

# ***PROCEDURAL JUSTICE IN A STATE CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM***

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# Background

Pennsylvania's Department of Correction

- Reinforcing Positive Behavior (RPB) (2006)
- Two-hour staff-focused training about interactions with inmates

# Reinforcing Positive Behavior

Results (2008-2010)

- Correctional officers less concerned with showing respect; minimized impact of their behavior on inmate rehabilitation
- Treatment and Clerical staff recognized their behavior impacted treatment outcomes; actions could make prison a more positive place

# Procedural Justice

Winter 2018

- New focus on **inmates' experiences and interactions** with prison staff
  - Correctional Officers, Treatment Staff, Counselors, & Unit Managers
- Establish a preliminary understanding about inmates' perceptions of procedural justice and fairness occurring in the correctional system

# Method

Inclusion criteria for individual inmates was based on the following criteria:

- 1) served in the general population of the prison,
- 2) actively serving within the institution for at least six months prior to the study, and
- 3) assessed at a 6<sup>th</sup> grade reading level or higher

Approximately 150-170 inmates were selected using a Probability Sampling technique (simple random sample) at each of the 11 institutions

# Method (cont...)

Sample - State correctional databases were used to identify inmates to be sampled within the 11 institutions

Variable	Response Category	n	mean	min	max
Type	<i>male</i>	9			
	<i>female</i>	2			
Job Category (female)	<i>correctional officers</i>	925	21.8%	5.3%	56.2%
	<i>treatment staff</i>	147	69.7%	46.2%	87.5%
	<i>counselors</i>	126	55.6%	26.3%	100%
	<i>unit managers</i>	33	40.9%	0%	75.0%
Staff Characterisitics	<i>female</i>	1,231	22.8%	8.3%	58.3%

# Method (cont...)

A total of 1,747 inmates were selected for inclusion in this study

Each inmate received a paper copy of a Prison Culture Questionnaire (PCQ), a return envelop, and instructions to return the completed survey to assigned prison staff

Fully or partially completed surveys were returned by 787 inmates

Overall response rate of 45.2 percent

# Results (cont...)

Table 2: Inmate Demographic and Personal Characteristics (n=703).

Variable	Response Category	n	%	median	SD	Min	Max
Demographic/Personal Background							
sex	<i>male</i>	651	82.7				
race	<i>White</i>	308	39.1				
	<i>Black</i>	296	37.6				
	<i>Hispanic</i>	41	5.2				
age	<i>years</i>	653		41.0	12.4	21	77
mental health status	<i>none/not active</i>	483	74.0				
	<i>mild/severe</i>	170	26.0				
Incarceration Information							
life sentence	<i>yes</i>	103	15.8				
time in current prison	<i>months</i>	653		21.0	46.7	6	297
crime type	<i>violent crime</i>	431	54.8				
	<i>property crime</i>	79	10.0				
	<i>drug crime</i>	76	9.7				
How many female prison staff do you interact with daily?		668		4.1	4.1	0	40



# Instrument

A Prison Culture Questionnaire (PCQ) was developed with statements requiring an ordinal type response (strongly disagree to strongly agree)

➤ [staff are] fair, respectful, helpful, etc.

Analyses shown here will focus on inmates' responses to statements about perceptions of **Correctional Officers**

# Results (cont...)

Table 3: Male Inmates' Perceptions about Experiences with Correctional Officers.						
			1	2	3	
		All Males	White	Black	Hispanic	
variable	response category	n=651	n=240	n=256	n=38	<b>sign.</b>
treat me fairly	agree/strongly agree	50.7%	61.3%	42.8%	36.8%	1>2***,3**
are polite when talking to me	agree/strongly agree	38.3%	44.8%	33.2%	31.6%	1>2**
have a good working relationship with inmates	agree/strongly agree	27.3%	35.3%	20.0%	26.3%	1>2***
have earned my respect	agree/strongly agree	35.0%	40.6%	29.6%	36.8%	1>2*
are helpful to me	agree/strongly agree	34.1%	42.1%	27.5%	28.9%	1>2**
are concerned about my physical safety	agree/strongly agree	37.5%	45.0%	30.9%	34.2%	1>2**
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001						
Correctional Officer Satisfaction Scale Cronbach's alpha		.894				

# Results (cont...)

Table 4: Regression Analyses of Satisfaction with Correctional Officers while Controlling for Institutional and Inmate Characteristics.

	White			Black & Hispanic		
	B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$
<b>Institutional Characteristics</b>						
percent female COs	0.04	0.02	0.15	-0.01	0.03	-0.1
percent female counselors	-0.06	0.02	-0.25**	0.06	0.02	0.23*
number females interacting with daily	0.22	0.11	0.14+	0.10	0.09	0.07
<b>Inmate Characteristics</b>						
age	0.07	0.03	0.17*	0.13	0.03	0.26***
months at current prison	0.01	0.01	0.04	-0.00	0.01	-0.02
MH status	-2.10	0.79	-0.18**	-0.95	1.01	-0.06
violent crime	-1.50	0.91	-0.14	0.07	0.85	0.01
property crime	-3.70	1.13	-0.26**	-0.66	1.52	-0.03
R <sup>2</sup>		.161			.105	
F statistic		4.51***			3.42***	
df		8, 196			8, 241	

B=unstandardized coefficient; SE=standard error;  $\beta$ =standardized coefficient; df = degrees of freedom

+ p < .10, \* p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001

# Conclusion

Understanding inmates' perceptions is a critical first step for implementing meaningful change and reform

Negative perceptions of their prison environment (poor working relationship, not helpful, disrespect, etc.) may lead inmates to acting out, including engaging in aggressive and violent behaviors

Understanding situations inmates perceive as undesirable may facilitate discussion among prison administrators about solutions to remedy problems in the prisons

Also, addressing inmates' concerns may lead to reducing the severity and number of incidents of institution violence

# THANK YOU

*Questions ???*

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