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CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PAROLE ACTION STUDY

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(Rough Draft for Review with
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The conceptual framework presented here should be read as a skeleton outline to be elaborated and modified during the coming two years of intensive study. Its formulations are an attempt to identify the critical social phenomena that have become evident wherever we have managed to observe the parole process in action. The currently scheduled conferences with Department of Corrections' staff and with the Study Advisory Committee are expected to contribute to further refinement of this statement. It will then become the guide to the still more systematic studies planned for the next two years.

Up to this point the method of study has been something like "taking soundings" wherever it seemed probable that events critical for parole outcomes might be taking place. These explorations are represented by the following, not exhaustive, list: three months participant observation and interviews in one parole unit on the day of weekly staff meetings; a small panel study of sixteen parolees from pre-release through the first four months of parole; a more intensive study of 40 parolees in a sample of 100 from pre-release through the first year of parole, followed by a systematic survey of the total sample (data collection just completed); a small panel study of families related to the parolees from the sample of 100; interviews with employment agency and public welfare personnel in the Bay Area, followed by exploratory interviews with thirty Oakland service agencies each of which might conceivably offer resources for coping with the various needs evidenced by parolees; two exploratory studies of the revocation process, one from the legal perspective, the other probing interaction among relevant decision-makers through to final disposition; preliminary exploration of pre-release and NCTU programs in prison, and of private associations offering help in the initial post-release period; exploratory observation of parole agency programs such as group counseling, nalline testing, half-way houses and Out-Patient Clinic; trips with all parole agents in the Oakland District to observe interaction in the field and to interview about

the nature of the agent's job and about issues of current agency concern; a comparative three-month study of another District office and its community relationships; and monthly participant observation in the State level policy meetings as well as in Regional Supervisor's meetings. Such activities have been supplemented by formal and informal interviews with parole-related persons ranging from top level officials in the Department of Corrections and the Adult Authority to parolees known from a previous prison study (C-Unit). Insofar as possible, these studies have been focussed on the observation and reporting of behaviors, rather than on discussions of general topics.

Most of these exposures to parole in process have been recorded in detailed field notes which have been periodically analyzed and summarized in a series of "working papers". Other studies of parole have been examined; and an exhaustive study of the history of parole in California has just been initiated. The studies currently in progress, or planned to begin as soon as appropriate personnel are secured, will be outlined in a concluding section of this document.

The data on which we have based the following set of formulations has been somewhat skewed by the fact that Region II, of the four State regions, has been most geographically accessible. Although statistically the three major Districts in the Region seem representative of a range of statewide operations, from somewhat liberal to more conservative, the top administration in the Region has been traditional and police-oriented in comparison with the modern professionalized, help-oriented State administration. Accordingly we have not observed at close hand certain administrative practices which may have influenced agent-parolee interaction in other parts of the State, although exposure to statewide policy formation and interviews with administrative personnel in other Regions have helped to define the differences to be expected in the local Region. However, this apparent disadvantage

has proved less serious than anticipated earlier because of recent drastic
changes in the management personnel at two levels in Region II. The fact
that extensive data has already been gathered in this Region provides us
with a baseline for examining in some detail just how this kind of adminis-
trative change as a "natural experiment" affects what goes on between agents
and parolees.

Within Region II, the intensiveness of our studies has also varied by
the relative accessibility of Districts. The Oakland District, reputedly
the more liberal, has been under increasingly systematic study for three
years; a "once over quickly" comparative study has been conducted of the
more conservative District office in San Jose with particular attention to
how it relates to various community agencies; while the San Francisco District,
apparently a "middle line" operation, has been examined only through contacts
with those parole agents and community agencies who were directly related
to the half of the sample of 100 parolees who lived in that District. Since
these three Districts are all primarily urban, we have not as yet investigated
the parole process in a rural area.

The following outline of concepts identifies those phenomena of the
parole process, so observed, that have emerged in our thinking as salient
for understanding parole outcomes. The list of such phenomena is obviously
not complete; we have only begun to discover some of the different forms
each can take over a range of possible conditions or to formulate the dynamic
relationships among them. This summary report cannot attempt to present all
the supporting data on which the decision to highlight these concepts rather
than others is based; we can only assure our readers that the preponderant
weight of the evidence so far collected supports the judgment that these
are important aspects of the parole process as it is experienced by the
persons who are directly involved.

The Process

Status Passage

Central to understanding the parole process is the fact that each parolee is undertaking to complete a status passage of a certain kind. Our initial formulation of the characteristics of the parole status passage is attached, (See Reentry of the Offender into the Community, 1966, enclosed) and its formulations still hold in large part, although we are now ready to supplement and, in part, reformulate these ideas in the light of more recent findings and more extensive exposure to status-passage theory.

In the first formulation we identified four critical dimensions distinguishing the parole status passage: 1) It is initiated by changes in life style, potentially of a crisis order and is plagued by all the characteristic problems of "transition"; 2) It is a pervasive status affecting all of the parolee's basic social roles; 3) It maintains the jeopardy of total failure at a constant level throughout its course; and 4) It is managed by a legally responsible organization.

Additional dimensions important for understanding the parolee's task have emerged.

1) Voluntariness: The parole status passage is involuntary. The parolee is a ward of the State and is completing a sentence to prison. Logically it might be said that he becomes a voluntary participant by signing the conditions of parole in order to obtain his release from prison. However, consideration for parole is so routinized, and parole itself has become so uniformly accepted by offenders and officials alike as an almost automatic stage in serving a sentence that parolees tend to experience parole as something scheduled for them by upper authorities without active participation in the decision by themselves.

2) <u>Desireability</u>: The parolee status passage is desired by most persons undertaking it in the sense that it means release from prison; the fact that it is a managed status passage is seldom desired, actual discharge being usually preferred.

