

Discussant Comments - “Does Parole Supervision Work?”

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* The findings of Amy Solomon’s research suggest that prisoners released to supervision based on the discretion of a parole board are slightly less likely (57%) to be arrested for a new crime over a two-year follow-up period than are prisoners released to mandatory supervision or those released unconditionally (61%) after individual differences are controlled.

* Suggests parole supervision has a very small effect on recidivism, but Solomon argues for renewed attention towards re-inventing parole.

* Efforts to re-invent parole should consider the neighborhood contexts in which prisoners are released. There is very little research on the topic but there are good reasons to expect that prisoners released into high poverty census tracts will commit a new crime at a higher rate than those released into low poverty tracts.

* Brian Kowalski (ODRC and OSU Sociology) and I collected a random sample of 1,687 prisoners who were released on discretionary parolee or released with mandatory post-release control (prc) from Ohio prisons between January-June, 1999 (see <http://www.drc.state.oh.us/web/iej.htm> for a more thorough description of the data).

* We selected one subject from each tract that a parolee or PRC was released into and weighted each case by the number of subjects that were released into each tract. The weighting is necessary because a small number of tracts are home to a large number of released prisoners.

* Below I show the results of a cross-tabulation of recidivism by neighborhood poverty to illustrate the differing outcomes for prisoners released into these varying contexts.

	Low Poverty (less than 20%)	Medium (20%-39%)	High (40% or more)
Percent re-incarcerated after one year	14.02%	17.07%	24.05%

* the results indicate a fairly strong neighborhood effect on recidivism, and suggest that prisoners released into the poorest neighborhoods may benefit the most from focused programming including parole supervision.