



success on parole

The influence of self-reported attitudes, experiences and background characteristics on the parole behaviors of youthful offenders.

STAFF SUMMARY

JULY, 1983

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S U C C E S S O N P A R O L E

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STAFF SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to learn more about processes leading to parole success rather than to failure and reincarceration. The study was conducted because there was very little information in the research literature about a very significant question: Why do some youth, having been judged delinquent enough to warrant Youth Authority commitment, begin to steer away from further trouble when they get out on parole, whereas others commit new offenses?

Method

The project method was naturalistic rather than experimental. In other words, we studied the effects of attitudes, events, and characteristics of parolees simply as they were rather than studying their effects by manipulating them in a controlled experiment. This distinction is important, because the project was aimed at finding out what general processes explain parole outcomes; it was not intended to test the effectiveness of any given correctional program

The design of the project was very simple. Three assessments were made of a representative sample of male wards. The wards were identified as they left Youth Authority facilities for their first paroles in 1979. The three assessments included: 1) Pre-parole, in which each ward was extensively interviewed in his final few days of incarceration to get detailed information about events, programs, and people that wards had encountered before and during their first Youth Authority stay; 2) Early parole, in which each ward was contacted and interviewed in his parole community at some point between the third and sixth month of parole to get information about experiences and

problems encountered in the initial parole period; and 3) Parole performances at 12 and 24 months, in which detailed information was gathered from parole sources about the parole-period arrests, convictions, and sentences served by those in the sample. The complete interview form is contained in the final report.

In the data analysis, we assumed that parole performance was the result of all of the experiences, attitudes, and characteristics assessed in the earlier interviews (plus a component of other unknown, unmeasured influences). Using a complicated sequence of computer calculations, we looked at alternative models or theories to explain the various parole performances that were observed.

During the summer months of 1979, Research staff identified 221 youth eligible for the study by reviewing computer lists of those scheduled for parole hearings. Eligibles included all male wards who were to be paroled to locations within California during a one-month period. The sample was limited to those in Youth Authority institutions and camps for the first time.

Between the first contact with the sample and the parole followup, the sample shrank due to various unavoidable reasons to 193. Shrinkage from the original sample did not bias the results to any appreciable extent, since inspection of the characteristics of those who could not be followed revealed that, like the remaining 193 wards, they were representative wards in terms of ages, ethnicities, prior offenses, and other background variables.

The 193-ward sample was very similar to all first commitments to the Youth Authority during the time period when the sample was identified. The Final Report displayed statistics showing that the ages, reading levels, ethnicities, geographic areas, committing offenses, and family incomes of the sample were distributed virtually the same as for all first commitments.

During the first or pre-parole assessment, all interviews were conducted in private administrative offices within Youth Authority facilities. Those meeting the criteria for being in the sample were contacted with the help of their living unit staff and asked for their participation. Then, staff introduced each ward to one of the interviewers. The interviewer explained the purpose of the study and that, if the ward agreed to participate, research staff would contact him after a few months on parole for another interview. Each ward was offered \$5.00 for the interview as an incentive to participate and to ensure a more representative sample than had we simply asked for unpaid volunteers. At this point in the project, no one refused to participate. Before the actual interviews, a written privacy notice was given to each ward and explained. (This was also done in the later, parole-period interviews.)

The followup interviews were planned to take place between each ward's third and sixth month on parole. Except for a few parolees who turned out to be extremely difficult to schedule and who were interviewed somewhat later than six months, we met this schedule. In tune with our naturalistic research design, we offered to meet and interview parolees wherever it was convenient for them. We were able to successfully suggest the local parole office to many of them, but we met others in fast food restaurants, parked cars, park benches, front porches, and other less likely locations.

Results and Discussion

How much parole success was there? Generally speaking, this sample of youth was highly delinquent, both before and after their first Youth Authority incarceration. In the average space of four and one-half years between the first contact with the police and first Youth Authority commitment, the 193 males had been arrested a total of 760 times and had served time in a secure

facility of total of 337 times. Then, they spent a total of 226 years in Youth Authority facilities (average stay, 1.16 years).