3) <u>Expectations for success</u>: Among the many parolees who strongly desire at the time of release "to make it this time" most believe that parole is extremely difficult to accomplish successfully, estimating a failure rate of 50% to 90%, while each individual holds firmly to the thought that some specially favorable factor (if only that "I have learned my lesson") makes his own success highly probable. Only a few parolees frankly think of themselves as going out for a "vacation", expecting to be soon back in the world they understand after a binge of drinking and women. Most also believe that "who my parole agent is" is the major factor in determining what happens in this parole. Officials both in parole and in prison, keenly aware that there is little selectivity in terms of probability of success in decisions to release on parole, tend to see each individual parolee as a potential failure, and often over-estimate the actual rate of failure in the parolee population. They often place the major burden for failure on "who the parolee is," tending to assume that parolees are extremely limited both in capacity and in motivation for "adjustment" to community living.

4) <u>Reversibility and repeatability</u>: The parolee status passage is reversible at any time until the point of actual discharge, and it may be repeated as many as five or six times. The fact that failures are returned to prison has a great deal to do with the low expectations of success held by newly released parolees; and previous failures by one individual seem to make considerable difference in both his and his agent's attitudes when he undertakes later status passage attempts.

5) <u>Solo or Collective</u>: The parolee status-passage is officially regarded
as a solo undertaking, and informal associations with fellow pasage-makers
are formally labelled illegitimate. On the other hand, current parole programs
such as half-way houses and group counseling increasingly require formal
association with other parolees, although personal bonds developed under
official auspices are not openly permitted to be acted on in the parolee's private
life. In actual fact many parolees find informal relationships with friends
made in prison or with others who are undergoing the same experience to be a
necessary psychological and social resource even if dangerous. There are
emerging attempts by parolees to find some legitimate way to satisfy this
need for association without official participation, e.g., the Seven Steps
Foundation.

6) <u>Scheduling and Phasing</u>: The parolee status passage is scheduled
in the sense that the time of beginning and end is set (although termination
time may be modified) and formal rules are officially prescribed for the
conduct of the parolee while he occupies the transitional status. Although
these rules may seem at first glance quite specific they are open to a wide
variety of behavioral interpretations by both agent and parolee. Most agents
and parolees agree that no person can live viably in a modern community and
maintain strict conformity to the "letter of the law" established by the
conditions of parole; accordingly both are involved in continuous efforts
to get rules defined for application to current situations and to establish
rationales for deviations from a strict interpretation of the rules.

In addition the phases through which the parolee must move in completing
his status passage are extremely unclear. A rough index of progress through
phases is found by both agents and parolees in noting reduction in the
number of required contacts, but an earlier stage of "intensive supervision"

can be reinstituted by the agent at any time in reaction to perceived disor-
ganization in the parolee's life situation or by a new agent who differs from
a previous agent in evaluation about what is needed. The newly required
annual review of cases for possible discharge after two years of successful
performance has introduced periodic evaluations of progress into the parole
process; but if the parolee is not discharged this review is not formally
used as an opportunity to signalize movement to a more responsible phase in the
status passage, tending rather to emphasize some current failure to conform.
The parolee himself may experience phases, e.g., the initial disorientation
period, the six month's danger point "when I begin to forget I am on parole",
or a later period when he is frankly moving into a new kind of life in the
community and parole restrictions become increasingly incongruous and
difficult to integrate within his emerging self-concept. But the official
definitions of phasing minimally reflect such experiential facts; and the
parolee's ability to influence official definitions is, in large measure,
limited to global performance over time involving both outward conformity
and successful covering up of possibly deviant behavior.

Most of these newly formulated dimensions of the parole status passage
were already implicit in the original paper. Making them explicit enables
us to use more directly the findings of studies of other status passages
that are comparable on one or several dimensions, e.g., the continuing
concern of TB patients with the unclear phasing of recovery (Roth's TimeTables).
Nothing in this elaboration of dimensions characterizing the parole status
passage challenges the major conclusion of the earlier statement, i.e., that
this kind of passage faces the parolee with a difficult task partly because
such a status is not easily combined with the kind of independent entrepren-
eurial operation expected of normal participants in the community and often

implicitly used as a measure of real success on parole.

Parolee Strategies for "Making It on Parole"

Although official statements refer to "reintegration into the community"
as the goal of the parole status passage, the parolee's goals tend to be
practically defined as "making it on parole", an end in itself rather
than a means for getting into real life. Given the problematical nature
of the parolee's task--living acceptably within the somewhat ambiguous
official requirements and responding flexibly to his life situations as he
defines them--parolees use a variety of strategies for managing the problems
of being a parolee.

A tentative list of those strategies that have been observed with some
frequency includes:

1. "PAL": disappearing from official notice by going AWOL.

2. "Passing as a square": hiding the fact that one is a parolee from
    new associates, and making a place for oneself in the normal world.

3. Becoming openly a "parolee expert," often involving efforts to gain
    advanced education or earn a living by the practice of an art; and
    usually involving aid from interested professionals or intellectuals.

4. Living as a parasite on family and friends but doing nothing illegal.

5. "Doing time": accepting under-employment, limited activities,
    social constriction, and the presence of a managing official as
    matters to be endured until discharge can be achieved.

6. Managing to keep the agent unaware of actual deviant behavior and
    associations.

7. "Giving up": more or less consciously asking to be returned to
    prison, by extensive use of alcohol or drugs, petty misbehavior, etc.

This list must be developed further and analyzed in terms of: a) the relation-
ships with friends, kin and other significant persons required for and
engendered by one or another strategy; and b) the kinds of counter-strategies
used by agents in response to each. No one of the above listed parolee
strategies is entirely satisfactory to all agents, and most involve some

large or small violation of parole rules. In general parole agents in the
Region we have studied seem most generally comfortable with those parolees
who a) either have no problem in returning to acceptable family, work and
other roles as a parolee; or b) adopt a relatively passive strategy for the
duration of the status passage. Attempting real problem solving while on
parole appears to involve considerable risk-taking for both parolee and agent,
since active efforts to grow and change imply trial and error search
activities, periodic if temporary failure experiences and open engagement
with conflicts of interest. For both it may seem easier and safer to
focus on "doing a parole" than to use the parole status passage as an active
training ground for the independent operation expected after discharge.

