

2017, Vol. 10, No. 1

---

**JOURNAL OF  
KNOWLEDGE  
AND BEST PRACTICES  
IN JUVENILE JUSTICE &  
PSYCHOLOGY**

---

**Prairie View A&M University  
College of Juvenile Justice & Psychology  
Texas Juvenile Crime Prevention Center**

© 2017 College of Juvenile Justice & Psychology, Texas Juvenile Crime Prevention Center, Prairie View A&M University.  
All rights reserved.

The College of Juvenile Justice and Psychology at Prairie View A&M University invites papers for publication in the Journal of Knowledge and Best Practices in Juvenile Justice & Psychology. The journal seeks relevant application research for the academic and practitioner communities of juvenile justice, psychology, and criminal justice. The editorial staff is soliciting both qualitative and quantitative articles on juvenile justice policy, delinquency prevention, treatment, and evaluation. The journal is published in hard copy and electronically. All articles submitted for review should be sent electronically to the senior editor [sfkouassi@pvamu.edu](mailto:sfkouassi@pvamu.edu). The articles should follow the APA style and be typed in 12 point font. All inquires and submissions should be directed to the senior editor.

All submissions must be done electronically and manuscripts will be promptly refereed. Reviewing will be double-blind. In submitting manuscripts, authors acknowledge that no paper will be submitted to another journal during the review period.

For publication in Journal of Knowledge and Best Practices in Juvenile Justice & Psychology:

- ♦ Manuscripts must follow the APA style (as outlined in the latest edition of Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.)
- ♦ The title of all papers should be centered and typed in caps on the first page with 12 point font.
- ♦ The title page must include the name, affiliation, title/academic rank, phone number, and the email address of the author(s).
- ♦ Submission of an electronic copy in MS Word as an attachment to co-editor: [sfkouassi@pvamu.edu](mailto:sfkouassi@pvamu.edu) maximum of 25 pages with references and tables. The submission must be entirely original.
- ♦ All papers must be typed, double-spaced, on regular 8.5" x 11" paper, and fully justified with margins set to 1-inch top, bottom, left, and right with 12 point font.
- ♦ Acknowledgment should be placed before references. Manuscripts that meet the above requirements will be published in the forthcoming volume of *The Journal of Knowledge and Best Practices in Juvenile Justice & Psychology*.

***Editor-in-Chief***

Tamara L. Brown, Ph.D.  
Dean, College of Juvenile Justice & Psychology  
Executive Director, Texas Juvenile Crime Prevention Center  
Prairie View A&M University  
Prairie View, TX 77446  
Phone: (936) 261-5205

***Senior Editor***

Susan C. Frazier-Kouassi, Ph.D.  
Director, Texas Juvenile Crime Prevention Center Prairie View A&M University  
Prairie View A&M University  
Prairie View, TX 77446  
Phone: (936) 261-5209

# Journal of Knowledge and Best Practices in Juvenile Justice and Psychology

## ***Editor-in-Chief***

Tamara L. Brown, Ph.D.  
Dean, College of Juvenile Justice & Psychology  
Executive Director, Texas Juvenile Crime Prevention Center  
*Prairie View A&M University, Prairie View, Texas*

## ***Senior Editor***

Susan C. Frazier-Kouassi, Ph.D.  
Director, Texas Juvenile Crime Prevention Center Prairie View A&M University  
*Prairie View A&M University, Prairie View, Texas*

## ***Editorial Advisory Board***

Erin Espinosa, *University of Texas, Austin, Texas*  
Delores James-Brown, *John Jay College, New York, New York*  
Ihekwoaba Onwudiwe, *Texas Southern University, Houston, Texas*  
Susan Ritter, *University of Texas, Brownsville, Texas*  
Barbara Scobey, *Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services, Austin, Texas*  
Alejandro del Carmen, *University of Texas, Arlington, Texas*  
Kathryn Sellers, *Kaplan University, Boca Raton, Florida*  
Donna M. Vandiver, *Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas*  
Scott H. Belshaw, *University of North Texas, Denton, Texas*

Diversion of Juvenile Offenders in China  
by Cao ..... 1

The Effects of Restorative Justice Programming on Juvenile Offered Empathy  
by Tapia, Natividad, and Vasquez ..... 7

Positivity and Delinquency: Is the Glass Half Full?  
by Harper..... 17

Trauma-Informed Care and the Juvenile Justice System  
by Kethineni .....25



# Diversion of Juvenile Offenders in China

Ying Cao

*Prairie View A&M University*

China's approach towards juvenile offenders has historically been more rehabilitative than punitive as compared to the United States. In recent years, China has developed innovative diversion programs/interventions for youth who are likely to receive prison sentences of less than one year. This paper presents a brief history of the development of juvenile diversion in China, the effectiveness of the Chinese juvenile diversion program known as "conditional non prosecution," and discusses the benefits and drawbacks of the diversion program, known as the "Dandelion Pukou."

*Keywords:* juvenile diversion, China, justice, rehabilitation

The concept of diverting youth from the juvenile justice system is embedded in the idea that processing youth in the formal system for committing minor offenses may inadvertently stigmatize them (Lundman, 1993), and that, if they were diverted, it would benefit youth, reduce recidivism, and save taxpayer money. The idea has a strong theoretical underpinning based on "labeling" principles proposed by Tannenbaum (1938) and Becker's (1963) notion of how social groups label certain acts as "deviant" and treat those who commit those acts as "outsiders" (p.1), and Lemert's (1972) position on how labeling leads to "secondary deviance" (p. 63). Studies on the effectiveness of the diversion programs in the United States have shown mixed results. Although some studies found certain diversion programs to be successful (Beck, Ramsey, Lipps, & Travis, 2006; Cuellar, McReynolds, & Wasserman, 2005; Davidson, Redner, Admur, & Mitchell, 1990; Frazier & Cochran, 1986; Hamilton, Sullivan, Veysey, & Grillo, 2006; and Henggeler, Halliday-Boykins, Cunningham, Randall, Shapiro, & Chapman, 2006), others reported no impact (Patrick & Marsh, 2005; Polk, 1995). Early opponents of diversion programs in the United States noted negative effects, including an increase in recidivism, perceived labeling, and self-reported delinquency (Elliott, Dunford, & Knowles, 1978; Klein 1976; Lincoln, 1976; and Lipsey, Cordray, & Berger 1981). Despite these concerns, the belief that isolating offenders results in a reduction in crime prevails in many countries, and China is no exception. In this paper, the newly developed Chinese diversion program known as the "Dandelion Pukou" is discussed ("Summer Program of Dandelion Pukou," 2013).

## Juvenile Delinquency and Justice in China

The law of the People's Republic of China regarding Protection of Minors (1991) defines minors as anyone under the age of 18. Those between 19 and 25 years of age are considered young adults. Current studies on juvenile delinquency in China focus on both groups. There

are three laws that regulate juvenile behavior: the Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China (1997 Revision), the Public Security Administration Punishments Law of the People's Republic of China (2012 Amendment), and the Law of the People's Republic of China on Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (2012 Amendment). Crimes committed by youth typically fall under the Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China (1997) and are handled by police, prosecutors, and judges. Offenses such as petty theft, vandalism, simple assault, and disruption of public order<sup>1</sup> are considered violations of public security law and are handled by only the police. Because it is not a judicial procedure, this study will not discuss violations that fall under the Public Security Administration Punishment Law of the People's Republic of China (2012).

According to the Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China (1997), a person who has reached the age of 16 and who commits a crime shall bear criminal responsibility. An individual who is over 14 but under 16 and commits serious offenses (e.g., intentionally killing, injuring, or poisoning someone, arson, and causing explosions) also shall bear criminal responsibility. Youth under the age of 18 shall be given a lesser or a mitigated punishment compared to adult offenders.

Lo, Maxwell, and Wong (2006) suggested that the Chinese juvenile justice model has a social control orientation as both informal and formal social control mechanisms are used in the treatment of juvenile offenders. For example, the police have a certain amount of discretionary power. If the offenses are minor, they refer cases to an educational assistance program, such as a work-study school (Lo et al., 2006). If the offenses are serious, they are referred to People's Procuratorial Office. At present, there is no independent juvenile procuratorial office in China; however, most procuratorial offices at the district or city level have a separate juvenile prosecution division. Juvenile prosecutors have discretionary power on whether to grant bail before trial, refer the case to the court, or supervise offenders who participate in diversion programs. If the offenses are serious, those cases are referred to the juvenile court (see Figure 1).

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Ying Cao, Prairie View A&M University. E-mail: ycao@student.pvamu.edu

<sup>1</sup> Depending on the seriousness the offense, disruption of public disorder, theft, or assault can also be considered crimes.

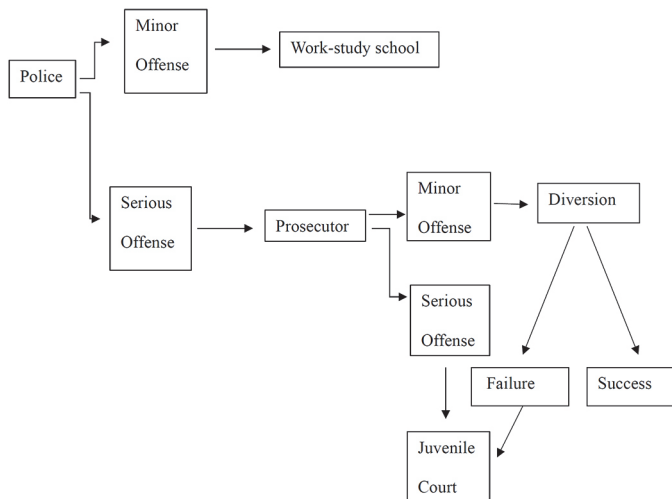


Figure 1. Case Referral Process

In addition to informal social control, re-integrative shaming theory also provides theoretical support to the diversion program. Re-integrative shaming, although an expression of disapproval, has a positive function because it is followed by re-acceptance of the community (Braithwaite, 1989). Highly homogeneous countries such as China and Japan, tend to empathize strong group control on individual's behavior, but at the same time believe in forgiveness and acceptance back into the community (Chen, 2002). Thus, diversion contract, as normative regulations, informally controls people's behavior.

## Development of Juvenile Diversion in China

**The start of the diversion (1992–2009).** Diversion is “an attempt to divert, or channel out, youthful offenders from the juvenile justice system” (Bynum & Thompson, 1996, p. 430). In China, diversion is also known as “conditional prosecution” or “conditional non prosecution.” Until recently, once a juvenile offender was placed in a diversion program, he or she would be given a “probation” period, usually three to six months. During this time, if the juvenile followed all the regulations and met the conditions of the program, a final non prosecution decision would be made, and the juvenile would not be prosecuted. Instead, the juvenile would be diverted from the court system and would have no criminal record.

The earliest diversion program dates from 1992 in Shanghai, China. At that time, the diversion was not officially regulated in either Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China (2012 Amendment) or the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Minors. Most of the diversion programs during this period were seen as a revolution in the juvenile system, and this revolution seemed to have been accepted by the authorities.

In 1992, the People's Procuratorial Office in Changning, Shanghai, made a “conditional prosecution” decision in the case of a juvenile who committed a theft. This action was considered to be the beginning of diversion revolution in China (Deng, 2012). In 2003, the People's Procuratorial Office in Nanjing, Pukou, expanded the application of “conditional prosecution” from youth to young adults, specifically for college students (Deng, 2012). In March 2005, the People's Procuratorial Office in Yushu, Shanxi, placed one juvenile homicide offender into the diversion program (Deng, 2012). Before this case, most offenses were limited to minor offenses, such as theft and assault. However, diversion was still a controversial issue, because the law did not officially recognize it.

**The popularization of diversion.** From 2009 to 2012, juvenile diversion programs were instituted in most provinces in China. During this period, China launched a new round of judicial reforms, including the establishment of the juvenile justice system. The diversion approach was an important part of this juvenile judicial reform. Many procuratorial offices at provincial levels created their own regulations of diversion. Deng (2012) noted that over one-third of the procuratorial offices in the provinces started various kinds of diversion programs.

On July 1, 2010, the People's Procuratorial Office in Henan Province<sup>2</sup> officially required all procuratorial offices within the province to start diversion programs beginning August 1, 2010 (Deng, 2012). At this time, juvenile diversion was widely accepted by the justice system and society. Although the concept was popular, there were no standards concerning the length of the probation period, what kind of youth would be placed in the program, or what kind of service youth would receive probation. Different local procuratorial offices had their own implementation.

In Hunan province, a public hearing process would take place before youth were placed in a diversion program (Deng, 2012). In the public hearing, offenders, their parents/guardians, defense attorney, the victim, people from local communities, and social workers would be invited by the prosecutor and permitted to present their opinion during the hearing. Although it was called a public hearing, it was similar to a Western-style family group conference.

**Legalization of juvenile diversion.** In 2012, China launched its new Criminal Procedural Law (2012 amendment). The law includes special procedures for criminal cases committed by minors. Article 266 establishes the principle of handling juvenile cases: education prior to punishment. Articles 271 through 273 regulate diversion procedures and stipulate that three conditions must be met before a juvenile is eligible for diversion. These include (1) the juvenile is suspected of committing a crime as provided in chapters 4, 5, or 6 of the Specific Provisions of the Criminal Law; (2) a criminal punishment of not more than one year of imprisonment may be imposed on the juvenile; and, (3) the juvenile has demonstrated repentance (Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China, 2012). Finally, the people's procuratorate shall observe and supervise the juvenile offenders who are under conditional non prosecution (Criminal Procedure Law, 2012).

In 2014, an official explanation of Criminal Procedural Law of the People's Republic of China (2012 Amendment) was launched. The explanation required that prosecutors hear the victims' opinion before making a decision about conditional non prosecution. If victims do not agree with the decision, they can appeal the decision to an upper-level procuratorate office (e.g., a city-level case could be appealed to the provincial level), but they cannot file a lawsuit against the offender (Dong, 2015).

After the implementation of Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China (2012 Amendment), every procuratorate office in China established its own diversion program. To provide services to youth who committed crimes outside of their residential provinces, cross-province cooperation was established between Shanghai and Jiangsu in 2014. The goal of this cooperation was to provide treatment or diversion service to out-of-province offenders. For example, if a juvenile offender from Shanghai commits a crime in Jiangsu, he will be put into Shanghai's diversion program. Currently, non prosecution is a common occurrence, whereas prosecution is rare. In some programs, youth are required to participate in community service in their local neighborhood. In other programs, professional counseling and vocational training are provided.

<sup>2</sup>China's administration division is composed of three levels: the lowest level is district level, the middle level is city level, and the highest level is provincial level.



**Juvenile Diversion in Pukou**

**Conditional Non Prosecution in Pukou**

The People’s Procuratorial Office in Pukou District, Nanjing City, is one of the several procuratorates that initiated the juvenile diversion revolution in China. As early as 2003, the Procuratorate Office placed a college student who committed theft into their diversion program (Deng, 2012). As the student was over 18 and considered a young offender, a five-month probation was given. They named this probation *bangjiao*, which means help and education (Deng, 2012). This innovation attracted public attention and received a lot of comments and criticisms. Many scholars argued that *bangjiao*, should not be applied to young adults because they are not minors. However, the upper-level authorities acquiesced to it because they believed it would be helpful in maintaining social stability and harmony. Between 2003 and 2012, this Procuratorate Office continued this diversion practice. In spite of the diversion revolution, there is no specific diversion-related law for young adults over the age of 18. As such, diversion is still used as an exception while prosecution is still common.

**Dandelion Pukou**

The change in Pukou diversion occurred in 2011 and 2012. In 2011, the Pukou Procuratorial Office introduced criminal justice social workers into the program, and the social workers, rather than the prosecutors, provided professional services. When the Criminal Procedure Law was launched and diversion was formalized in 2012, the Pukou Procuratorate improved the program and renamed it “Dandelion Pukou.” In Chinese culture, the dandelion is a symbol of growth, warmth, healing, and hope. When police refer cases to the Pukou Procuratorate, juvenile prosecutors review the case documents and interview both the offender and the victim. Then a social worker visits the offender’s family and school. A public hearing is held, and the offender, his/her parents, defense attorneys<sup>3</sup>, victims, teachers, and people from local communities or neighborhoods are invited by the prosecutor. After the hearing, the prosecutors and social workers develop a prediversion assessment (see Figure 2). Based on the assessment, a decision about conditional non prosecution is made, and offenders may be referred to the program. If the youth refuse to participate, they are referred to court. After youth have been referred to the program, they sign a *bangjiao* contract with the prosecutors, parents/guardians, teachers, and social workers. In the contract, the length of the probation is listed, and the offenders’ rights and responsibilities are explained in detail. The probation period is usually six months to one year. In this period, offenders receive private counseling, group counseling, vocational training, and legal education. They also complete 60 hours of community service. They are supervised by prosecutors and have to submit a written report every month. If they meet all the requirements and conditions and do not violate any laws or regulations, they are given a non-prosecution decision. This decision is considered a final judicial decision and is not kept on record. In the future, if the juvenile’s schools or employers run criminal background checks, they will not find a any history of criminal offenses.

The following section provides the description of the youth who participated in the “Dandelion Pukou” diversion program, including demographic information, family history, educational background, criminal history, the type of services they received while in the program, and the program outcome.

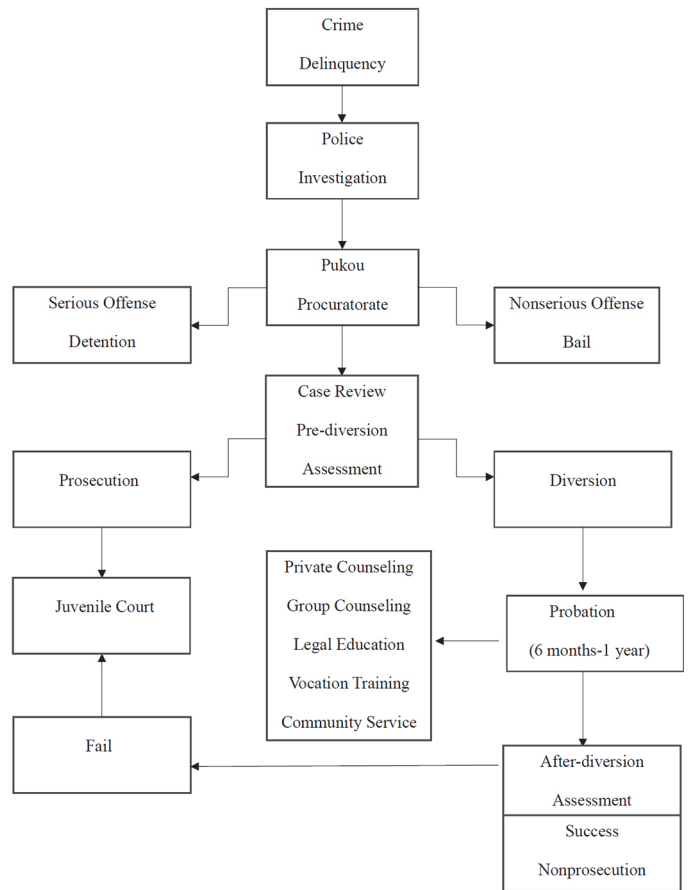


Figure 2. Prediversion Assessment

**Methodology: The Chinese Diversion Program**

**Data Collection**

First, permission was obtained from the Peoples Procuratorial Office in Pukou so that researchers could have access to the probation records of youth who were eligible for the program. Second, approval from Institutional Review Board (IRB) was secured. Once the approval from IRB was received, the Procuratorial Office released the non-identified data to the researchers. Research variables included the number of youth placed in the Dandelion Pukou program, profiles of the youth including prior criminal histories, risk levels, the type of original offenses for which they were placed in the program, new offenses committed during the participation in the program, success or failure, and the final legal decision. Although the program was started in 2011, the agency was only able to provide data from September 2013 through January 2016. During this time, the agency received a total of 47 juvenile cases from the police. Of these, 17 cases were considered eligible for diversion and were all referred to the program. Another 11 cases were considered extremely minor, and prosecutors made a direct non-prosecution decision without referring them to the program. None of those offenders had prior criminal records.

