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Crime and Justice, Vol. 26, Prisons. (1999), pp. 479-529.

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ABSTRACT

Discretionary parole release and parole field services have undergone major changes as the nation has embraced more punitive policies. Fourteen states have abolished discretionary parole release for all offenders, and twenty-one others severely limit its use. Parole supervision remains, but needed treatment programs are scarce, and parole officers focus on surveillance more than rehabilitation. About half of parolees fail to complete parole successfully, and their returns to prison represent about a third of incoming prisoners. Given an average (median) prison term served of fifteen months, more than half of all inmates now in prison will be in the community in less than two years. Developing programs to reduce parole recidivism should be a top priority, and a few agencies are operating successful job-training and substance abuse programs. Experts argue that a new parole model is sorely needed, one that incorporates advances in technology, risk prediction, effective rehabilitation, and more "active" forms of supervision that incorporate citizens and others who know the offender. Such reforms are more promising than parole abolition, in that they reduce the public safety risks posed by parolees and increase the chances that offenders will succeed.

Public anger and frustration over crime continue to produce significant changes in the American criminal justice system, but reforms focused on parole are among the most profound. Parole, which is both a procedure by which a board administratively releases inmates from prison

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0192-3234/1999/0026-0010\$02.00

and a provision for postrelease supervision, has come to symbolize the leniency of a system in which inmates are "let out" early. When a parolee commits a particularly heinous crime, such as the kidnapping and murder of thirteen-year-old Polly Klaas by California parolee Richard Allen Davis, or the horrifying rape and murder of seven-year-old Megan Kanka in New Jersey by a released sex offender, the public is understandably outraged and calls for "abolishing parole."

State legislatures have responded, and by the end of 1998, fourteen states had abolished early release by a parole board for all offenders, and several others had restricted its use. California still allows discretionary release by a parole board, but only for offenders with indeterminate life sentences (e.g., first-degree murder, kidnap for ransom) (Ditton and Wilson 1999). Even in states that have retained parole, parole boards have become more hesitant to grant it. In Texas, for example, 57 percent of all cases considered for parole release in 1988 were approved; by 1998, that figure had dropped to just 20 percent (Fabelo 1999).

The argument for abolishing parole is that it will lead to longer prison sentences and greater honesty in sentencing decisions. George Allen, former governor of Virginia, made abolishing parole a major campaign issue, and one of his first acts once elected governor in 1994 was to eliminate that state's discretionary parole system for violent offenders. He wrote that: "The principle that has guided our efforts is honesty. Easy-release rules prevented judges and juries from preempting the community's judgement about proper punishment for illegal conduct. Under the new law, judges do not have to play guessing games when imposing sentences. Police officers do not have to see the criminals out on the streets only a year after their last arrest. Criminals know they cannot beat the system. Crime victims and their families are finally seeing that justice is done" (Allen 1997, p. 22).

But correctional experts argue that, while abolishing parole may make good politics, it contributes to bad correctional practices—and ultimately, less public safety. As Burke (1995, p. 11) notes, parole makes release from prison a privilege that must be earned. When states abolish parole or reduce the amount of discretion parole authorities have, they in essence replace a rational, controlled system of "earned" release for *selected* inmates with "automatic" release for nearly *all* inmates. Proponents argue that the public does not understand the tremendous power that is lost when parole is abandoned. Through the exercise of its discretion, parole boards can target more violent and dangerous offenders for longer periods of incarceration. Burke (1995,

p. 11) writes: "The absence of parole means that offenders simply walk out of the door of prison at the end of a pre-determined period of time, no questions asked. No human being asks the tough questions about what has been done to make sure this criminal is no longer a danger before he is released."

The case of Richard Allen Davis is a perfect example. The California Board of Prison Terms (the parole board) knew the risks he posed and had denied him parole in each of the six instances when his case had been reviewed. But once California abolished discretionary parole release, the Board of Prison Terms no longer had the authority to deny release to inmates whose new standard sentence mandated automatic release after serving a set portion of their terms. Release dates were calculated by the computer for thousands of prisoners then in custody, and when it was determined that Davis had already served the amount of prison time that the new law required, he had to be released. Less than four months later, he murdered Polly Klaas. California parole officials suspect that, had the state not abolished parole, Davis would have never been released (Burke 1995). Similarly, the case of the murderer of Megan Kanka was never heard by a parole board; rather, he went out of prison under mandatory release.

Eliminating parole boards also means that several of their important ancillary purposes are also eliminated. Parole boards have the ability to "individualize sentencing" and thus can provide a review mechanism for assuring greater uniformity in sentencing across judges or counties. Parole boards can also take into account changes in the offender's behavior that might have occurred after he or she was incarcerated. Imprisonment can cause psychological breakdowns, depression, or mental illnesses, and the parole board can adjust release dates to account for these changes. Finally, abolishing parole boards also eliminates the major mechanism by which overcrowded prisons can quickly reduce populations. As parole expert Vincent O'Leary once observed: "Most people start out reforming parole, but when you pull that string you find a lot more attached" (Wilson 1977, p. 49).

A few states have not only abolished parole release but have also considered abolishing parole supervision (often referred to as the "other" parole). In Maine, the legislature abolished the parole board and also abolished parole supervision. Similarly, when Virginia abolished parole release, supervision also was abolished. Unless the judge remembers to impose a split sentence with a term of probation to follow prison, when offenders leave prison in Virginia, they have no strings at all. If you abolish parole supervision along with parole re-

lease, you lose the ability to supervise or provide services to released inmates when they have the highest risk of recidivism and are most in need of services.

Several states that abolished discretionary parole release have reestablished its equivalent. North Carolina, which placed severe constraints on its parole commission in 1981, has gradually restored some of its previous discretion. Florida, which adopted sentencing guidelines in 1983 and abolished parole, has now returned the function under the new name Controlled Release Authority. Colorado abolished discretionary parole release in 1979 and reinstated it six years later. Elected officials, along with law enforcement and corrections professionals, lobbied to reinstate parole release and supervision after data suggested that the length of prison sentence served had actually decreased following the elimination of parole and the ability to provide surveillance or treatment of high-risk offenders had significantly declined. As Bill Woodward, then director of the Division of Criminal Justice in Colorado, noted: "The problem with abolishing parole is you lose your ability to keep track of the inmates and the ability to keep them in treatment if they have alcohol and drug problems" (Gainsborough 1997, p. 23).

Today, all states except Maine and Virginia have some requirement for postprison or parole supervision, and nearly 80 percent of all released prisoners in 1997 were subject to some form of conditional community or supervised release (Ditton and Wilson 1999). However, some states have changed the name to distance themselves from the negative image that "parole" has. For example, postprison supervision is called "controlled release" in Florida, "community control" in Ohio, "supervised release" in Minnesota and in the federal system, and "community custody" in Washington. Regardless of its name, however, parole supervision has changed significantly during the past decade, as national support for parole-as-rehabilitation has waned.

Parole officers readily admit they have fewer services to offer an ever-growing population of offenders. Safety and security have become major issues in parole services (Lynch 1999), and parole officers are now authorized to carry weapons in two-thirds of the states (Camp and Camp 1997). Parole officers in most large urban areas are now more surveillance than services oriented, and drug testing, electronic monitoring, and verifying curfews are the most common activities of many parole agents (Petersilia 1998b).

Parole was founded primarily to foster offender reformation rather

than to increase punitiveness or surveillance. Abandoning parole's historical commitment to rehabilitation worries correctional professionals. The reality is that more than nine out of ten prisoners are released back into the community, and with an average (median) U.S. prison term served of fifteen months, half of all inmates in U.S. prisons today will be back on the streets in less than two years (Beck 1999). The transition from prison back into the community is exceedingly difficult, and recidivism rates are highest in the first year following release. A study by the Bureau of Justice Statistics found that 25 percent of released prisoners are rearrested in the first six months and 40 percent within the first year (Beck and Shipley 1989).

To assist in this high-risk period, parole has historically provided job assistance, family counseling, and chemical dependency programs (although arguably, parole has never provided enough of these services). But punitive public attitudes, combined with diminishing social service resources, have resulted in fewer services provided.

Until recently, the lines were drawn between tough-on-crime "abolitionists" and parole-as-rehabilitation "traditionalists." Politicians continued to shout "abolish parole," while corrections professionals asked for more money to invest in services and surveillance, and the two seemed worlds apart. Over the last year, however, politicians seem to be listening more closely to the professionals, as parole—or more precisely, *failure* on parole—is creating severe fiscal pressures on state prisons' budgets. Greater numbers of parolees are failing supervision and being returned to prison, and, as a result, they are contributing disproportionately to prison crowding and the continued pressure to build more prisons. As New York Assemblyman Daniel L. Feldman recently put it: "Lock 'em up and throw away the key attitudes are coming back to haunt state legislators across the nation" (Carter 1998, p. 2).

In California, for example, where 104,000 adults were on parole in 1997 (one of every seven U.S. parolees), nearly 80 percent are failing to complete supervision successfully (Austin and Lawson 1998). Parole violators accounted for 65 percent of all California prison admissions in 1997, and 41 percent of prison admissions were for violations of the technical conditions of parole rather than for the conviction of new crimes (Austin and Lawson 1998). It should be noted, however, that a technical violation does not necessarily mean the inmate was not engaged in criminal behavior. It may be that the inmate was arrested for a criminal charge but in lieu of prosecution was revoked and returned

to custody. The vast majority of these technical violations (82 percent) have an underlying criminal charge (Austin and Lawson 1998).

When revoked to prison, California inmates spend an additional three to four months in prison prior to being rereleased (Little Hoover Commission 1998*b*). Recent analyses suggest that such "high parole revocation rates represents an enormous waste of prison resources and does not fit the mission of a traditional state prison system (i.e., the long-term confinement of sentenced felons)" (Austin and Lawson 1998, p. 13). California has, for the first time since abolishing parole release in 1977, called for a statewide reassessment of the state's parole services and revocation policies (Legislative Analysts Office 1998).

Parole, a system that developed in the United States more by accident than by design, now threatens to become the tail that wags the corrections dog. Prison populations continue to rise, and more offenders are required to be on parole supervision, where fewer services and work programs exist owing to scarcity of resources (often diverted from parole services to fund prison expansion). Greater numbers of parole violations (particularly drug use) are detected through monitoring and drug testing, and parole authorities have diminishing tolerance for failure. Revocation to prison is becoming a predictable (and increasingly short) transition in the prison-to-parole and back-to-prison revolving door cycle. Correctional leaders, joined by many elected officials, are increasingly asking: "Must they all come back?"

Of course, answering that question is exceedingly complex. We would need to know what kinds of programs reduce recidivism for offenders with different needs. Would more intensive surveillance lower recidivism, and how intense must it be to make a difference? What combination of conditions, surveillance, and treatment would get the best results? Once we have identified programs that make a difference, we would have to ask a number of additional questions. For example, should we mandate that parolees participate in needed treatment or simply make it available to those who volunteer? How long should parole last? Should some parolees be kept on "banked" caseloads, with no services or supervision, simply to expedite their return to prison if they commit new crimes? What difference does caseload size make, and which kinds of officers are more successful with which kinds of clients?

