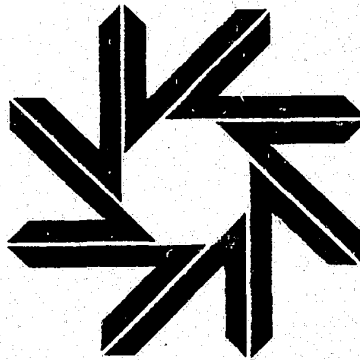


✓ THE MECKLENBURG EVALUATION

✓ V First Assignments—Long Term,
Non—Violent Inmates



67638

✓ Virginia Department of Corrections
Division of Administration
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Twenty-three inmates were initially assigned to Mecklenburg directly from the local jails. Seventeen inmates from the original assignments agreed to take part in the present study. The Inmate Questionnaires were administered by institutional staff who also completed a Staff Questionnaire from the institutional records of the inmate.

THE INMATE QUESTIONNAIRE

General Physical Conditions:

Of the seven specific physical conditions specified in the questionnaire, only the conditions of lighting and privacy were considered superior at Mecklenburg compared to the inmates' current location. Since Mecklenburg is a new facility and many of the inmates' present locations are somewhat dated in terms of physical facilities, the data were interpreted as indicating a bias in the inmates' responses to the questionnaire. It is probably fair to say that the inmates preferred to be assigned to their present locations rather than Mecklenburg, and not that the facilities in Mecklenburg were inferior. The rest of the questionnaire should be interpreted with the bias in mind.

General Inmate Treatment:

The majority of the inmates' indicated that overall they preferred the treatment they received in their present institution rather than Mecklenburg. Just over a third stated they had no preference. The inmates indicated that

discipline was stricter at Mecklenburg but no more (or less) fair than at their present institution.

A large majority of the inmates agreed that programs, privileges and freedom, and recreational facilities were preferred at their present institution. The inmates responses to these items substantially support the restrictive nature of the program at Mecklenburg, and the philosophy of the Center that increase in privileges are totally dependent on the individual's behavior.

Inmate Social Contact:

The inmates indicated that contact with family and friends and contact with other inmates was greater at their present institution than it was at Mecklenburg. The inmates opinion about the amount of contact with guards and staff was considerably more divided. Less than half of the inmates said they had had more contact at their present institution with the remaining responses divided between Mecklenburg and no preference. Considering the degree to which the inmates found their association with Staff and Guards to be positive or satisfying, specific preference for Mecklenburg was low but a greater proportion stated no preference than on any other question in the series on social contact.

Personal Safety and Security:

A larger proportion of the inmates stated they felt safer or more secure at Mecklenburg than they did at their present institution. An even greater number either stated that

they felt just as secure in both institutions or that they felt safe in neither place.

Inmate Institutional Preference:

A large majority of the inmates stated that they would prefer to finish their sentences in their present institutions rather than in Mecklenburg.

THE STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE

Disciplinary Problems:

After an average stay of 8.2 months in their present institutions, 65% of the inmates taking part in the study had no disciplinary reports in their record and only one inmate had as many as three such reports. None of the inmates had filed a legal suit, been involved in a serious incident or been charged with a Category C offense under 861. Only one of the inmates use of sick call was considered excessive and unrealistic.

Program Participation:

The staff questionnaire indicates that all of the inmates have participated in at least one institutional program. Fully 88% of the inmates have participated in two or more academic, vocational, counseling, or recreational programs in their present institutions.

Adjustment Rating:

The staff member was asked to compare the inmate's adjustment to other inmates who came in through other intake methods. Over half of the inmates were rated better or much better than most others. The adjustment of the remainder were rated as equal to most others. None of the inmates were considered worse or much worse than most others.

INTRODUCTION

The Mecklenburg Correctional Center is a maximum security institution located on 189 acres near Boydton, Virginia, in Mecklenburg County. The Center is planned and operated to meet the needs of inmates who require maximum security and who have not responded to treatment programs in other institutions. The program at the Center depends upon the ability to control and decrease disruptive behavior through maximum supervision.

Inmates assigned to the Center are not released, but are reassigned to the general population of other facilities upon completion of the Mecklenburg Program. There are two basic program goals for the Center: (1) to assist inmates in changing their attitudes toward the acceptance of authority, and; (2) to assist inmates in developing a respect for other individuals and their property.

