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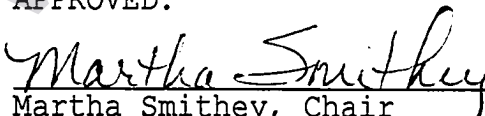
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EVALUATION RESEARCH ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EL PASO
JUVENILE PROBATION DEPARTMENT IN REDUCING RECIDIVISM

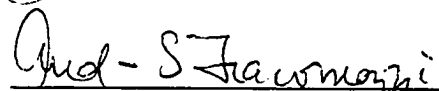
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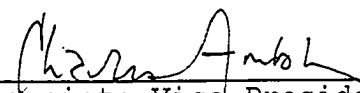
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Dedication

To the love of my life -- my wife, Vi -- to whom I owe more than words can say! Without her love, encouragement, and support, I could not have even considered taking on the task of returning to college to complete my education. I will always be indebted to her.

PREVIEW

EVALUATION RESEARCH ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EL PASO
JUVENILE PROBATION DEPARTMENT IN REDUCING RECIDIVISM

by

RICKY LEE BLANKENSHIP, B. A.

THESIS

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Presented to the committee July 7, 1997.

ABSTRACT

This research project examined the effects of program intensity, number of juvenile arrests, and severity of juvenile offense on the likelihood of adult recidivism. Specifically, the questions asked are: 1) what affect does program intensity have on adult recidivism?; 2) what affect does the number of juvenile arrests have on adult recidivism?; and 3) what affect does the severity of juvenile offense have adult recidivism? These issues are examined using data from 273 randomly selected cases from the El Paso County Juvenile Probation Department (JPD). Adult recidivist cases (N=130) were compared to a control group (N=143) of individuals who were not adult recidivists. Findings indicated that program intensity does not play a role in predicting adult recidivism. However, the number of juvenile arrests and the severity of juvenile recidivism does play a role in determining the probability of adult recidivism. Simply stated, the more times a juvenile is arrested, and the more severe the recidivism, the more likely the person is to recidivate as an adult.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the turn of the 18th century society has been trying to figure out how to deal with juvenile delinquency (Bernard 1992). The problem of juvenile delinquency can be attributed to the changes within our society since the Industrial Revolution. In Durkheim's *The Division of Labor in Society* (1933 [1893]), he maintained society is initially mechanical solidarity, meaning each person within the society was responsible for his/her own ability to provide for the family. With the industrialization of a society came organic solidarity (Durkheim 1933 [1893]:151). Each person is no longer individually responsible for the outcome of a given product because the people in the society become more interdependent upon one another. One of the ways in which families became dependent on society was in the society's taking a more active role in caring for children, including correcting juvenile delinquency.

Since juvenile delinquency is a diverse problem within our society, it appears that more emphasis is needed on interventions that can help reduce delinquent acts. Statistics show us that there has been a 10% increase in the number of juvenile delinquent acts committed between the years 1986 to 1990 and a 20.1% increase between 1991 to 1995. Fortunately, there has only been a 0.8% increase between 1994 and 1995 (Uniform Crime Reports 1995). But the

fact still remains that delinquent acts are being committed. Where it is not possible to eliminate entirely delinquent acts, it may be possible to help the juvenile from committing, or reducing their desire for committing additional acts.

While many of the theories dealing with juvenile delinquency offer explanations as to why juveniles commit acts of delinquency, the theories only suggest how to keep juveniles from committing delinquent acts or from recidivating once they have committed delinquent acts. Within the realm of evaluation research there are several studies that have been conducted over the past several years which look mainly at the effects of boot camps in reducing recidivism (Austin et al. 1993; Bourque et al. 1996a; Bourque et al. 1996b; Cronin and Han 1994).

These studies have primarily focused on one particular program -- usually the "newest" idea, or trend, at the time, in this case, boot camps. The focus of this study, however, is not to look at any one program individually, but rather to look at the results program intensity has on the likelihood of reducing adult recidivism. In addition to determining what impact program intensity has on adult recidivism, the number of juvenile offenses and the severity of juvenile recidivism will be addressed.