After their first Youth Authority stay, some members of the sample continued breaking laws. Depending on which statistics one decides to use, parole behavior in the sample of wards can be made to look quite good, especially considering the high levels of pre-Youth Authority crime, or quite bad. For example, only 13% were sent to state prison for parole-period offenses committed during the 24 months of followup (see Table 1), resulting in an 87% "success rate" by this criterion. Some correctional jurisdictions who report spectacularly high success rates, in fact use such a restricted measure. Alternatively, regarding the same sample we could accurately report that 77% of the sample had been arrested or temporarily detained during the 24 months leaving a "success rate" by this criterion of only 23% (Note: the complete Final Report contains detailed arrest statistics.)

Another measure of parole behavior (bottom of Table 1) scored the relative success with which each parolee stayed out of all types of confinement. This score, "good street-time percent," was calculated by dividing each person's total weeks spent outside of confinement by the total weeks of the followup. This simple measure was useful because it ignored where those charged with offenses were sent (jail, Youth Authority, prison) but it did preserve differences between parolees in costs to the California justice system for time periods spent confined rather than on-the-streets. Statistically, the score was useful because it yielded a continuous distribution of scores between zero and 100. Because it was highly correlated with the other parole performance measures and because of its good statistical properties, good street-time was chosen as the best outcome measure for examining relationships between the interview responses and parole behaviors.

TABLE 1

Disposition and Relative Success Measures of Parole Behavior

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
<u>Disposition Statistics</u>		
Dishonorable discharges to state prison.....	25	13.0
Dishonorable discharges to county jails (16) or in jails out-of-state (10).....	26	13.5
Returned to YA facilities.....	31	<u>16.1</u>
Total Parole Failures:	82	42.5
Still on parole.....	62	32.1
AVOL.....	4	2.1
General & miscellaneous discharges.....	6	<u>3.1</u>
Total Pending or Mixed Outcome:	72	37.3
Honorable discharges from parole supervision =		
Total Parole Successes:	39	20.2
TOTAL SAMPLE:	193	100.0

"Relative Success" Index Statistics

Total time (out of 24 months) spent outside of any type of confinement ("good street-time")

Mean = 15.58 months

Mean percentage of "good street-time"
(15.58 / 24) = 65%

Standard Deviation = .31

What wards told us during the interviews. The summarized interview responses represent a rare collection of the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of typical Youth Authority wards. This section will examine responses to some of the major topics covered in the interviews.

The picture that emerged from questions asked about Pre-Youth Authority Life was one of problems in all four areas shown in Table 2: family, school, peers, and economics.

Concerning family, there were marked differences between perceptions of mothers and fathers (these surface again in interview material to be presented later). While almost 80% of respondents said that they had felt close to their mothers before coming to Youth Authority, less than half reported such closeness toward fathers. Other researchers have claimed that absence of fathers produces the "hyper-masculine" traits commonly seen among delinquents-- physical aggressiveness and assaultiveness, swaggering, boastfulness, obsessions with weapons and toughness, authoritarianism--as an overcompensation for the absence. Judging from the responses in Tables 2, 3, and 4, there was a high level of father-absence, whether literal or psychological, in the backgrounds of the youth in the sample. The overall picture of family life gained from the items in Table 2 is one of poor relationships with fathers, highly punitive environments, perhaps a foster home placement or two, and the likelihood that a nonfamily adult friend took up the slack left by poor or disinterested parenting.

Impressions of school were also negative. Lack of interest in school was demonstrated by the fact that only 27.6% of the sample described their school attendance as "regular." Only half had ever taken part in school activities (those who did usually mentioned sports), and the average ward reported spending less than two hours per week doing homework.

