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MEASURING PAROLE VIOLATION

HARRY WILLBACH¹

When the criminologists of the future will record the history of the development of parole it is likely that the present controversy as to whether parole is a success or failure will be spoken of as being second only to the more ancient and therefore more venerable controversy as to which is the mightier—the pen or the sword. These students will probably indicate extreme impatience at the lengthy polemics resulting from attempts to bolster a position and make out a complete case without first reaching agreement on the meaning of terms or setting up standards to measure the value and efficiency of parole.

Parole is undoubtedly a failure and an utter and complete failure if it is to be assumed that the whole system may be justifiably condemned because of the inability or the unwillingness of a number of parolees to comply with the rules, conditions and restrictions imposed upon them by the paroling authority.

Parole is a signal failure if the concept of success is predicated on the complete and permanent non-violation of laws.

Parole has undoubtedly proven itself inadequate if it is to be assumed that a person released from a penal institution emerges therefrom as a model citizen impressed with the nobility of righteousness and possessed with a consuming desire to make a contribution to the forward march of society.

But these conditions or premises are idealistic if not fantastic. Necessarily they fall of their own weight because they imply higher standards and more crucial tests for parolees than for the general so-called law-abiding citizen who has not been caught in the meshes of the law.

On the other hand it is equally erroneous for a parole authority to proclaim or even to consider itself efficient or successful because not more than a certain percentage of its charges violated their parole. If this figure does not remain constant from one period to another, the parole authority will be forced to continually change the percentage on which it bases its claims to success. The implication in this is that any experience or result is a success. We are

¹ New York State Division of Parole.

then treated to the misleading proposition that everything is a success but that success varies in degrees and is always greater or less than the immediately preceding period. But logically and scientifically the term less success at some point becomes synonymous with failure.

It is therefore imperative that before laying claims to either the success or the failure of an institution or of a system there should be developed or constructed a standard or normal expectancy. This normal expectancy would be the average, and deviations from this average that fall outside a statistically determined range could then be referred to as being better or worse than the average or as success and failure.

While it is important to know that a parole system has operated successfully or unsuccessfully during a period under observation, these determinations are not ends in themselves but have value only if detailed analyses are made in order to ascertain the reasons for variations from the standard.

A further advantage of constructing standards or norms of expectancy will be the possibility of making comparisons between different units of the parole authority or even between different parole officers. These comparisons will doubtlessly suggest the advisability of analyses that may reveal the methods and the techniques that have consistently been observed wherever the highest degrees of success were found. These methods and techniques can then be applied more generally and the standard of normal expectancy will be raised. Conversely, the further analysis of the divisions or sectors where the poorest results have been experienced will probably result in discarding methods and procedures which appear to predominate.

Parole supervision has hitherto been carried on in blind fashion and has utilized the antiquated, costly and time consuming trial and error method. It has adopted procedures and techniques because of the reputation of the sponsor or of the school of thought to which they belonged. By the utilization of standards of normal expectancy, scientific evaluation will replace the hit and miss method and facilities will be introduced to continually compare practices, thus ultimately yielding a body of knowledge which will more likely have more satisfactory results.

This paper is exploratory in an effort to establish standards for comparison in the same parole jurisdiction. It is drawn on data of

the New York State Division of Parole and can therefore be applied only to results obtained by that parole set-up.

An analysis was made of all persons released from penal institutions during the calendar year of 1932, who were placed under parole supervision. This group was held under observation until July 1, 1935. Thus on the valid assumption that the average date of release for the entire group of 2880 parolees was the mid-point of the calendar year of their release, or July 1, 1932, the period of observation was three years. Because of this limitation in time most of the tabulations shown in this paper have been made to terminate at the end of three years.

Parole violation, or the failure of a prisoner under parole supervision to abide by the conditions of his release and the rules imposed by the parole authority, must be interpreted and defined in connection with the powers of the parole authority and the measures, procedures and techniques which are employed. It is well known that parole has different meanings and imposes different obligations upon released prisoners in different jurisdictions. Until these differences and others that result either from statutory differences or from procedural method have been eliminated, studies made of the operation of parole and of the results of parole cannot be used for purposes of comparing different set-ups but must be used only for the jurisdiction on whose data they are based, or to point the way to approaches that can advantageously be followed by other jurisdictions in making analyses of their work and their problems.

