

Abstract of the Dissertation

ANALYSIS OF PRISONER ESCAPE POTENTIAL:

A PREDICTIVE MODELING PROFILE

By

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The increasing frequency of prisoner escapes from the minimum security institutions of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department has created a delicate posture for the administrators of the organization in dealing with media coverage of the subject and the ramifications brought about by community concern for potential escape violence. In response to the perceived need for an empirical methodology for inmate classification and escape propensity determination, this study examined the demographic and situational characteristics of 200 escapees and 200 non-escapees selected from a multi-stage, stratified random sampling.

Pertinent variable characteristics were compared between the two sample groups via an SPSS Discriminant Analysis program in order to identify significant differences between the groups from a univariate perspective and to create a multiple regression model for use by prison administrators in determining the escape propensity possessed by a newly received inmate. The specific variables which were examined as part of this analysis were age, height, weight, education, race, local residency, employment status, parole status, probation status, previous arrests, previous confinement, marital status, prior escape history, pending court requirements, and active hold restrictions.

The general findings of this examination illustrated that extremely significant differences existed between the escape group and non-escapee sample with regard to the variables associated with community and social stability, social accountability and personal responsibility, and individual tolerance for confinement. As a result of these findings, the discriminant model was successful in predicting 87.5 percent of those cases examined and was, therefore, recommended for inclusion within the inmate classification processes of the Sheriff's Department.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS . . . . . vi

LIST OF TABLES . . . . . viii

I. INTRODUCTION . . . . . 1

Focus . . . . . 5

Purpose . . . . . 8

Problem . . . . . 11

Research Question . . . . . 13

Background . . . . . 14

Theory . . . . . 30

Variables . . . . . 42

Research Hypothesis . . . . . 43

Assumptions and Delimitations . . . . . 43

Footnotes . . . . . 45

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE . . . . . 47

General Theories on Prisoner  
Victimization . . . . . 47

Sexual Victimization in the Prison . . . . . 52

Institutionally Generated Frustration and  
the Ability to Cope . . . . . 56

Community/Social Stability: External  
Sources of Frustration . . . . . 61

Tolerance for Confinement . . . . . 67

Accountability/Responsibility . . . . . 77

Summary . . . . . 82

Footnotes . . . . . 83

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY . . . . . 85

Research Design . . . . . 85

The Samples . . . . . 86

Sampling Procedure . . . . . 87

Data Gathering Procedure . . . . . 88

The Variables . . . . . 89

Discriminant Analysis . . . . . 91

The Statistics . . . . . 93

The Pilot Study . . . . . 94

Summary . . . . . 95

Footnotes . . . . . 96

162	• • • • •	SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
161	• • • • •	Footnotes
159	• • • • •	Recommendations
155	• • • • •	Conclusions
151	• • • • •	Interpretations
150	• • • • •	V. INTERPRETATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS
149	• • • • •	Summary
141	• • • • •	Discriminant Analysis
135	• • • • •	Multivariate Analysis
98	• • • • •	Univariate Analysis
97	• • • • •	IV. PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

1. Profile of Los Angeles Sheriff's Department . . . . . 15

2. Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Station Boundaries . . . . . 18

3. Profile of the Sheriff's Custody Division Organizational Structure . . . . . 20

4. Means and Standard Deviations of Height by Prisoner Group . . . . . 99

5. Means and Standard Deviations of Weight by Prisoner Group . . . . . 101

6. Means and Standard Deviations of Age by Prisoner Group . . . . . 103

7. Frequency Profile of Prisoner Marital Status . . . . . 105

8. Means and Standard Deviations of Education by Prisoner Group . . . . . 107

9. Frequency Profile of Employment Status at Time of Arrest . . . . . 109

10. Frequency Profile of Parole Status at Time of Arrest . . . . . 111

11. Frequency Profile of Probation Status at Time of Arrest . . . . . 113

12. Frequency Profile of Local Residency of Prisoner Group . . . . . 115

13. Frequency Profile of Previous Escape Attempts by Group . . . . . 117

14. Means and Standard Deviations of Previous Arrests by Group . . . . . 119

15. Frequency Profile of Active Holds against Prisoners . . . . . 121

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

127	18. Means and Standard Deviations of Previous Confinement Time Served . . . . .
125	17. Frequency Profile of Ethnicity by Prisoner Group . . . . .
123	16. Frequency Profile of Pending Court Appearances by Prisoner Group . . . . .

