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YOUNG OFFENDER RECIDIVISM OVER A 28-MONTH  
FOLLOW-UP PERIOD

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## ABSTRACT

This follow-up study investigated 81 former young offenders of the Thunder Bay Youth Centre to determine the rate of recidivism and to evaluate predictor variables. Correctional records were used and both a liberal and conservative definition of recidivism included in this study. Over a mean follow-up period of 28 months, there was a 58% reconviction rate under the Criminal Code of Canada and/or the Provincial Offenses Act. The rate dropped slightly to 54.3% if only Criminal Code offenses were considered. Existing psychological test data and variables described as static and dynamic predictors were investigated to determine their relationship with recidivism. Partial correlation and multiple regression techniques were used to reveal that supervisor ratings of the likelihood of further criminal activity and aggregate sentence were statistically significant predictors of recidivism. However, these predictors collectively contributed in a relatively small way to the overall prediction of recidivism accounting for approximately 15-16% of recidivism variability. Results of this study are discussed along with limitations and suggestions for future research.

## INTRODUCTION

This study was concerned with following up young offenders held in secure custody. There are two important issues which this research has attempted to address: (1) What are the practical and methodological problems associated with young offender follow-up? (2) What can be discovered regarding young offender recidivism? Some of the existing literature related to these issues is considered below.

### YOUNG OFFENDERS

Legislation: The population this study focused upon is profoundly affected by one specific piece of federal legislation, the Young Offender's Act (YOA, 1984). The historical background of this act is important in understanding its impact on the young offender population. Burrows, Hudson and Hornick (1988) noted that the Juvenile Delinquent's Act (JDA), the forerunner to the (YOA), was criticized for its,

"lack of specified offences, substantial variation across Canada in the maximum age of juvenile delinquents, indiscriminate use of detention and indeterminate length of custodial dispositions, limited due process for youth, judge's lack of legislated authority to utilize community resources for treatment and the stigma of being labelled a juvenile delinquent" (p. 5).

Such criticisms over the years sparked a steady effort by the federal government to produce reform.

One of the initial reactions to the problem of the juvenile justice system was a 1965 study by the Department of Justice (Burrows, Hudson and Hornick, 1988). This study initiated an evolutionary process which ultimately produced the Young Offender's Act. As well, some intermediate pieces of legislation provided the stepping stones necessary for passage of the Young Offender's Act. Burrows, Hudson and Hornick (1988) reviewed this legislative progression. The 1967 draft of the Children's and Young Person's Act initiated this process of change in juvenile justice. The 1970 Act Respecting Young Offenders and to Repeal the Juvenile Delinquents Act was introduced in parliament but was not passed. The present day form of the YOA began to take shape when the Highlights of Proposed New Legislation for Young Offenders was developed in 1977 (Burrows, Hudson and Hornick, 1988). This helped lead to the preliminary draft of the Young Offender's Act in 1979. This draft was finally refined as Bill C-61 which received Royal Assent on July 7, 1982. The newly passed YOA came into effect on April 2, 1984, and was implemented in a two phase approach to allow provinces to adjust to the maximum age limit of the 18th birthday. This latter provision went into effect on April 1, 1985.

The principles guiding this new course of juvenile justice

are vital to consider. The YOA is based on the premise that society has the right to be protected from young offenders, and young offenders are to be held accountable for their acts (YOA Act, 1984 s.3b). It also creates a justice and correctional system separate and distinct from the adult system, and acknowledges that young persons have special needs, require special legal safeguards and are not to be held as fully responsible as adults (YOA Act, 1984 s.3a). Lescheid and Jaffe (1987) commented on these underlying principles stating that, "No longer can Canada's juveniles expect to be dealt with as children in a state of need, thereby requiring guidance and direction as outlined in the Juvenile Delinquent's Act" (p. 421). Lescheid and Jaffe do note that the YOA acknowledges the special needs of youth. They are attempting to point out an important discrepancy between the two pieces of legislation, however. They note that there are philosophical differences between the two. The JDA was largely based on the need of the offender, while the YOA has shifted focus to ensure due process for young offenders. The principles guiding the Young Offender's Act are unique when compared to the JDA. They are an attempt to create a system that is fair and equitable to everyone in the juvenile justice system. However, the changes to the juvenile justice system may not have been applied as uniformly as anticipated. There has been a degree of provincial disparity in the interpretation of the new legislation. The provinces have been able to devise their own

schemes for implementing the Act and as a result one provincial system differs.

In Ontario there is a unique structure which has been developed to oversee the workings of the YOA. The provincial government set up a two-tiered system of dealing with young offenders. This system is arbitrarily based on age. Phase 1 offenders, which includes 12-15 year old adolescents, are under the supervision of the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Phase 2 offenders, which includes 16-17 year old adolescents, are the responsibility of the Ministry of Correctional Services. This split jurisdiction may result in some differential treatment of young offenders. For example, Lescheid and Jaffe (1988) report that a 12-15 year old offender is at least 10 times more likely to receive a medical/psychological predisposition assessment for emotional or learning problems than a 16-17 year old. Due to split jurisdiction in Ontario, a 15-year old offender and a 16-year old co-accused may have quite different experiences under the YOA. Some contend that the 15-year old offender is more likely to receive treatment for emotional and learning problems than a 16 year old counterpart. This system has been challenged in the courts of Ontario, but to no avail. The Ontario Court of Appeal noted that no discrimination based on age could be demonstrated (Lescheid and Jaffe, 1988). As a result of this decision, split jurisdictions remain a reality in Ontario. All other provinces treat 12-17 year old adolescents

within a single jurisdictional mandate.

Research Data: Most YOA data have been obtained from studies with 12-15 year olds and there are several issues that arise. Lescheid & Jaffe (1987) found that while the number of charges for Phase 1 young offenders decreased under the YOA, the number of secure and open dispositions increased. This may be interpreted as taking a more punitive stance with 12-15 year olds and others have noted a similar trend. Hackler (1987) reported an alarming rate of increase in juveniles being locked in institutions in the province of Alberta. To date, there are no published reports using national data. Thus, it is not possible to determine whether the provincial trends noted by Lescheid and Jaffe, and Hackler hold up across the country. These authors report data on only the first 2 years of the YOA and trends may have changed subsequently. Furthermore, Jaffe and Lescheid, and Hackler studied 12-15 year olds while no similar research was conducted with 16-17 year olds. The situation for 16-17 year olds five years after the introduction of the YOA may not follow this trend. However, if the proportion of secure custody dispositions is rising, there may be a tremendous strain being put on Canadian young offender facilities.

