Using reintegration potential at intake to better identify safe release candidates

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Reintegration dividends can be realized by directing available programming resources and correctional controls to the level of reintegration potential candidates present at time of admission and encouraging greater efficiencies across offender management functions. In 1994, the introduction of the Offender Intake Assessment (OIA) process provided the Correctional Service of Canada with the capacity to produce custodial, release risk and programming requirement profiles of the federally sentenced inmate population at the time of admission. Since the implementation, over 25,000 OIA profiles have been generated by Service staff and stored in the automated Offender Management System (OMS). These profiles have been giving the Service an early indication of the level of security required by new admissions for initial penitentiary placement, risk to re-offend upon release to the community and the amount of program services necessary to reduce their likelihood to re-offend post-release. Among offenders with the highest potential for safe release and for whom priority case preparation might be provided are those cases rated as minimum-security, good release risk and lower criminogenic need (contributing factors to re-offending behaviour) categories at admission. For these groups, offenders who do not receive a discretionary release (parole) or receive it after their eligibility date represent a potential pool of candidates who may derive similar or better correctional benefits from a supervised release when eligible.

The 8,216 male inmate Reintegration Potential (RP) profiles explored in this article are based on the convergence of three objective classification instruments used by the Correctional Service of Canada. These are — the Custody Rating Scale (CRS), the Statistical Information on Recidivism – Revised 1 (SIR-R1) scale, and the Static/Dynamic Factors ratings obtained for each newly sentenced offender during the OIA process. The predictive validity results reported here suggest that objective security; release and program classification is desirable for good correctional management.

All federally sentenced offenders undergo a comprehensive and integrated Offender Intake Assessment (OIA) process at time of admission.[2] The OIA has a number of components: community intake assessment, initial assessment (physical, mental health, suicide potential), Static Factors risk (youth and adult criminal history) assessment, Dynamic Factors risk (employment, marital/family, associates/social interaction, substance abuse, community functioning, personal/emotional orientation, attitude) assessment, psychological and supplementary assessments, level of motivation assessment, release risk assessment using the Statistical Information on Recidivism-Revised (SIR-R1) scale,[3] security level designation using the Custody Rating Scale (CRS),[4] and an estimate of Reintegration Potential (RP).[5]

A total of 8,216 (63% of 13,019) federally sentenced men were identified in the OMS of the Service with complete OIA classifications and located in federal institutions on December 31, 1998. It should be noted that the inmate RPs reflected in this study reflect available OIA process information. A review of OMS indicates variations exist in the number of classification instruments completed (the files of those offenders admitted prior to implementation would be missing information). Future analyses will account for more completeness.

The average age of the 8,216 federal male inmates with complete intake assessment measures was 35 years, ranging from 18 to 82. Among the federally incarcerated male offender population there were 884 homicide offenders, 1,631 sex offenders, 3,305 robbery offenders and 1,608 drug offenders. The average sentence length was 5.2 years (excluding lifers and revoked cases). Nearly 55% were serving sentences 4 years or less and 921 cases (11%) were serving life sentences.

Reintegration potential at intake

A particular combination or convergence of three objective classification measures — CRS security level designation, SIR-R1 release risk grouping and OIA Static/Dynamic Factors level rating determines RP at admission for male offenders. For example, an offender rated at admission as "minimum" on CRS, "good" on SIR-R1, "low" on OIA Static/Dynamic Factors and would be classified as "high" reintegration potential. Conversely, an inmate rated "maximum" on CRS; "poor" on SIR-R1, "high" on OIA Static/Dynamic Factors would be classified as "low" reintegration potential. The 27 possible combinations of the three intake measures are grouped according to relative RP ranging from "low" to "moderate" to "high."

Table 1 shows a distribution of the three objective classification measures taken at admission — CRS security level designation, SIR-R1 risk grouping, OIA Static/Dynamic Factors rating as well as RP level by quarter in 1998. As the table illustrates, male inmates, as a group, show considerable potential for successful reintegration at admission. In fact, slightly more than one-third of the male inmate population were objectively classified as "high" reintegration potential at admission. The possibility remains that with the benefit of appropriate programming those inmates assessed at admission to be "moderate" or "low" reintegration potential might be re-evaluated as having "high" reintegration potential upon successful program completion at time of parole eligibility.

