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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.

RECIDIVISM

Zhang, Zhang, and Vaughn examined the effects of determinate (with mandatory parole) versus indeterminate sentencing (with discretionary parole) models on recidivism. Their analysis utilized Bureau of Justice Statistics' data to conduct a state-specific comparison of release programs in six states (MD, NC, NY, OR, TX, and VA) that use mixed sentencing models. There were 9,790 prisoners included in this study with varying sample sizes from each state. The results show that the effects of release type were different in each state. In two states the mandatory release program under the determinate sentencing model was associated with a reduced risk of recidivism, while for two other states parole board release was associated with a reduced risk of recidivism. In the final two states there were no significant differences between the two models. The authors state that the findings may indicate that how a state operationalizes and implements its model with respect to post-release parole programming may have more of an effect on recidivism than the sentencing model employed. The study, *Indeterminate and Determinate Sentencing Models: A State-Specific Analysis of Their Effects on Recidivism*, is available in the December 2009 issue of *Crime and Delinquency* at: <http://cad.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/0011128709354047v1>

Cloyes, Wong, Latimer, and Abarca conducted a study of recidivism among offenders with serious mental illness (SMI). Their study was designed to identify SMI offenders and to calculate the time from prison release to reincarceration for SMI offenders as compared to non-SMI offenders. This study included 9,245 prisoners released from Utah state prisons between 1998 and 2002. The authors conducted an analysis of reincarceration patterns up to three years following prison release. There were no significant differences between the groups in demographics, offense characteristics, or conditions of release. SMI offenders were found to have significantly higher rates of recidivism than non-SMI offenders. Overall, SMI offenders also returned to prison nearly one year sooner and had a higher risk of being returned to prison for a technical violation than non-SMI offenders. The study, *Time to Prison Return for Offenders With Serious Mental Illness Released From Prison: A Survival Analysis*, is available in the February 2010 issue of *Criminal Justice and Behavior* at: <http://cjb.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/37/2/175>

CORRECTIONS

Sorensen and Cunningham examined the characteristics and disciplinary data of approximately 70,000 inmates in the Florida Department of Corrections (FDOC) in 2002 and 2003 to study the relationship between conviction offense and prison violence.

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>.

The main focus of the study was to assess whether inmates convicted of homicide were more violence-prone than other offenders. The authors examined differences among those convicted of varying degrees of homicide (first-degree, second-degree, and lesser homicide). This study produced several findings that were consistent with previous research. There was a low frequency of serious assaults in Florida prisons, and prior prison commitment and gang membership were associated with an increased risk of violent misconduct. Additionally, men were more likely than women to be involved in violent rule violations. Of those convicted of homicide, the degree of homicide for which they were convicted appeared to have little effect on violent misconduct in prison. Most importantly, prisoners convicted of homicide did not account for a disproportionate share of prison violence, however defined. Finally, prisoners convicted of homicide were not significantly more likely to engage in disciplinary misconduct or commit acts of institutional violence than other inmates. The study, *Conviction Offense and Prison Violence: A Comparative Study of Murderers and Other Offenders*, is available in the January 2010 issue of *Crime & Delinquency* at: <http://cad.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/56/1/103>

ANNOUNCEMENTS

2010 National Criminal Justice Association (NCJA) Conference

On August 1-3 NCJA's conference, the 2010 National Forum on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, will be held in Ft. Myers Florida. This year's theme is "Navigating Evidence Based Policies and Practices." The conference is also sponsored by the IJIS Institute and the Bureau of Justice Assistance. For more information see: http://www.ncja.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=2010_National_Forum

OJP Evidence Integration Initiative (E2I)

The Office of Justice Programs (OJP) has launched a new effort to improve the management of research knowledge and to better integrate research evidence into practice and policy within OJP and the criminal justice field. The Evidence Integration Initiative, known as E2I. For more information see: http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/j_today/justice-today.pdf

AEA and CDC Summer Evaluation Institute

For information on the American Evaluation Association's and Center for Disease Control and Prevention's upcoming Summer Evaluation Institute see: <http://www.eval.org/SummerInstitute09/default.asp>

TIP OF THE MONTH

A common concern when it comes to planning an evaluation or reviewing the results of an evaluation is whether there were enough people or objects in the study so that the results are valuable. That is, can one feel confident that the number of cases is large enough to ensure that the evaluator is unlikely to draw an incorrect conclusion? At the same time, is the number of cases greater than necessary and therefore using more resources than needed to carry out the evaluation? This is the sample size issue. These questions are of particular concern when one does not study the entire population of interest. (A population is the entire collection of people or objects from which we may collect data or draw a sample. It is the entire group one is interested in, about which we wish to describe or draw conclusions). If a sample is not of sufficient size it will contribute to error and limit the ability to make inferences about the population. Generally, the larger the sample, the more representative it will be of the population and therefore the evaluator will be less likely to draw erroneous conclusions. For more information about sampling and an online sample calculator check out these websites:

- Research Methods Knowledge Base: Sampling
<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/sampling.php>
- University of Connecticut Sample Size Calculator
<http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/siegle/research/Samples/samplecalculator.htm>