An Evaluation of Hawaii Huikahi Reentry Circles & 12 Week Cognitive Class

Janet T. Davidson, Ph. D.
Professor, Criminology and Criminal Justice
Chaminade University of Honolulu
Email: jdavidso@chaminade.edu

October 3, 2016

Major Findings

Huikahi Circle Participants Highlights:

- Participants were largely male (72.4%); Hawaiian/part Hawaiian (51.7%) or Caucasian (27.6%).
- The average participant was 37.3 years old.
- The average participant had a criminal history that included 13 arrests for any severity and 5 convictions for criminal offenses.
- The three-year recidivism rate for participants was 43.1%, which included any rearrest within a three year period, post-prison release. Arrests were most likely to be for:
    - Parole revocation – 40% of the rearrests
    - Felony criminal arrest – 24% of the rearrests
- Participants in attendance at the circle, in addition to the inmate, were most likely to be a parental figure (55.2% of the circles), other family (63.8% of the circles), and other non-family members (60.3% of the circles).
- Recidivism rates were lower for inmates who had others included at the circles (28.6% recidivated in this group), and recidivism rates decreased as the number of attendees increased ($r = -.121$, p>.05).
- Inmate participants and outside participants at the circles were overwhelming positive about their experience, the impact on them personally, feelings of reconciliation and forgiveness, and their hope for a positive future and release for the inmate.

Huikahi Circle Participants versus Control Group & State Releases Highlights:

- The control group was significantly more likely to be female (43.3%) than the Huikahi participants (27.6%).
- There were no significant differences in ethnic breakdown of the control versus Huikahi participants.
- The average age of the control group was 35.4 years old compared to 37.3 for the Huikahi participants. This difference is not significant.
- There were no significant differences in overall criminal history between the Huikahi and control group, although the control group did demonstrate fewer average felony arrests and convictions and slightly more misdemeanor arrests and convictions than the Huikahi participants.

- The control group demonstrated statistically significantly higher recidivism rates than the Huikahi participants group (58.3% compared to 43.1%, t=-1.660, p < .05).
- The state parole release group demonstrated substantively higher recidivism rates than the Huikahi participants (56.4% compared to 43.1%).
- Of the rearrests within 3 years of release from prison, the control had more felony and misdemeanor criminal arrests than the Huikahi participants.
- Of the rearrests within 3 years of release from prison, the state release group had more parole revocations and slightly fewer criminal rearrests and criminal contempt of court arrests.

12 Week Cognitive Course (COG) Participant Highlights:

- The COG course participants were largely male (73.2%), Hawaiian/part-Hawaiian (50.7%) and Caucasian (29.6%). The average age of this group was 38.2 years old.
- The COG participants had an overall average of 4.7 felony arrests, 4.4 misdemeanor arrests, and 5 convictions.
- The recidivism rate for the COG group was 49.3%, compared to 56.4% for state parole releases.
- COG participants were more likely to be rearrested for a felony or misdemeanor/petty misdemeanor arrest and less likely for a parole revocation and criminal contempt of court than state releases.

Introduction – Restorative Justice/Reentry Circles

The United States correctional system has been under a spotlight recently. Many people are beginning to realize that our system is expensive, overcrowded, and ineffective. The current system of mass incarceration is due, in large part, to reactionary and punitive policies that began in the 1970s. The number of people in prison in this country has increased by over 500% over the past 40 years[1]. While this system of mass incarceration pulls ever more bodies into the system, it is no more effective at reducing recidivism than in the past. Indeed, roughly 75% of people who leave prison will be rearrested within five years of release[2]. These numbers are hardly indicative of success. Thus, there exists an acknowledgement that we must do more to enhance public safety, and we must pay attention to the harm done to the people in the system, the negative impact on public safety, and what it might take to enhance positive reintegration.

Restorative justice modalities have long been recognized as a viable alternative to the traditional criminal justice processing. Research has generally been supportive of this alternative type, but agencies have largely been reluctant to embrace restorative justice on a larger scale. Again, owing to mainly punitive responses of the past few decades, restorative justice practices are often viewed as too soft on crime and/or as a means to coddling offenders. However, a research base is being established, one that firmly counters these contentions[3]. The current evaluation looks at how restorative justice participants in two Hawaii-based programs performed after treatment. The two specific programs under evaluation in this study are the Huikahi reentry circles and the 12 week cognitive class. Both of these interventions were held with inmates in prison facilities in Hawaii, prior to their release from prison.