In order to comprehend the full significance of parole violation a brief summary is given of the powers and methods of the New York Division of Parole.

The parole set-up in existence at present in New York was established on July 1, 1930. It was created because of the conviction that the responsibility for parole rested with the state. Its cardinal principle is that supervision of parolees must rest with the body that is vested with the power of determining what prisoners should be released on parole and when and under what conditions such release is to be granted. It places supervision of parolees in the hands of state employees instead of delegating this duty to religious, social or other private cooperating groups.

The jurisdiction of the Division of Parole extends almost without exception, to all persons released from the state prisons and the Elmira reformatory. The reformatory receives the younger and

more hopeful offenders who have never before been convicted of felonies. Their sentences contain no statement of minimum terms and carry the maximum terms provided by statute for the crimes of which they were convicted. The determination of the time of release of these persons is placed by statute in the discretion of the Board of Parole and is not restricted in any manner as to conditions or date, save the provision that the inmate may not be detained beyond the date of expiration of the maximum term.

The state prisons are for felons who are given either indeterminate sentences or definite terms by the committing magistrate. Definite sentence prisoners are prisoners who had previously been convicted of felonies. The date of their release is fixed by the term imposed and is modified by the approval of the governor of good time allowances recommended by prison boards for good conduct and diligent performance of duties assigned. Upon their release they are placed under parole supervision and remain under the control of the Board of Parole, and are subject to its rules and orders for the periods for which their terms were reduced by allowance of good time.

Indeterminate sentence prisoners are persons never before convicted of felonies. They are received in the prisons with stated minimum and maximum terms. They may be released, at the discretion of the Board of Parole, at any date after the expiration of their minimum terms less the good time allowances granted them. The Board of Parole has the right however to withhold release for any period up to the termination of the full maximum sentence. These prisoners are, upon their release, placed under parole supervision and remain under the control of the Board of Parole until the expiration of their full maximum terms.

During the period for which the individual is under the jurisdiction of the Division of Parole he is required to conform with a number of conditions specified at the time of his release. These conditions apply to all paroled prisoners and relate to his general conduct while on parole. Failure to comply with any of the conditions so set forth or with any order of the parole officer may result in the person being declared a parole violator and subject to reimprisonment.

In order to make sure that the parolee abides by the conditions of his parole, and in addition for the purpose of assisting him in his problems, his difficulties and his efforts to readjust himself, he is placed under the supervision of a parole officer. This individual is

required to visit the parolee both at his home and his place of employment at intervals determined by the needs of the individual case. In addition to these contacts, arrangements are often made for the parolee to report at the office of the parole officer.

These measures and procedures provide for frequent contacts with the parolee and with members of his household. This condition, and the fact that jurisdiction is maintained over the parolee until the date his full sentence expires, provide careful and continuing supervision of a parolee. The careful supervision of the parolee for the entire unexpired part of his term probably results in more numerous recordings of parole violations than where the supervision is lax or of short duration.

The annual reports of the New York State Division of Parole contain various tables concerning parolees who were declared delinquent (violated their parole) during the year covered by the report. These tables, however, relate to all parolees carried during the year who violated their parole regardless of when they were released from the institutions.

A consolidation of one of these tables for the four-year period extending from January 1, 1931 to December 31, 1934, is given below.