The Agent as Fate-Maker

Except when the community's regular law enforcement officials bring
a new offense committed by a parolee to the attention of the parole agency,
the parole agent is the one who initiates action to consider a particular
parole status passage for reversal. In any case the agent's on-going
evaluation of the parolee's behavior since release is always taken into
account in making the various decisions connected with discharge, continue
on parole or revocation; and it often affects how the report of a new offense
is handled, both in the local community and by the Adult Authority. In
consequence the agent is not only seen by the parolee as a determining factor
in the success or failure of his status-passage; the agent is in actuality a
primary fate-maker, determining in large measure the direction of movement
in the status passage process--toward discharge or back toward prison.

The parole law establishes the framework within which the agent's role
becomes that of a fate-maker. Parole is "custody in the community", a kind
of invisible institution with special rules, added to the generally pertinent

laws, substituted for locks and bars. The agent administers these special
rules and has the power to permit or withhold privileges as well as to
evaluate behavior in the light of the rules and to initiate action to revoke
parole on the basis of this evaluation. He is, by analogy, a one man institutional
administration over the individual parolee. In the structure of the Department
of Corrections the parole division is seen as "another facility," one of the
several institutions representing more and less severe degrees of custody,
and the parole status as just the freest stage in a "continuum" of custody
ratings from which an individual can be removed, with justification, somewhat
as his custody rating within the institution can be changed. Parole agents
when pushed to define the agent's relationship to the individual parolee say,
on occasion, "Basically he is my prisoner; that's the law." Thus although
the agent is often likened to a policeman, his role in the individual parolee's
life is different from that of the police. The police are responsible for
behaviors in populations governed by generally applicable laws; the parole
agent is responsible for the total adjustments of persons who live under special
rules that pertain to almost all kinds of social behavior.

Helping and Policing

According to the current formulation of this fate-maker task, the agent
is supposed to help the parolee so he can stay out of prison and police his
activities so he can be sent back if he is becoming dangerous to have in
the community. The agent is thus a "Janus" figure, facing both ways at once
and responsible for movement along the status-passage in either direction.
This aspect of his role reflects the fact that the status passage he is
managing is reversible.

The agent's twin functions of helping and policing are often discussed
as though they were operationally different, e.g., one helps when referring

to an employment opportunity or counseling about a marital difficulty, and one polices when checking for needle marks, questioning landladies about the parolee's actual living patterns, or searching an apartment. In actuality however, the two functions are inextricably interwoven so that almost every operation has components of each. Thus in finding a job for a parolee the agent is helping the man become established in the community; he is also protecting the employer by alerting him to the parolee's status and is setting up a relationship with one other person who can act as a source of information if anything goes wrong. Many policing activities can be thought of as preventing misbehavior, contributing to keeping the parolee accessible to help, and thus part of the repetoire of helping skills necessary when one is dealing with convicted offenders; and by the same token many helping activities, such as locating work, finding decent lodgings, or resolving a family difficulty, can be construed as preventing a new cycle of criminal activity, and thus as part of the policing repetoire. Furthermore the efficient performance of both functions requires much the same intimate knowledge of problematic areas in the parolee's life; to help realistically the agent must have much the same kind of information that he needs for effective policing.

Since there are aspects of helping and policing in most agent operations, it obviously becomes possible for the agent to emphasize one or the other function in his definition of his task, in his management of particular situations, and in assigning priorities among his many possible activities. And indeed, agents tend to type themselves and their fellows as to whether they are generally help-oriented or police-oriented in their approach to parole work. Although at first the Study pursued the idea that different performances among agents could be best understood in terms of orienting

ideologies (following former studies such as that of Uhlin, Piven and Papenfort) it became increasingly evident through observation that the most "police-oriented" agent emphasizes helping in certain situations and that the most help-oriented agents act like a severe policeman in others. It is notable that the personally chosen ideology or orientation appears most clearly in action when the agent is interacting in the field with parolees and others outside the range of supervisory attention; and that all agents operate more like others once a case has moved into the more public and bureaucratized arena of consideration for revocation. Accordingly we have been forced to think more about the question, "Under what conditions does it become easy for the agent to emphasize help toward the goal of discharge and under what conditions does it become easiest to emphasize the policing activities that look toward movement in the reverse direction?", although we have continued to be aware that preferred ideologies do influence choices when the agent is relatively free from outside pressures and able to act according to his own definition of his job.

Social Danger

The key phenomenon in action in determining the direction of movement along the status passage seems to be the presence or absence of signs of social danger; and the agent's private orientation definitely affects how he defines social danger, what behavioral indices he accepts as evidence of its presence, and the means he prefers to use in averting it. All parole activities involve some implicit or explicit assessment of social danger. We must analyze this concept, together with the guides for such assessment available to the agent, to understand some of the wide variation in the way agents play the role of fate-maker.

The current shorthand version of the function of parole in the California

system is "keep as many parolees out of prison as possible without risk of danger to the community." It is important to note that "risk of danger" is essentially a predictive concept. When a new crime has been committed this is accepted by almost everyone as clear evidence that the parolee is socially dangerous to some degree and his return to prison is relatively automatic. But most parole agent activity, whether consciously oriented toward helping or policing, is concerned with evaluating signs of potential social dangerousness; and there is no body of scientific knowledge yet available that will permit us to predict accurately what persons under what conditions will break laws in the future. Thus the parole agent must operate on the basis of rough guides to judgment in evaluating all kinds of parolee behavior for signs of social danger.

The agent has two formal guides for evaluating social danger. The first is the Adult Authority resolution requiring a report to the Board whenever there is evidence that the parolee is using drugs, has been physically violent, has been drinking if under special condition, etc. This Board resolution specifies certain behaviors assumed to justify the inference that social danger is actual or potential, and the agent is not permitted to rely on his own judgment in deciding whether or not to set in motion the machinery for determining whether or not the parolee will be returned to prison. The second formal guide is the "conditions of parole," the special rules under which the parolee is supposed to live in the community. According to parole agents with long experience, "in the good old days" the breaking of any of these rules, e.g., driving without permission, associating with another parolee, or "not cooperating" with the agent was sufficient reason to infer social danger, "he is returning to his old patterns," and therefore adequate cause to revoke a parole. Now, many agents insist that parole

rules can be interpreted much more liberally, and, in fact, must be given

the current policy to reduce "technical violations" to the minimum. Certain

known Adult Authority policies, such as that disapproving common-law relation-

ships for parolees, also act as part of this body of written rules, violations

of which can be, and are, variously interpreted by agents as signs of social

danger. In current practice when the agent uncovers a violation of one of

these rules he seldom starts the revocation machinery into action but he

will usually note the act, often not in writing, as one charge to be used

if and when he decides to recommend revocation.