The Huikahi reentry circles ask offenders to look forward by setting personal goals[4]. These goals include employment, housing, positive relationships with loved ones, physical and emotional health, and maintaining a clean and sober lifestyle. However, the primary objective of the reentry circle is to have offenders take responsibility for their lives, their choices, and healing for their loved ones and the community. Each goal is specific to the individual offender. Offenders identify strengths that will help them achieve their goals while also making amends for their past criminal behavior. This evaluation will evaluate whether this process seems to have made an impact on offender behavior by measuring their post-prison criminal adjustment.

[1] http://www.sentencingproject.org/criminal-justice-facts/

[2] http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/mschpprts05.pdf

[3] http://www.crimesolutions.gov/advsearch.aspx

[4] Walker, Lorenn. 2010. "You're gonna make it: Reentry Planning at a Hawai'i Women's Prison" in Van Wormer, K. *Working with Female Offenders: A Gender-Sensitive Approach*. Pgs. 178-182. Wiley: New Jersey.

The 12 week cognitive class is intended to be a solution-focused approach to conflict and wrongdoing. The classes meet for 12 weeks via 2 hour sessions for a total of 24 intervention hours. Classes can include up to 30 incarcerated persons, and has 2-3 professional facilitators who have been trained in restorative justice practices and solution focused brief therapy. The course provides interactive learning experiences to strengthen cognitive and emotional intelligence in an effort to increase criminal desistance. Mindfulness, listening, and forgiveness are key areas covered.

The course is held in a circle and applies solution-focused brief therapy principles where individuals are considered the best experts of their own lives, recognizes their strengths, and helps them identify and strategize their goals. Modified Reentry Circles were developed for the course and instead of loved ones supporting the person having the circle, the other course participants do. About 10 modified circles are provided throughout the 12 week course. Written plans are provided for the 10 people who have a Modified Circle. Participants are provided a number of inspiring books like *Man's Search for Meaning, The Glass Castle, I am Malala, I know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, *Man Child in a Promised Land,* and many others to keep throughout the course. The last day of the course includes respected community members including judges participating in a completion circle with the imprisoned people providing a half hour long program of either a skit or presentation on anything that they learned in the course. The participants have regularly chosen to do their final presentations on forgiveness.

Methodology

This study evaluates the post-prison behavior of 71 inmates who took part in a 12 week restorative justice cognitive course, 58 inmates who took part in a Huikahi Reentry Circle, and 60 inmates who wanted to take part in a Huikahi Reentry Circle but were unable to do so (these inmates serve as a control group in this study). A list of all inmates who have participated since 2005 was provided to the researcher. The researcher then found the State Identification Number (SID) for each participant, as well as the prison release date. The final sample in this study includes all inmates who were adults at the time of the interventions. Access to the juvenile justice system and related statistics is heavily restricted and we are also unable to compare any recidivism numbers for the juveniles to state outcomes. In addition, any inmates who had not yet been released from prison or who did not have a three year follow-up time were excluded from this study.

The three year window for follow-up was important for this study as recidivism was measured via any new arrest within 36 months post-prison release. Arrest data were pulled from the Attorney General's Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) and date of prison release was pulled from the Hawaii Department of Public Safety. Demographic data (such as gender, ethnicity, and age) were pulled from both the CJIS and Department of Public Safety databases. The conceptualization and operationalization of recidivism routinely used by the state of Hawai'i to assess recidivism rates for offenders released from prison was also used in this study (any new arrest within 36 months post-prison release). Using the same measure here allowed us to compare outcomes for these inmates to those of parolees released statewide.

A standardized survey which included measures of healing and overall satisfaction for the incarcerated participant and for their loved ones and other support who also participated in the circles was administered at each circle. Responses to those surveys are also included in this analysis.

