percent of that group thought their participation in the program would reduce their future criminality.

Table 16 examines, by program type, whether the motivation for entering a program is associated with the inmate's assessment of whether the program is likely to reduce his future criminality.

Overall, persons who entered programs to "help them make parole" judged programs slightly less effective in terms of reducing their future crime than persons who say they entered for other reasons. However, none of the results was statistically significant. These results lead us to believe that an inmate's motivation for entering a program is not strongly related to the benefits he accrues from participation. These results, along with more detailed tables not reproduced here (program type and state), suggest that inmates who say they entered programs "to be with friends," "to break up prison boredom," and "to make parole" are just as likely to say they achieved positive benefits from the program as those who say they entered the program out of a sincere desire to deal with their problems.



Table 16  
**EFFECTS OF PROGRAM ON FUTURE CRIMES AS A FUNCTION OF MOTIVATION FOR PARTICIPATION:**  
**ALL STATES COMBINED**  
 (Percent who say participation in program will reduce their future crime)

Reason for Participation	Program Type						
	Adult Education	High School Education	Vocational Training	Alcohol Rehabilitation	Drug Rehabilitation	Individual Counseling	Group Counseling
Break up the prison boredom; see what it was like	63	65	65	57	71	53 <sup>a</sup>	65 <sup>a</sup>
Be with friends; make friends	67	77	59	65	90 <sup>a</sup>	—	78 <sup>a</sup>
Help me make parole	54	52	59	47	57	47 <sup>a</sup>	45 <sup>a</sup>
Learn skill or work toward a diploma	54	54	64	—	—	—	—
Help myself; learn how to deal with my personal problems	—	—	—	62	64	53 <sup>a</sup>	55 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Small sample size.

## VII. DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS POSED BY CAREER CRIMINALS

Analysis of the prison experience of career criminals cannot be limited to issues of treatment needs and program participation. Officials can plan inmate programming only within an environment where prison management and control are not compromised. Therefore, research on the identification, and ultimately the control, of intractable inmates is crucial to today's prison managers.

Attempts to formulate a correctional policy directed at career criminals must address the institutional behavior of such inmates. Any systematic study regarding the prison behavior of career criminals may provide useful information to correctional administrators. In this section we consider whether these inmates present more serious problems as measured by institutional infractions. If career criminals present distinguishable institutional behavior they might deserve selective correctional handling.

In discussions with prison administrators during the course of this project we heard a variety of opinions regarding the prison behavior of career criminals. Some felt that these inmates are greater security risks. Because of their prior institutional experience these "prison-wise" inmates are better able to manipulate staff and other inmates, and, as a result, get into trouble more often. Other prison officials expressed the opposite view, that career criminals are less likely to cause disciplinary problems; given their long sentences, these inmates have an interest in making the prison environment as safe and comfortable as possible. And, because most of them have been to prison before, they know how to "do their own time." These administrators believe that institutional problems are concentrated among young inmates with limited prison experience but with extensive juvenile crime careers.<sup>1</sup>

Previous research on inmate behavior supports the notion that older career criminals do not pose greater prison problems than their younger counterparts. Despite a wide variation in research methodologies, a synthesis of the literature indicates that inmates involved in disciplinary problems tend to be young,<sup>2</sup> to have juvenile arrest records,<sup>3</sup> and to have started their criminal careers at an early age.<sup>4</sup>

This composite sketch of the prison disciplinary problem based on prior re-

<sup>1</sup>See P. Honig, *The Prison Experience of Career Criminals: Current Practice and Future Considerations*, The Rand Corporation, P-6178, July 1978.

<sup>2</sup>Each study we reviewed which investigated the relationship between age and prison disciplinary problems found a strong inverse association. See, for example, Louis Myers and Girard Levy, "Description and Prediction of the Intractable Inmate," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, Vol. 15, No. 2, July 1978; Desmond Ellis et al., "Violence in Prisons: A Sociological Analysis," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 80, No. 1, July 1974; Gordon Bolte, "Institutional Disobedience in a Maximum-Security Prison," *Offender Rehabilitation*, Vol. 3, Fall 1978; Barry Brown and John Spevacek, *Disciplinary Offenses and Disciplinary Offenders Under Two Correctional Climates*, District of Columbia Department of Corrections Research Report No. 17, September 1969; Dorothy Jaman, *Behavior During the First Year in Prison, Report III—Background Characteristics as Predicators of Behavior and Misbehavior*, California Department of Corrections, March 1972; and Lawrence Bennett, "The Study of Violence in California Prisons: A Review With Policy Implications," in Albert K. Cohen (ed.), *Prison Violence*, D. C. Heath and Company, Lexington, Mass., 1976.

<sup>3</sup>See Myers and Levy (1978).

<sup>4</sup>Age-specific criminality measures appear related to institutional behavior: The younger an inmate was when he first started committing crime, the more likely he is to be a disciplinary problem in prison. For age at first arrest, see Myers and Levy (1978), Bennett (1976), and Rodney Coe, "Characteristics

search closely parallels the impressionistic descriptions offered by many of the correctional administrators we surveyed.

Turning our attention to other inmate characteristics, we find no clear trend in the research literature regarding the relationship between negative prison behavior and race, type of commitment offense, and prior prison terms. Previous research examining these sociodemographic and criminal history variables has yielded mixed results. There is limited support for the notion that inmates who are non-white,<sup>5</sup> are currently in prison for a property crime,<sup>6</sup> and who have no prior prison experience<sup>7</sup> have negative institutional behavior.

Before proceeding, we must emphasize that negative institutional behavior cannot be explained solely in terms of inmate characteristics; such behavior is also a product of in-prison experiences. For instance, whether an inmate had a prison job, the degree of his involvement in treatment programs, the composition of the inmate population (e.g., percent minority), the length of time incarcerated, the prison population, the type of living arrangements, and the orientation of staff, as well as many other factors, all have an effect on the type and extent of disciplinary problems encountered.

Sociologists, in describing inmate behavior, traditionally have used either the functional or importation model. The former focuses on in-prison conditions and explains inmate behavior as a response to the "pains of imprisonment." The latter focuses on inmates' pre-prison identities and experiences, typically either sociodemographic or psychological characteristics. A third, relatively new model, structures issues of prison behavior around the fusion of these opposing models. Within this framework, prison behavior is studied in terms of the interaction of subjects and environments. In our present investigation we use some variables that fit the importation model and some that fit the functional model. Here we examine the effect of a number of inmate characteristics and in-prison variables on negative behavior.

We use institutional infractions as our measure of prison behavior. We analyze the behavior of career criminals by examining the effect that each component variable has on prison behavior (i.e., the number of prior prison terms, number of serious convictions, and the extent of juvenile criminality).<sup>8</sup> Included in the analysis are three other inmate characteristics: age, race, and commitment offense type, as well as three in-prison variables: months in prison, prison work status, and level

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of Well Adjusted and Poorly Adjusted Inmates," *Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology and Police Science*, Vol. 52, No. 2, July-August 1961. For age at first court contact, see Myers and Levy (1978), and for age at first adult commitment, see Myers and Levy (1978), Jaman (1972), and Brown and Spevacek (1969).

<sup>5</sup>Several studies found that a disproportionate number of non-white inmates have disciplinary problems. See, for example, Myers and Levy (1978), Bolte (1978), Bennett (1976), Coe (1961), and Dan Fuller and Thomas Orsagh, "Violence and Victimization Within a State Prison System," *Criminal Justice Review*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Fall 1977. However, two other studies found no relationship. See Ellis et al. (1974) and Marvin Wolfgang, "Quantitative Analysis of Adjustment to the Prison Community," *Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology and Police Science*, Vol. 51, 1961.