TABLE I

ACTUAL PERIOD OF COMPLETED PAROLE FOR PERSONS WHO VIOLATED PAROLE DURING FOUR YEARS FROM JAN. 1, 1931 TO DEC. 31, 1934 (COMPLETED PAROLE REPRESENTS THE PERIOD OF TIME ELAPSED FROM DATE OF PAROLE TO DATE OF VIOLATION)

Period of Completed Parole	Total		Indeterminate Sentence Parolees		Elmira Reformatory Parolees		Definite Sentence Parolees	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Less than 3 months.....	1173	31.1	514	30.3	279	20.3	380	54.6
3 mos., but less than 6 mos.	640	17.0	279	16.5	249	18.1	112	16.1
6 mos., but less than 9 mos.	466	12.4	229	13.5	179	13.0	58	8.3
9 mos., but less than 1 year	368	9.7	156	9.2	171	12.4	41	5.9
1 yr., but less than 1½ yrs.	526	14.0	241	14.2	234	17.0	51	7.3
1½ yrs., but less than 2 yrs.	327	8.7	151	8.9	150	10.9	26	3.7
2 yrs., but less than 2½ yrs.	170	4.5	81	4.8	70	5.1	19	2.7
2½ yrs., but less than 3 yrs.	97	2.6	44	2.6	43	3.1	10	1.4
Total less than 3 years..	3767	100.0	1695	100.0	1375	100.0	697	100.0

It will be observed from this table that where parole violation was established during the four-year period, the largest number of such instances occurred during the first year of parole. During each succeeding year the number of parole violators was smaller than for the preceding year. This observation is not restricted

solely to intervals of a year. If the first year is broken down into four periods of three months each there is evident the same characteristic of decreasing numbers of parole violations as the length of time is increased.

In order to provide even periods of time and to test more adequately the phenomenon of decreasing parole violations as the length of completed parole increases, the parole violations were tabulated by six month intervals of the period of parole completed before the parolees were declared delinquent. The distribution for each of the three types of parolees—indeterminate sentence, Elmira and definite sentence—indicates continually decreasing percentages of parole violations as the period of completed parole was increased.

The preponderance of declarations of delinquency in the shorter periods of completed parole while evident for all types of parolees, is much more striking as regards definite sentence parolees than for the other types. While 46.8 per cent of the indeterminate sentence parolees were declared delinquent before completing three years of parole violated their parole within six months of their release from prison and 38.4 per cent of the Elmira parolees were declared delinquent during the same period, the corresponding percentage of definite sentence parolees who violated their parole within six months of their release was 70.7.

Further examination of the preceding table shows that there is no very marked difference among the parole violators of the three groups as regards the percentages where delinquency was established during the interval of from three to six months following release from the institutions. It is clearly indicated that of the parolees who violated their parole within three years from the date of their release, such action was taken more frequently within the first three months than during any other interval of time shown. The disparity between the definite sentence parolees and the others is most apparent as more than half of the 697 parole violations of this type of parolee occurred before three months of parole had been completed.

This table yields the inescapable conclusion that there is a tendency for parole violations to occur more frequently within the shorter periods following the date of release.

From the point of view of the administration of parole supervision this conclusion suggests the importance of utilizing more stringent and more frequent, and yet more sympathetic contacts of the parole officers with the parolee in the early stages of parole.

The compilation of the data for parolees who were declared delinquent during the four years of 1931-1934 suggests further the possibility of beginning to taper off in stringency of supervision somewhere between six and nine months from the date of release. Finally, on the basis of the comparatively small percentages of delinquencies established after two years of parole supervision, it would appear that at the end of such period marked changes could safely be made in the nature of the supervision exercised.

Thus far the discussion has centered about the period of completed parole of all persons who violated their parole during the four year period extending from 1931 to 1934 regardless of the actual dates on which they were released from the institutions.

By holding under continued observation a constant group composed of all persons released to parole supervision during the calendar year of 1932 the analysis of parole delinquency or parole violation can be extended. It will then permit of interpretations unrestricted by the reservations that are necessarily involved in parole violation data based on groups the composition of which is unknown.

