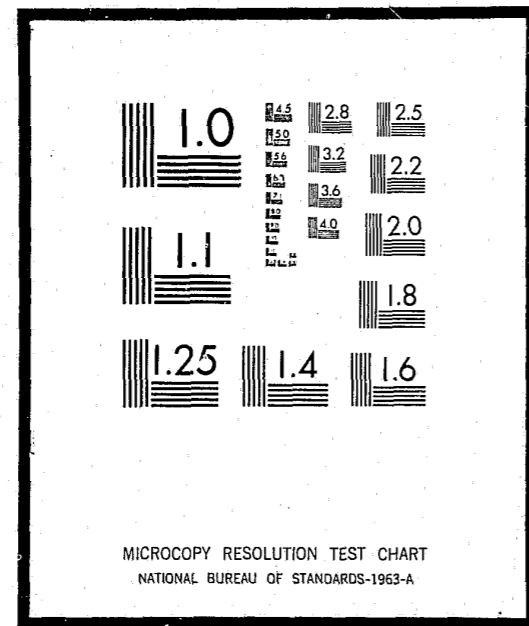


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Kenneth L. Harbo  
Director

COMMUNITY PERFORMANCE OF  
THREE CATEGORIES OF  
INSTITUTIONAL RELEASEES

by  
Wanda S. Heaton  
and  
Stuart Adams

Research Report No. 17

June 1969

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HIGHLIGHTS

Four-hundred thirty-two offenders who were released from the Lorton Correctional Complex (formerly the Reformatory) were divided into release categories and followed up for 36 months by means of records to learn whether there was variation in community performance by release type.

The three release categories, by number of offenders were the following: 1) parolees, 101; 2) conditional, or "good-time," releasees, 205; and 3) expirees, or releases at expiration of term, 126.

Performance in the community was described in terms of frequency of booking back into the D.C. Jail and in types of dispositions made after booking.

The parolees were the most successful of the three release categories. At the end of the 36-month follow-up, the parolees showed 29 percent booked, 12 percent sentenced for 30 or more days, and 7 percent sentenced for 360 or more days. The corresponding values for the conditional releasees were 44 percent, 27 percent, and 13 percent; and for the expirees, 57 percent, 39 percent, and 24 percent.

While some of the difference in performance might be attributed to personal and social differences between the releasee groups, some might be the result of differential handling before, during, or after release. The expirees, for example, who received no post-release supervision by the Parole Division, had failure rates ranging from two to three times those of the parolees.

These findings indicate a pressing need for deeper and more elaborate studies of the relationship between inmate type and performance after release to the community. Such studies are basic to an understanding of the extent to which community performance of releasees can be improved by changes in institutional treatment, in Parole Board procedures or decisions, or in post-release supervision.

COMMUNITY PERFORMANCE OF THREE CATEGORIES  
OF INSTITUTIONAL RELEASEES

INTRODUCTION

In Research Report No. 11, it was noted that a follow-up of 432 men released from the Lorton Correctional Complex in 1965 showed that at three years after release, 44 percent of the men had been arrested for a parole violation or new offense and returned to the D. C. Jail.<sup>1</sup> Approximately 25 percent of the 432 men had received sentences of 90 days or more, and about 13 percent had received sentences of 360 days or more.

Research Report No. 11 dealt with the 432 men as if they were an undifferentiated group. In actuality, the group of releasees could have been divided into many subgroups -- by category of offense, by personality type, by social circumstance, by age, and so on -- and performance in the community after release could

<sup>1</sup>Post-Release Performance of 432 Reformatory Releasees, Department of Corrections, Division of Research, Research Report No. 11, February 1969, by Stuart Adams, Wanda S. Heaton and John Spivacek.

have been examined in relation to any or all of these systems of categories.

The present report looks at performance in the community from the standpoint of type of release from the institution. The 432 men returned to the community in three different statuses: 1) on parole, 2) on conditional release, and 3) on expiration of sentence.

