

1951

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Recommended Citation

Thomas H. Pritchard, A Proficiency Index for Parole Officers, 41 J. Crim. L. & Criminology 609 (1950-1951)

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A PROFICIENCY INDEX FOR PAROLE OFFICERS

Thomas H. Pritchard

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One of the major problems of a supervising parole officer is to evaluate the work of the officers under his supervision. The task is complicated by inequalities in the case load, by differences in types of parolees, by variations in territories in regard to size and socio-economic characteristics, and by variable travel requirements. Any attempt to evaluate the parole officer's performance must give due consideration to these variables and must debit and credit each officer without prejudice or bias.

With all these requirements it is apparent that a parole officer's Proficiency Index, if it is to be effective, must be both sweeping in its application and exact to the point of fineness at the same time.

The Proficiency Index proposed here is based on the parole prediction tables. Normally, the parole prediction tables are considered as merely an actuarial basis for predicting the probability of a parolee's success or failure on parole. But in this instance, it is carried further and used to indicate the success or failure of a parole officer with his parolees.

THE UNADJUSTED PROFICIENCY SCORE

This is how it works. Parole Officer A has a monthly average case load of 130 parolees. During the year 60 parolees completed their parole successfully and 48 were returned to prison as parole violators or new commitments. There were also 84 parolees listed as absconders. Each of these parolees was given a prediction rating as to his probable success or failure prior to his release from prison.

On the basis of these ratings a prediction table is made up and each of the parolees—the 60 successes and 48 failures—is listed in the table according to his prediction scores. The table is as follows:

TABLE I
Procedure for Basic Unadjusted Proficiency Score

	<u>Parole Prediction</u>	<u>No. of Parolees</u>	<u>Predicted Successes</u>	<u>Actual Successes</u>	<u>Rate of Success</u>
	99-90	2	2	2	100
	89-80	10	8	9	90
	79-70	17	11	12	71
	69-60	20	12	14	70
	59-50	16	8	9	56
	49-40	15	6	7	47
	39-30	13	4	4	30
	29-20	8	2	2	25
	19-10	5	1	1	20
	9-0	2	0	0	00
Base Score ¹	450	108	54	60	509

If A's rate of success score (509) is divided by the base score 450, and multiplied by 100, his unadjusted proficiency rating is shown to be 113.1. The immediate impression is that Officer A has surpassed the prediction table in the number of his parole successes. But there are the 84 absconding parolees, which must be accounted for and there are other adjustments which must be made in order that his performance may be compared on an equal basis with the performance of his fellow workers.

SOURCE OF PRIMARY DATA

For the purpose of this article, there will be seven parole officers on the staff, A, B, C, D, E, F, and G. The primary data which supplies the material for making up the Proficiency Index will be found in Table II.

It is customary for parole officers to send weekly or monthly reports to their home office in which they submit information that is pertinent to their work, such as case load, hours spent in the field, hours spent traveling, calls made, overtime hours expended, etc. It is from these reports that the data for Table II are derived. Incidentally, the medians in the Table are for the purpose of making a quick appraisal of any given officer's position in the various categories listed.

1. The base score is the summation of the predicted success ratings.

TABLE II
Data* Used to Compile Proficiency Index

Officer	Average Monthly Case Load	No. of Parole Successes	No. of Parole Failures	No. of Absconders	Average Monthly Travel Time (Hours)	Average Monthly Overtime Expended (Hours)
A	130	60	48	84	59.0	49.5
B	98	76	39	96	56.0	85.0
C	108	42	26	48	55.5	39.5
D	90	72	36	24	40.0	26.0
E	103	96	53	96	29.5	36.5
F	75	36	22	24	36.5	20.0
G	78	36	35	24	47.0	46.0
MEDIAN	98	60	36	48	47.0	39.5

* These data are a composite of actual material, therefore, they should be considered as hypothetical.

THE WORK LOAD INDEX

The method for obtaining the basic unadjusted proficiency score has been established. Next comes the adjustment for work-load. The category "work-load" combines the factors of case load and size of territory.

It is not difficult to determine the size of the case load, but obviously the size of the territory cannot be stated directly in mathematical terms. However, for the purposes of calculating the work-load, there is a method of giving proper weight to the size of territory. For instance, an officer with a large territory or a large case load, or both, will expend considerable time in traveling. It is reasonable to assume that an officer with a large case load and a small territory will have as large a work-load as one with a small case load and a large territory. It is apparent, then, that hours spent traveling is interrelated with both case load and the size of the territory. Consequently, in Table III the work-load figure is obtained by multiplying the average monthly case load figure by the average monthly travel-time hours and then taking the square root of the results.

