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~~FOLLOW-UP~~ STUDY OF A SAMPLE OF PARTICIPANTS
IN THE NETWORK PROGRAM

At the request of the Department's Director of the Network Program, this survey examines the return rate of a sample of offenders who participated in this program.

The highlights of this report are presented in the following Executive Summary and illustrative graphics.

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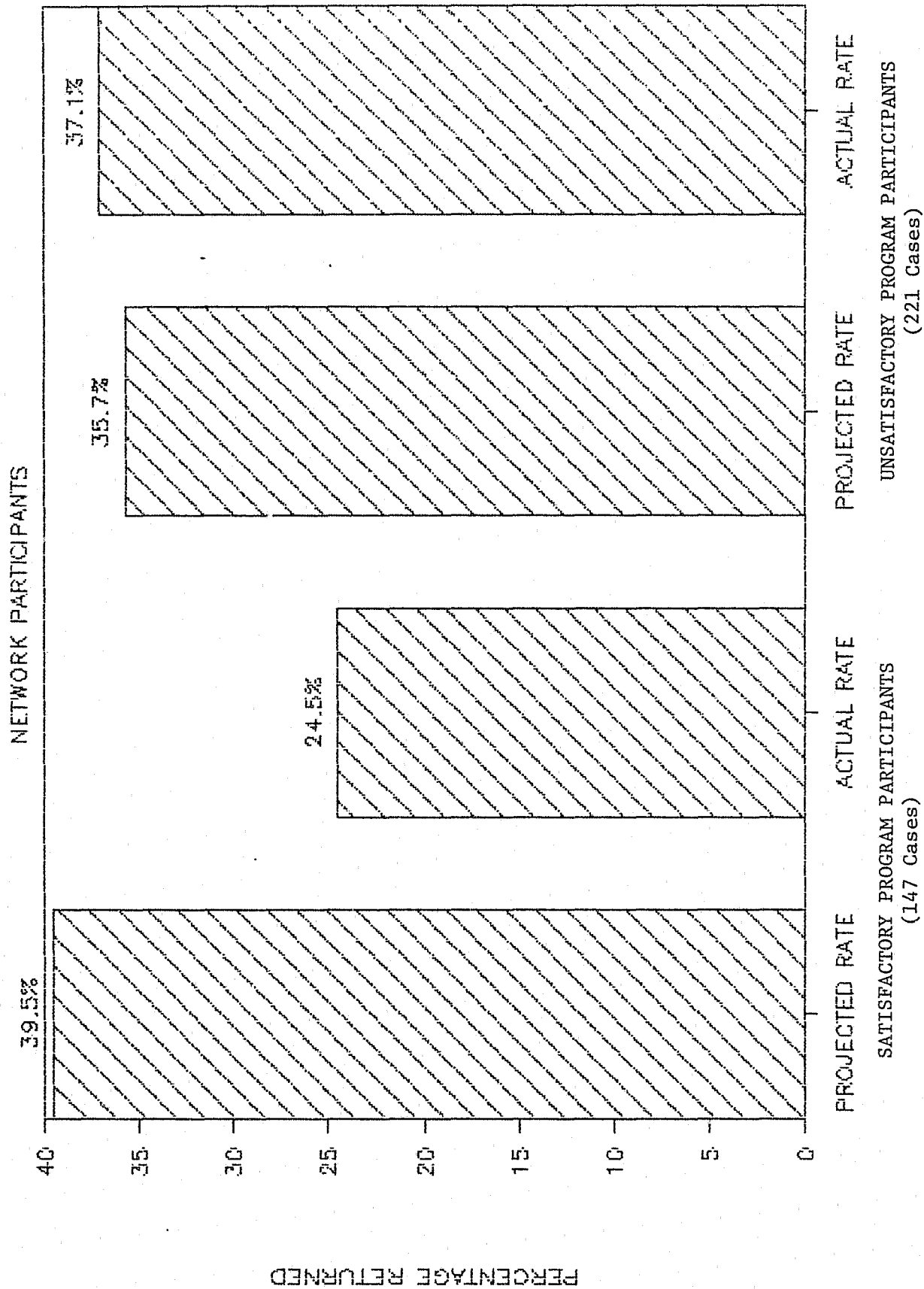
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COMPARISON OF RETURN RATES



FOLLOW-UP STUDY OF A SAMPLE OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE NETWORK PROGRAM

HIGHLIGHTS

1. Purpose of Research

At the request of the Director of the Network Program, this research project was designed to generate statistical data pertinent to the basic question, "Does satisfactory participation in the Network Program reduce the participant's likelihood of return to the Department's custody following release?"

