



The Boston Reentry Study: Lessons Learned

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Rhiana Kohl, Ph.D.

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Boston Reentry Study

Harvard University &
Massachusetts DOC Collaboration

Anthony Braga, Ph.D.

Rhiana Kohl, Ph.D.

Bruce Western, Ph.D.



Boston Reentry Study

- Longitudinal study; 5 interviews in one year
- 122 inmates released from Massachusetts State prisons to Boston neighborhoods
- Public Sector (DOC) & Academic (Harvard) Collaboration
- Surveys capture comprehensive information associated with transition prison-community
- View of life spectrum (pre, during, post prison)
- Gathered personal information from participants, family, friends, others



First of its kind: Study Retention

- Strategies used maximize participation
 - Cash incentive; \$50 per interview
 - Regular phone check-ins
 - Proxy contacts; supplementary interviews
 - Building rapport
 - Network criminal justice agencies
- Earlier studies, high attrition, mostly parolees, case studies

Sample Size and Response Rate

Interview	Completed Interviews	Failed to Interview	Response Rate (%)
Baseline (pre-release)	122	0	100.0
1 week	117	4	96
2 months	112	8	92
6 months	107	9	88
12 months	110	11	90



Boston Reentry Study

- (n=122) 15 females; 117 males
- Comparable to Boston release cohort same time frame (May 2012-Feb 2013)
- 51% black; 19% Hispanic; 30% white
- Average age 34
- Average time served 26 months
- Over 60% Supervision (parole/probation)



Complex Histories

- Education
- Trauma
- Family/Relationships
- Employment
- Housing
- Addiction
- Mental Illness

Extreme Income Poverty at Release

Money at prison exit		
	Median balance in prison account	\$384
	Median if not working	\$190
	Median if on work release	\$2000
Income source at one week after release (%)		
	Family or Friends	62
	Food stamps	42
	Employment	18
	Illegal Activity	3



Social Integration

- First week out generally quiet
- Feelings of isolation; anxiety
- Older inmates & those with mental illness & addiction least socially integrated, weak family ties

% Respondents changes in status over 1 year

	<u>1 week</u>	<u>2 mos</u>	<u>6 mos</u>	<u>1 year</u>
<i>Family Support</i>	67%	61%	57%	53%
<i>Marginal Housing</i>	38%	36%	35%	42%
<i>Public Assistance</i>	44%	75%	71%	52%
<i>Employed</i>	18%	43%	53%	54%



Supervision/Recidivism

- 20% returned to prison or jail first year out
- Supervised by parole or probation (or both) most likely recidivate
- Returned for technical violations



In Summary

- Significant histories
- Rethink separation from community via incarceration & process of transition from prison back to community
- Defining success as not just staying out of prison, but attaining basic level of material & social well-being as member of community

THANK YOU

- Men & Women incarcerated MA DOC
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- MA DOC Research Division
- Harvard Research Team

Emails: bostonreentrystudy@hks.harvard.edu

Rhiana.Kohl@state.ma.us

Western@wjh.harvard.edu

Websites:

<http://scholar.harvard.edu/brucewestern/boston-reentry-study>

www.mass.gov/doc