Although these formal guides for evaluating signs of social danger can

be interpreted variously (for instance an agent may choose not to report

a fight in which the parolee was engaged--an instance of violent behavior--

because the parolee reported it himself and appeared to be the victim of

aggression), they do affect the decisions of all agents to some extent.

There are, however, two other guides to evaluating social danger that are

much less uniform in their influence on official decision-making. The first

is the influence exerted by the particular Unit supervisor and the general

parole culture created by the agent's immediate colleagues; the second is

the agent's own moral code. Thus we have observed agents who are located

in a supervisory unit known as "police" oriented, and also known among

their fellows as "help" oriented, who act much more like "police" in their

patterns for detecting and evaluating signs of social danger than do

supposedly "police" oriented agents in a supervisory unit known as "help"

oriented. And it is a truism among agents that one agent or supervisor

may be "death on drunk driving" while others are much more concerned about

evidences of sexual deviation while still others are especially aroused

to make judgments of social danger whenever financial ambiguities appear

in the parolee's adjustment.

In evaluating behavior for social danger the agent must keep in mind the need to protect at least four different interests, and any one piece of behavior may involve risk to one or more of these. 1) There may be potential danger to the general public in the sense that anyone may become the victim of a check-writer or an irrationally assaultive person. Or 2) the danger may be primarily to persons close to the parolee, such as a wife who may be subjected to beatings. (An interesting version of this protection of persons who are directly related to the parolee can be observed when an agent becomes concerned for the welfare of "naive" sponsors who are taking an interest in the parolee outside of formal social roles and the agent attempts to block the relationship for fear the interested person is being "manipulated.") 3) Or the danger may be to the parolee himself, as when he threatens suicide. 4) And finally the parole organ- ization itself may be the most vulnerable, as in the case of a special interest case in which the parolee is not expected to recidivate but still must be closely supervised because of the potential damage to the public image of the Agency were something to happen to attract newspaper criticism.

Risk-Taking

In evaluating signs of social danger, regardless of what interests are threatened, the agent is always involved in risk-taking; and he must accordingly always be concerned with protecting himself against future retroactive evaluations that he was wrong when he originally assessed certain behaviors as evidencing "no risk, or minimal risk, of social danger." These self-protective strategies are commonly known among agents as "protecting my ass." They include such operations as "not seeing" or, at least, not reporting behaviors that others might interpret as signs of social danger but that he himself evaluates as relatively innocuous under the circumstances; referring questionable situations to other authorities, such

as the OPC, the supervisor, or even the Board; not talking with colleagues about the kinds of deviations he uses in giving help; and making sure that certain procedures are completed as evidence that he was "on top of his job" when assessing a problematic situation as not socially dangerous.

Risk-taking assumes special prominence in the agent's thinking when he is using a helping mode of responding to problematic behavior, since most "problems" can easily be seen as the precursors of or stimulants to dangerous behavior, and thus as predictive of social danger. Experienced agents often comment that they have never been criticized for having recommended revocation, but have been severely questioned for recommending that a problematical case be continued. Often in defining a problem as a "need for help" rather than as a sign of social danger to be referred to the Adult Authority, the agent is deviating in some way from a strict interpretation of "rules" in order to react appropriately to his perception of actual meaning in a particular complex problematic situation. For instance, he decides the parolee is not actually guilty of attempted rape on his woman companion because it is "evident" that she has a grudge against the parolee and is telling a story to get him into trouble; or he decides to "play cupid" in this case of a common law relation rather than order the parolee to move because the relationship seems to contribute to a stable work adjustment on the part of the parolee; etc. We need to know more about the conditions under which it is not risky to act as helper instead of police, and also when it is seriously risky; what kinds of perceptions, knowledges and skills go into "old pro" performance in this area; and what strategies the agents use to reduce risks to their own careers in making deviations in order to help.

Living Contexts

It is obvious that in evaluating behavior for signs of social danger and in making decisions to "help", to dismiss as relatively unimportant, or to initiate revocation proceedings, the agent must see specific behavior in the context of the parolee's total resources and social handicaps. Thus the assessment of the parolee's living context is at least an implicit part of "fate-making" and risk-taking decisions by the agent.

Tentatively parolee living contexts seem to be categorized by agents as negative, somewhat supportive, or providing strong support. Under negative contexts we could list cases in which there are no personal resources, cases with delinquent family support, and cases of parolees who are firmly integrated within a deviant culture; somewhat supportive contexts might include those in which one factor such as family is stable and supportive while there are serious problems in another area such as work; and strongly supportive contexts might include such instances as the family of a young parolee with a progressive illness who transport him wherever he goes, or the case of a lonely old Negro who got converted to a religious sect while in prison and was released to a "brotherhood" which assumed responsibility for his housing and employment while involving him in nightly prayer meetings. These three categories of contexts can be further analyzed into those that are acceptable and not-acceptable to the agent. Thus Synanon might be perceived as strongly supportive for an addict but not be acceptable to the agent; and a marihuana-user may be denied permission to accept apparently good housing and employment offers from a group of old friends (whom the agent suspects of current marihuana use) and returned to his resourceless dependence on food and housing chits because the agent is unwilling to permit his re-entrance into his former deviant culture.

Costs in Agent Effort

A part of the agent's evaluation of social danger and decision to respond with either helping or policing relates to an often implicit assessment of the cost in effort that would be involved to do either one successfully. Cases which in general evoke the helping orientation may range from that of the 64 year old Negro convicted of manslaughter, married, financially secure and a deacon of his church who needs little assistance, to that of the burnt out old con with no family or work skills who is minimally dangerous but who will require much effort to help him find a self-sufficient spot in the community. Cases in which policing activities might seem paramount range from that of the known expert safe-cracker with a good home and steady union job who either will or will not sometime pull another job but who will probably not be detected or deterred by any known means of extra surveillance from his agent, to the narcotics addict without stable ties for whom frequent arm-checking, surveillance over known haunts, surprise tests, etc., are deemed necessary for control in the community. The cost in agent effort increases as available resources in either policing or helping are used and found inadequate. When a crisis occurs in such cases the agent's assessment of the cost involved in finding additional alternatives may well lead him to seek a rationale for returning the man to prison.