The report will show that these three categories of releasees perform differently in the community. They have widely different rates of return to the D. C. Jail, and they differ considerably in the frequency with which they receive sentences of 360 days or more.

The analysis presented in this report does not explain these differences in performance. To provide an explanation -- that is, to state definitely what "caused" the differences -- requires kinds of information and types of research designs that have thus far been beyond the capability of the Department.

In the future, with the completion of the development of the automatic data processing system and the establishment of procedures for carrying out controlled experiments, the Department will be in a position to account for differences in community performance of population subgroups. More important, it will be able to use this information to devise programs that protect the community more effectively, rehabilitate its offenders more surely -- and perform these operations at generally lower costs per committed offender. The present study is a first step in that direction.

#### PROCEDURE

The procedure in this study consisted of four definite stages: 1) identifying the releasees from the Complex in a specified year; 2) separating the releasees into three release categories; 3) collecting information on failure to adjust in the community, defined as "returns to the Department of Corrections"; and 4) analyzing the data on returns to the correctional system in relation to time out and penalties imposed.

To identify a group of releasees from the Complex, the study made use of the subjects in a previous project, already described in Research Report No. 11.<sup>2</sup> These subjects were all the releasees from the Complex in 1965, excluding cases that were held for detainer and those who died subsequent to release or for whom adequate records could not be found.

The 432 releasees who became the final group of subjects for the study were traced for three years after release through the records of the D. C. Jail, the Parole Office, and the other institutions of the Department.

Through the use of schedules of background information on the releasees, it was possible to identify the manner of release from the Complex in 1965. This resulted in the definition of three major release cohorts: the Parolees, the Conditional Releasees, and the Expirees.

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<sup>2</sup> See footnote 1.

To describe the post-release performance of the three cohorts, the Jail and institutional return data were tabulated month by month to identify the status of each releasee who returned to the supervision of the Department of Corrections. Plotting of these statuses against time provided a pattern of performance curves for each cohort, showing cumulative percentages booked into the D. C. Jail, booked and released at cohort, or booked and sentenced to pay fines or to be detained for specified periods of time.

#### THE SUBJECTS

The subjects of this study have been described in detail in a previous research report.<sup>3</sup> For the present report, it will be useful to recapitulate a few of the major features of the description.

Parolees: The 101 parolees in the study were predominantly (89.0%) black, with a median age of 34.2

<sup>3</sup> Social and Demographic Characteristics of Releasees from the D. C. Reformatory for Men: 1965, Department of Corrections, Research Division, Research Report No. 5, August 1968, by Jeanne J. Wahl, Donald D. Stewart, and Stuart Adams.

at time of release in 1965, a median age at first arrest of 18.6 years, 3.8 prior arrests, 1.9 prior commitments, median IQ score of 96.2, median SAT score of 6.9 grades, crimes predominantly (70.6%) against the person, and median length of confinement on present term 5.3 years. They had been exposed to vocational training in the prison in a minority of cases (30.3%) and to academic or social training in a majority of cases (59.6%), were either single or separated (58.6%), and had their largest representation (38.5%) in an unskilled occupation.

Conditional Releasees: The 205 conditional releasees were predominantly (90.7%) black, with a median age of 34.6 at time of release, a median age of 18.8 at time of first arrest, 5.7 prior arrests, 3.5 prior commitments, median IQ of 96.1, median SAT score of 6.2, crimes of greatest frequency (46.1%) against the person, and median length of confinement on present term 4.7 years. They were exposed to vocational training (17.6%) and to academic or social training (37.5%), were either single or separated

(52.9%), and had their largest representation (41.4%) in an unskilled occupation.

Expiration-of-Sentence Releasees: The 126 ex-pirees in the study were predominantly (86.8%) black, with a median age of 32.4 at time of release, a median age of 18.2 at time of first arrest, a median of 7.4 prior arrests, 4.5 prior commitments, median IQ of 96.3, median SAT score of 6.6, crimes predominantly (60.4%) against property, and median length of confinement on present term 1.3 years. They were exposed to vocational training (2.8%) and to academic or social training (18.1%), were either single or separated (60.4%), and had their largest representation (31.3%) in the unskilled occupational category.