TABLE III
Procedure for Calculating the Work-Load

<u>Officer</u>	<u>Average Monthly Case Load</u>	<u>Average Monthly Travel Time</u>	<u>Work-Load Index</u> <u>Case Load x Travel Time</u>
A	130	59.0	87.6
B	98	56.0	74.1
C	108	55.5	77.4
D	90	40.0	60.0
E	103	29.5	55.1
F	75	36.5	52.2
G	78	47.0	60.5
MEDIAN	98	47.0	60.5

The calculation of the work-load index is only the primary step. It will be called into action as other adjustments for the unadjusted Proficiency Index are carried out.

WEIGHTED ABSCONDERS' SCORE

One of these adjustments is for the number of absconders. It should be recalled that Officer A had 60 parole successes, 48 parole failures and 84 absconders.

It would be possible to divide the number of absconders by the officer's work-load score and get a rough idea of the adjustment to be made. But a closer approach to reality requires the weighting of each absconder by his parole prediction score, summing up the weighted number of absconders and then dividing by the work-load score. This procedure is carried out in Table IV.

TABLE IV
Procedure for Calculating Officer A's Score for Absconders

<u>Parole Prediction</u>	<u>Number of Absconders</u>	<u>Absconders Weighted by Prediction Score</u>
99-90		
89-80	5	400
79-70	13	910
69-60	17	1020
59-50	13	650
49-40	13	520
39-30	11	330
29-20	6	120
19-10	4	40
9- 0	2	—
Total	84	3990

FORMULA: $\frac{\text{Weighted Absconders}}{\text{Work-Load}} = \text{Score for Absconders}$

$$\frac{3990}{87.6} = 45.5$$

RATIO OF OVERTIME TO WORK-LOAD

Another factor to be considered is that of overtime hours expended in doing parole work. By the very nature of the work there will be overtime hours. Their number in proportion to work-load is a good criterion as to the efficient and judicious use of both regular and extra hours. Table V shows overtime hours divided by work-load score, multiplied by 100.

TABLE V

Procedure for Calculating Overtime Score

Officer	Work-Load Index	Monthly Average Overtime Hours	Overtime Index
A	87.6	49.5	56.5
B	74.1	85.0	114.7
C	77.4	39.5	51.0
D	60.0	26.0	43.3
E	55.1	36.5	66.2
F	52.2	20.0	38.3
G	60.5	46.0	76.0

FORMULA: $\frac{\text{Overtime}}{\text{Work-Load}} \times 100$

COMBINING ABSCONDERS' SCORE AND OVERTIME RATIO

This completes the preliminary steps in setting up the various adjustment factors. Since the absconders index and the overtime index affect the unadjusted Proficiency Index in the same manner, they will be combined so that only one adjustment will be necessary for these two factors. They will be combined by multiplying the score for absconders by the score for overtime and then taking the square root. (See Table VI.)

TABLE VI

Procedure for Combining the Absconders Index with the Overtime Index

Officer	1	2	3	4*
	Absconders Index	Overtime Index	Absconders— Overtime Index	Amount of Adjustment to be made on Proficiency Index for Absconders and Overtime
			Col. 1 x Col. 2	
A	45.5	56.5	50.7	100-115.2 = -15.2
B	61.5	114.7	84.0	100-190.9 = -90.9
C	38.0	51.0	44.0	100-100.0 = ...
D	18.8	43.3	28.5	100- 64.8 = 35.2
E	81.4	66.2	73.4	100-166.8 = -66.8
F	21.8	38.3	28.9	100- 65.7 = 34.3
G	18.7	76.0	37.7	100- 85.9 = 14.1
MEDIAN	38.0	56.5	44.0	

*Each Index item is divided by the median and the quotient is subtracted from the base 100 to obtain the adjustment for the Proficiency Index.

Particular attention should be given to the amount of adjustment to be made on the unadjusted Proficiency Index by the absconders-overtime index. All those officers whose scores in the absconders-overtime index were above the median are either having too many parolees abscond, or are expending too many overtime hours—or both factors may be in excess. In any event, the unadjusted proficiency score will be adjusted down in proportion to the degree that the absconders-overtime score exceeds the median, or base 100.0. For those whose score is below the median, the reasoning is reversed and their proficiency score will be increased. In the event an officer is not using enough overtime hours to meet the requirements of his work-load the results will show up not only in the increased number of absconders but also in a low unadjusted proficiency score.

THE ADJUSTED PROFICIENCY INDEX AND ANALYSIS

We are now ready to make the needed adjustments to the basic unadjusted proficiency scores. In Table VII the final scores have been adjusted to a base of 100.0.

Table VII produced some rather interesting results. Officers B and E started out with the highest basic unadjusted proficiency scores, with 195.5 and 182.2 respectively. In the final scoring, each suffered severe losses to 13.18 points for Officer B and 33.33 points for Officer E. Table II will reveal the cause for this loss. Under the heading of absconders they had twice as many parolees drop out of sight as the

median number—48. In other words, they both had 96 absconders. Following this lead—after these 96 have been weighted for parole prediction scores and adjusted for work-load, they are still excessively high in number. The assumption so far is that if these two officers had apprehended more of their parole violators and had taken them into custody their unadjusted proficiency scores would not have been so high and also, their score on account of absconders would have been lower.