RESEARCH PURPOSE

According to Bernard (1992), societal response to juvenile delinquency has fluctuated with the philosophical shifts in how to best correct delinquent behavior. Societal response is manifested via juvenile correctional programs and practices. The purpose of this research was to test the various philosophies, as delineated by Bernard, surrounding juvenile corrections. Theories relevant to these philosophies were utilized to generate testable hypotheses. Conclusions drawn will be used to address the individual effectiveness of these philosophies. Further reliance on these theories as guiding principles culminated in analysis of extraneous factors outside the realm of correctional practices. This allowed unique insights not only into programs and other factors, but also a test of established theory.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This paper begins with a historical overview of the Industrial Revolution's affect on the family and the shift of responsibility for correcting juvenile delinquency from the family to society. Within the historical context, the cycles of juvenile justice will be discussed. Following the historical overview will be a review of the literature addressing the theoretical reasoning for juvenile delinquency. This overview will focus on correctional policies, gang membership, behavioral success in the education system, and family structure.

Historical Overview

The Industrial Revolution: Family Change and Juvenile

Delinquency. Since the Industrial Revolution, our society has had to deal with a "new" problem -- juvenile delinquency. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, juvenile problems were handled within the family -- there were no special institutions established for the juvenile. The cottage industry was the foundation of production, and within this structure was the ability of the family to supervise its children. This was possible since the children assisted in the economic activities of the family. Not only were the children supervised but they were also instructed in the family trade.

With the Industrial Revolution, the family became splintered when fathers went to work in factories which provided better pay. Since the family members were no longer in constant contact with each other, the amount of immediate parental supervision of children decreased. The children, however, were still expected to continue assisting the family by providing an income by also working at the factories.

Compounding the problem was the exploitation of the children within the factories where they worked. To help protect the children, compulsory school attendance laws were created to prevent abuse and exploitation (Hutter 1988). In effect, the children were removed from a daily structure of constant activity and supervision to one of less activity and supervision. This created more opportunity for delinquent acts. With each of these events (the father and children working outside of the home, and laws mandating school attendance) children were no longer under constant supervision of their parents and the society became more involved in family matters.

Since the Industrial Revolution, there have been several methods of attempting to deal with juvenile delinquency: from severe retribution to more lenient solutions (Bernard 1992). Attempts at curbing juvenile

delinquency seem to follow a cyclical pattern as described in Figure 1.

