
FELONY CASE PREPARATION: QUALITY COUNTS

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Interim Report The Vera Institute's Evaluation of the New York City Police Department's Felony Case Preparation Project

Executive Summary

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Preface

We hope that readers of this report will find in it, as we do, a welcome message. In these times of diminished resources, burgeoning crime, and endemic cynicism about the criminal justice system, quality still counts. So does inter-agency collaboration. By better investigation, preparation and presentation of felony arrests, the Police Department has enabled the assistant district attorneys handling cases from the experimental precinct to indict, convict and incarcerate a greater proportion of them. An additional benefit of the experiment was that both agencies were spared lengthy court processing of some of the arrests that were headed for ultimate dismissal.

Of course, an experiment is just that. We learn from it, we modify our future efforts as best we can to take advantage of what has been learned, but we do not mistake a modest improvement for a panacea. Nor do we assume that what has been achieved -- under experimental conditions in one precinct -- can simply be extended, undiluted, city-wide. But, as reported in these pages, the experiment has recently been extended to several other precincts and the results, encouraging as they are so far, continue to be subjected to the kind of careful analysis that has brought us to this point.

The individual police officers and detectives who helped shape the Felony Case Preparation Project, and who embraced the spirit and executed the detail of this experiment, deserve our thanks. Not only did their focus on the quality of felony case preparation have a significant impact on the dispositions of these arrests in court, but their success will inspire other efforts at improving the productivity, the law enforcement impact, and the quality of justice in our system.

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District Attorney
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
AND
INTRODUCTION

Puzzlement, concern and outrage have been provoked by the apparent inability of New York City's criminal justice system to increase the indictment, conviction, and incarceration rates in felony arrest cases. There are many reasons why we get the dispositional pattern that we do; it has been remarkably stable over the last decade and it is similar to the dispositional patterns reported by other large cities. Those who find the dispositions unacceptable -- because of concerns about justice, crime control and efficiency -- are not likely to find a simple or singular remedy. But each part of the system -- the police, the prosecutors, the courts, and the agencies upon which they call for ancillary services -- should find it possible by self-analysis, experiment, and collaborative action to improve it piece by piece.

This is an interim research report on such an effort by the New York City Police Department. Since August, 1979, the Department has been conducting an experiment, in collaboration with the Bronx District Attorney's Office, in which the immediate post-arrest investigation of felony arrests was expected to change the dispositional patterns in the experimental precincts and, from a law enforcement perspective, improve them.

The evidence presented here shows that the experimental procedures increased the indictment rate, the conviction rate, the incarceration rate, and the felony-time sentence rate. And the evidence of this impact is confirmed when the data are controlled for

changes in the system that might independently affect these rates.

The improved dispositional pattern was evident across all categories of the experimental precinct's felony arrests, but improvement was most dramatic for robbery and burglary arrests -- where improvement is most fervently desired. The indictment rate for arraigned robbery arrests shot up from 39% to 66%; the conviction rate rose from 51% to 74%; and the incarceration rate rose from 30% to 44%. Sentences of five years or longer more than tripled, rising from 8% to 30%. Among burglary arrests presented to the court for disposition, the indictment rate more than doubled, rising from 10% to 24%; and the conviction rate rose from 55.5 % to 68.3%.

The Felony Case Preparation Project has its operational complexities,¹ but it can be simply described. It is rooted in an assumption that the lack of timely investigation and preparation of felony arrests has two undesirable consequences: first, police officers, witnesses and defendants often waste months as some cases progress through the system only to be dismissed when their unprosecutability becomes obvious; second, other cases which should and could be prosecuted, as serious felony charges against serious criminals, are dropped or pled out at a low charge and with non-incarcerative sentences because prosecution and court decisions are inadequately informed. The normal procedure by which the police present their felony arrest work-product to the courts ends when an Assistant District Attorney ("ADA") in the Complaint Room receives a booking report (which does no more than present, often in a single

¹ See Appendix A to the full Interim Report.

sentence, those facts necessary to show that the officer had probable cause to make the arrest). For any other information the ADA must rely on Complaint Room interviews with the officer and the complainant; if there are other witnesses whose testimony bears on the evidentiary strength of the case, they will not normally be produced in the Complaint Room.

Under the experimental Felony Case Preparation Project, all adult felony arrests (except those made by special units such as Homicide, Narcotics, and Organized Crime), are referred to the Precinct Detective Unit ("PDU") which assigns a detective to conduct an immediate follow-up investigation. In "project-type" felony arrests,² the detective interviews all parties -- the arresting and any assisting officers, the victims, the witnesses -- and, if necessary, he visits the crime scene to search for additional evidence or to locate and interview additional witnesses. He may request assistance from forensic technicians, and he may conduct one or more line-ups if proper identification of the defendant is an issue. During the course of the follow-up investigation, the detective may call upon the arresting officer to assist him, a procedure which involves the officer in development of the case and serves as a training vehicle to improve the investigatory skills of the patrol force.

² Throughout this report, when we present data such as "indictment rate" and "felony-time sentence rate", the base upon which the rate is calculated consists of "project-type" felony arrests, and excludes the arrests noted in the text above. As the excluded categories have higher conviction, indictment and incarceration rates than most "project-type" felony arrests, the precincts actually have better over-all dispositional patterns than those that are shown in these pages for the purpose of evaluating the project.

The purpose of the experimental follow-up investigation is to capture at the earliest moment all evidence that would be useful to a prosecutor either for pressing cases forward or for identifying and dropping cases in which the evidence for prosecution cannot be had. The result of these investigations is reduced to a written Arrest Investigation Report ("AIR"), which is delivered to the Complaint Room together with the defendant; the AIR serves to inform initial prosecutorial decisions (e.g., whether to nolle prosequere, to seek criminal court conviction, or to seek indictment) and it becomes the backbone of the prosecution file.³ (A number of AIRs are attached as part of Appendix C to the full Interim Report, and serve to illustrate how the investigations strengthen these cases.)

The Vera Institute has been conducting evaluative research to determine the effects of the experimental case-preparation procedures. The 43rd Precinct was selected as the first site; additional detectives were assigned to the Precinct Detective Unit there, in advance of formal commencement of the project on August 1, 1979, to cover the expected increase in PDU workload. (In fact, the post-arrest investigations consumed only 7 percent of the hours detectives were available in that unit.) Vera then set up systems for the collection, coding and analysis of a great deal of data,

³ During Complaint Room review of the arrest, the Project's Court Liaison Sergeant serves as the link between precinct operations and the District Attorney's Office. In addition to gathering information concerning the ADA's opinion of the thoroughness of the investigation (which is fed back to the precinct for training purposes), the liaison sergeant is available to the ADA to secure additional investigation on the case should the ADA request it. If so, the liaison sergeant notifies the assigned detective who conducts the additional investigative steps and forwards a report to the Liaison Officer who delivers it to the assigned ADA.

including data necessary to monitor charging and voiding decisions at the precinct, non-prosecution and indictment-tracking decisions by ADAs in the Complaint Room, and dismissals, convictions and sentences in the Criminal and Supreme Courts.