<sup>3</sup> In China, offenders are allowed two or more defense attorneys.

## Results

### Gender, Age, and Occupation

Out of the 17 cases, 16 were male; 1 was female (see Table 1). Most of the youth ( $n = 16$ , 94.12%) were 17 years old at the time of committing crimes; 1 was 16 years old (see Table 2). A few youth ( $n = 5$ , 29.41%) were students; 2 (11.77%) were employed at the time of arrest; 10 (58.82%) were unemployed (see Table 3). None of those youth had prior delinquency adjudication.

Table 1.  
*Gender*

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	16	94.12%
Female	1	5.88%
Total	17	100%

Table 2.  
*Age*

Age	Frequency	Percentage
16	1	5.88%
17	16	94.12%
Total	17	100%

Table 3.  
*Occupation*

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Students	5	29.44%
Workers	2	11.77%
Non-employment	10	58.82%
Total	17	100%

### Original Offenses

All of the youth had only one original offense for which they received probation. More than 50% ( $n = 9$ ) of the first charges were theft, while 35.29% ( $n = 6$ ) were related to public order disruption/disturbances (see Table 4). Out of the 17 youth, 7 were charged with conspiracy as their crimes were committed with other youth. The remaining 9 youth committed crimes by themselves.

Table 4.  
*Original Offenses*

Original Offenses	Frequency	Percentage
Theft	9	52.95%
Public Order Disruption	6	35.29%
Conceal, transfer and purchase or sell property obtained through crime	1	5.88%
False imprisonment	1	5.88%
Total	17	100%

### New Offenses, Technical Violations

None of the youth committed new offenses. However, one refused to accept counseling service and legal education. Because the counseling and legal education are mandatory according to their contract, this youth did not fulfill the requirement and was finally prosecuted. Comparing to those who fulfilled the diversion contract, the youth who failed had several risk factors that might contribute to his failure. First, he lived with his friends, not his family, which decreased the informal social control level. Second, during his probation he worked in a night club, which increased his likelihood of being involved in other deviant behavior.

### Length of Probation

The Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China (2012 Amendment) requires a six-month to one-year probation period for conditional non prosecution. Most youth ( $n = 11$ , 64.7%) stayed in the program for six months (see Table 5). Only one stayed in the program for a whole year. The average length of probation was 7.17 months.

Table 5.  
*Length of Probation*

Length of Probation	Frequency	Percentage
12 months	1	5.88%
10 months	2	11.76%
8 months	3	3.75%
6 months	11	64.71%
Total	17	100%

### Family Background

Most of the youth were from dysfunctional families. Four youth ( $n = 4$ , 23.53%) were from single-parent families (see Table 6), and four ( $n = 4$ , 23.53%) did not live with their parents (see Table 7). Three lived with their friends, and one lived with grandparents. One youth reported to the social worker that his father had been diagnosed with a mental disability and his mother was physically disabled. Another reported domestic violence in his family.

Table 6.  
*Family Type*

Family Type	Frequency	Percentage
Single parent family	4	23.53%
Family with both parents	13	76.47%
Total	17	100%

Table 7.  
*Living Conditions*

Family Type	Frequency	Percentage
Living with parents	13	76.47%
Living with friends	3	3.75%
Living with grandparents	1	5.88%
Total	17	100%

## Type of Services

The program provides seven types of services: face-to-face counseling, group counseling, vocational training, communication training, parental training, family visits, and school visits. All of the youth received face-to-face counseling and group counseling. One youth received vocational training and communication training. Six youth's parents participated in the parental training. Three youths received a family visit, and two youths received a school visit. Besides these services, eight youths were followed up by telephone while they were in diversion. In addition to these services, the youth participated in some voluntary work and performed 60 hours of community service.

## Victims' Satisfaction

Victims' satisfaction is an important factor in evaluating restorative justice program outcomes (Bradshaw & Umbreit, 2003). Although there was no clear measurement of victims' satisfaction in this study, no victims appealed to the upper-level procuratorial office regarding the placement of youth in the diversion program.

## Case Study

In addition to the aforementioned descriptive data, the researchers used a case study method to provide a better understanding of the youth's family, school, and peer experience. Sixteen youths reported family issues. Eight youths reported that their parents were too busy and did not care about them. These also reported a lack of communication between themselves and their parents. Two youths reported abuse by their father at home. One juvenile mentioned financial issues at home. Besides family issues, school experience also is a concern. Two youths reported being bullied at school, and three dropped out of school. Four youths reported having close delinquent friends, and two reported that they learned how to steal from delinquent friends. In spite of these few reports of school-related issues, most of the social and relationship issues were concentrated at home.

For a deep understanding of individuals, typical examples of two cases are reported as follows.

**Case 1.** Youth 1 (Y1) stayed in the program for an entire year, which is the longest probation period. Y1 was a student when he committed the crime. His offense was theft. Y1 reported to the social worker that the relationship between his parents was intense and he did not feel care and support from his family. Although he grew up in a family with both parents, his father worked in another city, seldom lived at home, and did not pay for the family living expenses. Thus, his mother had to work very hard and did not talk with him often. Y1 also reported that he did not get enough legal education in the school. Y1 described himself as impulsive and rebellious.

During his year in the program, he received six face-to-face counseling sessions and one group counseling session. The social worker and prosecutor visited his school 13 times in the year. The school visit included discussions with his teachers and classmates. After the treatment, Y1 fulfilled all requirements and was assessed as a "success" in the program by the service provider.

**Case 2.** Youth 2 (Y2) was the only youth that was finally prosecuted in court. Y2 was charged with conspiracy to commit theft with two other youths. The other two fulfilled the requirements and received a final nonprosecution decision. Y2 stayed in the program for eight months. During his probation, he worked in a nightclub. He received four face-to-face counseling sessions. However, he refused to partici-

pate in other services and did not report to the prosecutor regularly, which violated his *bangjiao* contract, and he was prosecuted in court.

## Conclusion

The Chinese diversion program, Dandelion Pukou, is relatively new and is used in the prosecutorial phase. In addition, the program is primarily geared towards petty offenders as a way of encouraging youth to avoid prosecution. Between September 2013 and January 2016, the program diverted 16 cases from incarceration in youth prison. Overall, a total of 15 cases were identified by prosecutors as a success because these offenders fulfilled the diversion contract and received the nonprosecution decision. Only one offender violated the requirement and was finally prosecuted. The diversion program continues to accomplish its core goals of reducing juvenile incarceration and recidivism, while increasing victims' satisfaction with the justice system. The Chinese model of delinquency control contributes the most to this positive outcome. First, the surveillance approach increases the level of formal social control. The Prosecutorial Office has the power of supervising and observing youth according to the Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China (2012 Amendment). In Dandelion Pukou, this supervision is conducted through the enactment of the *bangjiao* contract. Youth are required to submit written reports monthly. Prosecutors also visit the school and family often. The visit also increases formal control. Second, informal social control contributes to the positive outcome of the program. The parents and teachers sign the *bangjiao* contract. They are required to supervise youth behavior during probation. Family and school visits continuously remind them of their responsibility. The collaboration of school, family, and the legal agency increases control over youth.

The second factor contributing to the positive outcome is the nature of the offense and offenders selected for the program. Youth who participate in the program are low-risk. None have any prior criminal record. They are all nonviolent offenders. Offenses are relatively minor, such as theft and false imprisonment.

The third possible explanation is the reintegrative shaming nature of Chinese society. Traditional Eastern countries, such as Japan and China, show the great value of reintegrative shaming. In Dandelion Pukou, people from the local community and neighborhood are brought in, and they are asked to reaccept the youth and give them a second chance at a normal life. The reacceptance of the community helps youth recognize consequences and reduce recidivism.

The results seem quite promising. However, there are still some questions about why there were only 16 cases in total that were referred to the program. Two factors limit the expansion of the program. First, heavy caseload prevents prosecutors from expanding the diversion program. For example, for each diversion case, the prosecutor has to interview the offender, meet with the family and people from the community, and organize the round table meeting with all stakeholders. In all, the diversion brings a lot of extra work. Even with the assistance of the social worker, the prosecutor still has to put much effort in reviewing each case. Thus, it is likely that they are reluctant to refer a case to the program even if the program provides supportive service to youth and their families. Second, for police departments, only a conviction counts toward success. If a case is referred to the diversion program and not prosecuted, it does not count toward their success as law enforcement. If they predict that a certain case might end up in diversion, they may tend to execute their discretionary power and not to refer the case to the prosecutorial office. This limits the number of diversion-eligible cases to the procuratorial office. In spite of these limitations, China continues to emphasize diversion program for youth.

## References

- Beck, V. S., Ramsey, R. J., Lipps, T. R., & Travis, L. F. 2006. Juvenile diversion: An outcome study of the Hamilton County, Ohio, unofficial juvenile community courts. *Juvenile and Family Court Journal*, 57(1), 1–10.
- Becker, H. S. (1963). *Outsiders: Defining deviance*. Retrieved January 26, 2017, from [http://leeclarke.com/courses/intro/readings/becker\\_definingdeviance.pdf](http://leeclarke.com/courses/intro/readings/becker_definingdeviance.pdf)
- Bradshaw, W., & Umbreit, M. (2003). Assessing satisfaction with victim services: The development and use of the victim satisfaction with offender dialogue scale (VSODS). *International Review of Victimology*, 10(1), 71–83.
- Braithwaite, J. (1989). *Crime, shame and reintegration*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press
- Bynum, J. E., & Thompson, W. E. (1996). *Juvenile delinquency: A sociological approach*. (3rd Edition). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Chen, X. (2002). Social control in China: Applications of the labeling theory and the reintegrative shaming theory. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 46(1), 45–63.
- Criminal Law of People's Republic of China (1997 Revision). Retrieved from <http://www.china.org.cn/english/government/207320.htm>
- Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China (2012 Amendment). Retrieved December 10, 2016, from <https://www.cecc.gov/resources/legal-provisions/criminal-procedure-law-of-the-peoples-republic-of-china>
- Davidson, W. S. II, Redner, R., Admur, R., & Mitchell, C. (1990). *Alternative treatments for troubled youth: The case of diversion from the justice system*. New York, NY: Plenum Press.
- Deng, S. G. (2012). Jian li wo guo de fu tiao jian bu qi su zhi du (The establishing of the Chinese conditional nonprosecution system). *Guo jia jian cha guan xue yuan xue bao*, 20(1), 100–106.
- Dong, L.T. (2015). Wo guo fu tiao jian bu qi su zhi du ruo gan wen ti de fan si yu wan shan (Reconsidering several issues in Chinese condition non-prosecution system and how to improve it). *Ji nan xue bao*, 1, 42–52.
- Elliott, D. S., Dunford, F. W., & Knowles, B. (1978). *Diversion: A study of alternative processing practices: An overview of initial study findings*. Boulder, CO: Behavioral Research Institute.
- Evans Cuellar, A., McReynolds, L. S., & Wasserman, G. A. (2006). A cure for crime: Can mental health treatment diversion reduce crime among youth? *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 25(1), 197–214. DOI: 10.1002/pam.20162
- Frazier, C. E., & Cochran, J. K. (1986). Official intervention, diversion from the juvenile justice system, and dynamics of human services work: Effects of a reform goal based on labeling theory. *Crime & Delinquency*, 32(2), 157–176.
- Hamilton, Z. K., Sullivan, C. J., Veysey, B. M., & Grillo, M. (2007). Diverting multi-problem youth from juvenile justice: investigating the importance of community influence on placement and recidivism. *Behavioral sciences & the law*, 25(1), 137–158. doi: 10.1002/bsl.720
- Henggeler, S. W., Halliday-Boykins, C. A., Cunningham, P. B., Randall, J., Shapiro, S. B., & Chapman, J. E. (2006). Juvenile drug court: Enhancing outcomes by integrating evidence-based treatments. *Journal of consulting and clinical psychology*, 74(1), 42. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.74.1.42>
- Klein, Malcolm W. 1976. Issues and Realities in Police Diversion Programs. *Crime and Delinquency*, 22, 421–27.
- Law of the People's Republic of China on Protection of Minors (1991). Retrieved from <http://www.china.org.cn/english/government/207411.htm>
- Law of the People's Republic of China on Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (2012 Amendment). Retrieved from <http://www.lawinfochina.com/display.aspx?lib=law&id=12577&CGid=>
- Lemert, E. M. (1972). *Human Deviance, Social Problems, and Social Control*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ.
- Lincoln, S. B. 1976. Juvenile Referral and Recidivism. In R. M. Carter and M.W. Klein (eds.). *Back on the Street: Diversion of Juvenile Offenders*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Lipsey, M.W., Cordray, D. S., and Berger, D. E. (1981). Evaluation of a Juvenile Diversion Program: Using Multiple Lines of Evidence. *Evaluation Review* 5(3), 283–306.
- Lo, T. W., Maxwell, G. M., & Wong, D. S. (2006). Diversion from youth courts in five Asia Pacific jurisdictions welfare or restorative solutions. *International Journal of Offender Therapy & Comparative Criminology*, 50(1), 5–20. doi:10.1177/0306624X05277944
- Lundman, R. J. (1993). *Prevention and control of delinquency*. (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Patrick, S., & Marsh, R. (2005). Juvenile diversion: Results of a 3-year experimental study. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, 16(1), 59–73.
- Polk, K. (1995). Polk, K. (1984). Juvenile diversion: A look at the record. *Crime & Delinquency*, 30(4), 648–659. doi: 10.1177/0011128784030004011
- Public Security Administration Punishments Law of the People's Republic of China (2012 Amendment). Retrieved from <http://www.lawinfochina.com/display.aspx?lib=law&id=4549&CGid=>
- Summer Program of Dandelion Pukou (2013, August). Retrieved from <http://www.pkjcy.net/dxsfszyfw/zxx/201308/640.html>
- Tannenbaum, F. (1938). *Crime and the community*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

# The Effects of Restorative Justice Programming on Juvenile Offender Empathy

Mike Tapia and Nicholas D. Natividad  
New Mexico State University

Crystal Vasquez  
SAMM Ministries

We evaluate the effects of a restorative justice program on the attitudes of a group of young offenders. The U.S. Department of Justice's *Victim Impact: Listen and Learn* curriculum was administered to treatment and control groups of youth fulfilling conditions of probation and parole at a non-profit community agency. We compare pre- and post-treatment survey scores to gauge program effects on participants' levels of offender accountability and empathy for victims. The scores of a matched control group that did not participate in the restorative justice program are also compared within and between groups. Finally, we compare rates of successful completion of community supervision conditions between the treatment and control groups. Insights from qualitative assessments of the program are also included.

*Keywords:* restorative justice, empathy, juvenile delinquency

The traditional system of addressing crime in America is one of punishment and retribution. Numerous studies have shown that the criminal justice system is largely unsuccessful in reducing recidivism and rehabilitating offenders (e.g. Butts & Mears, 2001; Cullen & Gendreau, 2000; Petersilia & Tonry, 1999). Aside from its inability to deter crime, the current system does poorly at serving the victims of crime or the community where it occurs (Apel, 2012). As a result, restorative justice is emerging as a viable alternative to the traditional system of justice. Although it has gained traction in the U.S. over roughly the last decade, it is shown to be an ancient practice in Native American culture and in the formal systems of other parts of North America (Dickson-Gilmore & Prairie, 2005; Gray & Lauderdale, 2007; Gray-Kanatiiosh & Lauderdale, 2006; McCaslin, 2005; Melton, 1995; Mirsky, 2004; Ross, 1996).

Propelled by three significant developments, Canada launched the first victim-offender mediation program in 1974 (Kleinknecht and Latimer, 2000). In 1995, Bill C-41 recognized that there was a need for alternatives to incarceration and brought about sentencing reform. Secondly, the Canadian Supreme Court addressed the needs of aboriginal offenders who relied on incarceration and wanted to reduce this practice. Lastly, the need for restorative justice was directly mentioned in the 1999 Speech from the Throne, resonating with Canadian policymakers (Kleinknecht and Latimer, 2000). Aided by the movement advocating for offender rights and restricting the use of incarceration, these events contributed to bringing the idea of restorative justice back into Western culture.

Restorative justice focuses on repairing harm by facilitating reconciliation between victims, offenders, and the community (Colson & Ness, 1989; Pranis, 1998; Van Ness & Strong, 2010; Weitekamp & Kerner, 1995; Zehr, 2002). It helps to hold offenders accountable for

their actions in a different way than the traditional system does (Johnstone & Ness, 2013; Zehr, 2002). Restorative justice is a very adaptable practice when implemented correctly and can work well with both minor and serious offenses. It can be used to deal with both adult offenders and juveniles. According to Rodriguez (2007), most restorative justice researchers argue that it is an acceptable and appropriate alternative to the existing methods used in juvenile courts.

Three pillars provide the framework for the practice of restorative justice. First, it focuses on psychological and physical harms and monetary losses brought about by the criminal act (Rodriguez, 2007). Second, it posits that recognized wrongs or harms should result in an obligation on the part of the offender to repair the relationships that were broken and make amends. Finally, it promotes engagement and participation on the part of the offender and everyone else involved in or affected by the criminal act by facilitating dialogue and communication through circle processes, mediation, and other such methods (Johnstone & Ness, 2013; Mackey, 1990; Morris & Maxwell, Gabrielle, 2003; Zehr, 2002). Based on these three pillars, restorative justice practices seek to instill a sense of empathy, accountability, and community in offenders, as well as to give solace to victims of crime. The values it is built upon include restoring emotions, providing a sense of security and empowerment, and promoting forgiveness and reconciliation (Rodriguez, 2007).

As with the adult system, the juvenile justice system has a long history of swaying between rehabilitative and retributive positions (Bradshaw, 2005). Juvenile offenders treated through these traditional models often return to the community unchanged. Restorative justice practices are becoming increasingly popular in juvenile justice since there is a growing consensus among practitioners that juvenile delinquency should be handled differently than adult crime (Bazemore & Schiff, 2013; Bergseth & Bouffard, 2012; Morris & Maxwell, Gabrielle, 2003, Richards, 2011). Restorative justice practices help to instill empathy and humility in young offenders by focusing on how their actions affected their victims and by engaging their community (Bazemore, 1999; Jensen & Jepsen, 2006), U.S. Department of Justice, 1996).

Crystal Vasquez, Education Program Manager, SAMM Ministries, San Antonio, Texas; Mike Tapia and Nicholas D. Natividad, Criminal Justice Department, New Mexico State University.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Crystal Vasquez, SAMM Ministries, San Antonio, Texas. E-mail: crystalvasquez02@gmail.com.

### The Three Pillars of Restorative Justice with Youth

Empathy, accountability, and community engagement are the key concepts that most juvenile restorative justice programs seek to impart in the youth they serve. There are several explanations for why these three concepts are believed to work better than the traditional retributive system in dealing with crime. Empathy has been proven to be a vital cognitive precursor for sufficient moral reasoning and behavior (Pepinsky, 1999). Most theorists of morality, and even criminal justice, recognize that empathy plays a role in pro-social and anti-social behavior. Studies dealing with empathy show that immature judgments and low empathy contribute to delinquency (Holst, Langstrom, Larden, & Melin, 2004).