TABLE 2

Responses to Questions About Pre-Youth Authority Life

Item	Yes		No		Mean
	#	%	#	%	
<u>Parents and Role Models</u>					
Felt "close" or "very close" to father.....	90	46.6	103	53.4	
Felt "close" or "very close" to mother.....	154	79.8	39	20.2	
Ever placed in a foster home.....	61	31.6	132	68.4	
Ever hit with stick or object for punishment . .	157	81.3	36	18.7	
Ever bruised or really beaten-up when punished	46	23.8	147	76.2	
Had hero(es); admired someone.....	92	47.7	101	52.3	
Had at least one special, helpful adult friend.....	129	66.8	64	33.2	
<u>School Experiences</u>					
Had at least one special, helpful teacher.....	133	69.6	58	30.4	
Reading Level (from files)					6.78
Hours per week spent on homework.....					1.90
Attendance at school was regular.....	53	27.6	140	72.5	
Took part in organized school. activities.....	97	50.3	95	49.2	
<u>Peers, Early Signs of Trouble</u>					
Friends were delinquent.....	130	68.8	59	31.2	
Was in street gangs.....	66	34.4	126	65.6	
Had a drinking or drug problem.....	79	40.9	114	59.1	
Age at first trouble with the law.....					12.28
<u>Economic Situation</u>					
Family ever received public assistance.....	99	52.4	90	47.6	
Had enough money for wanted things.....	111	58.1	80	41.9	
Parent(s) job title (On 6-pt. scale from 0=unemployed to 6=professional; e.g., 2= low skilled and 3=semi-skilled)					2.94
Any paid work experience.....	153	79.7	39	20.3	

Note. Sample Size = 193. Percentages are based on the number who answered each question, since there were a few missing responses to some questions. Responses summarized in this table were from the pre-parole interviews.

Table 2 items about Peers and Early Signs of Trouble are self-explanatory. Regarding economic situations, the typical family seemed to live slightly above the subsistence level, on earnings gained from blue-collar work, with occasional periods of unemployment during which the family lived on public assistance.

Regarding Life in Youth Authority Institutions and Camps (Table 3), the difference between relationships to mothers and to fathers appeared again in reports of visits. Almost twice the proportion of respondents reported regular visits from mothers than reported such visits from fathers (57.4% compared to 32.8%).

Respondents tended to evaluate the Youth Authority school programs very positively. Table 3 shows that almost three-fourths of wards considered their school program "important." Teachers were rated as somewhat or very helpful by 71.0% of the sample. Significant achievements were made in actual high school credits earned (mean = 3.26 credits per month of stay).

Two educational statistics are less glowing. Only 39.4% reported receiving help in planning for a job or for a career, which says that unless many wards simply did not remember such training, the Department has a long way to go to before it claims that all wards receive training in job survival skills. Also, those wards who were in vocational classes, on the average, said that their longest attended vocational course was slightly over eight months. This suggests that few wards in the Youth Authority population are likely to receive enough training to put them beyond the trainee stage in any given trade.

Descriptions of living unit programs were particularly interesting. Most wards gave their youth counselors and living unit programs positive ratings (proportions who considered their youth counselors and programs helpful were 70.5% and 67.4%, respectively).

