

National Parole Institutes  
Final Evaluation Report

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ACQUISITIONS

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Table of Contents

	Page
Statement of Evaluative Aims _____	1
Method _____	2
Program-Specific Results _____	5
Overall Value Ratings.....	5
Program Component Ratings.....	6
Participant Suggestions for Improvement.....	9
Back Home Utility.....	11
Satisfaction of Participant Expectations.....	14
Summary.....	19
N.P.I. Policy Impact _____	20
Changes at the Board Level.....	20
Changes at the Individual Level.....	24
Conclusion: N.P.I. and the Future of Parole _____	28

List of Tables

	Page
Table 1 Participant Ratings of Values of N.P.I. Programs, by Time of Rating and Program Site.....	4
Table 2 Participant Suggestions for Improving N.P.I. Programs, by Type of Suggestion and Program Site.....	9
Table 3 Participant Ratings of Applicability of N.P.I. Programs in Facing Day-to-Day Parole Problems, by Program Site.....	13
Table 4 Learning Expectations of Seminar Participants, by Site..	15
Table 5 Participants Seeing Parole Decision-Making Differently as a Result of Program Participation, by Site.....	18
Table 6 Participants Feeling that Changes Should be Made in the Way Their Board Functions, by Site.....	21
Table 7 Participants Reporting Changes in the Way Their Board Functions, as a Result of Program Participation, by Site.....	22
Table 8 Participants Reporting Changes in the Way They Perform Their Jobs, as a Result of Program Participation, by Site.....	25

### Statement of Evaluative Aims

The primary purpose of this evaluation report is to satisfy two distinct but complementary aims. In the first place, data will be presented and interpreted to assess the effects of the National Parole Institutes in relation to their stated goals and objectives. In the second place, the report will be structured and presented as an attempt to contribute maximally to subsequent decision-making about the N.P.I. Program.

For both the assessment of effects and concern for future decision-making, a dual level of analysis is suggested. On the first and most crucial level, the overall effectiveness of the program will be considered, while the second level of analysis will examine the component strategies, to isolate those which appear to show the most impact in the past and the most promise for any future application. In each case, whether it concerns the effectiveness of each individual session or the policy effectiveness of these National Parole Institutes collectively, the evaluation report will proceed in light of their stated objectives -- to improve parole decision-making in the United States, by strengthening the capability of those responsible through an increased knowledge of issues, an enhanced attitude, willingness and ability to make necessary changes.

### Method

The principal source of data upon which this evaluation is based stems from responses to questionnaires administered to the participants at different times throughout the evaluation period.

For the two National Parole Institutes, held in Oregon (October 26-31, 1975) and North Carolina (December 7-12, 1975), participants were asked to complete a three-page questionnaire at the close of the last day of the five-day programs. Similar questionnaires were administered immediately after each of the three-day seminars in Georgia (January 13-16, 1976), Arizona (March 2-5, 1976), and Illinois (April 13-16, 1976). Many of the items in these instruments relate to reactions to specific aspects of the programs that participants had just completed.

For the three seminars only, additional data were secured as a result of pre-post questionnaires which were administered immediately before and after the programs. Items included in these instruments were designed to measure the more generalizable learning experience of N.P.I. participation in relation to the program goals outlined above. Both parts of the pre-post instrument and the program-specific questionnaires were administered directly while the participants were present at the respective program sites.

In addition to the above measures of short-term effects of program participation, a follow-up questionnaire was mailed in September 1976

to participants at all five of the programs. This final evaluation instrument was designed to examine the extent to which short-term results had or had not persisted, and to ascertain any long-term attitudinal and/or behavioral consequences of program participation. Because the program-specific and the pre-post questionnaires were administered and collected in person by the evaluator and/or N.P.I. staff, the response rate was uniformly high at each site (80 percent and above). For the follow-up mail survey the response rate at the time of writing was 52.1 percent with a low of 40 percent for the Atlanta seminar and a high of 61.5 percent for the North Carolina institute. Average attendance for each program was 28.

As a supplement to the data gathered in the instruments just described, further information was taken from an evaluation log maintained by the evaluator. This record was compiled during the course of participant observation at one of the institutes and one of the seminars. Informal interviews with participants, and observation of group discussions and exercises, helped considerably to add substance and understanding to the questionnaire response patterns. This was especially true in the case of markedly discrepant answers which could only be explained in light of background information available as a result of personal interaction with the participant(s) and program staff.