These are tough questions, and sound-bite attacks on parole are not very helpful in answering them. We need to begin a serious dialogue aimed at "reinventing" parole in the United States so that it better bal-

ances the need to hold offenders accountable with the need to provide services to released offenders. To begin that dialogue, we need first to assemble information on what is known about parole in the United States. That is the purpose of this essay.

Section I begins by describing sources of U.S. adult parole data. I do not describe juvenile data or practices. Section II discusses the early evolution of parole in the United States and its use in modern sentencing practices. This section reviews the dramatic changes in parole release that resulted from the nation's skepticism about the ability of prisons to rehabilitate. Section III describes the current parole population. It presents trend data on the growth of the parole population and what is known about parolees' crimes, personal backgrounds, and court-ordered conditions. It also presents data on the average size of parole caseloads, offender contact requirements, and annual costs of supervision. Section IV is devoted to describing the offender's needs as he or she makes the transition into the community and what services are available to meet these needs. This section also outlines the civil disabilities that apply to ex-convicts. Section V assesses parole outcomes, reviewing parole completion and recidivism rates. Section VI discusses some current thinking on how to reform parole and identifies some of the more promising parole programs. Section VII presents concluding remarks.

I. Sources of Parole Information

Various agencies within the U.S. Department of Justice collect most of the available information regarding current parole practices and parolee characteristics. The National Institute of Corrections has supported periodic surveys since 1990 that describe parole board practices in the United States (Rhine et al. 1991) and whether states currently have discretionary parole release (National Institute of Corrections 1995). The nation's major parole associations, the American Probation and Parole Association, the American Correctional Association, and the Association of Paroling Authorities, International, also have conducted periodic studies (Rhine et al. 1991; Runda, Rhine, and Wetter 1994; Burke 1995). The Bureau of Justice Assistance recently published a survey of state sentencing practices, including information on states' parole practices (Austin 1998).

Most of what we know about U.S. parolee characteristics comes from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), the statistical arm of the U.S. Department of Justice. Since the early 1980s, the bureau has re-

ported on the numbers of persons entering and exiting parole through its National Corrections Reporting Program. This series collects data nearly every year on all prison admissions and releases and on all parole entries and discharges in participating jurisdictions.

The BJS's National Probation and Parole Reporting Program gathers annual data on state and federal probation and parole counts and movements and the characteristics of persons under the supervision of probation and parole agencies. Published data include admissions and releases by method of entry and discharge. The BJS also sponsors censuses, usually conducted every five to six years, describing the agencies that have control of persons serving a criminal sentence. The Census of State and Local Probation and Parole Agencies, first conducted in 1991, gathers data on the agency organizational location, staffing, expenditures, and programs. Finally, the BJS conducts surveys of jail and prison inmates (usually every five years) that ask offenders whether they were on parole at the time of the arrest that led to their current conviction.

Parole was not always such a minimal topic of data collection and research. Between 1965 and 1977, the National Council on Crime and Delinquency directed the Uniform Parole Reports project, which collected arrest, conviction, and imprisonment data on parolees. Analyses of these data helped researchers to improve methods for predicting parolee behavior (Gottfredson, Hoffman, and Sigler 1975). This data collection effort was discontinued in 1977, and no similar effort replaced it.

At about the same time, the U.S. Board of Parole undertook a major research study to develop parole guidelines, which incorporated offense seriousness and risk of recidivism (Gottfredson, Wilkins, and Hoffman 1978). This research tracked released federal prisoners and used the recidivism data to create an actuarial device, which in turn, was applied to each inmate to create a Salient Factor Score. This score provided the basis for explicit guidelines for release decisions based on a determination of the potential risk of parole violation (Hoffman and DeGostin 1974). The Salient Factor Score was adopted by the U.S. Parole Board in 1972 and remained in use until the abolition of parole at the federal level.

Beyond these early studies and the minimal descriptive data that are now collected, scant attention has been paid parole by the research or scholarly communities. We have very few parole program evaluations or research studies of the parole process and its effects on offenders.

The National Institute of Justice, the research arm of the U.S. Department of Justice, has funded most of what has been conducted, which includes evaluations of drug testing for high-risk parolees in Texas (Turner and Petersilia 1992), intensive parole supervision in Minnesota (Deschenes, Turner, and Petersilia 1995), work release in Washington (Turner and Petersilia 1996a), and the effects of providing work training and day programs to parolees (Finn 1998a, 1998b, 1998c).

Parole has never attracted much scholarly interest, although there are a few notable exceptions (e.g., von Hirsch and Hanrahan 1979; Bottomley 1990; Rhine et al. 1991; McCleary 1992; Simon 1993; Richards 1995; Abadinsky 1997; Cromwell and del Carmen 1999; Lynch 1999).

II. The Origins and Evolution of Parole in the United States

"Parole" comes from the French word *parole*, referring to "word," as in giving one's word of honor or promise. It has come to mean an inmate's promise to conduct himself or herself in a law-abiding manner and according to certain rules in exchange for release. In penal philosophy, parole is part of the general nineteenth-century trend in criminology from punishment to reformation. Chief credit for developing the early parole system is usually given to Alexander Maconochie, who was in charge of the English penal colony at Norfolk Island, 1,000 miles off the coast of Australia, and to Sir Walter Crofton, who directed Ireland's prisons (Cromwell and del Carmen 1999).

A. Early Foundations and Growth of Parole

Maconochie criticized definite prison terms and developed a system of rewards for good conduct, labor, and study. Through a classification procedure he called the "mark system," prisoners could progress through stages of increasing responsibility and ultimately gain freedom. In 1840, he was given an opportunity to apply these principles as superintendent of the Norfolk Island penal settlement in the South Pacific. Under his direction, task accomplishment, not time served, was the criterion for release. Marks of commendation were given to prisoners who performed their tasks well, and they were released from the penal colony as they demonstrated willingness to accept society's rules. Returning to England in 1844 to campaign for penal reform, Maconochie tried to implement his reforms when he was appointed governor of the new Birmingham Borough Prison in 1849. However, he was un-

able to institute his reforms there because he was dismissed from his position in 1851 on the grounds that his methods were too lenient (Clear and Cole 1997).

Crofton attempted to implement Maconochie's mark system when he became the administrator of the Irish Prison System in 1854. Crofton felt that prison programs should be directed more toward reformation and that "tickets-of-leave" should be awarded to prisoners who had shown definitive achievement and positive attitude change. After a period of strict imprisonment, Crofton began transferring offenders to "intermediate prisons" where they could accumulate marks based on work performance, behavior, and educational improvement. Eventually they would be given tickets-of-leave and released on parole supervision. Parolees were required to submit monthly reports to the police, and a police inspector helped them find jobs and generally oversaw their activities. The concepts of intermediate prisons, assistance, and supervision after release were Crofton's contributions to the modern system of parole (Clear and Cole 1997).

By 1865, American penal reformers were well aware of the reforms achieved in the European prison systems, particularly in the Irish system. At the Cincinnati meeting of the National Prison Association in 1870, a paper by Crofton was read, and specific references to the Irish system were incorporated into the Declaration of Principles, along with such other reforms as indeterminate sentencing and classification for release based on a mark system. Because of Crofton's experiment, many Americans referred to parole as "the Irish system" (Walker 1998).

Zebulon Brockway, a Michigan penologist, is given credit for implementing the first parole system in the United States. He proposed a two-pronged strategy for managing prison populations and preparing inmates for release: indeterminate sentencing coupled with parole supervision. He was given a chance to put his proposal into practice in 1876 when he was appointed superintendent at a new youth reformatory, the Elmira Reformatory in New York. He instituted a system of indeterminacy and parole release, and he is commonly credited as the father of both in the United States. His ideas reflected the tenor of the times—a belief that criminals could be reformed and that every prisoner's treatment should be individualized.

On being admitted to Elmira, each inmate (a male between the ages of sixteen and thirty) was placed in the second grade of classification. Six months of good conduct meant promotion to the first grade—mis-

behavior could result in being placed in the third grade, from which the inmate would have to work his way back up. Continued good behavior in the first grade resulted in release. Paroled inmates remained under the jurisdiction of authorities for an additional six months, during which the parolee was required to report on the first day of every month to his appointed volunteer guardian (from which parole officers evolved) and provide an account of his situation and conduct (Abadinsky 1997). Written reports became required and were submitted to the institution after being signed by the parolee's employer and guardian.

Indeterminate sentencing and parole spread rapidly through the United States. In 1907, New York became the first state formally to adopt all the components of a parole system: indeterminate sentences, a system for granting release, postrelease supervision, and specific criteria for parole revocation. By 1927, only three states (Florida, Mississippi, and Virginia) were without a parole system, and by 1942, all states and the federal government had such systems (Clear and Cole 1997).

The percentage of U.S. prisoners released on parole rose from 44 percent in 1940 to a high of 72 percent in 1977, after which some states began to question the very foundations of parole, and the number of prisoners released in this fashion began to decline (Bottomley 1990). As shown in figure 1, 28 percent of prison releases in 1997 were from discretionary parole, the lowest figure since the federal government began compiling statistics on this issue (Ditton and Wilson 1999). Mandatory releases—the required release of inmates at the expiration of a certain time period—now surpass parole releases. And if one adds the “expiration releases,” where the inmate is released after serving his full sentence, there is even a bigger imbalance between discretionary parole and mandatory release (28 percent vs. 57 percent).

Parole, it seemed, during the first half of the twentieth century, made perfect sense. First, it was believed to contribute to prisoner reform by encouraging participation in programs aimed at rehabilitation. Second, the power to grant parole was thought to provide corrections officials with a tool for maintaining institutional control and discipline. The prospect of a reduced sentence in exchange for good behavior encouraged better conduct among inmates. Finally, release on parole, as a “back-end” solution to prison crowding, was important from the beginning. For complete historical reviews, see Simon (1993) and Bottomley (1990).

The tremendous growth in parole as a concept, however, did not

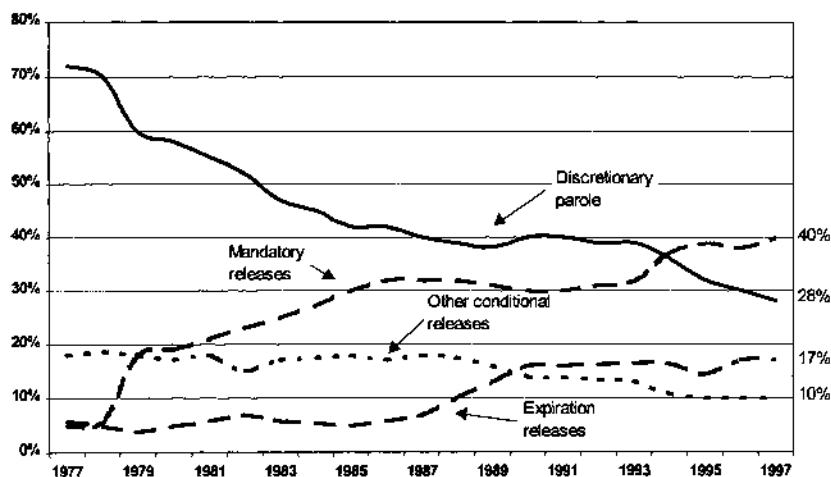


FIG. 1.—Percent of state prisoners released by various methods. Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics (various years–*d*). Note: Discretionary paroles are persons entering the community because of a parole board decision. Mandatory releases are persons whose release from prison was not decided by a parole board, including those entering because of determinate sentencing statutes, good-time provisions, or emergency releases. Other conditional releases include commutations, pardons, and deaths. Expiration releases are those in which the inmate has served his maximum court sentence.

imply uniform development, public support, or quality practices. As Bottomley (1990, p. 326) wrote, "It is doubtful whether parole ever really operated consistently in the United States either in principle or practice." Moreover, Bottomley notes that parole as rehabilitation was never taken very seriously and, from its inception, prison administrators used parole primarily to manage prison crowding and reduce inmate violence.

