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Evaluation News provides information on the BJA Center for Program Evaluation and Performance Measurement, promotes the exchange of information on evaluation and performance measurement, and publicizes criminal justice research and evaluation reports for use by state and local criminal justice agencies.

SEX OFFENDERS

Criminal Justice and Behavior has published a special issue focusing on sex offenders. The special issue is available at: <http://cjb.sagepub.com/current.dtl>.

Letourneau, et al. examined South Carolina's sex offender registration and notification (SORN) policy to determine if it was associated with a general deterrent effect on adult sex crimes. General deterrence refers to the legal threat of punishment and is achieved when the fear of consequences increases compliance with the law. Previous studies that examined the general deterrence effect of SORN policies have found mixed results. This study differs from previous studies in that the data permitted the authors to clearly distinguish between first and subsequent sex offenses, it separately models the effects of South Carolina's initial SORN policy and the revised policy that required Internet-based notification, and it enable the researchers to determine whether the observed changes in sex crime rates are attributable to registration policies or nonspecific factors that affect violent crime rates more generally. The study utilized adult arrest data from 1990 through 2005 with a total of 194,575 arrestees. Trend analyses were used to model the intervention effects of the initial 1995 policy and the revised 1999 policy. The results indicate that South Carolina's original 1995 SORN policy is associated with a general deterrent effect. Additionally, the authors noted a lack of a relationship between the internet-based notification component of South Carolina's revised SORN policy and general deterrence. The results also suggest that Internet notification is, at best, ineffective. Not only is the internet-based notification not associated with general nor specific deterrence, but the authors believe that it might result in unintended reductions in the identification and punishment of sex offenders, because it was associated with significant increases in plea bargains and decreases in convictions. The complete study, *Effects of South Carolina's Sex Offender Registration and Notification Policy on Deterrence of Adult Sex Crimes* was published in the May 2010 issue of *Criminal Justice and Behavior*. It is available at:

<http://cjb.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/37/5/537>

Zandbergen, Levenson, and Hart examined the relationship between sex offense recidivism and residential proximity to common places where children congregate. Specifically, they sought to determine whether sex offenders who live closer to schools or daycares were more likely to reoffend sexually than those who live farther away. The study was based on sex offender data from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. The data included demographic information, history of offenses, and history of registered addresses for each offender. The sample included recidivists and non-recidivists (n = 330) arrested for a new sex offense between 2004 through 2006. The authors found that there were no significant differences between the distances that recidivists and non-recidivists live from schools and daycares. Also, there was no significant relationship between reoffending and proximity to schools or daycares. The results of this study indicate that proximity to schools and day-

Useful resources for criminal justice program evaluation and performance measurement are available at the BJA Center for Program Evaluation and Performance Measurement web site: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/evaluation>.

cares, with other risk factors being comparable, does not appear to contribute to sexual recidivism. The complete study, *Residential Proximity to Schools and Daycares: An Empirical Analysis of Sex Offense Recidivism* was published in the May 2010 issue of *Criminal Justice and Behavior*. It is available at:

<http://cjb.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/37/5/482>

RECIDIVISM

Huebner, DeJong and Cobbina examined the long-term patterns of recidivism among a large, diverse sample of women released from prison in one state. Specifically, their research explores how social relationships, incarceration experiences, and community context, and the intersection of these factors with race, influence the occurrence and timing of recidivism. The study includes all 506 women released from prison in 1998. The follow-up data were collected on these women from their release through May 2006. Data for the study were drawn primarily from official department of corrections records. Recidivism was defined as a new conviction for any crime or being returned to prison for any reason during the eight year follow-up period. Their analysis revealed that nearly half (47%) of the women were reconvicted or reincarcerated during the eight year follow-up period, with most of these failures occurring within the first two years of release. Women who were drug dependent, had less education, or had more extensive criminal histories were more likely to fail on parole and to recidivate more quickly. The authors also observe racial variation in the effect of education, drug use, and neighborhood concentrated disadvantage on recidivism. While all drug dependent women were more likely to recidivate, the magnitude of this effect was much stronger for non-white, drug dependent women. Overall, women with a high school degree were less likely to fail on parole; however, results from the race-specific models suggest that education may be a particularly strong protective factor for non-white women. Neighborhood concentrated disadvantage also approached significance for women of minority race, indicating that non-white women returning to disadvantaged neighborhoods were less likely to fail on parole. The authors believe that this study highlights the importance of developing policies specifically for female parolees. The study, *Women Coming Home: Long-Term Patterns of Recidivism*, was published in April issue of *Justice Quarterly* and it is available at:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/section?content=a910861149&fulltext=713240928>

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Are gun buy-back programs effective?

Gun buy-back programs are intended to remove firearms from the streets by paying individuals to turn in guns they possess to law enforcement or other bodies. In an effort to encourage participation by offenders or those in possession of weapons used in crimes individuals are usually not required to reveal their identity when turning in the weapon(s). In some jurisdictions the guns are destroyed while in others they are resold. The basic theory behind the gun buy-back is that fewer guns on the street will result in a reduction in gun violence. Despite the popularity of these programs, research has consistently failed to show a link between these programs and a reduction in gun violence. Researchers have found that this is in large part due to the fact that these programs are based on a flawed theory. The guns that are turned in are often broken, not the types of guns likely to be used in crimes, additionally, the individuals turning in the guns are not using guns for violent crimes, and/or the guns turned in are easily replaced. For more information about gun buy-back program evaluations, see:

Firearms and Violence: A Critical Review by the National Research Council of the National Academies

http://books.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=10881

Aiming for Evidence-Based Gun Policy

http://www.ssa.uchicago.edu/pdf/jpam_aim_evidence.pdf

Under Fire: Gun Buy-Backs, Exchanges and Amnesty Programs published by Police Executive Research Forum

<http://www.policeforum.org>

The Effectiveness of Policies and Programs That Attempt to Reduce Firearm Violence A Meta-Analysis
<http://cad.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/0011128708321321v1>

TIP OF THE MONTH

What is a participant evaluation and how does it differ from a traditional evaluation?

A participant evaluation actively involves program stakeholders, such as providers, partners, and customers in the evaluation process. These stakeholders are involved with the development of the research questions, selecting the methods to be used, collecting and analyzing the data, and writing up the findings. In a traditional evaluation the stakeholders' involvement is primarily restricted to providing information to the evaluator. In a participant evaluation the evaluator facilitates the process and to contribute analytical expertise where needed, while in a traditional evaluation they are an outside evaluator. Some other important differences between the evaluation types are their foci and designs. Participant evaluations are less formal and they tend to focus on learning and have more flexible designs. Traditional evaluations tend to focus on accountability and employ predetermined designs such as a true or quasi experimental design. A true experimental design employs a pretest-posttest group design with random assignment, while a quasi experimental design has the pretest-posttest group design but lacks random assignment. An organization's purposes and availability of resources will often influence the choice of which type of evaluation to conduct. For more information about participatory evaluations and how they differ from traditional evaluations see:

<http://www.idrc.ca/openebooks/868-6/>

pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNABS539.pdf

<http://nzaidtools.nzaid.govt.nz/participatory-evaluation/how-are-participatory-evaluations-different>