The YOA has generated some provocative issues that need to be considered. The consent to treatment issue is one. Section 22(b) of the YOA provides children the right to protect

themselves from involuntary intervention. Thus, treatment can only be applied with the young person's consent. This may signify declining confidence in the role of rehabilitation as a goal of criminal justice (Lescheid and Hyatt, 1986). An alternative interpretation, and that which may have guided the consent clause, is that treatment may be to no avail without the active participation of the young person, as indicated by their premeditated consent. Lescheid and Jaffe (1986) argue that the main problem with the consent to treatment issue is that a young person's criminal behaviour may be related to pathological conditions. Such conditions along with immaturity, may prevent young people from appreciating the relevance of treatment. It is interesting to note how younger people feel about the legislation. Lescheid and Farthing (1987) sought opinions from youth about the YOA and JDA philosophies. Older high school students believed more strongly than younger high school students that young offenders should attend treatment if ordered by the court.

Public reaction to the YOA is also important to explore. The media may have played a role in forming some of the public's perceptions of the YOA. For example, the media may have portrayed the YOA as less punitive than the JDA. Doob and Roberts (1982 cited in Roberts and White, 1986) have demonstrated that the public has the opinion that sentences are too lenient as a result of selective coverage of certain cases by the news media. An



example of selective reporting can be found in the Thursday December 14, 1989 issue of the Thunder Bay Chronicle Journal. The article is clear in demonstrating that Chief Justice Allan MacEachern appears to be dissatisfied with the lenient treatment of youths who have murdered. He is quoted as stating that, "parliament should reconsider the penalties for murder and the delays in trying to raise youth to adult court" (p.19). The newspaper article also quoted the chief justice of the B.C. Court of Appeal as saying that, "a three-year maximum for murder is insufficient" (p.19). Clearly, some judges believe that there is a troublesome margin of leniency in the YOA. It is difficult to know how representative are these judicial opinions. Nevertheless, the public's perception of the YOA may be shaped by reporting such opinions in the media. Professional opinions of the YOA are relevant but perhaps the most pertinent information is the effect of YOA sentencing on the behaviour of young persons. One important aspect of YOA impact is recidivism.

## RECIDIVISM

### Definitional Issues

Recidivism is a complex issue. Wormith and Goldstone (1984) assert that in follow-up studies choices must be made as to the data source, criterion behaviour and scale components that are used to measure recidivism. They note that data sources usually

include, "self-report, observation by significant others, local agency follow-up and more widely based police information systems" (p. 6). The criterion behaviour which defines recidivism can also vary. Some consider recidivism to be the reoccurrence of a criminal act denoted through self-report data. Others would count the frequency of charges since the initial conviction as being the appropriate statistic based on sources such as R.C.M.P. arrest records. Finally, a more stringent definition of recidivism would count only re-convictions as the appropriate criteria. In addition, it can be argued that reconviction for less serious offences does not constitute true recidivism.

Definitional problems regarding recidivism are common and are accompanied by a concern about the length of time considered to be sufficient to gain an accurate assessment of offender recidivism. Wormith and Goldstone (1984) review a number of studies which use different time periods as well as those with different criteria. They note that the time frame for re-offending varies in the literature from a minimum of six months to a maximum of 18 years. Obviously, recidivism may vary depending on the time frame and unless acknowledged this factor could bias public perception of re-offense rates.

### Rates of Recidivism

General rates of recidivism for criminal populations exist. For example, an FBI study known as the Careers in Crime Program found that 65 per cent of the 207,748 subjects studied had been re-arrested at least once during a 5-year period (FBI, Uniform Crime Reports, 1974). More specific recidivism data is also available.

Hundleby (1986) in his Ontario research with male adolescents made use of two traditional indices of recidivism. He investigated readmission to correctional institutions and the rate of self-reported delinquent acts. Hundleby studied 150 boys who were in Ontario training schools and sentenced under the JDA. The mean age of this sample was 13 years 4 1/2 months at initial testing. He discovered that (71.4%) of these boys spent further time in a training school or correctional institution for adolescents within the 3-year follow-up period. Generally, Hundleby's subjects had spent only a short time outside a correctional facility at the time of their second interview. This finding highlighted the poor adjustment that these boys made after their initial incarceration. This particular method of measuring recidivism of young offenders appears to be adequate for the intended purpose of the study. However, Lescheid & Telford (1985) remind investigators that the time frame for juvenile recidivism should extend beyond the juvenile years to

include the possibility of criminal activities as adults. In other words, such a limited time boundary can exclude important information regarding recidivism in adulthood. Though, Hundleby did not pursue adult records in his initial 3 year follow-up, he continued investigating the recidivism rates of young offenders 18 years after the initial investigation. Hundleby (1991) found that 128 (93.4%) out of the follow-up sample of 137 men had offended as an adult. Seventy-two or (52%) were convicted of a serious violent crime such as, "murder, manslaughter, criminal negligence causing death, attempted murder, sexual assault, robbery, kidnapping, assault causing bodily harm, and common assault" (p.25).

Lescheid, Austin and Jaffe (1988) provide some comparative data on recidivism rates under the JDA and YOA. Their sample was composed of youth with special needs. This was determined by a personality measure of social-emotional disorder. The personality measure T-scores were determined for these youths. Those with mean T-scores over 60 on one of the three factors (i.e. psychiatric symptomatology, depression and social symptomatology) were considered in the special needs group. It was found that this population re-offended to a greater degree under the YOA (55.3)% than under the JDA (27.1%) at three-month follow-up. Those who did not have special needs re-offended at a rate of (32.1)% under the YOA and at (12.5)% under the JDA at three-month follow-up. This study suggests that the YOA has not

reduced recidivism, although the limited follow-up time frame could be misleading. A Ministry of Correctional Services study was completed by Loring (1988). She followed up 183 young offenders who were released from secure custody dispositions. Loring found that 49% of 183 Phase II young offenders had been re-admitted on new charges during the one year follow-up period. A subset of these readmissions (39% of the total sample) had been reconvicted during the same one year period. Loring does note that some young offenders were also given an open custody disposition to follow their secure custody. These young offenders were under some form of supervision during the follow-up period which began when they were released from secure custody; thereby giving them less non-supervised time to re-offend. Thus, it would be likely that some of the youth re-offended while in open custody or re-offended within a year once released from open custody.