Accountability is addressed differently between the traditional justice model and the restorative justice model. While the traditional model of justice considers crime a violation of the law, restorative justice considers it a violation of people and relationships (Bergseth & Bouffard, 2007; Morris & Maxwell, Gabrielle, 2003; Zehr, 2002). It therefore works to make juvenile offenders accountable to those whom they actually harmed. Bringing a juvenile offender face to face with victims makes youth accountable on a deeper level and is intended to make them consider how other people were affected by the delinquent or illegal actions.

Lastly, through engagement, juvenile offenders can feel a closer connection with their community and successfully reintegrate back into society. The community is then able to go from seeing this individual as a menace to seeing him or her as a responsible contributor to the community and to society as a whole. This addresses a part of the effects of restorative justice that often gets overlooked. Restorative justice programs can affect the level of volunteerism and community development, and change a community member's perception of the crime and criminals in their neighborhoods (Bazemore & Schiff, 2013; Jensen & Jepsen, 2006; Van Garsse, 2014), Kleinknecht and Latimer, 2000).

The current study evaluates how empathy, accountability, and community are utilized together in a restorative justice program for juvenile offenders. We first review literature describing how empathy and accountability are dealt with and processed by juveniles and adolescents. We highlight some literature on previous juvenile-focused restorative justice programs that have met notable success in one of the three concept areas. Next, we proceed to describe the setting for an evaluation of a restorative justice demonstration with youth. We describe the sample, design, and measures used in the assessment. We discuss the analytic strategy and present the quantitative results of this study. A set of qualitative findings helps to provide a more in-depth view of this program. Lastly, the study's limitations and implications of the assessment are discussed.

### Literature Review

The literature on restorative justice practices has grown in recent years. Although there are many explanations that outline the principles that serve as the foundation for restorative justice, there is little research showing that it actually works. In fact, there is still much resistance to the idea that it works (Choi, Gilbert & Green, 2011; Abrams, Gordon & Umbreit, 2006). It is first important to take a look at what has not worked thus far in order to discuss the conditions under which restorative justice might be a better approach for dealing with crime and for rehabilitating offenders.

In the last few decades, the traditional system for dealing with juvenile delinquency has been scrutinized by scholars and practitioners of criminal justice, penology, and criminology. From the late 1980s through the mid 1990s, increasingly violent and destructive behavior by youth spilled over from neighborhoods into schools and became a serious social problem (Elliott, Hamburg, & Williams,

1998). Today, bullying and teen violence still exist in various contexts, and there is public pressure on policy makers to respond appropriately.

The "get tough on crime" attitude also still exists in many jurisdictions (Calhoun & Pelech, 2010). Zero tolerance policies everywhere have sent thousands of children to juvenile institutions. Boot camps and incarceration are some of the typical responses of the traditional juvenile justice system. However, recidivism rates continuously show that this traditional system is not helping many juveniles to turn their lives around (Choi, et al., 2011). Because juvenile systems differ for every state, there is no national recidivism rate for young offenders. However, state level studies show that 55% of juveniles are re-arrested within one year of their release from a secure correctional institution (Sickmund & Snyder, 2006). Given this high rate, a growing amount of research attempts to understand adolescent cognition and other causal forces involved in delinquency.

Much effort has been made to understand what makes some youth engage in crime while others abstain. To begin, delinquent youth tend to reason at a developmentally lower level than non-delinquent youth (Holst, Langstrom, Larden & Melin, 2000). But teens in general are at a developmental disadvantage. Recent research on brain development shows that the part of the human brain that is responsible for judgment does not fully develop until age 25 (Farrington, et al., 2012). For adolescents, judgment and decision-making are affected by gaps between emotion, cognition, and behavior (Steinberg, 2006). Delinquency is shown to commence, typically in late childhood, increase during adolescence, and then decrease, i.e. the "age-crime curve" (Farrington, et al., 2012). Most crime is committed by persons between the ages of 15 and 25, and then starts to taper off substantially (Farrington, et al., 2012).

For this reason, some, like Howard Zehr (1995), posit that punishment and retribution are not appropriate for dealing with most juvenile crime because much delinquency is simply a "gesture for help." He argues that traditional methods do not allow young offenders to fully feel the consequences of their actions from the victims' perspectives. In fact, in case reviews performed by Choi, et al. (2011), the youth who participated in a restorative justice practice called victim offender mediation (VOM) felt that this was a "good punishment" for them. In his article, Steinberg describes studies of social cognition that show that adolescents think about others in a more abstract manner than full grown adults. Restorative justice practices for juveniles attempt to define relationships more clearly; they reveal how these relationships were broken and help the offender learn how to mend them (Jensen & Jepsen, 2006).

### Rational Choice & Moral Reasoning

Many offenders have reported that facing their victims is a much harder punishment and would much rather "do time" (Choi, et al., 2011). This is why rational choice is one of the theories that drives the restorative justice approach and is essential to understanding why or how it may work as an alternative to the traditional justice model. The rational choice theory states that individuals anticipate the outcomes of each course of action and then decide which would be best for them based on which would give them the greatest satisfaction (Keel, 2005). Studies have shown that teens are more driven by the reward part of the brain than adults are and are less likely to be able to properly assess the consequences of their actions (Sercombe, 2010). Their decisions are shaped by the rewards and consequences that they foresee will accompany their actions and that is what drives their decision to a commit a crime. If offenders believe that "doing time" is tolerable and they calculate that the amount of time or punishment they anticipate receiving is worth what they are doing, then the traditional system will not deter them from committing future offenses.

Studies have also shown that there is a relationship between immature moral reasoning and delinquent behavior, and the connection for this is that the “risk for negative consequences or punishment is regarded as low” (Holst, et al., 2006). Apel (2012) describes this process as the expected utility model. This is described as a person making a decision to become involved in risky behavior based on their expectations about the future, including concern for potential risks.

Avery Calhoun and William Pelech (2010) compared the theory of intervention between restorative justice and conventional approaches. They pointed out that the two models have two different definitions of wrongdoing. The conventional model defined wrongdoing as rules and laws that are accompanied by certain legal punishments. For every “wrong” that a young offender commits there is a value assigned to it in the form of a sentence to serve time, probation, or fees to pay. This is what is the wrongdoer is supposed to consider when weighing out the consequences of his actions in the future. A key feature of the utility model is that the person considers the trade off between the risks and rewards that will happen now, as well as those that will occur in the future (Apel, 2012). In some cases, the perceived risks are outweighed by the benefits and thus the person engages in the criminal or risky act.

In the case reviews done by Choi, et al. (2011), the young offenders who participated were faced with the real consequences of their actions. They were faced with the victims of their crimes and listened to how these actions affected other peoples’ lives. Findings in this study suggest that this process helped juveniles realize the extent of their actions by putting a face and a story to their crime. This ability to have a deeper understanding of the experience of the victim and to develop concern and respect for another person is the very definition of empathy (Calhoun & Pelech, 2010).

### **Empathy & Rational Choice**

Holst, et al. (2006) reviewed articles by numerous researchers and practitioners who viewed empathy as being a vital cognitive precondition for adequate moral reasoning and behavior. For this reason, much of the literature on restorative justice, juvenile delinquency, and moral judgment in youth mentions the connection between offender empathy and reduced recidivism (Calhoun & Pelech, 2010). Most researchers agree that criminal deterrence involves a strong link between sanctions and behavior (Apel, 2012). Weighing the consequences of one’s actions involves being fully aware of those consequences. In his research, Apel (2012) finds that the perception of risks and punishment are significantly lower among delinquent youth compared to non-delinquent youth. The theory of rational choice comes into play here because now it is assumed that if a young offender can develop empathy for another person, they can weigh out the true consequences and effects of their actions when trying to decide whether it is worth carrying out. Given the growing amounts of research showing this connection between empathy and moral reasoning and behavior, it comes as no surprise that many youth programs are now geared around developing empathy in offenders.

This concept of empathy is ingrained in every aspect of restorative justice approaches, including Victim Offender Mediation (VOM), Family Group Conferencing (FGC), healing circles, Circle Sentencing, and Victim Impact Panels (Rodriguez, 2007). VOM programs have been the most studied restorative justice programs because they facilitate direct communication between offenders and their victims. Circle sentencing is said to be the most holistic approach since it calls for all parties (offender, victim, family, and community) to come together for a “shared understanding.” Family group conferencing is the approach most used in New Zealand since the early 1990s for juveniles since it involves families be involved in the resolution process (Bazemore, and Umbreit, 2001).

Other restorative justice programs are a variation or modification of the common types of programs described above. Many forms of restorative justice programs exist because they are so adaptable so as to fit the unique needs of their audience. All of these approaches involve exposing the offender to the emotional experience of a victim of crime.

An evaluation was done of one such program called Calgary Community Conferencing, in which conferences between offenders and victims are facilitated regularly. Here, a qualitative study was done on eight young offenders and their parents along with six victims. It was found that there was a substantial change in participant level of accountability, willingness to repair relationships, and sense of closure (Calhoun & Pelech, 2010). This study, along with those done in Tennessee, Oregon, and other states, have all found that there is a significant reduction in recidivism among youth who participate in restorative justice practices compared to those exposed only to traditional methods (Abrams, et al., 2006).

In a study done on seven offenders who participated in a victim-offender mediation program in Minnesota, it was observed that all but one of the seven participants felt shame, guilt, and remorse after hearing their victim’s story (Abrams, et al., 2006). Offenders that have gone through restorative justice programs have expressed being able to “understand people better” and being able to “see the victim’s point of view” (Choi, et al., 2011). In one such case reviewed, a participant summed it up by saying the program “makes people come to terms with what they did....so they are less likely to do it again” (Choi, 2011: 346).

Although there is existing literature on the effect of restorative justice methods on the attitudes and recidivism rates of young offenders, there has only recently been emphasis on getting the offender’s point of view of the whole process. Abrams, et al. (2006) explains that there is still very little known on the subjective experiences of those who participate in restorative justice programs. Overall, from the research that exists, it is the general consensus that approaches like VOM help youth to develop an emotional understanding of the impact of their crime. However, results vary greatly from study to study and are difficult to replicate. Although there is a considerable amount of research that supports restorative justice, substantial analysis and understanding on why it works is still lacking (Choi, et al., 2011). In fact, while much of the recent research shows that restorative justice is effective in reducing recidivism (Bergseth & Bouffard, 2012), some researchers claim that these positive results are a product of flawed methodological design and selection bias (Rodriguez, 2007). Many of the programs studies thus far fail to incorporate comparison groups.

### **The Current Study**

While restorative justice with juveniles shows promise in theory, the success of these programs in changing the way young offenders see themselves and their community is still in its developmental stage. To move the research forward, this study attempts to measure the effect that a juvenile restorative justice program had on cognitive dimensions of empathy and accountability in a sample of juvenile offenders on probation or parole in Bexar County, Texas. Using a quasi-experimental design, the current study aims to evaluate the impact of a restorative justice based intervention demonstrated by a juvenile justice services agency affiliated with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Youth and Teen Services Division in San Antonio.

### **Approach and Hypotheses**

Where prior research examined the offender’s opinion of VOM (Bradshaw, 2005; Calhoun and Pelech, 2010; Choi, et al., 2011), this

study will look at a restorative justice practice called healing or peacemaking circles. By exploring how young offenders view the consequences of crime before and after they have been exposed to a restorative justice program, this study will measure the effect this process has on juveniles' view of the effects of crime. One expectation for this research is that this restorative justice practice will yield similar results to those done on the VOM experience. For the experimental group, scores from a post-services test are expected to show an improvement from a pre-services test in the assessed content areas. The intervention should affect the way juveniles view the effects of crime on victims. It is also expected that the control group scores will remain stagnant since there is no reason to believe their views on crime would be changed. These hypotheses are tested with a Time 1 and Time 2 measurement design.

We expect to find that restorative justice circle participants will have successfully completed the agency's broader youth rehabilitation programs at a higher rate than the control group subjects. This is based on the assumption that their newly found sense of empathy and accountability will redirect them so that they will be more willing to take advantage of the other services the program has to offer. These services included group counseling (circle of support), mentoring, life skills, education, employment, individual counseling, and case management. Successful completion of all necessary program classes and requirements is not a standardized measure due to varying probation or parole case plans. We therefore use a dichotomous Yes/No for completion of requirements. An incident of recidivism (i.e. re-offending) during the youth's time with the agency would also result in unsuccessful completion of the program, placing that case into the "No" category.

## Study Design

The types of delinquent acts the youth in the sample committed include both simple and aggravated assault, all types of property crime, and drug offenses. The independent variable is participation in a restorative justice practice called a healing circle that is designed to expose juvenile offenders to the three central concepts of empathy, accountability, and community involvement. The dependent variable is changes in the views participants have on crime and its effects. More specifically, we measure the youth's levels of knowledge and sensitivity and their level of accountability both before and after prolonged exposure to the restorative justice concepts in a 10-hour program.

A comparison sample of non-restorative justice program participants who are also on probation or parole was also surveyed. These subjects were exposed to all other elements of the agency's youth rehabilitation programs, except for the restorative justice component. This allows for a comparison of their responses on the dependent variable to those of the experimental group. As discussed, a final portion of the analysis compares the rate of successful completion of the agency's broader rehabilitation program by restorative justice program participation status.

By measuring whether this restorative justice program had any effect on its participants' level of empathy and accountability, this study seeks to understand what helped the agency be successful and whether this approach is a valid practice to incorporate into future programming. Previous studies have measured restorative justice programming effects on recidivism, but few have addressed the actual circumstances in which it can be effective (Rodriguez, 2007). This study provides some insight into the setting and factors that contributed to implementation of this program so that it can be used for future programming. Furthermore, much of the past research has been flawed in methodological design. Although there are some limitations

to the design of this current study, it does employ the use of a comparison group and tests for selection bias.

This research is important because it shows whether or not restorative justice methods show promise as an alternative to dealing with juvenile delinquency. This study will contribute to the growing research that tests the utility of restorative justice. The essential question this research aims to answer is, "Can restorative justice practices increase the level of empathy and accountability juveniles feel and consequently alter the way they see the effects of their crime?" If so, then we should expect to see changes in the participants of these programs' levels of accountability and empathy.

## Program Description and Sampling Bias

In San Antonio, Texas, juvenile delinquents are processed through the Bexar County Juvenile Probation department and/or the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD), formerly the Texas Youth Commission (TYC). TJJD deals with those young offenders who are charged with felony offenses or who have extensive prior records. This makes up about 2% of adjudicated juvenile offenders in Bexar County (Texas Youth Commission, 2009). The remaining adjudicated juveniles in Bexar County and surrounding areas are sent through the Bexar County Juvenile Probation department, and these are typically first time or misdemeanor offenders. This restorative justice program was provided to these youth through the DHHS-funded community program.

The restorative justice circles were offered to all incoming clients of the program by their case manager but were not mandated. Of those who agreed to participate, a one-on-one meeting was set up with them and their parent or guardian to explain the study and to obtain parental consent and child assent. This method worked for choosing participants for this study, because the case managers are the natural point of contact for the target population. Also, since both the justice system and members of the family are an essential part of peacemaking circles, this avenue makes it easier for all to be involved. The parent, along with the case manager, can encourage the youth to participate in the study.

The program consists of a four-part series of circles in which the study sample is exposed to ideas and dialogue about crime and how it affects victims, the community, and the justice system. The facilitator (the first author) utilized activities such as role-playing and journal reflections in the circles. Victim speakers and ex-offenders were presented to youth, and questions were asked of individuals by the facilitator to encourage discussion. The dialogue was also allowed to run freely so that the youth could express their opinions and share their thoughts. Everyone in the room was part of the circle, including the facilitators and guest speakers, and the youth were also given an opportunity to reflect on the circle topics through journals.

Once a group of 7 to 10 youth volunteers was established, a healing circle module began. Clearly, this participant selection process poses limitations for a controlled study. With this method it is essentially up to the case managers to make the initial referral. Because not all criminal justice practitioners believe in a restorative justice approach, not all of the case managers referred their youth to the circles, which may introduce a form of latent bias to the study. However, it is beyond the scope of the current study to analyze that potential form of bias.

A more tangible form of potential selection bias received some attention in this study. Because program participation is voluntary, it may be that those who chose to participate are fundamentally different in their views on empathy or other restorative justice concepts than youth who did not willingly volunteer. To account for this, a comparison group who did not volunteer for the restorative justice circles, but which otherwise resembles the experimental group in both demographic and legal characteristics, was chosen, and a basic test for



selection bias was conducted (discussed in ‘Analytic Methods’ below). Both groups were administered the survey pre-services to gauge their baseline levels of accountability and knowledge and sensitivity to victim plight.

A third limitation of this study related to program structure is the small sample size. Fifty two youth participated in the restorative justice peacemaking circles and a group of 22 youth comprised the control group for a total ( $n$ ) of 74. Because the number of cases is so low, the sample may lack representativity,<sup>1</sup> and the lack of statistical power precludes the use of methods such as multiple regression. However, one can still draw valid conclusions regarding the direction and strength of the relationships from the descriptive procedures carried out in this study.

This is considered a quasi-experimental design due to the inability to randomly assign participants to experimental and control groups. Although random assignment would be ideal for obtaining the highest level of confidence in results, it is not a practical approach in an applied, community-based program such as this. Because subjects are enrolled on a continual basis and services are delivered on a staggered schedule as needed or as otherwise determined by program personnel, resource availability, and other administrative directives of the agency, a highly controlled experiment is difficult to conduct. Nonetheless, a quasi experimental design still allows for an evaluation of program impact with inferential statistics.

### Sample Universe

The youth rehabilitation program ran from March 1, 2010 to August 31, 2012, for total of 28 months. The restorative justice component began its circle modules in November of 2010 and ended its last rotation in June of 2012. Although the initial idea was that every youth who was referred to the agency’s youth rehab program would participate in the restorative justice circles, implementation was more challenging than expected. Other probation or parole requirements took priority, such as education, employment, or counseling requirements. Consequently, youth referred to the restorative justice program typically consisted of clients who had already been in the program for an average of three to four months.

In total, the restorative justice program served just over 200 clients. Over the course of its existence, the program underwent several changes in the structure and curriculum. The last six months of the program were the most steady and consistent in terms of application and format. Therefore, this study only sampled those youth participating in these final six months (February to July). Of approximately 12 new agency referrals per month, between 5 to 9 agreed to participate in the restorative justice circle modules, for a total ( $n$ ) of 52 participants in the final 6 month period (or 26% of the available universe). Those who chose not to participate were asked to simply take the survey at Time 1 and at Time 2, with the incentive of two hours credit toward their community service requirement.

### Sample Participants

Subjects were between the ages of 14 and 19, all were on county probation or state parole, and were participants of the broader rehab program. As shown in Table 1, most of the program group ( $n = 47$ ) were referred by the Bexar County Juvenile Probation Department. The remaining cases in the program group ( $n = 5$ ) were referred by the Texas Youth Commission and committed more serious offenses than those referred from probation. The control group also had a majority

<sup>1</sup> As the broader project served approximately 800 youth in its 2.5-year existence, this subsample of 74 youth represents less than 10% of this population.

of participants from Bexar County Juvenile Probation Department ( $n = 19$ ) with only a few referred from Texas Youth Commission ( $n = 3$ ).

Of the 74 participants, 60.8% ( $n = 45$ ) were male and 39.2% were female ( $n = 29$ ). The majority, or 74.3% of the participants were Hispanic ( $n = 55$ ). Eighteen percent ( $n = 13$ ) were African American, 4.1% ( $n = 3$ ) were White, and 4.1% ( $n = 3$ ) were of another race. Of the 74 participants, 78.4% ( $n = 58$ ) successfully completed the broader rehab program and 16 were deemed unsuccessful.