Referring to Table II again and considering the list of overtime hours, Officer B had the highest amount of overtime, while Officer E was fairly low. However, adjusting the overtime figures by the work-load still finds them above the median. The final conclusion for these two officers is that in spite of a large amount of overtime expended they are having too many absconders.

TABLE VII

Table of Adjustments for the Final Proficiency Index

Officers	Proficiency Index Unadjusted	Work-Load Index	Proficiency Index Weighted by Work-Load	Percent of Adjustment for Overtime-Absconders Index	Weighted Proficiency Index after Adjustment for Overtime and Absconders	Proficiency Index Adjusted to a 100.0 Base
A	113.1	87.6	9907.56	-15.2	8401.61	84.02
B	195.5	74.1	14486.55	-90.9	1318.28	13.18
C	161.5	77.4	12500.10	...	12500.10	125.00
D	146.7	60.0	8802.00	+35.2	11900.30	119.00
E	182.2	55.1	10039.22	-66.8	3333.02	33.33
F	166.6	52.2	8696.52	+34.3	11679.43	116.79
G	111.1	60.5	6721.55	+14.1	7669.29	76.69

The same analysis can be made for each officer. The cases of Officers D and G, offer an interesting comparison. They have practically the same work-load and the same score in the absconders index, however Officer D not only started with a higher unadjusted Proficiency Index score, but also required less overtime hours than G so that his final score is considerably higher. This is a good example of how nicely the Proficiency Index takes into consideration the individual's particular weakness or strength in the final analysis.

THE PROFICIENCY INDEX AND PAROLE VARIABLES

The foregoing brings up for consideration the variables mentioned in the first paragraph of this article. Does the Proficiency Index give due consideration to these variables?

The variable "inequalities in the case load" and variations in the

size of territories were properly considered when combined into work-load. Differences in types of parolees were equalized by use of the parole prediction table in calculating the basic unadjusted proficiency score for parole successes and failures. The same is true for weighting the number of absconders. Variable travel requirements are interrelated with case load and the size of territory and are covered by work-load.

Variations in the socio-economic characteristics is the final variable to be considered. This, too, can be covered by the parole prediction table if the socio-economic characteristics are made factors in the prediction tables. Clark Tibbitts² borrowed eighteen factors from the Burgess System and added four of his own, one of which was the type of neighborhood to which the parolee was paroled, so that regardless of what type of territory a parole officer may have, the parole prediction score makes allowance for it.

THE EFFECTS OF THE PROFICIENCY INDEX

What will be the effect of the Proficiency Index on the parole officer's work? For those who are capable and are really working at their profession, it will make no difference unless the spirit of competition stimulates them to attempt to gain the highest proficiency rating. For the others, the proficiency index may play havoc with their careers.

In the realm of parole, as in all other government work, there are some political appointees who are riding on the "gravy train." There are, too, a few parole officers with civil service security who are taking advantage of that security and are "gold-bricking" on the job. Then there are those who on the surface are doing a good job as parole officers, but who in the cold logic of mathematical reality are actually falling short of the mark. With these various groups of parole officers the Proficiency Index would cause some changes to be made—changes that would mean improvement in professional action or changes in vocation. That is as it should be; society cannot afford to pay for less than the best from its parole officers.

As for the supervising parole officers, the Proficiency Index would take them off the "spot." Each man under his supervision would make his own Proficiency Index score. The rating of subordinates is a disagreeable job at best for supervisors and it becomes especially so when a bad rating must be given. By the same token the parole officer with the low score cannot claim personal animosity, prejudice or bias on the

2. CLARK TIBBITT, "Success and Failure on Parole Can Be Predicted," J. CRIM. LAW & CRIMINOL., 22, May, 1931, pp. 11-50.

part of the supervising parole officer. In the final analysis, the supervisor has more time to devote to actual supervision and helping with particular problems, and he will feel freer in his relations with those under him.

From an administrative point of view, the Proficiency Index provides a self-operating rating system. Furthermore, the Index will mean that the parole staff will put forth greater effort for efficient and effective parole work, which should result in more parolee successes and less absconding. From the financial side, too, there should be considerable saving in the amount of overtime, and in a large staff of parole officers that can mean a large sum.

Of course, there is the cost of setting up the parole prediction tables and of working up the Proficiency Index. Assuming that an additional sociologist is added to the staff for this purpose, the gains in the parole department alone would more than offset his salary. In fact, from the financial side, the cost should be negligible.

Another big advantage of the Proficiency Index is its simplicity and ease of application. All that is needed is IBM equipment and a clerk to do the posting and a few calculations. Even the parole prediction technique is simple in principle, but care is required in making the required selection and analysis of the factors.