<sup>6</sup>Inmates with disciplinary problems tend to be serving prison terms for property crimes (see Myers and Levy (1978), Bolte (1978), Coe (1961)) and not for homicide, forgery, or drug charges (see Bolte (1978) and Jaman (1972)).

<sup>7</sup>Two studies, Jaman (1972) and Wolfgang (1961), found that inmates with no prior prison experience are more frequently sources of disciplinary problems. However, two other studies, Coe (1961) and Brown and Spevacek (1969), found no relationship between prior prison experience and negative institutional behavior.

<sup>8</sup>Section V describes in detail the construction of the composite measure—career criminality.

of participation in treatment programs. Inmate age is included because prior research unequivocally relates it to negative prison behavior. Race is included because the literature shows mixed results regarding its relationship to prison behavior. Offense type is considered because prior research compared the prison behavior of inmates committed for specific offenses. Here, we group inmates into two categories: violent and non-violent (based solely on their commitment offenses).<sup>9</sup> And finally, we include months in prison, prison work, and treatment participation for their possible explanatory or intervening effect on negative prison behavior.

### **THE FREQUENCY AND SEVERITY OF PRISON INFRACTIONS IN THE RAND SAMPLE**

In each state, prison officials file in each inmate's folder a copy of every disciplinary report received by that inmate during his current term. Table 17 lists, in order of increasing severity, the seven types of infractions we used to code disciplinary reports. Although disciplinary reports typically describe behavior logically fitting more than one category (e.g., an inmate threatened and seriously injured another inmate with a contraband weapon), for simplicity we recorded only the most serious infraction (e.g., major injury).<sup>10</sup> We also obtained self-report measures of disciplinary infractions from the Inmate Survey. These measures are consistent with those recorded from their official records.<sup>11</sup> However, in our analyses, we chose to rely on the official record data because they are more descriptive and not subject to the problems associated with self-report measures.

Table 18 shows the percentage of inmates in each state who had an officially recorded infraction of the various types. We observe that a greater percentage of Michigan inmates have at least one "write-up" for each infraction type except major injury. Note that the percentage differences across the states are significant for five of the seven infraction types listed. Of those five, Michigan inmates have a much higher percentage than Texas or California inmates, except for infractions involving contraband. Here the percentage of Texas inmates with at least one infraction is less than one-third that of Michigan or California inmates.

Similarly, as displayed in Table 19, the total number of infractions inmates received varies considerably across the states. Because of these sizable differences, our analysis proceeds on a state-by-state basis.

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<sup>9</sup>Violent commitment offenses include homicide, kidnapping, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Non-violent commitment offenses include burglary, larceny, auto theft, forgery, drug charges, fraud, weapons, and other. The authors expect to analyze the relationship between prison behavior and inmate self-reported crime rates for specific offenses collected for another project, the Rand Inmate Survey.

<sup>10</sup>In Texas, Rand coded not only the type and number of each infraction in the official records, but also the date that each occurred. The authors hope to use this information in later analyses exploring the time sequence of infractions. Specifically we would examine whether most infractions occur at the beginning of the term, spread out evenly over the term, or increase as the term nears completion.

<sup>11</sup>Inmates were asked, "Since you began this term, have you gotten any disciplinary reports (write-ups)?" Inmates answering "yes" were then asked for the number of reports they had received, and for the number of reports for serious charges, e.g., fighting. In each state, the number of self-reported and officially recorded disciplinary reports were strongly correlated.

Table 17  
 TYPES AND DESCRIPTIONS OF OFFICIALLY  
 RECORDED INFRACTIONS

Infractions Type	Description
Administrative	Minor violations, disobedience, gambling, theft, horseplay, out-of-place, noncoersive homosexuality, work-related and other non-serious charges.
Contraband	Having concealed or in possession of items in violation of rules (e.g. drugs, weapons, literature).
Threat	Statement or gesture indicating intent to harm, coerce, intimidate, etc.
Violence Without Injury	Destruction of state property, fight or assault not resulting in an injury (but more serious than horseplay).
Minor Injury	Fight or assault resulting in cut, bruise, needing only slight medical treatment, i.e. antiseptic or bandaids.
Major Injury	Fight or assault resulting in injury requiring medical treatment or observation, i.e. broken bone, unconsciousness, cut requiring stitches.
Escape	Plots, attempts, conspiracies.

Table 18  
 PERCENT OF INMATES WITH INFRACTIONS,  
 BY TYPE OF INFRACTION

Infraction Type	California (N = 337)	Michigan (N = 363)	Texas (N = 583)
Administrative <sup>a</sup>	44.7	60.1	47.5
Contraband <sup>a</sup>	24.3	29.8	7.9
Threat <sup>a</sup>	4.2	13.8	1.2
Violence without injury <sup>a</sup>	15.1	27.5	18.0
Minor injury	1.5	5.0	1.4
Major injury	3.3	1.4	.9
Escape <sup>a</sup>	1.2	8.0	.3

<sup>a</sup> $\chi^2$   $p < .05$ .

### The Creation of a "Weighted Infractions Score"

The official records provide information regarding the frequency and severity of inmate infractions. Some inmates may commit a few serious infractions, while others may commit several minor ones. Although both groups violate prison rules, they represent different management concerns for correctional administrators. A simple tally of the number of times an inmate violates institutional rules is not nearly as important for policy purposes as knowledge regarding the frequency and severity of such violations.

Table 19

PERCENT OF INMATES WITH INFRACTIONS,  
BY NUMBER OF DISCIPLINARY REPORTS

Number of Disciplinary Reports	California (N = 337)	Michigan (N = 363)	Texas (N = 583)
0	41.5	30.0	45.6
1	19.3	16.8	23.7
2	9.8	9.6	11.0
3	10.4	5.8	5.5
4	5.0	6.1	3.6
5+	14.0	31.7	10.6
	100.0	100.0	100.0

This perspective prompted us to create a weighted infraction score. We assigned administrative rule violations a weight of 1, and added a weight of 1 to each increasingly serious type of infraction.<sup>12</sup> The infraction types thus had the following weights: administrative, 1; possession of contraband, 2; threat, 3; violence without injury, 4; minor injury, 5; major injury, 6; and escape, 7. We believe that weighting infractions by their severity represents an advancement over counting as equivalent all types of negative inmate conduct.

As already shown in Table 19, the distribution of infractions varies considerably across the three states. Table 20 displays further evidence of these state differences. Here we present the average number of serious infractions per inmate (i.e., escape, major injury, minor injury, and violence without injury), non-serious infractions (i.e., threat, possession of contraband, and administrative rule violations), and total infractions, as well as the mean weighted infraction score for each state sampled.

The state comparisons of the infractions data reveal that a greater proportion of Michigan inmates receive disciplinary reports than inmates in either Texas or California, averaging over twice as many serious and non-serious infractions. Although this suggests that the level of inmate misbehavior is higher in Michigan than in California or Texas, such a conclusion assumes that the number of disciplinary reports accurately reflects the level of inmate misbehavior. On the basis of discussions with prison staff while conducting the Inmate Survey, we believe these differences can be explained in part by the disciplinary policies and procedures in the three states.<sup>13</sup> We are at present unable to determine how much of the variation

<sup>12</sup>Here, we followed the work of Mueller and Jaman who utilized the equal interval method in developing an institutional violence severity scale. See Paul Mueller and Dorothy Jaman, *Institutional Violence Severity Scale*, California Department of Corrections, December 1966.