Predictive validity

One way of looking at the validity of an estimate of RP for male inmates at admission is by examining the relationships between the various categories and post-admission discretionary release (parole from penitentiary) and post-release outcome (return to federal custody). A follow-up of the 8,298 male offenders in the end-of March 1998 profile to December 1999 (average 8 months, range 1 to 19 months) revealed that 4,864 (58.6%) had been released. Of those released, 42% were assessed at admission to be "high" reintegration potential, 36% were "moderate" and 22% were "low" (Chi-square = 359, df = 2, $p < .001$).

When discretionary release was taken into account (21% of those assessed), 60% were classified as "high" reintegration potential, 30% were "moderate" and 10% were "low" (Chi-square = 679.7, df = 2, $p < .001$). Higher reintegration potential was found to be significantly associated with likelihood of discretionary release ($r = .26$, $p < .0001$).

As for post-release outcome (see Figure 1), 1,523 (31.3%) of the released male inmates had been returned to federal custody and 476 (10%) with a new offence. Of note, the highest percentage of return to federal custody was among the "low" reintegration potential group (47%), followed by "moderate" (39%) and then "high" (17%). Lower reintegration potential was found to significantly associated with a greater likelihood of return to prison ($r = .27$, $p < .0001$) and return with a new offence ($r = .16$, $p < .0001$).

Discussion

The incorporation of objective and systematic assessments of incarcerated offenders and principles of effective intervention into a reintegration framework is both legitimate and potentially fruitful. The process and content reflected in the Correctional Service of Canada's classification practices with male inmates are clearly compatible with the goals of safe reintegration. Importantly, this appears to be occurring as correctional staff and decision-makers have begun to more carefully consider the issues of inmate initial security level placement (CRS), release risk (SIR-R1), programming requirements (OIA Static/Dynamic Factors), and reintegration potential (RP) at admission.

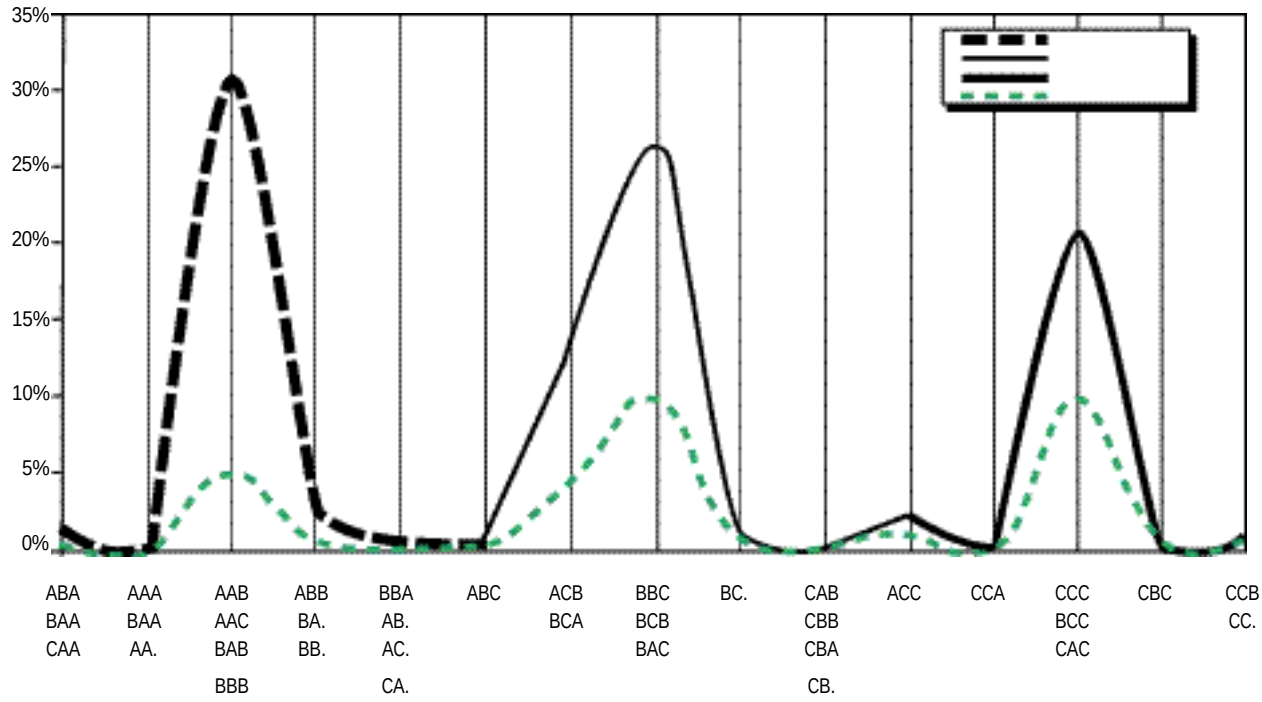
Table 1

Percentage Distribution of Intake Classification Measures (quarterly one year)

