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FOLLOW-UP STUDY OF A SAMPLE OF OFFENDERS WHO
PARTICIPATED IN FOOD SERVICES PROGRAM

At the request of the Department's Director of Occupational Training, this exploratory survey examines the return rate of a sample of offenders who participated in food services program.

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

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HIGHLIGHTS

1. Purpose of Research

At the request of the Director of Occupational Training, this research project was initiated to examine the return rates of offenders who acquired significant occupational skills while incarcerated. The objective of the present exploratory study was to develop a workable design for such follow-up studies and to pilot test this design with respect to a selected occupational training area (food services).

2. Sample Selection

For this preliminary study, the Division of Occupational Training used its computer files to generate two comparable samples of food services program participants. One sample was composed of the 50 inmates who had secured substantial vocational skills (i.e. had earned the short order cook job title in 1981). The comparison group of program participants who had acquired minimal food service skills was comprised of the 46 offenders who had earned only the entry level job titles of waiter or kitchen helper in 1981.

3. Follow-Up Procedure

These program participants were tracked from their respective release dates until December 31, 1985. In line with the Department's standard policy in recidivism research, the Department's overall return rate was used to project return rates for these two samples.

4. Comparison of Actual and Projected Return Rates

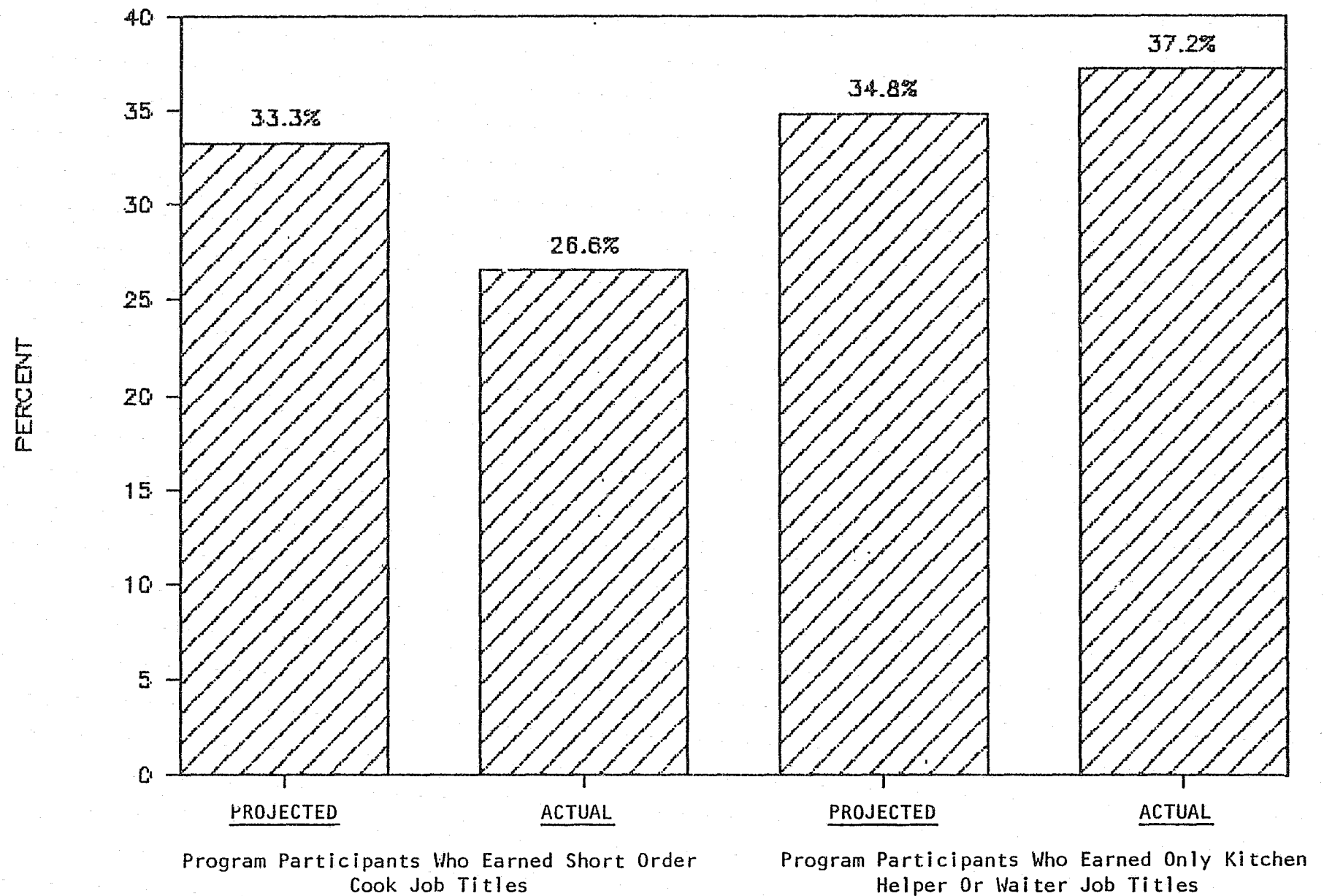
The actual return rate (26.6%) of the sample of participants who had earned short order cook job titles was notably less than their projected return rate (33.3%). On the other hand, the actual return rate (37.2%) of sample of participants who earned only waiter or kitchen help job titles was slightly above the projected rate rate (34.8%).

