

CRIMINAL JUSTICE and the **MEDIA:**

INMATE “PENPAL” WEBSITES

In a rather innovative archival study using websites, criminal justice scholar Richard Tewksbury read the personal advertisements of 1,051 prisoners posted on three websites (writeaprisoner.com, inmate-connection.com, and inmate.com) and compared the information that inmates posted about themselves with official information provided on state websites. He found that approximately one-third of the inmate ads included “at least one inaccurate reporting of the three pieces of basic personal information (age, release date,

conviction offense).” Just two of the inmates lied about all three pieces of information. Tewksbury stressed that two-thirds of the inmates were, in fact, honest about the information they provided.

Would you consider being a penal with an inmate?
What do you think some of the pros and cons would be?

Tewksbury, R. (2005). Personal ads from prisoners: Do inmates tell the truth about themselves? *Federal Probation*, 69(2), 32–34.