It will be noted that the parolees differed from the conditional releasees and the ex-pirees primarily in 1) smaller numbers, 2) more crimes against the person, 3) fewer prior arrests, 4) fewer prior commitments, 5) longer time served, and 6) more exposure to vocational and academic training while in the institution.

The ex-pirees tended to be at opposite poles from the parolees on a number of characteristics, with the conditional releasees occupying an intermediate position. The ex-pirees showed 1) higher numbers of prior arrests, 2) higher number of prior commitments, 3) fewer crimes against persons and more against property, 4) much lower years of confinement, and 5) much less involvement in vocational and academic training.

In the next section, attention will focus on variations in rates of failure in the community by these three types of releasees. The presentation will be primarily in the form of "performance curves," showing trends in jail bookings and in sentences of various types over a 36-month exposure period.

#### FINDINGS

Of the three releasee groups, the parolees showed the best record of community adjustment over the 36-month exposure period. The conditional releasees were second in rank, and the ex-pirees were third in rank in general quality of performance.

Since "performance" has been defined here as "not being booked in the D. C. Jail" and as "not being booked and sentenced," the foregoing statement may be paraphrased to indicate that the parolees were the most successful in avoiding being booked into the D. C. Jail. The expirees were the least successful.

To describe these patterns of performance in detail, each of the three release cohorts is traced over a 36-month exposure period by means of a chart that shows cumulative percentages of bookings and dispositions. Each of the charts is accompanied by a table listing the values on the chart.

Parolees: The performance trends of the 101 parolees are shown in Chart 1 (page 10). Table 1, page 11, shows the same data.

The uppermost curve on the chart represents the extent to which the parolees, who were released from the Correctional Complex in 1965, have been booked into the D. C. Jail in the intervening months. The follow-up in each case has been for precisely 36