Despite its expanded usage, parole was controversial from the start (Rothman 1980). A Gallup poll conducted in 1934 revealed that 82 percent of U.S. adults believed that parole was not strict enough and should not be as frequently granted (Gallup Organization 1998). Today, parole is still unpopular, and a recent survey shows that 80 percent of Americans favor making parole more difficult to obtain (Gallup Organization 1998). A comparable percentage is opposed to granting parole a second time to inmates who have previously been granted parole for a serious crime (Flanagan 1996). However, the public significantly underestimates the amount of time inmates serve, so their lack of support for parole reflects that misperception (Flanagan 1996).

Nonetheless, over time, the positivistic approach to crime and crimi-

nals—which viewed the offender as “sick” and in need of help—began to influence parole release and supervision. The rehabilitation ideal, as it came to be known, affected all of corrections well into the 1960s and gained acceptance for the belief that the purpose of incarceration and parole was to change the offender’s behavior rather than simply to punish. As Rhine (1996) notes, as the rehabilitative ideal evolved, indeterminate sentencing in tandem with parole acquired a newfound legitimacy. It also gave legitimacy and purpose to parole boards, which were supposed to be composed of “experts” in behavioral change, and it was their responsibility to discern when during confinement the offender was rehabilitated and thus suitable for release.

Parole boards, usually political appointees, traditionally were given broad discretion to determine when an offender was ready for release—a decision limited only by the constraints of the maximum sentence imposed by the judge. Parole boards—usually composed of no more than ten individuals—also have the authority to rescind an established parole date, issue warrants and subpoenas, set conditions of supervision, restore offenders’ civil rights, and grant final discharges. In most states, they also order the payment of restitution or supervision fees as a condition of parole release.

In the early years, there were few standards governing the decision to grant or deny parole, and decision-making rules were not made public. One of the long-standing criticisms of paroling authorities is that their members are too often selected based on party loyalty and political patronage, rather than professional qualifications and experience (Morse 1939).

In his book *Conscience and Convenience*, David Rothman discussed the issue of discretionary decisions by parole boards. He reported that, in the early twentieth century, parole boards considered primarily the seriousness of the crime in determining whether to release an inmate on parole. However, there was no consensus on what constituted a serious crime. “Instead,” Rothman wrote, “each member made his own decisions. The judgements were personal and therefore not subject to debate or reconsideration” (Rothman 1980, p. 173). These personal preferences often resulted in unwarranted sentencing disparities or racial and gender bias (Tonry 1995). As has been observed, “no other part of the criminal justice system concentrates such power in the hands of so few” (Rhine et al. 1991, pp. 32–33).

Regardless of criticisms, the use of parole release grew, and instead of using it as a special privilege to be extended to exceptional prisoners,

it began to be used as a standard mode of release from prison, routinely considered on completion of a minimum term of confinement. What had started as a practical alternative to executive clemency, and then came to be used as a mechanism for controlling prison growth, gradually developed a distinctively rehabilitative rationale, incorporating the promise of help and assistance as well as surveillance (Bottomley 1990, p. 325).

By the mid-1950s, indeterminate sentencing coupled with parole release was well entrenched in the United States, the dominant sentencing structure in every state, and by the late 1970s, more than 70 percent of all inmate releases were results of parole board discretionary decision. And in some states, essentially everyone was released as a result of parole board decision making. For example, throughout the 1960s, over 95 percent of all inmates released in Washington, New Hampshire, and California were released on parole (O'Leary 1974). Indeterminate sentencing coupled with parole release was a matter of absolute routine and good correctional practice for most of the twentieth century.

But all that was to change during the late 1970s, and more rapidly in the 1980s and 1990s, as demands for substantial reforms in parole practice began to be heard.

B. Modern Challenges and Changes to Parole

The pillars of the American corrections systems—indeterminate sentencing coupled with parole release, for the purposes of offender rehabilitation—came under severe attack and basically collapsed during the late 1970s and early 1980s. This period in penology has been well documented elsewhere and is not repeated here. For an excellent review, see Reitz (1998).

Attacks on indeterminate sentencing and parole release seem to have centered on three major criticisms. First, there was little scientific evidence that parole release and supervision reduced subsequent recidivism. In 1975, Martinson and his colleagues published the now-famous review of the effectiveness of correctional treatment and concluded that, "with few and isolated exceptions, the rehabilitative efforts that have been reported so far have had no appreciable effect on recidivism" (Lipton, Martinson, and Wilks 1975, p. 20). Of the 289 studies they reviewed, just twenty-five (8.6 percent) pertained to parole, and

yet their summary was interpreted to mean that parole supervision (and all rehabilitation programs) did not work.

The National Research Council reviewed the Martinson data and basically concurred with the conclusions reached (Sechrest, White, and Brown 1979). Martinson's study is often credited with giving rehabilitation the coup de grâce. As Holt (1998) notes, once rehabilitation could not be legitimated by science, there was nothing to support the "readiness for release" idea, and therefore no role for parole boards or indeterminate sentencing.

Second, parole and indeterminate sentencing were challenged on moral grounds as unjust and inhumane, especially when imposed on unwilling participants. Research showed there was little relationship between in-prison behavior, participation in rehabilitation programs, and postrelease recidivism (Glaser 1969). If that was true, then why base release dates on in-prison performance? Critics argued that not knowing their release dates kept prisoners in "suspended animation" and contributed one more pain of imprisonment.

Third, indeterminate sentencing permitted authorities to use a great deal of uncontrolled discretion in release decisions, and these decisions were often inconsistent and discriminatory. Since parole boards had a great deal of autonomy and their decisions were not subject to outside scrutiny, critics argued that it was a hidden system of discretionary decision making and led to race and class bias in release decisions (Citizens' Inquiry on Parole and Criminal Justice 1974).

It seemed as if no one liked indeterminate sentencing and parole in the early 1980s, and the time was ripe for change. Crime control advocates denounced parole supervision as being largely nominal and ineffective; social welfare advocates decried the lack of meaningful and useful rehabilitation programs. Several scholars, for example, James Q. Wilson, Andrew von Hirsch, and David Fogel, began to advocate alternative sentencing proposals.

Wilson argued that, if there were no scientific basis for believing rehabilitation worked, then the philosophical rationale for making it the chief goal of sentencing should be abandoned. He urged instead a revival of interest in the deterrent and incapacitative functions of the criminal justice system. He urged abandonment of rehabilitation as a major purpose of corrections, and wrote: "Instead we could view the correctional system as having a very different function—to isolate and to punish. That statement may strike many readers as cruel, even bar-

baric. It is not. It is merely recognition that society must be able to protect itself from dangerous offenders. . . . It is also a frank admission that society really does not know how to do much else" (Wilson 1985, p. 193).

von Hirsch provided a seemingly neutral ideological substitute for rehabilitation (see Holt 1998). He argued that the discredited rehabilitation model should be replaced with a simple nonutilitarian notion that sanctions should reflect the culpability and harm associated with the misconduct. Indeterminacy and parole should be replaced with a specific penalty for a specific offense. He believed that all persons committing the same crimes "deserve" to be sentenced to conditions that are similar in both type and duration and that individual traits such as amenability to treatment or potential for recidivism should be irrelevant to sentencing and parole decisions. He proposed abolishing parole and adopting a system of "just deserts" sentencing, in which similarly situated criminal conduct would be punished similarly (von Hirsch 1976).

Fogel advocated a "justice model" for prisons and parole, in which inmates would be given opportunities to volunteer for rehabilitation programs but that participation would not be required. He criticized the unbridled discretion exercised by correctional officials, particularly parole boards, under the guise of "treatment." He recommended a return to flat time/determinate sentencing and the elimination of parole boards. He also advocated abolishing parole's surveillance function and turning that function over to law enforcement (Fogel 1975).

These individuals had a major influence on both academic and policy thinking about sentencing objectives. Together they advocated a system with less emphasis on rehabilitation and the abolition of indeterminate sentencing and discretionary parole release. Liberals and conservatives endorsed the proposals. The political Left was concerned about excessive discretion that permitted vastly different sentences in presumably similar cases, and the political Right was concerned about the leniency of parole boards. Broad-based support for change resulted, and soon incapacitation and "just deserts" replaced rehabilitation as the primary goal of American prisons.

With that changed focus, indeterminate sentencing and parole release came under serious attack, and calls for "abolishing parole" were heard in state after state. In 1976, Maine became the first state to eliminate parole. The following year, California and Indiana joined Maine in establishing determinate sentencing legislation and abolishing dis-

cretionary parole release. By the end of 1998, fourteen states had abolished discretionary parole release for all inmates. In addition, in twenty-one states, parole authorities are operating under what might be called a "sundown provision," in that they have discretion over a small or diminished parole eligible population. Today, just fifteen states have given their parole boards full authority to release inmates through a discretionary process (see table 1).

Likewise, at the federal level, the Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984 created the U.S. Sentencing Commission. That legislation abolished the U.S. Parole Commission, and parole was eliminated for offenders sentenced under sentencing guidelines that took effect in 1987 and were kept only for prisoners sentenced under prior laws. Offenders sentenced to federal prison, while no longer eligible for parole release, are now required to serve a defined term of "supervised release" following release from prison (Adams and Roth 1998).

One of the presumed effects of eliminating parole or limiting its use is to increase the length of prison term served. After all, parole release is widely regarded as "letting them out early." Time served in prison has increased in recent years, but that is attributed to the implementation of truth-in-sentencing laws, rather than to the abolition of parole boards. The BJS data reveal no obvious relationship between type of release (mandatory vs. parole board) and length of time spent in prison prior to release. For all offense types combined, the (mean) average time served in prison for those released from state prison in 1996 through "discretionary" (parole) methods was twenty-five months served, whereas for those released "mandatorily," the (mean) average time served in prison was twenty-four months (Ditton and Wilson 1999). Ending parole by itself appears to have had no real impact on time served.