Similar to these cases are those in which there is no known technology for dealing with the presenting problem or no realistic means by which access to the necessary technology can be secured. A recent case of this sort involved a drug addict who was threatening suicide. The agent referred him to a local psychiatric clinic where he was diagnosed as in need of psychotherapy on an outpatient basis. A referral to OPC resulted in a denial on the basis that the parolee was not amenable to psychotherapy. The agent

instituted action to revoke since he felt he could not carry the
responsibility for the parolee's danger to himself without the support of
expert help in dealing with his depression.

Technology and Competence

In reviewing the range of evaluations and predictions the agent must
make in acting as fate-maker, and the variety of skills he might be called
upon to use in acting appropriately either to police or to help, one
becomes aware of the immense range of competencies and technologies which
the agent should either be able to provide himself or be sufficiently
familiar with to use for advice or auxiliary services. In fact in observing
a parole agent at work, one feels at a loss to name the competence that
should be his if he were to respond appropriately to the entire range of
problematic matters that may face him in one five hour session in the field.

For instance, on one field trip the observer heard the agent and the
parolee expressing pleasure that the parolee had at long last secured a
valid drivers license. The story behind this case--and other cases even
more complex described by the agent in answer to questions--revealed that
the agent had accumulated an impressive and sophisticated expertise in the
matter of getting drivers licenses cleared of a variety of handicaps because
he wants his parolees to drive and to drive legally. In order to develop
this competence he had accumulated extensive knowledge of procedures at
State, County and local levels; knew the law and was able to talk to
judges; and knew what persons to talk to about different matters throughout
the State. (Additional questions revealed that this agent does not share
his knowledge with his colleagues, chiefly because he feels he would be
criticized by other agents who believe it better that parolees should not
drive.)

The same agent knew local employment conditions in detail and could talk knowledgeably with each of his parolees about different kinds of work, specific union conditions as they affected a future on the job, and the comparative values of staying with one white collar job that offered specialized training as against moving to another job with increased pay and larger responsibility. However, although this agent was in all cases kindly and a good listener, his competence in dealing with a case of marital difficulty was of a distinctly lower order of sophistication, although the resolution of this problem was probably as critical for parole success in this case as were the problems of getting a valid driver's license or choosing between jobs in the others. And there were other interviews by this agent with parolees in which he showed no awareness that another expert, such as a psychiatrist, might usefully be consulted.

Since technology has a great deal to do with the type of organizational structure needed to facilitate agent work, (Perrow, "Organization Analysis", ASR, April, 1967) it is important that we analyze more carefully just what technical competence can or should be expected of the agent. Once basic characteristic of the agent's technology is clear: it is not routinizeable. The instances in which the agent's technology must be exercised are not standardized but vary greatly from case to case; and the nature of the search process required to deal with the exceptional aspects of cases is not yet, and perhaps cannot be, logically and systematically programmed. Perrow points out that there are two kinds of search processes that can occur in work situations where exceptional--or non-routine cases--are frequent: 1) those in which the problems are "analyzable," e.g., on the basis of a recognized paradigm for analysis, extensive knowledge about the nature of the raw material, and standardized methods for dealing with the

material; and 2) those in which problems are difficult to analyze, e.g., diagnosis depends in large part on intuitive, associative perceptions, knowledge of the raw material is limited and often primarily experiential, and methods for dealing with the raw material are uncodified and must be highly individualized. Most search processes in parole technology clearly fall into this second category.

As we talk with both parolees and agents it becomes increasingly evident that at least two basic structural strains interfere with the agent's ability to conduct these complicated search processes as effectively as he should, whatever his competence or orientation might be. The first is a structure of interaction among the directly concerned parties--particularly among the agent, the parolee, and the parolee's significant others that tends to turn what needs to be an open sharing of information in the pursuit of commonly accepted goals into what we have come to call "the information game." The second is a pattern of interaction between the agent and his upper authorities--the administrative agency and the Adult Authority-- that sets up strains for the agent between standards and innovation, and limits this discretion in the use of the search processes described above.

These two problem areas in the organizational structure that shape the status passage process are obviously interrelated, and it may be that the first can be modified most easily by dealing with the second. In turning now to an analysis of the organizationally established inter- action patterns so far observed in parole work, we should remind the reader that much of our data has been secured in a Region where certain administrative strains against innovation have continued to operate. Accordingly some of what we shall describe in the next section may already be in the process of modification, although the habits of agent behavior

established over many years of experience may still remain effective for
some time to come, and not all the structural problems to be identified
are easily accessible to change by administration at any level.

The Structure

In Region II, at least, the agent's world seems to be divided not between helping and policing functions but between his _invisible_ and his _public_ activities. The invisible part of the agent's world--(this idea started when we realized we were talking about the "submerged nine-tenths of an iceberg" as symbolizing the agent's work in the field)--is wherever his unsupervisable activities occur. The public part is evoked when he is an active participant in his organization. In these two different arenas he "wears different hats" and talks about different subjects, changing his manner and sometimes even his expressed values as he moves from one to the other. The agents seem to accept this repeated role change as quite natural, referring to it only implicitly.

The Invisible Arena

In his invisible activities the agent is an entrepreneur, essentially unsupervisable, free to use almost any means within his range of inventiveness and skill to accomplish his job _as he defines it_. He moves about his "manor," interacting with parolees, their family members, representatives of other agencies, police, and employers, with the freedom of one who carries some sort of authority toward almost everyone he meets, and his rewards come from these interactions and from his own sense of independent exercise of respon-sibility. Few formal requirements govern what the agent does in his invisible arena, except for certain stipulations about frequency and kind of contacts to be made, the number depending on whether he is in the conventional or the work unit program. It is in this arena that we observers hear about helping

activities or alternatively about "making a head count", about the
deviations from the rules that are necessary to do good parole work, and
even occasionally about the parolee who is a "good guy", "really motivated",
or a "real success". It is in this arena that compassion, liking and
respect for parolees are expressed. And it is in this arena that the decision
to set the routing process back to prison into motion is made unless an
independent action by other law enforcement officers has resulted in an
arrest.