The design of this evaluative research permits comparison of results obtained in 43rd Precinct felony arrests for any time period in the "test year" (beginning August 1979) with results for the same period in the preceding year (the "base year," beginning August 1978). But evaluative research is on shaky ground when, after observing change at an experimental site, it points to the new procedures as the cause of the change; the project can be credited with causing the change only if the research can show there is no other factor, external to the project, that caused the change. For this reason, Vera selected the 46th Precinct in the Bronx as a "control precinct," and collected the same data, for the same periods, on project-type felony arrests originating there. That way, if a jump in the 43rd Precinct's indictment rate was in fact caused not by introduction of the project but by a change in District Attorney policy, for example, a similar change of the same magnitude would show up in the control precinct and the apparent impact of the project would be seen as an illusion. If, on the other hand, there were no change (or no similar change) in the control precinct, the impact of the project would be confirmed. (The question is not, of course, whether one precinct has, for example, a higher or lower indictment rate than another. Indictment rates, conviction rates and the like are the product of a variety of factors that themselves vary from precinct to precinct. The question is whether a change in

these rates in the experimental precinct can be attributed to the augmentation procedures applied to felony arrest originating there; the answer will be yes if the change is not found in another, similarly-situated precinct.)

For the most part, this report presents data only for "project-type" arrests originating in the first six months of the test year and the same six months of the base year, in the two precincts. We stop at six months because, that way, we can present final dispositions in a very high proportion of the cases; arrests made in more recent months include rather too many that are still open in Supreme Court.⁴

The results are impressive. As the subsequent pages make clear, the dispositional pattern for arrests originating in the control precinct remained virtually unchanged, but the pattern changed dramatically -- in the expected direction -- in the experimental precinct. In presenting these findings, the broadest but most conservative measures of impact are presented first: that is, first we calculate indictment rates and the like on a base of all project-

⁴ For the six month periods under examination in this report, the size of the "open case" category is approximately the same for the two precincts in each of the years. For example: for the test year, 11.1% of the 909 project-type felony arrests from the Experimental Precinct were still open at the time of last data-collection; 12.4% of the 1350 arrests were still open in the Control Precinct. The proportions of cases still open from the two precincts in the base year are lower, but similarly close to each other (i.e., 7.3% of the 1191 arrests were still open in the Experimental Precinct, and 9.9% of the 1369 arrests were still open in the Control Precinct). This report presents findings from data that exclude open cases; when presenting sentencing data, the report excludes convictions for which no sentence had been imposed at the time of last data-collection. For a discussion of why the findings are unlikely to be affected by the closure of these open cases, see the first part of the full Interim Report.

type arrests (including arrests that were voided or nolle prossed), then we calculate the rates on a base that includes arraigned project-type arrests only. First, the results when all arrests are included:

Conviction rate. The proportion of all project-type felony arrests from the experimental precinct that resulted in conviction increased from 45% to 50% a relative change of 11%. (The overall conviction rate in the control precinct fell, from 50% to 48%.)⁵

Indictment Rate. The experimental precinct's indictment rate increased from 11.5% to 17.6% -- a relative change of 53%. (The indictment rate increased in the control precinct too, where it rose from 13.6% to 16.3%; but the relative change -- 20% -- was so much lower than in the experimental precinct that the positive impact of the project on indictment rate cannot be explained away by an upward movement of indictment rates in the Bronx generally.)

Incarceration Rate. The overall incarceration rate rose in the experimental precinct from 14.4% to 17.2% -- a relative change of 19.4%. (In the control precinct, it fell from 20.7% to 17% -- a relative change, in the opposite direction, of 17.9%.)

⁵ Note that, at this point, we are using the most conservative measure of program impact. The base on which these rates are calculated includes felony arrests voided at the precinct, felony arrests that are dropped by the prosecutor before arraignment, and felony arrests that have been reduced to misdemeanor charges by the time they reach Criminal Court arraignment. Most assessments of the criminal justice system exclude from "felony arrests" all arrests except those actually presented to the court system for arraignment on felony charges. (See, Felony Offenders Disposed in 1978 (New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services [March 1, 1978].) The effect of including the weak and unprosecutable cases in the base, as we do here, is to suppress the conviction, indictment and incarceration rates, and to suppress the magnitude of the improvements in these rates caused by the project.

Felony Sentencing Rate. The proportion of all project-type felony arrests in the experimental precinct that ended with sentences of more than a year rose from 4% to 5.8% -- a relative increase of 45%. (In the control precinct, the rate fell from 7.6% to 6.1% -- a relative decrease of 20%.)

Long-term Sentencing Rate. The proportion of project-type felony arrests resulting in sentences with maximums of five years or longer more than doubled in the experimental precinct (1.6% to 3.9%), while it fell in the control precinct (4.6% to 3.5%).

The Bottom Line (Crime Control). From a police perspective, the most important question about any innovative use of the Department's resources seems to be whether it increases the rate at which serious criminals are removed from the streets for felony terms, and the absolute number of them so removed. The project had a clear impact on the likelihood of a felony-time sentence being imposed in a felony arrest case, and the impact was strongest for felony terms of five years or more. But because the number of project-type felony arrests was declining in both precincts during this period, and because it was declining in the experimental precinct more rapidly than in the control precinct, it is encouraging to note that the absolute number of felony-time sentences actually increased slightly in the experimental precinct -- despite the fall-off in the number of felony arrests there -- while the number of criminals removed from the streets for more than a year in prison actually declined in the control precinct (and

declined at a much faster rate than the control precinct's fall-off in felony arrests).⁶

These improvements in the dispositional pattern for the experimental precinct were achieved with notable efficiency. There was no increase in arresting officers' overtime, there was no net increase in arrest-to-arraignment delay, and the investigations and report-writing consumed only 7.2% of the hours of detective manpower available to the Precinct Detective Unit. (See Appendix C.) There were other efficiencies as well: The increase in overall conviction rate was accompanied by an increase in the proportion of cases that were screened out before they reached formal court hearings in which they would, after wasted court appearances, have been dismissed. That is, the proportion of felony arrests voided at the experimental precinct (without any resources being devoted to them in the Complaint Room, pre-arraignment, and court process) increased from 3.4% to 13.2%. (The control precinct's voiding rate rose too, but only from 4.5% to 5.1%.) The efficiency of the police in screening out cases which investigation showed not to be prosecutable was matched, in the experimental precinct, by a drop in the proportion of cases

⁶ Fluctuations, up and down, in any precinct's felony arrest numbers are common. There are myriad causes, ranging from fluctuations in the gross amount of patrol and anti-crime manpower available for street patrol (and changes in the distribution of officers to uniformed and anti-crime assignment), to changes of personnel in command and patrol functions, to changes in the precinct's street conditions. Although some readers of earlier reports of this research have suggested that the declining number of felony arrests in the experimental precinct is in some way a consequence of introducing post-arrest investigations, our attempts to find such a link have not born fruit. Indeed, the independent causes of the declining volume of felony arrests in these precincts can be identified and quantified. A separate report, disposing of these matters, is in preparation.