It has been shown that for all persons maintained under jurisdiction for any part of the period extending from January 1, 1931 to December 31, 1934, who violated their parole during that period, the numbers decreased as the period of completed parole increased. This group, contained however, a number of parolees who had been released to parole supervision at dates preceding 1931. In order to test the validity of the conclusions based on that tabulation, a similar analysis was made of the parolees released to supervision during 1932 who were declared parole violators prior to July 1,

TABLE II

DELINQUENT PAROLEES WHO WERE RELEASED TO PAROLE SUPERVISION DURING 1932—
ACTUAL PERIOD OF COMPLETED PAROLE PRIOR TO DATE OF VIOLATION

Period of Completed Parole	Total		Indeterminate Sentence Parolees		Elmira Reformatory Parolees		Definite Sentence Parolees	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Less than 3 months.....	246	29.3	98	27.3	71	21.5	77	51.6
3 mos., but less than 6 mos.	137	16.3	51	14.2	58	17.5	28	18.8
6 mos., but less than 9 mos.	107	12.7	55	15.3	41	12.3	11	7.4
9 mos., but less than 1 year	94	11.2	41	11.4	41	12.3	12	8.1
1 yr., but less than 1½ yrs.	96	11.4	43	12.0	43	13.0	10	6.7
1½ yrs., but less than 2 yrs.	77	9.2	34	9.5	38	11.4	5	3.4
2 yrs., but less than 2½ yrs.	58	6.9	29	8.1	27	8.1	2	1.3
2½ yrs., but less than 3 yrs.	25	3.0	8	2.2	13	3.9	4	2.7
Total less than 3 years..	840	100.0	359	100.0	332	100.0	149	100.0

1935. This table, based on a definite and constant group, shows marked similarity with the results obtained in the combined tabulation of parole violations of the four years. It therefore confirms the finding as to the distribution of parole violators in so far as their periods of completed parole are concerned.

Persons released to parole supervision remain under the jurisdiction of the paroling or supervising authority for varying and unequal periods of time. Some of these are for very short intervals while others are for the remainder of the natural lives of the offenders. Between these two extremes there is a continuous series with small gradations of periods of time, each having some frequencies. When tabulated for the persons released to parole supervision during 1932 these show the distribution given in the following table:

TABLE III

EXPECTED PERIOD OF SUPERVISION OF PERSONS RELEASED TO PAROLE SUPERVISION

<i>Expected Period of Parole Supervision</i>	<i>Total</i>		<i>Indeterminate Sentence Parolees</i>		<i>Elmira Reformatory Parolees</i>		<i>Definite Sentence Parolees</i>	
	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
Less than 6 months.....	151	5.2	57	4.3	19	1.7	75	15.9
6 mos., but less than 1 year	329	11.4	113	8.6	61	5.6	155	32.9
1 yr., but less than 1½ yrs.	296	10.3	88	6.7	115	10.5	93	19.7
1½ yrs., but less than 2 yrs.	198	6.9	92	7.0	64	5.8	42	8.9
2 yrs., but less than 2½ yrs.	152	5.3	132	10.1	8	0.7	12	2.6
2½ yrs., but less than 3 yrs.	161	5.6	129	9.8	18	1.6	14	3.0
Over 3 years.....	1593							
Total all periods.....	2880	100.0	1312	100.0	1097	100.0	471	100.0

The above table gives for persons released on parole, the distribution of the expected periods of parole supervision, or the interval from the date of release from the institution to the date of the expiration of the full or maximum term. The periods indicated represent the length of time that the various individuals would be continued under the jurisdiction of the parole authority if they were not removed therefrom by death or parole violation.

Examination of this table in comparison with the preceding table will dispel the possible predetermined inclination to assume that the high percentage of parolees who violated their parole within six months of the date of their release may have been due to a preponderance of parolees with short expected periods of parole supervision. Of the 2,880 parolees under observation only 5.2 per cent had expected periods of parole supervision less than

six months, yet 45.6 per cent of the parolees who violated within three years of their release were declared delinquent within six months.

In order to throw additional light on the relationship of the expected period of parole supervision to parole violation the following table has been prepared:

TABLE IV

PAROLE VIOLATORS BY EXPECTED PERIOD OF PAROLE SUPERVISION FOR PERSONS RELEASED TO PAROLE SUPERVISION DURING 1932.