TABLE 3

**Responses to Questions About Life in Youth Authority
Institutions and Camps**

Item	Yes		No		Mean
	#	%	#	%	
<u>Family and Supports from Outside</u>					
Father visited at least monthly.....	63	32.8	129	67.2	
Mother visited at least monthly.....	108	57.4	80	42.6	
Frequency of outside, visitors was "not enough".....	81	42.0	112	58.0	
Had a girlfriend or wife on the outside,.....	142	74.0	50	26.0	
<u>Academic and Vocational School Programs</u>					
Was in academic (only) school programs.....	142	76.3	44	23.7	
Was in vocational or vocational-academic programs.....	44	23.7	142	76.3	
School program was "important to you".....	141	73.1	52	26.9	
Youth Authority teachers were "very helpful" or "somewhat helpful".....	137	71.0	56	29.0	
Number of months in (longest-attended) vocational class.....					8.13
Received help in planning for a job and/or career.....	76	39.4	117	60.6	
High school credits earned per month.....					3.26
<u>Living Unit Programs</u>					
Program seemed to emphasize counseling.....	98	52.1	90	47.9	
Estimated time (minutes) per week spent in planned, one-to-one counseling.....					21.98
Estimated time (minutes) per week spent in unplanned, informal counseling.....					115.7
Estimated time (minutes) per week spent in group discussions/meetings.....					70.7
Living unit programs was "very helpful" or "somewhat helpful".....	130	67.4	63	32.6	
Youth Counselor was "very helpful" or "somewhat helpful".....	136	70.5	57	29.5	
<u>Institutional Environment; Negative Behavior Indicators</u>					
Was able to get away from others and "be by myself" when wanted.....	737	71.0	56	29.0	
There were many fights on the living unit.....		49.0	98	51.0	
"Felt safe" on the living unit.....	154	80.2	38	19.8	

TABLE 3 (continued)

Item	Yes		No		M e a n
	#	%	#	%	
Was transferred out of living unit for disciplinary reasons.....:	27	14.0	166	86.0	
Was transferred out of the institution/camp for disciplinary reasons.....	22	11.4	171	88.6	
Was in a gang while incarcerated.....	24	12.5	168	87.5	
<u>Attitudes and Values</u>					
"Might have to do illegal things" for money when released.....		11.4	177	88.6	
Believe that 'crime is not worth it'.....	173	90.1	19	9.9	
decided that "crime is not worth it" during this stay.....	104	54.5	87	45.5	
Involved in any religious activity during this stay.....	115	60.8	74	39.2	

Note. Sample Size = 193. Percentages are based on the numbers who answered each question, since there were a few missing responses to some questions. Responses summarized in this table were from the pre-parole interviews.

Individual counseling tended to be informally done. The average ward reported spending less than 22 minutes per week in individual counseling that was planned, but he reported over 115 minutes per week spent in informal conversations with his counselor. Interviewers were left with an overall feeling that living unit programs were not too systematic or focused, but that wards highly valued their interactions with counselors. These interactions might have been especially valued given the high level of apparent disinterest by the wards' fathers both before and during the incarceration period.

Regarding ward's views of the institutional environment (Table 3), the vast majority of wards (80.2%) said that they had "felt safe" in their living units, even though about half (49.0%) reported seeing "many fights."

Finally, during this period it is interesting that most wards claimed that their attitudes and values were anti-crime. Table 3 shows that over 90% believed that crime was not worth the risks involved, and over half (54.5%) said that they had arrived at this belief during their Youth Authority stays (the others in the 90% said that they adopted the belief even before incarceration). When asked about how they would survive if things got tough financially, only 11.4% admitted that they might have to earn money by illegal means.

Regarding Life During the First Six Months of Parole (Table 4), reports of the family during this time period contain the same disparity between feelings toward mothers vs. fathers, even though wards reported slightly more closeness toward both mothers and fathers than in pre-Youth Authority days.

Concerning peers and other involvements, Table 4 shows a marked drop-off in the proportion of those claiming to have delinquent friends in this time period compared to pre-Youth Authority days (21.8% compared with the 68.8% in Table 2). Only 8.5% admitted to involvement in street gangs. However, positive involvements were also low. Only 18.1% were in (positive, legal) organizations and only 38.2% continued their seemingly positive Youth Authority educational experiences by enrolling in school or training while on parole.