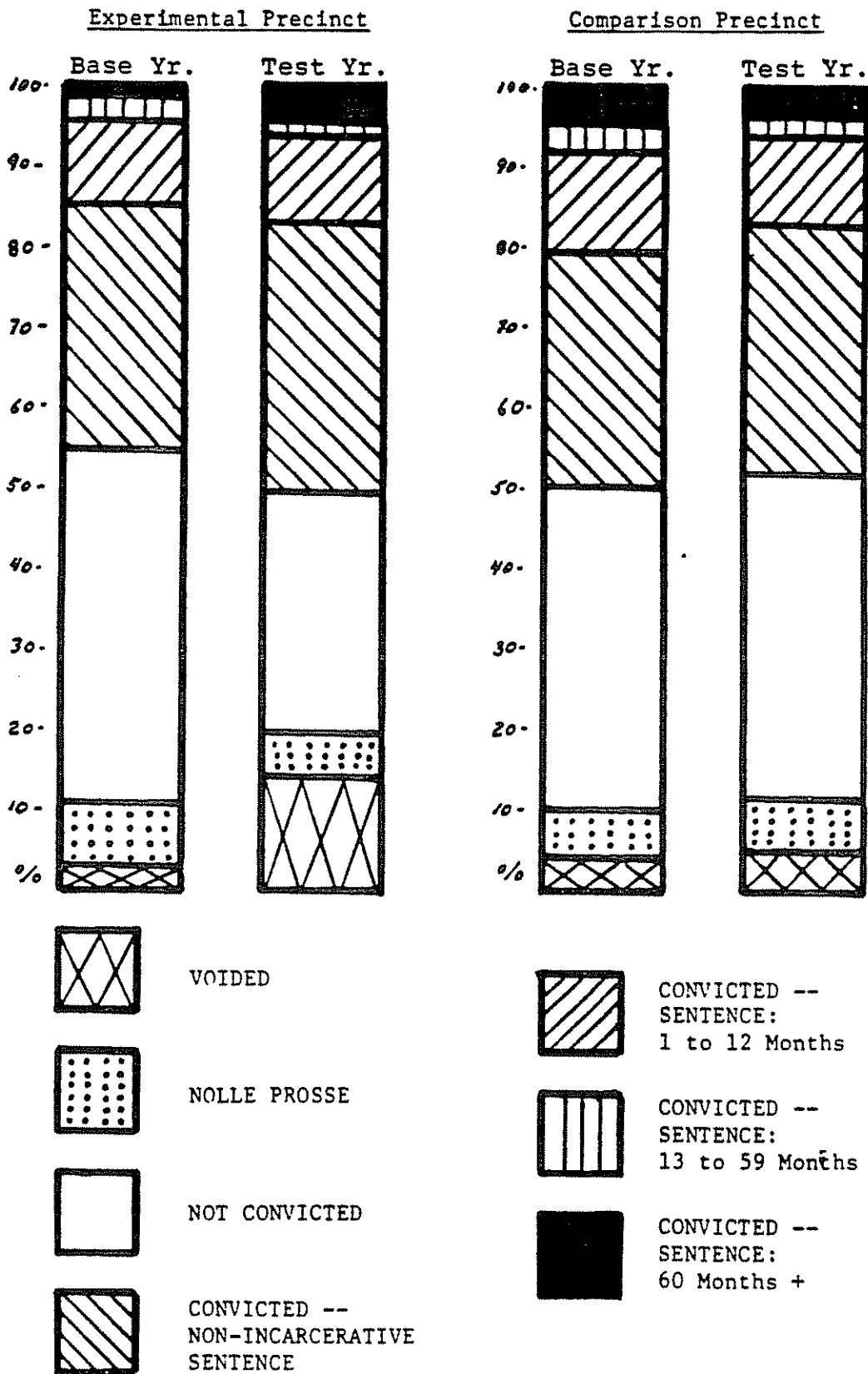
in which the Complaint Room ADAs declined prosecution (7.4% to 5.1%). (Declination of prosecution in the control precinct cases rose slightly, from 5.6% to 5.9%.)

If all these effects of the project are combined -- the increase in the conviction rate and the increase in the rate at which unprosecutable cases are identified and screened out prior to arraignment -- it is obvious that the proportion of felony arrests that were carried forward in the system only to be dismissed by the court declined dramatically in the experimental precinct. Indeed, court dismissals declined from 44% to 30%, a relative change of 35%. (In the control precinct, court dismissals remained constant at 40% of felony arrests.)

These effects are presented graphically on the following page. Each bar presents 100% of one precinct's project-type felony arrests for the base year or the test year (closed cases only, see note 4 above.)

Figure 1

Dispositional Pattern for Felony Arrests --
Criminal and Supreme Courts Combined



The impact of the case preparation procedures is evident in virtually every category of felony, as later sections of this report make clear, but it is most evident where it is most desired -- in arrests for robbery. Because robbery is currently the focus of special efforts throughout the city, the robbery data are separately summarized here:

The Conviction Rate for all robbery arrests in the experimental precinct (including those voided or nolle prossed) rose from 44.7% to 51%, a relative change of 14%. (It declined in the control precinct from 54% to 46%, a relative change of 15% in the opposite direction.)