17	1. Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Synopsis, Demographic and Geographic Data . . . . .
28	2. Los Angeles Sheriff's Department Budgets . . . . .
98	3. Means and Standard Deviations of Height by Prisoner Group . . . . .
100	4. Means and Standard Deviations of Weight by Prisoner Group . . . . .
102	5. Means and Standard Deviations of Age by Prisoner Group . . . . .
104	6. Frequency and Percentage Profile of Prisoner Marital Status . . . . .
106	7. Means and Standard Deviations of Education by Prisoner Group . . . . .
108	8. Frequency and Percentage Profile of Employment Status at Time of Arrest . . . . .
110	9. Frequency and Percentage Profile of Parole Status at Time of Arrest . . . . .
112	10. Frequency and Percentage Portrayal of Probation Status at Time of Arrest . . . . .
114	11. Frequency and Percentage Profile of Local Residency of Prisoner Groups . . . . .
116	12. Frequency and Percentage Portrayal of Previous Escape Attempts . . . . .
118	13. Means and Standard Deviations of Previous Arrests by Group . . . . .
120	14. Frequency and Percentage Profile of Active Holds against Prisoners . . . . .
122	15. Frequency and Percentages of Pending Court Appearances for Prisoner Group . . . . .

LIST OF TABLES

124	16.	Frequency and Percentage Portrayal of Ethnicity by Prisoner Group . . . . .
126	17.	Means and Standard Deviations of the Previous Confinement Time Served by Group . . . . .
136	18.	Wilks' Lambda and Univariate F-Ratio for Prisoner Population Samples . . . . .
139	19.	Pooled within Groups Correlation Matrix . . . . .
145	20.	Standardized Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients for Variables . . . . .
147	21.	Unstandardized Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients for Variables . . . . .
148	22.	Sample Group Classification Results . . . . .

With the current upsurge in public attention focused toward the arena of law enforcement and corrections, issues regarding the level of security within the community, the efficiency of law enforcement agencies to deal with the criminal element, and the effectiveness of the correctional system to securely house and isolate offenders from the community have again become topics of controversy.<sup>1</sup> As a result of this attention, police administrators have found themselves in a continual "thrust and parry" situation concerning their departments' ability to detect and remove criminal offenders from the community. Equally defensive are the prison administrators who must not only contend with the overcrowding conditions within their institutions, but continue to provide optimum levels of security so that offenders do not escape and return to harass the community.<sup>2</sup>

For those law enforcement agencies that possess collateral responsibilities, for both patrol and correctional housing, the dilemma of public safety becomes an even more perplexing problem. Demands for stronger sentencing practices, modifications of existing criminal

## INTRODUCTION

### CHAPTER I

statutes to provide for stiffer penalties, the receptive-ness of the judicial system to meet the public's demands, and the drastic limitations in building and operational funds have had a devastating impact on these types of agencies' ability to perform mandated functions. To deal effectively with these problems, some multi-service agencies have turned toward more cost effective custody approaches so that budgetary constraints are not so decisively limiting. One primary approach is that which involves the housing of "sentenced misde-meanant" prisoners within minimum security penal institutions. This contingency allows such departments to expend far less budget capital on the care and security of prisoners while supposedly maintaining "adequate" control over those prisoners remanded to custody. According to the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department policy, these facilities provide for the optimization of available space and revenues by housing inmates within a dormitory-type environment. Such institutions require fewer guards, less costly security devices, provide for reductions in capital outlay for construction, allow for increases in the rated capacity per square foot, and facilitate the agency's ability to maintain high levels of patrol coverage to the community by reducing the overall custody costs which restrict the organization's budget.<sup>3</sup>