Offenders are, however, spending greater amounts of time in prison and on parole. These longer times may make it more difficult for offenders to maintain family contacts and other social supports, thereby contributing to their social isolation on release. As table 2 shows, the (mean) average time served among released state prisoners, for all types of offenders, has increased from an average of twenty months in 1985 to twenty-five months in 1996. The median prison term served increased from fourteen months in 1985 to fifteen months in 1996. Similarly, the length of time on parole supervision (for those successfully discharged) has increased from an average of nineteen months in 1985 to twenty-three months in 1996. The average time on parole for

TABLE 1
Status of Parole Release in the United States, 1998

	Parole Board Has Full Release Powers	Parole Board Has Limited Release Powers	If Parole Board Powers Are Limited, Crimes Ineligible for Discretionary Release	Discretionary Parole Abolished (Year Abolished)
Alabama	✓			
Alaska		✓		
Arizona				✓ (1994)
Arkansas		✓		
California		✓	Only for indeterminate life sentences	
Colorado	✓			
Connecticut		✓	Murders, capital felonies	
Delaware				✓ (1990)
Florida		✓	Certain capital/life felonies	
Georgia		✓	Several felonies	
Hawaii		✓	Punishment by life without parole	
Idaho	✓			
Illinois				✓ (1978)
Indiana				✓ (1977)
Iowa		✓	Murder 1, kidnap, sex abuse	
Kansas				✓ (1993)
Kentucky	✓			
Louisiana		✓	Several felonies	
Maine				✓ (1975)
Maryland		✓	Violent, or death penalty sought	
Massachusetts		✓	Murder 1	
Michigan		✓	Murder 1, 650+ grams cocaine	
Minnesota				✓ (1980)
Mississippi				✓ (1995)
Missouri		✓	Several felonies	
Montana	✓			
Nebraska		✓	Murder 1/life, kidnap/life	
Nevada	✓			
New Hampshire		✓	Murder 1	
New Jersey	✓			
New Mexico				✓ (1979)
New York		✓	"Violent felony offenders"	
North Carolina				✓ (1994)
North Dakota	✓			
Ohio				✓ (1996)
Oklahoma	✓			
Oregon				✓ (1989)
Pennsylvania	✓			
Rhode Island	✓			
South Carolina	✓			
South Dakota		✓	None with life sentence	
Tennessee		✓	Murder 1/life, rapes	
Texas		✓	None of death row	
Utah	✓			
Vermont	✓			
Virginia				✓ (1995)
Washington				✓ (1984)
West Virginia		✓	No life without mercy	
Wisconsin		✓	No life without parole	*
Wyoming	✓			
Total	15	21		14

NOTE.—This information is from National Institute of Corrections (1997) and updated with information from Ditton and Wilson (1999).

* Wisconsin abolished discretionary parole release in 1999, to go into effect on January 1, 2000, for crimes committed on or after that date.

TABLE 2
Time Served in Prison, Jail, and on
Parole: All Offense Types Combined,
in Months

	1985	1990	1996
Average time served in jail	6	6	5
Average time served in prison	20	22	25
Time served on parole	19	22	23
Total months	45	50	53

SOURCE.—Data are from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (various years—c) and include only offenders with a sentence of more than one year released for the first time on the current sentence. Time served on parole is for “successful” exits.

“unsuccessful exits” was nineteen months in 1985 and twenty-one months in 1996 (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1998).

Even in states that did not formally abolish parole or restrict its use to certain serious offenses, the sentencing reform movement produced a significant diminution of parole boards’ discretionary authority to release. Mandatory minimum sentencing policies now exist in every state, and the federal government and twenty-four states have enacted “three strikes, you’re out” laws that require extremely long minimum terms for certain repeat offenders (National Conference of State Legislatures 1996).

Perhaps most significantly, twenty-seven states and the District of Columbia have established “truth-in-sentencing” laws, under which people convicted of selected violent crimes must serve at least 85 percent of the announced prison sentence. To satisfy the 85 percent test (in order to qualify for federal funds for prison construction), states have limited the powers of parole boards to set release dates or of prison managers to award good time and gain time (time off for good behavior or for participation in work or treatment programs), or both. Truth-in-sentencing laws not only effectively eliminate parole but also most “good time” (Ditton and Wilson 1999).

Even in the fifteen jurisdictions that give parole authorities discretion to release, most use formal risk prediction instruments (or parole guidelines) to assist in parole decision making (Runda, Rhine, and Wetter 1994). Parole guidelines are usually actuarial devices that pre-

dict the risk of recidivism based on crime and offender background information. The guidelines produce a "seriousness" score for each individual by summing points assigned for various background characteristics (higher scores mean greater risk). Inmates with the least serious crime and the lowest statistical probability of reoffending would then be the first to be released. The use of such instruments helps to reduce disparity in parole release decision making and has been shown to be more accurate than release decisions based on the case study or individualized method (Holt 1998). One-half of U.S. jurisdictions now use formal risk assessment instruments in relation to parole release (Runda, Rhine, and Wetter 1994).

III. A Profile of Parolees in the United States

While discretionary parole release has declined, parole supervision remains in almost every state. And, as the size of the prison populations has risen, so too has the parole population.

A. Numbers of Parolees under Supervision

The BJS reports that, at year-end 1997, there were 685,033 adults on parole in the United States. Persons on parole represented 12 percent of the total 5.7 million persons who were incarcerated or on community supervision ("under correctional control") at year-end 1997 (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1998).

The growth in parole populations has slowed considerably in recent years, increasing just 1.3 percent in 1997, after growing 24 percent between 1990 and 1992. This is the smallest growth of any of the correctional populations and likely reflects a short-term lull in the growth of the parole population, primarily as a consequence of an increase in the average length of prison term being served as a result of truth-in-sentencing policies (Ditton and Wilson 1999).

Nearly a third (31.2 percent) of all persons on parole in the United States were in Texas or California. Texas led the nation with 109,437 adults on parole in 1997, followed by California with 104,409. In 1997, however, the parole population in Texas declined by 2.8 percent, while the California population increased by 4.9 percent. The District of Columbia has, by far, the greatest percentage of its resident population on parole supervision. In 1997, nearly 1.7 percent of all its residents were on parole supervision (six times the national average of 0.3 percent) (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1998).

B. Selected Characteristics

There is little available information on the characteristics of persons on parole. The BJS reports some basic characteristics of those entering parole as part of its National Corrections Reporting Program series. In 1997, as is true of other correctional populations, males constituted most of the parolee population (89 percent), although the percentage of female parolees increased from 8 percent in 1990 to 11 percent in 1997. Fifty-four percent of the parole population were white, 45 percent were black, and 21 percent were of Hispanic origin. The median age of the parolee population was thirty-four years, and the median education level was eleventh grade (although 13 percent of parolees had an education level below eighth grade, and an additional 45 percent, between ninth and eleventh grade levels) (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1997). These characteristics have remained fairly constant since the early 1980s.

The only parolee characteristic that has changed in recent years appears to be the conviction crime. In 1988, 30 percent of first entries to parole were convicted of violence, but in 1997, that had dropped to 24 percent. In 1985, just 12 percent of those persons released to parole were convicted of drug crimes, whereas in 1997, that was true for 35 percent of first releases to parole (Beck 1999). Today, more than a third of all entrants to parole are convicted of drug-related crimes (see table 3).

Individual states sometimes publish descriptions of their parolees. For example, a recent report by the California Parole and Community Services Division reported that 85 percent of parolees were chronic substance abusers, 10 percent were homeless (but homelessness was as high as 30–50 percent in San Francisco and Los Angeles), 70–90 percent of all parolees were unemployed, and 50 percent were functionally illiterate (California Department of Corrections 1997). Over half of all parolees read below the sixth grade level and therefore could not fill out job applications or compete in the job market; 18 percent have some sort of psychiatric problem.

IV. The Reentry Process and Parole Supervision

Parole consists of two parts: parole boards that have the authority to decide when to release prisoners, and parole field services, whose parole officers supervise offenders after their release. The major criticisms of parole release (e.g., lack of professionalism, unwarranted dis-

TABLE 3
Conviction Offenses of Persons Entering Parole, Selected Years
(in Percent)

Most Serious Offense	First Entries to Parole Supervision*				
	1988	1990	1992	1994	1996
Violent offenses:	30.1	25.2	25.5	23.5	23.6
Homicide	3.8	3.0	2.7	2.3	2.1
Sexual assault	5.4	4.2	4.2	4.4	4.3
Robbery	13.7	11.2	10.7	8.7	8.9
Assault	6.3	5.8	6.6	6.9	6.9
Other violent	.9	1.0	1.0	1.2	1.4
Property offenses:	42.2	37.2	32.7	33.3	31.0
Burglary	20.8	17.5	14.8	14.5	12.9
Larceny/theft	10.2	9.6	8.4	8.5	8.1
Motor vehicle theft	2.9	2.7	2.7	3.1	2.7
Fraud	5.1	4.6	3.9	4.2	4.3
Other property	3.2	2.8	2.9	3.0	3.0
Drug offenses:	19.2	28.2	31.1	31.6	34.7
Possession	6.0	8.6	8.2	7.0	10.0
Trafficking	10.4	15.6	19.3	19.5	19.5
Other	2.8	4.0	3.6	5.1	5.2
Public-order offense:	7.1	8.1	9.8	10.5	10.1
Weapons	1.9	1.8	2.2	2.4	2.7
DWI/DUI	N.A.	3.0	3.7	3.5	3.2
Other	N.A.	3.3	3.9	4.6	4.2
Other offenses	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.1	.6

SOURCE.—Bureau of Justice Statistics (various years-*c*). Unpublished data are for 1994 and 1996.

NOTE.—N.A. = not available. All offenses per year sum to 100 percent.

* Based on parole entries who were released for the first time on the current offense and who had a maximum sentence of more than one year.

cretion, and ineffectiveness) were also leveled at field supervision and caused major changes and reforms there as well.

A. Administration of Parole Field Services

One of the first and continuing reforms in parole field services has been to make them more independent of parole boards. Since the mid-1960s, states have increasingly moved parole field services away from being an arm of the parole board and into a separate agency. According to the American Correctional Association, the parole field service agency is housed under a separate agency in forty-one states, usually in the department of corrections. Parole boards have responsibility for

supervising parolees in only ten states (American Correctional Association 1995).

Regardless of administrative relationships, parole board directives heavily influence how parole agents carry out their duties and responsibilities. When setting conditions of release, a parole board prescribes the goals it expects parole agents to pursue in the period of supervision. A 1997 survey by the Association of Paroling Authorities International shows that most parole boards are responsible for ordering community service, restitution, supervision fees, sex offender registration, and treatment program participation (Association of Paroling Authorities International 1998). In addition, some parole boards also mandate drug testing, intensified supervision, and participation in mediation programs.

In all states, the decision to revoke parole ultimately rests with the parole board. Parole boards set implicit and explicit criteria about which types of parole violations will warrant return to prison and thereby heavily influence the types of behavior parole officers monitor and record. If, for example, failing a drug test is not a violation that will result in revocation to prison or any serious consequence by the parole board, parole agents will not administer drug tests as frequently since no consequence can be guaranteed (McCleary 1992). In this way, parole boards and parole field services are functionally interdependent.

B. Offenders' Needs for Services and Conditions of Parole Supervision

Persons released from prison face a multitude of difficulties in trying to reenter the outside community successfully. They remain largely uneducated, unskilled, and usually without solid family support systems—and now they bear the added burdens of a prison record and the distrust and fear that inevitably results. If they are African American and under age thirty, they join the largest group of unemployed in the country, with the added handicap of former convict status (Clear and Cole 1997). As Irwin and Austin (1994, p. 133) write: "Any imprisonment reduces the opportunities of felons, most of whom had relatively few opportunities to begin with."