The sampled program participants who had acquired significant food service job skills (i.e. earned short order cook job titles) had a considerably lower return rate than the sampled program participants who had earned only entry level job skills (i.e. waiter or kitchen helper job titles).

5. Conclusion

While the very limited sample size precludes any definitive conclusions, this exploratory study does suggest positive impact and certainly highlights the value of further research in this area using this general methodology.

COMPARISON OF RETURN RATES



FOLLOW-UP STUDY OF A SAMPLE OF OFFENDERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN FOOD SERVICES PROGRAM

This exploratory survey examines the return rate of a sample of offenders who participated in food services program.

Purpose of Report

In view of the substantial program resources allocated to the Department's vocational training programs, the Department's Director of Occupational Training requested the Division of Program Planning, Research and Evaluation to examine the return rate of offenders who acquired significant occupational skills while incarcerated.

The objective of this exploratory research project was to develop a workable design for such follow-up studies and to pilot test this design with respect to a selected occupational training program (the food services training program).

Program Description

The Division of Occupational Training of the New York State Department of Correctional Services operates a wide range of vocational training programs in the State's adult correctional facilities. These programs include auto repair, food services and building trades (see Appendix A for a complete listing).

Within each of these major vocational training areas, the Department has established training programs for specific job titles. These job titles are based on the standardized Dictionary of Occupational Titles job titles. For example, the general food services training program includes a series of job titles ranging from entry level job titles (as waiter and kitchen helper) to more skilled job titles (short order cook).

The Vocational Instructors in these various programs utilize a standardized modular curriculum, which is based on the acquisition of specified concrete tasks. When an inmates demonstrates that he/she can complete a specific task, the instructor records this task completion on a standardized form for the respective job title. After the inmate demonstrates the ability to complete all the tasks for a specified job title, the offender is said to have completed this job title. For example, an inmate must demonstrate the ability to complete a number of tasks to earn the short order cook job title, such as prepare hamburger patties, fry patties, and garnish cooked patties.

Each individual inmate's progress in the Department's Vocational Training programs is recorded in both paper form and entered onto a computer file. A computerized listing of the inmate's progress in Occupational Training programs is provided to institutional parole authorities when the inmate is approaching a Parole Board hearing. The Division of Parole is thus able to transmit this

Sample Selection

A threshold question in follow-up studies is the selection of a representative study sample. For purposes of this exploratory research, this task involved the development of a design for drawing a sample of offenders who had acquired substantial vocational skills in a representative program. For comparison purposes, a comparable sample of offenders who did not secure such occupational skills in this selected program was also needed.

As such, the initial task in this design process was the choice of a representative occupational program for use in this exploratory study. The Division of Occupational Training suggested that the food services program might be an appropriate program for this exploratory study since it is a basic vocational program at a number of male and female facilities, which involves a significant number of inmates.

As the specific study sample, the Division of Occupational Training used its computer files to generate the two comparable samples of program participants. One group consisted of inmates who earned the high skill level job title of short order cook in 1981. A comparison sample of inmates who earned only the entry level job titles of waiter or kitchen helper in 1981 was selected. (Inmates who earned food service job titles in 1981 were selected to maximize the number of released program participants and their potential follow-up period.)

The records of the Division of Occupational Training indicated that 50 inmates had earned short order cook job titles in 1981 and 46 had earned only waiter or kitchen helper job titles. (It should be noted that numerous other inmates earned other job titles in this series during 1981).

