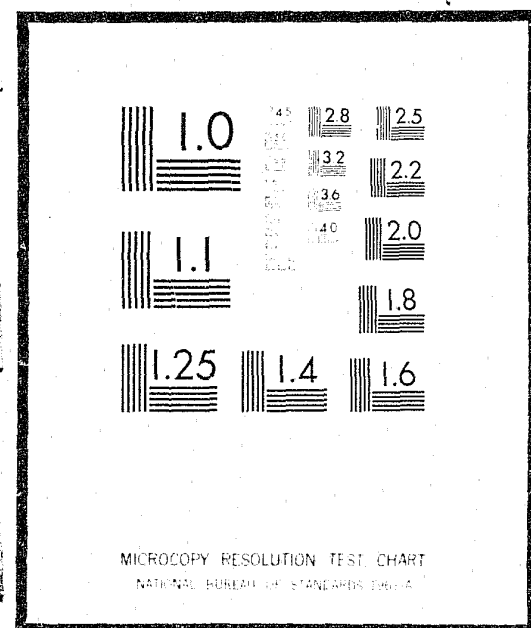# NCJRS

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MINISTRY OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES
PROVINCE OF ONTARIO

EXTRACTING DATA ON RETURNS FROM PLACEMENT
FROM THE JUVENILE INFORMATION SYSTEM

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ACQUISITIONS

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INTRODUCTION

In April of 1974 the Ministry of Correctional Services began the collection of data for a computerized information system on its juvenile clients. Anyone who was a ward of the Ministry at that time and all those admitted since are included on the systems files. Basically, a wards file consists of a brief history section including mainly demographic data and a log entry for each significant occurrences during his wardship. Those admitted prior to the inception of the computerized system have information only on those occurrences since April 1974.

To date, the system has been used primarily to replace functions formally carried out manually from the main office files. While this may result in some efficiencies it ignores the enormous potential that this volume of readily accessible data presents. A large number of reports could be produced which would be of great use to the program personnel giving an accurate and up to date account of the operation of the training school system.

One such report could give an indication of the effectiveness of the programs being offered in the schools as it is measured by the rate of returns from community placements.

The objectives of the programmes available in Ontario training schools, of course, go far beyond simply preventing returns. Factors such as family adjustment, scholastic or work achievement and peer relationships would have to be measured to give a complete picture of the success or failure of the programmes as they exist. While such data have been collected with some success in evaluations of individual programmes (Polonoski, 1976; Lambert & Birkenmayer, 1972) such outcome measures are not currently available on the computerized system. In fact, it is questionable if an attempt to code this type of subjective material on an ongoing basis would yield results useful enough to justify the costs.

Accepting that they do not constitute a complete outcome measure, however, return rates if collected routinely could be a valuable form of feedback to programme staff. As well as being of interest on their own, return rates should serve as good indicators of success in those other outcome areas mentioned.

It is hoped, then, that the data presented in this report will be used not only as a measure of current return rates, but as a model for a report which could, in the future, be routinely produced by the information system.

METHODOLOGY

The Sample

The selecting of the sample for this report was a matter of including all cases with the required data available rather than selecting a true sample from the entire training school population. Complete data is only available on wards who entered training school after March 31st of 1974 (the date the system came into being) and a year's follow-up data was only available at the time that the data was extracted from the system, on those who were placed in the community prior to September 20 of 1975.

To simply define the sample in terms of these two constraints would leave two problems. First, to include anyone who was placed prior to September 20, 1975 and place no restriction on the admission date would weight the sample in favour of those with short stays in training school. Secondly, there would be a number in the sample whose wardship was terminated prior to the end of a year's follow-up. Since data is not available beyond termination of wardship we would not have a full year's follow-up for that group.

To cope with these problems, without reducing the sample size too drastically, the following limits were placed on the sample: all wards were included whose admission date was between April 1 and December 31, 1974 and whose first placement was at least one year prior to their most recent available data (either September 20, 1976 or the termination of wardship). In actual fact, all wards terminated prior to a year's follow-up period were not eliminated from the sample. This will be explained in the next section.