Research has shown that parolees want the same things as the rest of us, although most believe they will not succeed (Richards 1995). Most aspire to a relatively modest, stable, conventional life after prison. "When I get out, I want to have my kids with me and have a good job so I can support them" (Irwin and Austin 1994, p. 126).

The public too would like them to succeed. But what assistance are

parolees given as they reenter our communities? Sadly, while inmates' need for services and assistance has increased, parole in some (if not most) states has retreated from its historical mission to provide counseling, job training, and housing assistance.

An excellent ethnographic study of parole officers in California concludes that, while "rehabilitation" remains in parole's rhetoric, as a practical matter parole services are almost entirely focused on control-oriented activities (Lynch 1999). Agents have constructed the prototypical parolee as someone who generally chooses to continue involvement with crime, who needs no more than an attitude adjustment in order to get on the "right track," and who does not need the agent to provide intervention and services to facilitate reform. As Lynch observes: "In this way, while parole may talk of the need and capability for reform among their clientele, the agency can absolve itself of the responsibility to provide it" (Lynch 1998, p. 857). Even when traditional rehabilitative tools are available to agents—for example, drug treatment and counseling—they "are treated as rehabilitative in discourse, but are often used for coercive control in practice" (ibid., p. 860).

1. *Services and Parole Conditions.* Of course, what help parolees receive differs vastly depending on the state and jurisdiction in which they are being supervised. But as states put more and more of their fiscal resources into building prisons, fewer resources are available for parole services. And, as noted earlier, the public has become less tolerant and forgiving of past criminal transgressions and more fearful of particular offenders (e.g., sex offenders). This sentiment has translated into stricter requirements for release and stricter supervision and revocation procedures once released.

In California, for example, there are few services for parolees. There are only 200 shelter beds in the state for more than 10,000 homeless parolees, four mental health clinics for 18,000 psychiatric cases, and 750 beds in treatment programs for 85,000 drug and alcohol abusers (Little Hoover Commission 1998). Under the terms of their parole, offenders are often subjected to periodic drug tests. But they are rarely offered any opportunity to get drug treatment. Of the approximately 130,000 substance abusers in California's prisons, only 3,000 are receiving treatment behind bars. And of the 132,000 inmates released last year in California, just 8,000 received any kind of prerelease program to help them cope with life on the outside. As was recently reported:

Inmates are simply released from prison each year in California, given nothing more than \$200 and a bus ticket back to the county where they were convicted. At least 1,200 inmates every year go from a secure housing unit at a Level 4 prison—an isolation unit, designed to hold the most violent and dangerous inmates in the system—right onto the street. One day these predatory inmates are locked in their cells for twenty-three hours at a time and fed all their meals through a slot in the door, and the next day they're out of prison, riding a bus home. (Schlosser 1998, p. 51)

The national picture is almost as disturbing. The Office of National Drug Control Policy recently reported that 70–85 percent of state prison inmates need substance abuse treatment; however, just 13 percent will receive any kind of treatment while incarcerated (McCaffrey 1998).

All parolees are required to sign an agreement to abide by certain regulations. Conditions can generally be grouped into standard conditions applicable to all parolees and special conditions that are tailored to particular offenders. Special conditions for substance abusers, for example, usually include periodic drug testing.

Standard conditions are similar throughout most jurisdictions, and violating them can result in a return to prison. Common standard parole conditions include that one should report to the parole agent within twenty-four hours of release, not carry weapons, report changes of address and employment, not travel more than fifty miles from home or leave the county for more than forty-eight hours without prior approval from the parole agent, obey all parole agent instructions, seek and maintain employment or participate in education/work training, not commit crimes, and submit to search by the police and parole officers.

Some argue that we have created unrealistic parole conditions. Boards were asked in 1988 to indicate standard parole conditions in their state from a list of fourteen items. The most common was "obey all laws." However, 78 percent required "gainful employment" as a standard condition; 61 percent, "no association with persons of criminal records"; 53 percent, "pay all fines and restitution"; and 47 percent, "support family and all dependents." None of these can consistently be met by most parolees (Rhine et al. 1991). Increasingly, drug testing is the most common condition for probationers and parolees. It is estimated that more than a third of all community correctional

clients have court-ordered drug testing conditions (Camp and Camp 1997).

In October 1998, Maryland began ordering every drug addict released on parole or probation to report for urine tests twice a week in an ambitious attempt to force about 25,000 criminals statewide to undergo drug treatment or face a series of quickly escalating punishments. The project, known as "Break the Cycle," is based on the theory that frequent drug testing coupled with swift, graduated punishments for drug use will force more addicts off drugs than the threat of long jail terms or treatment programs alone ever could. The state anticipates that more than a million tests annually may be required to make the plan work, compared with the 40,000 tests the state administered the preceding year (Pan 1998).

Seeing that the parolee lives up to this parole contract is the principal responsibility of the parole agent. Parole agents are equipped with legal authority to carry and use firearms; to search places, persons, and property without the constraints imposed by the Fourth Amendment (e.g., the right to privacy); and to order arrests without probable cause and to confine without bail. The power to search applies to the household where a parolee is living and businesses where a parolee is working. The ability to arrest, confine, and in some cases reimprison the parolee makes the parole agent a walking court system (Rudovsky et al. 1988).

2. Parole Classification and Caseload Assignment. When parolees first report to the parole field office, they are usually interviewed for the purposes of being assigned to a caseload. Most jurisdictions rely on a formal approach to classification and case management. Such systems recognize that not all offenders are equal in their need for supervision. A recent parole survey found that 90 percent of the states use a classification system for assigning parolees to different levels of supervision (Runda, Rhine, and Wetter 1994).

Most often, this assignment is based on a structured assessment of parolee risk and an assessment of the needs or problem areas that have contributed to the parolee's criminality. By scoring information relative to the risk of recidivism and the particular needs of the offender (i.e., a risk/need instrument), a total score is derived, which then indicates the particular level of parole supervision (e.g., intensive, medium, minimum, administrative). Jurisdictions usually establish policy that dictates the contact levels (times the officer will meet with the parolee). These contact levels correspond to each level of parole supervision.

TABLE 4
Parole Caseload Supervision Level, Contacts, and Annual Costs

Caseload Type	Percent of All Parolees	Average Caseload Size	Face to Face Contacts	Annual Supervision Cost (\$)
Regular	82	69:1	1.6/month	1,397
Intensive	14	27:1	5.1/month	3,628
Electronic monitoring	.7	25:1	5.7/month	3,628
Specialized	3.7	43:1	4.4/month	4,080

SOURCE.—Camp and Camp (1997).

The notion is that higher-risk inmates and those with greater needs will be seen more frequently (e.g., on “intensive” caseloads). These models are described as “management tools” and are not devices to reduce recidivism directly (Holt 1998).

Larger parole departments have also established “specialized caseloads” to supervise certain types of offenders more effectively. These offenders generally pose a particularly serious threat to public safety or present unique problems that may handicap their adjustment to supervision. Specialized caseloads afford the opportunity to match the special skills and training of parole officers with the specialized needs of parolees. The most common specialized caseloads in the United States target sex offenders and parolees with serious substance abuse problems, although, as shown in table 4, fewer than 4 percent of all parolees are supervised on specialized caseloads.

Cases are then assigned to parole officers and constitute an officer’s caseload. Table 4 contains the latest information on these characteristics for U.S. parolees. Over 80 percent of U.S. parolees are supervised on regular caseloads, averaging sixty-nine cases to one parole officer, in which parolees are seen (face-to-face) less than twice per month. Officers may also conduct “collateral” contacts, such as contacting family members or employers to inquire about the parolee’s progress. Many parole officers are frustrated because they lack the time and resources to do the kind of job they believe is maximally helpful to their clients. Parole officers often complain that paperwork has increased, that their clients have increasingly more serious problems, and that their caseloads are much higher than the thirty-five to fifty cases that have been considered the ideal caseload for a parole officer. However, there is

no empirical evidence to show that smaller caseloads result in lower recidivism rates (Petersilia and Turner 1993).

One important implication of larger caseloads and the reduction in the quality of client supervision is the increased potential for lawsuits arising from negligent supervision by parole officers (del Carmen and Pilant 1994). In a 1986 case, the Alaska Supreme Court ruled that state agencies and their officers may be held liable for negligence when probationers and parolees under their supervision commit violent offenses (*Division of Corrections vs. Neakok*, 721 P.2d 1121, 1125; Alaska [1986]). Thus parole officers are increasingly at risk through tort actions filed by victims harmed by the crimes committed by their offender-clients. Some have argued that this legal threat will eventually force states to invest more heavily in parole supervision.

3. *Parole Revocation.* If parolees fail to live up to their conditions, they can be revoked to custody. Parole can be revoked for two reasons: the commission of a new crime, or the violation of the conditions of parole (a "technical violation"). Technical violations pertain to behavior that is not criminal, such as the failure to refrain from alcohol use or remain employed.

In either event, the violation process is rather straightforward. Given that parolees are technically still in the legal custody of the prison or parole authorities, and as a result maintain a quasi-prisoner status, their constitutional rights are severely limited. When parole officers become aware of violations of the parole contract, they notify their supervisors, who can rather easily return a parolee to prison.

Parole violations are an administrative function that is typically devoid of court involvement. However, parolees do have some rights in revocation proceedings. Two U.S. Supreme Court cases, *Morrissey vs. Brewer*, 408 U.S. 471 (1972), and *Gagnon vs. Scarpelli*, 411 U.S. 778 (1973), are considered landmark cases of parolee rights in revocation proceedings. Among other things, *Morrissey* and *Gagnon* established minimum requirements for the revocation of parole, requiring boards to conform to minimum standards of due process. Parolees must be given written notice of the nature of the violation and the evidence obtained, and they have a right to confront and cross-examine their accusers.

C. *The Changing Nature of Parole Supervision and Services*

Historically, parole agents were viewed as paternalistic figures who mixed authority with help. Officers provided direct services (e.g., counseling) and also knew the community and brokered services (e.g.,

job training) to needy offenders. Parole was originally designed to make the transition from prison to the community more gradual, and, during this time, parole officers were to assist the offender in addressing personal problems and searching for employment and a place to live. Many parole agencies still do assist in these "service" activities. Increasingly, however, parole supervision has shifted away from providing services to parolees and more toward monitoring and surveillance (e.g., drug testing, monitoring curfews, and collecting restitution).

Historically, offering "services" and treatment to parolees was commonplace, but such services are dwindling. A recent survey of twenty-two parole agencies shows that fourteen provide job development help, seven offer detoxification services, and thirteen offer substance abuse treatment, yet all do drug testing (Camp and Camp 1997).

There are a number of reasons for this. For one, a greater number of parole conditions are being assigned to released prisoners. In the federal system, for example, between 1987 and 1996 the proportion of offenders required to comply with at least one special supervision condition increased from 67 percent of entrants to 91 percent (Adams and Roth 1998). Parolees in state systems are also more frequently being required to submit to drug testing, complete community service, and make restitution payments (Petersilia and Turner 1993).