Table 1.  
*Demographic Characteristics of Participants*

Occupation	Percentage	Number of Cases	Total $N$
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	60.8%	45	
Female	39.2%	29	74
<u>Race/Ethnicity</u>			
Hispanic	74.3%	55	
African American	17.6%	13	
Caucasian	4.1%	3	
Other	4.1%	3	74
<u>Referral Source</u>			
BCJP	89.2%	66	
TYC	10.8%	8	74

### Measures

The independent variable, participation in the restorative justice program, is coded as 1 = yes and 0 = no. The dependent variables are composite scores on survey questions in two categories: (1) Accountability, and (2) Knowledge & Sensitivity to victim plight. Survey items in each domain were adapted from the *Victim Impact: Listen and Learn* curriculum created by the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs (2005). They use a rating of 1 through 6; 1 being “strongly disagree” and 6 being “strongly agree.” Refer to Table 2 for the list of questions. We divide by the number items in each scale to yield a final score ranging from 1 to 6.<sup>2</sup> Higher scores denote a more socially desirable response, and lower scores indicated a lower level of understanding and/or opinion.

### Program Delivery

Circles were held once a week for 5 weeks for 2 hours each time to equal 10 program hours for each participant. A different concept was introduced in every circle, and the curriculum was designed so that every week was built upon the one before. After the participants went through the restorative justice circles, the survey was re-administered to measure any change in opinions. Control group subjects were also re-administered the survey five weeks from the baseline.

### Analytic Methods

After the experimental group (i.e., program participant) scores and control group scores were gathered, a series of one and two-sample

<sup>2</sup> When originally scoring the survey, for some items a low score denotes a desirable response, and for others a high score is more desirable. These measures were built into the survey to limit careless responses. Truthful surveys should result in a mix of high and low responses. For this reason, some responses are reverse coded for consistency.

Table 2.  
Pre/Post Test Items

<b>Accountability:</b>	
- Being the victim of a crime changes a person's life.	
- Blaming the victim is common in gang violence.	
- Most victims of crime get over it as time passes.	
- Someone who leaves their car unlocked is asking for it to be stolen.	
- Victims should have a say in the sentencing of their offender.	
- Offenders are sometimes victims themselves.	
- After the offender has served his/her time, the victims and/or their family should forget about what happened.	
<b>Knowledge/Sensitivity to Victim Plight:</b>	
- I always tell the truth.	
- Stealing from people with insurance isn't bad.	
- People who abuse others just can't help themselves.	
- No one has the right to abuse or intimidate a person, no matter what.	
- Doing right in the community is important to me.	
- Before someone can move past wrong choices in life, they must first realize and admit something happened.	
- If you rob someone, you should pay them back.	
- Crime has a ripple effect that impacts the victim's family, friends, and community.	
- If you victimize someone, it is important to find an appropriate way to apologize or make amends.	
- Making amends can be done through an apology letter.	
- Spraying graffiti on buildings or buses should bother anyone.	
- It is important to help others.	

*t*-tests were performed as appropriate to specific study objectives. Mean scores for each of the two content categories were taken and compared for experimental and control groups at Time 1. This test was conducted in order to rule out selection effects. If scores for both groups start out the same, in a similar range, or if any observed differences are not statistically significant, one can rule out the notion that the experimental group was fundamentally different than the control group in some way that manifests in a different set of scores to start.

Within each group (experimental and control) a comparison of mean scores at Time 1 and Time 2 shows the difference in the level of understanding in the two categories over time, and thus gives an indication of whether the treatment made a difference. In the control group, this procedure rules out testing effects. In other words, it tests whether the control group subjects' scores improved. If so, one can assume subjects were merely responding to the survey questions with what they thought program facilitators wanted to hear, regardless of taking part in any circles.

The last statistical analysis compares the program completion rate of both groups in the broader rehab program. The experimental group is hypothesized to complete the program successfully at a higher rate than the control group since the experimental group will have a new-found sense of ownership and direction. This presupposes that restorative justice practices will change their attitudes and help them take charge of their actions and of their lives.

Finally, findings are contextualized by qualitative observations to understand any limitations or successes the program experienced that are not reflected in quantitative data. Because the first author was one of the restorative justice program facilitators, participant observation provided insight on the circle process by default. The journals kept by youth participants were also reviewed, and their content was summarized. Interviews were also conducted with a community member and volunteer coordinator who worked side by side on a community gar-

den with youth during the community service portion of the circle process. The two victim speakers, one male and one female, who shared their stories with the youth in the circles were also interviewed. They had very different stories of victimization, and each story was incorporated into different activities throughout the circle process. Finally, the second restorative justice facilitator was interviewed on her thoughts and experiences regarding the program.

## Results

Table 3 compares the mean scores of experimental and control groups at Time 1 for both content categories. Under Accountability, the experimental group mean was 2.87 compared to the control group mean of 2.66. The *t*-value of 1.12 shows that these scores are not significantly different from each other, meaning participants in both groups had the same level of understanding in both areas at Time 1, thereby ruling out a selection effect. Under Knowledge & Sensitivity, the experimental group had a mean of 2.94 compared to the control group mean of 3.20, with a *t*-value of 1.21. Again, this test shows that participants of both groups started at basically the same levels of understanding in this category, and therefore there was no apparent selection bias.

Table 3.  
Content Area Scores at Time 1

Content Area	Experimental Group ( <i>n</i> = 52)		Control Group ( <i>n</i> = 22)		<i>t</i> -Value
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	
Accountability	2.87	.67	2.66	.49	1.12
Knowledge & Sensitivity	2.94	.71	3.20	1.06	1.21

Table 4 shows the change in levels of Accountability and Knowledge & Sensitivity for the experimental group at Time 1 and at Time 2. This is arguably the study's most critical test, showing whether attitudes and opinions in these areas changed after the treatment. On the Accountability dimension, the experimental group had a Time 1 mean of 2.84 that significantly increased to 3.48 by Time 2 (*t* = 4.53). There was also a significant increase in the Knowledge & Sensitivity scores, with a mean of 2.94 at Time 1 and a mean of 3.51 at Time 2 (*t* = 3.66). As a higher score reflects a more favorable outcome, this means that exposure to the program (the restorative justice themed circles) increased their knowledge of facts of victimization and knowledge of victim rights. It also means program participants were more sensitive to the plight of victims after completing the program.

Table 4.  
Experimental Group Content Area Scores

Content Area	Time 1 ( <i>n</i> = 52)		Time 2 ( <i>n</i> = 22)		<i>t</i> -Value
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	
Accountability	2.84	.67	3.48	.77	4.53*
Knowledge & Sensitivity	2.94	.71	3.51	.88	3.66*

\**p* < .01

Table 5 shows the change in levels of Accountability and Knowledge & Sensitivity for the control group at Time 1 and at Time 2. This test shows whether this group's attitudes and opinions changed after

receiving no treatment. Results show that the control group had no increase in their understanding of these categories, with a mean of 2.66 at Time 1 and 2.54 at Time 2 in Accountability and 3.20 and Time 1 and 2.81 at Time 2 in Knowledge & Sensitivity. This actually shows a *decrease* in the average scores for these content areas, which differs from the original hypothesis. Although the *t*-values are not significant, with .67 for Accountability and 1.24 for Knowledge & Sensitivity, scores declined in these areas over the five-week time frame. In their assessment of a victim impact program, Gaboury and Sedelmaier (2007) saw similar results in this area. Their explanation of this posits that the comparison group not only lacked exposure to messages that promoted accountability, but they were also allowed to sit and “stew” in their rationale of their behavior and maybe further rationalized their own criminal actions. They, therefore, may have slipped further into a blame-shifting mind frame (Gaboury and Sedelmaier, 2007).

Table 5.  
*Control Group Content Area Scores*

Content Area	Time 1 (n = 22)		Time 2 (n = 22)		t-Value
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	
Accountability	2.66	.49	2.54	.63	.67
Knowledge & Sensitivity	3.20	1.06	2.81	1.00	1.24

Finally, Table 6 shows that 87% of experimental group participants successfully completed the overall (broader) rehab program compared to 59% of the control group. With a 32% higher success rate, there is a positive association between restorative justice program participation and broader program completion. The *t*-value for this equals 2.37, which is significant at the .05 level.

Table 6.  
*Program Completion Rate*

	Experimental Group (n = 52)	Control Group (n = 22)	
Program Completion	.87	.59	2.37*

\**p* < .05

### Cursory Qualitative Analyses

Several qualitative methods were used in an effort to understand the real-time dynamics of the actual circle sessions and how this process manifested into a change in the two content area categories measured. A basic cursory review was done on the circle curriculum and of the program journals kept by the youth. Observation was done through first-hand facilitation and participation in the circles by the first author. Finally, six months post-program termination, interviews were conducted with victim speakers, community members who participated in community building projects with the subjects, and on the other restorative justice facilitator of the program.

Although this restorative justice program did not engage victims in the same way as victim-offender mediation typically does, victim speakers were presented during circles and were given the chance to tell their stories. Interviews of the victim participants of this program revealed that recounting their story to these young offenders helped them in their healing process and brought them comfort in knowing that they had a chance to be heard. As one victim speaker described,

“Participation in this program helped me by letting me get some emotional stress off my chest... I now feel I have room to breathe again,” Another victim speaker felt she was able to come to terms with what happened to her so that she could finally move on.

The youth participants who listened to these stories had a chance to reflect through dialogue and activities. Through group activities, they were given the chance to map what type of suffering the victim has and will endure as a result of the delinquent or criminal incident they recounted. They outlined financial, emotional, and physical effects that they thought could result from the story. They were also asked to reflect upon who was responsible for the victim’s pain and suffering. Through journal reflections at the end of the session, youth were then asked to map out the effects of their own crime and determine whether they thought the price they were paying was too little or too high of a consequence. Many of them confessed that they thought they were paying too little of a price for their crime, and that they felt shame and sympathy when they heard the victim’s story.

Once the youth went through victim impact and empathy building activities, they were able to participate in a community building project. These projects were designed to teach the youth about the importance of giving back to the community and to give them an opportunity to make amends. This part of the circle module also enabled the youth to interact with members of their community in a different setting. It gave them a chance to be seen in a different light and to experience appreciation and teamwork. Many times while on these projects, community members expressed their gratitude for a job well done towards the youth in the form of a thumbs up, by providing lunch, or by giving a simple “thank you.”

Journal entries for this section showed that the youth were surprised at this response. Reflections here included responses like “I didn’t know people could be so nice” and “it felt good for people to tell me thank you.” The coordinator of a community development ministry that aims to address issues related to poverty in San Antonio, Texas, was one of the community members who worked alongside the youth participants on a community garden. She observed the youth to be “hard-working and dedicated” and commented that she liked watching them work together to contribute to their community. The community garden was one of many projects the youth participated in. They also participated in graffiti clean up, park clean up and maintenance, the planning and facilitation of the lighting of the Angel Tree hosted by the San Antonio Victim Advocacy Council, and many more events.

Much effort was put in to opening up these opportunities for the youth. There are both positive and negative aspects of this program that quantitative data cannot reveal. In an interview with the one of the program facilitators, it was relayed that the circles made for a great environment for youth to open up and talk about their decisions without fear of being judged. The facilitator also expressed the circles helped build a strong sense of trust in the youth and exposed them to kindness and openness that they had not experienced before. It also let them explore different points of views that they were otherwise closed off to.

Although the program had great potential, the facilitator also voiced some setbacks stemming from program planning and implementation. Adequate training and opportunities for professional growth were said to be lacking and there was a lack of understanding and support for the program by other staff and departments in the larger agency. Also, it was felt that the program was only allowed to scratch the surface because it wasn’t fully invested in nor was it carried out in a manner that would promote maximum growth and support for the youth.

The RJ program really needed to be woven into all other services offered by [the agency]. It was set up as a stand-alone component to shuffle the youth through before (or after) they moved on to the next component. It

was not fluid....This kind of introspection and personal transformation takes time – it cannot happen when kids are being run through as though on a conveyor belt. (2nd RJ Program Facilitator).

Through this interview, it seems that this program was not implemented or designed in the most fluid or connected manner. This could be a reason why only a fraction of the youth who went through the agency actually participated in the restorative justice component.

### Study Limitations

This study was conducted on a small scale (based on the *n* of cases), disallowing a comparison and evaluation of program effects by ethnicity and gender. A larger study would also allow for an analysis of more specific content items under the two broader categories tested, such as victim empathy, sense of community, and so on. With more cases, comparisons can also be made by crime type in order to test whether restorative justice practices work more with a certain type of offender. One way to examine this would have been to test for differences between the subjects from the two referring agencies (After-care (Parole) versus Probation).

In a study done on restorative justice programming, Rodriguez (2007) found that females responded significantly better than males. Lower recidivism rates for females in this and a study by Hayes and Daly (2004) evidence that restorative justice programs have a different effect on males and females. More subjects would have allowed for this to be explored as well. Furthermore, Rodriguez (2007) found that the impact of restorative justice programming significantly differed between first-time or second-time offenders and other juveniles. In her study, it seems prior offenses has a negative impact on the recidivism rate for restorative justice participants, meaning first and second-time offenders responded more favorably to the treatment than did more chronic or repeat offenders. This particular issue was not tested here but should be studied elsewhere.

Jensen (2009) suggests that there is an intricate web of social relationships that most experience from birth. This includes peers, adults in and out of school, and family members. Each of these relationships can represent a risk or protective factor on the odds that youth will engage in delinquency. In their study on youth and cognitive impulsivity, Farrington, et al., 2012, describe some causes or risk factors of violence and delinquency that include individual, family, and neighborhood. They describe a “dose-response relationship” between how many of these factors exist for the juvenile and the probability that they will become delinquent. The parent-child relationship and neighborhood context are other factors that can have a great effect on a youth. Restorative justice approaches help facilitate positive relationships in these areas. Measuring the extent that parent and peer relationships have on these young offenders and their attitudes towards crime is beyond the scope of this study. However, it is an area that should be examined in future research.

Another area merely inferred but not well-addressed in this study is the offender’s relationship with the community. Rodriguez (2007) explains that “the restorative justice process is characterized by a collective effort.” This means that juveniles return to their community, not only after they have accepted responsibility for their action, but also after they receive support services. A newly found sense of community could also help them build stronger relationships with those who are willing to help, and therefore enable them to be more successful on their road to rehabilitation. Rodriguez (2007) also notes that this is ideal restorative justice and that this vision is seldom if ever fully realized. More research should be done in an effort to measure how positive community bonds can turn into a reduction in criminal or juvenile offending.

A final, major limitation for this study is the lack of recidivism data. Specific recidivism rates on the participants of this program

would allow for some insight into whether this program affected the actions of the youth it served and therefore whether it had any long term effects. Also, it is important to note that findings for this study are not generalizable to all juvenile justice programs and may differ in different jurisdictions and juvenile settings.

### Discussion

This study measured the effects of a restorative justice demonstration on juvenile offenders’ attitudes and opinions in a community-based setting. Not many programs exist that are based on restorative justice principles and even fewer of these are geared towards juvenile delinquents, making this a rare type of intervention. By measuring the change in the level of empathy of these offenders both before and after the administration of restorative justice peacemaking circles, this study sought to demonstrate whether or not restorative justice practices can make a difference in the thought processes, and possibly the lives of those who become engaged in the practice.

The data in the current study agree with the findings in much of the literature on the effects of restorative justice programs. This study showed that participation in this particular restorative justice program improved the level of understanding of accountability and empathy expressed by its young participants. This finding is an important indication of how much more the restorative justice approach can do for offenders compared to the traditional system. It suggests there is value in linking delinquent behavior to improved moral reasoning and increasing the level of empathy in juveniles.

This study also showed that participation in restorative justice yielded a higher likelihood of completion of a broader set of programs. That is, participants were more likely to comply with other, external program requirements and to participate in other classes and components compared to those who did not take part in the circles. This could be attributed to the new found sense of community and the chance to be heard and understood, as well as the chance to understand the perspectives of victims of crime. This may have important implications for how restorative justice processes help build relationships and how these youth can act in their families and in their communities.

Although actual recidivism rates were not measured in this study, there is research suggesting that improved levels of understanding and accountability are likely to lead to actual improved behavior (Bandura, 1989). Albert Bandura (2001) found that the capacity to exercise control over one’s self is characterized by intentionality and forethought, self-regulation by self-reactive influence, and self-reflectiveness about one’s capabilities. According to social cognitive theory, consciousness involves deliberately accessing and processing information and using it to construct, regulate, and evaluate one’s course of actions. Bandura explains that intentions which are grounded in self-motivators have a high likelihood of affecting future actions. This means that a proactive commitment to take a different course of action is likely to lead to said action.

Forethought is also a characteristic of human agency. This means that most people anticipate the circumstances of their actions and based on that, they set goals in place that set courses of action that will produce their desired results (Bandura, 1989). This is important to highlight with this study’s findings since a higher level of empathy and accountability in the study subjects here will likely lead to them choosing a different course of action in the future.

The DHHS-funded project evaluated here was one of very few programs nationwide that approached rehabilitation through restorative justice principles. The agency’s take on juvenile offender re-entry includes a culmination of intensive case management, extensive wrap-around services, and the inclusion of restorative justice principles and practices. It is projects like these and restorative justice pro-

grams like the one evaluated in the current study that make small but vital strides in the way the business of juvenile justice, and even criminal justice, is administered.

Jensen (2009) posits that, though the brain is susceptible to adverse environment effects, it is equally susceptible to positive and enriching effects and that healthy emotional responses like empathy and compassion can be taught. He also goes on to say that there is a proper way to deal with youth who have these deficits in their responses. Many authority figures, practitioners, and community members tend to label and demean these kids because of society's lack of understanding about where their behavior stems from and what it means. It is important, however, that we move past condemning and move on to helping troubled teens to develop the necessary skills they need to think through situations and circumstances in their lives.

Restorative justice practices can help to facilitate understanding between the youth, their family members, practitioners, victims, and community members. This approach is relatively inexpensive to run and maintain compared to other programs and can have long lasting effects in many areas including reduced recidivism, increased victim relief, and stronger community bonds. The cost of running this particular component was roughly \$65,000 to \$75,000 annually. This figure includes salary for two full-time facilitators. Running more programs like this one would only call for a small monetary investment of tax dollars that can produce a big return for many. These methods promote healing, treatment, and community-based programming.