Chart 1. Parolee Bookings and Dispositions: N = 101

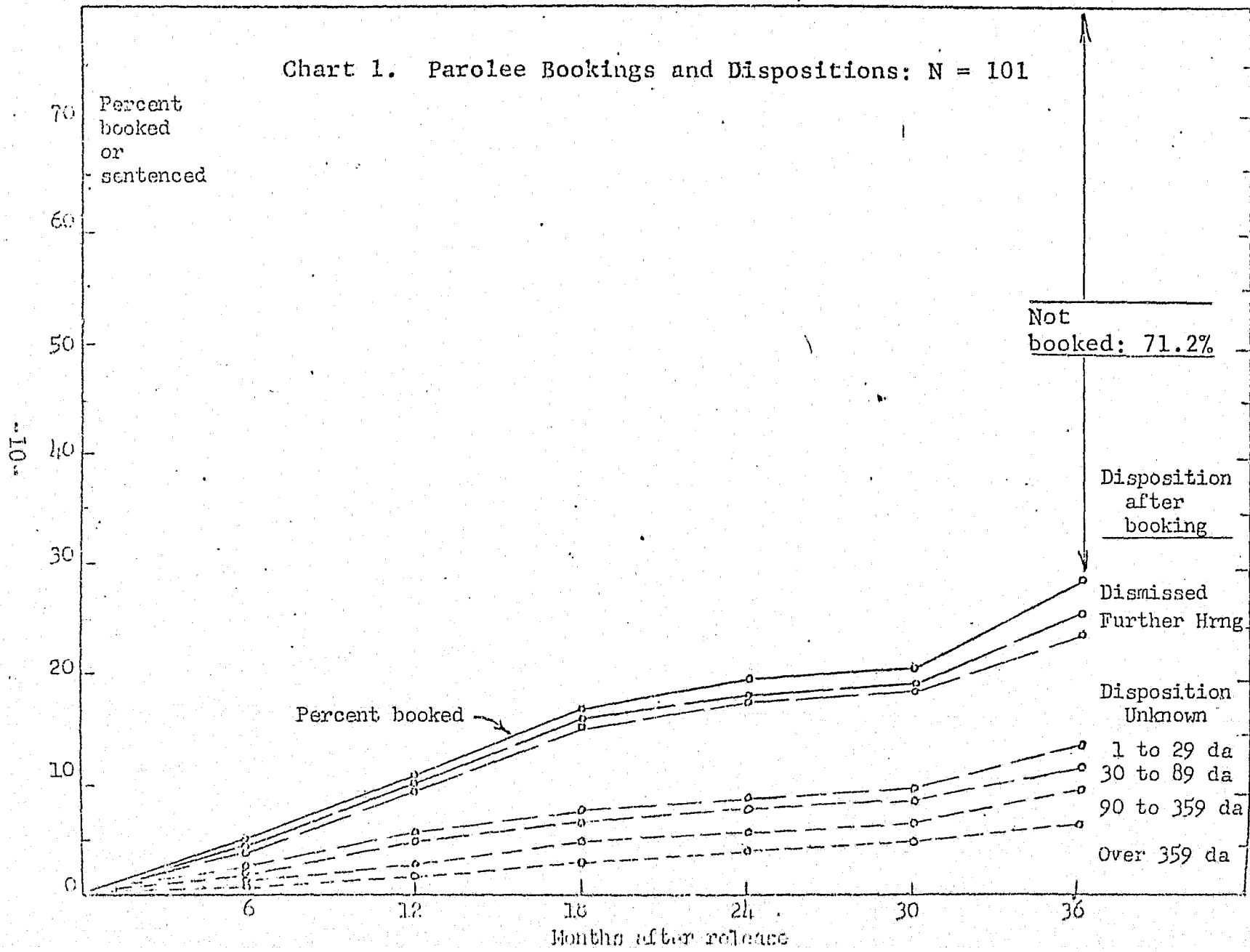




Table 1  
Parolee Bookings and Disposition

Action	Months After Release						Cumulative Total
	6	12	18	24	30	36	
Sentenced 360 or More Days	1 1.0%	2 2.0%	3 3.0%	4 4.0%	5 5.0%	7 6.9%	7 6.9%
Sentenced 90-359 Days	0	1 1.0%	2 2.0%	2 2.0%	2 2.0%	3 3.0%	10 9.9%
Sentenced 30-89 Days	1 1.0%	2 2.0%	2 2.0%	2 2.0%	2 2.0%	2 2.0%	12 11.9%
Sentenced 1-29 Days	0	1 1.0%	1 1.0%	1 1.0%	1 1.0%	2 2.0%	14 13.9%
Unknown	2 2.0%	4 4.0%	8 7.9%	9 8.9%	9 8.9%	10 9.9%	24 23.8%
Awaiting Further Hearing	0	0	0	0	0	2 2.0%	26 25.7%
Booked and Dismissed	1 1.0%	1 1.0%	1 1.0%	2 2.0%	2 2.0%	3 3.0%	29 28.8%
Not Booked							72 71.2%
Total							101 100.0%

months so as to equalize exposure time for individuals released in different parts of the year 1965.

The data in chart 1 show that in 36 months after release about 29 percent of the 101 parolees has been booked back into the D. C. Jail. Approximately 3 percent were dismissed when their cases were heard in court; about 2 percent were awaiting a further hearing in court. For about 10 percent, the disposition after booking was not evident in the available records. About 12 percent of the parolees received sentences of 30 days or more, and about 7 percent received sentences of 360 days or more.