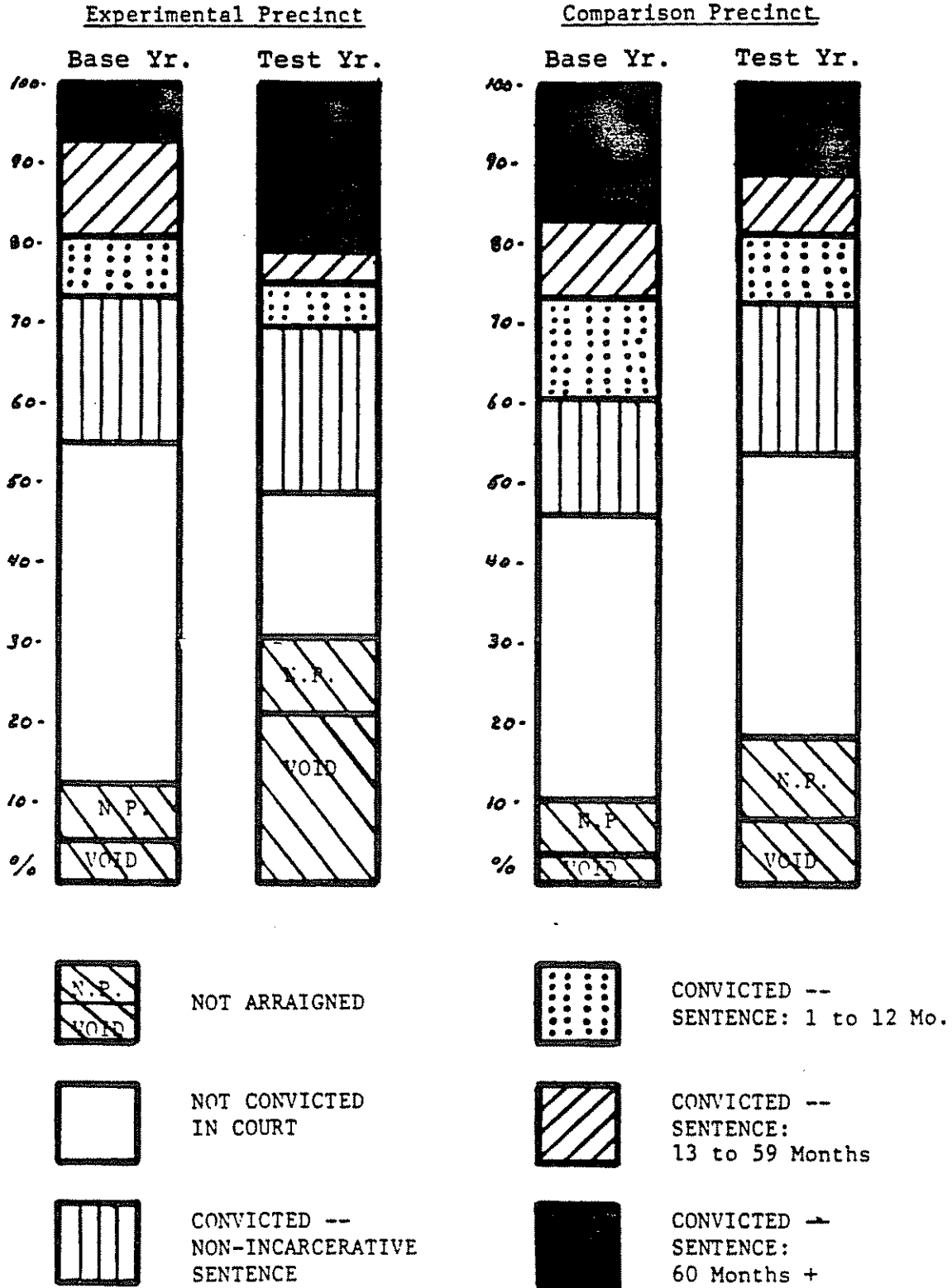
The Indictment Rate for all robbery arrests rose 14.5%, from 33.9% to 48.4% -- a relative change of 43%. (In the control precinct, the indictment rate for robbery arrests rose only 3%, from 39.1% to 42.2% -- a relative change of 8%.)

The Felony Sentence Rate rose 6% in the experimental precinct, from 18.5% to 24.6% -- a relative change of 33%. (It fell 7.7% in the control precinct, from 26.4% to 18.7% -- a relative change of 29% in the opposite direction.)

The combined effects of these changes in the dispositional pattern for robbery arrests -- and the dramatic rise in the long-term felony-time sentence rate, which nearly tripled in the experimental precinct by going from 7.3% to 20.8% -- are summarized in Figure 2 on the following page:

Figure 2

Dispositional Pattern for Robbery Arrests --
Criminal and Supreme Courts Combined



From a crime control perspective, the bottom line for the felony case preparation project is particularly encouraging in the robbery arrest category. The absolute number of robbers removed from the streets of the experimental precinct by prison sentences of five years or longer almost doubled after the project was introduced, despite the drop in the volume of robbery arrests that began before (and continued during) this period. In the control precinct, the absolute number of such incapacitative sentences fell.

So far, we have been examining changes in various dispositional rates expressed as percentages of all project-type felony arrests. This is useful for its highlighting of the rather efficient trade-offs observed between voiding and declining of prosecution on the one hand and, on the other hand, the more time-consuming and wasteful dismissing of cases after they have been sent forward in the system to the court. These measurements of impact also have the advantage of being the most conservative tests of program impact, because the magnitude of improvements in the dispositional pattern of arrests that are actually prosecuted in court is obscured by including in the base the cases that, when properly prepared, are screened out before prosecution is attempted. Because impact on the District Attorney's Office and the courts is of independent importance, and because other reports of the dispositions of felony arrests do not

include in the base these voided and nolle prossed cases,⁷ Figures 3 and 4 are presented to illustrate the impact of the project on dispositional patterns for all arraigned project-type felony arrests. The magnitude of the improvement resulting from the Felony Case Preparation Project is even more evident, when the base is restricted to arraigned arrests. The highlights are:

The Indictment Rate for arraigned project-type arrests rose from 13% to 22% -- a relative change of 69%. (In the control precinct it rose from 15% to 18%, a relative change of only 20%.)

The Conviction Rate rose from 51% to 63% -- a relative change of 24%. (In the control precinct, it remained virtually unchanged -- 54% and 55%.)

The Incarceration Rate rose from 16% to 21% -- a relative change of 31%. (In the control precinct it fell from 23% to 19% -- a relative change in the opposite direction of 17%.)

The Long-Term Sentence Rate (sentences with maximums of 5 years or longer) more than doubled -- rising from 1.8% to 4.8%. (In the control precinct, this rate decreased from 5.1% to 3.9%.)

⁷ See Felony Offenders Disposed in 1978 (New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services; March 1, 1981) pages 21, 85-93, 117-127 (and note that the DCJS Offender-Based Transaction System does not include felony arrests voided by the police or nolle prossed by the District Attorneys); and Vera, Felony Arrests: Their Prosecution and Disposition in New York City's Courts, revised edition (New York: Longman, 1981).

Figure 3

Arraigned Felony Arrests: Pattern of Indictment,
Conviction and Dismissal in Criminal Court