Program-Specific Results

Overall Value Ratings: For the participants, no less than for an official evaluator, the experience of attending an N.P.I. seminar or institute can be reduced in its simplest form to a judgment of merit, reached after weighing the program -- its content and presentation -- against some explicit or implicit standards or expectations. This section of the report will describe some of these perceptions of the programs' value as reported in questionnaire items and as observed by the evaluator during the course of two of the five programs.

One of the most immediately apparent impressions gained by any "outsider" attending an N.P.I. program would probably be the extensive positive pre-conditioning among participants. Without exception, the parole board members interviewed for this report arrived at the program sites anticipating a high quality learning experience. Participants had frequently talked with past or present board members from their own State about previous Institutes and "had heard nothing but praise from anyone who knew about them."

The implications for program success or failure in this early positive attitude are twofold. First it seems likely that program staff are faced with less "resistance to change" from participants than would normally be the case without the high reputation of the programs and the staff themselves among paroling authorities. Consequently, in terms of the underlying planned-change theories upon which a major part of the N.P.I. program is based, the present series of institutes and seminars had a promising beginning.



A second consequence of the extremely high learning expectations at the beginning, however, is that these same expectations provide the yardstick against which the programs are measured by participants at the end. Especially in the case of the more experienced board members and chairmen at the three-day seminars, it might be expected that because they would have "less to learn" than the new members at the five-day programs it would also be more difficult to provide an equally satisfying learning experience. It can be seen from the following table, however, that the programs are perceived as being very valuable by both experienced and "novice" participants alike.

Table 1 Participant Ratings of Value of N.P.I. Programs, by Time of Rating and Program Site

Questionnaire Item	Time of Rating	Mean Score All Sites	Program Site				
			Oregon	North Carolina	Georgia	Arizona	Illinois
Estimated Value to Participants: 9-Point Scale*	Immediately following program	8.05 (N=125)	8.57 (N=25)	8.32 (N=25)	8.0 (N=27)	7.23 (N=26)	8.14 (N=22)
	During follow-up period	7.57 (N=73)	7.67 (N=16)	7.64 (N=16)	7.83 (N=12)	6.92 (N=14)	7.80 (N=15)

\* 1 = poor; 9 = excellent

At all five sites, participants were asked immediately after the program to estimate the value of the program to themselves on a 9-point scale, with a score of 9 representing an "excellent" value. The same

question was repeated in the follow-up questionnaire after several months to allow for a period of reflection and consideration of the program's value after "returning to the job." Although the slightly lower scores from the follow-up question seem to indicate some over-estimation of utility during the early program completion period, the results in Table 1 show an impressively high rating for both test periods for participants at all five programs. It is interesting to note that the slightly lower ratings from the more experienced board members at the three seminars during the immediate post-test period are reversed during the later follow-up for the Atlanta and Chicago participants.

Program Component Ratings: In addition to this overall judgment, the participants at all five sites were asked to rate each individual aspect of the program presented to them, in terms of both content and manner of presentation. Because of some variations in staff and program content at each site, the ratings are not directly comparable in many cases and the items are too diverse for tabular presentation. However, on scales of 1 to 5, representing the degree to which program components were helpful and informative (content) or stimulating and well-presented (presentation), the combined mean scores were extremely favorable. The fact that the mean score for presentation (4.04) is somewhat lower than the corresponding rating for content (4.35) may reflect a reaction

against "outsiders" to the program; the ratings for external staff presentations were consistently lower than those for staff members who shared the entire program period with the participants.

Particularly well received at every site were the "frame of reference" presentations by Vincent O'Leary, with a combined mean score for presentation and content of 4.62. In view of the primary goal of the N.P.I. Program, it is encouraging to note the very favorable reception of this exercise which is designed directly to aid the participant in gaining a better understanding of both his or her own and others' decision-making behavior. Also well received on this same subject was the presentation of the "decision-making grid" at the institute in Oregon, with mean scores for presentation of 4.86 and for content of 4.83.

Other aspects of the program that were well received include the exercise on "characteristics of effective work groups" given at the first three programs by Loren Ranton (overall mean = 4.43) and the majority of the group tasks generally. Tasks in which participants were asked to evaluate suggested "accreditation standards" for parole boards, and to consider possible "back-home applications" of the program learning experience were also rated as highly stimulating across sites (overall mean scores of 4.20 and 4.14, respectively). Interestingly, one of the most academic of all the presentations received the highest scores; what approached a lecture on sentencing by O'Leary to the North

Carolina participants received a rating of 4.86 for both content and presentation.