Expected Period of Parole Supervision	Re-leased	Total Delinquent		Indeterminate Sentence Parolees			Elmira Reformatory Parolees			Definite Sentence Parolees		
		No.	%	Re-leased	Delinquent	%	Re-leased	Delinquent	%	Re-leased	Delinquent	%
Less than 6 months..	151	17	11.3	57	6	10.5	19	3	15.8	75	8	10.7
6 mos., but less than 1 year	329	72	21.9	113	20	17.7	61	13	21.3	155	39	25.2
1 year, but less than 1½ years	296	81	27.4	88	21	23.9	115	32	27.8	93	28	30.1
1½ years, but less than 2 years.....	198	56	28.3	92	22	23.9	64	21	32.8	42	13	31.0
2 years, but less than 2½ years	152	53	34.9	132	35	26.5	8	7	87.5	12	11	91.7
2½ years, but less than 3 years.....	161	63	39.1	129	48	37.2	18	12	66.7	14	3	21.4

It will be noted that this table does not show any time intervals beyond three years from the date of parole although many parolees were released to remain under supervision for longer periods of time. In fact, the total release shown above is 1,287 while all releases to parole supervision during 1932 amounted to 2,880. This procedure was however adopted here and in the succeeding tables as the analysis must necessarily concern itself with periods of time that do not exceed three years, because the releases of 1932 have been under observation only for that length of time.

This table gives the number and per cent of parolees from within each interval of expected period of parole supervision who were declared violators at any time prior to their final discharge by the expiration of their sentences. The regularity of the increase in the percentages as the expected period of parole supervision increases gives positive evidence of the fact that the probability of parole violation increases as the length of the expected period of parole supervision increases.

The reasons for declaration of delinquency or parole violation in New York State, while they may be as numerous as the condi-

tions of parole, can for convenience be grouped into three classes: 1. arrest for another crime, 2. absconding or leaving without advising the parole authority of ones whereabouts, and 3. violation of some other specific order set forth in the parole conditions or imposed by the parole officer. The tabulation below gives for parolees released during 1932, the reasons for parole violation and the expected period of parole supervision.

TABLE V

PAROLE VIOLATORS WHO WERE RELEASED TO PAROLE SUPERVISION DURING 1932—REASONS FOR DECLARATION OF DELINQUENCY AND EXPECTED PERIOD OF PAROLE SUPERVISION

	No. of Parolees Released	Reason for Declaration of Delinquency					
		Arrest		Absconding		Gen. Violation	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Less than 6 months.....	151	3	2.0	12	7.9	2	1.3
6 mos. but less than 1 yr....	329	29	8.8	35	10.6	8	2.4
1 yr. but less than 1½ yrs....	296	36	12.2	36	12.2	9	3.0
1½ yrs. but less than 2 yrs....	198	31	15.7	19	9.6	6	3.0
2 yrs. but less than 2½ yrs....	152	27	17.8	20	13.2	6	3.9
2½ yrs. but less than 3 yrs..	161	39	24.2	18	11.2	6	3.7

The violations for failure to comply with a specific parole condition exclusive of arrest or absconding represents a small group and does not therefore lend itself to valid interpretations. There is suggested however the probability of more complete compliance with these rules when the parole authority exercises its control over short periods than when the expected period of supervision is for longer intervals. It is also possible, however, that parole officers may not be as strict or as ready to take disciplinary action as regards this type of parole transgressor when their period of responsibility is short.

A comparison of the percentages of parole violations established because of arrest, and of those due to absconding, indicates that for parolees whose expected period of supervision was less than one year the ratio who violated their parole by committing acts which resulted in arrest was considerably less than that for the group who took "french leave." For parolees with expected periods of parole supervision of one to two years and two to three years the converse is true. Among these two groups parole violations due to the arrests of the parolees are greater than those established because of absconding.

It should also be observed that the tabulation of parole violators by six month intervals in the expected period of parole supervision indicates a continuously increasing percentage of parolees who be-

came violators because of arrests. It is possible that one of the reasons for this is that parolees with longer expected periods of parole supervision are largely persons who had been given longer terms and therefore, presumably, had committed more serious offenses and perhaps were more inured to crime.