2. Program Overview

Since the inception of the Network Program in 1979, this program has been expanded to a growing number of facilities. At this time, the Network Program is operational in a total of 19 facilities of all security levels, including facilities for male and female inmates. The Network Program is scheduled to be a major component of the new Shock Incarceration camps for selected young offenders. At this time, the Network Program involves approximately 750 inmates at any given time.

3. Research Design

In accord with the Department's standard practice, this survey sampled all male participants leaving the program in a given year (1982) for follow-up purposes. (Since Department research have consistently found the male and female releases has significantly different return rates, Appendix A presents a separate analysis of a limited sample of female program participants.) Of this total, 148 were classified satisfactory program participants (who were paroled from the program or transferred to work release) while 222 were categorized as unsatisfactory program participants (who dropped out or were administratively terminated by the program).

4. Follow-Up Procedure

The Department's computerized data file was utilized to determine the number of these program participants who had been released. A cut-off release date of December 31, 1985 was selected to insure a minimum follow-up period of 12 months as of December 31, 1986. As of the end of 1985, 147 satisfactory program participants and 221 unsatisfactory program participants had been released.

HIGHLIGHTS continued

5. Comparison of Return Rates of Satisfactory and Unsatisfactory Program Participants

The return rate of the 147 satisfactory program participants (24.5%) was considerably less than the return rate of the unsatisfactory program participants (37.1%).

This finding is notable since the satisfactory program participants as a group were in the community for longer periods than the unsatisfactory program participants.

6. Comparison of Return Rate of Satisfactory Program Participants and Overall Return Rate of Department Releases

Using the average return rate of all Department releases, projected return rates were computed for these program participants based on the number of months since their release. The actual return rate (24.5%) of the satisfactory program participants was notably less than the projected rate (39.5%) based on the Department's overall return rate. The actual return rate of the unsatisfactory program participants (37.1%) was higher than their projected rate (35.7%).

7. Conclusion

The findings of this research suggest that satisfactory participation in the Network Program is positively related to successful post-release adjustment as measured by return to the Department.

FOLLOW-UP STUDY OF A SAMPLE OF OFFENDERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE NETWORK PROGRAM

This survey examines the return rate of a sample of offenders who participated in the Network Program.

Purpose of Report

In view of the substantial program resources allocated to the Network Program, the Department's Director of Network requested the Division of Program Planning, Research and Evaluation to examine the return rate of offenders who participated in this program.

Program Description

Since the inception of the Network Program in 1979, this program has been expanded to a growing number of facilities. At this time, the Network Program is operational in a total of 19 facilities of all security levels, including facilities for male and female inmates. The Network Program is scheduled to be a major component of the new Shock Incarceration camps for selected young offenders. At this time, the Network Program involves approximately 750 inmates at any given time.

Under the Department's Deputy Commissioner for Facility Operations, the overall administration of this program on a statewide basis is the responsibility of the Director of Network. At the facility level, specially trained Network Administrators coordinate the program. Correction officers play a key role in the operation of the program and act as the principal role model and change agents for the inmates who participate in the program. Under the supervision of these Department staff members, trained inmates conduct a variety of peer counseling activities as part of this program.

Inmates who participate in Network are housed together in housing units. This policy facilitates the program's group counseling sessions while permitting the involved inmates to participate in the facility's vocational, educational and other programs.

Upon entry to the Network Program, individual contracts are developed by each inmate. These contracts identify behavior and attitude changes to be made while in the program. On a daily basis, community meetings are held which include all participants. These sessions focus on decision making, life skills, communications, human relations and group process. Failure to satisfactorily participate in these sessions or violation of the Network rules for group living result in termination from the program.

The objective of the Network Program is to enable the involved offenders to change their attitudes and values and to develop goals and behavior patterns which will lead to a successful adjustment in the community.

Preceding Preliminary Research

In 1984, a preliminary follow-up report on Network Program participants was completed.^{1/}

This research examined the release and return rates of Network Program participants who left the program in 1982. While the findings of this survey were very encouraging, the results were considered as preliminary due to the relatively limited number of cases who could be tracked for 2 years at the time of the report.