## References

- Abrams, L.S., Gordon, A., & Umbreit, M. (2006). Young offenders speak about meeting their victims: implications for future programs. *Contemporary Justice Review*, 9(3): 243–256.
- Apel, R. (2012). Sanctions, perceptions, and crime: Implications for criminal deterrence. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 29: 67–101.
- Bandura, A. (1989). Human agency in social cognitive theory. *American Psychologist* 44(9): 1175–1184.
- Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. *Annual Review Psychology*, (52):1–26.
- Bazemore, G. (1999). *Restorative Juvenile Justice: An Exploration of the Restorative Justice Paradigm for Reforming Juvenile Justice*. (L. Walgrave, Ed.). Criminal Justice Press.
- Bazemore, G., & Schiff, M. (2013). *Juvenile Justice Reform and Restorative Justice*. Routledge.
- Bazemore, G. & Umbreit, M. (2001). A comparison of four restorative justice conferencing models. *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*. February: 1–20.
- BCFS Health and Human Services. (2012). Youth Transition Centers. <http://www.bcfs.net>. Accessed on January 4, 2013.
- BCFS Health and Human Services. (2012). Youth Transition Centers. <http://www.bcfs.net/about-bcfs/experience/youth-transition-centers>. Accessed on January 4, 2013.
- Bergseth, K. J., & Bouffard, J. A. (2007). The long-term impact of restorative justice programming for juvenile offenders. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 35(4), 433–451. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2007.05.006>
- Bradshaw, W. (2005). Restorative justice dialogue: the impact of mediation and conferencing on juvenile recidivism. *Federal Probation*, (69)2: 15–21.
- Brinker, G.P., Roger J.G., & Triplett, R.A. (2002). Growing up poor: Examining the link between persistent childhood poverty and delinquency. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 18, 159–187.
- Butts, J.A., & Mears, D.P. (2001). Reviving juvenile justice in a get-tough era. *Youth & Society*, 33(2), 169–198.
- Calhoun, A., & Pelech, W. (2010). Responding to young people responsible for harm: a comparative study of restorative and conventional approaches. *Contemporary Justice Review*, 13(3), 287–306.
- Choi, J., Gilbert, M., & Green, D. (2011). Putting a Human Face on Crimes: A Qualitative Study on Restorative Justice Processes for Youths. *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 28(5), 335–355.
- Colson, C., & Ness, D. V. (1989). *Convicted: New Hope for Ending America's Crime Crisis*. Westchester, Ill: Crossway Books.
- Cullen, F.T., & Gendreau, P. (2000). Assessing correctional rehabilitation: policy, practice, and prospects. *Criminal Justice*, 3: 109–175.
- Dickson-Gilmore, J., & Prairie, C. L. (2005). "Will the Circle be Unbroken?": *Aboriginal Communities, Restorative Justice, and the Challenges of Conflict and Change* (2nd Revised edition). Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division.
- Elliott, D.S., Hamburg, B.A., & Williams, K.R. (1998). Violence in American Schools: An Overview. In D.S. Elliott, B.A. Hamburg, and K.R. Williams (Eds.), *Violence in American Schools* (pp. 3–18). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Farrington, D.P., Loeber, R., Lynam, D.R., Menting, B., Moffitt, T.E., Pardini, D., Stallings, R., & Stouthamer-Loeber, M. (2012). Findings from the Pittsburgh youth study: Cognitive impulsivity and intelligence as predictors of the age-crime curve. *Journal Of The American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 51(11).
- Gaboury, M.T. and Sedelmaier, C.M. (2007). *Impact of victim (ioc) curriculum development project: Final evaluation report*. University of New Haven: West Haven, CT.
- Gamble, Y. (2013, March 5). Email interview.
- Glassner, S., & Stafford, M. (2012). Evaluation of children's aftercare re-entry experience (CARE) for the Texas Department of Juvenile Justice. *Texas Juvenile Justice Department: Appendix C*.
- Gray, B., & Lauderdale, P. (2007). The Great Circle of Justice: North American Indigenous Justice and Contemporary Restoration Programs. *Contemporary Justice Review*, 10(2), 215–225.
- Gray-Kanatiyosh, B. A., & Lauderdale, P. (2006). The Web of Justice: Restorative Justice Has Presented Only Part of the Story. *Wicazo Sa Review*, 21(1), 29–41.
- Hayes, H., & Haly, K. (2004). Conferencing and re-offending in Queensland. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 37(2), 167–191.
- Hines, D. J., (2008). Restoring Juvenile Justice. *GPSOLO, April Issue*. Retrieved February 22, 2016, from [http://www.americanbar.org/newsletter/publications/gp\\_solo\\_magazine\\_home/gp\\_solo\\_magazine\\_index/restoringjuvenilejustice.html](http://www.americanbar.org/newsletter/publications/gp_solo_magazine_home/gp_solo_magazine_index/restoringjuvenilejustice.html)
- Holst, U., Langstrom, N., Larden, Martin., & Melin, L. (2006). Moral judgement, cognitive distortions and empathy in incarcerated delinquent and community control adolescents. *Psychological, Crime & Law*, 12(5): 453–462.
- Jensen, E., & Jepsen, J. (Eds.). (2006). *Juvenile Law Violators, Human Rights, and the Development of New Juvenile Justice Systems*. Oxford: Hart Publishing.
- Jensen, E. (2009). *Teaching with poverty in mind: What being poor does to kids' brains and what schools can do about it*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Johnstone, G., & Ness, D. V. (2013). *Handbook of Restorative Justice*. Routledge.
- Keel, R. (2005). Rational choice and deterrence theory: sociology of deviant behavior. <http://www.umsl.edu/~keelr/200/ratchoc.html>. Accessed on November 11, 2011.

- Kleinknecht, S. & Latimer, J. (2000). The effects of restorative justice programming: A review of the empirical. Research and Statistics Division: Department of Justice Canada. [http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/pi/rs/rep-rap/2000/rr00\\_16/index.html](http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/pi/rs/rep-rap/2000/rr00_16/index.html). Retrieved on April 2, 2013.
- Mackey, R. V. (1990). *Restorative Justice: Toward Nonviolence*. Presbyterian Criminal Justice Program.
- McCaslin, W. D. (2005). *Justice As Healing: Indigenous Ways*. St. Paul, Minn: Living Justice Press.
- Melton, A. P. (1995). Indigenous Justice Systems and Tribal Society. *Judicature*, 79, 126.
- Mirsky, L. (2004). Restorative Justice Practices of Native American, First Nation and Other Indigenous People of North America: Part One. Retrieved February 22, 2016, from [http://www.iirp.edu/article\\_detail.php?article\\_id=NDA1](http://www.iirp.edu/article_detail.php?article_id=NDA1)
- Morris, A., & Maxwell, Gabrielle (Eds.). (2003). *Restorative justice for juveniles: conferencing, mediation and circles* (Repr). Oxford: Hart.
- National Center for Children in Poverty. 2012. *Child Poverty*. <http://www.nccp.org/topics/childpoverty.html>.
- Nussbaum, N. (2013, March 5). Email interview.
- Pepinsky, H. (1999). Empathy Works, Obedience Doesn't. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, 9(2), 141–167.
- Petersilia, J., & Tonry, M. (1999). American prisons at the beginning of the twenty-first century. *Crime and Justice*, 26(1): 1–13.
- Pranis, K. (1998). *Guide for Implementing the Balanced and Restorative Justice Model*. United States: US Dept of Justice
- Richards, Kelly. (2011). Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice: What makes juvenile offenders different from adult offenders? *Australian Institute of Criminology*. [http://www.aic.gov.au/media\\_library/publications/tandi\\_pdf/tandi409.pdf](http://www.aic.gov.au/media_library/publications/tandi_pdf/tandi409.pdf). Accessed September 21, 2015.
- Rodriguez N. (2007). Restorative justice at work: Examining the impact of restorative justice resolutions on juvenile recidivism. *Crime & Delinquency*, 53, 355–379.
- Ross, R. (1996). *Returning to the teachings: exploring aboriginal justice*. Toronto: Penguin Books.
- Ruiz, R. (2013, March 10). Email interview.
- Sercombe, H. (2010). The 'teen brain' research: Critical perspectives. *Youth & Policy*, 105, 71–80.
- Sickmund, M., & Snyder, H.N. (2006). Juvenile offenders and victims: 2006 national report. *Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention*. <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/publications/index.html>. Accessed on October 22, 2011.
- Steinberg, L. (2005). Cognitive and affective development in adolescence. *TRENDS in Cognitive Sciences*, 9(2): 69–74.
- Texas Criminal Justice Coalition. 2013. *Solutions for Youth Justice*. <http://www.texasjc.org/solutions-youth-justice>. Accessed April 16, 2013.
- Texas Juvenile Justice Department. 2012. *Strategic Plan 2012–2017*. <http://www.tjjd.texas.gov/publications/reports/TJJD%20Strategic%20Plan%20-%20FINAL%20-%20JULY%202012.pdf>. Accessed February 20, 2013.
- Texas Youth Commission. (2009). *Texas youth commission: overview of the juvenile justice system in Texas*. <http://www.tyc.state.tx.us/about/overview.html>. Accessed December 1, 2011.
- U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs. (2005). *Victim impact: Listen and Learn*. <https://www.ovcttac.gov/victimimpact/>. Accessed on November 10, 2012.
- Uvalle, J. (2013, February 20). Telephone interview.
- Van Garsse, L. (2014). Reflecting on a Brazilian approach to restorative juvenile justice-from Belgium, with fascination and respect. *Restorative Justice*, 2(3), 367–370.
- Van Ness, D. W., & Strong, K. H. (2010). *Restoring justice: an introduction to restorative justice* (4th ed). New Providence, NJ: Lexis-Nexis: Anderson Pub.
- Weitekamp, E. G. M., & Kerner, H. J. (2002). *Restorative Justice: Theoretical Foundations*. Taylor & Francis.
- Wong, L. (n.d.). *Falling Up*. <http://www.silverclifffranch.com/netcommunity/page.aspx?pid=1413>. Accessed on January 4, 2013.
- Zehr, H. (1995). *Changing Lenses*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press.
- Zehr, H. (2002). *The Little Book of Restorative Justice* (Original edition). Intercourse, PA: Good Books.

# Positivity and Delinquency: Is the Glass Half Full?

Alexis J. Harper

Texas A&M International University

Research from control theorist Walter Reckless has shown that positive self-image acts as an insulator from delinquency during adolescence. Current research investigates the connection between an individual's self-perceptions and their inclination toward delinquency, hypothesizing that rates of delinquency will be lesser for an individual with a positive perception of self. Data from Wave I of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health are compared to follow-up data with participants in Wave II so reported self-image may predict subsequent delinquency. Ordered logistic regression is used to estimate the significance of self-image effects on delinquency, and probability scores for participation in delinquency have been generated based on reported levels of self-image. Variables considered include measures of self-efficacy and self-expectations, which are compared to rates of delinquency and other risk factors among the sample. Results show that positive self-image does act as an insulator from delinquency, with increasing levels of self-image significantly decreasing delinquency at the .01 level, and reducing the probability of participating in delinquent acts, supporting the research of Walter Reckless. These findings promote the development and encouragement of positive self-image during adolescence, when youth are impressionable, need guidance, and positive reinforcement.

*Keywords:* self-image, containment theory, juvenile delinquency

There are a variety of theories surrounding why a person reacts certain ways in certain situations and why people differ from each other in their reactions. Criminological theorists in the positivist school of thought have attempted to determine which characteristics a person or their environment possesses that leads them to commit acts of delinquency or deviance. On the other hand, it is perhaps equally important for these theorists to consider which factors would enable an individual to abstain from delinquency or deviance.

Containment theorists have determined that individuals who are externally contained base their decisions on external limiters such as laws and consequences. Those who have developed internal control mechanisms or inner containment, however, base their decisions on personal beliefs, values, attitudes, and self-identity (McDonald and Towberman, 1993). Control and containment theorist Walter Reckless (1956) theorized that the way we view ourselves as individuals determines the way in which we make decisions to either avoid or partake in delinquent activities. The concept of self encompasses all the traits that make a person who he or she is and believes they are.

Reckless' (1956) research has shown that positive self-image, an inner containment, acts as an insulator from delinquency. If an individual develops a strong self-image, they are less likely to succumb to the pressures of delinquency, even in unfavorable conditions which may be conducive to delinquency. If however, they have a weak self-image, the likelihood of engaging in delinquency increases as they may lack inner containment to resist it.

This paper will discuss the relationship between an individual's self-perceptions and their inclination toward delinquency. It will be necessary to consider prior research on the topic in order to determine the basic arguments surrounding the relationship between delinquency and self-image, though much of the literature is dated as containment theory has not been often visited since Reckless' work. The research hypothesis in this study posits that delinquency, the dependent variable, and self-image, the primary independent variable, are negatively

associated, positing that those with a higher self-image will abstain from delinquency.

Many of Reckless' original experiments were not based on a random sample, did not have a large enough sample size, were not demographically representative, or had a host of other research issues, which may have affected the way the relationship between self-image and delinquency is viewed. Present research focuses on the original theories of Walter Reckless and colleagues and attempts to determine the correlation between self-image and delinquency while compensating for many shortcomings of Reckless' (1957) analyses through the use of a data set that employed systematic sampling methods and stratification to ensure the respondents are representative of youth in the United States. Research of this nature contributes to the field of Criminology and concerns of adolescent delinquency in that findings may support the fostering of a more positive self-image during adolescence, a period when a child is in the process of developing into an adult. This will hopefully encourage parents, teachers, and other adult authority figures to practice self-image building with adolescents, such as positive reinforcement and early intervention in negative attitudes and antisocial behaviors. Additionally, avoiding factors that may diminish self-image such as bullying, non-constructive criticism, and lack of guidance, may help promote a stronger and more positive sense of self within an adolescent, also helping them avoid turning to delinquency. For those already involved in delinquency and who have perhaps already come in contact with the criminal justice system, it may be necessary to consider how criminal labels may affect self-image and implement strategies to reduce secondary deviance due to criminal labels.

## Literature Review

The concept of "self" is acquired through social experience and social interactions, as well as a result of the socialization process. Self-image is considered an indicator of children's subjective well-being, and has been found to be significantly correlated with home, neighborhood, school, and peer contexts (Newland et al., 2014). Individuals who generally have a prominent role model and were effectively socialized as a child have a greater likelihood of developing and

---

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Alexis J. Harper, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice, Texas A&M International University, Department of Social Sciences. E-mail: alexis.harper@tamui.edu

maintaining a positive self-image and resisting delinquent companions and activities (Reckless, Dinitz, and Murray, 1956; Dinitz, Scarpitti and Reckless, 1962). Other researchers, such as Church, Wharton, and Taylor (2009), have also drawn the conclusion that the social support one receives from family and peers plays what is possibly the most important role in shaping an individual's sense of self. Reckless posits that the quality of the self-concept is what leads youth in their decision making processes and may be a valuable predictor of delinquency.

### The Work of Walter Reckless

In the first of multiple experiments, Reckless, Dinitz, and Murray, (1957) commissioned school teachers of sixth grade boys to establish what criteria qualifies a boy to be considered a "good" boy. The common assertion had generally been that a good youngster is "merely one who is quiet, submissive, and rarely troublesome" (p. 20). The majority of the characteristics the teachers selected as being possessed by a good boy were favorable personal characteristics, attitudes, and interests. However, having a favorable home situation, non-delinquent companions, positive school performance, and participation in character building organizations, religious activities, and after-school employment, also led the teachers to place a label of "good" on boys possessing these positive characteristics.

In addition, Reckless, Dinitz, and Murray (1957) reported a small percent of negative evaluations which resulted in teachers labeling certain students as "insulated." Being excessively timid, naive, or overprotected led teachers to believe boys with these traits would not participate in delinquency. Other negative type evaluations included that "one teacher adjudged a boy to be a potential delinquent but indicated that he probably would never come into contact with the law because he was 'too clever'" (p. 222). This trait may insulate the boy from delinquency, or at least from being caught and processed as a delinquent, but would not necessarily entitle him to the label of good boy. Characteristics and cases such as these are what has sparked debate about the concept of self, how it is created, why it varies so much between individuals, and how self is manifested in the decisions individuals make. Since the birth of Reckless' theory in the 1950s, many researchers have attempted to further this theory by determining the factors that shape self-image and contribute to the concept of the self.

Through the process of socialization, individual behavior can be seen as a function of the articulation of society and self, which may offer an explanation for both delinquency and non-delinquency. In a follow-up study four years later, Reckless and his colleagues (1960) concluded that the boys who had been nominated as good boys by their teachers had managed to avoid delinquency, having been insulated from it through positive self-evaluations, including considering themselves to be law abiding. "The concept of self and other is the differential response component that helps to explain why some succumb and others do not, why some gravitate toward socially unacceptable patterns of behavior and others veer away from them" (Reckless, Dinitz, and Kay, 1957, p. 570). Self-concept, which includes an individual's ability to control themselves, potentially accounts for the ability some individuals have to resist delinquency, even when exposed to a high delinquency environment. If the concept of self is acquired through social experience and interactions, and is a result of the socialization process, then opinions of other individuals must be very influential in the shaping of "self."

### Shaping the Concept of "Self"

"Self-evaluation is basically a positive or negative attitude toward the self. It is made up of the individual's reactions to, and his judgments of, the opinions that significant others have of him" (Hall,

1966, p. 147). An individual's awareness of his degree of success or failure in fulfilling the social roles that are identified as his, shape his self-evaluation. If an individual fulfills the expectations of others, opinions of him will become greater, including his opinions of himself. Conversely, if others' expectations are not fulfilled, and they do not have positive opinions about a specific individual, that individual's opinion of himself may be negatively influenced. In this respect, the concept of labeling can either be very encouraging or very discouraging to the formation of an individual's self-concept.

### The "Deviant" Label

Stager, Chassin, and Young (1983) found that deviant social labeling is associated with low self-esteem when an individual views their societal label as being negative and similar to their actual self. The authors point out that the labeled individual is an active participant in the social labeling process by determining the connotation of the label and then choosing to accept or reject their label as being similar to themselves. If the label is rejected as not similar to the way they view themselves, or if the individual rejects a negative evaluation of the label, then self-esteem is conserved. This theory assists in the understanding that low self-esteem is not an inevitable outcome of the social labeling process if individuals are an active participant in the process and they do not accept that they are viewed negatively.

Reckless (1957; 1960) has shown that it is possible for favorable perceptions of self to insulate youth from delinquency, and that opinions of significant others plays a role in the shaping of self, but this does not necessarily mean that delinquents have negative self-perceptions. Tangri and Schwartz (1967) argue that a delinquent self-concept is not necessarily a negative concept. One who is labeled a deviant may actually be a deviant, but if he chooses to reject the negative evaluation of this label, he may retain positive self-esteem, offering an explanation of why some individuals with deviant identities have high levels of self-esteem. Kaplan (1975) showed through an evaluation of seventh grade students' self-attitudes and self-reported delinquency, that individuals with negative attitudes about themselves are more likely to participate in deviant acts, just as Reckless and his colleagues posit. However, in later research, Kaplan (1977, 1978) finds that lowered self-esteem may be antecedent to deviance, and once individuals adopt deviant patterns and accept group membership within a deviant group, they may not continue to have such self-rejecting attitudes. The relationship between accepting delinquent values and rejecting conventional norms and judgments is especially strong for delinquent individuals who have high self-esteem, which perpetuates participation in delinquency (Issmer et al., 2013).

### Socialization

Social control and bonding theories suggest that if individuals cannot gain support or acceptance from conventional others, there is the possibility that they will resort to seeking the support they require from those with whom they share similar values (Hirschi, 1969). If individuals do not hold traditional values, it may be because those values did not gain them the support they feel they require. This lack of support could lower their self-image and motivation to conform to social expectations, leading them to act out in deviant ways, which introduces them to other deviants (Edwards, 1992). Kaplan (1978) states that when accepted as a member of a group, an individual's self-image will increase if the opinions of that individual from the valued others in that group are high, regardless of whether the group is conventional and law abiding. A positive self-image may insulate youth from delinquency and keep them from associating with delinquent peers; a negative self-image may drive youth to delinquency, but once that youth is accepted by other delinquents, it is unlikely their self-image will re-



main low, but very likely their delinquency will continue as it is reinforced by these now valued others (Zieman and Benson, 1983). "In this way, delinquency represents an adaptive or defensive response to the low self-regard that results from rejection by conventional reference groups" (Mason, 2001, p. 85).

