The Timing and Sequencing of Correctional Programming

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Overview

- 2016 BJS Visiting Fellowship
- Connects data from two sources:
  1. National criminal history data on 1,879 MN prisoners from 2005 BJS recidivism study
  2. Minnesota DOC institutional data on 1,879 offenders
- Address two main questions:
  - Does Timing Matter?
    - Does point at which participation in programming begins or ends affect recidivism outcomes?
  - Does Sequencing Matter?
    - Do certain combinations of interventions yield better (or worse) recidivism outcomes?

Background

- Research on aggregate-level effects of programming
  - Studies w/ Valerie Clark: Recidivism and Post-Release Employment
  - Main Findings
    - Warehousing increases recidivism and unemployment
      - Warehousing = idle/no participation in programming
        - More likely: Males, probation/parole violators, < confinement periods
    - Effective interventions improve employment/recidivism
      - At least one successful recidivism-reduction intervention (SRRI)
        - 12% decrease in recidivism
        - But less than half = at least one SRRI
      - At least two SRRI's
        - 26% decrease in recidivism
        - Only 18 percent = 2 or more SRRI's

Research Questions

- Warehousing = worse outcomes
- Effective interventions = better outcomes

- Can we improve the outcomes for effective interventions?
  - Earlier involvement = more programming?
  - Does more programming/greater dosage reduce recidivism?
  - Does delivering programming closer to release improve recidivism outcomes?
  - What combinations of interventions are most (least) effective?
    - Does the order in which they participate in these interventions matter?

- Current study attempts to address these questions

Description of Study Sample

- N = 1,879 prisoners released in 2005
- 11 correctional interventions included
  - Education (secondary and post-secondary degree)
  - Employment (work release and home-building program)
  - Treatment (chemical dependency and sex offender)
  - CBT, a correctional boot camp, and visitation
  - Faith-based, prisoner reentry, and MH programming
- 18% were warehoused
- 52% participated in 2 or more interventions
  - 26% = 3 or more
  - 8% = 4 or more

Demographics, Criminal History and Recidivism

- Gender
  - 85% male and 15% female
- Age at Release = 34
- # of prior arrests = 9.25
- # of prior convictions = 4.93
- 5-Year Recidivism Rates
  - Rearrest = 76%
  - Reconviction = 63%
  - Resentenced = 42%
  - Reimprisonment = 52%

Does Timing Affect Program Participation?

- Two timing measures
  1. Days from admission to first intervention
     - Average for sample = 170 days
  2. Start Timing Percentage
     - Days from admission → intervention/Total Prison Days
     - Average for sample = 47%
- Estimate ordinal logistic regression models
  - DV = Total # of interventions
  - Results
    - Earlier involvement in programming = more interventions
      - True for both timing measures

Initiation Timing and Recidivism

- When individuals begin programming—does it affect recidivism?
- Estimated Cox regression models
  - Same 2 timing measures (days and percentage)
  - 4 measures of recidivism
- Results
  - Initiation timing did not have a significant effect on any of the recidivism measures

End of Programming and Recidivism

- When individuals end programming—does it affect recidivism?
- Two timing measures
  1. Days from end of last intervention to release
     - Average for sample = 68 days
  2. End Timing Percentage
     - Average for sample = 28%
- Results
  - Days significant for only one recidivism measure
  - Percentage significant for 3 of 4 recidivism measures

Does Dosage Affect Recidivism?

- Dosage = number of confinement days involved in programming
  - 2 measures
    - Total intervention days
      - Average = 198 days
    - Dosage percent (Total intervention days/Total prison days)
      - Average = 36%
- Results
  - Both dosage measures had a significant effect on all 4 recidivism measures
    - More confinement time involved in programming → less recidivism

Combinations/Sequencing of Programming

- Sample size too small for sequencing
- Combinations of interventions
- Results
  - Combos → significantly better recidivism outcomes
    - Two interventions
      - Education and visitation
      - Visitation and work release
      - Chemical dependency and sex offender treatment
    - Three interventions
      - Sex offender treatment, education, and visitation

Summarizing Timing and Dosage

- When programming ends → greater effect on recidivism
  - Closer to release date = less recidivism
  - Could also reflect benefits of "continuum of care"
- Earlier involvement in programming → greater participation in interventions
  - More interventions/higher dosage = less recidivism
  - Initiation Timing
    - May have more direct impact on prison misconduct

Summarizing Sequencing/Combos

- Can't conclude much about sequencing (yet)
  - Sample size too small
  - Much larger sample needed to address questions related to combinations/sequencing
    - Relatively few participate in multiple interventions
- More important for higher-risk offenders?
  - Higher-risk offenders may need more than one intervention to desist
    - If multiple interventions are needed, what combinations or sequences will yield best outcomes?
      - Incorporate risk and needs assessment

Closing Thoughts

- Results are preliminary
- Individual program evaluations and meta-analyses of specific interventions are important
  - Help address the question: What works?
- But research on aggregate-level effects of correctional programming is also needed
  - Can help address the questions:
    - What works best for whom?
    - And under what circumstances?