**Benefit-Cost Analysis of Drug Treatment Alternative to Prison Program**


**WHY WAS THE STUDY DONE?**

As a result of the War on Drugs during the 1980s, federal state, and local jail and prison populations soared. Subsequent overcrowding and then building of new cells increased criminal justice costs, leading decisionmakers to seek alternatives to prison for drug offenders. Drug treatment was considered a possible cost-effective alternative. Many evaluations of drug treatment examine prison-based facilities or treatment after release from prison, but an alternative approach is to divert drug offenders from prison into community-based treatment early in the legal process. This may be less costly to the criminal justice system because the high costs of incarceration are avoided, and most of the costs of prosecution are avoided. Although some studies examine the effect of diverting drug offenders from prison to treatment, few published articles present benefit-cost estimates of such programs.

In October 1990, the Kings County (Brooklyn, NY) District Attorney’s Office implemented the Drug Treatment Alternative to Prison (DTAP) program designed to divert nonviolent felony drug offenders from prison to community-based residential drug treatment programs. The program offers the opportunity for arrested drug offenders to defer prosecution and enter into residential treatment, which uses a therapeutic community model, for 15 to 24 months. The aim of this study was to estimate the benefits and costs to the criminal justice system of this program as an alternative to prison. A benefit-cost approach was used that allows comparison of the costs of providing the DTAP program with the program’s benefits. A distinguishing feature of benefit-cost analysis is that both costs and benefits are valued in dollar terms.

**WHAT DID THE STUDY FIND?**

The study estimated costs for DTAP program components as well as regular court processes, including prison and parole costs. Annual costs and six-year cumulative costs were computed for DTAP participants and prison comparisons. The largest unit of cost was costs associated with court processing, estimated to be $3,421 per individual. Individuals who proceed through the criminal justice system process from arrest to sentencing incur this cost. Thus, the costs were incurred by individuals in the prison comparison group, DTAP noncompleters after they dropped out of treatment, and those individuals in each group who have a subsequent arrest. The second largest unit cost was for apprehending a DTAP dropout ($1,492).

Annual benefits (i.e., cost savings) of DTAP were calculated as the difference in the annual “other criminal justice system (CJS)” costs of DTAP participants compared with prison comparisons. These other CJS costs represent all costs related to the CJS process.
that are incurred from the point of the initial arrest. For example, in Year 1, DTAP participants incurred other CJS costs of $4,775, and prison comparisons incurred other CJS costs of $48,831. Thus the benefits of DTAP in Year 1 were $44,056 ($48,831 - $4,775). Comparing DTAP benefits to DTAP costs of $25,830 in Year 1, the study found the program benefits exceed costs. Similar comparisons for Years 2 through 6 also showed DTAP benefits exceeded costs.

This study shows that the DTAP program is cost beneficial from the criminal justice system perspective; it is less costly to divert drug-abusing offenders to treatment rather than sending them to prison. Long-term perspective is important in evaluating treatment diversion, since the study found that benefits increased in each subsequent year of analysis.

Methodology. A benefit-cost approach was used to compare the benefits of providing the DTAP program with its associated costs. Program cost per participant is the sum of four cost components: pretreatment detention, screening, treatment, and program monitoring and administration. Costs were estimated by year and cumulatively over 6 years. To compare costs on an equal basis, all costs were measured in year 2001 dollars and estimated as present values discounted to Year 1 (the year of arrest and then either diversion or prison) using a 3% discount rate. DTAP benefits were defined as the difference in other justice system costs incurred by DTAP participants relative to the prison comparisons. After the benefits and costs of the program were estimated, a benefit-cost analysis was performed, with benefits and costs compared annually and cumulatively over 6 years.

Quality of Operations at Public and Private Prisons


WHAT DID THE STUDY FIND?

The study presents examinations of three types of prison misconduct: all types, violent misconduct, and drug misconduct. For all misconduct, which is considered the most reliable form for comparing prisons, analysis showed that over the course of the 36-month period studied, the private prison contributed at a higher rate to the probability that inmates would be involved in misconduct than the BOP comparison prisons. The private prison started with favorable values in the first six months of the observation period, but after that initial period, all of the values observed were worse than expected. Toward the end of the observation period, the values began to improve, but before that, the private prison was one of the worst performing low-security prisons. The separate analysis of violent misconduct suggested that this type of misconduct did not contribute to the negative performance ratings at the private prison for all types of misconduct. In fact, the private prison was the best performing prison for violent misconduct for most of the observation period. The private prison was found to have an impact on drug misconduct among inmates, however; for most of the observation period it had the highest contribution to the probability of drug misconduct of all the low-security prisons examined. Other forms of misconduct—accountability, security, property, and other—were also studied, though detailed results were not presented in this report. The private prison did worse than the comparison prisons for these types of misconduct with the exception of security misconduct, where its performance was good. In sum, the performance of the private prison was generally less favorable than the performance of the BOP comparison prisons.