In March 1977, 23 inmates were assigned to the facility directly from the local jails. Although convicted of serious crimes, these first assignments were not the inmates for whom the facility had been built. Their assignment was intended to establish institutional policies and procedures which would be used later with inmates who had demonstrated an inability or unwillingness to adjust to other institutions in the Virginia Correctional System. All of the inmates were housed at the Mecklenburg facility for a period of

six to eight months. Of the original 23, 17 agreed to take part in this study.

The following is a descriptive summary which reflects the reaction of 17 inmates after initial incarceration in Mecklenburg and subsequent assignment to another location. The questionnaire was designed to study inmate reactions to staying at Mecklenburg. The opinions expressed are based on a comparison of Mecklenburg and the inmates' current institution. Reviewed as well are correctional staff responses to a second questionnaire relating to the inmates' current adjustment in their present institutions.

Initially the inmate questionnaire was composed of 17 comparisons and a section for comments. The staff questionnaire had 8 sections requiring 13 specific responses and an open-ended question asking for comments on any significant area of adjustment for the inmate. One of the items on the inmate questionnaire had a typographical error which rendered the question meaningless. The staff questionnaire contained an item which was ambiguous. Written comments on both of the questionnaires indicated misunderstanding and misdirection for the two items. As a result, these two questions were dropped from the survey and not interpreted.

In evaluating the results of the inmate survey, two possible sources of bias should be kept in mind. First is the fact that these inmates were assigned to Mecklenburg

not because they represented any kind of discipline problem but rather to establish institutional procedures to be followed later when a more appropriate inmate group was assigned. Understandably the inmates did not like the restrictions placed on them by the assignment. In their opinion they had done nothing to "deserve" the assignment. This kind of general dislike for the assignment is likely to be reflected in the inmates ratings.

The second possible source of bias in favor of the inmates present institution is represented by the conditions under which the survey was administered to the inmates. The survey was answered in the inmates' present institution and immediately handed to a member of the staff to be forwarded to the Bureau of Research, Reporting and Evaluation. In spite of instructions concerning the confidentiality of the inmates responses, it is likely a bias was introduced by the procedure.

It should be noted that this second source of bias could have been controlled by having a member of the Bureau staff administer the inmate section of the questionnaire to each individual inmate. That procedure was deemed somewhat infeasible since the inmates who were to take part in the study were located in twelve different parts of the State. For that reason, and because the bias due to the inmates "general dislike" for the assignment could not be controlled, it was decided to have the

inmate questionnaires administered by institutional personnel and that an attempt would be made to evaluate the degree of bias in the inmates answers.

Toward that end several questions concerning the physical facilities were added to the inmate questionnaire. The feeling was that since Mecklenburg was a new facility, the inmates should rate Mecklenburg better than the older facilities in which they find themselves now. If no bias was in operation Mecklenburg should fair pretty well in the ratings. As will be seen from the inmate ratings in Table I, in only privacy and lighting did the inmates give higher ratings to Mecklenburg. The average of the ratings was Mecklenburg 32.1%, the inmates' present institution 46.2%, and no preference 21.8%. The results do indicate somewhat of a bias in favor of the inmates present institution. The reader is cautioned to interpret the results of the inmate survey with the bias in mind.

The inmate questionnaire probed five major areas of comparison between the inmate's present institution and Mecklenburg; namely: (1) the general physical condition of the institution, (2) the general treatment of the inmate, (3) the extent of social contact of the inmate, (4) the perceived personal safety and security of the inmate, and (5) the inmate's overall preference for the institution in which he was to complete his sentence.

The staff questionnaire provided information as to how long the inmate has been at the present institution

and probed three major areas of inmate involvement, namely: (1) the disciplinary problems of the inmate, (2) the inmate's participation in institutional programs, and (3) the comparison of the adjustment of the inmate with those who came in through other intake.

GENERAL PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

The first area, the general physical condition of the institution, was surveyed in questions 1, 2 and 4. In question 1, 70% of the inmates surveyed felt the overall physical conditions were better at their present institution than at Mecklenburg. Mecklenburg was preferred by 23% and 6% indicated no preference for the overall cell conditions of either institution. See Table I.

Cell Conditions

In question 2, 47% of the inmates liked the cell they had at their current institution better than their former cell in Mecklenburg. The cell in Mecklenburg was

TABLE I
PREFERENCE PERCENTAGES FOR
PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

	No Preference	Mecklenburg	Present Institution
Lighting	29.4	41.2	29.4
Ventilation	35.3	23.5	41.2
Space	11.8	17.6	70.6
Beds	17.6	17.6	64.7
Toilet Facilities	11.8	41.2	47.1
Shower Facilities	23.5	23.5	52.9
Privacy	23.5	58.8	17.6

preferred by 41% and 12% had no preference regarding cells. See Table I.