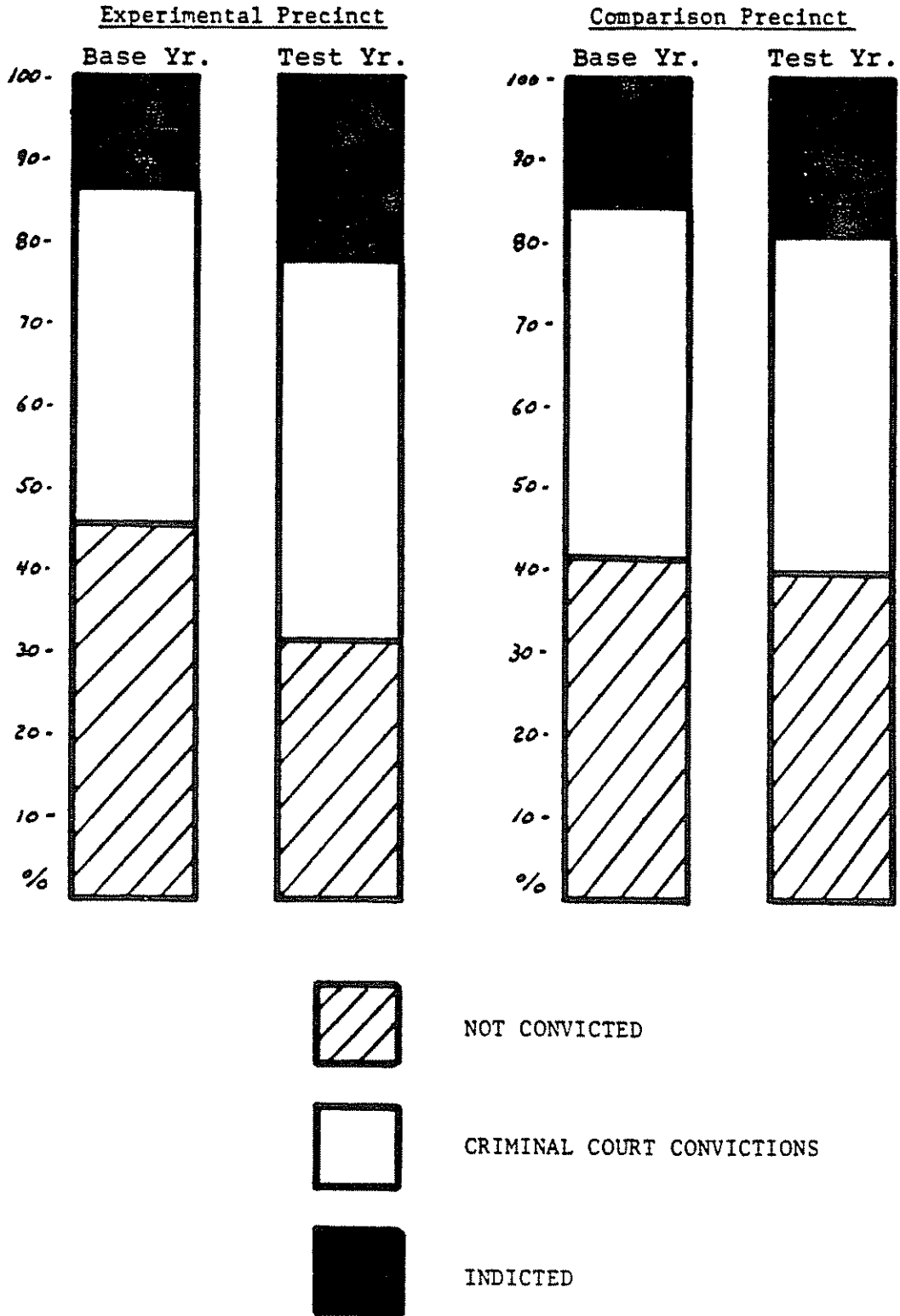
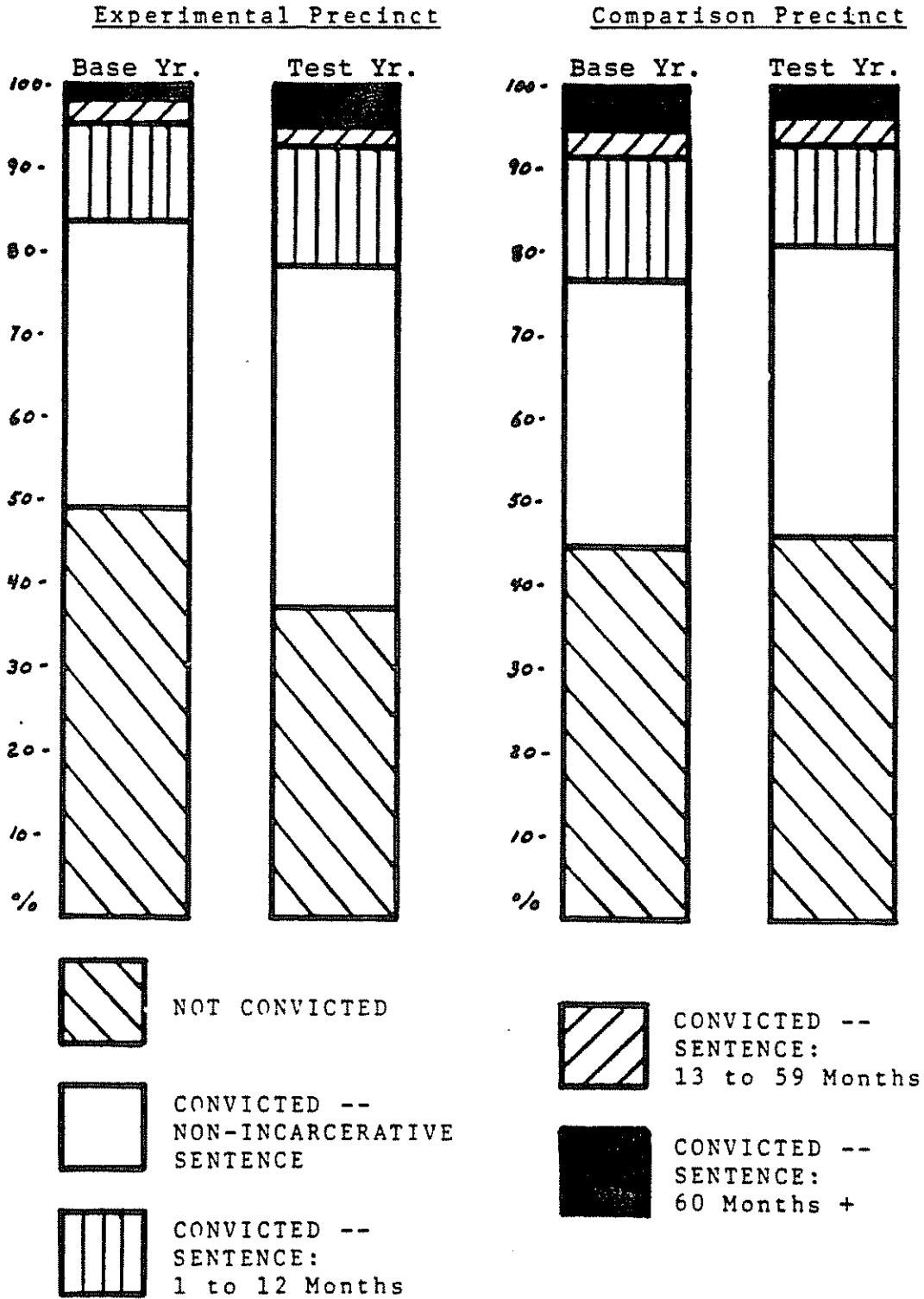


Figure 4

Dispositional Pattern for Arraigned Felony Arrests -- Criminal and Supreme Courts Combined



The project's impact on the dispositional pattern of arraigned cases was most marked in the robbery category, as Figures 5 and 6 illustrate. The highlights are:

The Robbery Conviction Rate rose from 51% to 74%, a relative change of 45%. (In the control precinct it fell from 60% to 56%, a relative change of 7% in the opposite direction.)

The Robbery Indictment Rate rose dramatically, from 39% to 66% -- a relative change of 69%. (In the control precinct it rose from 44% to 50%, a relative change of only 14%.)