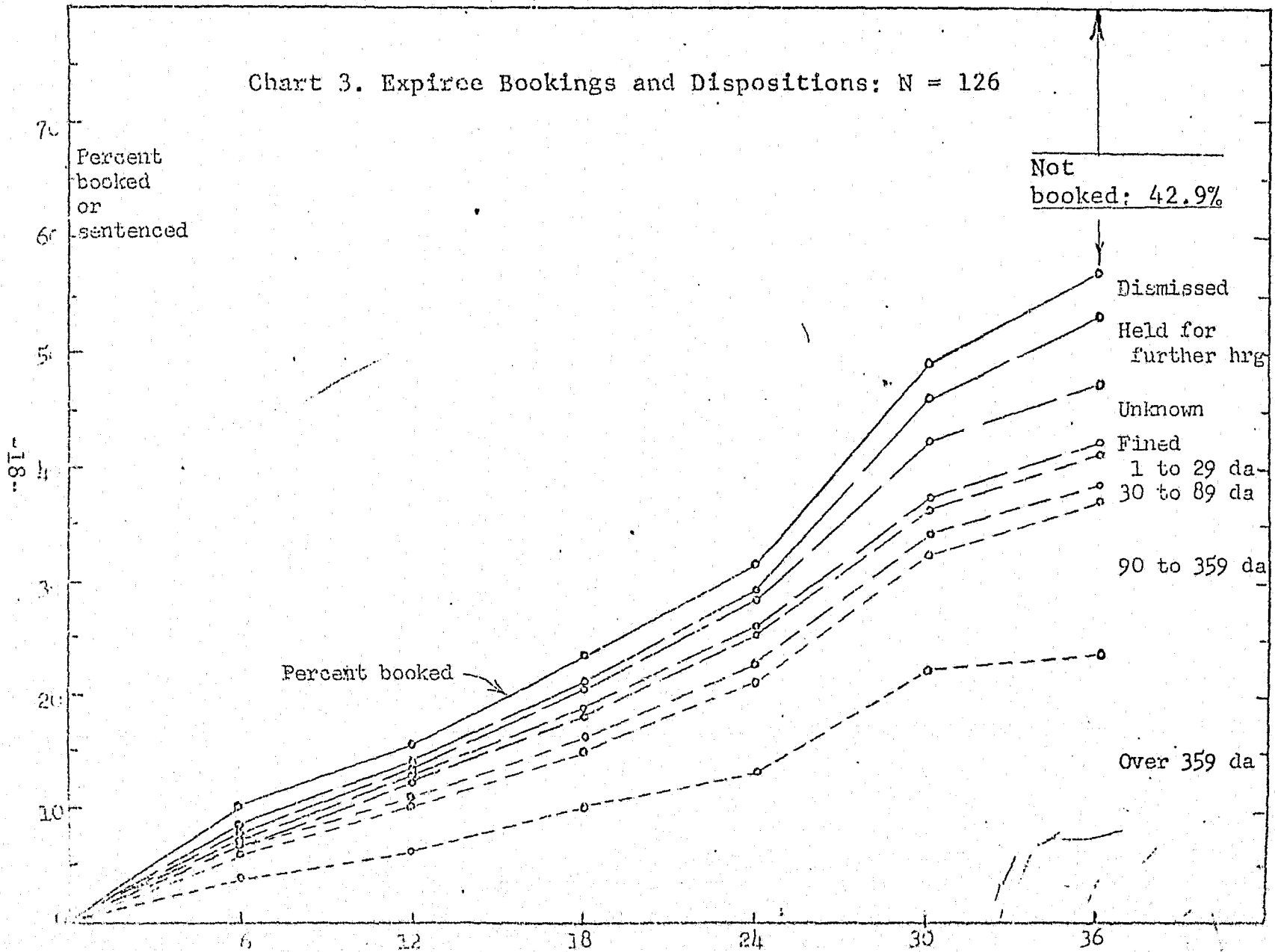
One conspicuous feature of the data is the sharp upturn in the booking curve in the 30-36 month segment. This is unusual in recidivism curves, which tend to rise rapidly in early months after release, then level off at about two or three years, and remain on a plateau indefinitely after that. In the present instance, the rapid rise of the booking curve -- together with rises of slightly less emphasis in the remaining curves -- suggests the operation of some special

influence. One might hypothesize that increasingly strict parole policies, increasingly active police, increasingly alienated parolees, or an increasingly disordered society account singly or in combination for the upturn in bookings and dispositions in the final six months of the follow-up. As will be seen later, the most plausible of these hypotheses is that the upturn in parolee failures at the 36-month mark is the result of the social disorders that occurred in the District of Columbia in early and middle 1968.