### Self-Image vs. Delinquency

So which is a more powerful causal factor? Does self-image have a greater effect on delinquency than delinquency has on self-image? Rosenberg and Rosenberg (1978) suggest what Reckless and Kaplan discuss are two different aspects of the concept of self. Reckless' (1957) concept of self refers to the idea that individuals who see themselves as good and have their idea of being good reinforced will abstain from delinquency. Kaplan's (1978) concept of self goes a step farther to say that self-image is an overall positive or negative attitude toward the self, which encompasses, among other things, one's decisions surrounding delinquency. "The former holds that people behave in a fashion consistent with their self-definitions, and the latter that they behave in a fashion designed to maximize their self-esteem" (Rosenberg and Rosenberg, 1978, p. 280). The researchers concluded that self-image has the upper hand over delinquency, supporting both Reckless and Kaplan. If an individual's self-image is constantly positive, they have a greater ability to abstain from delinquency, but if self-image is lowered, delinquent tactics may be used to regain self-image. In this regard, self-image is still a greater factor over delinquency, because delinquency is being used as a mechanism to gain positive self-image.

The consensus of this research would suggest that the attitude of the individual primarily dictates how their self-image will be affected based on the opinions of others. Assuming an individual has support of the others whom they value, their self-image will remain positive, even if their actions are not positive. There is something to be said, though, for the idea that positive self-esteem promotes more positive decisions: "low self-esteem can render an individual more vulnerable to situational strains that dispose him or her to engage in deviance" (Edwards, 1992, p. 567).

If an individual does not gain the support of those they value most through delinquent tactics, it may deplete their self-esteem even further. Meadow et al. (1981) contest it may not be as easy for those who do not accept traditional values to gain support. Delinquent youths and their families tend to evaluate themselves and each other more negatively than non-delinquents. Delinquency may gain individuals some self-esteem if they are accepted by others whom they value; however, if those whom they value the most do not accept them because of their delinquency, additional strain may negate any self-esteem gained by being accepted into a delinquent group. This additional strain may manifest itself in even more self-destructive ways for an individual, exacerbating the issues associated with a lack of inner containments and no regard for external limiters.

Lee-Flynn et al. (2011) found that higher rates of self-esteem "played a buffering role in the daily stress process, especially against stressors that were considered threatening and uncontrollable" (p. 263). Having a clear and stable sense of self is necessary for proper psychological adjustment to stressors. The researchers state that participants in their study with high self-esteem tended to appraise their most stressful event of any day as having less negative effects than those with low self-esteem, who see stressful events as more threatening. Those with higher self-esteem were also more able to deal with stressors over which they had less control. Having a heightened sense of self coupled with high self-esteem allows for a reduction in depressive symptoms and the ability to be more emotionally stable over time. Stress, depression, low self-esteem, and alienation have all been found to lead to individual risk-taking, including participation in de-

linquency and other problem behaviors (Karaman, 2013). Having higher self-esteem is "a valuable resource, especially for people coping with important daily stressors" while those with low self-esteem are particularly vulnerable (Lee-Flynn et al., 2011, p. 264).

### Other Influences on Self-Image

Beyond social interactions, labeling, the opinions of valued others, and life stressors, there are additional factors that influence self-esteem and self-image. Socioeconomic status has been found to play a role in the effects self-esteem and delinquency have on each other. Fannin and Clinard (1965) found in their research that "lower class boys did conceive of themselves as being tougher, more fearless, powerful, fierce, and dangerous, while middle class boys felt they were more clever, smart, smooth, bad, and loyal" (p. 213–214). These self-conceptions have been found to be related to specific types of behavior, with the "tough guys" committing more violent offenses, delinquency, and having lower occupational aspirations.

Rosenberg and Rosenberg (1978) showed that youth in the lower class, where the social support for delinquent activity may be stronger and social condemnation weaker, may be more inclined to commit deviance. This conclusion may offer an explanation for why delinquency appears to damage the self-esteem of a boy of a higher socioeconomic status more so than that of a boy of a lower socioeconomic status. This conclusion cannot be drawn about girls, however, as girls do not tend to resort to delinquency at the same rate as boys when self-esteem is low. It may be that the delinquent girl is not as valued as the delinquent boy. The researchers offer the possibility that "the successful gang leader is admired by some girls, but the successful prostitute is not admired by boys" (p. 289). In this case, delinquency would have a stronger effect on the self-esteem of a girl.

Additionally, age must be considered, as Jones and Swain (1977) point out that as adolescents mature, their concept of self becomes more stable. Aging and becoming educated allow for individuals to learn more about themselves and their limits and abilities for handling certain situations and stressors. Many of the stressors which effect self-esteem during adolescence will no longer be issues as they age out of secondary school. Bullying, for example, has been found to negatively affect self-esteem and increase levels of depression in both bullies and victims of bullying (Seals and Young, 2003). However, the prevalence of bullying decreases with age. Bynner, O'Malley, and Bachman (1981) state that as adolescents mature, there is a "growing autonomy in the self-concept," and the need for approval lessens (p. 432). As most of the pressures on self-esteem are at their strongest during early adolescence, once individuals leave high school they have come to terms with what they have been able to achieve, and their need for delinquent response to restore self-esteem seems to disappear.

There are many factors which affect the way an individual's self-concept and self-esteem develop. The opinions of significant or valued others is an incredibly important consideration in the development process, as the quality of familial and peer interaction will dictate the socialization of an individual. Children who do not develop a secure attachment to caregivers and significant others may experience developmental issues in the sense of self and in relationships with others into adulthood, especially if they are maltreated as children (Reckdenwald et al., 2014). This may lead to long-term consequences, including improper care for their own future children, as well as adult offending. The inner ability of a person to direct themselves and resist deflecting from conventional norms "encompasses a variety of related psychological and social-psychological concepts such as 'self-control,' and 'good self-concept,'" (Jensen, 1973, p. 464). The "self" factor is what allows a person to judge what is best for themselves and what will help promote their self-esteem. If individuals' internal and

external containing factors are strong, they are not likely to participate in deviant behavior; however, if their containing factors are weak, they may allow any “predispositions towards deviance to emerge in the form of actual offending” (Marshall, 1973, p. 227). Negatively distorted self-image has been found to be associated with social anxiety disorder, which may prevent an individual from developing strong containing factors from offending (Schreiber and Steil, 2013).

Reckless and Dinitz (1967) state, “We live in a society of alternates, where the self has more and more opportunities for acceptance or rejection of available confrontations” (p. 522). The search for the self-factors that determine the direction of decisions and behaviors of individuals must continue if there is to be hope of discovering how these self-factors can be controlled in order to reduce instances of crime. In this current study, different factors that play a part in the concept of self are considered to help determine the relationship between self-image and delinquency. Multiple variables that make up the concept of self and drive the direction of an individual’s self-image are compared to the rates of delinquency reported by respondents in the questionnaire. It is necessary to understand the relationship between self-image and delinquency in order to successfully develop a strategy against deviancy, stressors, and pressures.

**Method**

**Data.** Data come from Waves I and II of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. Wave I in-school questionnaires were administered to a nationally representative sample of students in grades 7 through 12 in the U.S. during the 1994–1995 school year. Wave II data were collected in 1996, with respondents who were in the 12th grade at Wave I not being included at Wave II. These data are suitable for this study, which assesses adolescents due to systematic sampling methods that ensure large samples of respondents who are representative of youth in U.S. schools with respect to region, urbanicity, size, type, ethnicity, and the inclusion of questions within the questionnaire that provide insight into the behaviors of adolescents, including delinquent activities (UNC Carolina Population Center, 1994).

**Measurement**

From questions included in the Add Health questionnaire, two scales were constructed: (a) the delinquency scale, and (b) the self-image scale. Variables such as age, gender, race, and a proxy for socioeconomic status from Wave I data are included as controls in various models. Wave I and Wave II data were merged by the respondent identifier, so the analysis only contains individuals who answered all of the questions included in the scales from both waves.

**Dependent Variable.** The delinquency scale was created from the questions included in the delinquency and fighting and violence sections of Wave II of the Add Health questionnaire. Delinquency was estimated at Wave II in order to address temporal ordering, so items measuring self-image from Wave I can predict subsequent delinquency. The scale contains 15 items, answers to which range from 0 to 3, representing the prevalence or frequency of delinquent occurrences within the past year. Respondent answers to these 15 questions were summed to create a composite delinquency score. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for the delinquency variable. For a list of items included in the delinquency scale, please reference Appendix A.

Table 1.  
*Descriptive Statistics for the Dependent Variable: Delinquency*

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. dev	Min.	Max	Cronbach’s Alpha
Delinquency	2.955	3.03	4.49	0	45	0.84

**Primary Independent Variable.** The self-image scale is a variable created to represent the concept of self-image. The 51 items comprising the scale were chosen out of the Add Health Wave I dataset based on the consideration of items included in similar scales throughout existing literature (Edwards, 1992; Freemesser and Kaplan, 1976; Jensen, 1973; Lawrence, 1985; Marshall, 1973; Mason, 2001; McDonald and Towberman, 1993; Reckless and Dinitz, 1967; Rosenberg and Rosenberg, 1978). Before creating the scale, the variables to be included in the scale were standardized, then added or summed to create a scale composite score. Cronbach’s alpha for the self-image scale is 0.93, indicating the included variables are highly related. Table 2 shows the summary and descriptive statistics for the self-image variable.

Table 2.  
*Descriptive Statistics for the Primary Independent Variable: Self-Image*

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. dev	Min.	Max	Cronbach’s Alpha
Self-Image	4.113	−0.01	0.48	−2.34	1.44	0.93

Respondents were asked to indicate their answers to questions by choosing an answer on a scale ranging anywhere from 0 to 5, with the numbers indicating how often they participated in an action, whether or not they agree or disagree with a statement, or how they felt about a given situation. For the purposes of this research, all answers were recoded so lower numbers represent responses with negative connotations and higher numbers represent responses with positive connotations. Some items were reversed on the scale in order to correct their polarity; these items are denoted with an asterisk in the list of items included in the self-image scale which can be found in Appendix B. Respondents did have the option to skip a question, answer that they “don’t know” or “refuse” to answer the question, or answer with “not applicable” if they chose. Any answer not coded as 0 to 5 was coded as a null value for the purposes of this research.

**Control Variables.** Characteristic or demographic variables such as age, gender, race, and socioeconomic status from Wave I are included as controls. Table 3 shows a summary of these variables.

Table 3.  
*Descriptive Statistics for Various Control Variables Included in the Analysis*

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. dev	Min.	Max
Age	4,117	15.6	1.82	11	21
Age 15 (15 Years/Younger is 0; Over 15 Years is 1)	4,117	0.53	0.50	0	1
Gender (Female is 0; Male is 1)	4,119	0.48	0.50	0	1
Race (Non-Black is 0; Black is 1)	4,101	0.28	0.45	0	1
Receipt of Food Stamps (No is 0; Yes is 1)	3,191	0.15	0.36	0	1

Age was a continuous variable ranging from ages 11 to 21, but was transformed into a dichotomous variable with respondents being clustered into two categories, above and below the mean of 15 years of age. This new variable “Age 15,” is what is used in this analysis, with 52.7% of the sample being above age 15. Age was coded in this way

for this study because the maturity gap of age ranges in the sample is expansive. Past research has shown that older, more mature individuals may have a more stable self-image, lessening their inclination toward delinquency (Bynner, O'Malley, and Bachman, 1981; Jones and Swain, 1977). Gender and race are both binary variables. About 48.4% of the sample is male, and about 27.8% of the sample is black. Lastly, because socioeconomic status has been found to predict both self-image and delinquent behavior (Fannin and Clinard, 1965; Rosenberg and Rosenberg, 1978), a variable asking respondents if any member of their household has received food stamps in the last month is included as a proxy for socioeconomic status. Approximately 15% of respondents answered that their household was receiving food stamps. Tables 4 and 5 show how average delinquency from Wave II and average self-image scores from Wave I vary by these control variables.

Table 4. Average Delinquency Score as it Varies by Control Variables

Variable	Average delinquency
Age	15 Years/Younger Over 15 Years
	3.07 2.98
Gender	Male Female
	3.65 2.47
Race	Black Non-Black
	3.03 3.02
Food Stamps	Yes No
	3.36 2.98

Table 5. Average Self-Image Score as it Varies by Control Variables

Variable	Average self-image
Age	15 Years/Younger Over 15 Years
	0.07 -0.08
Gender	Male Female
	0.04 -0.06
Race	Black Non-Black
	-0.03 -0.002
Food Stamps	Yes No
	-0.14 0.06

A K-means cluster analysis was performed on the delinquency variable to create four different categories of delinquency: no, low, moderate, and high delinquency. This was done to create a variable that is easier to interpret based on participants' self-reported delinquency, and allows individuals to be systematically categorized based on how often they reported committing delinquent acts. This was also done for the self-image variable to predict probability outcomes for being categorized in any delinquency category based on being categorized in a low, moderate, or high self-image category. Ordered logistic regression predicts the number of differences between participants and determines what category they belong in. Because the dependent variable is ordered, ordered logit is appropriate. Using ordered logit, each category of delinquency is compared to each of the three separate categories of self-image.

**Results**

Table 6 shows the ordered logistic regression results for self-image and delinquency from Wave II. Model 1 is unrestricted while Model 2

is restricted, controlling for age, gender, race, and socioeconomic status. Self-image is a statistically significant predictor of delinquency category at the 95% confidence interval in both models, rejecting the null hypothesis that self-image and delinquency are not correlated.

Table 6. Ordered Logistic Regression Results for Models 1 and 2: Wave II Delinquency/Wave I Self-Image

Variable	Model 1	Model 2
Delinquency	-1.03***	-1.18***
Self-Image	(0.07)	(0.09)
Age 15	—	-0.27*** (0.08)
Male	—	0.48*** (0.08)
Black	—	-0.03 (0.09)
Food Stamps	—	-0.06 (0.11)
Cut 1	-0.85***	-0.80***
Cut 2	0.51***	0.57***
Cut 3	2.84***	2.93***
Obs.	2.953	2.373
R-squared	0.03	0.04

(Standard errors in parentheses)  
\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

Results for the slightly more robust restricted Model 2 from Table 6 show that self-image significantly decreases delinquency. Age and gender are also statistically significant, showing that as age increases, delinquency decreases, and that males are more inclined to be delinquent than females. These findings are consistent with existing research. Race is not statistically significant in this analysis, but future research ought to include a wider range of races, rather than simply categorizing respondents as black or non-black, to determine if any race in the sample is more inclined to be delinquent. The proxy for socioeconomic status of receiving food stamps is also not statistically significant, but future research should also consider a better measure for socioeconomic status, as there is no indicator of income in the Adolescent In-School Questionnaire of the Add Health data.

Table 7 shows the probability of being categorized in any of the four delinquency categories based on an individual's level of self-image. As indicated by Table 7, individuals who have high levels of self-image are much less likely to be categorized in higher delinquency categories than those with lower self-image. The results in the table suggest that the lower an individual's self-image, the higher their probability for being in a higher delinquency category.

Table 7. Probabilities Outcomes for Being in Each Delinquency Cluster (Wave II) Based on Self-Image

Self-Image	Delinquency			
	No	Low	Moderate	High
Low	0.1368	0.2436	0.4820	0.1376
Average	0.2469	0.3126	0.3689	0.0716
High	0.4040	0.3202	0.2398	0.0360

There are a few relationships in Table 7 that merit special consideration. The low self-image/moderate delinquency figure of 0.4820 is the highest on the table, indicating that those who have low levels of self-image are inclined toward average and higher than average delinquency. Individuals in the moderate delinquency category reported committing between 3 and 10 delinquent acts, with the average reported being 3 delinquent acts. The high self-image/no delinquency figure, 0.4040, is the second highest probability in the table and indicates that those who have high levels of self-image have about a 40% probability of being in the no delinquency category versus the low, moderate, or high delinquency categories.

Another relationship specifically worth noting is the 0.0360 probability in the high self-image/high delinquency position. This figure, being the lowest probability, indicates that individuals with high self-image have an extremely unlikely probability of being categorized in the high delinquency category, less than 4%. Every probability of being in the moderate and high delinquency categories decreases as self-image levels increase. These results, along with the results of the ordered logistic regression analysis, lend support to Reckless' theory and the current research hypothesis that positive self-image insulates youth from delinquent activity.

### Conclusion

Overall, the analysis in this study supports the hypothesis that increased levels of self-image and variables associated with positive self-image will insulate an individual from participating in delinquency and negative behaviors. Males and younger individuals are more inclined toward delinquency than females and older, likely more mature individuals, supporting findings in past research (Bynner, O'Malley, and Bachman, 1981; Jones and Swain, 1977; Rosenberg and Rosenberg, 1978). Race and the measure for socioeconomic status, however, were not found to be statistically significant. The null hypothesis that self-image and delinquency are not correlated is rejected, as self-image is a statistically significant predictor of delinquency at the 95% confidence interval.

Supporting Walter Reckless' research on self-image being a containing factor from delinquency is important to the study of adolescent delinquency for many reasons. At an age when individuals are hyper-impressionable and negative stimuli are rampant, it is necessary to teach and lead youth in positive directions to promote their well-being, sense of responsibility, and encourage them in present and future endeavors. Individuals who do not establish a positive self-image while growing up tend to be less successful and perhaps even offend during adolescence and into adulthood (Reckdenwald et al., 2014). Recognizing the importance of fostering this positive sense of self, and offering help, support, and building confidence for youth is important for any adult as a strong role-model and may be an important contributor to proactively preventing adolescent participation in delinquent activities.

Youth who have already become involved in delinquency, and potentially become involved with the criminal justice system, may need additional attention and consideration in order to foster a more positive self-image, rather than allowing a criminal label to be internalized, which may promote secondary deviance (Lemert, 1952). This may require some systemic changes in the way the juvenile justice system and society react and respond to youthful offenders. Suggestions through research offer support for programs that foster participation in prosocial activities, diversion programs that allow offenders to receive treatment in lieu of traditional punishment, and restorative justice techniques that allow offenders and victims to come together to shame the offenders' actions, offer forgiveness, and develop a plan for restoration (Akers and Sellers, 2009).

In future research, it may be important to consider other intervening variables, as there may be a left out variable bias. Consideration may be given to the use of a better proxy for socioeconomic status than the household receipt of food stamps. This may require the combination of the Adolescent In-School Questionnaire and the Parent In-Home Questionnaire if Add Health data continue to be used in these analyses, as more specific questions regarding income were provided by parents. Future research may also consider an analysis of a broader range of races, rather than categorizing the sample as black or non-black.

The results of this research suggest that the relationship between self-image and delinquency is negatively correlated, as self-image increases, delinquency decreases. Positivity has been shown to negatively correlate with an individual's inclination toward delinquency. The glass is indeed half full!