### Prediction of Recidivism

Andrews (1989) emphasizes that existing criminological research has identified key variables that identify delinquents and distinguish them from non-delinquents. Some of the characteristics of delinquents include: antisocial/delinquent associates, antisocial antiauthority/procriminal attitudes values and beliefs, family conflict, low levels of affection or

cohesiveness, violence and poor supervision, poor monitoring and disciplinary practises by parents. Personality variables are another set of factors that help to distinguish between delinquents and non-delinquents. Andrews and Wormith (1989a) review a number of studies addressing the issue of personality and criminality. They clearly demonstrate that personality has been established in the research as a dimension by which delinquents differ from non-delinquents. Elsewhere, Andrews and Wormith (1989b) conclude that the continued rational exploration of an antisocial personality theory will be beneficial in criminological research. Jaffe, Lescheid, Sas, Austin and Smiley (1985) used Basic Personality Inventory (Jackson, 1974) scores to compare those young offenders reappearing in court for new charges during the first year following assessment with those who did not reappear before the court. Those reappearing in court were significantly higher on scales measuring denial, alienation, impulse expression, and social introversion.

Other variables related to recidivism include measures of risk. Rogers (1981) identified 6 risk factors in a study of adult probationers in Ontario. Rogers found that the total number of risk factors present for an adult probationer was strongly associated with the level of supervision which was independently decided upon by probation officers. The greater the number of risk factors identified the more intense the supervision of the probationer. Furthermore, the level of

supervision and also the risk factors were found to be associated with higher rates of recidivism. The risk factors that Rogers identified were that the offender: (i) associated with other criminals (ii) had an existing criminal record (iii) was under the age of 24 (iv) used most free time aimlessly (v) family relied on welfare and (vi) was male.

A follow-up of female delinquents by Lewis, Yeager, Cobham-Portorreal, Klein, Showalter and Anthony (1991) demonstrated that clinical variables such as cognitive deficiencies, neurological/limbic problems and episodic psychotic symptoms and environmental stressors predicted subsequent re-offending. More importantly, the quality of the lives of these women was poor. Many had drug and alcohol problems. They also experienced some marital difficulties and some abused their children.

From a methodological perspective, Andrews (1989) asserts that prediction of recidivism may improve with the following : 1) biological and situation specific information, 2) systematic psychological testing, 3) longer follow-up periods and 4) consideration of dynamic risk factors (i.e. conditions which may change over the period of incarceration). These principles underlie his risk, need and responsivity model.

Andrews indicates that there are static predictors that will remain consistent throughout an offender's disposition. Such risk can be assessed by the use of instruments that measures certain features of the offender's presenting state. These risk

assessment instruments can be used effectively by correctional professionals who have the most frequent contact with the offenders. In Ontario, the Level of Supervision Inventory is one instrument that is used to assess risk (Andrews, 1989). The higher the risk that is determined by the Level of Supervision Inventory the higher the level of service that should be provided to the client. Andrews makes the point that there are dynamic predictors which affect the recidivism potential of the client. Andrews states that, "once in the correctional system, offenders are subject to events and experiences that may produce shifts in their chances for recidivism" (p. 13). Low-risk cases may stay low during incarceration or move into higher risk categories or high-risk cases may remain so, or become low-risk cases during the disposition. He notes that this can be monitored by reassessing the risk periodically.

This study attempted to determine (i) the rate of recidivism in a Phase II young offender sample and (ii) the relationship between predictor variables and recidivism. The follow-up was based upon approximately a two-year time frame and predictors included static variables, dynamic variables and psychological test data. It was hypothesized that psychological, static and dynamic data will help in explaining recidivism in this sample of young offenders.



## METHOD

### Subjects

An assessment package was introduced at the Thunder Bay Youth Center for clinical and research purposes between 1987 and 1990. Approximately one hundred 16 and 17-year old young offenders in secure custody were assessed and a variety of social, psychological and incarceration data accumulated. From this group, subjects who were known to have moved out of province were eliminated, as well as subjects who had not been discharged for at least twelve months. Eighty-one young offenders for whom follow-up data was available served as the final sample.

### Measures

#### Recidivism

For the purposes of this study recidivism was defined as the first re-conviction of a former young offender of the Thunder Bay Youth Center either as a young offender or an adult during the follow-up period. Recidivism was defined in two ways. Recidivism #1 included any and all offence convictions that fell under the Criminal Code of Canada and/or the Provincial Offenses Act. Recidivism #2 included offence convictions that occurred solely under the Criminal Code of Canada. This format provided a liberal and conservative definition of recidivism respectively and permitted separate analyses of the data.

### Follow-up Data Source

The data collected in this study were quantitative in nature. The data were obtained from the Rapid Inquiry System of the Ministry of Correctional Services. This system maintained a detailed account of all offender records in the province of Ontario. The data indicated whether the person had been re-convicted as a young offender or an adult and also the type of disposition received (secure custody, open custody or probation).

### Static Risk Variables

The static risk measures used in this study included age, last grade completed, family dysfunction and aggregate sentence. The aggregate sentence variable in this study was length of secure custody time. Family functioning was measured by the Family Dysfunction Index (See Appendix A). The Family Dysfunction Index is a 14-item checklist of family difficulties such as parental separation and child abuse. This index was completed by a clinician based upon all available information for the young offender. The Family Dysfunction Index is a locally derived instrument. Reliability indices have not been established; some data on inter-rater reliability has been collected but not analyzed.

### Dynamic Risk Variables

The Supervisor's ratings used in this study were obtained at the end of the secure custody sentence. This was in accordance with the suggestion from Andrews that the dynamic risk factors

are changeable and should be assessed at different times during incarceration. Shift supervisors at the Youth Centre made ratings on a locally derived rating scale called the Institutional Progress and Rehabilitation Potential (IPP). The ratings were obtained from 3 different shift supervisors at the Thunder Bay Youth Centre. It was designed to evaluate in a global way how well young offenders had done while incarcerated and their likelihood of success after release. Specifically, the ratings were made of each young offender's

- (i) attitude towards rehabilitation and behaviour change
- (ii) degree and reality of discharge planning
- (iii) likelihood of further criminal activity.

