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Adjustment Patterns and Programming Needs of Long-Term Inmates

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Adjustment Patterns and Programming Needs of Long-Term Inmates

Background

The Federal sentencing guidelines and other recent sentencing laws are expected to cause an increase in both the size of the Federal inmate population and the lengths of stay of individual inmates. In addition, because of the changing nature of the crimes for which people are receiving lengthy sentences (i.e., drug related crimes), a shift in the demographic and criminal history characteristics of long-term inmates is anticipated. The Bureau is therefore initiating a study to explore the adjustment patterns and programming needs of current and future long-term Federal inmates.

In the past, it was believed that long-term inmates served as a calming and stabilizing influence in correctional institutions. It seemed that inmates who expected to be spending a significant portion of their future incarcerated in an institution had a vested interest in perpetuating a non-volatile, stable living environment since the prison was, in fact, to be their "home." Conversely, it was felt that shorter-term inmates lacked this incentive since they could view their term in prison as more of a temporary visit that did not require them to establish "residence," so to speak. Furthermore, long-termers of the past often were serving sentences for very different types of crimes than the shorter-term inmates — crimes that did not necessarily indicate a propensity to disruptiveness.

Now, however, with the changing composition, sentence lengths, and size of the inmate population, it is reasonable to question whether inmates with longer sentences will continue to be seen as a stabilizing influence in the prison. Additionally, research indicates a possible need for the development of "career planning" programs for long-term inmates whose programming needs and concerns may be quite different from those of inmates with shorter sentences.

Such a prison "career plan" might offer inmates an individually tailored, structured program path to follow during their incarceration to achieve certain series of goals, prepare for their eventual release, and, possibly, earn a sense of accomplishment for their time in prison. It is hoped that the institutions would also benefit from such a program as inmates who receive certain types of training might be able to "repay" the institution by training others in turn, or by serving productively in positions that require extensive training as a prerequisite. Currently, most prison program opportunities are for relatively short spans of time with the aim of keeping inmates busy and preparing them for release in the not too distant future. We wish to examine whether, through planning and focused program evaluations, the incarceration of long-term inmates can be made more beneficial for them and more productive for the institution and society.

The Proposed Study

In order to examine the issue of career planning for Federal long-term inmates more closely, we propose a prospective study of the impact of a career planning program for a sample of long-termers.

A major issue that will need to be resolved is the definition of a long-term inmate. We suspect that, if we look at the 5 to 10 percent of the population serving the longest sentences today as compared with that proportion of the population 10 years ago, the sentences of those today will be much longer. If this is true, within the social ecology of the prison the meaning of long term may be changing. We will need to exercise caution in projecting what cut-off sentence lengths will best serve as our definition of long term for the proposed study.

Our next step will be to create demographic, criminal history, and offense profiles for long- and short-termers for three different admissions cohorts: one cohort of inmates admitted in 1981, one of "new law" inmates admitted in 1988 who were sentenced under the Comprehensive Crime Control Act (CCCA), and the third of "old law" inmates admitted in 1988 whose crimes occurred before the CCCA was effective. We believe it is necessary to compare inmates sentenced under the "new law" with those sentenced under the "old law" to determine whether a new type of inmate (e.g., younger, more violent, more drug-involved) is entering the system due to the impact of the CCCA. With these profiles, we will investigate how inmates incarcerated in 1981 differ from those sentenced in 1988, and how the two 1988 cohorts compare. We expect that such comparisons may suggest whether differences among the cohorts are due to the effects of the CCCA or to general shifts in prisoner populations. We will examine whether the characteristics of long-termers as a group are changing over time (for example, are current long-termers younger, more predatory, more likely to have extensive criminal and institutional histories, etc., than long-termers were in the past, as some researchers have suggested).

We will then conduct interviews with a sample of inmates from the 1981 cohort — long-termers who are still in the Bureau — to gain insight into their adjustment process, their aims, and their views about what components might be valuable in a long-term inmate career planning program. By working closely with case-management and inmate programs staff, we will then develop a "career planning" pilot program based on the profile findings, our interviews with inmates, and input from case managers and others in the field.

It is, of course, difficult to predict the characteristics of the pilot program before proceeding with the initial stages of data collection. However, it is possible that characteristics of the program might include partial or complete separation of long-termers from short-termers, assignment of an institutional career planning coordinator to oversee the development and implementation of individual career plans,

and career planning conducted for stages of prison career. It is not clear whether the pilot program would require additional program resources or merely a concerted effort to coordinate resources that already are available.