<sup>13</sup>In our opinion, the Michigan infractions data probably reflect more accurately the actual level of inmate behavior problems. In California prisons, where staff members perceive a greater potential for more serious inmate disturbances, minor transgressions are often ignored as a tradeoff for continued order in prison. In Texas, the omnipresent threat of losing good-time credits and being returned to the fields to do agricultural labor ("to the line") tends to depress the number of inmate transgressions. Also, Texas prison officials spoke of informal procedures (short of writing a disciplinary report) for handling some minor infractions.

Table 20  
 AVERAGE NUMBER OF INFRACTIONS  
 PER INMATE, BY TYPE

Infraction Type	California (N = 337) Mean Value	Michigan (N = 363) Mean Value	Texas (N = 583) Mean Value
Serious	.30	.69	.29
Non-Serious	1.69	3.70	1.38
Total	1.99	4.39	1.67
Weighted Infraction Score	3.52	7.67	2.70

NOTE: In California, the annual rate of serious infractions is .20 per inmate; the rate of non-serious infractions, 1.52 per inmate. In Michigan, the annual rate of serious infractions is .42; non-serious infractions is 2.40. In Texas, the annual rate of serious infractions is .25; non-serious infractions, 1.25.

in the state infraction rates is attributable to inmate behavior and how much reflects differing state policies.<sup>14</sup>

## THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN INMATE CHARACTERISTICS AND PRISON INFRACTIONS

### Statistical Method

We used multiple linear regression to analyze how the dependent variable, the weighted infraction scores, varied with a set of selected predictor variables. The use of this model requires certain assumptions: that there is linearity and additivity in the independent variables, i.e.,  $Y = b_0 + b_1 \times 1 + \dots + b_n \times n + \text{error}$ ; and that the errors are independent, have equal variances, and have normal distributions. Although the original variables may not satisfy these assumptions, we can construct variables through transformation that approximately do.

Of the eleven independent variables, six have numerical values (i.e., inmate age, number of prior prison terms, number of serious convictions, age at first arrest, number of treatment programs entered, and months in prison), and five have nominal values (i.e., career criminality, crime type of current conviction, degree of juvenile criminality, whether currently with a prison work assignment, and race). We introduced the nominal variables into the regression equation as "dummy" variables: career criminality (0 = no, 1 = yes); crime type (0 = non-violent offense, 1 = violent offense); degree of juvenile criminality (0 = light, 1 = heavy); prison work (0 = no, 1 = yes). Race had dummy variables for black and Mexican-American inmates; the default value was white. We assigned cases with missing values the mean for the particular variable. In addition, we created dummy variables for those cases with missing values (0 = not missing data, 1 = missing data). These

<sup>14</sup>A more detailed examination of each prison system's sanctioning process is needed to explain further these state differences. This task is beyond the scope of the present study.

dummy variables allowed us to examine whether these cases differed significantly from those with complete information.

Intuition suggested that we convert two variables—the weighted infraction score and the number of treatment programs entered—into rates. This was done by dividing these values, for each inmate, by the number of months he had been in prison during the current term. Thus, each inmate had a rate of treatment program participation and a rate of infractions which took into account how long he had been in prison.

Both exploratory data analysis and theoretical reasoning led us to transform the dependent variable as well as some of the independent variables. Residual plots and concern about the possibility that a single outlying observation might skew our estimated regression coefficients led us to use the square root of infraction rate as our dependent variable.<sup>15</sup>

In each state we used the same set of independent variables in our regression equation.<sup>16</sup> From these analyses one can judge not only the significance of the relationships within specific states but, more importantly, one can gauge the strength of these relationships by noting which sustain their level of significance across states. Table 21 gives the mean and standard deviation of the variables used in the analysis.

As Table 21 shows, some major differences exist across the state samples. First, California inmates have a lower average number of prior prison terms, but they have not necessarily committed less crime. Their average number of serious convictions is 30 percent higher than in Michigan or Texas. Second, more than half of the California and Michigan inmates are currently in prison for violent offenses (Crime Type = 1), whereas less than one-third of Texas inmates are serving time for violent crimes. Third, the Texas sample averaged less recorded juvenile crime than inmates in California and Michigan, as measured by a later age at first arrest and a lower degree of juvenile criminality.<sup>17</sup> Fourth, although fewer Michigan inmates had work assignments at the time of the survey, their treatment program participation rate is highest overall. Michigan inmates also have been in prison about five months longer on the average. Fifth, blacks predominate in Michigan and Texas prisons, whereas whites hold a plurality in California.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup>More specifically, we fitted a number of different specifications of the multiple regression equation to the data of a single state (California), made various plots of the residuals, modified the specification as indicated, and iterated until no further modification produced a meaningful improvement. Doing an exploratory analysis on a single state allowed us to check the final specification with the data from the other states to guard against overfitting the data. We modified the original independent variables as follows: (1) a dummy variable for missing data on prison work was used in all three states; (2) dummy variables for missing data on prior prison terms and age at first arrest were used in Michigan; (3) a dummy variable for missing data on both prior prison terms and degree of juvenile criminality was used in California; and (4) age was recoded as the number of years older than 16 up to 20 (36+ years old).

Space does not allow a step-by-step description of the process here. The interested reader is referred to N. Draper and H. Smith, *Applied Regression Analysis*, John Wiley, New York, 1966, Chap. 3, or to Carl Morris and John Rolph, *Introduction to Data Analysis and Statistical Inference*, The Rand Corporation, P-5819, Chap. 9, for an account of how exploratory analysis of data can be used to arrive at a satisfactory regression equation.

<sup>16</sup>However, as noted above, we retained a dummy variable for a missing value only when it had a significant impact on the regression equation.

<sup>17</sup>The older age at first arrest in Texas may be an artifact of the data source in Texas. Nevertheless, the second measure substantiates the lower level of recorded juvenile crime in Texas. It should be noted that Texas has a smaller formal network for handling juvenile delinquency, which may depress these figures independent of the degree of juvenile delinquency the inmates might have displayed.

<sup>18</sup>The state prison populations have the following racial compositions: California—34 percent black, 44 percent white, 20 percent Mexican, 2 percent other; Michigan—56 percent black, 39 percent white,



Table 21  
 INMATE CHARACTERISTICS BY STATE,  
 MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS

Variable	California (N = 337)		Michigan (N = 363)		Texas (N = 583)	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Square root of the Infraction rate <sup>a</sup>	.335	.353	.476	.421	.241	.341
<b>Social</b>						
Age <sup>b</sup>	11.006	4.807	10.153	5.474	12.077	5.212
Black	.356	.480	.683	.466	.530	.500
Mexican-American	.196	.397	—	—	.103	.304
<b>Criminal</b>						
Career criminal <sup>c</sup>	.496	.501	.565	.496	.424	.495
No. of prior prisons	.462	.754	.816	1.329	.746	1.308
No. of serious convictions	2.491	1.699	1.964	1.496	1.765	1.284
Crime type <sup>d</sup>	.558	.497	.504	.499	.322	.468
Age at 1st arrest	15.237	4.144	16.690	4.231	19.068	4.355
Juvenile record <sup>e</sup>	.483	.493	.547	.498	.233	.423
<b>In-Prison</b>						
Prison work <sup>f</sup>	.593	.477	.462	.477	.584	.476
Treatment rate <sup>g</sup>	.143	.153	.205	.199	.176	.218
Months in prison	16.691	11.821	21.749	20.702	16.902	17.031
Missing prison work <sup>h</sup>	—	—	.088	.284	—	—

<sup>a</sup>Square root of weighted infraction score divided by months in prison.

<sup>b</sup>We subtracted 16 from every inmate age to reduce their magnitude.

<sup>c</sup>Non-career criminal—0, career criminal—1.

<sup>d</sup>Non-violent offense—0, violent offense—1.

<sup>e</sup>Minor juvenile record—0, major juvenile record—1.