The generally high scores for program presentation, including the initial orientation (overall mean = 4.19), reflect the superior organizational quality and professional management of the programs. Some of the lower scores, however, for individual aspects of the programs suggest areas in which particular care might be exercised in any future Institutes. At the bottom end of the scale, for example, participants at the Oregon and North Carolina programs reacted least favorably to the presentation of "legal issues in parole" (overall mean 2.95). Apart from the possible "reaction-to-outsiders" phenomenon suggested above, it became apparent to the evaluator as a participant-observer at one of these presentations that a major part of the problem resulted from massive task confusion when participants broke into groups during the exercise. At both the institute and seminar attended for this evaluation, similar, though much less severe, confusion arose over a number of the tasks which participants were asked to face in small groups. The small group approach is an important part of program focus, and clearer definitions of small group tasks would increase group productivity and perhaps reduce time spent on argument over the nature of the particular task at hand.

Participant Suggestions for Improvement: When the participants themselves were asked to propose ways in which any future programs might be improved, suggestions ranged from organizational improvements such as increasing or decreasing overall time and time spent on particular program components, to more purely content concerns involving additions or changes to the subject matter of the presentations. These results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2 Participant Suggestions for Improving N.P.I. Programs, by Type of Suggestion and Program Site

Nature of Suggested Changes	Program Site					Total Number of Suggestions
	Oregon	North Carolina	Georgia	Arizona	Illinois	
Organization/Time	7	5	2	24	2	40
Content Concerns	2	9	11	9	5	36
Input Concerns	5	4	5	10	3	27
Location/Facility	1	2	2	1	3	9
None	9	10	13	4	13	49

In terms of overall planning, participants at the five-day institutes suggested a three-day program, while board members at the three-day seminars suggested a longer, five-day format. Perhaps the most valid suggestions in this respect came from those few participants attending both types of program. Where this was the case, the unanimous preference was for the longer period. Nevertheless, even where suggestions were made to extend the length of the programs, participants frequently added a plea that the programs be less arduous and that a little more leisure time be allowed. Although many of these latter suggestions may have been tongue-in-cheek reactions, some of them were undoubtedly in earnest.

In terms of location, participants were almost equally divided over the need to be less isolated (particularly the North Carolina contingent) and the necessity to ensure few outside distractions. Satisfaction with the physical facilities at each program was high, although several participants suggested the greater use of audio-visual equipment, especially during the role playing exercises.

Subsumed under the heading "input concerns" are a number of suggestions for more participant input, particularly in the form of open discussion of group-generated concerns and pre-program suggestions of topic areas that might be covered by staff presentations. Several participants expressed in person to the evaluator a regret that they had not been provided more information prior to attending, to give them time

to prepare questions and provide feedback during the program. Other participants suggested a more diverse level of input, ranging from inmates and correctional personnel to keynote speakers from the judicial or law enforcement branches of the criminal justice system.

Suggestions directed towards specific content areas for program improvement varied from a need for more general and historical background for newer board members to recommendations that more specific research results be presented. Other suggestions along this dimension include a greater emphasis on legal issues, more comparative information from board to board, and more stress upon role playing and interview techniques. Overall, however, the majority of participants expressed satisfaction with the program(s) they attended, suggesting that no changes be made except to schedule them more frequently; one participating board member went so far as to suggest in the follow-up questionnaire that "there should be a Federal law that requires paroling authorities to meet in training sessions at least annually."

Back-Home Utility: Complementing the evaluation ratings of individual program components are the responses to two other questionnaire items, one asked immediately after the two institutes and the other two in the follow-up instrument sent to participants from all five sites. In each case, participants were asked to assess the utility of the different parts of the programs in terms of applicability to their job.

In specifying particularly helpful aspects, both in anticipation and after actual experience "back home," the most frequently cited program components were also those which received the highest ratings for content and presentation. The sessions devoted most directly to gaining an understanding of decision-making were held overwhelmingly to be the most useful. In particular, the sessions outlining a "frame-of-reference" for decision-making, and explaining the dimensions of various decision-making styles were mentioned more often than almost all other program components combined.