Each item had its own set of verbal anchors and rating scores from one to five keyed in the same direction. (See Appendix B for form).

Post-incarceration disposition (i.e. open custody, or probation, or nothing) was also considered to be a dynamic risk factor. The Ministry of Correctional Services records usually provided this information on each former young offender. In most cases it was easily determined whether or not there was probation or open custody dispositions following incarceration, and the duration of any such dispositions. From the records it was also possible to determine whether a young offender who received probation or open custody had re-offended during this supervisory period. Post-incarceration dispositions can arise or change as a

result of progress reviews that may be held for each young offender every six months during incarceration. Thus, this variable is to some extent dynamic although in many cases post-incarceration dispositions are set at the time of sentencing.

### Psychometric Variables

The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale--(Revised) or (WAIS-R) is a standardized test of intelligence (Wechsler, 1981). It provides the investigator with a measure of the subject's full, verbal and performance IQ's. The (WAIS-R) consists of 11 subtests, six of which are verbal subtests and five of which are performance subtests. Subscales of the (WAIS-R) include: Information, Picture Completion, Digit Span, Picture Arrangement, Vocabulary, Block Design, Arithmetic, Object Assembly, Comprehension, Digit Symbol and Similarities. The (WAIS-R) is a highly reliable measure of intelligence. The reliability coefficients for Verbal, Performance and Full Scale IQ's are .97, .93 and .97 respectively.

The Basic Personality Inventory (BPI) (Jackson, 1989) is a 240-item measure of personality which yields 12 scale scores. The scales are: Interpersonal Problems, Alienation, Impulse Expression, Depression, Anxiety, Hypochondriasis, Persecutory Ideation, Thinking Disorder, Self-Depreciation, Social Introversion, Denial and Deviation. This test has been used successfully with young offenders to help determine the structure of their personality (Jaffe et al., 1985). It also aids in

identifying problem areas for the young offender so that the clinician can devise appropriate interventions. The Basic Personality Inventory is a highly reliable measure of personality with sound psychometric properties (Holden, Fekken, Reddon, Helmes and Jackson 1988).

The Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST) (Skinner, 1982a) is a measure of problems related to substance abuse. The questionnaire contains 20 items that are answered and scored based on a "yes" or "no" format. The Drug Abuse Screening Test is also a highly reliable instrument with an internal consistency reliability (coefficient alpha) = .92 (Skinner, 1982a). Concurrent validity was established by correlating the DAST with the type and frequency of drug use in the past 12 months for a sample of 256 alcohol and drug treatment clients. Correlations ranged from,  $r = .19, p < .05$  for heroin use to  $r = .55, p < .01$  for cannabis use. Skinner does admit that further validation is necessary.

The Michigan Alcohol Screening Test or (MAST) (Selzer, 1971, Skinner, 1982b) measures degree of problems associated with alcohol use. This questionnaire has 24 items and a "yes" or "no" answer format. The internal consistency reliability of the MAST (coefficient alpha) is from .90 to .93 (Skinner, 1982c). In a study of the MAST's psychometric properties Selzer, Venokur and Van Rooijen (1975) found a validity coefficient for criterion group membership to be  $r = .79$ .

### Permission

Permission was requested and granted through the superintendent of the Thunder Bay Correctional Centre and the Ministry of Correctional Services to obtain statistical profiles on former young offenders approximately 2 years after their assessment date. This research project was also approved by the Lakehead University Ethics Advisory Committee (see Appendix C). The data were number coded to preserve anonymity.

### Coding

The coding of the data received from the Ministry of Correctional Services involved calculating the length of follow-up for each young offender and recording this figure in months. Data for "yes" or "no" dichotomous variables were coded "1" = "yes", or "0" = "no". These variables included, open to follow, probation to follow, Recidivism #1, Recidivism #2. The dichotomy involving the type of re-offense--young offender or adult was coded "1" = "young offender", or "2" = "adult". Also, the length of time elapsed from the expiration of the secure custody sentence to the 1st re-conviction was calculated and coded. The time elapsed to 1st re-conviction was calculated for both the liberal and conservative definitions of recidivism. The data were then entered into the computer and were matched with the existing psychosocial data. Once matched the data were ready for the analysis.

## RESULTS

The follow-up data received from the Ministry of Correctional Services (MCS) allowed for the analysis of 81 subjects, 75 male and 6 female on the variables of interest. The mean follow-up period was 28 months. Descriptive statistics on the static variables defined in this study can be found in Table 1.

Forty-seven subjects or (58.0%) of the sample had re-offended under the Criminal Code of Canada and/or Provincial Offenses Act (in this study Recidivism #1). Of those 47 subjects who re-offended under this category, 20 (42.6%) did so as a young offender, while the remaining 27 (57.4%) did so as an adult. Forty-four subjects or (54.3%) were re-convicted solely under the Criminal Code of Canada (Recidivism #2). Of those 44 subjects, 19 or (43.2%) were re-convicted as a young offender, and 25 or (56.8%) were re-convicted as an adult.

The time from the expiration of the secure custody sentence to the date of the first re-conviction (Recidivism #1) was 11.45 months with standard deviation of 7.78 months. The median value was 10.00 months. The mean time to reconviction (Recidivism #2) was 11.52 months with standard deviation of 8.21 months. The median value was 9.50 months.

Table 1.  
Descriptive Data on Static Variables

Variable	n	M	S.D.	median	min.	max.
Age (years)	81	17.10	0.63	17.10	15.60	18.40
Aggregate Sentence (days)	81	204.98	179.82	143.00	24.00	1006.00
Family Dysfunction Index	81	9.04	4.11	9.00	0.00	17.00
Last Grade Completed	81	8.60	1.00	8.00	6.00	12.00



### Psychometric Variables

Table 2 provides means and standard deviations for the personality measure used in this study. For comparative purposes Table 2 also provides the results of the BPI (Basic Personality Inventory) scores of 12 to 16 year old male offenders from a study by Jaffe et al. (1985). Jaffe looked at the BPI as a predictor of recidivism. It was not possible to pursue multivariate analysis of variance to compare the means obtained in this study with those in Jaffe's study as Jaffe's individual data were not available. However, z-tests were performed to determine if significant differences existed between our 16-18 year sample and Jaffe's larger group. There were seven scales that showed significant differences between our sample and Jaffe's. These were on the Hypochondriasis, Depression, Persecutory Ideation, Anxiety, Thought Disorder, Self-Depreciation and Alienation scales. Jaffe's younger subjects had higher mean scores on all scales except Alienation where our 16-18 year old sample had a higher mean score. These differences indicate that Jaffe's subjects were reporting more psychological problems than our subjects.