Methodology. Data on all sentenced inmates incarcerated in the Bureau of Prisons between January 1999 and December 2001 (36 months) were analyzed. In January 1999, this included 87,465 inmates at 141 facilities, and by December 2001, it
Police Use of Force

Parker, K.F., MacDonald, J.M., Jennings, W.G., Alpert, G.P.  
Racial Threat, Urban Conditions and Police Use of Force: Assessing the Direct and Indirect Linkages Across Multiple Urban Areas, Justice Research and Policy, 7(1), 53–79.

Why was the Study Done?

Efforts to understand police use of force often focus on factors such as community violence or racial threat. This study examines the use of nonlethal force by police by presenting a conceptual model that incorporates the racial threat, city structural factors, and the nature of police organizations in a theoretical framework. In other words, racial threat and urban disadvantage factors are integrated with the literature on police organizations to explain the rates of police use of force. The study proposes that differences in the rates of force can be explained by examining the interconnections among the social, economic, and political characteristics of cities and the style of policing.

What did the Study Find?

In the 73 cities surveyed, on average there were 97 use of force incidents per 100,000 city residents. Fifteen percent of the cities in the sample had a black mayor. Fifty-three percent of the police departments were nationally accredited and 60% had a police union.

Among the findings were the following:

- Social disorganization/disadvantage does increase police use of force somewhat, though its effects were not as strong as expected.
- Characteristics of police organizations indirectly affect the relationships among racial threat, disorganization/disadvantage, and police use of force rates.
- Contrary to the researchers’ expectations, the presence of a black mayor does not lessen the rates of police use of force.

Overall, the findings from the model constructed in this study suggest that the relationships between racial threat and police use of force are more complex than previously found. Results indicate that police use of force is greatest in cities with the greatest amount of residential mobility and where police unions and black mayors are present. In addition, police departments that are nationally accredited have significantly lower rates of force. Finally, the findings also suggest that police use of force is a function of the structural, police organizational, and political dynamics of a city.

Methodology. The influence of city-level structural indicators on departmental use of force data was analyzed. A national survey of law enforcement agencies conducted by the Police Executive Research Forum provided the police use of force data, with a sample of 73 American cities with a population of 100,000 or more being chosen. The study also used population statistics from the 1990 Bureau of Census and from the International City Managers Association. The rate of police use of force incidents was calculated by dividing the number of incidents of force (in agencies that report all uses of nonlethal force) by the resident population of the agency. A theoretical model that included indicators of social and economic characteristics of urban cities was constructed. The indicators included black composition, urban disadvantage, racial inequality, residential mobility, political climate, and police organization. Structural equation models of the relationships between racial threat, social disorganization/disadvantage, and police use of force were estimated, controlling for the mediating influence of the police organization. These models were used so that the study could test the conceptual model and simultaneously estimate the direct and indirect effects of racial threat and structural indicators of social disorganization on police use of force when accounting for potential mediating influences of political climate and police organizational factors.
ACCU RACY OF ARRESTEES’ SELF-REPORTS OF CRIMINAL HISTORIES


WHY WAS THE STUDY DONE?

A continuing problem in criminology and sociology is assessing the accuracy of a respondent’s self-reports. Erroneous self-report of sensitive behavior has been linked to deception, memory problems, and faulty measures. Many studies have documented the degree of agreement between self-reported criminal or delinquent behavior and an external measure or “gold standard,” such as official criminal justice records. Results show low to moderate levels of agreement, but few studies have addressed the various types and magnitudes of inaccuracy, nor the relative importance of these factors in a given study. This article focuses primarily upon the accuracy of offender self-reports regarding the number and type of contacts with the criminal justice system.

WHAT DID THE STUDY FIND?

A key finding of this research was that the accuracy of arrestee self-reports compared to official criminal histories varied. For all arrestees in the study, a majority were precisely accurate for recent arrests, probation episodes, prison sentences, and time in prison. Overall respondents with prior criminal histories do not appear to be systematically concealing their criminal justice involvement, with the exception of probation, where almost half of respondents with an official record failed to disclose it. Overdisclosure and overreporting constituted a surprisingly large source of discrepancy between self-reports and the official record, especially for information on arrest recency, number of prison sentences, and time spent in prison or jail. Underreporting was also prevalent, being especially common for information about total arrests and total jail episodes. While arrestee self-reports may lack the precision and accuracy that criminal justice practitioners may prefer, the relatively high proportions of overdisclosers and overreporters suggest that official criminal justice records do not form a complete picture of the official criminal history of a substantial number of arrestees.

Methodology. The data used in this study were obtained during the Policing Project, a research study conducted in 1999 as a supplement to research for the Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (ADAM) program. Policing Project researchers interviewed arrested individuals for their perceptions of police activity. First ADAM and Policing Project data files were matched and merged. Next, arrest-related and other identifying data were used to obtain defendant and court processing information from the New York City Criminal Justice Agency, and official criminal record information from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services. The project staff obtained criminal events by creating an anonymous research data set, and they were able to compute the number of arrests, convictions, jail, prison, and probation terms for specific offenses and over different time periods. Seven measures of accuracy comparing self-reports with official records were created. The current study compared official criminal records with self-reports about various details of that person’s criminal history, specifically, the recency of arrests or imprisonment, the exact number of times arrested or imprisoned, and the length of time incarcerated.