<sup>f</sup>No prison work—0, prison work—1.

<sup>g</sup>Number of treatment programs participated in divided by months in prison.

<sup>h</sup>Not missing information—0, missing information—1.

## Results

We present the results of the regression analysis for each state below. Table 22 gives the coefficients of the prediction equation in each state. Along with each coefficient we present the t-value corresponding to that coefficient. The notes a and b refer to two-tailed t-test significance levels. The values of  $R^2$  show the proportion of the variance in the transformed dependent variable explained by the equations.

This set of independent variables limited our ability to predict the (square root of the) rate of weighted infraction scores. Although each regression equation is

5 percent other; and Texas—43 percent black, 38 percent white, 19 percent Mexican. Sources: California Department of Corrections Program Planning Report for 1978-79 fiscal year, Vol. II—Program Analysis and Recommendations, April 1978; Michigan Department of Corrections 1977-78 Dimensions; Texas Department of Corrections 1977 Annual Statistical Report.

Table 22

RESULTS OF REGRESSION ANALYSES ON THE SQUARE ROOT  
OF WEIGHTED INFRACTION RATES, BY STATE

Variable	California (N = 337)		Michigan (N=363)		Texas (N = 583)	
Constant	.803	7.230 <sup>a</sup>	.999	7.647 <sup>a</sup>	.800	11.896 <sup>a</sup>
Social						
Age	-.023	-4.608 <sup>a</sup>	-.039	-8.179 <sup>a</sup>	-.033	-10.359 <sup>a</sup>
Black	-.108	-2.686 <sup>a</sup>	.063	1.531	.077	3.007 <sup>a</sup>
Mexican-American	-.017	-.339	—	—	.049	1.185
Criminal						
Career criminal	.062	1.175	.040	.852	.043	1.229
No. of prior prisons	.006	.161	-.016	-.819	.022	1.503
No. of serious convictions	-.009	-.750	-.019	-1.244	-.020	-1.689 <sup>b</sup>
Crime type	.039	.995	-.125	-3.227 <sup>a</sup>	.002	.007
Age at 1st arrest	-.007	-1.423	-.005	-.798	-.001	-.342
Juvenile record	.019	.432	-.007	-1.154	-.007	-.245
In Prison						
Prison Work	-.073	-1.935 <sup>b</sup>	-.056	-1.449	-.175	-6.904 <sup>a</sup>
Treatment rate	-.332	-2.682 <sup>a</sup>	-.070	-.691	-.250	-4.322 <sup>a</sup>
Months in prison	-.001	-.491	.002	1.575	.001	1.162
Missing prison work	—	—	.127	1.939 <sup>b</sup>	—	—
Estimated Standard						
Deviation of regression	.353		.421		.341	
R <sup>2</sup>	.189		.347		.348	
F	6.279 <sup>a</sup>		15.524 <sup>a</sup>		25.378 <sup>a</sup>	
Degrees of freedom	(12,324)		(12,350)		(12,570)	

<sup>a</sup>Significant at the .01 level.

<sup>b</sup>Significant at the .10 level.

statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ), we can explain only 19 percent, 35 percent, and 35 percent of the variance in California, Michigan, and Texas, respectively.<sup>19</sup>

However, aside from the issue of prediction, the results from the regression equations allow us to examine the simultaneous relationships between a number of inmate factors and prison infractions. By inspecting the size and sign of the individual coefficients and their associated t-values, we can determine which inmate factors are associated with infraction rates. We describe these relationships first by state; then we combine the findings across states and make reference to prior research.

From the t-values in California, we find that inmate age is most strongly (negatively) related to infractions. This is a most consistent finding of prior research. We also find statistically significant inverse relationships for inmate race, prison work status, and treatment participation rates. Whites (the reference group) have significantly more infractions than blacks (although not substantially more than Mexican-Americans). Further, all other things equal, inmates without prison jobs and with

<sup>19</sup>When using dependent variables that are "counts" (like infraction scores), there is an upper bound to the amount of variance that is theoretically possible to explain. See D. Cox and P. Lewis, *The Statistical Analysis of Series of Events*, Methuen, London, 1966, for details in the case of Poisson data.

less exposure to treatment programs tend to have significantly higher infraction rates than their counterparts. The “idle” inmate represents the extreme case for these latter variables.

In Michigan also, inmate age is most strongly (negatively) related to infractions. Further, only one of the four criminal history variables had a statistically significant ( $p < .01$ ) coefficient in the regression model: Criminals currently convicted of a non-violent offense had higher infraction rates than those convicted of a violent offense. Contrary to the results in California, inmate race was not significantly associated with infractions. Also, neither the degree to which the inmate had participated in treatment programs nor the inmate’s prison work status were statistically associated with infractions.

In Texas, as in Michigan and California, there was a powerful (negative) relationship between inmate age and infraction rates. As was the case in California, race was statistically significant in Texas, but in the opposite direction: Black inmates in Texas have a higher infraction rate than whites. And, as in Michigan, only one criminal history variable had a significant t-value ( $p < .10$ ). However, it was the number of prior serious convictions, not crime type, that was negatively related to infractions. Finally, as in California, Texas inmates with greater treatment program participation and prison work assignments had lower rates of infractions ( $p < .01$ ) than their counterparts.

Here we present a composite sketch of a high-rate infractor for each state, based on the regression models for the square root of the rate of weighted infraction scores.

- *California*: A young white inmate who has had limited exposure to treatment programs, and who currently has no prison work assignment.
- *Michigan*: A young inmate serving a prison sentence for a non-violent crime.
- *Texas*: A young black inmate with few serious convictions, who has had limited exposure to treatment programs and who currently has no prison work assignment.

We found rather strong associations between being idle and having infractions. However, we can make no causal inferences since we are unable to determine whether idle inmates commit more infractions, or inmates who commit more infractions become idle. We suspect that both situations are true.

It is important to note that our composite career criminality measure was not statistically related to the infraction rate in any of the three states. This is not particularly surprising since several component measures failed to show statistical significance. (Only in Texas did a component measure, the number of serious convictions, have a statistically significant t-value.)

Four of the independent variables examined in this section were significantly related to the dependent variable in at least two of the three states examined; inmate age in all three states and inmate race, prison work status, and treatment participation rate in California and Texas. Here, we discuss these findings in more general terms and present visual displays of their relationship with infractions.<sup>20</sup>

Of the independent variables examined in this study, only inmate age was

<sup>20</sup>In the figures that follow we display relationships with the dependent variable by using the coefficients and mean values of the independent variables from each of the regression equations. When

related to the transformed infraction measure in all three states: As inmate age increased, the level of prison infractions decreased. This powerful negative relationship with poor prison behavior confirms prior research. Figure 12 graphically depicts this relationship for each state.<sup>21</sup>

As previously noted, we derived an infraction value for each inmate age in the three states by using the mean values and coefficients of all other independent variables in the equation.<sup>22</sup> In Fig. 12 we see that although the infraction values in Texas are closer to those in California than Michigan for most inmate ages, the slopes of the lines in Texas and Michigan are quite similar, i.e., the age coefficients are  $-.039$  and  $-.033$ , respectively. Michigan inmates have higher infraction values than Texas inmates of the same age, and higher values than California inmates up to age 35. Because the slope of the California line is less steep (the age coefficient is  $-.023$ ), it finally intersects the Michigan line, at which point California inmates 35 years old and older have higher levels of negative prison behavior, all other things being equal.

Our findings on inmate race were consistent with earlier research; the data reveal mixed results. In Texas, black inmates had significantly higher scores than whites; but the reverse is true in California. The sign of the race coefficient in Michigan, although not significant, parallels that of Texas. The bar graph in Fig. 13 depicts these relationships. Once again, we derive the infraction values using each state's regression equation.