Table 3. displays descriptive statistics for the intelligence measure and the measures of drug and alcohol problems.

Table 2.  
Comparison of BPI Scores Between  
Phase 1 Offenders and Secure Custody  
Phase 2 Offenders

BPI Scale	Jaffe et al.'s <sup>1</sup> Phase 1 sample n = 453		Secure Custody <sup>2</sup> Phase 2 sample n = 73		z-score
	M	s.d.	M	s.d.	
Hypochondriasis	5.02	3.42	3.89	3.09	2.83**
Depression	7.03	4.20	5.96	3.70	2.18*
Denial	6.94	2.89	7.06	3.23	-0.35
Interpersonal Problems	11.36	3.51	11.58	3.97	0.54
Alienation	8.04	3.25	9.62	3.13	-4.16**
Persecutory Ideation	8.72	3.33	7.32	3.66	3.59**
Anxiety	7.20	3.10	5.84	3.26	3.77**
Thought Disorder	8.87	3.46	3.47	2.82	13.17**
Impulse Expression	9.88	3.42	10.47	3.54	-1.32
Social Introversion	6.42	3.66	6.75	3.73	-0.77
Self- Depreciation	5.43	3.90	4.36	3.09	2.33*
Deviation	5.67	3.32	6.21	3.09	1.36

<sup>1</sup> From Jaffe et al. (1985). <sup>2</sup> Six female subjects excluded from Phase 2 population on this table. Also, missing data for 2 male subjects.

Table 3.

Means and Standard Deviations for Psychological Data

Variable	n	M	SD
WAIS-R IQ Full	77	94.29	11.76
Verbal	76	90.18	11.50
Performance	76	100.92	13.34
Drug Abuse Screening Test	81	7.19	4.87
Michigan Alcohol Screening Test	81	7.86	4.74

A t-test demonstrated a significant discrepancy between the Verbal and Performance IQ scores,  $t(74) = 5.92$ ,  $p < .01$ . It is noteworthy that the mean Verbal IQ-Performance IQ discrepancy of 10.74 in this sample exceeds the criterion of 10 IQ points established by Kaufman (1990) as a clinically significant in individual cases. A z-test demonstrated that the sample mean Verbal IQ was significantly different from the population mean of 100 ( $z = 5.71$ ,  $p < .01$ ). A similar z-test for mean score of the Performance IQ was not significantly different from the population mean. A final z-test for mean score of the Full Scale IQ established that there was a significant difference between our sample and the population mean of 100 ( $z = 3.32$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The mean (DAST) score of 7.19 was in the "moderate" range for drug abuse problems. The mean MAST score of 7.86 was also in the "moderate" range for problems associated with alcohol use.

#### Dynamic Variables

Table #4 provides the descriptive statistics for the Institutional Progress and Rehabilitation Potential ratings. Three different correctional officers rated each young offender on all 3 questions. However, the correctional officers varied (i.e. not always the same three). Nevertheless, the inter-correlations between the three ratings for each question give some indication of reliability. These correlations ranged from .49 to .63 and are in the marginal to fair range. For the purpose of analysis, the mean of the three ratings was used for

each subject. The overall mean of item #1 was between the verbal anchors "very poor" and "average" for behaviour change and attitude towards rehabilitation. The mean of item #2 was between the verbal anchors "poor" and "average" for the degree and reality of discharge planning. The mean of item #3 was between the verbal anchors "moderate likelihood" and "very likely" for the likelihood of further criminal activity.

A breakdown of recidivism by post-incarceration disposition is provided in Table #5. A chi-square analysis was performed for each disposition following secure custody and for each definition of recidivism (4 separate chi-squares). All chi-square analyses were non-significant. These analyses however, do not take into account the combinations of these dispositions (i.e. some subjects had both open and probation).

#### The Relationship Between Recidivism and Static, Dynamic and Psychometric Variables

All variables were analyzed to investigate their relationship with Recidivism #1 and Recidivism #2. The correlation matrices appear in Table #6 and in Table #7. Simple correlations show Aggregate sentence, the Family Dysfunction Index, BPI Anxiety and the "likelihood of further criminal activity" rating to be significant for Recidivism #1. Simple correlations for Aggregate sentence, anxiety, the Family Dysfunction Index and the "likelihood of criminal activity" rating were also significant with Recidivism #2.

Aggregate sentence had significant first order correlations with recidivism and is a measure that is readily available at the time of incarceration. Consequently, the contribution of other variables to the prediction of recidivism beyond the aggregate sentence variable was of interest. As a result, correlations were performed on all variables with aggregate sentence partialled out. First order partial correlations are shown in Tables 6 and 7. After aggregate sentence was partialled out the first order correlations that remained significant for Recidivism #1 were anxiety and the "likelihood of further criminal activity". For Recidivism #2 the first order correlations that remained significant after aggregate sentence was partialled out were anxiety, "attitude towards rehabilitation", and the "likelihood of further criminal activity".

For both definitions of recidivism the data were subjected to a stepwise multiple regression analysis. This method of analysis was used for exploratory purposes to expose superfluous variables. Such variables could then be eliminated in future research (Tabachnick and Fidell, 1989). For Recidivism #1 a maximum multiple  $R = .38$  was obtained. The variables that remained in the equation explained 15.16% of the variance. The two variables that contributed significantly to the variance were aggregate sentence and the "likelihood of further criminal activity" rating. The aggregate sentence beta weight was significant at  $t(2) = 2.595$ ,  $p < .02$ . The longer the sentence the

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Table 4.Descriptive Statistics on Dynamic Variables  
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Variable	n	M	S.D.
attitude towards rehabilitation and behaviour change	74	2.53	0.98
degree and reality of discharge planning	74	2.40	0.87
likelihood of further criminal activity	74	3.87	0.92

  
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Table 5.  
Disposition Following Secure Custody  
Recidivism #1 & #2.