Parole officers work for the corrections system, and if paroling authorities are imposing a greater number of conditions on parolees, then field agents must monitor those conditions. As a result, modern-day parole officers have less time to provide other services, such as counseling, even if they were inclined to do so.

It is also true that the fiscal crises experienced in most states in recent years reduced the number of treatment and job-training programs in the community at large, and given the fear and suspicion surrounding ex-convicts, these persons are usually placed at the end of the waiting lists. The ability to "broker" services to parolees, given the scarcity of programs, has become increasingly difficult. If there is one common complaint among parole officers in the United States, it is the lack of available treatment and job programs for parolees. At the end of the 1960s, when the country had more employment opportunities for blue-collar workers than it does now, there was some movement to reduce employment barriers to ex-prisoners, and studies revealed a full-time employment rate of around 50 percent for parolees (Simon 1993). Today, full-time employment among parolees is rare.

The main reason, however, that "services" are not delivered to most

parolees is that parole supervision has been transformed ideologically from a social service to a law enforcement system. Just as the prison system responded to the public's demands for accountability and justice, so did parole officers.

Feely and Simon (1992) argue that over the past few decades a systems analysis approach to danger management has come to dominate parole and that it has evolved into a "waste management" system, rather than one focused on rehabilitation. In their model, those in the dangerous class of criminals are nearly synonymous with those in the larger social category of the underclass, a segment of the population that has been abandoned to a fate of poverty and despair. They suggest that a "new penology" has emerged, one that simply strives to manage risk by use of actuarial methods. Offenders are addressed not as individuals but as aggregate populations. The traditional correctional objectives of rehabilitation and the reduction of offender recidivism have given way to the rational and efficient deployment of control strategies for managing (and confining) high-risk criminals. Surveillance and control have replaced treatment as the main goals of parole.

Newly hired parole officers often embrace the "surveillance" versus "rehabilitation" model of parole and embrace the quasi-policing role that parole has taken on in some locales. Twenty years ago, social work was the most common educational path for those pursuing careers in parole. Today, the most common educational path is criminal justice studies—an academic field spawned in the 1960s to professionalize law enforcement (Parent 1993). Parole agents began to carry concealed firearms in the 1980s. Firearms are now provided in most jurisdictions and represent a major investment of training resources, agent time, and administrative oversight (Holt 1998).

Programming innovations likewise represent a theme of control and supervision rather than service and assistance. Parolees are held more accountable for a broader range of behavior, including alcohol and substance abuse, restitution, curfews, and community service.

As Irwin and Austin (1994, p. 129) put it: "Instead of helping prisoners locate a job, find a residence, or locate needed drug treatment services, the new parole system is bent on surveillance and detection. Parolees are routinely and randomly checked for illegal drug use, failure to locate or maintain a job, moving without permission, or any other number of petty and nuisance-type behaviors that don't conform to the rules of parole."

In addition to the limitations set out in the parole contract and en-

forced by the parole officer, parolees face a growing number of legal restrictions or "civil disabilities." Ironically, these civil disabilities often restrict the parolee's ability to carry out one of the most common parole requirements—that of remaining employed.

D. Civil Disabilities and Injunctions of Convicted Felons

While the services available to assist parolees have decreased, the structural obstacles concerning their behavior have increased. Under federal law and the laws of many states, a felony conviction has consequences that continue long after a sentence has been served and parole has ended. For example, convicted felons lose essential rights of citizenship, such as the right to vote and to hold public office, and may be restricted in their ability to obtain occupational and professional licenses. Their criminal record may also preclude them from retaining parental rights, be grounds for divorce, and bar them from serving on a jury, holding public office, and firearm ownership. These statutory restrictions or "civil disabilities" serve as punishments in addition to the conviction and sentence imposed by the court.

A recent survey shows that after a period when states were becoming less restrictive of convicted felons' rights, the "get-tough movement" of the 1980s had the effect of increasing the statutory restrictions placed on parolees. Between 1986 and 1996, state legal codes reveal an increase in restrictions on the rights and opportunities available to released inmates (Olivares, Burton, and Cullen 1996).

A complete state-by-state survey of civil disabilities of convicted felons can be found in Love and Kuzma (1996). These restrictions apply to all convicted felons and not separately to parolees.

1. *Right to Vote.* Fourteen states permanently deny convicted felons the right to vote, whereas most others temporarily restrict this right until the sentence has been fulfilled. Eighteen states suspend the right to vote until the offender has completed the imposed sentence of prison, probation, or parole (and paid all fines). Colorado is typical in this regard and provides that the "right to vote is lost if incarcerated and automatically restored on completion of sentence, including parole." California denies the right to vote to incarcerated offenders and parolees yet allows probationers to vote. Fellner and Mauer (1998) estimate that 1.4 million black males, or 13.1 percent of the black male adult population, are currently or permanently not able to vote as a result of a felony conviction. While most states have procedures for regaining the right to vote, it often requires a gubernatorial pardon.

2. *Parental Rights.* Nineteen states currently may terminate the parental rights of convicted felons if it can be shown that a felony conviction suggests a parent's unfitness to supervise or care for the child. Oregon and Tennessee require that the parent be incarcerated for a specified length of time (three years in Oregon and two years in Tennessee).

3. *Divorce.* The use of a felony conviction to permit divorce exists in nineteen states. In twenty-nine jurisdictions, a felony conviction constitutes legal grounds for divorce. In 1996, ten states consider any felony conviction as sufficient grounds, whereas seven jurisdictions require a felony conviction and imprisonment to grant divorce.

4. *Public Employment.* Public employment is permanently denied in six states: Alabama, Delaware, Iowa, Mississippi, Rhode Island, and South Carolina. The remaining jurisdictions permit public employment in varying degrees. Of these states, ten leave the decision to hire at the discretion of the employer, while twelve jurisdictions apply a "direct relationship test" to determine whether the conviction offense bears directly on the job in question. But the courts have interpreted the "direct relationship" standard liberally; for example, a California case (*Golde vs. Fox*, 98 Cal. App.3d 167, 159 Cal. Rptr. 864 [1st Dist. 1979]) found that conviction of possession of marijuana for sale was substantially related to the business of real estate broker as it shows lack of honesty and integrity.

Each state has its own particular professions that have been restricted to ex-convicts. In Colorado, for example, the professions of dentist, engineer, nurse, pharmacist, physician, and real estate agent are closed to convicted felons. In California, the professions of law, real estate, medicine, nursing, physical therapy, and education are restricted. In Virginia, the professions of optometry, nursing, dentistry, accounting, funeral director, and pharmacy are professions generally closed to ex-felons.

5. *Right to Serve as a Juror.* The right to serve as a juror is restricted permanently in thirty-two jurisdictions, and the remaining states permit the right with consideration given to varying conditions. For example, ten states restrict the right only during sentence, while four jurisdictions impose an additional delay after sentence completion (e.g., from one year in the District of Columbia to ten years in Kansas).

6. *Right to Hold Public Office.* Seven states permanently deny elected office to persons convicted of specific crimes including bribery,

perjury, and embezzlement. Twenty states restrict the right to hold public office until the offender has completed his or her sentence of prison, probation, or parole.

7. *Right to Own a Firearm.* Thirty-one of fifty-one jurisdictions permanently deny or restrict the right to own or possess a firearm on "any" felony conviction. In contrast, eighteen states deny the right to own or possess a firearm only for convictions involving violence.

8. *Criminal Registration.* In 1986, only eight of fifty-one jurisdictions required offenders to register with a law enforcement agency on release from prison. By 1998, every state required convicted sex offenders to register with law enforcement on release (Lieb, Quinsey, and Berliner 1998). These state registration schemes, so-called Megan's laws, vary considerably with respect to the crimes for which registration is required, the duration of the registration requirement, and the penalty for failure to register. Illinois, for example, requires sex offenders and those convicted of first-degree murder against a victim under eighteen years old to register. The registration typically lasts for a period of several years but may extend for the life of the offender for certain crimes. In addition, California now requires sex offenders to provide blood and saliva samples for DNA testing.

Simon (1993) notes that these civil disabilities have the effect of creating an inherent contradiction in our legal system. He writes that different laws may serve different purposes, but they must not contradict one another. Yet, in the United States, we spend millions of dollars to "rehabilitate" offenders, convince them that they need to obtain legitimate employment, and then frustrate whatever was thereby accomplished by raising legal barriers that may bar them absolutely from employment and its rewards. He also notes that structural changes in the economy in the United States have taken their toll on the very population from which most parolees come, which have, in turn, affected agents' ability to do their jobs. Most notably, the loss of a solid industrial base over the past few decades, which has traditionally supplied jobs within poorer inner-city communities, has left urban parolees with few opportunities and left agents with fewer venues in which to monitor and supervise their clients (Lynch 1999).

V. Recidivism and Crime Committed by Parolees

The most common question asked about parole is, "Does it work?" By "work," most mean whether persons granted parole refrain from further crime or reduce their "recidivism." Recidivism is currently the

primary outcome measure for parole, as it is for all corrections programs.

A. Prisoner Recidivism Rates

The most comprehensive study of state prisoner recidivism tracked 16,000 inmates released during 1983 in eleven states. The study found that, overall, 63 percent of inmates were arrested for a felony or serious misdemeanor offense within three years of release from prison. In unpublished data from that cohort, Beck reports that 62.3 percent of those who were released "conditionally" (i.e., on parole) were rearrested within three years, whereas the figure was 64.8 percent for those who were released "unconditionally." About 47 percent of inmates were convicted of a new offense during the three years after release, and 41 percent returned to prison or jail for a new offense or technical violation of their prison release (Beck and Shipley 1989).

The Beck and Shipley study is the best available to approximate the recidivism rates of parolees, but it has some limitations. Not all persons released from prison were officially on parole; however, in the early 1980s most were, so that these data capture most parolee recidivism. Also, the study tracked inmates for a full three-year period after release, and offenders may or may not have been officially on parole for all of that time period. The study was also conducted more than fifteen years ago, and we know that parole policy has changed considerably since that time. Unfortunately, there are no U.S. record-keeping systems that record the recidivism of parolees and no more recent national prisoner follow-up studies.

B. Successful vs. Unsuccessful Completion of Parole

The BJS, as part of its National Corrections Reporting Program, does collect data each year from every state about its parole population and how many of its parolees successfully complete parole. These data derive from parole agency records, not from the police, and hence they may not capture all arrests. It is possible, for example, for an offender to be arrested (say, for a misdemeanor or low-level felony) and not to be violated from parole and, hence, be recorded as a "successful exit" from parole.