One possible explanation for these inconsistent results may be the different racial compositions in the three prison systems. In Texas and Michigan, black inmates constitute the largest racial group in the state prison populations; in California, white inmates are most prevalent.

The proportion of racial groups in prison is a factor worthy of further investigation in research on negative prison behavior. We find some support for this notion already in the literature. One study of inmate behavior compared prisons where less than half of the inmates were nonwhite with prisons where more than half were nonwhite. The researchers found higher average levels of aggressive transgressions and were able to explain 15 percent more of the variation in high nonwhite facilities as compared to the low nonwhite facilities.<sup>23</sup>

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we examine the relationship between inmate age and infractions, for example, we literally assume "all other things being equal." We solve the regression equations in each state (and thus obtain an infraction value) for each inmate age by holding constant (at the mean) values for all other independent variables in the models. This technique offers an advantage over displaying bivariate relationships as if the effects of all other variables were removed. Such displays can be misleading when variables not examined markedly affect the relationship at hand. In contrast, we show the effect of one variable while controlling for the effects of all other variables.

<sup>21</sup>As noted in Fig. 12, inmates over 35 years of age were treated as if they were 36 years old. We collapsed into one age group the tail end of the age distribution and used this recoded variable in our three regression equations. Inspection of earlier plots of age and infractions revealed that values on the dependent variable declined with an increase in age up to the mid-30s, at which point the values varied slightly around this plateau. By grouping together inmates over 35 years old we obtained dramatic increases in the age coefficients in California, Michigan, and Texas; up by 44 percent, 77 percent, and 136 percent, respectively. This improved all three regression models, adding 1 percent, 6 percent, and 7 percent to the variation explained in California, Michigan, and Texas, respectively.

<sup>22</sup>Figure 12 and those that follow are based on solutions to regression equations for the square root of the infraction rate. We display these values along the left vertical axis and the equivalent infraction rates along the right side. Note that an inmate's untransformed weighted infraction score is the product of his infraction rate and the number of months incarcerated.

<sup>23</sup>See Ellis et al. (1974).