This emphasis in the questionnaire responses is mirrored in comments made during group sessions and to the evaluator by different participants. The enthusiastic reaction to the frame-of-reference approach is typified in the comment by one board member at the North Carolina institute, who wished that "the rest of (her) board could have taken the Frame of Reference Inventory, to make them aware of the types of issues they have been arguing about among themselves." Board members frequently commented that they had gained insight into their personal decision-making processes and an awareness of previously unacknowledged personal biases in different situations. Two respondents to the follow-up questionnaire stated specifically that they are now seeking to approach their decisions with "a more balanced view of the different frames of reference."

Although almost three-quarters of the follow-up respondents (72.92 percent) said that particular aspects of the programs had been of help to them or to their boards, the specific examples given were far fewer than the projections made immediately following the institutes.



The only other aspect of the programs that was specified consistently across sites was the general learning experience derived from "sharing ideas with board members from other States." This opportunity to compare approaches, both formally and informally, was mentioned specifically as having been useful by over 27 percent of the follow-up respondents and by 31.58 percent of the participants at the two institutes. One participant at the Atlanta seminar wrote in this context that: "The information offered is helpful in a broad sense. The practices, policies, and results from other systems serve to clarify issues for the board and offer some direction in the future."

Finally, to gain a more quantifiable measure of "back-home utility," participants were asked in the follow-up instrument to indicate the extent to which they had been able to apply the learning experience of the program in facing the day-to-day problems of working in parole. On a 9-point scale ranging from 1--not at all, to 9--extensively, the following results were obtained.

Table 3 Participant Ratings of Applicability of N.P.I. Programs in Facing Day-to-Day Parole Problems, by Program Site

Questionnaire Item	Mean Score All Sites	Program Site				
		Oregon	North Carolina	Georgia	Arizona	Illinois
To what extent have you been able to apply the learning experience of the program in day-to-day parole problems? 9-point scale*	6.24 (N=67)	6.63 (N=14)	6.46 (N=15)	5.80 (N=12)	5.50 (N=14)	6.80 (N=12)

\* 1 = not at all; 9 = extensively

Satisfaction of Participant Expectations: In order to go beyond the different ratings made by program participants, this section of the evaluation sought to define a baseline of their expectations upon which such ratings were made. By way of the pre-post questionnaire it is then possible to look at the question of satisfaction of participants' needs.\* At the outset, participant expectations were solicited through a question which asked for a list of three things that it was hoped would be gained in the course of attending the program. These items can then be examined to identify common themes and to isolate unique or uncommon expectations of particular individuals. Each of these, in turn, can be measured against the content and structure of the programs as an estimate of the extent to which needs were addressed, and against the responses to the corresponding post-questionnaire item ("list three things you have gained") to estimate the extent to which such needs were met.

The most frequent categories of expectations are summarized in Table 4.

\*Because the pre-post questionnaire was only administered at the three seminars this section of the evaluation report is restricted for the most part to those participants. In addition, due to an administrative oversight the post-questionnaire item for this question was not administered at the Georgia program.

Table 4 Learning Expectations of Seminar Participants, by Site

Nature of Learning Expectations	Total Number of Responses	Program Site		
		Georgia	Arizona	Illinois
Knowledge of structure and procedures of parole authorities nationwide	79	26	24	27
Techniques to improve personal and group decision- making	49	18	18	13
Solutions to commonly shared problems	26	10	8	8
Knowledge and strategies to face parole critics	17	6	8	3

Subsumed under the four general categories in the above table are a number of specific issues about which participants hoped to gain information from the program. Under the first and largest category, for example, participants wished to improve their own and their boards' work through "a knowledge of how other boards work" and by learning "where we stand in relation to others." Of particular interest to a number of participants were issues such as revocation and appeal procedures, while others sought exposure to the different philosophical approaches to parole. Especially hoped for by many

who attended was a greater understanding of the Federal parole model and the use of hearing examiners.

As a source of information along these and similar dimensions, the N.P.I. programs are extremely well organized. In addition to providing the opportunity for informal exchange of information between participants, descriptions of every jurisdiction's procedures and practices were solicited prior to the programs and lengthy summaries were distributed to each participant. A further resource made available to parole authorities is the N.P.I. newsletter which not only presents additional survey information but provides a forum for the ongoing exchange of information between jurisdictions. Not surprisingly, therefore, when participants at the Arizona and Illinois seminars were asked to list things that they had gained by attending, an overwhelming majority (75 percent) claimed a "more global view" of parole and its problems.