These data reveal a disturbing trend: a majority of those being released to parole will not successfully complete their terms, and the percent of "unsuccessful" parolees is increasing. As Beck (1999) recently reported, annual discharges from state parole supervision reveal a

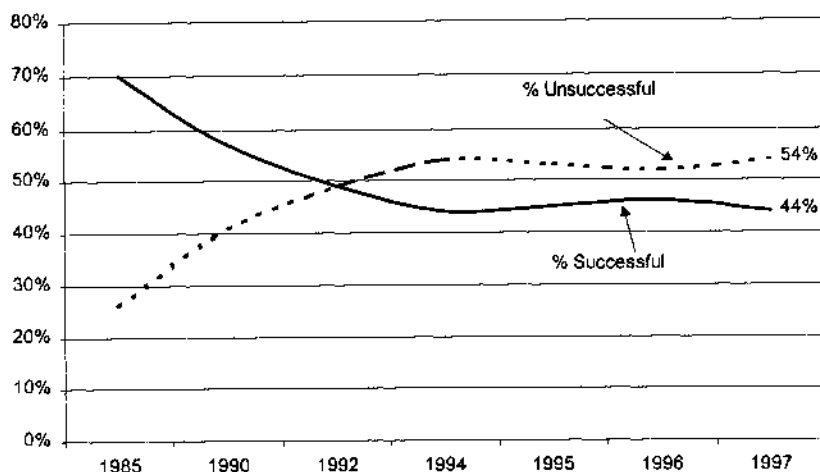


FIG. 2.—State parole outcomes, 1985–97. Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics (various years–a).

sharp drop in the percent of parolees who successfully complete their term of community supervision. As a percentage of all discharges from state parole supervision, offenders successfully completing parole declined from 70 percent in 1984 to 44 percent in 1996 (see fig. 2).

C. *The Return of Parolees and Other “Conditional Releases” to Custody*

Such high parole revocation rates are one of the major factors linked to the growing U.S. prison population. Since 1980, the percentage of conditional release violators—who had originally left state prisons as parolees, mandatory releases, and other type of releases subject to community supervision—has more than doubled, from 16 percent to 33.8 percent (see table 5).

In some states, the figures are even more dramatic. For example, in California in 1997 over two-thirds (64.7 percent) of all persons admitted to state prisons were parole violators. By comparison, in New York, the figure is 23 percent. In Texas, the state most comparable in prison population to California, the figure is also 23 percent. A recent report concluded: “There is no question that California has the highest rate of parole violations in the nation. In terms of total numbers, California accounts for nearly 40 percent of all known parole violators that occur in the nation although it reflects less than 15 percent of the nation’s parole population” (Little Hoover Commission 1998, p. 23).

TABLE 5
Percent of Admitted Prisoners Who Were Parole Violators,
Selected Years

State	1980	1985	1992	1997
New York	24.1	13.8	13.9	23.0
Pennsylvania	19.6	26.7	18.6	33.4
Ohio	18.5	21.1	16.6	19.6
Illinois	20.3	29.9	19.7	30.4
Michigan	16.6	23.5	25.8	28.3
North Carolina	10.6	5.8	17.4	23.6
Georgia	8.2	18.3	25.5	23.0
Florida	16.0	6.4	12.7	12.2
Texas	15.8	30.9	39.9	22.7
California	20.7	41.7	56.3	64.7
Average:				
All fifty states	16.09	22.3	28.6	33.8
Federal only	11.09	12.9	*	9.0
State and federal combined	15.8	21.6	28.6	32.3

SOURCE.—Bureau of Justice Statistics (various years–b), and unpublished data from 1997.

* Not reported.

D. The Contribution of Parolees to Crime

Another way to examine parole effectiveness is to look at proportions of all persons arrested and in custody who were on “parole” at the time they committed their last crime. The BJS conducts periodic surveys of persons arrested, in jail, in prison, and on death row. These data show that 44 percent of all state prisoners in 1991 had committed their latest crimes while out on probation or parole (fig. 3).

Such high recidivism rates have led to the common perception that community supervision fails to protect the public and that “nothing works.” As DiIulio (1997, p. 41) writes: “While formally under supervision in the community, these prison inmate violations included more than 13,000 murders, some 39,000 robberies, and tens of thousands of other crimes. More than a quarter of all felons charged with gun crimes in 1992 were out on probation or parole.”

Of course, it is important to remember that more than 80 percent of all parolees are on caseloads where they are seen less than twice a month, and the dollars available to support their supervision and services are generally less than \$1,500 per offender per year—when effective treatment programs are estimated to cost \$12,000 to \$15,000 per

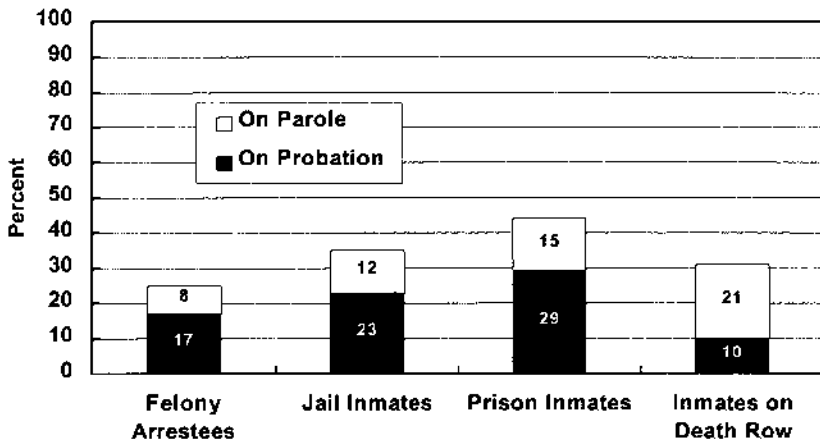


FIG. 3.—Who is on parole at time of arrest? Source: Petersilia (1997)

year, per client (Institute of Medicine 1990). It is no wonder that recidivism rates are so high. In a sense, we get what we pay for, and as yet, we have never chosen to invest sufficiently in parole programs.

Nevertheless, most view these data as showing that the parole system is neither helping offenders nor protecting the public and that major reform is needed.

VI. Reinventing and Reinvesting in Parole

As Joe Lehman, currently commissioner of the Washington Department of Corrections, said: "We have a broken parole system. Part of the problem is that parole can't do it alone, and we have misled the public in thinking that we can—hence the frustration, and the cries to abolish parole. We don't need to abolish parole, but a new model is sorely needed" (personal communication, September 10, 1998).

Interviews recently conducted with U.S. correctional experts reveal a consensus that parole needs to be "reinvented" (a term commonly used) and that the new parole "model" should incorporate at least four components: the identification of dangerous and violent parolees, for whom surveillance through human and technological means is a top priority; the delivery of quality treatment (particularly substance abuse) and job-training programs to the subgroup of offenders for whom research shows it could be most beneficial; the establishment of intermediate sanctions and other means of diverting technical parole violators to community-based alternatives and away from expensive prison cells;

and committing to a community-centered approach to parole supervision. This approach requires a commitment to manage offender risk in those neighborhoods where parolees live and means forming active partnerships with local police, community members, offenders' families, neighborhood associations, and other indigenous groups. Some refer to this as "neighborhood parole."

A. Greater Monitoring of High-Risk, Violent Parolees

There can be no doubt that the public, aided by private industry, will continue to demand and receive an increase in the level of control over certain violent, predatory offenders in the community. The most visible sign of this is the expanded registration of parolees, originally begun for sex offenses but now expanding in terms of types of crimes, and how accessible the information is to the public. Connecticut recently expanded its parolee registration to include kidnapping for sexual purposes, public indecency, and fourth-degree sexual assault. As of January 1, 1999, Connecticut's entire list is posted on the Internet. Florida and New Jersey also allow citizens to have complete access to inmate release information through an Internet site maintained by each state's department of corrections.

A New York City-based crime victim's advocacy group, using information from the state Department of Correctional Services, now places on the Internet the names of inmates soon to be eligible for parole from New York State prisons. In addition to including inmates' names, criminal backgrounds, and parole eligibility dates, the Internet site includes press clippings of the crime if they are available. The site encourages citizens to contact the New York State Division of Parole with comments.

In California, the State Department of Justice developed a CD-ROM database with the pictures, names, and whereabouts of the state's more than 50,000 registered sex offenders. Visitors to any local police station in the state are able to type in their ZIP codes to find out if a sex offender lives nearby. When the data were first released, many local newspapers published the pictures and addresses of local sex offenders. Los Angeles County just announced that, since few residents are using the CD-ROMs, mass mailings would be made to residents informing them of the location and names of sex offenders living in their neighborhoods. As of January 1, 1999, California school districts also have direct access to the CD-ROM and permission to distribute the information directly to the public.

New York and California both also now have 900-number hotlines set up to allow residents to check whether someone is a registered sex offender. Before that, it was illegal for a law enforcement officer to notify citizens about a sex offender living in the neighborhood.

Sophisticated technology is also assisting police and parole officers to keep better track of parolees once they are in the community. As the cold war wound down, the defense industry, along with the developing computer and electronic industries, saw the community correctional clientele as a natural place to put its energies—a growing market. Electronic monitoring, voice verification systems, cheap on-site drug testing, breathalyzers through the phone (through a mechanism placed in the phone voice piece)—all allowed community corrections the means to become more surveillance-oriented.

Since the mid-1980s, the electronic monitoring industry has continued to expand, and three states (Texas, Florida, New Jersey) now use global-positioning technology to determine when a parolee leaves his or her home or enters a restricted zone, such as an area around a school or the neighborhood of a former victim. The SMART (Satellite Monitoring And Remote Tracking) system was developed by Pro Tech Monitoring, Inc., a company founded by former Florida Governor Bob Martinez. "We integrated technologies proven in military and space applications to serve the citizens here at home," Martinez says. "This new system helps criminal justice and law enforcement officials know where offenders are when the courts release them into our communities" (see <http://www.ptm.com/news.html>; accessed October 12, 1998). The Florida Department of Corrections began implementing the system in 1997 and has transferred nearly one hundred offenders from the old traditional house arrest systems to the SMART system (see <http://www.ptm.com/news.html>). New Jersey began using the system in 1997 to monitor high-risk juveniles who have been mainly convicted of violent offenses or sexual assaults. The technology is also being planned for counties in Minnesota and Pennsylvania (Kleinknecht 1997). These initiatives and programs are a far cry from the traditional social work approaches to probation and parole.

B. Delivering Appropriate Treatment and Work Training to Selected Parolees

The public seems to have focused its fear and punitiveness on the violent (particular sexual) offender and seems more willing to tolerate treatment programs for nonviolent offenders, particularly substance

abusers (Flanagan and Longmire 1996). Recent research reveals that the public favors both punishing and treating criminals, and punitiveness tends to decline when people are given complex sentencing options and are informed about the high cost of incarceration (Applegate et al. 1996). A recent study found the public unwilling to tolerate regular probation for felons but willing to tolerate, if not prefer, strict community-based alternatives to prison when these sanctions are developed and applied meaningfully. For the crime of robbery with injury, for example, 50 percent of the respondents viewed a sanction between halfway house and strict probation acceptable. When the option of shock incarceration (prison followed by community supervision) is added, this figure rises to a full 63 percent (Sundt et al. 1998). The public seems open to tough community-based sanctions and wants them to include both treatment and surveillance.

This softening of public attitudes seems to have resulted from knowledge about the high costs of prisons, combined with emerging evidence that some treatment programs are effective, for some offenders, under certain empirically established conditions. This research has identified those principles that produce effective correctional interventions. The evidence indicates that well-designed and properly implemented programs incorporating these principles result in significant reductions in recidivism. Those programs that are most successful include a strong behavior and cognitive skills development component (Andrews and Bonta 1994). Some of these programs have been effective in reducing the rearrest rates of parolees.