Information about jobs and general economic situations presents a mixed picture. On the one hand, 76.8% of parolees had found at least one job during this time period. Those who had worked had found their first jobs

TABLE 4

Responses to Questions About Life During the First Three To Six Months on Parole

Item	Yes		No		Mean
	#	%	#	%	
<u>Parental Closeness & Support</u>					
Feels "close" or "very close" to father.....	107	55.4	86	44.6	
Feels "close" or "very close" to mother.....	160	86.5	33	13.5	
Receives much or all of financial support from parent(s)	98	50.8	95	49.2	
<u>Peers; Positive & Negative Involvements</u>					
Most or all of present friends have been in serious trouble with the law.....	42	21.8	151	78.2	
Involved in street gang.....	16	8.5	173	91.5	
Belong to (positive) organization (club, charity, etc.)	37	19.4	155	80.7	
Enrolled in school or training.....	73	38.2	118	61.8	
Involved in any religious activity.....	54	28.1	138	71.9	
Current drinking or drug problem.....	34	17.6	159	82.4	
<u>Job Experiences</u>					
Has had at least one job since parole date....	146	76.8	44	23.2	
Number of weeks before finding first job.....					3.43
Hourly wage (\$) of best-paying job so far....					4.71
Duration of first job (weeks).....					7.78
<u>General Economic Situation</u>					
Much of financial support comes from his own job	95	49.2	98	50.8	
Partial support comes from public assistance..	20	10.4	173	89.6	
Is at least "somewhat satisfied" financially..	115	59.6	78	40.4	
Sometimes get money by illegal means.....	52	26.9	141	73.1	
<u>Attitudes Toward Parole Agents</u>					
'See parole agent weekly (vs. less than weekly)		27.5	140	72.5	
Parole Agent is "helpful" or "very helpful"...	142	75.1	47	24.9	
Parole Agent acts like a helper (rather than "a cop")	156	85.7	26	14.3	

Note. Sample Size = 193. Percentages are based on the numbers who answered each question, since there were a few missing responses to some questions. Responses summarized in this table were from the parole-period interviews.

after an average time of only 3.43 weeks after parole release. On the other hand, jobs tended to end quickly (average duration of jobs was less than eight weeks), and 26.9% of respondents admitted sometimes using illegal means to get money. The most typical pattern of employment was intermittent work at low-paying jobs having low potential for future security or advancement.

Finally, the items in Table 4 concerning parole agents got strong positive responses. Three-fourths of respondents said that their parole agents had been helpful to them. An even higher proportion (85.7%) rated the style of their parole agents as being that of "helper" rather than policeman.

What explains parole success? To examine this question, we returned to the delinquency theories that had been used to develop the interview items. We tested the relationship between interview items and parole outcomes ("good street-time percent") in five separate equations. Each was made up by reassembling the interview items into sets according to the theory from which it had been drawn. This way we could see which items from each theory-set would stand out from the others in successfully explaining parole outcomes. Then, those items, and the theory behind them, could be more carefully examined for implications to further research and possible Youth Authority programs and policies.

In each of the five equations tested, an identical set of demographic variables was simultaneously entered along with the theoretical items to control for the influence of these "fixed" characteristics. These control-variables were age, number of priors, type of committing offense (property vs. non-property) and ethnicity. Two ethnic variables were used, Black/non-Black and Hispanic/non-Hispanic, leaving White ethnicity as a reference category. These demographic variables were put in each equation because

earlier studies suggest that they might help to predict parole outcomes. However, nothing can be done to change ages, ethnicities, or prior offense histories when persons arrive at Youth Authority. Therefore, we wanted to know what in addition to these demographics seemed to make a difference in parole performances.

Besides the demographics, the five collections of items tested were:

1. Differential association items. These pertained to the reports of family, school, peer, institutional, and parole relationships.
2. Social control items. These were items measuring the extent of parolees' stakes in legitimate conformity (school, jobs, organizational memberships, romantic attachments, others).
3. Economic items. These measured the extent of legitimate resources including family economics, personal employment variables, and "ability resources" such as reading level and training.
4. Social ecology items. These were measures of environmental conditions, such as neighborhood census material, perceptions of Youth Authority institutional environments, parole living situation, region of parole, and abuse of chemicals (drugs/alcohol).
5. Competence items. These had to do with family, schooling, reading level, achievements and behaviors in Youth Authority facilities, and productivity on parole.

There was some overlap; some items were included in more than one collection. For example, proportion of productive time on parole (time spent either in school or employed) was included in three collections, namely, the social control, economic, and competence groupings. Another source of overlap was the demographic items previously described.