With respect to problem-solving expectations, issues raised by participants in the pre-questionnaire ranged from legal problems faced by parole authorities and corrections, to ways of improving everyday operations and parole standards in general. Closely related to these issues are the perceived needs of many participants to gain knowledge of and learn strategies to cope with the growing criticisms of parole, especially from abolitionists, flat-sentence advocates, and the public in general. In each instance, it seemed as a participant observer that the issues were dealt with at length during the course of the

programs or in materials provided for participants to examine in their own time. Supporting this impression are the responses of several participants who said they had gained "an ability to evaluate (their) boards' procedures," to "spot weaknesses," and had also gained information that might help to remedy them. The presentations on "accreditation standards" were also listed by 25 percent of the respondents (N=48) to this question, and seven participants felt they had gained by "opening communication channels" with other boards.

A final major class of expectations held by incoming seminar participants related to gaining techniques and knowledge to improve personal and group decision-making. More than 63 percent (N=77) of those who responded to the pre-seminar questionnaire raised this issue. Concerns ranged from "parole success predictors" and "guidelines" for more "uniform," "equitable," and "consistent" decisions, to wishing to gain a "better understanding of my personal decision-making processes" or, more simply, "the reason I make the decisions I do." That these expectations were met for a large number of participants has already been seen in the value assessments and utility ratings for the component parts of the program. In addition, many of the Arizona and Illinois participants who listed things they had gained through contact with the program pointed to items indicative of an enhanced decision-making ability (41.6 percent; N=48).

As a final indicator of the extent to which expectations were met in this latter regard, participants at all five sites were asked whether, as a result of program participation, they saw the process of parole decision-making differently. As can be seen from Table 5,

Table 5 Participants Seeing Parole Decision-Making Differently as a Result of Program Participation, by Site

Item	Program Site					Overall Mean
	Oregon	North Carolina	Georgia	Arizona	Illinois	
Those Seeing Parole Decision-Making Differently as a Result of Attending	88.5 (N=25)	76.9 (N=25)	66.7 (N=27)	46.2 (N=26)	77.3 (N=22)	71.1 (N=125)

a large majority of respondents did report a change (71.1 percent).

Explanations offered by this group related largely to increased personal sensitivity and the effectiveness of group decision-making, and ranged from "a better intellectual foundation" to a "knowledge of better interviewing techniques" for reaching decisions. In addition, several respondents noted an increased awareness of the "disparity of decision results and of members' value systems."

Because the Arizona results were so low in comparison with all other sites, particular attention was paid to the explanations of the group reporting no change. The stated explanation are not, however, very illuminating. In two cases the lack of change was attributed to

recent prior exposure to the materials from the Oregon program. In four cases, however, no explanation was given, and in the remaining six cases the respondents stated that they "were coming from pretty much the same place anyway."

Summary: This first section of the evaluation has concerned for the most part perceptions of the effectiveness of each program as reported by participants in a wide variety of questionnaire items, and as noted by the evaluator during participant observation at two of the sites. The general results to this point are, with very few exceptions, extremely favorable. Both the overall programs and a large majority of the component parts were considered highly valuable by those attending. In addition, programs appear to be satisfying many of the precise needs and expectations of the paroling authorities themselves. Participant suggestions for program changes were mostly additive rather than critical, and several participants expressed strongly the opinion that programs should be more frequent and attendance mandatory.

Finally, the programs, and in particular those parts dealing most directly with decision-making and decision-making styles, were deemed by participants to have broad utility in the day-to-day work with a parole authority. This "back-home" aspect of the evaluation will now be expanded to constitute the second major section of the final report.

### N.P.I. Policy Impact

In this section of the evaluation report, data are presented to examine the more long range outcomes of the N.P.I. programs. Having identified, for example, that a majority of participants see the process of decision-making in a different light as a result of attending, a question then arises about the extent to which these new preceptions are translated into differential job performance. In addition to assessing program impact for change as individual participants return to their various paroling responsibilities, broader questions can be raised about corresponding changes for parole authorities generally, and for the field of parole as a whole.