Defining Returns

The next step was to arrive at a working definition of 'return' which would best indicate failure on the part of the ward following his placement in the community. The returns are presently coded on the information system in two categories. Code '40' returns are those which are intended to be only temporary as for purposes of counselling or replacement. These do not normally indicate any serious misbehaviour or incident. Code '41' returns are more permanent in nature, usually for some breakdown on placement.

At first appearance then, those returns coded '41' would cover all situations which we would define as failures. On further investigation, however, it was found that the difference between the two codes were not as distinct, in terms of reason for returns, as would have been preferred. Code '40' returns did in some cases, have offences cited as reasons for return such as car theft or B & E even though such codes were not to be used for this type of return. Many of the code '41' returns on the other hand, had listed such reasons as 'medical', 'voluntary' or 'for replacement' which do not necessarily indicate any offences. There are some indications, as well, that certain schools or aftercare officers might use code '40' in a case where others might use code '41'. Re-grouping the returns on the basis of the coded reason for return would not solve the problem. Large numbers of reasons were coded as 'other' or in categories such as 'for further treatment' or 'court order' with no indication of the actual behaviour which led to the return.

It was decided that to either report code '41' returns only or to report the total of all returns, would misrepresent the actual incidence of failure and that the best picture of the actual situation would be given by reporting both figures.

The history of each ward in the sample was followed for twelve months from the date of placement. If any code '41' returns were encountered the ward was considered a 'definite' return. Any ward who had returns coded as '40' only were included in total return figures but not as definite returns.

Wardships being terminated prior to the end of the follow-up period led to additional problems. On examining the reasons for termination it was found that they encompassed everything from the most positive to the most negative of situations. To leave out this entire group would result in a serious loss of information. In the data reported, the terminations were dealt with as follows: those terminated for neutral reasons, such as leaving the province or turning eighteen during the follow-up period, were eliminated from the sample; those terminated because of an adult conviction were grouped with the definite returns to training school and the group terminated because of satisfactory adjustment on placement were included in the group with no returns to training school.

FINDINGS

The figures below represent the final classification of all wards whose files were traced, that is, all those admitted to training school between April 1 and December 31, 1974.

Table 1

Final Classification of All wards Examined

In Sample	Boys #	%	Girls #	%	
- no returns to T.S.	201	54.5	128	63.0	Considered no returns
* - wardship terminated (satisfactory adjust.)	-		-		
- temporary return only	21	5.7	18	8.9	
- definite return	110	29.8	57	28.1	Considered definite returns
- wardship terminated (adult conviction)	37	10.0	-		
Total	369	100.0	203	100.0	

Removed From Sample		
- no placement prior to September 1975	118	43
Wardship Terminated		
- out of province	3	2
- turned 18	5	1
- other agency	1	1
Total Traced	496	251

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* *While no wards in this study fall on this category the classification was left in the table to alert readers to its possibility and the way in which it would have been dealt with.*

As well as final status, the time from placement to first return was calculated for all those who were returned within one year. Figures A and B show the cumulative percentage of definite and total returns over the twelve month follow-up period for boys and girls.

The pattern of returns was quite different for the male and female subjects. While the eventual return rate was higher for the boys, those girls who did return did so faster than the boys. Over half of the girls who were to return within the first year had done so before the end of their fourth month in the community. After the same period less than 40% of those boys who were eventually to return had done so.

If these trends continue beyond one year it appears that the rate for boys would be substantially higher if a longer follow-up period was used. In the case of the girls a shorter time period, such as nine months, would have been sufficient to show the majority of eventual returns. It is interesting to note that if a follow-up period of five months or less had been chosen the data would have indicated higher total return rates for girls than boys.