Complete statistics associated with all five regression equations are available in the Final Report. For purposes of the present discussion, statistically significant predictors of parole performance have been abstracted from three of these equations and presented in Tables 5, 6, and 7. These correspond to the regression equations calculated for the Differential Association, Social Ecology, and Social Competence sets of items. The other two equations, using Social Control and Economic Theory items, produced significant predictors that were redundant with those from the other three equations. Thus, the tables and discussion will be confined to the three solutions that were most unique in terms of content.

This does not imply that Social Control Theory or Economic Theory proved inadequate. In fact, all five theories proved useful in that each set of items explained a highly significant proportion of the total variance in parole performance scores. Also, it is likely that project staff happened to develop more sensitive measures within some theory-sets than within others, which is why results should not be used to make comparative judgments about the merits of these theories.

1. Differential association items (Table 5). Besides the two significant demographic items (age and prior record, which were significant in all five equations), three of the four other significant predictors of good parole street-time involved descriptions of peers. The fourth item was a composite item made up of ratings by respondents of their parole agents. Regarding peers, an interesting reversal from what might have been expected took place. Namely, parole successes (those who stayed on the streets proportionately longer) tended to describe their pre-Youth Authority friends as being in trouble more than did parole failures. However, successes also claimed to

TABLE 5

Statistically Significant Predictors of 24-Month Parole Performance ("Good Street-Time") Derived From Differential Association Theory

<u>Predictors</u>	<u>Relationship of Predictor To Better Parole Performances</u>
Older Age at Release to Parole	Positive
Longer Prior Record	Negative
Friends Described as "in trouble" (Pre-YA Period)	Positive
Been in Any Gang While in YA	Negative
Parole Agent was: Seen often, rated as helpful, rated more as a helper than as a policeman	Positive
Friends Described as Non-Delinquent (Parole Period)	Positive

Note. Significant predictors were derived from an initial test of the simultaneous effects of 18 items (five demographic "givens" and 13 items derived from theory) on parole performance. See Table C-1, P. 85, of the Appendix for technical details.

have not been involved in gangs while incarcerated, and they were likely to describe their current (parole-period) friends as nondelinquent. While these response tendencies seem contradictory, they may have indicated a growing consciousness among successes that they had undergone change. Those who, during their institutional stay, had decided to put delinquency behind them were aware that their past associations had been delinquent ones compared with their current nondelinquent ones. Wards who had not undergone such a change were not inclined to make sharp distinctions between past and present friends.

The significance of the parole agent items might also be evidence of positive attitude change. Those who had decided against criminal lifestyles were more likely to maintain good relationships with parole agents. Of course, it is possible that the better, more effective parole agents produced more successes as well as positive ward evaluations; realistically, it is more likely that parole agent ratings as well as parolee behaviors reflected changes in overall parolee attitudes and lifestyles.

2. Social ecology items (Table 6). That this collection of items was significantly related to parole performances is interesting, since all of the significant predictors except for drug/alcohol problems are nonbehavioral ones. In this formula which stresses environmental conditions, physical location appears to have been a strong determinant of parole performances. Specifically, living in neighborhoods with higher education levels and living

TABLE 6

Statistically Significant Predictors of 24-Month Parole Performance ("Good Street-Time") Derived From Social Ecology Theory

<u>Predictors</u>	<u>Relationship of Predictor To Better Parole Performances</u>
Older Age at Release to Parole	Positive
Longer Prior Record	Negative
Higher Neighborhood Education Level (Census)	Positive
No Problem or Heavy Use of Drugs or Alcohol (Parole)	Positive
Region III Parole Location	Negative
Region IV Parole Location	Negative

Note. Significant predictors were derived from an initial test of the simultaneous effects of 18 items (five demographic "givens" and 13 items derived from theory) on parole performance. See Table c-4, p. 88; of the Appendix for technical details.

in northern parole regions (I and II) were associated with higher street-time scores. This could have happened for various reasons. First, crime-producing conditions might have been less prevalent in these areas. Or, these areas could have sent the less serious delinquents to the Youth Authority to begin with than did other areas, which would mean that area of residence during the parole period did not matter so much as earlier selection and commitment factors. Finally, it is possible that different localities react differently to parolee misbehavior. Some apprehend youth sooner, incarcerate them at a higher rate, and keep them locked up for longer times than do other localities for the same misbehaviors. Whatever the reason, the fact that location correlated significantly with time spent free from confinement is a finding that deserves further study.