Present Expansion of Follow-Up Research

The present study was initiated at the request of the Director of Network to update and expand this previous research.

The current research was designed to both (a) involve a significantly larger sample of program participants and (b) track these program participants for longer follow-up periods than previously possible.

Comparison of Preceding and Present Report

The previous report was able to track only 84 cases for 2 years. (The bulk of the analysis of the previous report utilized 18 month follow-up data.)

At this time, a greater number of these program participants have been in the community for longer periods. As such, this study was able to track a much larger sample (366 cases) for longer time periods (generally 3 to 5 years).

Sampling Procedure

Similar to the preceding study, the present project selected program participants who left the program in 1982 as its sample. These individuals who left the program in 1982 were selected to insure lengthy follow-up periods by the end of 1986.

^{1/} Fisher, Robert L., A Preliminary Analysis of Recommitment Rates of 1982 Network Releases, New York State Department of Correctional Services, October 1984.

Comparable Groups of Satisfactory and Unsatisfactory Program Participants

The sample was divided into two main groups.

One group consists of the satisfactory program participants who were paroled from the program in 1982 or transferred to work release programs.

The second group is composed of the unsatisfactory program participants who were administratively expelled from the program or dropped out.

As indicated above, this survey sought to develop two distinctly different groups of program participants who clearly differ to a significant degree on the quality of their program participation. For this reason, this research does not include in either group those inmates who left the Network program for reasons other than those which could be classified as successful or unsuccessful departure. For example, this study excludes inmates who left the Network Program due to such reasons as transfer to another facility, movement to another living unit in the same facility or being sent out-to-court. It would be inappropriate to include these cases in either the satisfactory or unsatisfactory program participant groups.

Since Department research has found that female offenders are typically returned to Department custody at a significantly lower rate than male offenders, it was decided to conduct separate research on male and female program participants. To include the female cases with the male program participants would unfairly bias the results. As such, Appendix A analyzes female participants in the program.

Participants Leaving Network Program in 1982

The following number of male participants left the program in 1982.

<u>Type of Program Participation</u>	<u>Number</u>
Satisfactory Program Participants	147
Unsatisfactory Program Participants	<u>221</u>
TOTAL	368

Follow-Up Period

It is the Department's standard policy in recidivism research that a follow-up period of at least 12 months is required for valid analysis based on return rates. For this reason, a cut-off date for release from Department custody of December 31, 1985 was set to insure a follow-up period of at least 12 months as of December 31, 1986.

Follow-Up Procedure

The Department's computer file was then utilized to determine (a) the number of these individuals sampled who were subsequently released before December 31, 1985, and (b) the number of released program participants who were returned to Department custody by December 31, 1986.

Number of Sampled Cases Released Before December 31, 1985

Of the 148 sampled offenders who satisfactorily completed the Network Program, 147 had been released by December 31, 1985.

Of the 222 sampled offenders who did not satisfactorily complete the Network Program, 221 had been released by this date.

Comparison of Return Rate of Study Sample to Overall Return Rate of Department Releases

The reporting of a return rate for a given study sample is of relatively limited value unless a valid comparison rate is also provided. In view of this consideration, it is the standard policy of Department recidivism research to compare the return rate of study samples to the Department's overall return rate (as well as the return rates of any other appropriate comparison groups).

For general comparison purposes, the overall return rate of Department releases is used in Department recidivism studies. This overall return rate of Department releases is utilized to compute a projected return rate for the study sample.

Development of Projected Return Rate for Comparison Purposes

The Bureau of Records and Statistical Analysis tracks all Department releases for a five year period to generate return rate statistics. Using the overall return rate of all Department releases in 1980, a projected return rate can be developed for the program participants based on the number of months since their release.

For example, the sample cases released in 1985 would have been in the community between 13 and 24 months as of December 31, 1986, depending on their respective release dates. Based on the Department's overall return rate, it may be projected that 22.8% of these individuals would be returned to Department custody for a parole violation or with a new sentence by December 31, 1986.

Table 1

Release Year	Months Since Release (As of 12/31/86)	Projected Percent Returned
1982	49 - 60 Months	40.7%
1983	37 - 48 Months	37.3%
1984	25 - 36 Months	31.9%
1985	13 - 24 Months	22.8%

This projected return rate can then be applied to the number of sampled cases released in this period to generate the number of expected returns.