Conditional Releasees: The data on community-adjustment failures among conditional releasees are shown in Chart 2 and Table 2 (pages 14 and 15).

The performance-curve pattern for conditional releasees shows both similarities and differences when compared with the curves for parolees. In the area of similarities, there is the tendency to rise rapidly in the beginning, climb more slowly in the middle months, then accelerate rapidly upward in the end months of the follow-up period.

Chart 3. Expiree Bookings and Dispositions: N = 126



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Chart 2. Conditional Releasee Bookings and Dispositions: N = 205

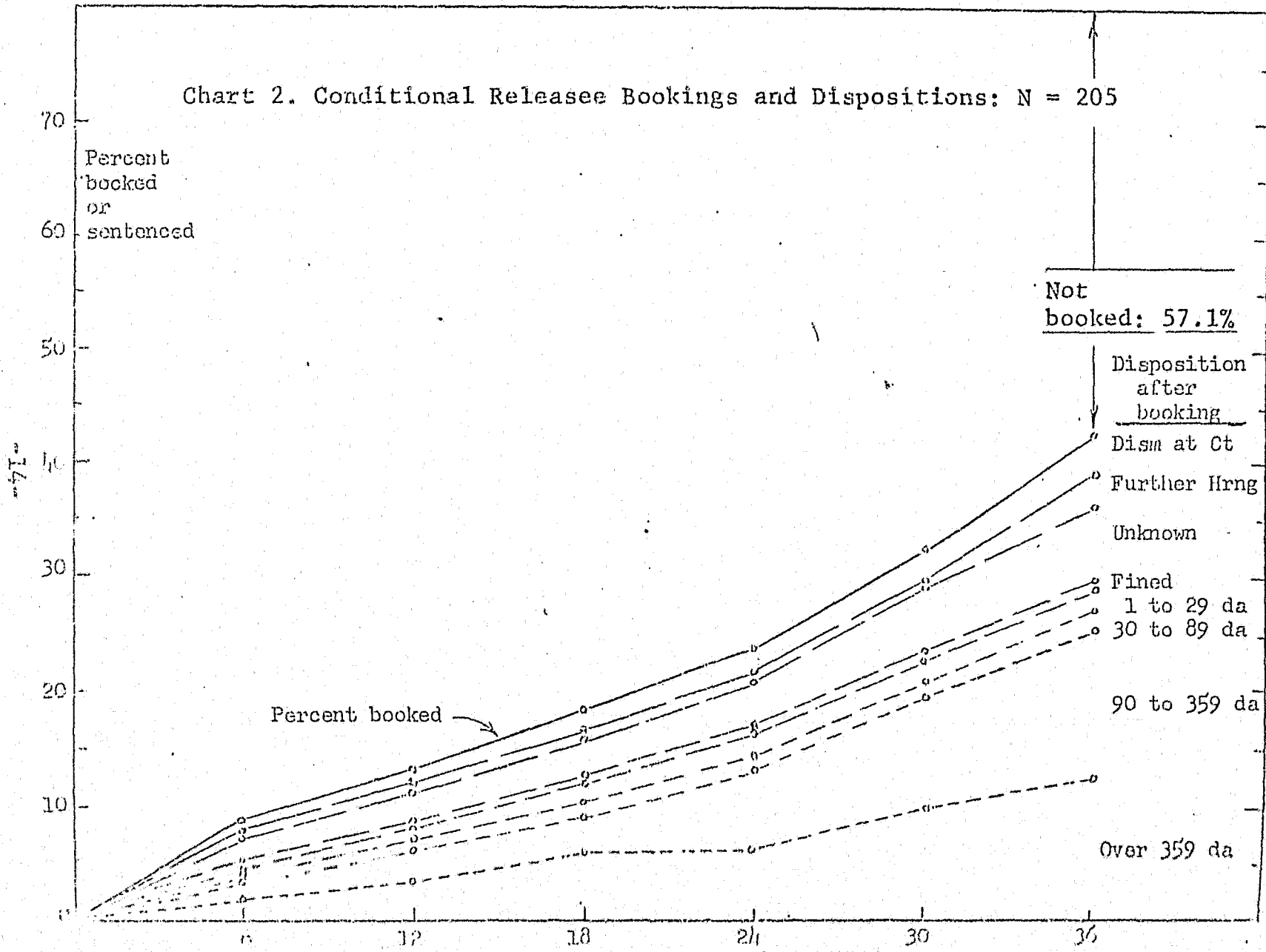


Table 2  
Conditional Release Bookings and Dispositions

Action	Months After Release						cumulative total
	6	12	18	24	30	36	
Sentenced 360 or More Days	4 2.0%	7 3.4%	12 5.9%	13 6.3%	21 10.2%	26 12.7%	26 12.7%
Sentenced 90-359 Days	4 2.0%	6 2.9%	7 3.4%	14 6.8%	19 9.3%	26 12.7%	52 25.4%
Sentenced 30-89 Days	1 .4%	2 1.0%	3 1.5%	3 1.5%	3 1.5%	4 2.0%	56 27.3%
Sentenced 1-29 Days	1 .4%	2 1.0%	3 1.5%	4 2.0%	4 2.0%	4 2.0%	60 29.3%
Fined and Dismissed	1 .4%	1 .4%	1 .4%	1 .4%	1 .4%	1 .4%	61 29.8%
Unknown	4 2.0%	6 2.9%	7 3.4%	9 4.4%	12 5.9%	14 6.8%	75 36.6%
Awaiting Further Hearing	0	0	0	0	1 .4%	6 2.9%	81 39.5%
Booked and Dismissed	3 1.5%	3 1.5%	5 2.4%	5 2.4%	6 2.9%	7 3.4%	88 42.9%
Not Booked							117 57.1%
Total							205 100.0%

-15-

In the area of differences, it will be noted that the conditional releasee curves rise higher in 36 months. There is not as strong a tendency toward leveling off in the middle months. The sector of the curves that shows acceleration after a period of slow-down is twelve months long, not six months. Finally, the part of the releasee population that received 360-day sentences is only one-half that which received 90-day sentences, not two-thirds as in the case of the parolees.

Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of the conditional releasee curves is the relatively high failure rate. The booking rate is 43 percent, compared to 29 percent for the parolees, and the 360-day sentence rate is 13 percent, compared to 7 percent for the parolees. The 90-day sentence rate is 25 percent, compared to 10 percent for the parolees.

The conditional releasees differ from the parolees at time of release, they are managed differently in the community, and they perform quite differently. The reason for the performance differential is not at

all clear, since cause and effect relationships are thoroughly mixed here.

Expirees: The 126 expirees performed in the community in the manner shown by Chart 3 and Table 3 (pages 18 and 19).

Several matters in these data are worthy of note. First, the level of failure in this group is relatively high. The booking rate of 57 percent is considerably above the 29 percent of the parolees and the 43 percent of the conditional releasees. Second, the upward "break" in the performance curves that was evident in the other two groups is evident here also, although in a special form -- it shows itself primarily between the 24th and 30th months, and thus differs in at least one respect from the upward breaks in the parolee and good-time releasee curves. Third, the expirees show a disproportionately high number of their sentences falling into the 360-days-and-up category. For the parolees, about one-fourth of the bookings were disposed of by such a sentence; for the conditional releasees, slightly more than one-



third were thus handled. However, for the expirees, slightly more than two-fifths of the bookings were given sentences of 360 days or more. The expirees, who served their initial terms for less serious offenses, were now showing a tendency to earn longer terms for more serious offenses and in considerably greater proportions.