Lighting, Ventilation, Space, Beds, Toilet, Shower and Privacy

Of the seven physical conditions specified in question 4, the conditions of lighting and privacy were felt by inmates to be better at Mecklenburg, respectively 41% and 59%, than at their present institution. The remaining 5 conditions were rated as being better at the inmate's present institution. They are as follows: Ventilation (41%); Space (71%); Beds (64%), Toilet Facilities (47%), and Shower Facilities (53%). See Table I.

In summary, the general physical conditions at the inmate's present institution were felt to be better than at Mecklenburg. There was no strong preference or dislike of the cell at the present institution compared to Mecklenburg; they were almost evenly preferred. Conditions of lighting and privacy were considered better at Mecklenburg than the inmates present institution.

As was noted before these questions were asked specifically to aide in assessment of the general inmate attitude toward the Mecklenburg facility. Since Mecklenburg is a new institution, it would be assumed to have superior physical facilities. The fact that inmates found the ventilation, space, beds, toilet and shower facilities wanting, is an

indication of the inmates' negative attitude toward the Mecklenburg facility. The fact that inmates responded somewhat positively to their present institutions, some very old and dated in terms of physical conditions, illustrates again how they disliked Mecklenburg and so rated their present institution more favorably. The more favorable rating assigned to an older institution could also be somewhat attributed to the conditions under which the inmate is responding to the questionnaire. If he is to turn it over to a staff member, he is more likely to give more favorable answers about his present institution. Even considering these sources of bias for the inmates present institution, a fair degree of reliability for the survey may be assumed. Consider the inmates' responses to the privacy question. Since the program at Mecklenburg required the limiting of contact with other inmates, it is a preceived reality that privacy was greater at Mecklenburg.

GENERAL INMATE TREATMENT

The second area, general treatment of the inmate, was covered directly in question 3 and elaborated in questions 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 14, and 16. See Table II.

TABLE II

PREFERENCE PERCENTAGES FOR
GENERAL INMATE TREATMENT

	<u>No</u> <u>Preference</u>	<u>Mecklenburg</u>	<u>Present</u> <u>Institution</u>
Preference for Treatment	35.3	5.9	58.8
Stricter Discipline	17.6	76.5	5.9
Fairer Discipline	41.2	23.5	35.3
Programs	5.9	0	94.1
Privileges and Freedom	5.9	5.9	88.2
Recreational Facilities/ Opportunities	0	0	100

Treatment

In question 3, 59% of the inmates preferred the treatment received at their present institution, 6% preferred the treatment at Mecklenburg, and 35% had no preferences regarding treatment received at either institution.

Discipline

Discipline was seen as being stricter at Mecklenburg (76%) than at the present institution (6%) or no preference (18%). An answer of no preference was given by 41% of the inmates to the question of the fairness of discipline, 35% of the inmates responded that discipline was fairer at their present institution; 24% felt that it was fairer at Mecklenburg. See Table II.

Programs

Most inmates saw themselves as receiving greater benefit from the programs provided at their present institution (94%) than Mecklenburg (0%). Six percent had no preference regarding the benefit of programs. It must be understood that when these 23 inmates were initially assigned to Mecklenburg there were no programs established. As the programs were implemented, the programs that were developed were not designed for this original group of non-violent inmates. See Table II.

Privileges and Freedom

Ninety-four percent of the inmates felt they had more privileges and freedom at the present institution. Mecklenburg was definitely not seen by the inmates as an institution where they had privileges and freedom. Six percent of the inmates indicated they saw no preference between privileges and freedom at Mecklenburg and their present institution. See Table II.

The response on this item can be explained by the philosophy of the Mecklenburg Center that any increase in privileges is totally dependent upon the individual's behavior. An inmate at Mecklenburg in Phase I must earn the privilege of having a radio by not violating the guidelines or rules of the center and by demonstrating a willingness to work toward resolving the problems which resulted in his assignment to Mecklenburg. Only toward the end of his stay there, as he enters Phase II-A and B

are more privileges extended to the individual. In Phase III the inmate receives all his meals outside his cell and recreational and educational opportunities are expanded and participation in a work program required. The reliability of this response of no preference for Mecklenburg (0%) is thus affirmed by the institutions policy regarding privileges.