Table 2

Release Date/Months Since Release (As of 12/31/85)	Number Released In Year	Return Rate	Projected Number Returned by 12/31/86
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SATISFACTORY PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

1982	119	X	40.7%	=	48
1983	24	X	37.3%	=	9
1984	4	X	31.9%	=	1
1985	-	X	22.8%	=	-
<hr/>					
TOTAL	147	X	39.5%	=	58

UNSATISFACTORY PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

1982	49	X	40.7%	=	20
1983	111	X	37.3%	=	41
1984	47	X	31.9%	=	15
1985	14	X	22.8%	=	3
<hr/>					
TOTAL	221	X	35.7%	=	79

Based on the Department's overall return rate, it can be projected that 58 (39.5%) of the 147 satisfactory program participants would be returned by December 31, 1986. Similarly, it can be projected that 79 (35.7%) of the 221 unsatisfactory program participants would be returned by this date. (The difference in the projected return rates of these samples is due to variations in the release years of these samples, i.e., the satisfactory program participants as a group had been released earlier than the unsatisfactory program participants.)

Comparison of Actual and Projected Return Rates

As illustrated by this table, the actual return rate of the sample of satisfactory participants (24.5%) was notably less than their projected return rate (39.5%).

Table 3

	<u>Projected Return Rate</u>		<u>Actual Return Rate</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Satisfactory Program Participants	58	39.5%	36	24.5%
Unsatisfactory Program Participants	79	35.7%	82	37.1%

On the other hand, the actual return rate of the sample of unsatisfactory program participants (37.1%) was higher than the projected return rate (35.7%).

The Department has occasionally been asked what percentage of returned program participants were returned with new sentences or for parole violations. Of the satisfactory program participants, 18 were returned for parole violations and 18 were returned with new sentences. Of the unsatisfactory program participants, 46 were returned for parole violations and 36 with new sentences.

Comparison of Findings of Follow-Up Studies.

Some readers may wish to compare the findings of the present follow-up study of Network participants with the preceding 1984 report. However, a word of caution in comparing the two reports is appropriate.

Upon initial review, it may appear that the earlier sample did "better" than the current sample since only 9.8% of the previous sample was returned to Department custody as opposed to 24.5% of the present sample. Such a comparison ignores the fact that these two samples were followed for substantially different time periods.

As previously noted, the earlier study was able to track the vast majority of the sampled cases for only 18 months due to the recent establishment of the program. As such, it was projected that 18.9% of the participants would be returned by the end of this month follow-up period. In fact, only 9.8% were returned.

On the other hand, the current study tracked the surveyed program participants for significantly longer periods. In contrast to the previous study, 83% of the program participants were followed for 3 to 5 years. Due to the much longer follow-up periods, it was projected that a higher percentage (39.5%) of the program participants would be returned by the end of the study period. In fact, only 24.5% were returned.

	<u>1984 Study</u>	<u>Current Study</u>
Projected Return Rate	18.9%	39.5%
Actual Return Rate	<u>9.8%</u>	<u>24.5%</u>
Difference	9.1%	15.0%

As illustrated by the preceding table, the return rates of the program participants in these two follow-up studies were consistently lower than their projected return rates.

Discussion

In brief terms, the two major findings of this survey may be summarized in the following fashion:

1. The sample of satisfactory participants had a notably lower return rate than their projected rate based on the Department's overall release population.
2. This sample of satisfactory Network participants also returned to the Department's custody at a lower rate than the comparison group of unsatisfactory program participants. This finding is especially noteworthy since the satisfactory program participants as a group had been in the community for longer periods than the unsatisfactory program participants.

Self-Selection Bias v. Program Impact

In reviewing these findings, it might be argued that there may be a self-selection bias. It might be contended that inmates who volunteer for Network are more motivated and should be expected to have lower return rates than the Department's overall release population.

However, it should also be noted that this possible self-selection bias would not apply to the comparison of satisfactory and unsatisfactory program participants. All of these cases volunteered for the Network Program. As such, these samples may be more appropriately compared with respect to the impact of the program. The principal difference between these two groups is the nature of their program participation.

Issue of Administrative Termination/Dropout Rate

It might also be argued that the high administrative termination/dropout rate of the Network Program also creates a selection bias in favor of the program in comparing return rates of satisfactory and unsatisfactory participants. In 1982, there were nearly 50% more administrative terminations/dropouts (222) than program completions (148). It may be contended that a high administrative termination/dropout rate tends to eliminate "poor risks" from the satisfactory program participant group and, thus, lowers the return rate of this sample.