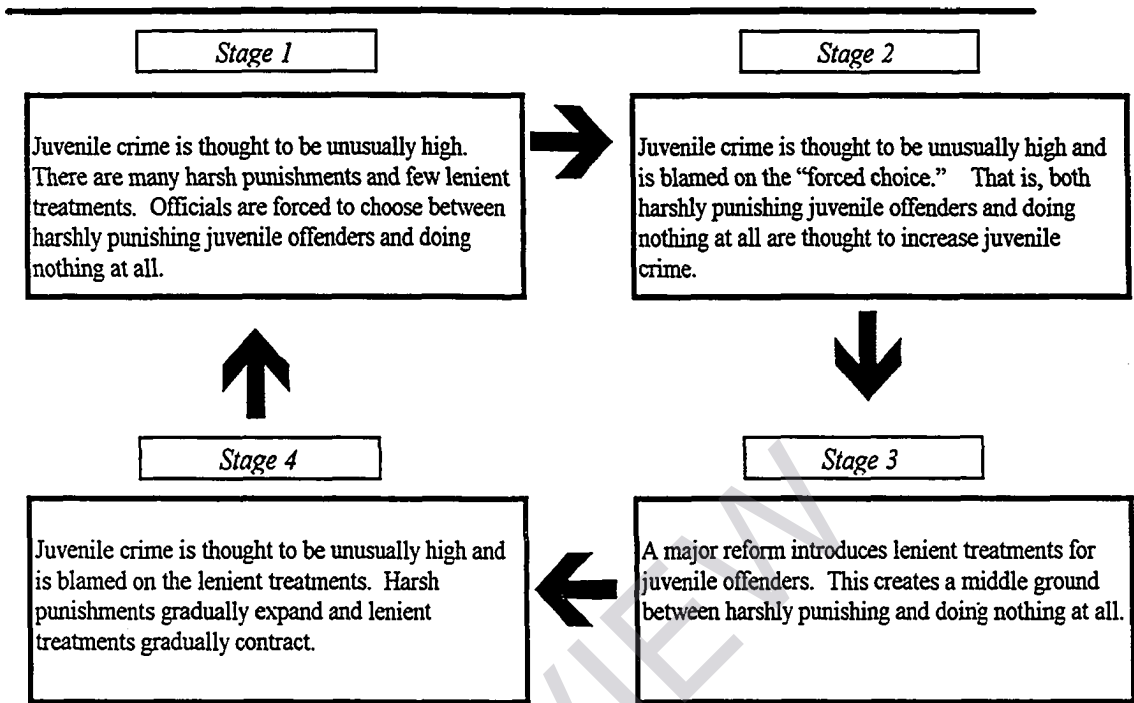


Figure 1. Thomas J. Bernard's Cycle of Juvenile Justice. (Thomas J. Bernard. 1992. The Cycle of Juvenile Justice. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., p. 4) (Headings added)

The first stage is the *belief* that juvenile delinquency is unusually high. In response to this belief, the juvenile justice system establishes harsh treatments, with few lenient treatments, to deal with the delinquent. This forces the officials into choosing between harsh treatment or no treatment at all. The second stage is a belief that there is an unusually high level of juvenile delinquency, but it is blamed on stage one where the officials responded with harsh treatment of delinquents because "...both harshly punishing and doing nothing at all are thought to increase

juvenile crime" (Bernard 1992:4). The third stage involves a reform of harsh punishment and introduces lenient treatment of the juvenile, creating a middle ground between the harsh punishment and no recourse at all. The final stage can be seen as the initiation of the entire cycle itself: once again, juvenile crime is seen as unusually high, but this time it is blamed on the lenient treatment of the juveniles. Harsh treatments are then expanded to help reduce the problem of juvenile delinquency and from this point, the cycle continues (Bernard 1992).

According to Bernard, these cycles tend to repeat every 30 - 40 years. This time frame is used since it is the adults who hold the belief that juvenile delinquency was not a problem when they were children. So, the adults of today would be referring to the 1940s to 1950s; whereas, the adults of the 1940s and 1950s who believed juvenile delinquency was not a problem when they were children would be referring to the 1910s to 1920s. Within this framework of "the good old days" is the basis for the cycle to repeat. Each generation thinks the way to solve juvenile delinquency is to simply "do it the way it was done when I was a kid." Depending upon which stage of the cycle is being referred to, the way to fix juvenile delinquency was to make punishment more lenient, or harsh, as the case may be (Bernard 1992).

The cycle stated above is generated from the belief that juvenile delinquency is not properly handled. In other words, individuals in society believe juvenile delinquents should be dealt with in a specific manner. Therefore, new (or what is believed to be new) policies are constantly created to deal with this problem. This is what Walker (1980) terms "popular justice":

The special character of American criminal justice lies in the high degree of direct and indirect popular influence over its administration. Popular influence takes many forms: criminal codes written by democratically elected legislatures; the direct election of many officials such as sheriffs and judges; citizen participation on juries; the control of police departments and other agencies by political machines responsive to their constituents; and, finally, the pervasive influence of public opinion over day-to-day decisions. (3)

Popular justice can be seen in different trends created to try to deal with juvenile delinquency. Examples of current, or "new" trends are discussed in the next section.

Current Trends

National. One current trend to try to reduce juvenile delinquency and juvenile recidivism is shock incarceration, or boot camp. Boot camp programs are designed after military boot camps. These camps bring in new recruits and within a given time, mold the recruits into productive members of the military. This style is one of constant supervision by a Drill Instructor who provides the opportunity to correct inappropriate behavior immediately. Likewise, the juvenile, after committing an offense, is

placed into a boot camp program, thereby establishing a structure of constant supervision and correction that he/she was not receiving in the home environment. In doing this, the juvenile justice system is falling within the guidelines of Stage 4 listed previously -- issuing harsh punishment for an offense.