1. *Drug and Alcohol Dependency Programs.* A recent research summary of drug treatment effectiveness reported that "a growing body of research" shows that voluntary or mandatory drug treatment can reduce recidivism, especially when treatment is matched to offender needs (Prendergast, Anglin, and Wellisch 1995). The most successful programs are based on social learning theory. These programs assume that criminal behavior is learned, so they try to improve offenders' interpersonal relations through vocational and social skill building, peer-oriented behavior programs, role-playing, and interpersonal cognitive skill training. Effective treatment programs must also continue assisting the offender for several months after program completion.

A program that attempts to do this with notable success is San Diego's Parolee Partnership Program, which is part of California's statewide Preventing Paroling Failure Program. The San Diego program, begun in 1992, provides substance abuse treatment for parolees

in San Diego County. A private vendor operates the program, using principles of client selection, managed care, case management, and case follow-up. The vendor subcontracts with others for outpatient, residential, and detoxification treatment services and facilities. Support services (e.g., education and vocation training, and transportation) are provided directly by the vendor or through referral to other community resource agencies. Typically, the time limit is 180 days of treatment. The participant is then assigned a "recovery advocate" who motivates the offender to continue in treatment for as long as necessary and keeps the parole agent aware of the parolee's progress. The program served about seven hundred offenders in fiscal year 1995-96 at a total cost of about \$1.5 million (about \$2,100 per parolee).

An evaluation of the program shows that the Parolee Partnership Program was successful with its target group (which was characterized as a hard-to-treat group, who on average had used drugs for about eleven years). The percentage of parolees placed in the program who were returned to prison was nearly 8 percentage points lower than the return rate for the statistically matched comparison group, and this difference was statistically significant (California Department of Corrections 1997). Los Angeles County operates a similarly successful program. The success of these programs motivated the California State Legislature to increase funding for parole substance abuse programs in 1998-2000.

2. *Employment and Job Training.* Research has consistently shown that if parolees can find decent jobs as soon as possible after release, they are less likely to return to crime and to prison. Several parole programs have been successful at securing employment for parolees.

The Texas RIO (Re-Integration of Offenders) Project, begun as a two-city pilot program in 1985, has become one of the nation's most ambitious government programs devoted to placing parolees in jobs (Finn 1998c). The project has more than one hundred staff members in sixty-two offices who provide job placement services to nearly 16,000 parolees each year in every county in Texas (or nearly half of all parolees released from Texas prisons each year). The RIO Project claims to have placed 69 percent of more than 100,000 ex-offenders in jobs since 1985.

The RIO Project represents a collaboration of two state agencies, the Texas Workforce Commission, where the program is housed, and the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, whose RIO-funded assessment specialists help inmates prepare for employment and whose pa-

role officers refer released inmates to the program. As the reputation of the program has spread, the Texas Workforce Commission has developed a pool of more than 12,000 employers who have hired parolees referred by the RIO program.

A 1992 independent evaluation documented that 60 percent of the RIO participants found employment, compared with 36 percent of a matched group of non-RIO parolees. In addition, one year after release, RIO participants had worked at some time during more three-month intervals than comparison group members had. During the year after release, when most recidivism occurs, 48 percent of the RIO high-risk clients were rearrested compared with 57 percent of the non-RIO high-risk parolees; only 23 percent of high-risk RIO participants returned to prison, compared with 38 percent of a comparable group of non-RIO parolees. The evaluation also concluded that the program continually saved the state money—more than \$15 million in 1990 alone—by helping to reduce the number of parolees who would otherwise have been rearrested and sent back to prison (Finn 1998c). These positive findings encouraged the Texas legislature to increase RIO's annual budget to nearly \$8 million and other states (e.g., Georgia) to implement aspects of the RIO model.

New York City's Center for Employment Opportunities project is a transitional service for parolees, consisting of day labor work crews. Assignment to a work crew begins immediately after release from prison, and while it is designed to prepare inmates for placement in a permanent job, it also helps to provide structure, instill work habits, and earn early daily income (Finn 1998b). Most participants are young offenders, released from prison boot camp programs, and they are required to enroll as a condition of parole. The descriptive evaluation of this program shows that young parolees associated with the program are more likely to be employed, refrain from substance use, and participate in community service and education while in the program.

3. *Multiservice Centers.* The Safer Foundation, headquartered in Chicago, is now the largest community-based provider of employment services for ex-offenders in the United States, with a professional staff of nearly two hundred in six locations in two states. The foundation offers a wide range of services for parolees, including employment, education, and housing. A recent evaluation shows that Safer has helped more than 40,000 participants find jobs since 1972, and nearly two-thirds of those placed kept their jobs for thirty days or more of continuous employment (Finn 1998a).

Another highly successful program for released prisoners is operated by Pioneer Human Services in Seattle, a private, nonprofit organization. Pioneer Services provides housing, jobs, and social support for released offenders, but it also operates sheltered workshops for the hard-to-place offender. It is different from other social-service agencies in that its program is funded almost entirely by the profits from the various businesses it operates and not through grants. They place a priority on practical living skills and job training. Most of their clients are able to maintain employment either in the free market or for Pioneer Services, and the recidivism rates are less than 5 percent for its work-release participants (Turner and Petersilia 1996b).

There are parole programs that work. One of the immediate challenges is to find the money to pay for them. Martin Horn, currently commissioner of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, suggests using offender "vouchers" to pay for parole programs. At the end of the prisoner's term, the offender would be provided with vouchers with which he or she can purchase certain type of services on release (e.g., drug and alcohol treatment, job placement, family counseling). Horn suggests giving \$2,000 in "service coupons" for each of the two years following prison release. The offender can then purchase the services he feels he most needs. Horn's cost-benefit analysis for this plan for the state of New York shows that it could save about \$50 million per year—dollars that he says could then be invested in prevention programs instead of prison (Horn, personal communication, September 10, 1998).

C. Intermediate Sanctions for Parole Violators

States are taking a new look at how they respond to violations of parole—particularly technical violations that do not involve, of themselves, new criminal behavior (Burke 1997). Several states are now structuring the courts' responses to technical violations. Missouri opened the Kansas City Recycling Center in 1988, a forty-one-bed facility operated by a private contractor to deal exclusively with technical violators who have been recommended for revocation. The pilot program proved so successful that the state took over its operation and set aside a complete correctional facility of 250 beds for the program. Mississippi and Georgia use ninety-day boot camp programs, housed in separate wings of the state prisons, for probation violators (for other program descriptions, see Parent et al. [1994]). While empirical evidence as to the effects of these programs is scant, system officials be-

lieve that the programs serve to increase the certainty of punishment while reserving scarce prison space for the truly violent. Importantly, experts believe that states with "intermediate" (nonprison) options for responding to less serious parole violations are able to reduce parolees' new commitments to prison, explaining the vast differences shown in table 5.

D. "Neighborhood" Parole

One of the critical lessons learned during the past decade has been that no one program—surveillance or rehabilitation alone—or any one agency—police without parole, parole without mental health, or any of these agencies without the community—can reduce crime, or fear of crime, on their own (Petersilia 1998a). Crime and criminality are complex, multifaceted problems, and real long-term solutions must come from the community and be actively participated in by the community and those who surround the offender. This model of community engagement is the foundation of community policing, and its tenants are now spreading to probation and parole.

This new parole model is being referred to as "neighborhood parole" (Smith and Dickey 1998), "corrections of place" (Clear and Corbett 1999), or "police-parole partnerships" (Morgan and Marrs 1998). Regardless of the name, the key components are the same. They involve strengthening parole's links with law enforcement and the community offering a "full-service" model of parole and attempting to change the offenders' lives through personal, family, and neighborhood interventions. At the core, these models move away from managing parolees on conventional caseloads and toward a more "activist supervision," where agents are responsible for close supervision as well as procuring jobs, social support, and needed treatment.

The "neighborhood parole" model has been most well thought out in Wisconsin, where the Governors' Task Force on Sentencing and Corrections recommended the program. Program proponents realize neighborhood-based parole will be more costly than traditional parole supervision but are hopeful that reduced recidivism and revocations to prison will offset program costs. In 1998, the Wisconsin legislature allocated \$8 million to fund and evaluate two countywide pilot projects (Smith and Dickey 1998).

VII. Concluding Remarks

Nearly 700,000 parolees are now doing their time on U.S. streets. Most have been released to parole systems that provide few services

and impose conditions that almost guarantee their failure. Our monitoring systems are getting better, and public tolerance for failure on parole is decreasing. The result is that a rising tide of parolees is washing back into prison, putting pressure on states to build more prisons, which in turn, takes money away from rehabilitation programs that might have helped offenders while they were in the community. All of this means that parolees will continue to receive fewer services to help them deal with their underlying problems, assuring that recidivism rates and returns to prison remain high and public support for parole remain low.

This situation represents a formidable challenge to those concerned with crime and punishment. The public will not support community-based punishments until they have been shown to "work," and they will not have an opportunity to "work" without sufficient funding and research. Spending on parole services in California, for example, was cut 44 percent in 1997, causing parole caseloads to nearly double (now standing at a ratio of 82:1). When caseloads increase, services decline, and even parolees who are motivated to change have little opportunity to do so. Job-training programs are cut, and parolees often remain at the end of long waiting lists for community-based drug and alcohol treatment.

Yet crime committed by parolees is a real problem, and there is every reason to be skeptical about our ability to reduce it significantly. Early parole research did not reveal any easy fixes, and the current parole population is increasingly difficult and dangerous. The public is skeptical that the "experts" know how to solve the crime problem and have increasingly taken matters into their own hands. Corrections officials report being increasingly constrained by political forces and are no longer able to use their own best judgments on crime policy (Rubin 1997). State officials feel that even a single visible failure of any parole program could readily become a political disaster for the existing administration. One notorious case was that of Willie Horton and the Massachusetts furlough program. The press often publicizes such cases to feed the public's appetite for news about the failure of the criminal justice system. Such negative news, and the fear of such negative news, often precludes innovative parole reform efforts.

The challenge is to bring greater balance to the handling of parole populations by singling out those offenders who present different public safety risks and different prospects for rehabilitation. The pilot parole programs described in Section VI above are the first step, but it

would help considerably if rigorous impact evaluations were always conducted. We do not know with any precision what effect parole has on offenders' recidivism or what supervision conditions are helpful to the reintegration process.

It is safe to say that parole programs have received less research attention than any other correctional component in recent years. A congressionally mandated evaluation of state and local crime prevention programs included just one parole evaluation among the hundreds of recent studies that were summarized for that effort (Sherman et al. 1997). I have spent many years contributing to the evaluation literature on probation effectiveness but know of no similar body of knowledge on parole effectiveness. Without better information, it is unlikely that the public will give corrections officials the political permission needed to invest in rehabilitation and job-training programs for parolees. With better information, we might be able to persuade voters and elected officials to shift their current preferences away from solely punitive crime policies and toward a sanctioning philosophy that balances incapacitation, rehabilitation, and just punishment.

By the year 2000, the United States is predicted to have a record 2 million people in jails and prisons and more people on parole than ever before. If current parole revocation trends continue, more than half of all those entering prison in the year 2000 will be parole failures. Given the increasing human and financial costs associated with prison, investing in effective reentry programs may well be one of the best investments we make.

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