Table II shows the return rates for a number of sub-groups within our sample at the end of the year. Caution should be urged in making inferences from the percentage of returns for groups with small numbers. The fact that one hundred percent of the three boys placed from White Oaks returned, for instance, tells us little about the quality of programme at the particular school.

In other cases, however, the sub-samples were large enough to yield quite reliable indicators of the rates for these groups. We were also interested in which variables might prove predictive of later return rates. Chi-squares were calculated on contingency tables between return rate and each of the potential predictive variables and only the table with age at admission yielded statistically significant results. Those who were 15 or 16 at admission were less likely to return than those admitted at an earlier age.

While not significant, the trends in some of the other comparisons are worth noting. It is interesting, for example, that while prior court appearances are related to higher return rates, prior probation experience is related to lower rates.

No attempt has been made here to delve into such differences to explain their cause or to examine how combinations of these variables relate to return rates. While such procedures might be valid it was felt that more detailed information would cloud the original intent of the report, which is to present the rate of returns as defined in the methodology section for selected samples from our training school population.

Reasons for definite returns as they are presently stored on the system are shown on Table III. As mentioned
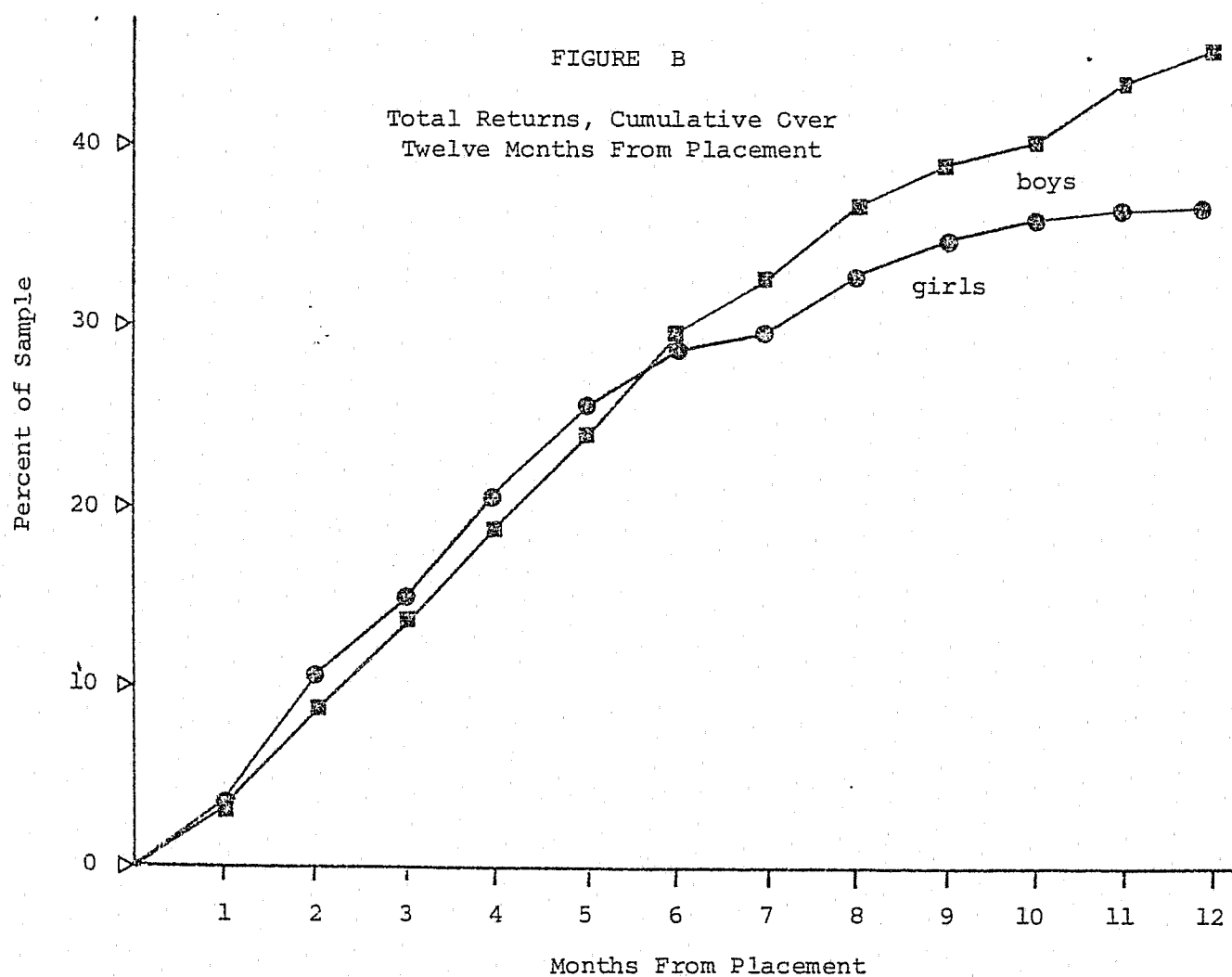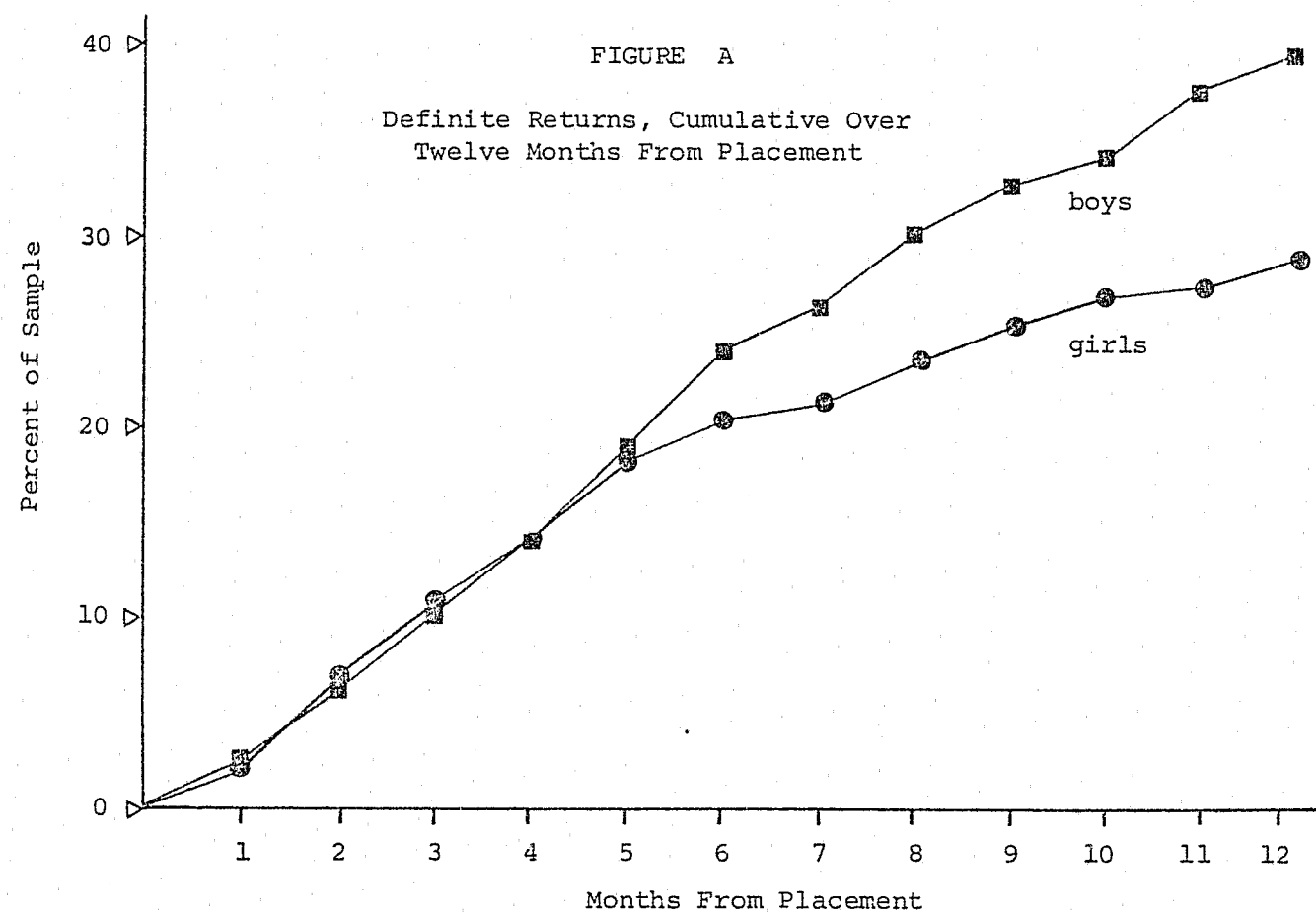
FIGURE A