On a national level, the target population for boot camp programs is the juvenile who is a repeat, but not a serious offender. These repeat offenders have shown the sanctions used have not been effective. Even though they are classified as repeat offenders, they are still considered to be in the beginning stages of their delinquent behavior since the offenses committed are generally minor. By placing the juvenile delinquent in a boot camp program after the first or second offense, there is the expectation that the program will shock the juvenile from recidivating (Austin et al. 1993).

El Paso County. This policy is different for the El Paso area. Candidates for the Challenge Program (boot camp) are comprised of those individuals who not only failed the lesser sanctions, but are considered to be hardened and/or serious offenders. Other programs at JPD deal primarily with juveniles who have committed non-serious offenses. Depending on the offense, the juvenile will either be

assigned to a Conference Committee, to the First Offender Program, or to filing a petition in District Court meaning further legal actions need to be taken. This determination, or recommendation, is made primarily by the in-take officer when the juvenile is being processed by JPD. Even though it is the in-take officer who makes the recommendation, and the Director of JPD and the Assistant County Attorney who make the decisions on the outcome, it is the County Attorney's office that makes the final decision-- dismissal, consolidation, or reducing the offense to a lesser charge (El Paso County 1994).

The programs offered at JPD fall within the spectrum of lenient to harsh treatment. This means the programs are either in Stage 3 (lenient and harsh treatment), Stage 4 (harsh treatment), or in a transition between the two stages. The following is a brief description of each program.

The Conference Committees are comprised of volunteers from the community who serve as an extension of the court. These committees handle minor offenses and provide a procedure through which a youth in trouble, as well as his/her parents, can be assisted in addressing problems while still in the early stages of offending, thereby circumventing any further steps to be taken by JPD (El Paso County 1994). If JPD recommends placement in the First

Offender Program (FOP), both the juvenile and his/her parents must agree to the program. Once agreed to, they must attend weekly counseling sessions which provide life management skills and make restitution to victims. This program is four months long and during this time the juvenile is subject to both office and home visits (El Paso County 1994). JPD also offers unsupervised probation. This program is fairly self-explanatory -- the juvenile is placed on probation, but is not expected to be supervised (visited) by a probation officer. Should the juvenile violate his/her probation, he/she would be placed in a harsher program. These programs fall within the criteria of Stage 3 since JPD is trying to resolve the issue in a less punitive form of restitution, instead of relying solely on the more punitive programs.

The last three programs offered by JPD are actually a continuum of one program (Challenge) in which each phase is classified by a different name. Obviously, the first phase is the Challenge Program (described previously) which is a ninety day program. After completion of this phase, the juvenile will be placed in the next phase -- Crossroads. This phase can best be described as a half-way house. The juvenile still resides at a facility operated by JPD in the community, but he/she is slowly reintegrated into society. While in Crossroads, the juvenile is reunited with his/her

family through case plans established and monitored by Crossroads. This phase lasts four to six months. If the juvenile successfully completes the second phase, he/she will be placed in the third phase -- Aftercare. While in this phase of the program, the juvenile can reside in one of several places: at home, if the family situation is conducive to continuing the rehabilitation process; in a half-way house; or in a special rehabilitation facility to assist the juvenile with drug and/or mental problems. Realizing juveniles will eventually return to the neighborhood from which they came, Aftercare tries to ensure he/she does not fall back into the pattern of behavior which initiated the delinquency. While in this phase, the probation officer assigned to the juvenile helps establish a support system (family, school, employer) to try to avoid a pattern of delinquent behavior (El Paso County 1994).

There are four programs offered at JPD falling within the transition from lenient to harsh punishment. The first would be electronic monitoring which is the use of an electronic anklet connected to a computer through the juvenile's home phone. The second program is house arrest meaning the juvenile is confined to his/her home, except for school and emergencies. This program is enforced by random checks by a probation officer. The third program is supervised probation which is the same as unsupervised