For each parolee released during 1932 who violated his parole, the actual period from the date of parole to the date the violation occurred was known. These periods were added together for all delinquent parolees falling within the same expected period of parole supervision. These sums when divided by the number of parolees from within the group who had been declared parole violators, yielded average periods of completed parole prior to the establishment of parole violation.

TABLE VI

PERIOD OF FULL EXPECTED DURATION OF PAROLE AND ACTUAL AVERAGE PERIOD OF COMPLETED PAROLE FOR DELINQUENT PAROLEES WHO WERE RELEASED DURING 1932

	Total		Indeterminate Sentence Parolees			Elmira Reformatory Parolees			Definite Sentence Parolees			
	No. Delinquent	Per Cent	No. Delinquent	Per Cent	No. Delinquent	Per Cent	No. Delinquent	Per Cent	No. Delinquent	Per Cent		
		Months of Average Parole		Months of Average Parole		Months of Average Parole		Months of Average Parole				
Less than 6 mos...	17	1.7	55.6	6	1.5	50.0	3	2.5	83.3	8	1.5	50.0
6 months but less than 1 year.....	72	3.8	34.3	30	3.0	33.3	13	4.5	50.0	39	2.7	30.0
1 year but less than 1½ years...	81	5.2	34.7	21	5.0	33.3	32	5.6	37.3	28	4.7	31.3
1½ years but less than 2 years....	56	6.1	29.0	22	6.3	29.7	21	6.5	30.9	13	5.2	24.8
2 years but less than 2½ years...	53	8.3	30.7	35	7.8	28.9	7	10.0	37.0	11	8.6	31.9
2½ years but less than 3 years....	63	11.5	34.9	48	11.4	34.6	12	13.5	40.8	3	1.5	5.0

It will be seen that with one exception the average period of completed parole for these delinquent parolees was less than one year, although the greater part of persons released to parole supervision during 1932 were expected to be retained under such supervision for periods in excess of one year.

It should also be noted that the average periods of actual completed parole increased as the expected period of supervision increased. These increases, however, are about one and a half to

two months for every six months in the expected period of parole supervision.

There is a forceful indication in this table that where parole violation does occur, it is most likely to be encountered in comparatively short periods following release from the institution.

The average number of months of completed parole for the delinquents falling within each group was compared with the mid-point of the range of time for each interval. The results of this comparison are shown in the third column for each of the different types of parolees. An examination of these figures leads to the conclusion that except for delinquents who had expected periods of parole of less than six months, the average period of completed parole hovered around one-third of the mid-point of the expected period of parole. It is therefore obvious that the critical period of parole apparently falls within the first third of the period during which the person is to be continued under supervision. It is during this critical period that the greatest amount of supervision is required and during which the various techniques must be fruitfully employed. It is during this critical third that the parolee adjusts himself and during which he needs the active and continued interest and assistance of his parole officer.

Upon constructing a similar table for these delinquent parolees according to the nature of the parole violation—arrest, absconding, and violations of some other condition of parole—it is clearly indicated that violations because of absconding occur much earlier in the parole life of delinquent parolees than either of the other two types.

The fact that arrest as the cause of parole violation shows the highest ratios of actual completed parole as compared with the full expected period of parole supervision may have two explanations. The first is that the parolee has consciously and conscientiously endeavored to be law abiding but finds the going so very difficult that he finally succumbs to the forces and the behavior patterns that controlled and determined his previous criminal activities. The other, and perhaps the more plausible, is that for one reason or another, but largely because of excessive case loads, the parole officer has insufficient contacts with the parolee and inadequate knowledge of him and his affairs and is therefore unable to observe the deflections of the parolee until actual arrest results.