A Comparison: To provide comparative data on the three groups of releasees, it will be useful to combine the essential data from the three charts in a single table. The results are shown on Table 4 (page 21).

Table 4 is not cumulative. It divides the performance "space" into its several sectors, each measured by its percentage dimensions. The total of the several spaces is 100.00 percent.

Comparative Performance of Parolees, Good-Time Releasees and Expirees on Bookings and Sentences

Performance Criterion	Parolees	Good-Time Releasees	Expirees
Not Booked	71.2%	57.1%	42.9%
Booked and Dismissed	3.0	3.4	4.0
Held for Further Hearing	2.0	2.9	5.5
Disposition Unknown	9.9	6.8	5.5
Fined and Dismissed	2.0	.4	.8
Sentenced 1 to 29 Days	2.0	2.0	2.4
Sentenced 30 to 89 Days	2.0	2.0	1.6
Sentenced 90 to 359 Days	3.0	12.7	13.5
Sentenced 360 or More Days	6.9	12.7	23.8
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

These data disclose that the parolees "conform" better in the community as compared with the good-time releasees and the expirees. They return to the D. C. Jail in lower percentages, and those who return are sentenced less frequently to the longer terms. Although they had histories of longer incarceration and more crimes against the person, they performed



better during the 3-year exposure period than the two other release cohorts.

The ex-pirees, on the other hand, with their shorter but more frequent terms of recent incarceration, primarily for property offenses, were apparently turning to more serious offenses that were resulting in sentences of longer duration.

#### DISCUSSION

The foregoing analysis of community performance trends of three ex-prisoner subcategories discloses that there are important differences in performance of the various subgroups. These differences are significant enough that they should be followed by changes in prison and parole policies -- if the differences mean what they appear to. If the differences in performance of parolees and ex-pirees are the result of non-supervision of the ex-pirees, for example, then it would appear that no prisoner should be allowed to return to the community to a status of non-supervision.

The foregoing analysis also discloses that there are many matters that are poorly understood in the field of corrections, and the establishment of a truly effective correctional operation will have to wait for better understanding. A sound correctional system can be built only upon a foundation of a good information system (that is, a good data processing system) and a capable research activity.

As has been noted many times, some aspects of corrections are destructive; they are harmful to both the prisoner and to the community. Other aspects are constructive and rehabilitative. Furthermore, some correctional practices are costly, and to the extent that they achieve little correction, they are wasteful. Still other practices are economical, either in the sense that they make modest use of resources or that they accomplish a great deal with the resources that they employ.

These considerations underscore the importance of carrying out further analyses of the relationship between offender characteristics and community per-

formance. It is important to know what associations exist between community performance and offense type, offender personality characteristics, offender social history, and offender goals and value systems.

Also important is further information on performance in the community and offender experiences in the correctional system. To what extent is the offender's reintegration into the community related to academic and social or vocational training, to individual or group psychotherapy, to guided group interaction, to the quality of the inmate social interaction, to inmate-staff relationships?

The analysis of such relationships is perhaps only one-half the research task confronting corrections. The other half pertains to the economics of corrections -- the problem of cost-benefit analysis. It has been noted elsewhere that the kinds of correctional experiences that are the most cost-effective are those that applied to younger offenders, particularly to young offenders in a community setting.<sup>4</sup> Detached workers

<sup>4</sup>Stuart Adams, "Is Corrections Ready for Cost-Benefit Analysis?" Paper presented at the Congress of Corrections, San Francisco, August 1968.

with juvenile gangs and community treatment workers in a probation or early-parole operation appear to accomplish the most recidivism reduction per dollar of correctional investment.

As corrections becomes more experienced, and as it develops concern for optimal use of its resources, cost-benefit analysis will perhaps become as commonplace in correctional research divisions as recidivism-rate or community-performance analysis. The rapidity with which this will occur depends on the acceptance and support that research receives from correctional administrators and control agencies.

**END**