Recreational Facilities and Opportunities

Eighty-eight percent of the inmates responded that recreation and leisure time facilities and opportunities were greater at the present institution. Six percent responded that facilities and opportunities were greater at Mecklenburg and, similiarly, 6% had no preference. See Table II.

Personal Possessions

All respondents (100%) felt that they were allowed to have more personal possessions like radios, TVs, stereos and posters at their present institution. There were no responses (0%) for the remaining two categories -- Mecklenburg and No preference. See Table II.

In summary, inmates prefer treatment received at present institutions to treatment received at Mecklenburg. Incarceration in Mecklenburg was seen as less desirable in terms of the benefit derived from programs, privileges and freedom, recreational facilities and opportunities, and

being able to possess personal items.

INMATE SOCIAL CONTACTS

The third area involved the social contact of the inmate and is dealt with in questions 5, 10, 11, and 15.

Contact with Guards and Staff

Inmates indicated that 47% felt they had greater contact with guards and staff at the present institution; only 23% felt they had greater contact at Mecklenburg and 29% had no preference. See Table III.

TABLE III

PREFERENCE PERCENTAGES FOR INMATE SOCIAL CONTACT

	<u>No</u> <u>Preference</u>	<u>Mecklenburg</u>	<u>Present</u> <u>Institution</u>
Contact with Guards and Staff	29.4	23.5	47.1
Positive/Satisfying Association with Staff and Guards	41.2	11.8	47.1
Contact with Inmates	5.9	5.9	88.2
Contact with Family/ Friends	11.8	5.9	82.4

Positive or Satisfying Association with Staff and Guards

Inmates' association with staff and guards was more positive or satisfying at their present institution (47%);

followed closely by inmates having no preference (41.2%) and 12% responding in favor of Mecklenburg. See Table III.

Contact with Inmates

The opportunity to have contact with other inmates was seen by 88% of the inmates as being greater at their present institution. This reply can be interpreted to substantiate the plans and operation of Mecklenburg as a maximum security facility with less social contact in Phase I and II than at other institutions. Mecklenburg was preferred by less than 6% of the inmates and an equal number had no preference regarding the extent of contact with inmates at either institution. From the comment one inmate made, it appears that the 6% response in favor of Mecklenburg is attributable to the feeling that the inmate was able to have contact with "men" at Mecklenburg and "mental retards" at the present institution. The inmate therefore valued more highly or preferred his contact with "men" inmates at Mecklenburg vs. "retarded" inmates at his present institution. See Table III.

Contact with Family and Friends

The inmate questionnaire concerning social contact with family and friends again reconfirmed the maximum security conditions of Mecklenburg. Less than 6% of the inmates felt that they had greater contact with friends

and family at Mecklenburg than at their present institution; less than 12% had no preference. However, 82% of the inmates responded that they had greater contact with friends and family at their present institution. See Table III.

In summary, the low response to the extent of social contact at Mecklenburg is evaluated as validation of the general program at the Center. The program depends upon the ability to control and decrease disruptive behavior through maximum supervision and various degrees of isolation as the inmate progresses through the three Phases. The two basic goals of the Center are: (1) to assist inmates in changing their attitudes toward the acceptance of authority, and; (2) to assist inmates in developing a respect for other individuals and their property. This implies that the initial social contact in Mecklenburg is one of strained - relationships and the exertion of institutional rules and guidelines in preference to the development of "social contact".

In conclusion, it is not surprising that inmates rate their current institution as providing the opportunity for greater social contact with staff, guards, inmates, family and friends.

PERSONAL SAFETY AND SECURITY

The fourth major area, that of personal safety and security, was specifically covered in question 13.

The inmate was asked the question of where he felt safer or more secure. Mecklenburg was favored by 29% of the inmates, whereas only 12% of the inmates favored their present institution. It is noted that the result favors Mecklenburg where inmate contact is limited and highly supervised when it occurs. It was also found that 29% of the inmates felt equally safe and secure at both institutions. An additional response category on this question not given on other questions was the choice of "neither place". Twenty-nine percent of the inmates replied that they felt safe or secure at neither institution. See Table IV.

TABLE IV
PREFERENCE PERCENTAGES FOR
PERSONAL SAFETY AND SECURITY

<u>Neither Place</u>	<u>Same at Both</u>	<u>Mecklenburg</u>	<u>Present Institution</u>
29.4	29.4	29.4	11.8

In summary, inmate personal safety or security was seen to be greater at Mecklenburg than the present institution.