Changes at the Board Level: In the evaluation questionnaire administered immediately before and after each of the three seminars, participants were asked whether they felt that any changes should be made in the way their respective boards functioned. At each site a large majority responded that changes should be made, and there was little difference between the initial response figures (77.8 percent - yes; 19.8 percent - no; N=81), and the responses given immediately following the program (82.6 percent - yes; 14.7 percent - no; N=75). It would appear from matching pre and post responses on this question that whereas most of the program participants arrived with an open awareness of change needs at this level, a small remaining group reported that they did not



perceive such a need either before or as a result of the program experience.

In addition to the pre - post inquiry about boards' change needs, the same question was repeated for participants at all five sites and the respondents in each case were asked to specify the particular needs in mind. In this way information became available indicating possible future areas of interest for program planning, and a baseline of change-needs was formed, against which to measure developments upon the participants' return to the job. A summary of the perceived need for changes at this level is given in Table 6.

Table 6 Participants Feeling that Changes Should be Made in the Way Their Board Functions, by Site

Response	Total	Program Site				
		Oregon	North Carolina	Georgia	Arizona	Illinois
Yes	107 (84.9%)	20	19	24	25	19
No	15 (11.9%)	5	5	3	0	2
No Response	4 (3.1%)	0	1	1	1	1
<u>Total</u>	126 (100%)	25	25	28	26	22

Proceeding within this framework, the next step in the evaluation was to assess by way of the follow-up instrument the extent to which

changes were made in board operations as a result of program participation by one or more members. The general results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7 Participants Reporting Changes in the Way Their Board Functions, as a Result of Program Participation, by Site

Response	Total*	Program Site				
		Oregon	North Carolina	Georgia	Arizona	Illinois
Yes	31 (42.5%)	9	7	5	3	7
No	37 (50.7%)	6	8	5	10	8
No Response	5 (6.8%)	1	1	2	1	0
<u>Total</u>	73 (100%)	16	16	12	14	15

\*Because of the anonymity assurances to questionnaire respondents it was not possible to identify the actual number of boards represented in the figures for this table.

In view of the fact that programs were not typically attended by entire boards - normally only one or two members were present - the results in Table 7 indicate an impact that suggests that the learning experience at the programs is being shared with and is influencing non-participating board members. Several of the participating members outlined for the evaluator plans to formally present and discuss the N.P.I. materials with colleagues 'back home', and change illustrations accompanying the results in Table 7 suggest that such a process is not uncommon.

Where respondents reported no changes in board functioning, the

explanations often indicate attempts by participants to effectuate such change as a result of attending. One participant who reported no change at the board level explained: "I am the only one that attended the institutes and therefore our board functions primarily the same despite my suggestions for discussions on parole decision, etc...." Another member replied that no change had occurred, "except in some minimal way because of my vote and attempt to explain the content of the conference."

Other explanations where no changes had been implemented ranged from abolition of one board and "political turmoil" for another, to simple responses of "not yet." Additionally, several members replied that as individuals they had little influence on board policies.

Where changes were reported in the follow-up instrument, one of the largest general classes of innovation involved the clearer isolation of parole criteria and policies. The current emphasis on mandatory sentencing, and an awareness of the lack of structure in the parole decision-making process had led one board to consider the use of guidelines and to "mobilize" against flat sentencing. In connection with this move to clearer policy formulation, one respondent noted that public relations for the board had also improved as a result. An equally frequent answer to this question of board changes was that the decision process had improved for the board as a whole. In particular the process had become "more orderly" for some, with "longer discussion" and "more attention to due process rights of the offender" for others. Still others replied that their boards now "work more as a unit," and that "more time is spent with each inmate" before a decision is reached.

Participants at both the institutes and the seminars reported that their boards had begun to "develop guidelines" for their decision-making.

In addition to changes along these broader dimensions, several boards were reported to have changed in more specific directions. One participant indicated a greater interest in the concept of Mutual Agreement Programming on the part of his board, while another board had revised procedures for notification of inmates. Yet another board had moved in the direction of providing training for hearing representatives.

The range of explanations given by respondents for the changes in their boards is clearly extensive, both in terms of the type and extent of change. Moreover, in view of the prescribed purposes of the N.P.I. programs, the major emphasis by respondents upon the changes in criteria and policy formulation and in decision making generally is a substantial indicator of goal achievement. In addition, these areas which were most frequently cited as involving changes at the board level were also those most often considered as needing change at the time of program participation.