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	Probation		Open	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Recidivism #1	20	27	24	23
No Recidivism	15	19	14	20
Recidivism #2	17	27	22	22
No Recidivism	18	19	16	21

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@Note: All Chi-square analyses were non-significant.



more likely the young offender was to re-offend according to the parameters of Recidivism #1. Also the "likelihood of further criminal activity" beta weight was significant at  $t(2) = 2.269$ ,  $p < .03$ . When the data was regressed onto Recidivism #2, a multiple  $R = .41$  was achieved. This equation accounted for 16.55% of the variance. Again the two significant variables remaining in the equation were aggregate sentence and the "likelihood of further criminal activity" rating. The aggregate sentence beta weight was significant at  $t(2) = 2.734$ ,  $p < .01$ ; while the "likelihood of further criminal activity" beta weight was significant at  $t(2) = 2.389$ ,  $p < .02$ .

Table 6.  
Correlations, Partial Correlations and Multiple  
Regression Beta Weights between Predictor Variables and  
Recidivism #1.

	Simple Correlations	First Order Partial Controlling for Aggregate Sentence	Multiple Regression Beta Weights
<u>Static</u> <u>Variables</u>			
Age	-.09	-.04	
Aggregate Sentence	.25*		.30
Last Grade Completed	-.11	-.10	
Family Dysfunction Index	.24*	.16	
<u>Dynamic</u> <u>Variables</u>			
Attitude Toward Rehabilitation	-.17	-.22	
Reality of Discharge Planning	-.12	-.14	
Likelihood of Further Criminal Activity	.23*	.27*	.26
<u>Psychological</u> <u>Variables</u>			
WAISRIQ Full Scale	-.14	-.14	
WAISRIQ Verbal	-.14	-.15	
WAISRIQ Performance	-.13	-.09	
Drug Abuse Screening Test	.15	.19	
Michigan Alcohol Screening Test	-.13	-.10	
Hypochondriasis	-.16	-.14	
Depression	-.16	-.22	
Denial	.02	.03	
Interpersonal Problems	.18	.03	
Alienation	.19	.10	
Persecutory Ideation	-.15	-.18	
Anxiety	-.28*	-.26*	
Thought Disorder	-.20	-.12	
Impulse Expression	.01	.03	
Social Introversion	-.04	-.07	
Self-Depreciation	-.16	-.19	
Deviation	-.04	-.14	

\*p < .05.

Table 7.  
Correlations and Partial Correlations and Multiple  
Regression Beta Weights Between Predictor Variables and  
Recidivism #2

	Simple Correlations	First Order Partial Controlling for Aggregate Sentence	Multiple Regression BetaWeights
<u>Static</u>			
<u>Variables</u>			
Age	-.08	-.01	
Aggregate Sentence	.26*		.31
Last Grade Completed	-.09	-.06	
Family Dysfunction Index	.26*	.19	
<u>Dynamic</u>			
<u>Variables</u>			
Attitude Towards Rehabilitation	-.21	-.26*	
Reality of Discharge Planning	-.20	-.23	
Likelihood of Further Criminal Activity	.25*	.29*	.28
<u>Psychological</u>			
<u>Variables</u>			
WAISRIQ Full Scale	-.09	-.07	
WAISRIQ Verbal	-.08	-.07	
WAISRIQ Performance	-.09	-.05	
Drug Abuse Screening Test	.14	.19	
Michigan Alcohol Screening Test	-.12	-.09	
Hypochondriasis	-.15	-.12	
Depression	-.06	-.11	
Denial	.01	.01	
Interpersonal Problems	.18	.04	
Alienation	.15	.06	
Persecutory Ideation	-.09	-.10	
Anxiety	-.26*	-.24 <del>†</del>	
Thought Disorder	-.13	-.03	
Impulse Expression	.01	.04	
Social Introversion	-.03	-.06	
Self-Depreciation	-.13	-.17	
Deviation	-.06	-.17	

\* $p < .05$ . ~~†~~  $p < .06$ .

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study are discussed in the following sections: rates of recidivism, interpretation of psychosocial results, risk models, and limitations of the study. Possible future directions for research are explored in the limitations section.

### Rates of Recidivism

The rates of recidivism determined in this study for Recidivism #1 and Recidivism #2 appear to be reflective of the general trend in Ontario juvenile corrections. In this study 58% and 54.3% respectively had recidivated within the follow-up period. Loring (1988) found that 39% of Phase II young offenders had been re-convicted within the first year after release from secure custody. It was discovered that our sample of young offenders re-offended with almost a 20% higher frequency over the longer follow-up period. Our results tend to follow the general rule of thumb for recidivism (i.e. 65% recidivism rate in FBI study of ex-offenders, FBI Uniform Crime Reports, 1974) established in the literature review. The fact that more than half of all young offenders re-offended within the follow-up period reinforces the general problem of recidivism. It is of value to note that the rate of recidivism for this study was also higher than rates noted under the JDA for a similar population. Lescheid, Austin and Jaffe (1988) found that 27.1% of a special

needs population re-offended, while the rate of re-offending under the YOA was 55.3%. This latter figure is congruent with the results obtained in this study. The rates of recidivism for this study appear to be substantially less than the 71.4% re-offending rate obtained in Hundleby's three year follow-up of training school boys. This discrepancy probably arises because of Hundleby's operational definition of recidivism. His definition was based upon self-reported delinquent acts and re-admission to training schools or correctional facilities. Furthermore, the re-admissions that he counted were the result of cases adjudicated under the Juvenile Delinquents Act rather than under the YOA. Also the longer time frame may be another reason the rate is higher.

#### Interpretation of Psychosocial Data

Jaffe et al.'s Phase 1 offender Basic Personality Inventory scores were compared to those obtained from this study's Phase 2 offenders. The means and standard deviations of the two samples demonstrated some differences between young offenders. Some of the scales that were significantly different were Hypochondriasis, Depression, Persecutory Ideation, Anxiety and Self-Depreciation. The two most notable differences between the samples existed for Thought Disorder and Alienation. These two variables will be examined in more detail in this discussion.