Intake Measure	1st n (%)	2nd n (%)	3rd n (%)	4th n (%)
CRS: Security Level				
Minimum	1,467 (18)	1,495 (18)	1,518 (18)	1,582 (19)
Medium	5,931 (71)	5,946 (71)	5,844 (70)	5,678 (69)
Maximum	900 (11)	915 (11)	935 (11)	956 (12)
SIR-R1: Release Risk				
Good/Very Good	3,644 (44)	3,714 (44)	3,628 (44)	3,587 (44)
Fair	1,286 (15)	1,315 (16)	1,306 (16)	1,281 (15)
Poor/Very Poor	3,368 (41)	3,327 (40)	3,363 (40)	3,348 (41)
Static/Dynamic Factor				
Low	857 (10)	891 (11)	860 (10)	855 (10)
Medium	2,978 (36)	2,978 (35)	2,920 (35)	2,880 (35)
High	4,463 (54)	4,487 (54)	4,517 (54)	4,481 (55)
Reintegration Potential				
Low	2,283 (27)	2,277 (27)	2,289 (28)	2,300 (28)
Moderate	3,129 (38)	3,319 (38)	3,165 (38)	3,125 (38)
High	2,886 (35)	2,940 (35)	2,843 (34)	2,791 (34)

Note: Distributions based on availability of three intake measures on each offender.

Distribution of Reintegration Potential (RP) Sub-groupings and Post-release Outcome — National Overview (Men Released from Prison)



Taken together, the results reported here provide ample empirical support for the risk-based case differentiation approach to the allocation of correctional resources and controls. The convergence of three reliable and valid classification measures to yield an estimate of RP coupled with discretionary release eligibility dates provides a combined measure for compliance control, quality assurance and performance measurement.

Consistent with efforts directed towards contributing to the protection of society by actively encouraging and assisting offenders to become law-abiding citizens, a direct and concerted effort is still required to ensure that correctional programs and interventions are linked to estimates of RP at admission and subsequent re-evaluations. To accomplish this task several things in corrections must happen.

First, evaluations of core offender programs such as education, employment, alcohol/drug abuse, cognitive/behavioural, and sex offender treatment have to be ongoing and reflect impacts on achieving safe reintegration. Second, the practice of accrediting correctional programs for incarcerated offenders has to begin to ensure programs meet high standards of integrity, both in terms of content and delivery. Finally, a mechanism is required to incorporate treatment information on male offenders into decisions regarding future reintegration potential. ■

1 340 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0P9.

2 Motiuk L. L. (1997). Classification for correctional programming: The Offender Intake Assessment (OIA) process. *Forum on Corrections Research*, *9*(1), 18-22.

3 Nuffield, J.(1989). The SIR scale: Some reflections on its applications. *Forum on Corrections Research*, *11*(2), 19-22. See also Correctional Service of Canada (1996). Rating Guidelines for the Statistical Information on recidivism Scale — Revised 1. And see Cormier, R. B. (1997). Yes SIR! A stable risk prediction tool. *Forum on Corrections Research*, *9*(1), 3-7.

4 Luciani, F. P., Motiuk, L. L., and Nafekh, M. (1996). *An operational review of the custody rating scale: Reliability, validity and practical utility*. Research Report R-47. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service Canada. And see Luciani, F. P. (1997). Tried and true: Proof that the Custody Rating Scale is still reliable and valid. *Forum on Corrections Research*, *9*(1), 13-18, and Luciani, F. P. (1998). Exploring reintegration potential: Impacts of initial placement practice. *Forum on Corrections Research*, *10*(1), 23-28.

5 Motiuk, L. L. and Nafekh, M. (1999). Reintegration potential profiles for federally sentenced women. *Forum on Corrections Research*, *11*(3), 13-17.