Findings

Huikahi Circle Participants

Figures 1 and 2 and Table 1 display background and other demographic information related to the Huikahi Reentry Circle participants. Almost three-quarters of the participants were male, 72.4%. The largest ethnic group represented (as reported by the Department of Public Safety) was Hawaiian/part-Hawaiian, representing over half of the sample at 51.7%. Caucasians made up another large percentage at 27.6%, followed by Filipino at 9.0%. The rest of the sample was categorized as 'other' given their relatively small numbers, but included Japanese, Black, Samoan, American Indian, Hispanic, and Other. The average age of the participants was 37.3 with a standard deviation of 9 years. This group has, on average, 6 felony arrests, 3 misdemeanor arrests, 13 arrests of all severity levels, and almost 5 convictions.
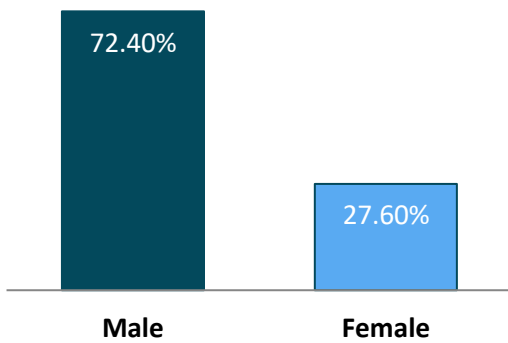
Figure 1: Gender of Huikahi Participants

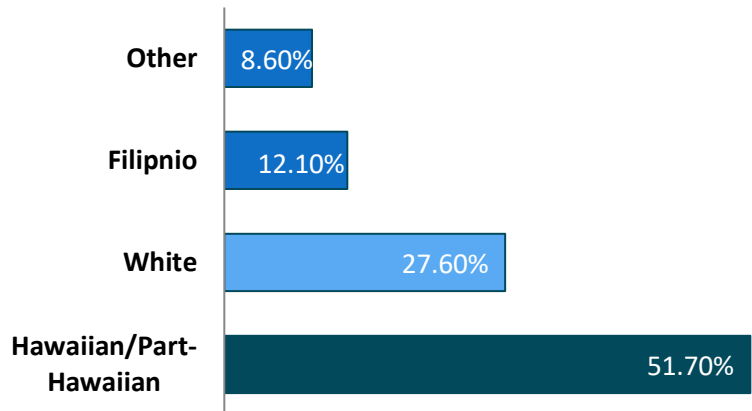Figure 2: Ethnicity of Huikahi Participants

Table 1: Criminal History of Huikahi Participants

	Range	Average	Standard Deviation
Total Felony Arrests	43	6.08	9.88
Total Felony Convictions	25	2.38	4.28
Total Felony Non-Convictions	32	3.50	6.67
Total Misdemeanor Arrests	16	3.45	3.78
Total Misdemeanor Convictions	4	0.60	1.11
Total Misdemeanor Non-Convictions	14	2.73	3.43
Total Petty Misdemeanor Arrests	10	1.78	2.36
Total Petty Misdemeanor Convictions	4	0.83	1.15
Total Petty Misdemeanor Non-Convictions	6	0.83	1.50
Total Arrests: All Severities	53	13.13	14.02
Total Arrests: Convictions	30	4.65	5.50
Total Arrests: Non-Convictions	42	7.55	9.39

As mentioned previously, recidivism in this study is defined as any rearrest within three years of release from prison. If there were multiple arrests, the first arrest was counted for this study. If there were multiple arrests on the same day, the most serious arrest was counted. Table 2 displays re-arrest summaries for this group. A little over half of the Huikahi participants, 43.1%, was rearrested within three years of release from prison.

Table 2: Huikahi Re-arrests (Recidivating Event) within Three Years of Release

Recidivating Event	Frequency	Percent
No	33	56.9
Yes	25	43.1

Table 3 outlines the type of recidivating event for the Huikahi participants. The numbers demonstrate that the majority of rearrests for this sample are for parole revocations and criminal contempt of court. Only a quarter, 24%, was rearrested for a new felony.

Table 3: Type of Re-arrest (Recidivating Event) for Huikahi Participants

Arrest Type	Frequency	Percent
Felony Criminal Arrest	6	24.0
Misdemeanor or Petty Misdemeanor Criminal Arrest	4	16.0
Parole Revocation	10	40.0
Criminal Contempt of Court	5	20.0

Figure 3 displays the type of people in attendance at the circles. The most represented groups were other family (such as aunts, uncles, siblings) and other (such as counselors and other helping professionals, friends, and religious figures). The least represented groups included significant others (24.1% of circles included these) and children (39.7% of circles included these).