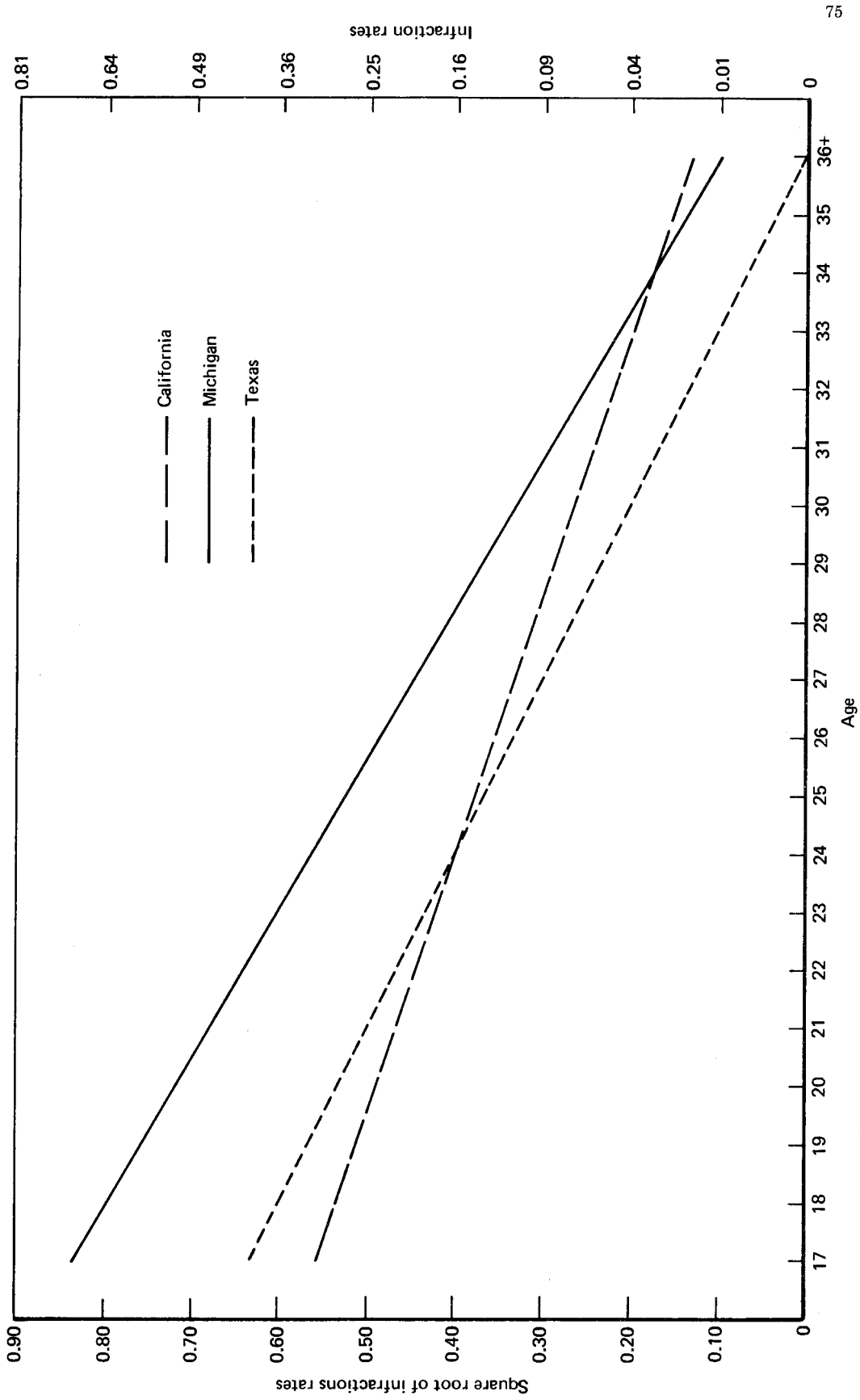


Fig. 12—Decreasing infraction scores with increasing inmate age

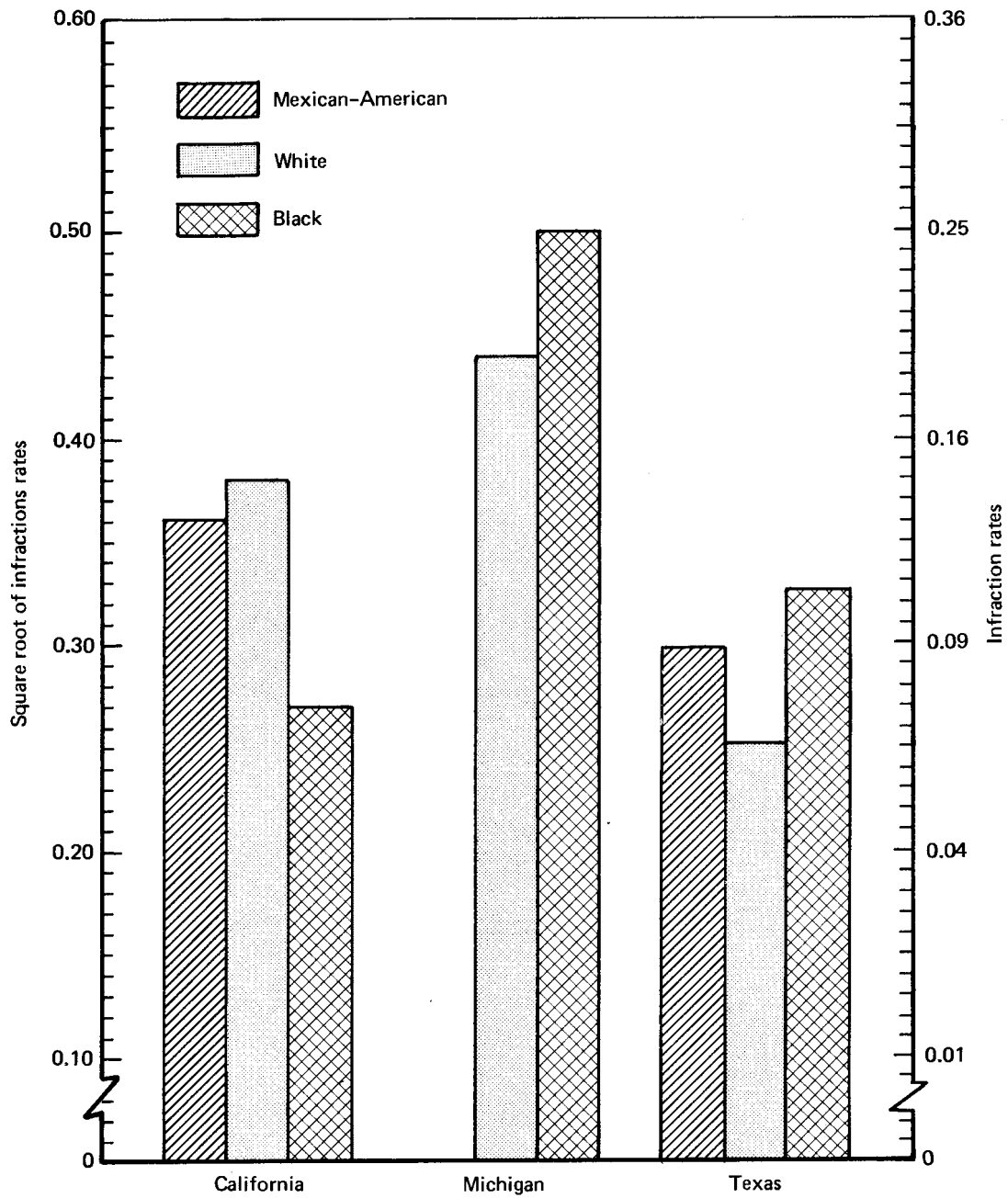


Fig. 13—Differences in infraction scores across inmate racial groups

We find similar results despite the differing foci, i.e., state as opposed to institutional differences. Michigan (high black) has a higher average infraction rate than California (low black), although this does not hold true for Texas. Further, the difference in the percent of variation explained for both Michigan and Texas is 16 percent over that in California.

Turning our attention to criminal history variables, none of the six measures analyzed had a consistently significant association with infractions across state samples. In fact, none were significant in California, only one was significant in Michigan (crime type), and only one in Texas (number of serious convictions). And, by inspecting the direction of the relationships (i.e., the signs of the coefficients) we find that only three were consistent across states: career criminal—positive; number of serious convictions—negative; and age at first arrest—negative. On the basis of our data we conclude that knowing the criminal characteristics of an inmate, other things being equal, does not appreciably increase our predictive capabilities regarding his negative prison behavior.

Lastly, we examine in-prison variables: prison work assignments, treatment participation rates, and number of months in prison. In California and Texas the prison work status and treatment participation rates are strongly (negatively) related to infractions. The coefficients in Michigan are also negative, although statistically insignificant. In all three states the number of months in prison proved unrelated to the transformed dependent variable.<sup>24</sup>

In Fig. 14 we see that for each state, inmates without a prison work assignment display, on the average, much more negative prison behavior than their working counterparts. Solutions to the regression equations yield significant increases of 24 percent in California and 92 percent in Texas. The pattern in Michigan, an increase of 12 percent, is consistent but not statistically significant.

We obtain similar results for treatment participation rates. The negative relationship with infractions is significant in both California and Texas; in Michigan it is consistent but not statistically significant. Once again, based on solutions to the regression equations, we see in Fig. 15 that the infractions level decreases most rapidly with an increase in the treatment participation rates in California. Across the states, we found fewer disciplinary problems among inmates with high levels of treatment program participation, all other things being equal.

Given the powerful negative associations that prison work status and treatment participation have on the level of negative prison behavior, what can we say about their combined effect on infractions? In Fig. 16 we plot for each state the regression of treatment participation rates on infractions for inmates with prison work assignments and for those without.

Comparing the relative magnitudes of the prison work coefficients, we find that work status in Texas has the largest impact on the rate of infractions for inmates with similar treatment participation rates, followed by California and then Michi-

<sup>24</sup>This is not to say that an inmate's length of incarceration is not related to his institutional behavior. Preliminary regression models using the weighted infraction score and the infraction rate revealed that "months in prison" is positively related to the former and negatively related to the latter. These relationships make intuitive sense: Inmates in prison for longer periods of time tend to have, on the average, higher weighted infraction scores, and inmates tend to receive disciplinary reports earlier rather than later in their sentence. However, in our final model in which we transform the dependent variable to best fit the data, "months in prison" is an insignificant predictor variable.