Typically, the inmates who earned the short order cook job titles had also earned a number of other food service job titles. The 50 sampled inmates who earned the short order cook job title had previously earned an average of six other job titles, generally lower skill level job titles.

Hypothesis of Research

It was hypothesized that the program participants who had secured significant vocational skills (i.e. earned short order cook job titles) would return at a lower rate than those who earned only waiter or kitchen helper job titles.*

* It should be noted that this exploratory study did not investigate the involvement (if any) of these inmates in other occupational training programs. It is hoped that the records of the Division of Occupational Training will allow future research to control for this possible factor.

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, 1984 was set to insure a follow-up period of at least 12 months as of December 31, 1985.

Follow-Up Procedure

The Department's computer file was then utilized to determine (a) the number of these sampled individuals who were subsequently released before December 31, 1984, and (b) the number of released program participants who were returned to Department custody by December 31, 1985.

Number of Sampled Cases Released Before December 31, 1984

Of the 50 sampled offenders who earned short order cook job titles while incarcerated, 45 had been released by December 31, 1984.

Of the 46 sampled offenders who completed only kitchen helper or waiter job titles, 43 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 1984 would have been in the community between 13 and 24 months as of December 31, 1985, 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, 1985.

Release Year	Months Since Release (As of 12/31/85)	Projected Percent Returned
1981	49 - 60 Months	40.7%
1982	37 - 48 Months	37.3%
1983	25 - 36 Months	31.9%
1984	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.

Release Date/Mos. Since Release (As of 12/31/85)	Number Released In Year		Return Rate		Projected Number Returned By December 31, 1985
<u>SHORT ORDER COOKS</u>					
1981	10	X	40.7%	=	4
1982	20	X	37.3%	=	7
1983	10	X	31.9%	=	3
1984	5	X	22.8%	=	1
TOTAL	45	X	33.3%	=	15

KITCHEN HELPERS/WAITERS

1981	8	X	40.7%	=	3
1982	10	X	37.3%	=	4
1983	14	X	31.9%	=	5
1984	11	X	22.8%	=	3
TOTAL	43	X	34.8%	=	15

Based on the Department's overall return rate, it can be projected that 33% of the offenders who earned short order cook job titles would be returned by December 31, 1985. Similarly, it can be projected that 34.8% of the offenders who earned only kitchen helper or waiter job titles would be returned by this date. (The slight difference in the projected return rates of these samples is due to variations in the release years of these samples).

Comparison of Actual and Projected Return Rates

As illustrated by this table, the actual return rate of the sample of participants who earned short order cook job titles was notably less than their projected return rate.

	<u>Projected ..</u>		<u>Actual</u>	
	<u>Return Rate</u>		<u>Return Rate</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Offenders Who Earned Short Order Cook Job Titles	15	33.3%	12	26.6%
Offenders Who Earned Kitchen Helper or Waiter Job Title	15	34.8%	16	37.2%

On the other hand, the actual return rate of the sample of participants who earned only a kitchen helper or waiter job title was slightly above their projected return rate.

In reviewing these statistics, however, the reader is cautioned against generalizing from this data due to the very limited sample sizes.

Conclusion

As indicated in the introduction to this report, this exploratory study had two basic objectives:

1. To design a research methodology for identifying cohorts of offenders who earned substantial vocational skills while incarcerated (and comparison groups that did not acquire such skills) and
2. To pilot test this research design on a set of samples from a selected vocational training program.

In line with these objectives, this survey did draw two comparable samples from program participants in the food services program and conduct a follow-up study of these two comparison groups.

This exploratory research did find that the sampled program participants who acquired significant food service job skills (i.e. earned short order cook job titles) had a lower return rate than sampled program participants who earned only entry level job skills (i.e. waiter or kitchen helper job titles).

While the very limited sample sizes of the two groups involved in this study precludes any definitive conclusions, this preliminary finding does suggest positive impact and certainly highlights the value of further research in this area using this general methodology.

At this time, discussions are underway with the Division of Occupational Training concerning future research in this area. Among the possible studies under consideration are the following:

1. Continued analysis involving larger samples of the return rates of offenders who earned short order cook job titles as compared to offenders who earned only waiter and kitchen helper job titles.
2. Expansion of this research series to other vocational areas selected by the Division of Occupational Training.
3. Based on the results of these follow-up studies, future research on the employment histories of the program participants after release to determine the percentage who secured jobs in the areas of their occupational training.