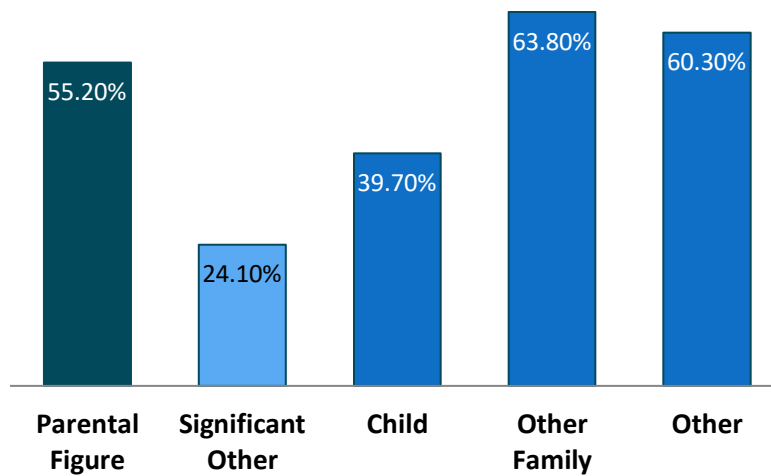**Figure 3: Family Members and Others in Attendance at Circles**

Table 4: Huikahi Re-arrests (Recidivating Event) by Relationship of Attendees

Recidivating Event (yes)	Frequency	Percent
Parental Figure	15	46.9
Significant Other	4	28.6
Children	8	34.8
Other Family	15	40.5
Other Person*	10	28.6

Note: Difference significant at the .05 level or less.

There are some interesting recidivism differences by relationship of attendees, but these might also be impacted by the number attending in each category. For example, the other and other family categories represent the largest categories, so any changes here might be reflective of greater opportunities for success in sheer numbers alone. Regardless, there were no significant differences in recidivism by relationship to attendee, except for the other person category (χ^2=7.60, p < .01). Again, this category included counselors and other helping professionals, friends, and religious figures. It may be that the presence of these figures means that the inmate has more support inside prison than others, or that folks who already have these support figures are more willing to change. This research cannot discern the actual reasons, but participants who did have 'others' in attendance demonstrated significantly lower recidivism rates (28.6%). Recidivism rates were also low for participants whose significant others were attendance (28.6%), but only a quarter of participants had the inclusion of a significant other, making it harder to gain statistical significance.

The number of participants at the Circle, in addition to the inmate and facilitators, varied by the individual inmate participant. Some had as a few as one, others up to 8. It is instructive to look at whether there might be a relationship between the number of participants and success rates. The correlation between the two is r=-.121, p >.05. Although this correlation is not statistically significant, it is worth noting that recidivism rates dropped as the number of attendees rose. In other words, having more participants at the Circle is correlated with more favorable outcomes.

Table 5 details the level of inmate satisfaction with the Huikahi circles. Each question included a likert scale response of very positive, positive, mixed, negative, and very negative. The categories were collapsed into positive, mixed, and negative for this analysis. As can be seen, inmate participants were overwhelmingly positive about their circle experiences, the impact on them personally, and their hope for the future. All inmates who completed the survey indicated they were positive about each of the indicators measured in the survey. Table 6 includes results from others who attended the Circle. Multiple individuals may have been present at a Circle, so aggregate responses are included here. The same likert scale response category was used in this survey as with the previous one, but the questions were different (as noted in the Table). Again, participants other than the inmate were overwhelming positive about the circle, the impact on the inmate and the participant, and hope for the future.

