Faculty Research Grant Report

Title: Evaluating Criminal Recidivism among Mental Health Court Defendants
PI: Karen Snedker
Amount: $1,360
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Seattle Pacific University

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1. Project Goals

This FRG supported the purchasing of administrative criminal records data on mental health court clients defendants. Specifically, the grant funded an important outcome variable to assess criminal recidivism among mental health court clients up to 4 years post court exit. This data gives greater leverage on criminal re-offending, allowing for additional follow-up data on criminal reoffending for a longer period of time than any current study on criminal recidivism from mental health courts. The main objective of this grant was to work on the quantitative portion of a larger project on mental health courts. The quantitative analysis, using this key outcome variable, is being done collaboratively with Lindsey Beach (BA; graduate student) and Katie Corcoran (PhD).

2. Major Findings

In evaluating the effectiveness of one mental health court on criminal recidivism up to 4 years post court exit we identify key predictors of recidivism. We use two modeling strategies. Logistic regression models evaluate the likelihood of arrest 2 years after finishing the court and the likelihood of a guilty charge 4 years out. Event history analysis models (Cox-proportional hazard models) evaluate the time to first re-arrest within 2 years and the time to a guilty charge within 4 years. Both estimation procedures yield similar results. Results show that defendants who were offered a dispositional continuance, increased their non-crisis treatment during court, and graduated had lower odds of criminal reoffending (both arrest and guilty charge) and longer time to re-offense (both arrest and guilty charge). These findings suggest that connecting court participants to planned mental health services, providing incentives for compliance and court completion are central to reductions in criminal re-offending.

3. Dissemination

- This variable is a key outcome being used in a paper that assesses the effectiveness of Seattle Municipal's MHC on criminal recidivism.
  - o I presented this working paper at the Deviance Seminar the University of Washington in May 2015.
  - o An article on criminal recidivism and mental health courts is in draft form and is being prepared for submission to *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, a peer-reviewed journal. I plan to submit the article by September 1, 2015.

4. Future Scholarly works

The data collection supported by this FRG represents a key part of the quantitative analysis related to a larger study by the PI on MHCs. Employing a mixed-methodological research design, the larger study integrates extensive statistical analysis of longitudinal data (based on court records, mental health services, and probation records) with a detailed ethnography (detailed field observations of trials and court proceedings, interview with MHC team) of two MHCs (Seattle Municipal and Regional). The larder study will culminate into a book length manuscript "Therapeutic Justice: Crime, Treatment Courts and Mental Illness."

5. <u>External Funding</u>

Although I would like to purse external funding (NIH or NSF) for the broader research project unfortunately I do not have the time to devote to the grant writing process. If there is grant support to assist faculty in such endeavors I would be pleased to work on writing grants for this or future projects.

6. <u>Problems</u>

There were no in completing this project.

7. <u>Student Participation</u>

This project did not involve any current SPU student participation but it is in collaboration with a graduate student at UW Sociology and also an SPU alum. It has been a tremendous experience. She is using a different data set on the same subject matter for her Master Thesis.