### References

- Akers, R. & Sellers, C. (2009). *Criminology Theories: Introduction, Evaluation, and Application*. (5th Ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury.
- Bynner, J. M., O'Malley, P. M., & Bachman, J. G. (1981). Self-Esteem and Delinquency Revisited. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 10(6), 407–441.
- Church, W. T., Wharton, T., & Taylor, J. K. (2009). An Examination of Differential Association and Social Control Theory: Family Systems and Delinquency. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 7(3), 3–15.
- Dinitz, S., Scarpitti, F.R., & Reckless, W.C. (1962). Delinquency Vulnerability: A Cross Group and Longitudinal Analysis. *American Sociological Review*, 27(4), 515–517.
- Edwards, W. J. (1992). Predicting Juvenile Delinquency: A Review of Correlates and a Confirmation by Recent Research Based on an Integrated Theoretical Model. *Justice Quarterly*, 9(4), 553–583.
- Fannin, L. R. & Clinard, B. M. (1965). Differences in the Conception of Self as a Male among Lower and Middle Class Delinquents. *Social Problems*, 13(2), 205–214.
- Freemesser, G. F. & Kaplan, H. B. (1976). Self-Attitudes and Deviant Behavior: The Case of the Charismatic Religious Movement. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 5(1), 1–9.
- Hall, P. M. (1966). Identification with the Delinquent Subculture and the Level of Self-Evaluation. *Sociometry*, 29(2), 146–158.
- Hirschi, T. (1969). *Causes of Delinquency*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press.
- Issmer, C., Stellmacher, J., & Gollwitzer, M. (2013). When Disadvantaged Adolescents Strike Out: The Impact of Negative Metastereotypes on Delinquency. *Journal of Criminal Psychology*, 3(1), 4–18.
- Jensen, G. F. (1973). Inner Containment and Delinquency. *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 64(4), 464–470.
- Jones, F. R. & Swain, M. T. (1977). Self-Concept and Delinquency Proneness. *Adolescence*, 12(48), 559–569.
- Kaplan, H. B. (1975). Increase in Self-rejection as an Antecedent of Deviant Responses. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 4(3), 281–292.
- Kaplan, H. B. (1977). Increase in Self-Rejection and Continuing/Discontinued Deviant Response. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 6(1), 77–87.
- Kaplan, H. B. (1978). Deviant Behavior and Self-Enhancement in Adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 7(3), 253–277.
- Karaman, N. G. (2013). Predicting the Problem Behavior in Adolescents. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 52, 137–154.
- Lawrence, R. (1985). School Performance, Containment Theory, and Delinquent Behavior. *Youth and Society*, 17(1), 69–95.

- Lee-Flynn, S. C., Pomaki, G., DeLongis, A., Biesanz, J. C., & Puterman, E. (2011). Daily Cognitive Appraisals, Daily Affect, and Long-Term Depressive Symptoms: The Role of Self-Esteem and Self-Concept Clarity in the Stress Process. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 37(2), 255–268.
- Lemert, E. (1952). *Primary and Secondary Deviance*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.
- Marshall, T. F. (1973). An Investigation of the Delinquency Self-Concept Theory of Reckless and Dinitz. *British Journal of Criminology, Delinquency and Deviant Social Behaviour*, 13(3), 227–236.
- Mason, W. A. (2001). Self-Esteem and Delinquency Revisited (Again): A Test of Kaplan's Self-Derogation Theory of Delinquency Using Latent Growth Curve Modeling. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 30(1), 83–102.
- McDonald, R. M. & Towberman, D. B. (1993). Psychosocial Correlates of Adolescent Drug Involvement. *Adolescence*, 28(112), 925–936.
- Meadow, A., Abramowitz, S. I., De La Cruz, A., & Bay, G. O. (1981). Self-Concept, Negative Family Affect, and Delinquency. *Criminology*, 19(3), 434–448.
- Newland, L.A., Giger, J.T., Lawler, M.J., Carr, E.R., Dykstra, E.A., & Soonhee, R. (2014). Subjective Well-Being for Children in a Rural Community. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 40(5), 642–661.
- Reckdenwald, A., Mancini, C., & Beauregard, E. (2014). Adolescent Self-Image as a Mediator between Childhood Maltreatment and Adult Sexual Offending. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 42(2), 85–94.
- Reckless, W. C., Dinitz, S., & Murray, E. (1956). Self-Concept as an Insulator Against Delinquency. *American Sociological Review*, 21(6), 744–746.
- Reckless, W. C., Dinitz, S., & Murray, E. (1957). Teacher Nominations and Evaluations of “Good” Boys in High-Delinquency Areas. *The Elementary School Journal*, 57(4), 221–223.
- Reckless, W. C., Dinitz, S., & Murray, E. (1957). The 'Good' Boy in a High Delinquency Area. *The Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology, and Police Science*, 48(1), 18–25.
- Reckless, W. C., Dinitz, S., & Kay, B. (1957). The Self Component in Potential Delinquency and Potential Non-Delinquency. *American Sociological Review*, 22(5), 566–570.
- Reckless, W. C. (1967). *The Crime Problem*. New York: Meredith Publishing Co.
- Reckless, W. C. & Dinitz, S. (1967). Pioneering With Self-Concept as a Vulnerability Factor in Delinquency. *The Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology, and Police Science*, 58(4), 515–523.
- Rosenberg, F. R. & Rosenberg, M. (1978). Self-Esteem and Delinquency. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 7(3), 279–294.
- Scarpitti, F. R., Murray, E., Dinitz, S., & Reckless, W. C. (1960). The “Good” Boy in a High Delinquency Area: Four Years Later. *American Sociological Review*, 25(4), 555–558.
- Schreiber, F. & Steil, R. (2013). Haunting Self-Images? The Role of Negative Self-Images in Adolescent Social Anxiety Disorder. *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry*, 44(2), 158–164.
- Seals, D. & Young, J. (2003). Bullying and Victimization: Prevalence and Relationship to Gender, Grade Level, Ethnicity, Self-Esteem, and Depression. *Adolescence*, 38(152), 735–747.
- Stager S. F., Chassin, L., & Young, R. D. (1983). Determinants of Self-Esteem Among Labeled Adolescents. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 46(1), 3–10.
- Tangri, S. S. & Schwartz, M. (1967). Delinquency Research and the Self-Concept Variable. *The Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology, and Police Science*, 58(2), 182–190.
- UNC Carolina Population Center. (1994–1995). *The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health* [Data file and code book]. Retrieved from <http://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/addhealth> & <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/studies/21600?archive=ICPSR&q=21600>.
- Zieman, G. L. & Benson, G. P. (1983). Delinquency: The Role of Self-Esteem and Social Values. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 12(6), 489–500.

### Appendix A: List of Items Included in the Delinquency Scale

How often have you done each of the following within the past year:

1. Painted graffiti or signs on someone else's property or in a public place?
2. Deliberately damaged property that didn't belong to you?
3. Lied to your parents or guardians about where you had been or whom you were with?
4. Taken something from a store without paying for it?
5. Gotten into a physical fight?
6. Hurt someone badly enough to need bandages or care from a doctor or nurse?
7. Ran away from home?
8. Driven a car without its owner's permission?
9. Stolen something worth more than \$50?
10. Gone into a house or building to steal something?
11. Used or threatened to use a weapon to get something from someone?
12. Sold marijuana or other drugs?
13. Stolen something worth less than \$50?
14. Taken part in a fight where a group of your friends was against another group?
15. Were loud, rowdy, or unruly in a public place?

### Appendix B: List of Items Included in the Self-Image Scale

\* Some items in the scale were reverse coded. These items were recoded so item coding was consistent before statistical analysis was conducted.

1. In general, how is your health?
2. How do you think of yourself in terms of weight?  
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements in questions 3–5:
3. You feel close to people at your school.
4. You feel like a part of your school.
5. You are happy to be at your school.  
How often was each of the following things in questions 6–18 true during the past week:
6. You felt that you could not shake off the blues, even with help from your family and friends.
7. \*You felt that you were just as good as other people.
8. You felt depressed.
9. \*You felt hopeful about the future.
10. You thought your life was a failure.
11. You felt fearful.
12. \*You were happy.
13. You felt lonely.
14. People were unfriendly to you.
15. \*You enjoyed life.
16. You felt sad.
17. You felt that people disliked you.
18. You felt life was not worth living.
19. \*How close do you feel to your mother?
20. \*How much do you think she cares about you?
21. \*How close do you feel to your father?
22. \*How much do you think he cares about you?  
Do you agree or disagree with the following statements in questions 23–39:
23. Most of the time your mother is warm and loving toward you.
24. Your mother encourages you to be independent.
25. When you do something wrong that is important, your mother talks about it with you and helps you understand why it is wrong.
26. You are satisfied with the way your mother and you communicate with each other.
27. Overall, you are satisfied with your relationship with your mother.
28. When you get what you want, it's usually because you worked hard for it.
29. Most of the time, your father is warm and loving toward you.
30. You are satisfied with the way your father and you communicate with each other.
31. Overall you are satisfied with your relationship with your father.
32. You are well coordinated.
33. You have a lot of good qualities.
34. You are physically fit.
35. You have a lot to be proud of.
36. You like yourself the way you are.
37. You feel like you are doing everything just about right.
38. You feel socially accepted.
39. You feel loved and wanted.
40. \*How much do you feel adults care about you?
41. \*How much do you feel teachers care about you?
42. \*How much do you feel your parents care about you?
43. \*How much do you feel friends care about you?
44. \*How much do you feel like the people in your family understand you?
45. \*How much do you and your family have fun together?
46. \*How much does your family pay attention to you?
47. \*How much do you want to go to college?
48. \*How likely is it that you will go to college?
49. \*What do you think are the chances that you will live to age 35?
50. \*What do you think are the chances that you will be married by age 25?
51. What do you think are the chances that you will be killed by age 21?

# Trauma-Informed Care and the Juvenile Justice System

Sesha Kethineni

*Prairie View A&M University*

The topic of traumatic stress among justice-involved youth has gained national attention. Studies have shown a multitude of factors contributing to youths experiencing trauma or victimization. Reports indicate that about 34% of children in the United States experience at least one traumatic event in their lives, and studies have shown that between 75% and 93% of youths in the juvenile justice system have suffered traumatic victimization of one form or another. In 2013, the State of Texas passed legislation mandating all juvenile probation and juvenile supervision personnel to complete trauma-informed care training. Using a sample of juvenile probation officers (JPOs) in Texas, this study aims to identify: (1) the type of trauma-care training utilized, (2) staff knowledge about the aims and purposes of the training, (3) the type of screening and intervention used, and (4) gaps in the training.

*Keywords:* trauma-informed care, juvenile justice system, juvenile probation officers, needs assessment

A large body of literature provides consistent findings of trauma exposure and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among justice-involved youths (Foy, Ritchie, & Conway, 2012; Frounfelker, Klodnick, Mueser, & Todd, 2013; Gerson & Rappaport, 2013; Kim, 2016; Ford et al., 2016). Foy et al. (2012) reviewed 25 U.S. and 8 international studies related to exposure to multiple sources of trauma. The results showed that young women reported severe exposure to multiple forms of trauma, including PTSD rates of over 30%. Moderate levels of trauma exposure and associated psychological disorders were reported as causes of female delinquency. Frounfelker et al. (2013) studied transition-age youth between the ages of 16 and 21 that were referred to a psychiatric rehabilitation agency in Chicago, Illinois. Out of 84 youths, 79 (94%) reported a history of trauma, and about 30 (26%) had PTSD. The study also found that youths with PTSD were involved in the criminal justice system. The threatening detention environment may also trigger the youths' PTSD symptoms, which can result in problem behaviors that endanger other young people (DeLisi et al., 2010). As more scientific evidence shows the negative impact of trauma on young people, academicians, policymakers, and practitioners have started recognizing the need for a trauma-informed juvenile justice system. In 2013, the Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 1356, which required all juvenile probation officers (JPOs), juvenile supervision officers, juvenile correctional officers, and juvenile parole officers to have trauma-informed care training before their certification or renewal (existing officers).

## Literature Review

### Trauma and Juvenile Delinquency

Many children and adolescents in the child welfare, mental health care, and juvenile justice system report a history of trauma exposure (Dierkhising et al., 2013; Dorsey et al., 2012; Ko et al., 2008). Children can be traumatized by a single event, a series of events, or a set of circumstances (Boe, 2015; Strange & Takarangi, 2015). Bath (2008) identifies three types of trauma: acute trauma, chronic trauma, and complex trauma. Acute trauma is caused by a single overwhelming event, such as a serious car accident, crime victimization, or a natural disaster. Chronic trauma refers to exposure to multiple traumatic events (Buffington, Dierkhising, & Marsh, 2010). Complex trauma is

caused by exposure to a series of multiple, chronic, and adverse developmental events (Bath, 2008). Complex trauma is usually caused by interpersonal traumatic events – physical abuse, sexual abuse, and witnessing domestic violence – that occur at an early age. The impact of trauma on children and adolescents can be extremely harmful (De Bellis & Zisk, 2014). For example, trauma can have a significant impact on brain development (Perry, 2000). Research shows that traumatized children are often subject to hyperarousal and hypervigilance (Perry, 2006; Ford & Blaustein, 2013; Ben-Amity, Kimchi, Wolmer, & Toren, 2016). Perry highlights the developmental stages of the brain. By the age of three, the brain reaches 90% of its adult size, therefore the early experiences of childhood can define adulthood.

Children who are exposed to trauma are in a constant state of alert, and they may also report problems with concentration and focus. Because of their negative experiences, they may consider adults as potential threats instead of a source of comfort and support (Bath, 2008). Children who are exposed to traumatic events can develop symptoms of PTSD (Bath, 2008; Buffington et al., 2010), while specific cues can trigger the trauma even in adulthood (De Bellis & Zisk, 2014).

**Trauma and justice-involved youth.** There are consistent findings regarding the relationship between trauma and justice-involved youths. Research indicates that young people in the juvenile justice system report higher rates of trauma exposure, PTSD, and multiple mental health problems than young people within the general population (Dierkhising et al., 2013; Wolpaw & Ford, 2004). Using national representative data, Dierkhising et al. (2013) found that 62% of justice-involved youths reported trauma exposure as early as age five, and more than 30% of the justice-involved youths reported exposures to multiple traumas when they were adolescents (Dierkhising et al., 2013). About 92% of youths in the juvenile justice system reported at least one traumatic event (Abram et al., 2004).

In addition to trauma exposure, PTSD is also prevalent among youths involved in the juvenile justice system (Abram et al., 2004; Ford, Hartman, Hawke, & Chapman, 2008; Kerig, Moeddel, & Becker, 2011). Dierkhising et al. (2013) found that 23.6% of justice-involved youths met the formal diagnosis of PTSD, while in a detention setting, at least 20% of detained youths meet the criteria for full or partial PTSD (Becker & Kerig, 2011). Prior studies show that justice-involved youths report high rates of trauma exposure and PTSD, although there are differences in reporting of levels of PTSD by gender. Research consistently indicates that girls are more likely than boys to report elevated levels of PTSD symptoms (Kerig & Ford, 2014; Digitale, 2016; Kerig & Becker, 2012; Ford, Steinberg, Hawke, Levine, & Zhang, 2010). In a national sample of 3,000 youth, Ford et

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Sesha Kethineni, Prairie View A&M University. E-mail: srkethineni@pvamu.edu

al. (2010) noted girls, more likely than boys, to be poly-victims, and such victimization is a good predictor of delinquency. Males tend to report higher rates of witnessing violence, whereas females report higher rates of interpersonal victimization, particularly sexual assault, compared to the general population (Espinosa, Sorensen, & Lopez, 2013; Ford, Chapman, Hawker, & Albert, 2007; Foy et al., 2012)

**The impact of trauma and the impact of the juvenile justice system.** Both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies reveal that traumatized youths have a higher likelihood of juvenile delinquency and antisocial behavior (Kerig & Becker, 2012; Becker & Kerig, 2011; Maschi, Bradley, & Morgan, 2008; Egeland, Yates, Appleyard, & Van Dulmen, 2002; Widom & White, 1997). Moreover, trauma history is an important indicator for predicting placement decisions regardless of gender (Espinosa et al., 2013; Espinosa & Sorensen, 2016). Trauma histories increase the likelihood of juveniles being placed in more restrictive settings (Espinosa et al., 2013), and involvement in the justice system has an adverse impact on traumatized youths (Dierkhising et al., 2013). Many features of the juvenile court and detention settings can re-traumatize youths. The threatening detention procedures, such as restraints or isolation, can trigger the memory of a traumatic experience. Even if the traumatic trigger is subtle, such as a staffer's gruffness or a lack of privacy, youth response can be highly reactive (Kerig & Ford, 2014). Traumatized youths may look disorganized, disobedient, or out of control; however, their disobedience may be due to their reaction to the stress (Kerig & Ford, 2014). As thousands of youths are incarcerated each year in the United States, few are screened for trauma-related symptoms or offered trauma-informed care.

### Trauma-Informed Juvenile Justice System

Research shows that much of the healing of trauma can be performed in non-clinical settings (Bath, 2008). Due to the prevalence of trauma exposure and PTSD among justice-involved youths, there is a strong need to establish a trauma-informed/trauma-sensitive juvenile justice system (Buckingham, 2016). Different from the traditional trauma-specific intervention approach, the trauma-informed approach involves a paradigm shift at multiple levels (Dierkhising & Branson, 2016). It requires juvenile justice professionals (e.g., individuals in law enforcement, the courts, probation, and detention) to improve their responses to traumatized youths by adopting and implementing trauma-informed policies and practices. Dierkhising and Branson (2016) suggest four core domains of a trauma-informed juvenile justice system: (1) the implementation of trauma exposure and PTSD screening, assessment, and intervention service; (2) trauma-informed trained staff at all levels; (3) specific trauma intervention for vulnerable populations, such as minorities and children who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation; and (4) system reform to create physical and psychological safe environments.

Other researchers recommend additional elements of a trauma-informed care system. Bath (2008) proposed three pillars of trauma-informed care: safety, connections, and emotion and impulse management. A safe environment requires establishing trust between traumatized youths and mental health providers and caregivers. Comfortable connections must be created between traumatized youths and their care providers and mentors. Traumatized youths should also be taught to self-regulate their emotions and impulses.

Fallot and Harris (2008) identified five core values for a trauma-informed care approach: safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, and empowerment. Secondary traumatic stress (i.e., vicarious trauma) is another critical issue in a trauma-informed care system. Juvenile justice staffs have daily contact with traumatized youths, which makes the staffs vulnerable to secondary traumatic stress (Lang, Campbell, Shanley, Crusto, & Connell, 2016). The system should provide worker support and wellness teams to maintain job performances and person-

al and professional relationships and to reduce turnover. Overall, a trauma-informed juvenile justice system requires awareness of youth trauma exposure and symptoms, well-trained staffs at all levels, and an improvement of child-staff interactions. The Report of the U.S. Attorney General's National Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence (2012, pp. 21–23) identified nine steps for the juvenile justice system to be an effective trauma-informed care system:

1. Make trauma-informed screening and assessment and care an integral part of the juvenile justice system.
2. Eliminate juvenile correctional practices that traumatize children.
3. Provide juvenile justice services that are ethnoculturally appropriate based on child's individual needs.
4. Provide care and service to address special needs of girls.
5. Provide care and services for LGBTQ youth.
6. Develop and implement school policies that keep children in school rather than resulting in suspensions and expulsions that drive children to delinquency.
7. Guarantee that children exposed to violence and are accused of a crime have legal representation.
8. Assist child victims of sex trafficking.
9. Prosecute (when appropriate) young offenders in the juvenile justice system instead of transferring them to adult court.

Staff who are trauma-informed can lessen the impact of trauma on youth; promote resilience, health, and well-being of youth; instill motivation for successful living; and inform other juvenile justice professionals about effective ways of responding to trauma (National Center for Innovation & Excellence, n.d.). A few states – Wisconsin, New York, Missouri, North Carolina, Florida, Kentucky, Ohio, and Texas – have adopted trauma-informed policies and practices in the juvenile justice system. States such as Massachusetts and Washington have developed trauma-sensitive schools, including trauma-informed classrooms. One of the major challenges with the use of trauma-informed juvenile justice system is the possibility of a youth incriminating himself/herself, which could potentially lead to harsher sanctions (National Center for Mental Health & Juvenile Justice, n.d.). Without such procedural protections, the system could create a net-widening effect that could increase the number of youths in juvenile justice supervision.