Table 5: Huikahi Circle Inmate Participant Satisfaction

| Survey Question	Positive	Mixed	Negative
I believe the Huikahi Restorative Circle I participated in was:	100%	0%	0%
I believe the Circle was valuable in helping me make goals for the future.	100%	0%	0%
I believe the Transition Plan made at the circle is:	100%	0%	0%
I learned something new about my strengths at today's Circle.	100%	0%	0%
I believe the Restorative Circle I participated in was:	100%	0%	0%
I believe the circle was valuable in helping me make goals for the future.	100%	0%	0%
I believe the Transition Plan made at the Circle is:	100%	0%	0%
I learned something new about my strengths at today's Circle.	100%	0%	0%

Table 6: Huikahi Circle Participant Satisfaction

Survey Question	Positive	Mixed	Negative
I believe the Restorative Circle I participated in was:	100%	0%	0%
I am more optimistic about the inmate's success in transitioning from prison as a result of the circle.	100%	0%	0%
I am more optimistic about the inmate's success in transitioning from prison as a result of the circle.	96.23%	3.77%	0%
I believe the transition plan developed by the inmate at the circle is:	100%	0%	0%
I learned new information about the inmate's strengths as a result of today's circle.	100%	0%	0%
I think the circle expanded the inmate's social support system.	100%	0%	0%
The circle has helped me reconcile with the inmate.	98.11%	1.89%	0%
The circle has helped my forgiveness concerning the inmate.	98.11%	1.89%	0%
I think the facilitator and recorder did good work with the circle.	100%	0%	0%

Huikahi Circle and Control Group Participants

It is instructive to compare the demographic make-up and overall post-prison outcomes of the circle participants with another group of inmates who wanted to participate in the Huikahi Circle but were unable to do so prior to release from prison. These inmates serve as the control group in this study. As witnessed in Figure 4, the control group had a significantly greater percentage of female than male participants (χ^2=3.190, p < .08). This is important because females typically exhibit lower recidivism rates than their male counterparts. There were not any significant differences in ethnicity or in age between the two groups. The average age of the Huikahi participants was 37.3 compared to 35.4 for the control group and the differences were not significantly different. No significant differences emerged in race of the Huikahi participants compared to the control group, as demonstrated in Figure 5.

Figure 4: Gender of Participants for Huikahi and Control Participants
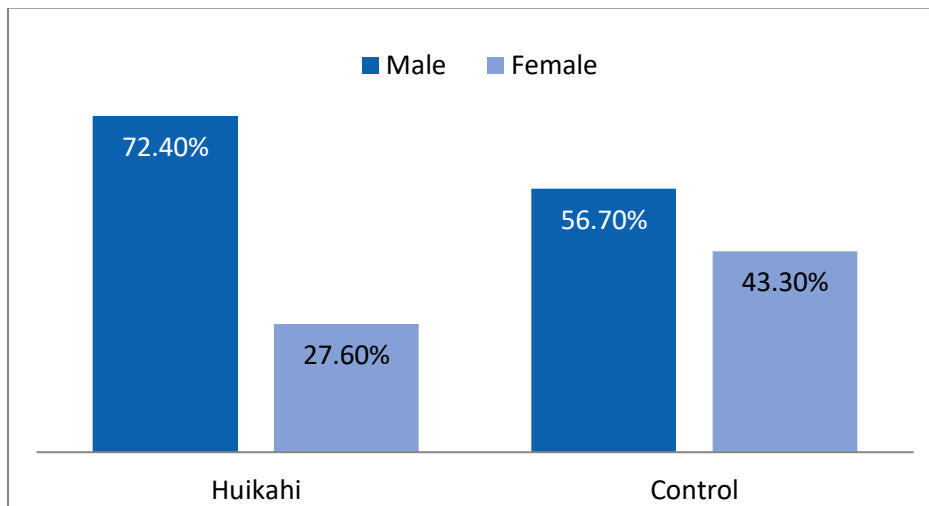
Note: χ^2=3.190, p < .08