3. Social competence items (Table 7). In this equation, besides age and prior record, Black ethnicity showed up as a predictor of less time spent outside of confinement during the followup period. Readers should keep in mind that in the statistical techniques of multiple regression, the weights (beta) that describe the relative contribution of each item reflect its importance with other items controlled. This is why Black ethnicity could have barely reached statistical significance in this equation ($p < .05$; see Final Report Appendix) but not in the others. In the other equations, some of the other items more fully accounted for the variance in street-time scores than Black ethnicity accounted for in the social competence equation. Because of this sometimes confusing aspect of multiple regression the weights within each equation must be interpreted only in the context of that equation.

The other significant predictors in this equation have to do with performance. One of these was a self-prophecy of performance, that is, the self-stated chances of success that were described to us by wards before

TABLE 7

Statistically Significant Predictors of 24-Month Parole Performance ("Good Street-Time") Derived From Social Competence Theory

<u>Predictors</u>	<u>Relationship of Predictor To Better Parole Performances</u>
Older Age at Release to Parole	Positive
Longer Prior Record	Negative
Black Ethnicity*	Negative
Higher Self-Stated Chances for Parole Success	Positive
Any Disciplinary Transfers in YA Facilities	Negative
No Problem or Heavy Use of Drugs or Alcohol (Parole)	Positive
Proportion of First Parole Year Spent Working or in School	Positive

Note. Significant predictors were derived from an initial test of the simultaneous effects of 17 items (five demographic "givens" and 12 items derived from theory) on parole performance. See Table C-S, P. 89, of the Appendix for technical details-

* Ethnicity (White, Black, Hispanic) was tested in all five original equations but was statistically significant in only one. See text, p. 18, for a discussion of the statistical reason for this.

they left Youth Authority facilities for parole. That these forecasts were significantly related to two subsequent years of parole street-time suggests that wards can evaluate their own abilities to stay out of future trouble as well as or better than other persons, such as officials, can evaluate them. It also supports an idea mentioned earlier, that wards tend to make decisions about future behavior at some point during incarceration. If so, the self-stated chances represented evidence of those decisions. Supporting this idea was the fact that disciplinary transfers while in Youth Authority facilities predicted poorer parole performances.

Finally, a highly significant performance variable was the proportion of time spent working or enrolled in school. There are several imaginable reasons for the importance of this item. Working provides legitimate income which alleviates at least one motive for crime. Working or school enrollment keeps youth busy during times which could be used for delinquent activity. Jobs and education can lead to increased self-esteem. Or, those most successful in keeping jobs and staying in school might simply have more intelligence and/or motivation for achievement, which qualities show up in less delinquency as well as more legitimate productivity.

Implications

Wards reveal much about how they will do on parole. When research staff first began this project, a supervisor of one parole office telephoned to take issue with the concept of interviewing wards. His comments went something like, "Why interview wards? They're not very articulate, and besides, they'll just exaggerate and tell you tall tales. You should be talking to experts!" By this last term, naturally, he was referring to parole agents and other officials. His comments were partially correct. Most wards were not very articulate, which was expected given their generally poor academic histories. But regardless of how well they said it, some of what they said had definite meaning in predicting their subsequent parole outcomes. The information given during the interviews represented a type of coded message from respondents.