Changes at the Individual Level: In addition to changes reported immediately following the program, two follow-up items sought to identify more long-run behavioral and attitudinal shifts on the part of individual participants. Participants were asked whether attending the programs had caused them to change in any manner the way in which they per-

formed their jobs. Similarly, and as somewhat of a check upon the answers to the previous question, respondents were asked to say whether they had noticed any such change in the behavior and/or attitudes of other members of their boards. The individual change results are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8 Participants Reporting Changes in the Way They Perform Their Jobs, as a Result of Program Participation, by Site

Response	Total	Program Site				
		Oregon	North Carolina	Georgia	Arizona	Illinois
Yes	47 (64.4%)	12	11	8	7	9
No	22 (30.1%)	2	4	4	6	6
No Response	4 (5.5%)	2	1	-	1	-
<u>Total</u>	73 (100%)	16	16	12	14	15

As might be expected, the proportion of respondents reporting changes on a personal level is much greater than where they were asked to report on perceived changes at the board level. Some of the types of changes reported are such that they often would be unlikely to influence other members directly or even to be noticeable to them. One of the most frequently cited changes, for example, was an increased

"awareness of motivations" behind parole decisions, and one member remarked that the "Frame of Reference considerations are ever present in my mind."

Such an awareness, however, translates into various degrees of differential job performance and many of those who reported no changes in performance acknowledged a better understanding of why they were performing as they had been in the past. Where changes were reported with respect to motivational awareness, they ranged from greater attention to the influence of sentencing structure to allowing a lesser degree of institutional influence to enter into the decision process. One respondent had "implemented a program to establish meaningful parole criteria." while several others had instituted more restricted technical changes such as new notification forms or other procedural innovations.

By far the most frequently noted change at this level generally was the increased ability and willingness to consider the views of other board members for a group decision. One respondent in particular noted that his decision style had changed from "Roberts' Rules of Order [to] giving more time to others for input before reaching a decision." Almost one half of all those reporting a change in job performance related it to the influence of better group decision-making, which had led in many cases to "more consistent" and "more confident" decisions. As a result, several respondents reported a "more careful approach to each case," "avoiding stereotyped hearings," with "more

input from the offender" and "more careful writing of reports and board orders."

When participants were asked about changes in fellow board members who had also attended the program, the prominence of changes to group decision-making was reaffirmed. Of the 44 respondents reporting that colleagues had also attended, slightly over 50 percent said they had noticed attitudinal and/or behavioral changes since the program. Although a number of changes related to specific interview techniques or individual decision items such as due process considerations, almost all other changes related to a "greater willingness to openly discuss issues," to be "less dogmatic" and "more objective" in arriving at a decision. Although the perceived changes in fellow participating board members tended more often to be attitudinal rather than behavioral, enough changes of the latter variety were reported to lend validity to the more frequent claims of change at the personal level. Finally, changes noted in others frequently coincided with and reinforced personal changes so that one board member responded that: "I was able to gain a great deal of confidence in my ability to make decisions when I learned that others also agonize and are constantly filled with doubt....I feel that both [colleagues] who attended are more willing to involve themselves in consensus decisions and become more open to other points of view. A greater willingness to listen has made for less tension and more relaxed decision-making."

Conclusion: N.P.I. and the Future of Parole

The field of parole is currently under increasingly mounting pressure from abolition groups, advocates of flat sentencing, and those who are simply disenchanted with the so-called rehabilitative ideal. If parole is to survive as an integral part of the sentencing function it is incumbent upon those involved to improve their own standards and procedures. The safety of the community and the rights of the offender are both dependent in large part upon the decision-making capabilities of parole authorities, and it is clearly in this area that improvement is most called for.

Decision theory and decision-making techniques are beginning to develop rapidly as the whole criminal justice system more and more is being examined as a series of decision points of which parole is but one. The experiments in the Federal system and more recently with a number of state parole authorities indicate that boards are in a position to innovate where guidance and expertise is available. In addition to providing a great deal directly, the present series of N.P.I. programs informed participants of other sources of guidance and provided an invaluable opportunity for those attending to make each other aware of the problems and suggestions for improvement.