Thus far the data presented and the conclusions drawn therefrom relate to definite divisions of expected periods of parole super-

TABLE VII

EXPECTED PERIOD OF FULL DURATION OF PAROLE AND THE AVERAGE PERIOD OF ACTUAL COMPLETED PAROLE FOR DELINQUENTS WHO WERE RELEASED TO PAROLE SUPERVISION DURING 1932—BY NATURE OF VIOLATION

	Total			Arrest			Absconding			General Violation		
	No. Delin-quent	Com-pleted Parole	Per Cent to Ex-pected Parole	No. Delin-quent	Com-pleted Parole	Per Cent to Ex-pected Parole	No. Delin-quent	Com-pleted Parole	Per Cent to Ex-pected Parole	No. Delin-quent	Com-pleted Parole	Per Cent to Ex-pected Parole
Less than 6 mos...	17	1.7	55.6	3	1.5	50.0	12	1.8	58.3	2	1.5	50.0
6 months but less than 1 year.....	72	3.8	34.3	29	3.8	41.7	35	2.3	25.5	8	3.7	41.7
1 year but less than 1½ years..	81	5.2	34.7	36	8.0	53.2	36	3.8	25.0	9	6.5	43.3
1½ years but less than 2 years.....	56	6.1	29.0	31	7.2	34.3	19	4.2	19.8	6	6.5	31.0
2 years but less than 2½ years..	53	8.3	30.7	27	9.7	35.9	20	6.6	24.5	6	8.0	29.6
2½ years but less than 3 years....	63	11.5	34.9	39	12.0	36.4	18	10.5	31.9	6	11.5	34.9

vision and no consideration has been given to the period of actual completed parole of violators for each of these groups. Inasmuch as parole supervision is a continuing exercise of authority throughout the period for which the parolee is subject to the control of the parole body there are possibilities of parole violation during this entire period.

It is therefore important to construct an experience table, similar to a life table which might indicate the probability of parole violation after completing specified periods of parole as non-violators. Putting the situation differently it should be possible to construct a table which would indicate for parolees who completed six months of their parole the probability of parole violation within each succeeding six month period.

The experience table designed to yield this result is offered tentatively and with reservations due to the fact that the population on which it is based is comparatively small. It blazes a trail however and is justified both because it can be added to as more data is accumulated and because even a poor experience table is far better than none.

During the year 1932 there were 2,880 persons released to the active supervision of the New York State Division of Parole. Every one of these was under supervision for some period of time. Obviously, it can be said that all of the 2,880 individuals were under supervision for one day.

Since the group under observation is a constant group there can be no additions to it but only decreases. As the period of observation under supervision is increased from one day to longer periods of time there is a gradual reduction in the number of different individuals under observation.

The period of time used as intervals being six months it may similarly be said that all of the 2,880 persons released to supervision during the year were under observation for this length of time. At the end of six months from the date of release some of the 2,880 parolees who were under observation at the start of the inquiry were eliminated because of the expiration of their full terms. A previous table shows that 151 of the persons released during the year had expected parole periods of less than six months. Upon deducting this number from 2,880 it will be seen that 2,729 parolees should have been under supervision for the period beginning with six months from the date of their parole and extending to one year from the time they were released. The number that should have been under supervision during each successive interval is obtained in the same manner.

If, in addition to deducting the parolees who passed from supervision because of the expiration of their sentences, there are also deducted the number of parolees who became violators during each of these periods the actual number under observation during each period is arrived at.² With this number as a base it is possible to prepare violation rates for each period.

Thus for the entire group of 2,880 parolees it was found that during the first six months of supervision the parole violation rate was 13.4 per cent. For the 2,361 parolees who completed six months of supervision and were carried over for supervision for the period from six months to a year the parole violation rate was 8.5 per cent.

Reference to the following table will show that in each six month interval the parole violation rate showed a decrease from the rate of the previous period:

² It is necessary to guard against deducting the same individual twice. This error may enter by deducting as a maximum expiration a parolee who has already been deducted as a violator.