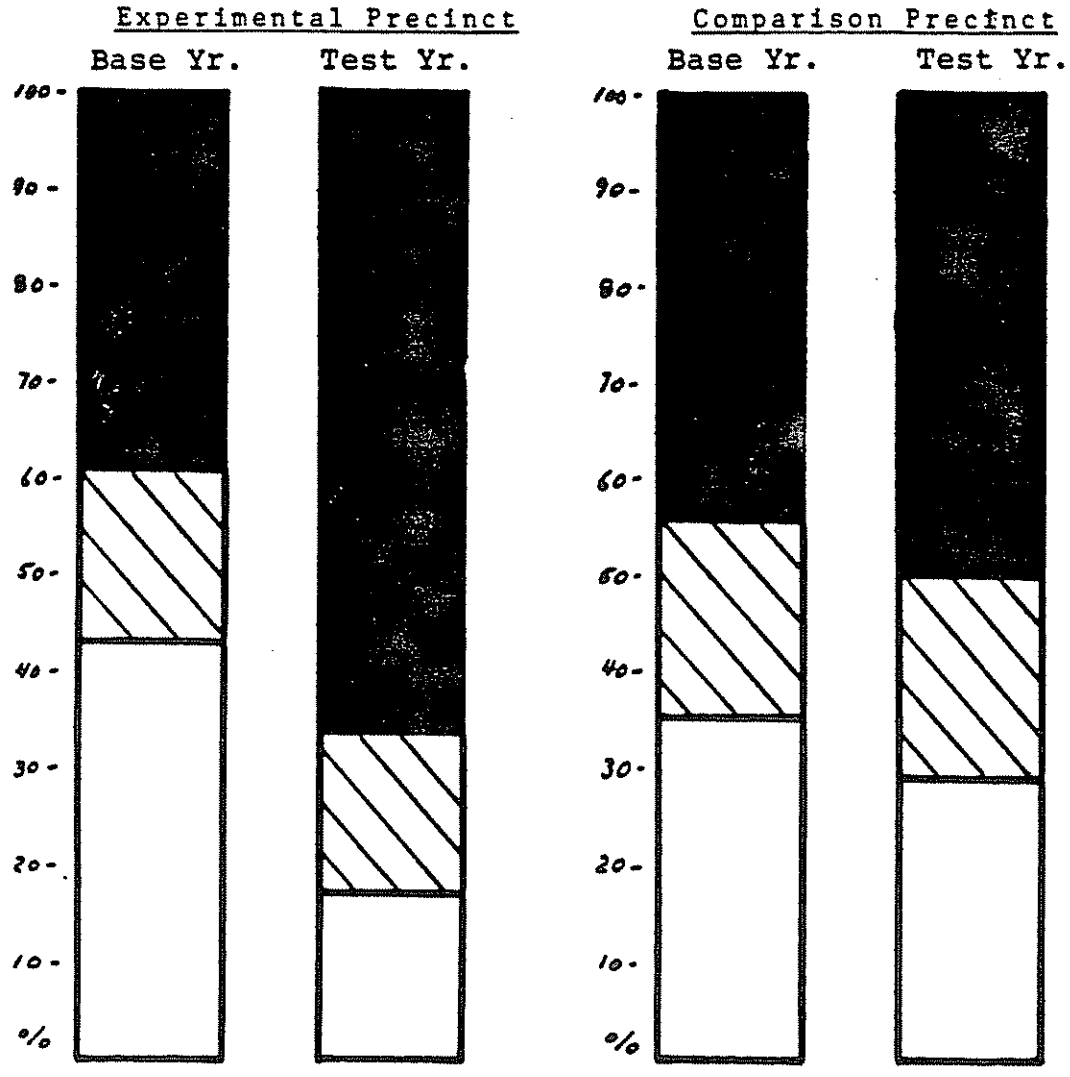
The Robbery Incarceration Rate increased from 30% to 44%, a relative change of 47%. (In the control precinct, it dropped from 44% to 34%, a relative change of 23% in the opposite direction.)

The Felony Sentence Rate for Robbery rose from 21% to 36%, a relative change of 71%. (In the control precinct it dropped from 29% to 23%, a relative change of 21% in the opposite direction.)

The Long-Term Sentence Rate for Robbery (sentences with maximums of five years or longer) more than tripled, rising from 8% to 30%. (In the control precinct, the long-term sentence rate fell from 19% to 14%, a relative change of 26% in the opposite direction.)

Figure 5

Arraigned Robbery Arrests: Pattern of Indictment, Conviction, and Dismissal in Criminal Court