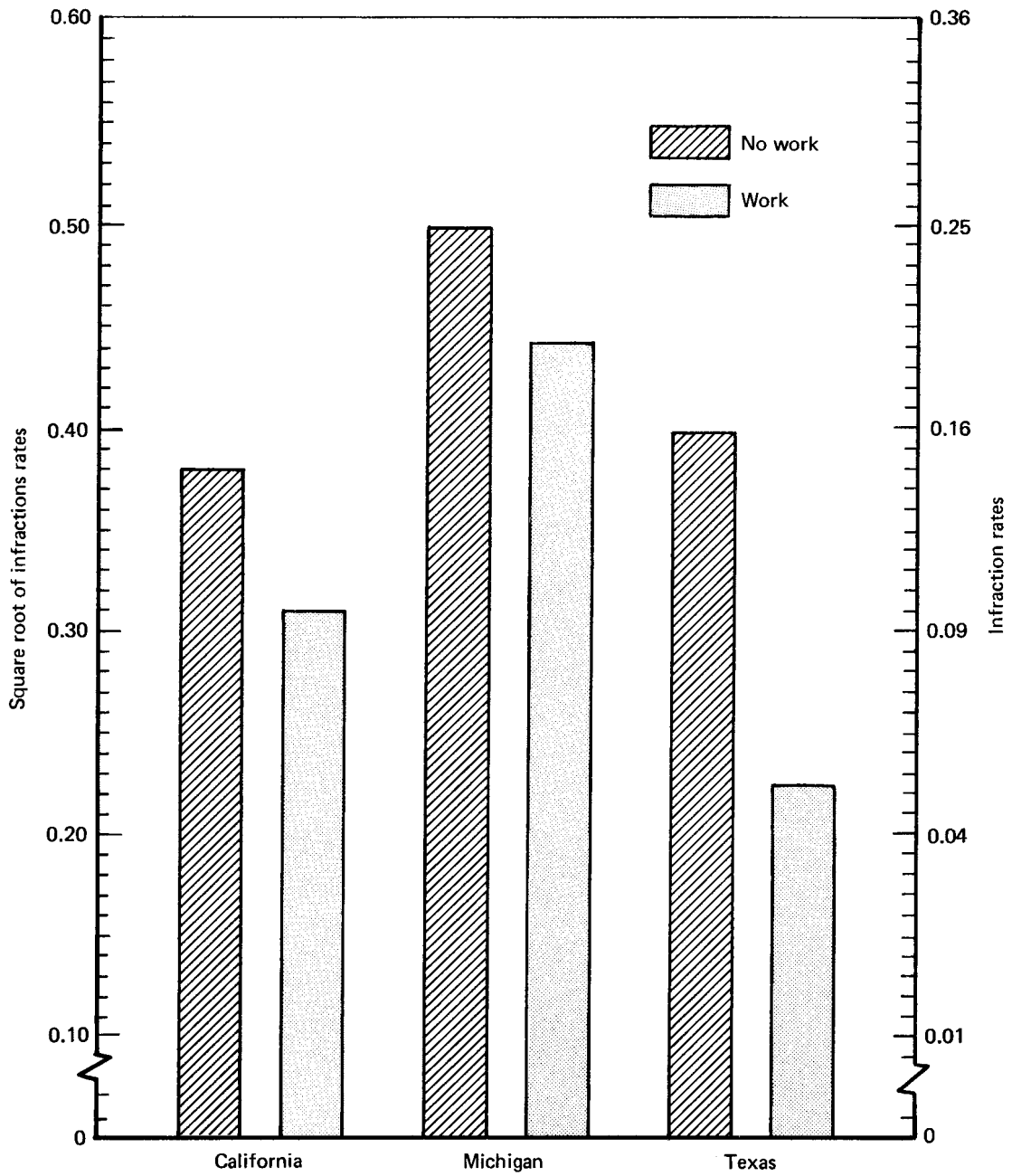


Fig. 14—Differences in infraction scores, by prison work status



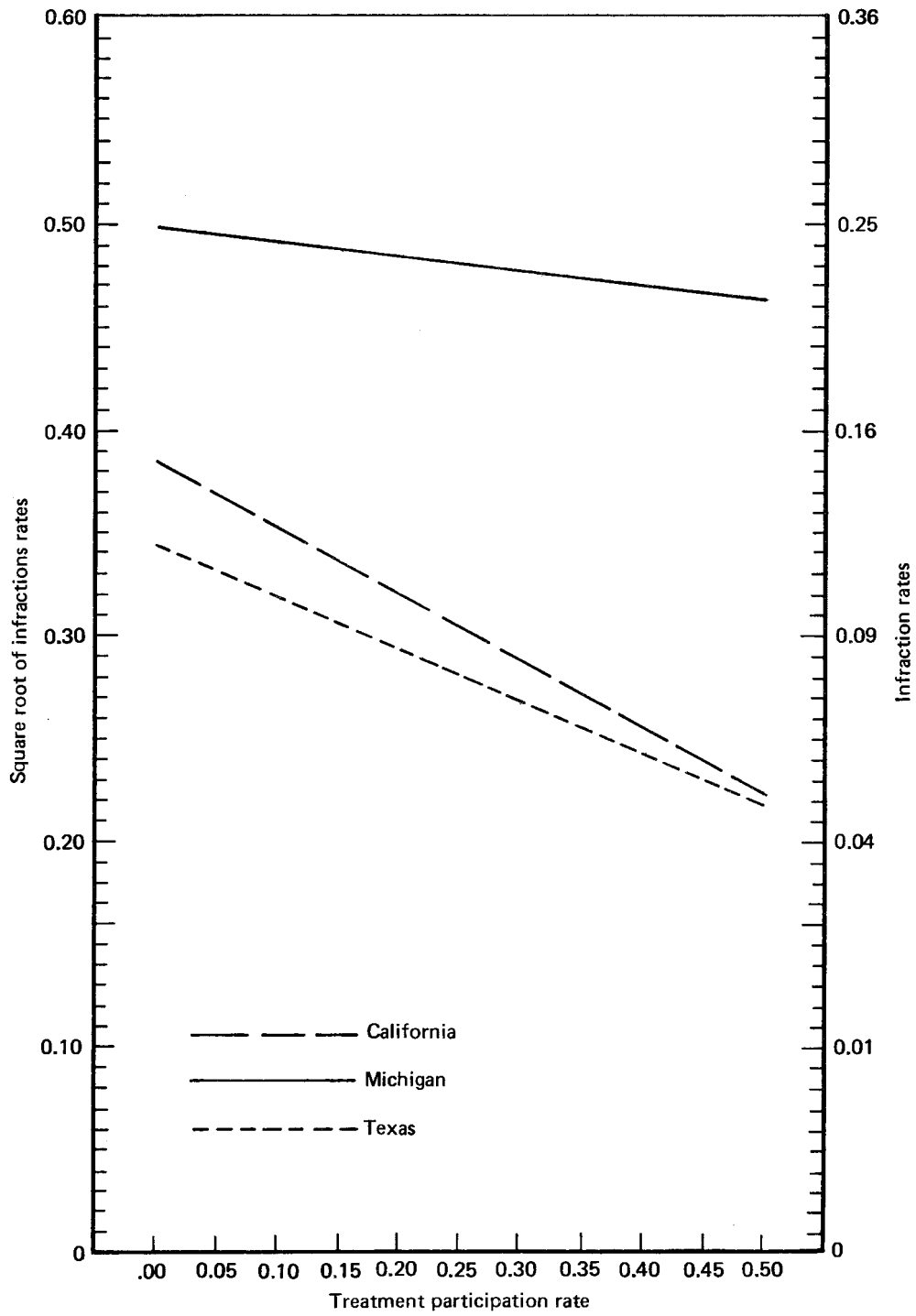


Fig. 15—Decreasing infraction scores with increasing treatment participation

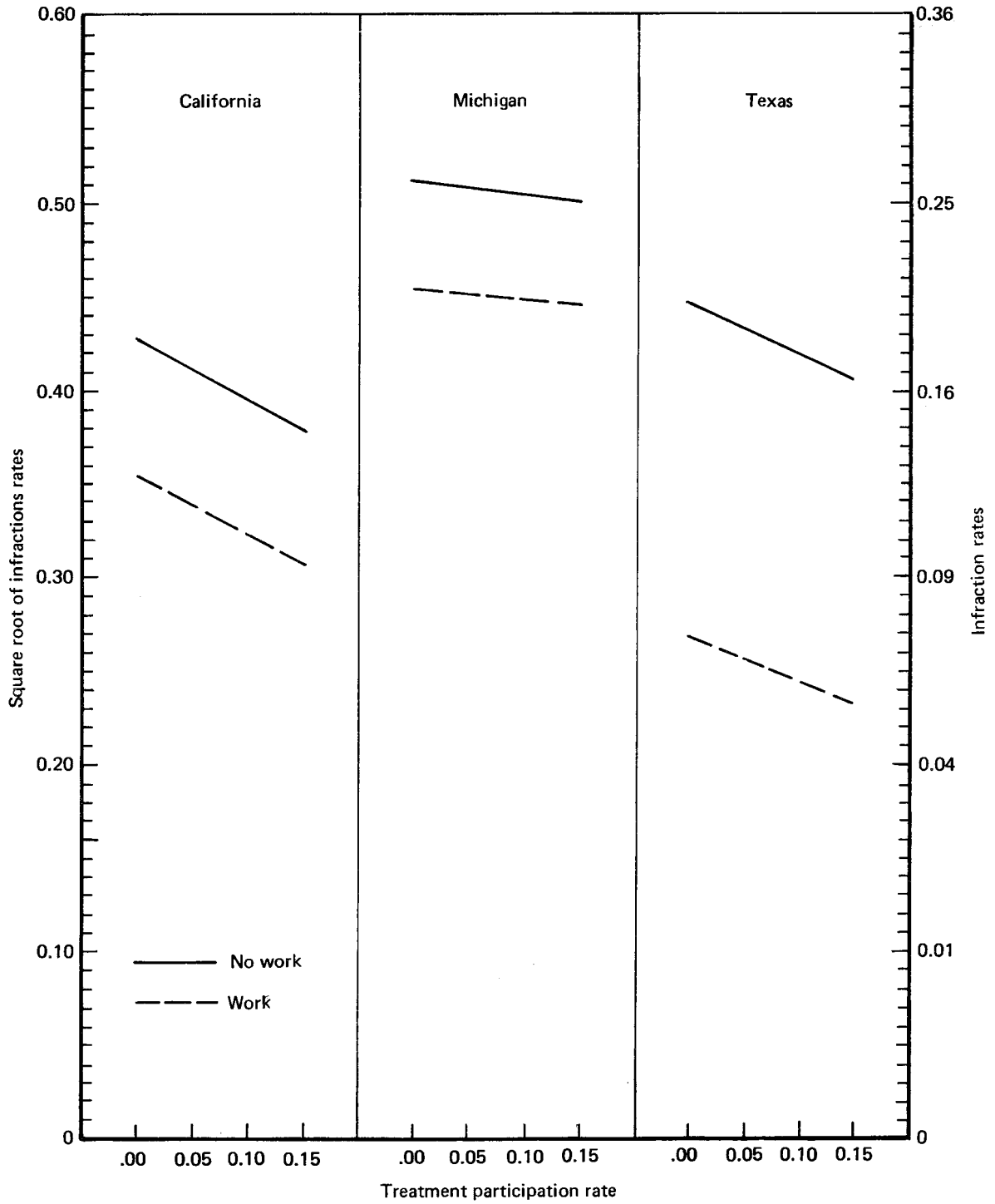


Fig. 16—Decreasing infraction scores with increasing treatment participation, by prison work status

gan. From these figures we surmise that larger decreases in infractions are obtained by a change in prison work status than by merely increasing treatment participation rates. However, best results are achieved by providing both treatment participation and prison work assignments.

Note, again, that we make no causal inference here. It must be remembered that we are unable to determine from our data whether idle inmates commit more violations than active inmates or whether inmates who commit more violations become idle, i.e., lose their jobs or are removed from a treatment program as punishment for their rule violations. Unravelling the causality in these relationships is of paramount importance. To the degree that idleness leads to rule violations, administrators will have to act decisively and creatively in the face of prison overcrowding, budget trimming, and the increasing proportion of idle inmates in prisons.

## CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

We conducted this investigation of prison behavior to determine whether career criminals exhibit institutional behavior distinctly different from that of other inmates. We did not, however, limit our analysis to this one measure of criminality (career vs. non-career criminals). Instead we included several measures of criminality, as well as inmate age, race, and in-prison variables.

We believe that a correctional response to career criminals based on their institutional behavior is unwarranted. We found a weak positive association between career criminal status and institutional infraction rates in all three states, but we obtain more consistent and statistically stronger associations between inmate behavior and other measures, e.g., age, race, and prison activities. It would be self-defeating for prison officials to shape policy toward certain inmates based on external concerns (pressure for a systemwide response to the career criminal) instead of internal concerns (institutional behavior).

In this report we define career criminals by particular threshold criteria, attempting to approximate the type of offender currently subjected to prosecution by LEAA's Career Criminal Program. We did not actually track inmates who had been prosecuted by such units. However, our conclusions are quite similar to those of a recent study which did examine the correctional experience of inmates formally prosecuted as career criminals.<sup>25</sup> The study uncovered no clear-cut differences between the institutional behavior of inmates prosecuted as career criminals and that of a contemporary control group.

The number of career criminals who are prosecuted and incarcerated nationwide continues to increase as the Career Criminal Program gains widespread support. And now, with the claim that criminal careers peak at early adulthood, there is an increasing tendency to prosecute and incarcerate career criminals earlier rather than later in their careers. These trends lead to two important policy questions: What will be the impact on correctional management of (1) an influx of career criminals, and (2) incarcerating career criminals at an earlier age?

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<sup>25</sup>Ellen Chayet, *The Institutional Experience of Major Violators in Massachusetts*, Massachusetts Department of Corrections, April 1979.

First, many prison officials we interviewed voiced concerns that handling career criminals as a class might undesirably increase the influence of those inmates in prison and artificially unify them vis-à-vis other inmates and prison officials. Any correctional policy designed to deny career criminals opportunities available to other inmates, e.g., improving their custody/security ratings, or entering treatment programs, would cause them to lose their incentive for good institutional behavior. An influx of career criminals might expand their power base substantially, thus intensifying a potentially hostile and violent atmosphere.

And second, while targeting career criminals at an earlier age may aid crime reduction efforts, incarcerating greater numbers of younger habitual felons undoubtedly will escalate prison violence. Our data reveal that inmate age is most strongly (negatively) related to infractions in all three states. Changing the inmate composition by increasing the proportion of young prisoners with serious (especially juvenile) criminal records holds potentially explosive consequences for our nation's prisons. Corrections officials would be wise to recognize these possibilities and devise strategies to prevent or minimize such outcomes.