The scale of Thought Disorder was much higher among Jaffe et al.'s sample of young offenders than in the young offenders of

the present research. This may suggest that Jaffe's subjects were more likely to have emotional/psychological problems than our sample of Phase 2 offenders. One reason for this difference may be that Jaffe's subjects were all referrals for psychological assessments, whereas most of our sample were not. Another possibility may be that his subjects were younger. The younger people get into trouble, the more serious the conduct disorder problems are thought to be. The alienation scale for our Phase 2 sample was significantly higher than Jaffe's Phase 1 sample. The Phase 2 offenders scored higher possibly because they have had more time and more experience with the delinquent sub-groups than the Phase 1 offenders.

The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Revised results from this sample of young offenders supported the trend of the mean of Performance IQ scores being higher than the mean Verbal IQ scores among delinquent youth (Wechsler, 1958 as cited in Walsh and Beyer, 1986). The statistically significant difference between mean Performance and Verbal IQ scores on group criteria also supports Kaufman's (1990) notion that such a discrepancy is reflective of problematic behaviour in individual cases. The mean of the Verbal IQ scores was barely in the average range and was significantly lower than the population mean of 100. A possible explanation may be the truancy of young offenders before they entered the secure facility. This may have resulted in educational deficiencies that may have influenced verbal IQ

scores. The mean last grade completed for the 16-18 year old young offenders of this study was 8.60 which seems lower than would be expected for similar aged peers not having academic difficulties. Of course, it can also be argued that lower verbal IQ's increase vulnerability to delinquency. Regardless, low verbal IQ in a young offender sample has implications for choice of therapy. Young offenders with lower verbal IQ's may have limited capacity to benefit from traditional verbal/insight therapy. It may be that this form of rehabilitation counselling may not be the best choice for this population. The Full Scale IQ mean indicates that this young offender sample is fairly representative of youths of similar age. The mean of the Full Scale IQ scores was in the average range which would tend to indicate that the youths in this sample possess sufficient intellectual potential for adaptive functioning in everyday life.

The results of this study suggest that there is a substantial amount of family dysfunction in this particular young offender sample. The mean score 9.04 on the Family Dysfunction Index demonstrates the problems young offenders have in their family backgrounds. There are 14 items on the Family Dysfunction Index. Six items can be scored "1" and 8 items can be scored as "1" or "2", where "2" is an indication of severity. Clearly, our subjects were checking off quite a number of problem areas or fewer, but more severe problem areas. Loeber and Dishion (1983), McCord and McCord (1963) both noted that, "Families of antisocial

children are characterized by harsh and inconsistent discipline, little positive parental involvement with the child, and poor monitoring and supervision of the child's activities" (cited in Patterson, DeBaryshe and Ramsey, 1989 p. 329). The family of a young offender may contribute to delinquency but can also exert a controlling influence on problem behaviours. Forgatch (1988, cited in Patterson, DeBaryshe and Ramsey, 1989) found that with changes in parental discipline there was a reduction in the child's antisocial behaviour. This suggests that families can be given access to preventative measures such as parent-skills training courses.

Problems related to alcohol use were measured by the Michigan Alcohol Screening Test (MAST) (Seltzer, 1971). The mean score of this test fell into the moderate range of difficulties related to alcohol. This result suggests that alcohol has been causing the typical young offender in our sample noteworthy problems in his/her life. The MAST was filled out retrospectively for the year prior to incarceration. Alcohol related difficulties on the MAST cover school/work, family/friend relations, physical and psychological health. If the mean is in the moderate range then some young offenders have serious problems. It was also determined that 12.5% of our sample fell into the substantial range of difficulties related to alcohol. Again, this illustrates the degree to which alcohol is problematic for the young offender. Although it was discovered



that alcohol was not a predictor of recidivism, alcohol abuse will interfere with healthy functioning. Therefore, alcohol problems are worthy of intervention during incarceration. Clearly this variable should be examined in Andrew's dynamic sense to see whether there are changes in risk over incarceration.

The Drug Abuse Screening Tests (DAST) of all the young offenders studied yielded a mean score that also fell into the moderate range of problems related to drug use. There were also 17.5% of our sample that fell into the substantial range of difficulties related to drug abuse. There was another 5% of our sample that fell into the severe range of difficulties related to drug abuse. It appears that many of the young offenders in this sample used drugs to a degree that impaired various areas of their lives. Again these could range from school/work difficulties, family/peer relations and perhaps even medical or psychological problems. Thus, substance abuse programming is important for incarcerated young offenders. Scores on the DAST failed to be a significant contributor to recidivism. Drug abuse was assessed by asking the young offenders to respond on the basis of one year prior to their incarceration. Again, the level of drug problems may have changed during the disposition. It may be advisable to evaluate the attitude of young offenders towards drug/alcohol use at regular intervals throughout the disposition. Changes in such measures may yield valuable information regarding

the status of the young offender's substance abuse problems and may be related to recidivism.

The very general and preliminary examination of post incarceration dispositions revealed no relationship with recidivism. However, a more detailed examination is required. Young offenders, on average, were re-convicted 10-11 months after their release in this study. We do not know the exact timing of re-offense but looking at this in relation to dispositions after secure custody would be useful information. It would also be important to look at combinations of post-secure dispositions (e.g. open and probation) which was not taken into account in this study.

### Risk Models

The partial correlation analyses and the multiple regression equations for both the liberal and conservative definitions of recidivism both indicate two significant predictor variables. These two predictors can be discussed in terms of Andrew's risk model which provides ways of understanding recidivism and its prediction.