Definite Returns, Cumulative Over Twelve Months From Placement

boys

girls

Percent of Sample

Months From Placement

FIGURE B

Total Returns, Cumulative Over Twelve Months From Placement

boys

girls

Percent of Sample

Months From Placement

TABLE II

RETURN RATES AFTER ONE YEAR FOR SELECTED SUB-GROUPS OF THE SAMPLE

CONTROLLING VARIABLE	Boys			Girls		
	Definite Return	Any Return	100%=	Definite Return	Any Return	100%=
Overall Sample	39.8	45.4	369	28.1	36.9	203
School Placed From						
Cecil Facer	34.5	37.9	58	23.5	32.4	34
D.A.R.E. Portage Lake	80.0	80.0	10			
D.A.R.E. Wendigo	39.2	43.1	51			
Oakville R.A.C.	32.6	34.9	43	25.6	25.6	39
Pine Ridge	39.5	46.5	43			
Brookside	43.8	56.2	16	42.9	42.9	14
Grandview				27.5	40.6	69
Hillcrest	62.5	62.5	8			
Kawartha Lakes			· ·	31.1	44.4	45
Sprucedale	50.0	50.0	54			
White Oaks	100.0	100.0	3			
St. Joseph's	35.7	42.9	28			
St. John's	29.6	46.3	54			
Where Placed:						
own home	38.5	43.6	296	26.2	36.5	126
foster home	46.2	53.8	52	29.5	37.7	61
boarding home	42.9	42.9	7	50.0	50.0	6
free home	50.0	50.0	2	20.0	20.0	5
employed home	100.0	100.0	1	0.0	0.0	1
special rate home	36.4	54.5	11	100.0	100.0	2
self contained accom.				0.0	0.0	1
*	(N.S.)	(N.S.)		(N.S.)	(N.S.)	
Time Spent in T.S.:						
1-3 months	40.0	40.0	30	27.6	31.0	29
3-6 months	32.5	37.5	120	22.0	31.7	41
6-9 months	43.2	52.0	148	30.0	40.0	70
9-12 months	44.6	48.2	56	36.6	52.2	41
over 12 months	46.7	46.7	15	18.2	18.2	22
	(N.S.)	(N.S.)		(N.S.)	(N.S.)	

TABLE II (Cont'd)