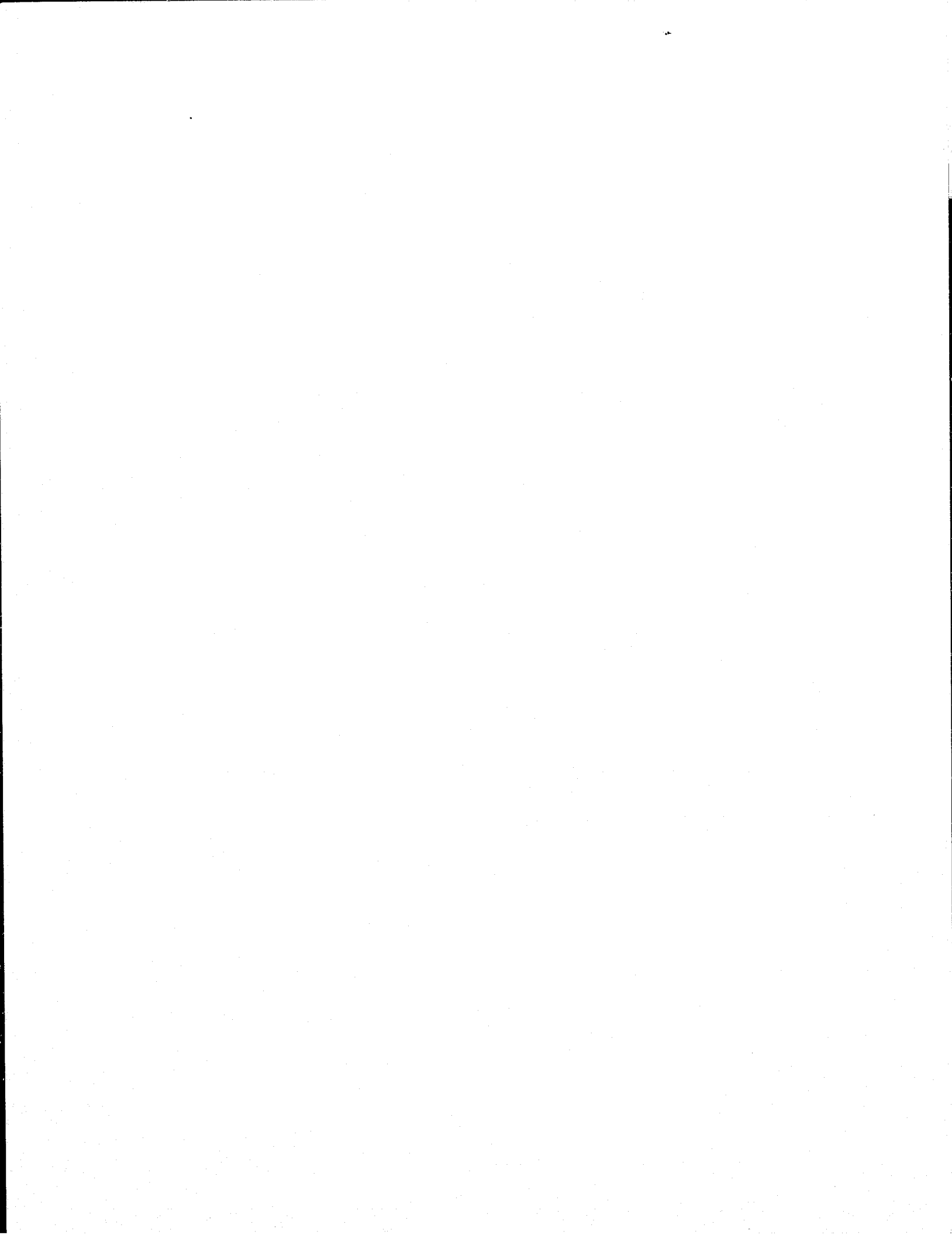
As a result of attending the programs, a majority of participants reported a more active and more informed role in the decisions of their boards, and many had set in motion procedures and programs to improve their decision-making generally by policy and criteria formulation.



And the experience of individuals at each meeting seems in many cases to have influenced fellow board members in similar directions. Finally, as a corollary to increased confidence in decision-making, one participant reported that "our board is now taking definite steps to define and defend the positive aspects of parole; we are attempting to educate the public through the press and legislature."

In view of the stated goals of the program to increase knowledge, willingness and ability to change, among parole authorities, the recent series of N.P.I. seminars and institutes has achieved substantial success on every level. A yardstick against which to measure such success and the continuing need for programs is best indicated by this response from one participant commenting on changes in job performance:

"I knew little about parole prior to attending the institutes so therefore I learned how to perform my job."



**END**