

Discussant Comments:

“Entries and Exits: Contrasting Pathways to Community Reentry”

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Minnesota Exits and Entries

- Comparative study of re-entry upon exiting foster care, mental health treatment, chemical health treatment, armed forces, jails, and the prison system.
- One focus is on cross-cutting issues common to each population: work, education, housing, family life, emotional adjustment, community participation.
- The other is on issues unique to each: i.e., combat experiences for veterans or more extensive drug use questions for those in treatment.
- Multi-method: qualitative informs quantitative
- This is an interesting concept and an important service to the state of Minnesota.

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- Key issue for execution of study:
- Following high-risk populations is very difficult, attrition likely.
- Cooperation of agencies is important, but skilled and empathetic staff and interviewers who are comfortable in contexts that are sometimes dangerous is most crucial.

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- Key issue with conceptual framing:
- Showing that processes (i.e., family, work, etc.) are general and explain exits from diverse institutions is interesting and important, but will new processes/mechanisms be examined that extend knowledge of successful re-entry beyond those we know about?
- Similarly, will there be new mechanisms examined that are specific to each subgroup?

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- Key issue for policy:
- Scholars and practitioners are more easily convinced than politicians and the general public when results suggest that tax money should be spent on programs rather than punishments, especially when it comes to correctional (juvenile, jail, and prison) populations.
- Punishment is expensive and programs save states money, but the general public is easily manipulated by tough on crime approaches. Politicians are sensitive to this.
- At-risk populations have diverse family forms and relationships, but the general public is polarized in debates over the meaning of family and marriage and the rights that go with it. This may impede policies aimed at strengthening relationships.
- Regardless, this project will produce valuable information. We wish you good luck and look forward to having you back to present your results.