

Uncovering the predictors of correctional officers' attitudes and behaviors: a me...

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Topic: Uncovering the Predictors of Correctional Officers' Attitudes and Behaviors: A meta- analysis By: Jeff Maahs and Travis Pratt Name & Section Number of Course: Instructor's Name: Date: I chose to review the article, "Uncovering the Predictors of Correctional Officers' Attitudes and Behaviors: A Meta-Analysis"(Maahs & Pratt, 2001), for the purposes of this assignment. This article is relevant to me as I am interested in corrections and police work. The purpose of this study was to examine the published research regarding corrections officers and their attitudes towards their jobs' satisfaction and dissatisfaction and the correction officers' attitudes about punishment or rehabilitation for prisoners. Maahs and Pratt justified the importance of their work in two ways: First, they agreed with Bowker in stating, " Correctional officers bear the primary responsibility for the successful control and treatment of inmates" (Maahs & Pratt, 2001, p. 13). Secondly, the current corrections officers' demographics have changed from an all-white male workforce to a diversified and professionalized workforce. Maahs and Pratt wanted to see what changes the demographics made in the correctional officers' attitudes and actions towards the inmates. The authors used meta-analysis to synthesize the data of three decades of research of correctional officers. The study computed mean effect size estimates for three categories of predictor variable (importation, deprivation, and management) across two dependent variables (negative job attitudes and rehabilitation orientation). The analysis combined quantitative synthesis research methodology with the results of 19 empirical studies. This spanned 6, 427 cases and resulted in two threads of information; namely studies that specified the predictors of correctional officers': 1) Job satisfaction or

dissatisfaction, intentions to quit, and burnout were combined as predictors of negative job attitudes, and 2) Treatment orientation, custody orientation, and punitiveness were combined as predictors of attitudes toward treatment [of inmates] (Maahs & Pratt, 2001, p. 15). The conclusions of the research resulted in the following findings; Table 1 revealed that age, race, education, and gender are inversely related to job satisfaction. There was more job dissatisfaction reported among females, non-whites, younger officers and officers with more education than from older white-male officers. Table 2 findings revealed corrections officers who perceive their job as more dangerous, those that face role conflict, or those who feel their supervisors are less supportive have more job burnout and are more likely to quit or report job dissatisfaction. The attitude of higher management toward the officers had a significant bearing on their personal job satisfaction. The third conclusion brought by this research was that the results of the previous research gleaned that the previous findings have a weak explanatory power. This suggests that researchers have focused on predictors that are not very important in predicting the officers' attitudes and behaviors or a correctional officers' job may not be a suitable subject for research. The authors instead suggest qualitative or ethnographic research as a better tool for studying correctional officers and others working in prisons. The final conclusions imply that stereotypical correctional officers, white-male and minorities, find more job satisfaction and have a much better understanding of the inmate and the work environment. These officers reported more favorable attitudes towards the inmates, rehabilitation and treatment for the inmates, rather than punitive and continual incarceration for the inmates. The belief that

women and minorities would be better suited to corrections work in terms of empathy and correctional intervention was found to be true, especially in terms of race. Adding women and minorities to the prison staff decreased the culture gap between the officers and inmates, and “normalized” the population to mimic the normal environment of the outside world. Increased education of the correction officers helped to standardize the treatment of the inmates, and helped liberalize the attitude of the officers towards rehabilitation and treatment for the inmates. The cost of incarceration is a growing concern for lawmakers, citizens, and taxpayers. While the lawmakers and taxpayers are concerned about the monetary costs, family and friends of inmates are more concerned about the waste of time and life for the prisoner. Although there are education incentives while incarcerated, nothing can take the place of a positive role model in the home, a parent that is present for his/her children, a bread winner in the community, and a citizen of the world. Incarceration takes resources and time, both of which are precious commodities. If there can be a way for rehabilitation, re-training, addiction treatment and a positive return to the community for the inmate, then the corrections officer will need to embrace new roles of mentoring, training, encouraging and supporting the prisoners instead of just correction and control, and warehousing until the prisoner serves the sentence or dies, whichever comes first.