## VIII. CONCLUSIONS

When this study was conceived, some observers believed that hardened career criminals, familiar with the prison environment, would have learned to "do their own time." The result might mean little involvement in prison treatment programs. Corrections staff might also fail to encourage career criminals to enter treatment programs because of their history of failures. If this situation were true, persons convicted by Career Criminal Prosecution Units would be serving long prison terms, with little exposure to rehabilitation. The future for such persons would be dim, with a predictable return to crime. Policymakers thought this situation unsatisfactory. This research was undertaken to examine whether career criminals were being left out of programs, and what types of programs they needed.

Basically, we found little difference between career criminals and the rest of the prison population for most of the measures studied. They are quite similar to the general prison population in their program participation, treatment needs, and prison infractions. On the other hand, we feel the research has a valuable contribution to make to federal policy. We hope it will serve to caution policymakers not to automatically expand the career criminal concept to other sectors of the criminal justice system. We feel this concept has little applicability to correctional management concerns. Interviews with correctional personnel during the course of this study led us to believe they agree with our assessment. A concept which is excellent for organizing resources and policies in policing and prosecution may be inappropriate for corrections.

Why doesn't the career criminal concept "work" for corrections? A number of reasons are discussed throughout this report. First, almost every inmate in prison today is in some sense a "career criminal," because in most states persons are sent to prison only as a last resort. They have already proceeded through the less serious dispositions—diversion, probation, jail. Most have been through such dispositions several times. Thus, as was shown in this research, career criminals, as currently defined, take in too large a subpopulation, and as a result they possess few distinguishing characteristics.

Another objection is that similar offenders from different jurisdictions would not be similarly handled by corrections. Their treatment would be dictated by whether their local jurisdiction did or did not have a special prosecution unit. Thus, if it is to apply class-handling of career criminals fairly, a corrections system would be compelled to engage in classification efforts similar to those performed by prosecution. Without these efforts at fair application, a correctional career criminal program might be subject to legal challenges from inmates who feel they are being denied equal access to prison treatment programs.

Practical impediments at the moment also include the general unfamiliarity of corrections officials with the police and prosecutorial career criminal efforts, and inadequate procedures for exchanging information between corrections and other agencies. If career criminals were handled as a class, the effect might be to undesirably increase their influence and esteem with the prison population. If denied opportunities, e.g., for improving their housing and supervision situation, then

career criminals as a class would lose their incentive for good institutional behavior and a serious, violence-prone disciplinary problem could be created.

Most important, however, is the reluctance of corrections systems to downgrade the importance of institutional behavior relative to criminal record in managing the prison inmate. Past criminal record does not, and, according to the opinions of corrections officials, *should not*, play a dominant role in correctional decisionmaking.

Other changes have been mentioned in connection with the idea of bringing the career criminal concept to corrections—for instance, accelerating the reception and diagnostic processes for such persons, or placing them in special facilities. Corrections personnel would strenuously resist such changes. Strong empirical evidence would have to prove that there was a need to handle career criminals selectively. This research found no such evidence.

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