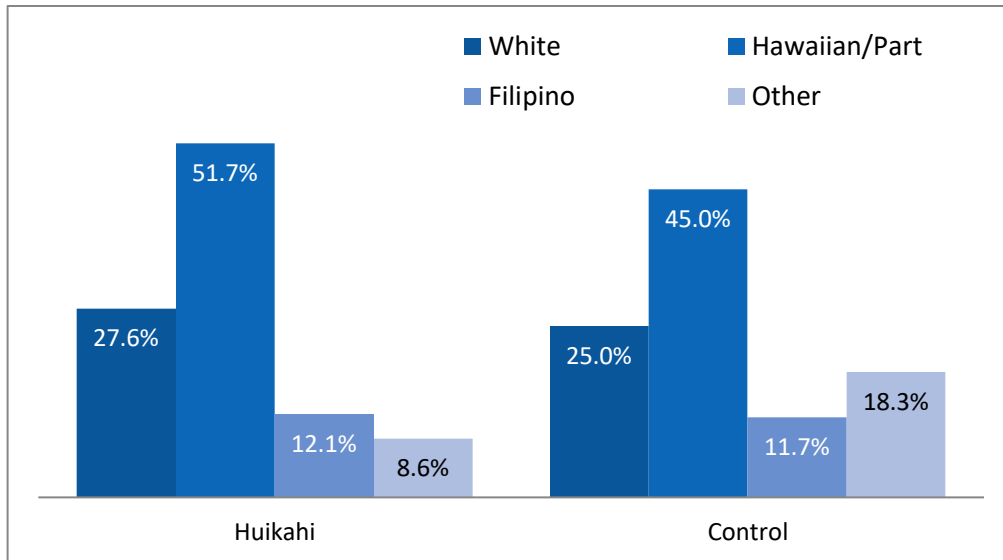Figure 5: Race of Participants for Huikahi and Control Participants

Table 7 displays a comparison of overall criminal histories for the Huikahi and control groups. While there are no significant differences between the two groups, the control group does demonstrate fewer average felony arrests and convictions, slightly more misdemeanor arrests and convictions, and a higher average for arrests and convictions for all severities.

Table 7: Criminal History Summary for Huikahi and Control Group Participants

	Huikahi Circle Participants	Control Group
	Average	
Total Felony Arrests	6.08	5.40
Total Felony Convictions	2.38	2.10
Total Felony Non-Convictions	3.50	2.73
Total Misdemeanor Arrests	3.45	4.83
Total Misdemeanor Convictions	0.60	0.98
Total Misdemeanor Non-Convictions	2.73	3.52
Total Petty Misdemeanor Arrests	1.78	2.70
Total Petty Misdemeanor Convictions	0.83	1.37
Total Petty Misdemeanor Non-Convictions	0.83	1.30
Total Arrests: All Severities	13.13	14.48
Total Arrests: Convictions	4.65	5.32
Total Arrests: Non-Convictions	7.55	7.75

Outcome analyses reveal that the circle participants performed significantly better than the control group in terms of post-prison adjustment (Figure 6). The Huikahi circle participants demonstrated a significantly lower recidivism rate of 43.1%, compared to 58.3% for the control group (t=-1.660, p < .05). Although unable to determine significant differences between the Huikahi group and state parole releases (raw data are needed for these calculations), the Huikahi group also exhibits substantially lower recidivism rates than the state group. Again, the Huikahi group demonstrated a recidivism rate of 43.1% compared to 56.4% for the state parole release group[5], using the same state definition for recidivism (Figure 7).

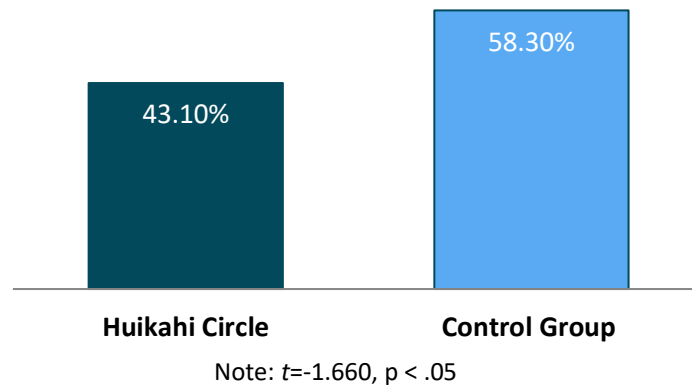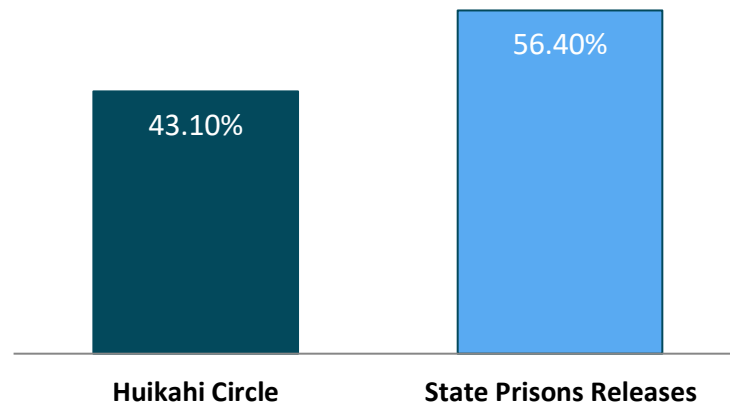Figure 6: Recidivism Rates for Huikahi Participants compared to the Control Group