Once the pilot test is underway, we will study its impact on both "new law" and "old law" long-termers by examining institutional adjustment measures such as disciplinary actions, education program participation, medical services used, and psychological adjustment measures. We will compare the adjustment measures of these inmates with those of long-term inmates (CCCA and non-CCCA) who do not participate in the pilot program in order to evaluate the program's effectiveness. We can also compare these adjustment measures to those of our 1988 cohorts, to determine whether our pilot program inmates adjust differently than did the inmates in our 1988 groups. We may also wish to collect adjustment information on short-term inmates, enabling us to compare the adjustment patterns of long-termers versus short-termers.

Attached are several tables with information concerning the expected length of stay, security level, age, and offense categories of Federal inmates.

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Table 1. Number and Percent of BOP Inmates With Varying Lengths of Stay – All Inmates

Expected Length of Stay (in Years)	Number	Percent
0 - 5	27,423	64.6
5 - 10	10,218	24.0
10 - 15	2,554	6.0
15 - 20	1,165	2.7
20 - 25	557	1.3
25 - 30	332	0.8
30 plus	254	0.6
Total	42,503	100.0

Table 2. Number and Percent of BOP Inmates With Varying Lengths of Stay – CCCA Inmates

Expected Length of Stay (in Years)	Number	Percent
0 - 5	9,270	74.5
5 - 10	2,125	17.0
10 - 15	564	4.5
15 - 20	317	2.5
20 - 25	94	0.8
25 - 30	73	0.6
30 plus	38	0.3
Total	12,481	100.0

Table 3. Number and Percent of BOP Inmates With Varying Lengths of Stay – Non-CCCA Inmates

Expected Length of Stay (in Years)	Number	Percent
0 - 5	18,153	60.5
5 - 10	8,093	27.0
10 - 15	1,990	6.6
15 - 20	848	2.8
20 - 25	463	1.5
25 - 30	259	0.9
30 plus	216	0.7
Total	30,022	100.0

Table 4. Average inmate age at different stages of prison career, for varying "expected lengths of stay" – All inmates

Expected length of stay (in years)	Percent of term already served	Average age	N
0 - 5	< 25	36	4,129
0 - 5	25 - 49	36	6,981
0 - 5	50 - 74	36	7,875
0 - 5	75 +	37	8,501
6 - 10	< 25	36	2,978
6 - 10	25 - 49	38	3,123
6 - 10	50 - 74	40	2,129
6 - 10	75 +	40	2,043
10 +	< 25	37	2,573
10 +	25 - 49	41	1,298
10 +	50 - 74	42	587
10 +	75 +	42	422

Table 5. Average inmate age at different stages of prison career, for varying "expected lengths of stay" – CCCA inmates

Expected length of stay (in years)	Percent of term already served	Average age	N
0 - 5	< 25	34	2,508
0 - 5	25 - 49	34	3,313
0 - 5	50 - 74	32	2,081
0 - 5	75 +	31	1,518
6 - 10	< 25	35	1,895
6 - 10	25 - 49	35	268
6 - 10	50 - 74	—	—
6 - 10	75 +	—	—
10 +	< 25	35	1,098
10 +	25 - 49	—	—
10 +	50 - 74	—	—
10 +	75 +	—	—

Table 6. Average inmate age at different stages of prison career, for varying "expected lengths of stay" – Non-CCCA inmates

Expected length of stay (in years)	Percent of term already served	Average age	N
0 - 5	< 25	40	1,621
0 - 5	25 - 49	38	3,668
0 - 5	50 - 74	38	5,794
0 - 5	75 +	38	6,983
6 - 10	< 25	38	1,083
6 - 10	25 - 49	38	2,855
6 - 10	50 - 74	40	2,129
6 - 10	75 +	40	2,043
10 +	< 25	39	1,475
10 +	25 - 49	41	1,298
10 +	50 - 74	42	587
10 +	75 +	42	422

Table 7. Average security level classification at different stages of prison career, for varying "expected lengths of stay" – All inmates

Expected length of stay (in years)	Percent of term already served	Average security level	N
0 - 5	< 25	1.5	3,770
0 - 5	25 - 49	1.7	6,400
0 - 5	50 - 74	1.7	7,210
0 - 5	75 +	1.6	7,658
6 - 10	< 25	2.6	2,961
6 - 10	25 - 49	2.6	3,115
6 - 10	50 - 74	2.7	2,128
6 - 10	75 +	2.8	2,010
10 +	< 25	3.6	2,563
10 +	25 - 49	3.9	1,296
10 +	50 - 74	4.0	584
10 +	75 +	3.7	417

