

This Week's Citation Classic

CC/NUMBER 3
JANUARY 21, 1980

Glaser D. *The effectiveness of a prison and parole system*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964. 596 p. [University of Illinois, Urbana, IL]

This work presents data on prison and parole experiences, their statistical relationships to recidivism rates, and methods of guiding parole decisions actuarially. Its conclusions stress the variability of offenders, their problems of postprison employment, and ways of helping them acquire legitimate occupations. [The *Science Citation Index*[®] (*SCI*[®]) and the *Social Sciences Citation Index*[™] (*SSCI*[™]) indicate that this book has been cited over 285 times since 1964.]

Daniel Glaser
Department of Sociology
and Social Science
Research Institute
University of Southern California
Los Angeles, CA 90007

December 17, 1979

"In 1957, when I was an assistant professor at the University of Illinois and only three years beyond the PhD, the assistant director of the Bureau of Prisons, Frank Loveland, invited me to Washington to discuss a major study of the federal correctional system. He had gotten my name from Lloyd Ohlin, then at Columbia and now at Harvard.

"After discussing research possibilities, Loveland and I joined James Bennett, head of the Bureau for over two decades, and an older man, Francis B. Sayre, who, I learned, had proposed this project. Sayre (now deceased) had left the Harvard law faculty around 1930 to reorganize the Massachusetts prisons. Later, under President Franklin Roosevelt, he was undersecretary of state, then the last US-appointed governor of the Philippines under the independence plan that he fathered, and in 1942 fled the Japanese in a submarine with General MacArthur. When he finally retired, he renewed his interest in prisons. After Sayre and Bennett accepted our ideas, they perused annual reports of foundations to determine which members of boards of directors they should phone. Some months later, following formal proposal writing, I had a quarter million dollars from the Ford Foundation. Grantgetting has never

been the same for me since.

"I ran the study from Urbana, placing research assistants for a year in five Midwest federal prisons, and for a year in federal probation offices to contact parolees from these institutions. Our advisory board, chaired by Sayre, included federal and state correctional officials as well as academicians from several disciplines. Meeting quarterly at first, the board's nonresearchers wanted conclusive answers to all questions, immediately if not sooner. Much of my time was spent in diminishing their expectations. They made our range of inquiry too broad, but they also made us focus on policy-relevant problems (to which I tried to apply abstract theory and reproducible research methods). Our concern was with remediable conditions that foster a prisoner's postrelease unemployment and recidivism. Our data have been repeatedly cited to justify expansion of halfway houses, financial aid to inmates at release, meaningful work and educational opportunities in prison, and fewer restrictions on letters and visits to prisoners. In 1965 this study earned me the John Howard Association's Annual Award, presented by the Governor of Illinois. Because the 1964 book seemed too technical to officials, the abridged 1969 edition was prepared.¹

"In reacting to crime, many academicians join politicians in glib generalization. Neither their promised panaceas nor their laments that 'nothing works' are justifiable. Instead, we need: (1) more application of our most adequately established knowledge on what works best for whom; (2) monitoring of such applications to assure that they are what we expect; and (3) continued evaluation and experimentation to expand this knowledge. If such efforts are well-grounded in theory, both pure and applied science, as well as the general public, will benefit.

"That this work has been highly cited reflects the persistence of the problems it addresses and the constant return to research after the failure of simple solutions."

1. Glaser D. *The effectiveness of a prison and parole system*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill. 1969.345 p.