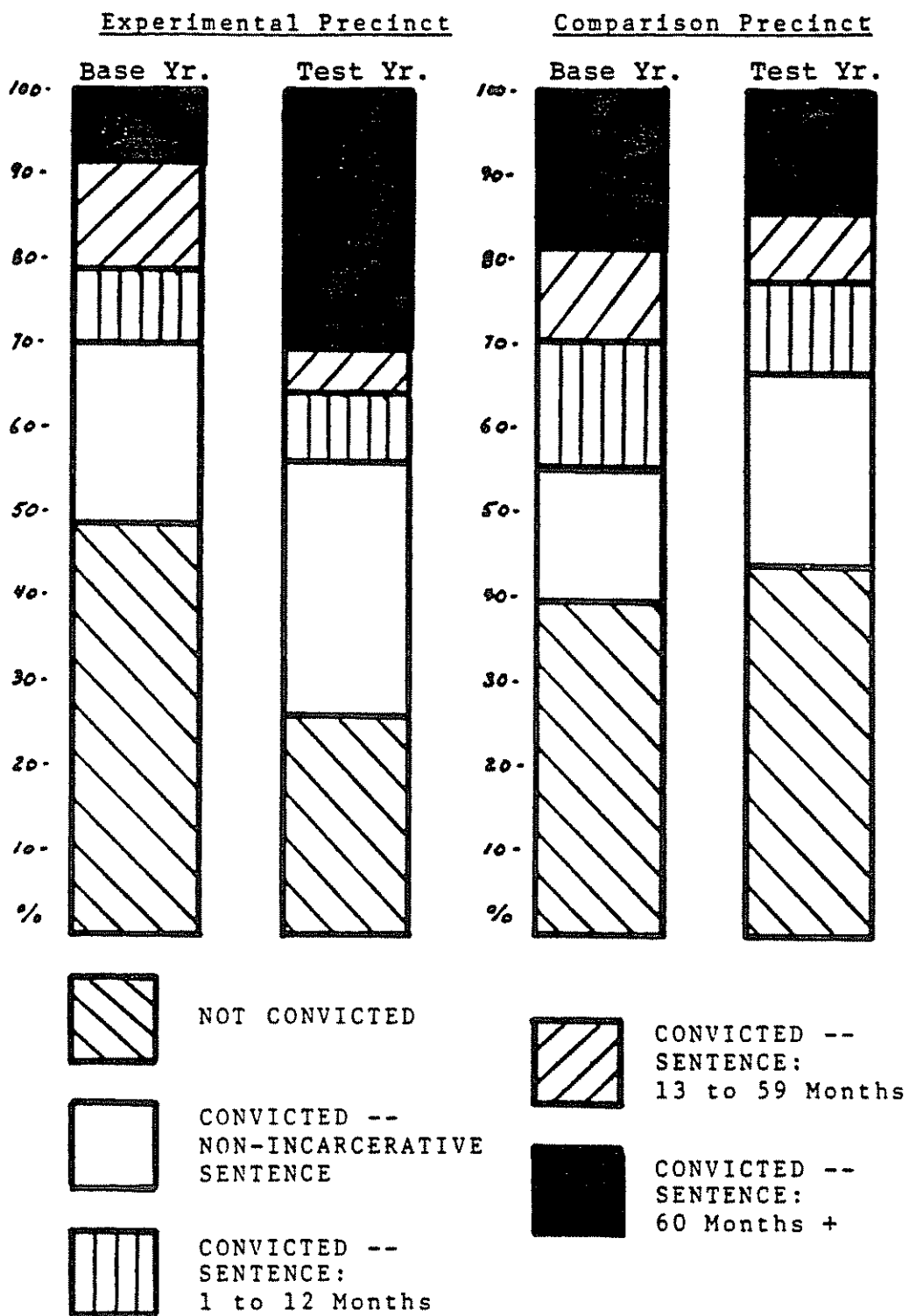
■ INDICTED

▨ CRIMINAL COURT CONVICTIONS

□ NOT CONVICTED

Figure 6

Dispositional Pattern for Arraigned Robbery Arrests --
Criminal and Supreme Courts Combined



Current Period

Thus far, we have summarized the impact of the Felony Case Preparation experiment as it emerges from the controlled research on arrests made in the first six months of operations. We limited ourselves to that period because a sufficient number of cases from that period have reached final disposition and sentence for us to draw fairly comprehensive conclusions. But, because most indictments are returned within thirty days of arrest, we can look separately at the current period to verify that the impact on court processing has not fallen off with the passage of an additional twelve months.

In addition, current period data permit us to verify that the project's impact is not a function of peculiarities in the original experimental precinct. This opportunity arises because, in January 1981, after reviewing the early returns from the six month data base, the Police Department extended the project to two additional precincts. Fortunately, one of the new experimental precincts is the 46th Precinct, which had been the control precinct; the other new experimental precinct is the 50th.

Examination of the results in felony arrest cases in the three experimental precincts for the first three months of 1981 strengthens the evidence of positive program impact:

Voiding and Declined Prosecution. In the original experimental precinct, data for the first six months showed a rise in voiding, from 3.4% to 13.2%. While the higher conviction rate and the lower declined prosecution rate more than offset this increase

in voiding, voids were a matter of concern to some police officials. It now appears that the voiding rate has settled back down. In the original experimental precinct, it was down to 4.7% in the first three months of this year -- lower than it had been for this three month period in either of the past two years. Nevertheless, the proportion of felony arrests in which the prosecutors declined prosecution continued to drop -- it was 9.1% for this period in 1979, 3% for this period in 1980, and 1.8% for this period in 1981. The two new experimental precincts produced similarly encouraging results: In the 46th Precinct, the voiding rate was steady -- 7.2% in 1980 and 7.1% in 1981 -- but the declined prosecution rate dropped from 5.3% to 1%. In the 50th Precinct the voiding rate increased from 1.9% to 3.6%, but the declined prosecution rate dropped from 10.2% to 3.6%. If we combine the data from the three experimental precincts for the first three months of 1981 and for the first three months of the base year (1979 in the 43rd, 1980 in the other two precincts), we find that the voiding rate dropped from 6.5% to 5.7%, while the declined prosecution rate dropped from 7.4% to 1.7%.

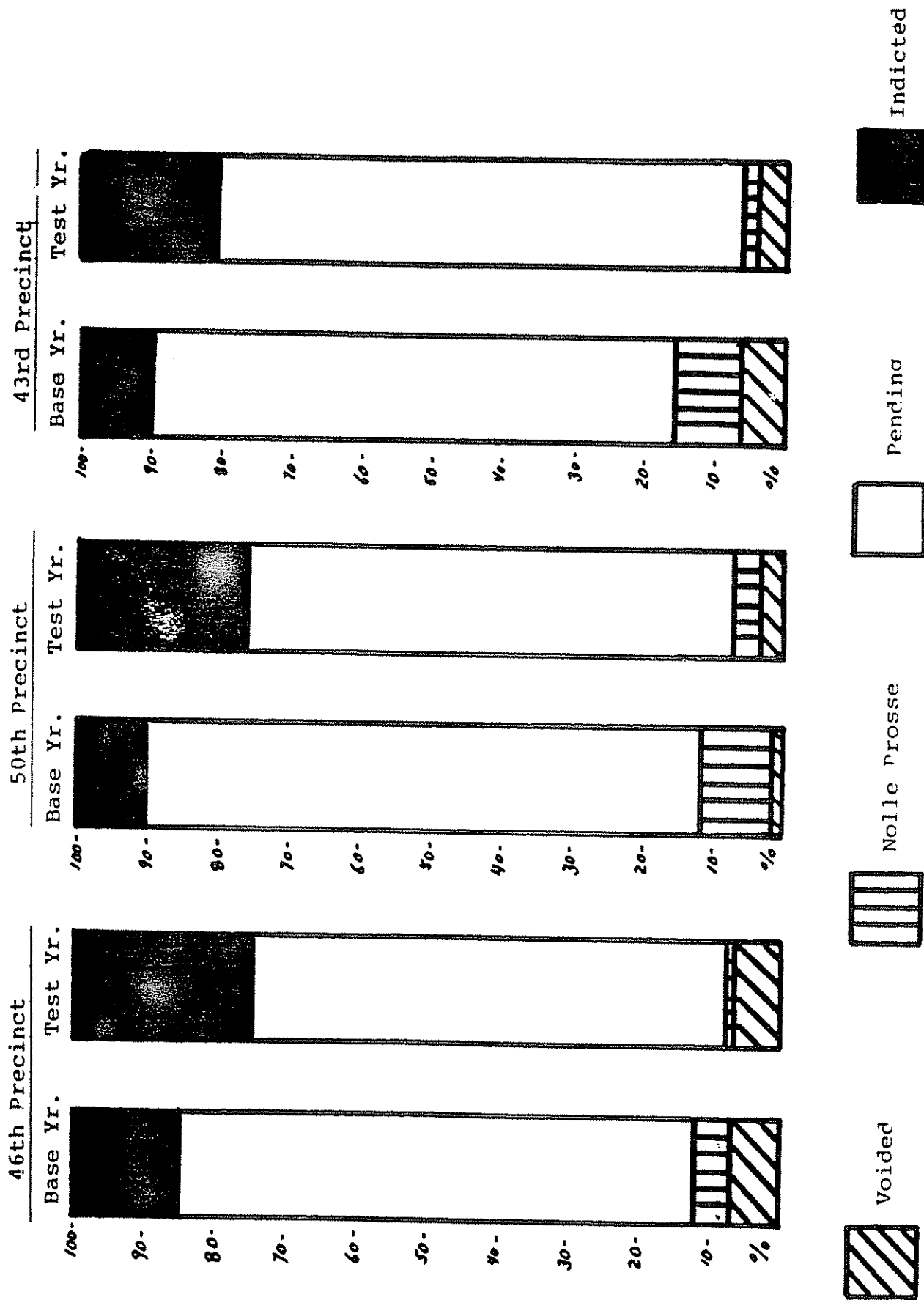
Indictment Rate. We saw in the six months' data that, as a proportion of all felony arrests, the indictment rate in the original experimental precinct increased from 11.5% to 17.6%. If we isolate the months of January, February and March of 1979, 1980 and 1981, we can trace the continued impact of the project in the 43rd Precinct as follows: In 1979, the indictment rate was 9.6% for the three month period; in 1980 (the first test year), it was 17.2%; this year it is already 18.7% -- almost double the 1979 rate for