The Public Arena

In Region II, the public activities of the agent are primarily concerned
with the preliminary decisions and the final process of routing men back to
prison. In this part of his world the agent is a bureaucrat, keenly aware
of complex procedural and policy considerations. He is focussed on his
responsibilities to his two upper authorities, i.e., those in the adminis-
trative hierarchy of the parole agency, and the Adult Authority. He often
explicitly assigns precedence in his considerations to the fact that he is
directly responsible to the Adult Authority, noting that the supervisor in
the parole agency can register a difference of opinion but cannot change
the agent's report and recommendation. Since most of the agent's public
activities are initiated by indications that social danger may already exist,
helping activities are usually either not considered or are dismissed as
impracticable, most such activities being suspended until the data needed for
the decision to revoke or not has been marshalled. In this arena the agent
interacts primarily with his supervisor, his colleagues, and law enforcement
agents in the community. The parolee is only minimally involved, often
being held in jail; other persons or agencies in the community who are inter-
ested in the parolee often either withdraw until the legal issue has been
settled or are by-passed. Responsibility for decision making is dispersed

throughout the parole system and decisions tend to be conservative. The
decision about final outcome is not made by consensus among all responsible
decision makers but by a number of different authorities each operating
relatively independently and from different vantage points--four possible
recommending positions in the parole agency, two different Board panels.
Accordingly there is a tendency to postpone everything else in connection
with a case, once the routing process has started, until after the final
outcome is known (possibly two months later) because either return to the
community or revocation is logically possible. In this arena the observers
hear primarily about the parolees who are failures, and parolees are often
spoken of in derogatory terms. Even in the informal gatherings among
agents over coffee or lunch instances of parolee malfeasance or cunning,
and current cases in crisis (along with gripes about administration) absorb
the conversation, and no one seems to discuss "helping" activities
or programs.

The agent experiences two major problems as he attempts to coordinate
his public and invisible arenas of activity. First, effectiveness in the
invisible world where he is an entrepreneur depends on his flexible response
to individual situations. His experience there is fluid and shifting; he
deals with the normal gray areas of human life where matters are seldom
clearly black or white. When he moves into the much more bureaucratically
controlled and formal arena of public decision making, cases, persons and
behaviors must be fitted into verbal categories; and in this process we find
he almost necessarily transforms the indentities of parolees from persons with
some good and some bad characteristics into dangerous criminals, inadequate
nuisances or mentally ill persons "in need of treatment". It is possible
in the course of a single revocation process to see a parolee's biography

and current identity reformulated according to several different stereotypes
as the various decision-makers grope toward the formulation of a satisfactory
rationale for disposition.

Secondly the public world of the parole agency is not organized to
recognize and reward many of the means the agents use to keep parolees from
ever getting to the revocation process. This is partly because the agent
is hesitant about reporting his deviations from strict adherence to the
rules. With experience he appears to develop an automatic screening process
as he summarizes what has happened in the field; the necessary elimination
of much that has gone on when doing a capsule report for the Board acts as
taken-for-granted justification for leaving his own activities in the back-
ground, unexplicated. Furthermore there is little official machinery for
reporting and counting the problem situations that do not require a report
to the Board because they are resolved in some way. Thus such activities
often remain a part of the invisible world excert as they are reflected in
official case recording, often summarized dryly long after the event. In
addition each agent tends to keep to himself information about the resources--
useful employers, contacts in service agencies, techniques for finding
resources--that he develops for himself. Such information is his own hard
won capital; it is one of the few means by which he can prove himself useful
to his parolees and so win the compliant or somewhat dependent relationship
on which so much of successful supervision over potentially hostile clients
depends. Finally, in this Region at least, there are few official meetings
in which actual helping processes are discussed among colleagues, so that
the agent lacks a sense that there is a welcoming audience for his tales of
success. Furthermore, activities in the invisible arena are valued parts of
his own pattern of operation and he hesitates to subject them to possible
criticism when he can much more easily go about his business without revealing

too much about his actual operations.

The definition of authority relations apparently current in the local District may tend to support this dichotomy between the invisible and public arenas of work. The image of the agent as an independent professional, "paid to make decisions" and ultimately directly responsible to the Adult Authority places the supervisor in an ambiguous position when he tries to influence agent operations. In his invisible world the agent does not see himself as supervised; in fact he _is_ the agency as he presents himself to the parolee and to the community, except when he needs to fall back on "policy" to defend himself in making an unpopular decision. The supervisor who says, "I usually don't hear about a case coming up for revocation until the written report is on my desk and the agent has already made up his mind about the decision" (in response to the researcher's plea to get in on cases at an earlier decision point) is in part respecting the agent's image of independence and responsibility at the same time that he reveals his own limited means for taking responsibility for a total caseload. When he tries to hold staff meetings agents often express their defense against "interference" by failing to attend because of "emergencies," sitting passively until announcements are concluded, or engaging in joking by-play that essentially challenges the supervisor to join in and be one of the "boys" or reveal himself as an unwanted and authoritarian, if somewhat impotent, "outsider".

Triad Interaction in the Invisible Arena

The parole agent is expected to make most of his contacts with parolees and with collaterals "out in the field", partly because non-scheduled visits in the natural environment of the parolee are evaluated more highly than office interviews for surveillance purposes. Thus the parole agent typically plans his week for as much time out in his District as possible, his time in the office being largely reserved for supervisory conferences, recording, telephoning,

picking up messages and taking his share of O.D. responsibilities. (The
recent economy move reducing the availability of State cars has seriously
jeopardized the agent's maneuverability in this regard.) It is out in the
field that the agent moves into interaction with and attempts to influence
the parolee's current life and the social forces affecting his adjustment
in the community, and often in his mind what he does there constitutes the
real work of parole.