Table 8. Average security level classification at different stages of prison career, for varying "expected lengths of stay" – CCCA inmates

Expected length of stay (in years)	Percent of term already served	Average security level	N
0 - 5	< 25	1.5	2,258
0 - 5	25 - 49	1.7	2,882
0 - 5	50 - 74	1.6	1,596
0 - 5	75 +	1.5	1,024
6 - 10	< 25	2.6	1,881
6 - 10	25 - 49	2.3	267
6 - 10	50 - 74	-	-
6 - 10	75 +	-	-
10 +	< 25	3.4	1,088
10 +	25 - 49	-	-
10 +	50 - 74	-	-
10 +	75 +	-	-

Table 9. Average security level classification at different stages of prison career, for varying "expected lengths of stay" – Non-CCCA inmates

Expected length of stay (in years)	Percent of term already served	Average security level	N
0 - 5	< 25	1.4	1,512
0 - 5	25 - 49	1.6	3,518
0 - 5	50 - 74	1.7	5,614
0 - 5	75 +	1.7	6,634
6 - 10	< 25	2.6	1,080
6 - 10	25 - 49	2.6	2,848
6 - 10	50 - 74	2.7	2,128
6 - 10	75 +	2.8	2,010
10 +	< 25	3.7	1,475
10 +	25 - 49	3.9	1,296
10 +	50 - 74	4.0	584
10 +	75 +	3.7	417

Table 10. Percentage of inmates falling into various length of stay categories for several offense categories – all inmates

Offense	Expected Length of Stay (in Years)			N
	0 to 5	6 to 10	> 10	
Drug, liquor	65.39	26.16	8.46	20,625
Firearms, explosives	68.76	22.63	8.61	1,812
Violent	36.76	25.31	37.93	1,284
Property	80.91	13.53	5.56	3,222
White collar	89.08	9.33	1.59	1,007
Court, corrections	81.52	13.16	5.32	395
Immigration	98.76	1.10	0.14	1,457
Extortion, fraud	88.92	8.67	2.40	3,078
Sex offenses	45.22	36.52	18.26	230
National security	67.35	22.45	10.20	49
Robbery	36.08	40.60	23.32	5,421
DC offenses	33.91	30.95	35.14	1,457
Miscellaneous	60.94	22.41	16.65	2,691
N	27,433	10,345	4,950	42,728
Percent of total	64.20	24.21	11.58	100.00

Table 11. Percentage of inmates falling into various length of stay categories for several offense categories – CCCA inmates

Offense	Expected Length of Stay (in Years)			N
	0 to 5	6 to 10	> 10	
Drug, liquor	64.52	24.30	11.17	7,797
Firearms, explosives	71.91	18.73	9.36	534
Violent	73.03	12.45	14.52	241
Property	95.34	2.91	1.75	687
White collar	98.82	1.18	0.00	340
Court, corrections	96.80	3.20	0.00	125
Immigration	100.00	0.00	0.00	1,233
Extortion, fraud	97.80	1.98	0.22	454
Sex offenses	78.57	17.86	3.57	28
National security	87.50	6.25	6.25	16
Robbery	68.27	17.90	13.83	810
DC offenses	100.00	0.00	0.00	5
Miscellaneous	80.76	7.45	11.79	738
N	9,570	2,268	1,170	13,008
Percent of total	73.57	17.44	8.99	100.00

Table 12. Percentage of inmates falling into various length of stay categories for several offense categories – Non-CCCA inmates

Offense	Expected Length of Stay (in Years)			N
	0 to 5	6 to 10	> 10	
Drug, liquor	65.91	27.28	6.81	12,828
Firearms, explosives	67.45	24.26	8.29	1,278
Violent	28.38	28.28	43.34	1,043
Property	77.00	16.41	6.59	2,535
White collar	84.11	13.49	2.40	677
Court, corrections	74.44	17.78	7.78	270
Immigration	91.96	7.14	0.89	224
Extortion, fraud	87.39	9.83	2.78	2,624
Sex offenses	40.59	39.11	20.30	202
National security	57.58	30.30	12.12	33
Robbery	30.43	44.59	24.98	4,611
DC offenses	33.68	31.06	35.26	1,452
Miscellaneous	53.46	28.06	18.48	1,953
N	17,863	8,077	3,780	29,720
Percent of total	60.10	27.18	12.72	100.00