One of the variables that remained in the regression equation was the likelihood of re-offending as indicated by the Supervisor's Ratings. This result can be interpreted as one that lends support to Andrews' (1989) concept of dynamic risk factors. It appears that the youth officers were on the right track in

rating the likelihood of a young person under their care re-offending. Youth officer ratings of young offender attitude toward rehabilitation was also significantly correlated with Recidivism #1 after aggregate sentence was partialled out. This would seem to suggest that the frequent contact of the officers with the young offenders and the fact that they made their ratings at the end of the young offenders secure custody contributes to prediction. It is important to note, however, that supervisor ratings, although statistically significant in predicting recidivism, are far from perfect and contribute in a relatively small way to the prediction of recidivism. We do not know whether young offenders actually changed during incarceration (i.e. whether risk factors were dynamic in Andrews' sense) because we did not have ratings from early in the incarceration. However, the fact that a measure taken at the end of incarceration is one of the best predictors of recidivism is in keeping with Andrews' idea that initial static variables may not tell the whole story. He noted that the risk of recidivism may increase or decrease during the disposition. It is not surprising that ratings by youth officers contributed to the prediction of recidivism. The Level of Supervision Inventory (LSI), (Andrews, 1982) a rating checklist used by probation officers has been shown to be a good indicator of the risk of recidivism. Thus, judgements made by front line staff on simple rating scales can yield valuable information. The ratings of

youth officers appear to be worth further study. The psychometric properties of ratings needs to be studied. Also, research involving more youth officers or a different rating system might help to improve risk prediction. It may be that psychological testing did not contribute to Recidivism #1 or #2 because the data was usually gathered solely at the beginning of the disposition. This ignores the dynamic nature of many variables for young offenders held in secure custody. If testing was conducted at different points in the disposition, psychological variables may be identified that are associated with increases or decreases in risk of recidivism. For example, the anxiety scale of the BPI showed promise as a correlate and even remained correlated to Recidivism #1 after aggregate sentence was partialled out. Therefore, it may be useful if evaluated throughout the disposition.

Another aspect of Andrew's risk model that is supported by this research was the concept of static risk factors. These risk factors for recidivism remain constant throughout the disposition. In this research it was established that aggregate sentence was predictive of further re-offending. The aggregate sentence of a young offender is established when they enter secure custody, though this may change slightly as a result of appeals or outstanding charges being dealt with while incarcerated. A small percentage of our sample was affected by such changes. In some cases, changes were incorporated into the

aggregate sentence to reflect more accurately this static variable at its final value. It is debatable whether aggregate sentence should be recorded as it stands at the beginning of a sentence, or as it settles with outstanding charges or variations. From this research, it appears that the longer the aggregate sentence the more likely the young offender will re-offend. On the surface, it might seem that the length of secure sentence may be failing as a deterrent. However, the significant correlation only accounts for a small amount of the variability in recidivism and may be influenced by a few high risk chronic offenders receiving longer sentences. Perhaps, future research could partial out chronicity measured by first time offender versus non-first time offender.

#### Limitations of Study

This study was successful in establishing a rate of recidivism for an older sample of young offenders over a 28-month period. The results of this study also reinforced some concepts of recidivism put forth in the research literature. However, there are noteworthy limitations of this study that prevent far-reaching conclusions.

The records used to determine recidivism were at times problematic. The records were difficult to read given multiple codes, dates, entries, exits and transfers. The records were at times incomplete and had occasional errors and omissions in some

cases. Our local data and personal knowledge of the young offenders allowed us to make this observation. Improvement in the readability, collation and accuracy of criminal records of young offenders is essential if recidivism studies are to continue in a positive direction.

Another limitation of the study was the possibility of relocation out of province by young offenders. The data collected provided only re-offenses that occurred in the province of Ontario. As a result, there may have been re-offending in another province which would not be counted as such in this study. It is likely that this occurred in a few instances. However, we did eliminate from the study young offenders known to have come from and intending to return to other provinces which hopefully minimized this design flaw.

Significant results from prediction studies also need to be cross-validated with new samples, which clearly was not possible with our limited data. Finally, the author was originally interested in obtaining information directly from young offenders about their adjustment after release from secure custody. Information such as living arrangements, use of time and alcohol/drug use may be critical in determining recidivism. However, explicit consent for such contact is required and had not been obtained from the young offenders of this study.

Some possible directions that young offender recidivism research may take in the future include the following options.

Future young offender recidivism studies should concentrate more on the level of risk determined at specific intervals during the disposition. In this respect, the ratings of youth officers is worthy of pursuing. Also systematic psychological testing could be utilized at specific intervals throughout the disposition to determine whether such information can contribute to prediction of recidivism. The timing of recidivism in relation to dispositions following secure custody seems worthy of more attention. Finally, it may be possible to obtain written consent from young offenders while still in secure custody to contact them for research purposes once they have been released. Quality of life indices for released young offenders could then be investigated for their relevance to recidivism.

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APPENDIX A  
FAMILY DYSFUNCTION INDEX

1.	Parents separated	within last 3 years	(2)	_____
		longer than 3 years	(1)	_____
2.	No significant mother figure		(1)	_____
3.	No significant father figure		(1)	_____
4.	Lived with alcoholic parent, step-parent, guardian			_____
	Score (1) or (2) for severity			_____
5.	Poor relationship with mother/step-mother		(1)	_____
6.	Poor relationship with father/step-father		(1)	_____
7.	Asked to leave/or left family home -			
	gone for < 1 month		(1)	
	gone for > 1 month		(2)	_____
8.	Abusive child background - physical, sexual, psychological, neglect.			
	Score (1) or (2) for severity			_____
9.	Parental discipline and family structure - permissive, laissez-faire, disorganized, chaotic.			
	Score (1) or (2) for severity			_____
10.	Witnessed spousal violence		(1)	_____
11.	CAS involvement/foster home placements			
	Score (1) or (2) for severity			_____
12.	Parents, siblings criminal record		(1)	_____
13.	Economic family problems (debt, welfare, unemployment)			
	Score (1) or (2) for severity			_____
14.	No family support upon release.			
	Score (1) or (2) for severity			_____
				_____
				_____
			TOTAL	_____

APPENDIX B  
INSTITUTIONAL PROGRESS AND REHABILITATION POTENTIAL

1. Attitude towards rehabilitation and behaviour change.

1	2	3	4	5	
VERY POOR		AVERAGE		VERY GOOD	_____

2. Degree and reality of discharge planning.

1	2	3	4	5	
POOR <sup>1</sup>		AVERAGE		VERY GOOD	_____

3. Likelihood of further criminal activity.

1	2	3	4	5	
NOT VERY LIKELY		MODERATE LIKELIHOOD		VERY LIKELY	_____

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Highest level attained	1	2	3	4	_____
Level dropped (number of times)					_____
CMU (number of times)					_____

<sup>1</sup>This anchor was in fact "poor" and not "very poor" as in item #1. It seems to have arisen as the result of an undetected typographical error.