Note: t=-1.660, p < .05

Figure 7: Recidivism Rates for Huikahi Participants compared to State Parole Releases

---

[5] Wong, Timothy. 2011. *State of Hawaii, FY 2007 Cohort 2010 Recidivism Update*. Interagency Council on Intermediate Sanctions.

Table 8: Type of Re-arrest (Recidivating Event) for Huikahi Participants
and Control Group – *Recidivists Only*

Arrest Type	Huikahi Participants	Control
Felony Criminal Arrest	24.0	25.7
Misdemeanor or Petty Misdemeanor Criminal Arrest	16.0	28.6
Parole Revocation	40.0	28.6
Criminal Contempt of Court	20.0	17.1

Table 8 exhibits the type of post-prison rearrest for the Huikahi participants compared to the control group. The differences between the two groups is not statistically significant (χ^2=1.641, p > 05), but there are some interesting patterns nonetheless. The Huikahi participants had fewer felony, misdemeanor, or petty misdemeanor criminal arrests but were more likely to have a parole revocation or criminal contempt of court, as compared to the control group.

Table 9: Type of Re-arrest (Recidivating Event) for Huikahi Participants
Compared to State Releases – *Recidivists Only*

Arrest Type	Huikahi Participants	State Releases
Criminal Rearrest	17.2	15.2
Parole Revocation	17.2	37.6
Criminal Contempt of Court	8.6	3.6
No Recidivating Event within 3 Years	*56.9*	*43.6*

Table 9 also looks at post-prison rearrest, but uses the categories outlined in the state report on recidivism. Statistical significance is not able to be calculated for this comparison as these are two different samples, and we only have aggregate numbers for the state release group. However, the difference in recidivism rates is certainly substantial. Of those rearrested within three years of release from prison, the state releases were slightly less likely to have a

criminal rearrest or criminal contempt of court, and more likely to have parole revocation compared to the Huikahi participants.

12 Week Cognitive Course Participants

Participants in the 12 week cognitive class were more likely to be male (73.2%) than female (26.8%). The majority of the prison population is male, so it makes sense that this portion of the sample would reflect a greater percentage of males. The average age of participants was 38.17. The major ethnic group represented in these classes was Hawaiian/part-Hawaiian (50.7%), followed by Caucasian (29.6%), and other (15.5%), see Figure 9.
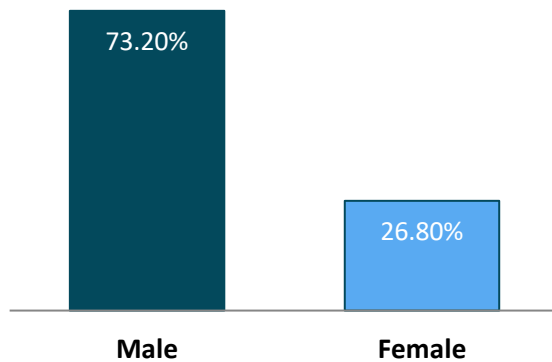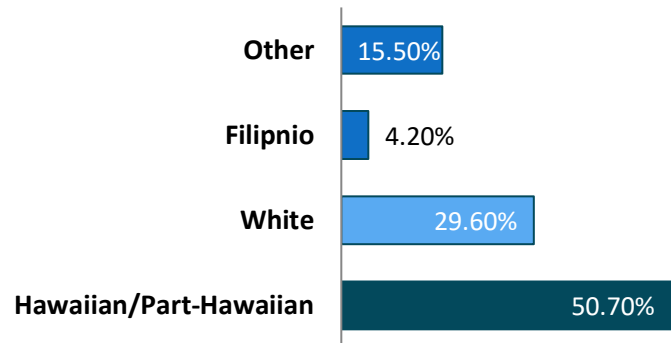
Figure 8: Gender of 12 Week COG Participants