This observation is obviously valid. Unsatisfactory program participants are probably less motivated and less likely to benefit from program services and, thus, probably more likely to return to Department custody following their release.

However, this observation does not address the critical issue in follow-up studies of participants in various programs. The key issue is whether or not successful program completion appears to be related to post-release recidivism. Whether or not a significant percentage of participants do not complete a program is a relevant concern but only if satisfactory participation is positively related to lower recidivism rates. The issue then becomes an operational issue of how to maximize the number of participants who complete the program.

Conclusion

In closing, the reader is cautioned against any definitive conclusions concerning the Department's program based on this sample study. However, the findings of this research (which is based on follow-up data for a sizable sample of over 350 cases who were generally tracked for 3 to 5 years) support the position that satisfactory participation in the Network Program is positively related to post-release adjustment.

APPENDIX A
FOLLOW-UP STUDY OF A SAMPLE OF
FEMALE NETWORK PARTICIPANTS

As noted earlier in this report, a separate analysis of the female program participants was conducted due to overall differences in the return rates of male and female offenders. The Department's recent study of 1980 releases found that the return rate for female releases (26.3%) was lower than the return rate for male releases (42.0%). However, this report observed that the return rate for female releases had increased substantially in recent years from 11.9% for female releases in 1972 to 26.3% for female releases in 1980.^{1/}

Using the average return rate of all female Department releases in 1980, a projected return rate can be developed for the program participants based on the number of months since their release.

Release Year	Months Since Release (as of 12/31/86)	Projected Percent Returned
1982	49-60 Months	25.8%
1983	37-48 Months	23.7%
1984	25-36 Months	20.3%
1985	13-24 Months	14.5%

For example, the program participants released in 1984 would have been in the community between 25 and 36 months as of December 31, 1986 depending on their respective release dates. Based on the Department's average return rate, it may be projected that 20.3% of these individuals released in 1984 would be returned to Department custody for a parole violation or with a new sentence by December 31, 1986.

These projected return rates can then be applied to the number of program participants released in each of these years to generate the number of expected returns.

^{1/} Donnelly and Bala, 1980 Releases: Five Year Post Release Follow-Up, New York State Department of Correctional Services, August 1986.

APPENDIX A continued

Release Year	Number Released In Year		Return Rate		Projected Number Returned by 12/31/86
<u>SATISFACTORY PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS</u>					
1982	41	X	25.8%	=	10
1983	4	X	23.7%	=	1
1984	-	X	20.3%	=	-
1985	-	X	14.5%	=	-
TOTAL	45	X	24.4%	=	11
<u>UNSATISFACTORY PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS</u>					
1982	10	X	25.8%	=	2
1983	20	X	23.7%	=	5
1984	6	X	20.3%	=	1
1985	3	X	14.5%	=	-
TOTAL	39	X	20.0%	=	8

Overall, it can be projected that 11 (24.4%) of the 45 satisfactory program participants would have been returned by December 1986. Similarly, it can be projected that 8 (20.0%) of the 39 unsatisfactory program participants would have been returned by December 1986.

	<u>Projected Return Rate</u>		<u>Actual Return Rate</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Satisfactory Program Participants	11	24.4%	8	17.8%
Unsatisfactory Program Participants	8	20.0%	6	15.4%

The actual return rate of the satisfactory program participants was lower than the projected return rate based on the Department's overall female release population. The actual return rate of the unsatisfactory program participants was also lower than the projected return rate based on the Department's female release population. The reader is cautioned against comparing the actual return rates of the satisfactory and unsatisfactory program participants since the satisfactory program participants as a group were in the community significantly longer than the unsatisfactory cases and as such would be expected to have a higher return rate.

APPENDIX A continued

Conclusion

Due to the limited sample sizes (less than 50 cases in each sample), the reader is cautioned against reaching the general conclusion that women who are unsatisfactory Network participants have a lower return rate than satisfactory participants. With such limited sample sizes, each case accounts for over two percent in the return rate calculations. For example, if one more unsatisfactory program participant had returned, the return rate of the satisfactory and unsatisfactory participants would have been virtually identical (17.8% and 17.9%, respectively). As such, the reader is cautioned against drawing definitive conclusions from this preliminary data.