Part of the agent's resistance to interference with his operation in
the invisible arena seems to be due to the potential instability and tenuous-
ness of many of his relations in the field. He may be minimally aware of
the underlying uneasiness that characterizes the way others relate to him,
either because he is accustomed to assuming the primary authority role of
one who has general responsibility for a ward of the State, and so expects
a certain lack of overt disagreement with what he does, partly because he
gets used to not being "wanted" by parolees and others who are close to
the parolee. But aware or not, the maintenance of the relationships through
which the agent gathers the information essential for making decisions and
taking action takes a delicate kind of footwork and adjustment to shifting
positions among the various actors in each case that in reality must be
protected against outside interference if it is to be successful.

The tenuousness of much of the agent's participation in the field is
in large part due to the fact that he becomes a third party in most of the
parolee's basic role relationships with the significant others in his life-
his wife, mother, landlady, employer, welfare worker, etc. Triad relation-
ships are characteristically unstable, potentially encouraging the coalition
of any two against the third member of the triad especially when the goals
of the three members do not coincide. In fact, all three kinds of combinations
of two against the third have been repeatedly observed in case observation,

the agent and parolee against a family member, the family member and the parolee against the agent, and the agent and family member against the parolee. The formulation may shift from time to time in the course of a case, but throughout his work the agent tends to try to maintain at least a superficially friendly access to all possible sources of information in each case, and often he implicitly assigns the role of "deputy" agent, at least in the sense of information-provider, to the significant other in the parolee's life.

In consequence whenever the agent appears in the parolee's social space-- especially when he appears without notice and can be expected to appear at any time even when the parolee is not present--his mere presence generates uneasiness especially focussed on the issue of information. What is the agent's purpose in making this visit? What has he been told by some other informant? What is he thinking about the situation into which he has just walked? If I tell him what is concerning me will he pass it on in ways that introduce suspicion into my relationship with that other person? The agent is usually also uneasy about giving information, partly because he is seeking information and does not want to be pressured into premature statements of position, partly because he too does not want what he says passed on to other actors in the set of relationships. In consequence many of the triad relationships in which the agent engages with the parolee and some other person fall into what Glaser and Strauss characterize as "suspicion context" (Awareness of Dying) in which no one of the parties is frankly opening his knowledge and evaluation of the situation to another. The consequent strategies to secure information and to ward off revealing more than might be safe--the information game--occupy much of the interchanges between the agent and others in the field, even when they are apparently most friendly; and often such engagements have repercussions in later interaction between the

parolee and his significant other, even if the renewed uneasiness is not verbally expressed. How did my agent get that information if you didn't tell him? What did the agent tell you that made you withdraw in the relationship? Why did you tell him that I wasn't living at home--instead of saying I was out for the evening--does it mean you are trying to cut me down with him? And so on.

The fact that wherever the agent moves in field relationships he both activates the uncertainties inherent in such triad relationships and also brings to the focus of attention the paramount nature of the stigmatized parolee status in the life of the parolee tends to set in motion a vicious cycle no matter how helpful his intentions. The purpose of agent help is to enable the parolee to adjust normally--comfortably, conformingly, and productively--in the accustomed roles of social life. Yet the mere presence of the agent highlights the parolee's difference from other people and emphasizes the continuous jeopardy of return under which he lives. In consequence all the role relationships in which the parolee operates and to which the agent has access tend to be characterized by reduced privacy, tenuousness and (many times) stigma, none of which are conditions conducive to stable functioning. In addition the fact that the agent typically moves from one role to another in the process of "investigating trouble" can contribute to the deterioration of several relationships in the parolee's life whenever a crisis situation appears in one area.

One of the problems the agent must solve as he moves among these triad relationships seems to be that of having to be "intrusive" far beyond the usual canons of social interchange when he has not been invited by those others to intrude as a condition of receiving expert services (such as a doctor's) while still maintaining the dignity of the persons in whose lives he is intruding. It is interesting to observe the variety of authority models

experienced agents assume in resolving such problems, e.g., the older, somewhat paternalistic, adviser; the teacher; the clinician with less mature clients; the policeman concerned primarily with behavior. One of the factors that appears to reduce free communication between the agent and others in the field is that he frequently does not make sufficiently explicit his own assumptions about his right to intrude and the limitations he places on this right, or about the nature of his relationship to persons other than the parolee.

The triad relationship that occurs when another helping agency enters the parolee's life space is especially complicated. In our studies of community agencies we have gained the distinct impression that: 1) there is some hesitation on the part of parolees to get engaged with other official agencies who may pass on information to the agent; 2) that agents are hesitant to involve other agencies because of concern about interference by other persons whom they cannot control in the management of the case; and 3) that agency workers are uneasy about sharing cases with the parole agency because of concern about the agent's use of them as informants and his ability as a superior authority in the parolee's life to disrupt their plans for work with him.

One of the apparent difficulties in securing the aid of community resource agencies for parolees is the tendency of the local community to see the parolee as a ward of a state agency, not as "one of ours for whom we are responsible". Although active reassimilation of the parolee is obviously a task for which the local community must accept responsibility if he is to be reintegrated, the fact of State wardship over the person of the parolee seems to result in a tendency to allocate all responsibility to the State agency whenever problems arise, e.g., "use your own psychiatric resources", or "send him back rather than cause us expense for providing his day in court". Another

aspect of this problem in allocation of authority between local and parole agencies is the apparently necessary assumption of broad authority over the parolee's total life plan by the parole agent whenever a conflict of interests arises with another agency that is responsible for one aspect of the parolee's life. At such points parole interests and requirements tend to take precedence over the interests and requirements of other agencies in a way that leaves some agencies hesitant to take on parolee cases. In such cases, they say, one not only takes on a "difficult, hopeless" client but also becomes involved in an uneasy attempt to sort out related responsibilities and authorities with his supervising agency. We have not yet done the intensive study that would test out and refine these impressions. But it is evident that the strains in the triads that involve two agencies and the parolee are sufficient to explain much of the lack of use of other community agencies without blaming it all on either agent laziness and lack of knowledge or on the resistance of other agencies to help offenders.