73.20%

26.80%

Male   **Female**

Figure 9: Race of 12 Week COG Participants

Other 15.50%

Filipnio 4.20%

White 29.60%

Hawaiian/Part-Hawaiian 50.70%

The participants in the COG class were slightly less criminally active than the Huikahi participants. These participants had an average of 4.7 felony arrests, 4.4 misdemeanor arrests, 12.9 total arrests of all severities, and 5 convictions. Table 10 provides further details on the overall criminal history of this sample of participants.

Table 10: Criminal History of the COG Participants

	Range	Average	Standard Deviation
Total Felony Arrests	36	4.72	7.18
Total Felony Convictions	18	2.11	3.40
Total Felony Non-Convictions	18	2.31	3.99
Total Misdemeanor Arrests	37	4.44	5.83
Total Misdemeanor Convictions	6	0.83	1.33
Total Misdemeanor Non-Convictions	36	3.39	5.20
Total Petty Misdemeanor Arrests	11	2.01	2.41
Total Petty Misdemeanor Convictions	10	1.06	1.65
Total Petty Misdemeanor Non-Convictions	6	0.82	1.30
Total Arrests: All Severities	45	12.90	11.76
Total Arrests: Convictions	21	4.96	4.85
Total Arrests: Non-Convictions	38	6.86	7.17

Table 11: COG Class Arrests within Three Years of Release (n=71)

Recidivating Event	Frequency	Percent
No	36	50.7
Yes	35	49.3

The recidivism rate for this group of participants is slightly higher than for the Huikahi participants. Roughly half, 49.3%, of the COG group experienced a recidivating event (Table 11). Like the Huikahi participants, however, the COG group did exhibit a lower overall recidivism rate than the state parole release group (Table 12). Again, the COG participants had a 49.3% recidivism rate, compared to 56.4% for the state releases.

Table 12: Cog Class Participant Re-Arrests within Three Years of Release Compared to State Rates

Recidivating Event	Cog Class Participants	State Releases
No	50.7	43.6
Yes	49.3	56.4

Table 13: Type of Rearrest for COG Participants with a Recidivating Event

Arrest Type	Frequency	Percent
Felony Criminal Arrest	11	32.4
Misdemeanor or Petty Misdemeanor Criminal Arrest	9	26.5
Parole Revocation	7	20.6
Criminal Contempt of Court	7	20.6

Finally, Table 13 displays the type of rearrest for the COG participants who did recidivate. The largest category fell into felony criminal arrest (32.4%), followed by a misdemeanor or petty misdemeanor criminal arrest (26.5%).

Conclusion

This evaluation will hopefully help address the needs of offenders, victims, and families in the state of Hawai`i via the positive evaluation of promising services. There is clearly a link between the restorative services evaluated in this study and reduced recidivism. The state might consider expanding these types of services to further reduce recidivism, increase healing, and promote public safety. There is an opportunity now in Hawai`i, as elsewhere, to look at evidence-based opportunities to our current reactive and punitive system of incarceration. Evidence-based alternatives are greatly needed in the system. However, increasing funds toward incarceration has also meant reduced funding for research, research needed to demonstrate an evidence base. More funding should continue to be directed towards discovering which services work at reducing recidivism, as well as the mechanisms for positive findings.

Recommendations for future work and evaluation include:

- The results from this study are promising, as have results from other restorative justice initiatives been in other jurisdictions. The State or other interested parties should consider funding more restorative justice services in continuing efforts to reduce recidivism and increase public safety. Too, these services help to reconcile damaged offender and victim relationships, creating overall healthier communities.

- Continue to evaluate restorative justice services as more inmates who have received services leave prison. This will allow for a more robust sample that will enable more sophisticated, multivariate analyses.

- Restorative Justice practitioners should collect SID numbers on all inmates who receive services. This will enable future evaluators to more easily pull necessary data for outcome analyses.