TABLE VIII

PAROLE VIOLATION RATES BY SIX MONTH INTERVALS OF ACTUAL SUPERVISION

From Date of Parole	Total			Indeterminate Sentence Parolees			Elmira Reformatory Parolees			Definite Sentence Parolees		
	No. Under Supervision	Delinquent	Parole Violation Rate	No. Under Supervision	Delinquent	Parole Violation Rate	No. Under Supervision	Delinquent	Parole Violation Rate	No. Under Supervision	Delinquent	Parole Violation Rate
Less than 6 mos...	2880	385	13.4	1312	149	11.7	1097	130	11.8	471	106	22.5
6 months but less than 1 year.....	2361	201	8.5	1112	96	8.6	951	83	8.7	298	22	7.4
1 year but less than 1½ years..	1903	130	6.8	923	77	8.3	820	43	5.2	160	10	6.2
1½ years but less than 2 years.....	1592	77	4.8	813	34	4.2	694	38	5.5	85	5	5.9
2 years but less than 2½ years..	1373	58	4.2	709	29	4.1	613	27	4.4	51	2	3.9
2½ years but less than 3 years....	1216	25	2.1	583	8	1.4	585	13	2.2	48	4	8.3

The continuity of the decrease in the delinquency, or parole violation rates applies not only to the total group under observation but also to the parolees of each of the three types. There is, however, one exception which occurs among the definite sentence parolees under observation for the period of from two and a half to three years following their release. The increase found here is undoubtedly due to the fact that the percentage is based on a population of 48 and is therefore subject to a large error.

The table indicates, for example, that for an indeterminate sentence parolee the probability of violating parole during the first six months after release from prison is 11.7 per cent. Stated differently, it is indicated that approximately one out of every nine of this type of parolee will become delinquent within six months from the date of parole. For those who weather the difficulties of the first six months of parole there is a likelihood that about one out of twelve will violate parole during the succeeding six month period. Among the indeterminate sentence prisoners who complete one year of parole and are continued under supervision there is a probability that one out of twelve will violate at some time between one year and one and a half years of parole supervision.

There is a markedly greater parole violation rate among definite sentence parolees during the first six months of supervision than for either the indeterminate sentence parolees or the Elmira parolees. This is due to the fact that definite sentence prisoners are released without discretionary action of the Board of Parole

and also because they are recidivists and more fixed in criminal tendencies.

The probability of successfully completing any given period of parole is the difference between 100 per cent and the probability of parole violation during that period. Thus, while 11.7 per cent is the probability of parole violation of an indeterminate sentence parolee during the first six months after release from prison, 88.3 per cent is the probability of successfully completing the first six months of parole.

SUMMARY

1. Due to lack of knowledge of composition of all parolees under supervision parole violation rates have heretofore been based on mass figures with the result that there was lacking the necessary basic information for interpreting the meaning or for evaluating the rate.

2. Tabulations have shown that for parolees who were declared violators during a given period the distribution of these by period of completed parole indicated the largest percentage in the shortest periods with continually decreasing percentage as the period of completed parole was increased.

3. These tabulations have doubtful value because there is complete absence of data descriptive of parolees who did not violate their paroles during the period under examination.

4. Analysis of periods of completed parole for violators from among the releases of a given year yields results markedly similar to those secured by analyzing parole violations among a group composed of parolees released to supervision during an extended period.

5. These results indicated that the greatest degree of parole supervision was required up to between six and nine months from the date of release and that thereafter supervision could begin to be tapered off in stringency until two years from the date of release after which time only a modicum of supervision was necessary.

6. By holding under continued observation a constant group of parolees it was found that although 5.2 per cent of the group had expected periods of parole supervision of less than six months from the date of their release until the expiration of their sentences, 45.6 per cent of all the violators of the group violated their parole before completing six months of supervision.

7. The probability of parole violation increased as the length of the expected period of parole supervision increased.

8. Among parolees whose expected periods of supervision were less than one year violation resulted more frequently because of absconding than because of arrest.

9. Among parolees whose expected periods of supervision were one year or longer violation resulted more frequently because of arrest than because of absconding.

10. The actual period of completed parole for parole violators was about one-third of the full expected period of parole.

11. Where parole violation is established there is a tendency for this to occur in comparatively short periods following release from the institution.

12. It is possible to construct an experience table that would yield the probability of parole violation after a parolee has completed various parts of his entire expected parole period.

13. Such a table indicates a continually decreasing probability of parole as the period of completed parole increases.