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~~X~~ MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
~~X~~ Guides for Better Living
Evaluation

Research and Information Systems
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Background

A course, "Guides for Better Living" was taught at the Minnesota State Prison (MSP) from 1972 through 1976. The course content focused on goals, goal setting and motivation. It was open to all inmates, and was offered in thirteen week blocks with one two hour session per week. Most inmates who entered the non-credit course completed it (N = 183).

The purpose of this study was to follow up course graduates and a matched sample of non-participants.

A sample of men who were incarcerated in MSP and who were released at the same time was drawn for comparison purposes.

Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC) automated records were searched for both the course graduates and the matched sample.

Method

Subjects. The subjects were 169 released men who completed the "Guides to Better Living" course taught at MSP between 1972 and 1976. An additional fourteen individuals graduated from the course but either had not been paroled yet, or were paroled to a federal detainer. These fourteen individuals were excluded from the follow-up study as they were not at risk to be returned to prison.

Before selecting a sample matched by release year, course graduates were compared with all MSP inmates who had been released since 1972 to determine if the comparison group should be stratified on relevant variables. The course graduates were found to be reasonably similar on education, age and number of dependents. They differed on offense type and prior adult record. Course graduates were more likely to be person offenders and less likely to

have a prior adult record. Since these two items were found to be related, the sample was stratified by grouped offense type. Tables 1 and 2 compare the matched sample and course graduates on the two variables controlled for; release year and offense type. The match between the two groups was judged sufficiently close.

Procedure

Department of Corrections automated records were searched for all men in the matched sample and for all course graduates. All new court commitments and returns for revocation were recorded.

Results

Course graduates were 30.3 years old on release, while the matched sample had an average age of 31.6. The course graduates had 10.7 years of schooling, while the matched sample had 10.2 years of schooling.

Table 1 shows release year for the course graduates and the matched sample.

Offense type for the course graduates, the matched samples and all released MSP inmates from 1972 through 1977 are presented in Table 2.

Parole revocations for the course graduates and the matched sample are presented in Table 3. The course graduates had somewhat fewer parole revocations, but this was not significant.

The course graduates were much less likely to return with a new sentence than the matched sample (Table 4).

When parole revocations and new court commitments were grouped, course graduates were significantly less likely to return to prison in Minnesota than

the matched sample (Table 5).

Discussion

While inmates at MSP who completed a "Guides to Better Living" course were significantly less likely to return to the institution than a matched sample of MSP inmates released during the same time period, this difference cannot be attributed to participation in the program. Several other factors may be involved. First, it could be expected that persons enrolling in the course were more highly motivated than inmates who chose not to participate. Secondly, the follow-up group was confined to those inmates who successfully completed the program.

Sufficient data were not provided to make further analysis possible.

TABLE 1: Release Year for Guides to Better Living Graduates and a Matched Sample

<u>Year</u>	<u>Course Graduates</u>		<u>Matched Sample</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
1972	3	1.8	9	3.1
1973	16	9.5	20	6.9
1974	61	36.1	102	35.4
1975	30	17.8	60	20.8
1976	35	20.7	60	20.8
1977	17	10.1	25	8.7
1978	7	4.1	12	4.2
Total	169	100.1	288	99.9

TABLE 2: Offense Type for Guides for Better Living
Graduates and a Matched Sample

<u>Offense Type</u>	<u>Course</u> <u>Graduates</u>		<u>Matched Sample</u>		<u>Men Released</u> <u>From MSP</u> <u>1972-77</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Homicide	15	8.9	26	9.0	165	5.5
Other Person	45	26.6	77	26.7	662	22.2
Property	75	44.4	134	46.5	1668	55.9
Drug	14	8.3	33	11.5	245	8.2
Other	20	11.8	18	6.3	245	8.2
Total	169	100.0	288	100.0	2985	100.0

TABLE 3: Parole Revocations for Guides to Better Living Graduates and a Matched Sample Since Release

<u>Revocations</u>	<u>Course Graduates</u>		<u>Matched Sample</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
0	137	81.1	212	73.6
1	20	11.8	59	20.5
2	12	7.1	17	5.9
Total	169	100.0	288	100.0

TABLE 4: New Court Commitments for Guides to Better Living Graduates and a Sample Matched Since Release

<u>New Court Commitments</u>	<u>Course Graduates</u>		<u>Matched Sample</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
0	142	84.0	198	68.8
1	23	13.6	78	27.1
2	3	1.8	12	4.2
3	1	.6	0	-.5
Total	169	100.0	288	100.1

TABLE 5: All Returns for Guides to Better Living
Graduates and a Matched Sample Since Release

<u>All Returns</u>	<u>Course Graduates</u>		<u>Matched Sample</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
0	120	71.0	154	53.5
1	29	17.2	87	30.2
2	15	8.9	35	12.2
3	4	2.4	10	3.5
4	0	-.-	2	.7
5	1	.6	0	-.-
Total	169	100.1	288	100.1

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