There are certain "naturals" among the agents who are easy in triad relationships of all kinds and who do generate trust among the participants. But not all agents are so gifted; and some deliberately encourage the instability of such relationships in order to maximize the information they can gain when the parolee and his significant other are not too closely aligned against the agent. Skill in managing triad relationships so that common goals are formulated as a guide to action would seem to be one of the major areas in which the agent should develop a special competence, especially because of the ease with which such relationships can become destructive in the hands of the unaware, or clumsy agent.

Interaction in the Public Arena

Triad operation of a somewhat different kind also poses problems for all the officials in the official bureaucracy. For the agent a prominent

triad is found in his relationship to the two major authorities in this structure--the Parole and Community Services Division and the Adult Authority. On the one hand he is supervised and evaluated within the parole division and it is there that he receives his career rewards, such as promotion. At the same time the ultimate decisions concerning the fates of the parolees on his caseload--whose performances are a major index of his success as an agent--are made by the Adult Authority, with its own definitions of goals and of success.

The contrasts between these two bodies--one administrative and the other quasi-judicial--as they impinge on the agent, can be grossly outlined. If one were drawing a cartoon, one would show each as one of the Janus faces, the Adult Authority looking toward revocation and presiding over the return to prison, the Parole Division looking toward discharge and presiding over the helping process. One agent even described his situation in such simplified terms, "When I am helping I work for the Parole Division; when I am considering a parolee for revocation I am working for the Adult Authority." In a sense the Adult Authority's influence may permeate the agent's work with his raw materials, the parolees, even more extensively than do the Division's standards and guides, since the Adult Authority establishes the "conditions of parole"--those rules that structure the content of much of the agent-parolee interaction--and also sets the policy requiring that certain parolee behaviors be reported for consideration of revocation.

It is clear that the administrative agency provides the greatest support to the agent for "helping" as a significant part of parole work, especially at the upper policy levels, where major attention is given to small caseloads and to differentiation among the supervision needs of different kinds of cases; to the reduction of revocations on technical grounds; to the development of local community resources; and to the training and selection of

personnel. One of the most exciting and rewarding aspects of the last 18 months period of the Study has been the opportunity to observe at close hand the activities of a new administration (since 1964[?]) designed 1) to professionalize an old organization that was still patterned in many ways on a semi-military, police-oriented model; and 2) to introduce the helping orientation as a major value in parole work.

This section would warrant a whole paper in itself, since the Study has been in a position to observe "history in the making" during a critical three years of major transformation. Much of that history has happened outside of the researcher's access, as top administrators deal with their own organizational environment to gain and maintain support for such large programs as the Work Unit Plan under which small caseloads, assembled by counting "amount of work" weights, rather than by counting individual parolees, have been established for about half to two-thirds of the total parolee population. One of the most interesting insights gained while observing this effort has been a beginning understanding of the way parolee population is related to total correctional population, and an introduction to the complexities of "flow of correctional population" between prison and parole and back as it affects ability to do the kind of parole work desired.

We can only suggest here some of the topics that need further analysis and for which considerable data has already been collected. One is the way a focus on "helping" at the top administrative levels gets translated down the communication channels to agents in the field, and the modifications this goal focus has required in middle management roles. The problem of change itself, as a massive structure expands and is reorganized, has been experienced by everyone at every level, including the parolee, and some of the dimensions of this problem have become increasingly clear. The emergence of different

ideologies of "helping" has been one of the observed phenomena of this period, and there is increasing awareness that "how one helps" and the goals of helping in parole are questions that must be directly addressed and that the definitions of helping operations must be specified throughout the organization.

Another important facet of reorganization in the effort to make paroles a service organization--with implications for all organizational levels down to the agent and the parolee--is the emergence of "participative management" as a means for involving all related persons in planning, innovation and evaluation processes. At this point participative management is interpreted in different ways throughout the organization and is somewhat variously practiced. It appears most clearly in the data so far assembled at the top policy level in the Executive Staff which involves Regional Administrators and in certain supervisory units where work groups concerned with a total caseload have been formed. With the recent introduction of District Administrators into the structure a new middle management group has been formed which is tending to group itself as a Regional Executive Staff on the participant management model. Two issues not yet resolved appear to be looming on the horizon in this total push to involve all participants in creative efforts to improve services: 1) the relation of training, which has been organized outside of line authority, to the learning developed through task-oriented participation in work groups; and 2) the need to develop standards of accountability that properly reflect and support innovation rather than encourage routinized performance.

Perhaps the largest issue currently being worked upon is that concerning the somewhat disparate emphases of the Adult Authority, with its pervasive influence on agent performance, and that of the administrative agency. The means by which Adult Authority policy can be influenced to support such

programs as the current attempt to reduce prison population by increasing parole population are apparently not easy to discover and implement on the one hand; and the processes by which supervisors learn to focus their role operations on case supervision so they become strong supporting organizational links to the agents in emphasizing service are still to be specified on the other hand. It may be that one of the current consequences of organizational changes designed to implement a service policy has been to highlight temporarily for the agent the potential differences between his obligations to the Adult Authority and to the Parole and Community Services Division. The implications of this triad relationship for daily decisions in work with parolees raise one of the most problematical issues now appearing in our data; and the opportunity to study this process under conditions of planned change toward a helping orientation is one of the most challenging in the current work of the Study, especially since perhaps the most drastic changes in the State in both personnel and structure is occurring in the Region most accessible to observation.

Plans for the Future

The Parole Action Study is currently engaged in the following studies: 1) a baseline study of agent attitudes toward and expectations of the recent reorganization in the Region; 2) observation of the process of administrative change at the Regional and the District level, to continue for at least six months, and to be followed by a review of agent attitudes and operations in the Oakland and San Jose Districts; 3) a study of psychiatric services in the Region; 4) a study of group counseling in the Oakland District; 5) a study of parolee strategies in dealing with the system; 6) continuing observation of policy formation at the State level; and 7) a historical study of the development of parole in California.

Studies planned for the immediate future, as soon as appropriate personnel can be secured, include: 1) a study of legal issues in parole; 2) a study of relations with law enforcement agencies in the Oakland District; and 3) a systematic study of service agencies in relationship to parole, with special attention to employment resources. The next year should see the development of plans for additional comparative studies both within California and in other states.

END