CONTROLLING VARIABLES

	Definite Return	Total Return	100%=	Definite Return	Total Return	100%=
Section Admitted Under:						
Section 8	40.3	50.0	62	31.1	39.3	122
Section 9	39.5	43.8	281	23.4	32.5	77
J.D.A.	42.3	53.8	26	25.0	50.0	4
	(N.S.)	(N.S.)	(N.S.)	(N.S.)		
Race:						
Indian	37.0	37.0	27	22.7	31.8	44
non-Indian	40.1	46.2	342	29.7	38.6	203
	(N.S.)	(N.S.)	(N.S.)	(N.S.)		
Age at Admission:						
9-12	47.1	52.9	17	37.5	37.5	8
13	56.8	64.9	37	52.2	52.2	23
14	46.5	54.4	114	36.6	47.9	71
15	33.0	37.2	191	16.2	26.3	99
16	20.0	20.0	10	0.0	0.0	2
	$p<.01$	$p<.001$		$p<.001$	$p<.05$	
Any Prior Court Appearance:						
yes	40.3	45.6	320	29.0	37.4	57
no	33.5	38.1	42	25.6	37.2	18
	(N.S.)	(N.S.)		(N.S.)	(N.S.)	
Previous Probation:						
yes	38.7	43.3	261	22.5	31.0	11
no	42.2	49.0	102	31.5	40.9	127
	(N.S.)	(N.S.)		(N.S.)	(N.S.)	

* The significance level shown are based on chi-squares on contingency tables between return (yes/no) and the controlling variables. (N.S.) represent $p>.05$.

earlier, there are problems with the breakdown which is available, such as large numbers in the 'other' category. This coding system is currently under examination and it is hoped that future data will shed more light on what events actually led to the wards return to training school.

TABLE III

REASONS GIVEN FOR DEFINITE RETURNS

	Boys #	Boys %	Girls #	Girls %
AWOL	16	10.9	28	49.1
Theft	23	15.6	5	8.8
*Placed on Adult Probation	27	18.4		
B & E and Theft	12	8.2		
*Sentenced to Adult Inst.	10	6.8		
Court Order	9	6.1	1	1.8
Further Treatment	4	2.7	3	5.3
	7	4.8		
Truancy	5	3.4		
Medical	1	0.7	2	3.5
Offensive Weapon	1	0.7		
Assault	1	0.7		
Arson			1	1.8
**Voluntary			1	1.8
**Replacement			2	3.5
Other	31	21.1	14	24.6
Total with Definite Returns	147	100.0	57	100.0

* Although not actually returns those whose wardship was terminated because of adult convictions were included in this group as indication of failure, reasons for conviction were not available on the file

** These codes were to be used only for temporary returns but were on the file for these definite returns.

Returns From Later Placement

The relative recency of the data available on the computerized files limits the number of cases with prior returns who have complete data on their wardship. The following data was gathered despite this limitation, more to show the type of analysis which would be available in the future than as a reliable measure of the current situation.

All placements between July 20, 1975 and March 20, 1976 of wards admitted between April 1, 1974 and March 31, 1975 were examined. They were then grouped according to the number of prior placements and the return-rate after a six months follow-up was computed. The results are shown below:

TABLE IV

RETURN RATES AFTER SIX MONTHS BY NUMBER OF PRIOR PLACEMENTS

	Boys			Girls		
Number of Prior Placements	Definite Returns	Total Returns	100%=	Definite Returns	Total Returns	100%=
None	24.5	30.3	208	20.8	25.0	96
One	25.0	25.0	8	50.0	50.0	4
Two or more	50.0	50.0	2*	25.0	37.5	8*

The 8 girls with more than one prior placement are broken down: 6 with 2, 1 with 3, and 1 with 4. Both boys had two prior placements.

It is important to remember here that our follow-up period is six months rather than a full year, so comparisons to earlier tables are inappropriate. The small numbers in the groups with prior returns are the result of limited data. While many more wards who had prior returns may have been placed during this period, most of them would have been in training school prior to April, 1974 and the information on their previous history would not be complete. As time elapses the proportion of wards in the system with incomplete data will decrease and this type of analysis will be possible with much more complete data.

Conclusions

The return rates, as reported in earlier tables, to a large degree must speak for themselves. The reader can judge for himself whether those figures constitute positive or negative findings based on his own perceptions of what is, in fact, an acceptable rate of return.

The important thing shown here is that the computerized system as it exists will yield usable data on return rates and with modifications to the coding of reasons for return and an increasing data base better data will be available. It is hoped that this report and the response to it by potential users of such information will lead to the design of a workable format for regular reporting of returns to training school.

END