these months. (There are still some indictment-tracked cases pending, so this measure of the current indictment rate probably understates the final indictment rate and, thus, the magnitude of project impact.) In the 46th Precinct, the indictment rate has risen from 15.5% last year to 24.6% this year. In the 50th Precinct it has risen from 9.3% to 23.6%. If we combine the data from the three experimental precincts for the first three months of 1981 and compare the aggregate indictment rate with that for the same three months of the base year (1979 in the 43rd Precinct and 1980 in the other two), we find that the indictment rate has risen almost 10%, from 12.4% to 22.2% -- a relative change of 79%.

Figure 7, on the following page, illustrates these effects of the project:

Figure 7

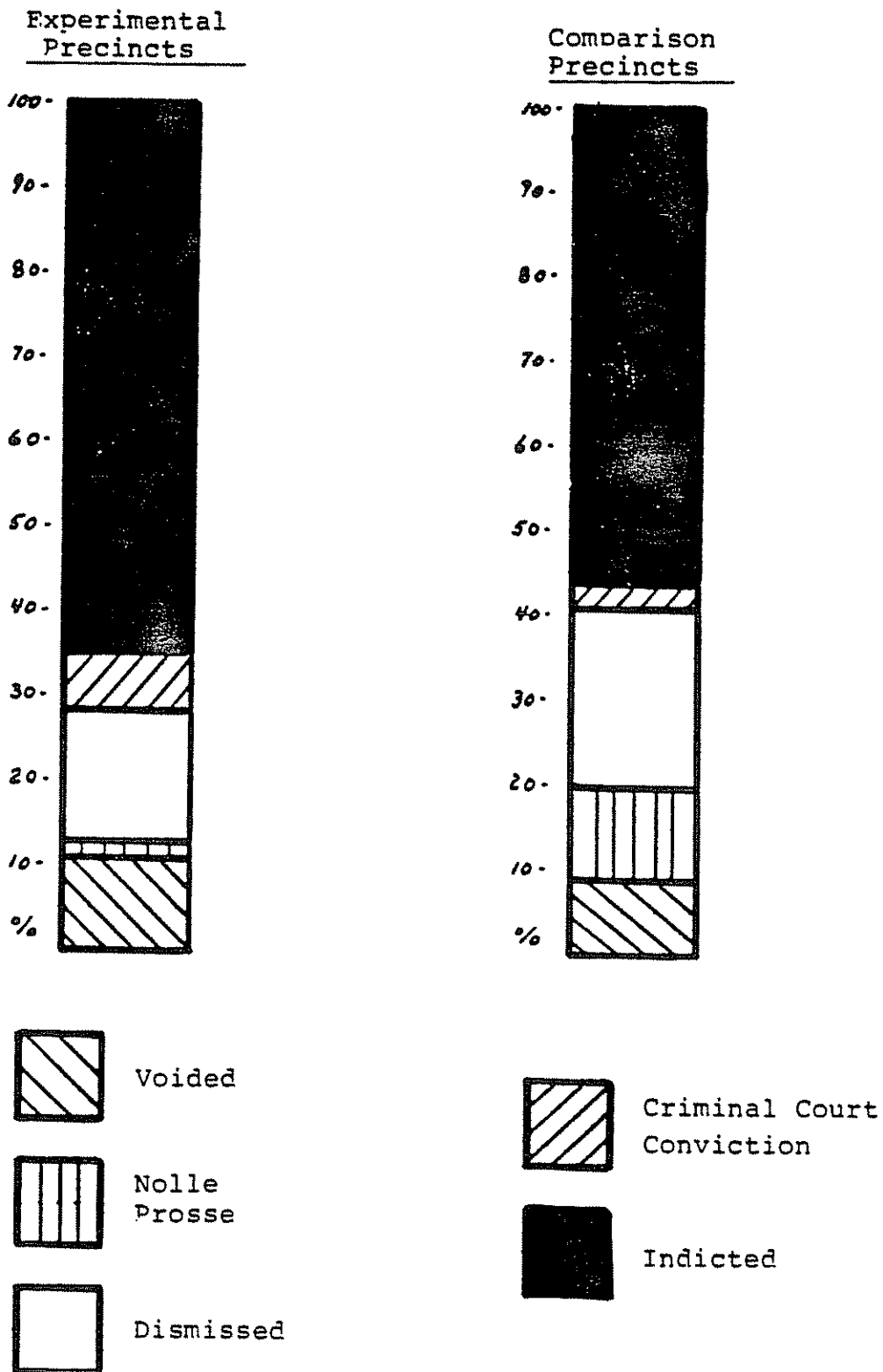
Felony Arrests: Rates of Indictment and Non-Prosecution
in All Experimental Precincts (1981 and Base Year)



Once again, it is of special interest to isolate the project's impact on robbery arrests, this time for the current period. But, because there has been such a sharp focus on robbery cases in this city for several months, we are not comfortable making a comparison of the current dispositional pattern with that of a year ago. Instead, we have collected robbery arrest and disposition data, for the current period, from three Bronx precincts which are not operating the Felony Case Preparation Project but which have similar arrest volumes and are located close by the three experimental precincts. Combining the three experimental precincts, we find that 86.5% of the robbery arrests made in January, February and March have been disposed of (at or before Criminal Court) or have been indicted; the rest are pending. The proportion of robbery arrests disposed of in these ways in the three comparison precincts is 86.3%, so the two groups of cases are roughly comparable. To date, in the experimental precincts, 64.7% of these robbery arrests have resulted in indictment and 7.2% of them have reached conviction in Criminal Court, for a combined conviction/indictment rate of 71.9%. This is substantially higher than the 59.4% conviction/indictment rate of the comparison precincts (where 56.2% of the robbery arrests have been indicted and 3.2% have been convicted in Criminal Court). Figure 8, on the following page, illustrates this impact; it tells an encouraging story:

Figure 8

Robbery Arrests: Current Pattern of Indictment, Conviction, Dismissal, and Non-Prosecution in Criminal Court (All Experimental and Comparison Precincts)



The full text of the Interim Report, with its appendices, presents the results of our evaluative research to date in much greater detail. At this point, although there is need for more research, it is clear that the Felony Case Preparation Project should hearten those who believe that the performance of the criminal justice system can be improved.