INMATE INSTITUTIONAL PREFERENCE

The fifth major area, that of overall inmate personal preference for the institution in which to complete his sentence, was measured in question 17.

Eighty-two percent of the inmates preferred to complete their sentences in their present institution. While not quite 6% said Mecklenburg, not quite 12% indicated they would be willing to complete their sentences at either place. See Table V.

TABLE V
PERCENTAGES FOR
OVERALL INSTITUTIONAL PREFERENCE

<u>Either</u>	<u>Mecklenburg</u>	<u>Present Institution</u>
11.8	5.9	82.4

The 6% response can be attributed to the feeling of greater personal security and safety at Mecklenburg and therefore the inmate prefers the "safer" institution. The high percentage (82%) of inmates who preferred to complete their sentences in the present institution as opposed to Mecklenburg was an anticipated result. Mecklenburg is a facility for inmates who have not responded to treatment programs in other institutions. It is a maximum security, strictly supervised, rehabilitative institution where hardened offenders who don't cooperate with the system are sent. The

comments of one inmate are as follows:

"I hate Mecklenburg..., but I also know it is badly needed and should have been built 10 years ago... If Mecklenburg is used for what it was built for, it will help to better the prison system. It will stop a lot of prison rapes and killings if the party involved knows if he is caught, he has Mecklenburg waiting for him not for months, but for years."

It is not known if this is the opinion of all inmates, since only 4 of the 17 completing the survey wrote substantial comments.

In summary, inmates preferred to complete their sentences in their present institutions, rather than in the Mecklenburg Maximum Security Center.

STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE

The staff questionnaire was used as a post-treatment evaluation of the inmate and assessed inmate (1) disciplinary problems, (2) participation in institutional programs and, (3) adjustment.

The staff questionnaire provided information on how many months the inmate had been at the present institution. One inmate had been at the present institution for four months; one inmate had been at the present institution for seven months; six inmates had been at the present institution for eight months; and nine inmates had been at the present institution for nine months. See Table VI.

TABLE VI
MONTHS IN PRESENT INSTITUTION

<u>Number of Inmates</u>	<u>Months in Present Institution</u>
1	4
1	7
6	8
9	9

Disciplinary Problems

A staff member, usually a counselor, was asked to report the disciplinary problems of the inmate according to information supplied in the inmate's institutional record.

Eleven of the inmates had no disciplinary reports; three had one disciplinary report; two inmates had two reports; and one inmate had three disciplinary reports on his inmate record.

None of the inmate's records contained any Legal Suits, Serious Incidents, or Category C Offenses under 861.

Sixteen of the inmate's use of sick call appeared to be normal and reasonable. Only one inmate's use of sick call (14 times in two months) appeared to be excessive and unrealistic.

Participation in Programs

Table VII illustrates the inmate participation in institutional programs. Inmates participating in institutional programs are ranked in order of participation, they are:

Counseling	13
Recreation	12
Academic	9
Vocational	6
Other (including work)	7

TABLE VII
 PARTICIPATION IN INSTITUTIONAL
 PROGRAMS

<u>Programs</u>	<u>Participation in Programs</u>	
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Academic	9	8
Vocational	6	11
Counseling	13	4
Recreation	12	5
Other (Work)	<u>7</u>	<u>10</u>
Total:	47	38

In summary, all (100%) of the inmates have participated in at least one institutional program; 88% participated in 2 or more programs; 65% participated in 3 or more programs and 12% participated in 4 programs.

Adjustment Rating

The staff member was asked to compare the inmate's adjustment to other inmates who came in through other intake methods. All inmates were seen as equal to, better than, or much better than most others. None were considered worse than or much worse than most. The mean response was "better than most". Staff considered 8 of the 17 inmates who came to this institution from Mecklenburg to be equal to most others. Staff considered 9 of the 17 inmates to be better or much better than most. Of these 9, 7 were rated as "better than most" and 2 were rated as "much better than most". See Table VIII.

TABLE VIII
INMATE ADJUSTMENT RATINGS

<u>Adjustment Comparison</u>	<u>Inmate Frequency</u>
Much better than most	2
Better than most	7
Equal to most others	8
Worse than most	0
Much worse than most	0

In summary, 53% of the former Mecklenburg inmates were rated better or much better than inmates received through other intake and 47% were rated as equal. None were considered worse or much worse than most.

END