Perhaps those who described themselves as non-gang-affiliated while inside, as behaving well in their living units (no disciplinary transfers), and as having higher chances for success on parole were describing tentative decisions to try to be "good" on parole. After a few months on parole, those who reported good relationships with parole agents, no problems with

alcohol or drugs, nondelinquent friendships, and involvements with jobs and school were the ones whose earlier, tentative decisions were being positively reinforced in their parole communities. Of course, there was much that could go wrong in this process. Tentative, weak decisions to give legal living a chance might have been reversed when jobs were lost or other disappointments or rebuffs took place. Alcohol or drug use, at such times, would have compounded these frustrations.

The implication of this coded-message-idea is that staff should pay serious attention to what wards in institutions and on parole have to say. Possibly the parole supervisor quoted earlier was right in saying that wards will exaggerate. But what is important is not the precise accuracy of wards' self-reports, but the overall quality or slant of the conversation. Staff should pay special attention to general optimism expressed about any key areas of adjustment--friends, drugs, alcohol, jobs, school, parole agents--and make sure that wards are reinforced for these expressions. It is possible that some people who work with wards on a routine basis tend to overlook or discount some of the minor signals that good (or bad) things are beginning to happen. Of course, experienced parole agents and institutional staff have been listening to wards and acting on what they have heard for years; these findings simply provide formal support for that process.

Personal performances in the areas of drugs, alcohol, work, and school can be used as barometers of parole performances, and perhaps manipulated to improve performances. Findings confirm the simple idea that success or failure in finding and keeping jobs, or staying in school, and in avoiding abuse of alcohol and drugs is closely related to success in staying out of trouble with the law. As with other findings, it is impossible to know how much this is due to general personality or motivational characteristics

that lead to success in all areas of life, and how much the findings are due to jobs, school, and lack of substance problems causing parole success. The theory of social competence learning stresses the developmental nature of successfully passing society's milestones, such as learning to read, learning to relate to others, graduating from school, and getting a job. This theory also maintains that these achievements relate to each other like building-blocks, with the earlier ones becoming a necessary foundation for later ones.

Accordingly, the highly delinquent sample which was studied probably represents a group of young people that missed or delayed many of these critical mastery experiences, so that some of the basic foundations for competent citizenship had still to be set. During the short time of our study, some of the youth made some major achievements, such as finding their first jobs and staying off of alcohol long enough to do well in the jobs. These achievements might have had a multiplier-effect on other areas of their lives, such that delinquent activities became less and less attractive to them

Implications are that the Department should ensure that their programs and supervision styles enhance and encourage the process of development. Although findings do not prove the effectiveness of classic "rehabilitation," which was a concept that usually meant psychotherapy or similar focused attempts to change attitudes, they indicate the importance of having practical skills with which to make basic achievements. Accordingly, institution and parole staff should continue to actively encourage and reinforce school enrollment, employment, and participation in substance abuse programs.

Wards were generous in evaluating the Youth Authority and realistic in evaluating themselves. Lending validity to the interviews was the fact that wards freely described past school, family, peer, and economic difficulties.

Interestingly, their evaluations of Youth Authority staff, programs, and personal safety at the institutions were quite positive. These evaluations might have reflected actual conditions, that is, very good staff and programs, or they might have reflected relative perceptions of conditions in Youth Authority compared with wards' lives on the streets. Youth Authority facilities and staff might have appeared as being very safe, humane, and helpful when compared to poor, frightening conditions in many wards' home environments.

Regardless of the reason for the positive evaluations, the result has one simple implication for programs and staff. Namely, staff should more fully exploit their status as positive, valued role-models for delinquents. The interview responses indicated that for many wards, in addition to a public school teacher who might have taken an interest in the youth, the Youth Authority counselor or parole agent was among the most caring non-parent adults with whom the youth had significant contact. Social learning theory indicates that this position can be a very powerful and influential one, especially since many wards might have "missed" some earlier stages of socialization and positive attitude-formation. In other words, staff might more accurately be attempting what some writers call "habilitation," that is, primary teaching of prosocial values, rather than "rehabilitation" or changing of previous ones.