### State Context

Like national trends, justice-involved youths in Texas have high rates of exposure to trauma and full or partial PTSD (Feierman & Fine, 2014). Complex trauma is also prevalent among juveniles in the Texas juvenile justice system. Using data from three urban probation departments in Texas, Espinosa et al. (2013) found that 10.9% of girls and 5.2% of boys reported four or more trauma indicators. Moreover, a traumatic experience increased the likelihood of being placed in a more restrictive environment (Espinosa et al., 2013). To create a trauma-informed juvenile justice system, Texas Senate Bill 1356 (2013) requires all JPOs, juvenile supervision officers, juvenile correctional officers, and juvenile parole officers to have trauma-informed care training before certification or renewal of certification (Sec. 221. 06, 2013). This training is aimed at providing juvenile justice staffs with the knowledge and skills for interacting with traumatized youths (Human Resource Code, Sec. 221. 002 (c-1), 2013). While the training is mandated, officers can receive the training in various ways. Officers can use a training curriculum developed by the Texas Juvenile Justice Department, which addresses the following topics: 1) the impact of trauma on childhood development; 2) the relationship between trauma and behavioral problems, including delinquency; 3) how to recognize the effects of trauma on a youth's behavior; 4) how to respond appropriately to a traumatized youth's reactions; and 5) how to manage stress caused by working with a traumatized population (Texas Juve-



nile Justice Department, 2016). The curriculum includes nine additional elements:

1. Maximize the sense of safety.
2. Assist in reducing overwhelming emotion.
3. Help youths make new meaning of their trauma history and current experiences.
4. Address the impact of trauma and subsequent changes in behavior, development, and relationships.
5. Coordinate services with other agencies.
6. Utilize comprehensive assessment of trauma experiences and their impact on development and behavior to guide services.
7. Support and promote positive and stable relationships in the life of the youth.
8. Provide support and guidance to the family and caregivers.
9. Manage professional and personal stress.

Local departments are allowed to use a different training curriculum as long as it addresses all the above issues and is approved by the Texas Juvenile Justice Department. To assess the impact of the training, a survey of JPOs in Texas was conducted.

**Methodology**

**Design and Data Collection**

A web-administered survey of a convenient sample of JPOs in Texas was conducted. The Texas Juvenile Justice Department provided a complete list of juvenile probation departments within the state. Only 160 of the 254 counties in Texas have juvenile probation departments. Using this list as a guide, the researchers contacted all 160 county juvenile probation departments via email or phone and invited them to provide an email list of their county JPOs. A total of 31 counties agreed to participate and provided 160 JPO email addresses. The researchers sent the survey to the 160 JPOs directly. For the remaining 129 counties, the researchers sent the survey to chief probation officer/supervisor emails and asked them to distribute the survey to their officers. A total of 51 participants responded to the survey within 12 days, of which 46 were JPOs. Due to the nature of the web-based survey, we could not identify who participated in the survey or the geographical location of the respondents' organization.

**Survey Questionnaire**

The survey consisted of 32 questions that included single-answer items, multiple response items, scaled response items, and open-ended questions. First, the survey instrument asked if the participants were JPOs, their length of time of working as a JPO, and if they were trauma-informed care trainers. Second, focusing on workforce development, the survey instrument asked whether, when, and how they received trauma-informed care training, and about their knowledge of the aim and purpose of the training. Third, focusing on trauma screening and intervention, they were asked about the usage of a trauma screening tool, the number of juveniles identified with trauma symptoms, and what in-house or external service was provided. Finally, they were asked open-ended questions about their suggestions for future training.

**Findings**

**Sample Characteristics**

As shown in Table 1, all the participants are JPOs. More than half of them (56.2%) had juvenile probation working experience of 5–20

years. Fewer than 15% had less than two years of experience, whereas 12.2% had three to four years of experience. About 15% had juvenile probation experience of more than two decades. A total of 35% of JPOs took trauma-informed care training before beginning their probation work. A total of 65.8% had worked with traumatized youth before their training. About 17.5% of the respondents were trauma-informed care trainers, whereas 82.5% were not; 85.4% of respondents reported that their departments had at least one qualified trauma-informed care trainer.

Table 1.  
*Sample Characteristics*

Characteristics	Percent of Total (N=46) <sup>a</sup>
<b>Job titles</b>	
Juvenile probation officers	100%
<b>Years as JPO</b>	
Less than one year	0.0%
1–2 years	14.6%
3–4 years	12.2%
5–10 years	24.4%
11–15 years	9.8%
16–20 years	22.0%
21–25 years	14.6%
More than 25 years	2.4%
<b>Trauma informed care trainer</b>	
TIC trainer	17.5%
Non-TIC trainer	82.5%
<b>Previous TIC training experience</b>	
Previous experience	35.0%
No previous experience	65.0%
<b>Previous working experience with traumatized youth</b>	
Previous experience	65.8%
No previous experience	14.0%
<b>Agency characteristics</b>	
Qualified department TIC trainer	85.4%
No qualified department TIC trainer	14.6%

<sup>a</sup> Due to missing data, the total sample for this table ranged from 40 to 46 depending on the characteristics reported.

**Workforce Development**

**Training completion.** The Texas Juvenile Justice Department launched the training program in 2015. As shown in Table 2, by 2017, 97.5% of the JPOs had finished the mandated training. Most JPOs (87.5%) completed the training before the state-mandated time frame of September 1, 2015, whereas 12.5% of them finished the training afterward. The majority of training had been provided by qualified trainers from their department (70%). Only a few reported getting the training from other counties or the Texas Juvenile Justice Department. The majority (77.5%) used the training curriculum designed by the Texas Juvenile Justice Department; 2.5% of probation officers used training developed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA). About 20% of the JPOs either did not know or did not recall who designed their training curriculum. Around 90% of the probation officers received 6–9 hours of training; 6.1% of them took training that lasted longer than 10 hours. Almost all the training was face-to-face in a classroom (97%); 3% reported taking video training.

Table 2.  
*Workforce Development*

Workforce Development	Percent of Total (N=40) <sup>b</sup>
TIC training completion	
TIC training completion	97.5%
TIC training non-completion	2.5%
TIC training completion time	
Before September 1, 2015	87.5%
September 2, 2015 to December 2015	10.0%
2016	2.5%
TIC trainer	
Department TIC trainer	70.0%
Trainer from another county	5.0%
Texas Juvenile Justice Department	7.5%
National Child Traumatic Stress Network	2.5%
Other	15.0%
TIC training curriculum	
TJJD curriculum	77.5%
SAMHSA	2.5%
Others	20.0%
TIC training time	
< 6 hours	6.1%
6–8 hours	72.7%
8–9 hours	15.2%
10 hours	10.00%
More than 10 hours	6.1%
TIC training method	
Classroom (face-to-face)	97.0%
Video (Webinar)	3.0%

<sup>b</sup> Due to missing data, the total sample for this table ranged from 33 to 40 depending on the characteristics reported.

**Knowledge and evaluation about trauma-informed care training.** Table 3 lists JPO knowledge of trauma-informed care after the training. Texas Juvenile Justice Department identified six objectives of trauma-informed care training. The majority of JPOs (more than 85%) could identify the following four objectives: 1) understanding the definition of trauma; 2) developing awareness of the prevalence of traumatic exposure among youth and youth involved in the juvenile justice system; 3) developing an understanding of the impact of traumatic exposure on brain development and child development; and 4) identifying the role trauma plays in driving the emotional, cognitive, behavior, and relational difficulties of youth involved in the juvenile-justice system. However, just under 60% had only a limited understanding of the factors that increase secondary trauma among young people or how to integrate trauma-informed care into their daily practice.

In addition to structured questions, respondents were asked to define trauma-informed care in an open-ended question. Most of their answers reflected their understanding of the first four objectives as enumerated above. For example, officers made the following comments: “children in justice system experience more traumatic events,” “trauma has a significant impact on children development,” “the system needs to be aware of justice-involved youth’s trauma,” and “efforts are needed to prevent re-traumatization.” However, none of the respondents talked about secondary trauma and the risks of working with traumatized youths. The responses to the open-end questions were consistent with the responses to the multiple-choice questions.

Respondents’ evaluation of trauma-informed care training was measured with nine response items (Table 4). Overall, respondents re-

Table 3.  
*Understanding the Objective of Trauma-Informed Care Training*

Objective	Percent of Total (N=33)
Define trauma	100.0%
Develop awareness of the prevalence of traumatic exposure in the general population of youth and youth involved in the juvenile justice system	93.9%
Discuss the impact of traumatic exposure on brain development, child development, and individual plan	87.9%
Identify the role trauma plays in driving the emotional, cognitive, behavior, and relational difficulties of juvenile justice involved youth	100.0%
Contrast perspectives and approaches that increase secondary trauma of youth with perspectives and approaches that promote recovery, rehabilitation, and resiliency	60.6%
Given a practice activity, integrate trauma-informed care into your daily practice	57.6%

ported positive attitudes about the training results. The majority of respondents considered the training useful in all nine essential elements. Only in one item, “manage professional personal stress,” did respondents indicate a higher negative attitude (9.1% negative attitude, 12.1% neutral opinion).

Table 4.  
*Evaluation of Trauma-Informed Care Training*

Question	Percent of Total (N=33)		
	Somewhat not useful/not useful at all	Somewhat useful/very useful	Neither useful nor useless
Maximize the child’s sense of safety	3.0%	97.0%	0.0%
Assist children in reducing overwhelming emotion	3.0%	97.0%	0.0%
Help children make new meaning of their trauma history and current experiences	6.3%	87.4%	6.3%
Address the impact of trauma and subsequent changes in the child’s behavior, development, and relationships	3.0%	87.9%	9.1%
Coordinate services with other agencies	3.1%	93.8%	3.1%
Utilize comprehensive assessment of the child’s trauma experiences and their impact on the child’s development and behavior to guide service	3.0%	84.9%	12.1%
Support and promote positive and stable relationships in the life of the child	3.0%	94.0%	3.0%
Provide support and guidance to the child’s family and caregivers	3.0%	94.0%	3.0%
Mange professional personal stress	9.1%	78.8%	12.1%

Note. The original five-point scale was collapsed to “Somewhat not useful/not useful at all” and “Somewhat useful/very useful.” “Neither useful nor useless” remained the same.

**Screening, Assessment, and Intervention**

One of the important features of a trauma-informed juvenile justice system is a staff’s ability to identify traumatized youths and provide appropriate service. Toolkits provide a checklist that can be used by organizations as a guideline for implementing trauma-informed practices (Klinic Community Health Centre, n.d.). The guidelines help officers to recognize the signs and symptoms and develop an effective support system for traumatized youths and their families. Forty-seven percent of JPOs had different trauma-informed assessment toolkits such as Life Events Checklist, Life Stressor Checklist, Trauma History Questionnaire, Trauma History Screen, Trauma Exposure Measure, Child Welfare Trauma Referral Tool, and MAYSI-2. Fifty-two percent did not have any assessment toolkit. For those who had toolkits, 75% had English-only toolkits, and 25% had bilingual toolkits (English and Spanish). Lacking an assessment toolkit made it less likely they would be able to identify traumatized youth. Although JPOs reported their ability to identify traumatized youths (87.5% before training, 97% after training), the majority (over 80%) identified fewer than 10 juveniles with trauma issues over a six-month period. There was no significant change in the number of identified traumatized youths before and after the training. This may be problematic, because prior studies indicate a higher number of traumatized youths among justice-involved youth. It may be possible that these youths either did not display the signs and symptoms of trauma at the time of interview or masked those symptoms. Given the complex nature of trauma, juvenile justice professionals need to have frequent trauma-informed care training.

Table 5.  
*Trauma Screening Toolkit and Service Provided*

Screen Toolkit	Percent of Total (N=32) <sup>c</sup>
Trauma informed assessment/referral toolkit	
Assessment toolkit	47.0%
No assessment toolkit	53.0%
Multiple language toolkits	
English only	75.0%
English and Spanish	25.0%

<sup>c</sup> Due to missing data, the total sample for this table ranged from 32 to 20 depending on the answers reported.

Table 6.  
*Ability to Identify Traumatized Youth*

	Six months before training	Six months after training
Able to identify traumatized youth		
Yes	87.5%	97.0%
No	12.5%	3.0%
Able to identify traumatized youth		
< 5	55.0%	45.0%
5–10	35.0%	42.0%
> 10	10.0%	13.0%

After identifying traumatized youths, the officers referred youths to professional counselors, MHMR (mental health and intellectual and developmental disability) services, associated behavioral trauma spe-

cialists, domestic violence counseling, sexual abuse/trauma counseling, and grief counseling services. A few probation departments provided in-house services, including crisis intervention and psychiatric and bio-psycho-social assessments.

**Obstacles and Suggestions for Future Training**

Although nearly all the JPOs completed the trauma-informed care training, they reported many obstacles. More than half (59%) indicated that lack of time was the most critical obstacle. More than 9% reported a lack of support from their employer. Other respondents indicated the belief that the training was not helpful or beneficial, or that the training was too expensive. Respondents were asked to provide suggestions for future training in an open-ended question. Many recognized the need for a complete list of external trauma-intervention services and suggested more training with specific emphasis on building communication with clients and families.

**Conclusion**

**Discussion**

Overall, the data indicate that most JPOs completed the trauma-informed care training and met the state requirement and the officers had a highly favorable opinion about the training. The majority presented adequate knowledge about trauma and delinquency and indicated a good understanding of trauma-informed care in the juvenile justice setting. Having such knowledge not only helps officers to understand childhood trauma and its impact on youth behavior and health but also can aid in coordinating service needs of youth. However, the results show two major limitations of the current training. First, the training did not provide JPOs with trauma assessment toolkits. Fewer than half of the respondents have toolkits, forcing them to rely on their knowledge and experience. This reduces the chances of identifying traumatized youths, providing appropriate services, and creating a more trauma-sensitive environment. Given that JPOs serve as gatekeepers to mental health services (Dierkhising & Branson, 2016), it is essential for them to perform screening and assessment for trauma-related mental health issues. Second, most JPOs are unfamiliar with secondary trauma/vicarious trauma. Approximately 40% did not understand that secondary trauma was also a major factor for a trauma-informed care system. Officers rated the lowest when it comes to the usefulness of the training in managing their professional stress. Their self-definition of trauma-informed care confirmed this finding.

**Limitations**

This study has limitations that warrant discussion. First, the researchers sent a direct survey invitation to 30 counties. For the majority of counties, the researchers sent the questionnaire to JPOs through their organizations and relied on administrators to provide the survey link to all of the employees. It is reasonable to suspect that many counties did not forward the survey. The low response rate limits our ability to generalize about all Texas JPOs.

The second limitation concerns the number of youth that the officers identified as having traumatic experiences, which was relatively low compared to previous studies. The number of traumatized youth identified is an important outcome measure of a trauma-informed juvenile justice system. The researchers relied on respondent self-reporting on the number of youth identified. We do not have official data to verify their self-reporting, which limits our ability to evaluate system reform.

## Directions for Future Research

Despite the limitations, this study provides a preliminary assessment of the Texas trauma-informed juvenile justice system and some of the obstacles to effectively incorporating the training into practice. Future studies are needed to evaluate the implementation of legislation among correctional officers, school teachers, and child welfare professionals. Future research is also required to address secondary trauma issues among juvenile justice staffs.

## References

- Abram, K. M., Templin, L. A., Charles, D. R., Longworth, S. L., McClelland, G. M., & Dulcan, M. K. (2004). Posttraumatic stress disorder and trauma in youth in juvenile detention. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, *61*(4), 403–410.
- Bath, H. (2008). The three pillars of trauma-informed care. *Reclaiming Children & Youth*, *17*(3), 17–21.
- Becker, S. P., & Kerig, P. K. (2011). Posttraumatic stress symptoms are associated with the frequency and severity of delinquency among detained boys. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, *40*(5), 765–771.
- Ben-Amitay, G., Kimchi, N., Wolmer, L., & Toren, P. (2016). Psychological reactivity in child sexual abuse. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, *25*(2), 185–200.
- Boe, O. (2015). Coping with perceived traumatic events: A case study of a Norwegian officer. *Science Direct: Procedia Economics & Finance*, *23*, 402–405.
- Buckingham, S. (2016). Trauma informed juvenile justice. *American Criminal Law Review*, *53*(3), 641–692.
- Buffington, K., Dierkhising, C. B., & Marsh, S. C. (2010). Ten things every juvenile court judge should know about trauma and delinquency. *Juvenile & Family Court Journal*, *61*(3), 13–23.
- De Bellis, M. D., & Zisk, A. (2014). The biological effects of childhood trauma. *Child Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America*, *23*(2), 185–222.
- DeLisi, M., Drury, A. J., Kosloski, A. E., Caudill, J. W., Conis, P. J., Anderson, C. A., Beaver, K. M. (2010). The cycle of violence behind bars: Traumatization and institutional misconduct among juvenile delinquents in confinement. *Youth Violence & Juvenile Justice*, *8*(2), 107–121.
- Dierkhising, C. B., & Branson, C. E. (2016). Looking forward: A research and policy agenda for creating trauma-informed juvenile justice systems. *Journal of Juvenile Justice*, *5*(1), 14–30.
- Dierkhising, C. B., Ko, S. J., Woods-Jaeger, B., Briggs, E. C., Lee, R., & Pynoos, R. S. (2013). Trauma histories among justice-involved youth: Findings from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, *4*, 1–12.
- Digitale, E. (November, 2016). Traumatic stress changes brains of boys, girls differently. *Stanford Medicine News Center*. Retrieved from <https://med.stanford.edu/news/all-news/2016/11/traumatic-stress-changes-brains-of-boys-girls-differently.html>
- Dorsey, S., Burns, B. J., Southerland, D. G., Cox, J. R., Wagner, R. H., & Farmer, E. M. Z. (2012). Prior trauma exposure for youth in treatment foster care. *Journal of Child & Family Studies*, *21*(5), 816–824.
- Egeland, B., Yates, T., Appleyard, K., & Van Dulmen, M. (2002). The long-term consequences of maltreatment in the early years: A developmental pathway model to antisocial behavior. *Children's Services: Social Policy, Research, and Practice*, *5*(4), 249–260.
- Espinosa, E. M., & Sorensen, J. R. (2016). The influence of gender and traumatic experiences on length of time served in juvenile justice settings. *Criminal Justice & Behavior*, *43*(2), 187–203.
- Espinosa, E. M., Sorensen, J. R., & Lopez, M. A. (2013). Youth pathways to placement: The influence of gender, mental health need and trauma on confinement in the juvenile justice system. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence*, *42*(12), 1824–1836.
- Fallot, R. D., & Harris, M. (2008). Trauma-informed approaches to systems of care. *Trauma Psychology Newsletter*, *3*(1), 6–7. Retrieved from [http://traumapsychnews.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/newsletter\\_2008\\_winter.pdf#page=6](http://traumapsychnews.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/newsletter_2008_winter.pdf#page=6)
- Feierman, J., & Fine, L. (2014). Trauma and resilience: A new look at legal advocacy for youth in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. *Juvenile Law Center*. Retrieved from [http://jlc.org/sites/default/files/publication\\_pdfs/Juvenile%20Law%20Center%20-%20Trauma%20and%20Resilience%20-%20Legal%20Advocacy%20for%20Youth%20in%20Juvenile%20Justice%20and%20Child%20Welfare%20Systems.pdf](http://jlc.org/sites/default/files/publication_pdfs/Juvenile%20Law%20Center%20-%20Trauma%20and%20Resilience%20-%20Legal%20Advocacy%20for%20Youth%20in%20Juvenile%20Justice%20and%20Child%20Welfare%20Systems.pdf)
- Ford, J. D., Kerig, P. K., Desai, N., & Feierman, J. (2016). Psychosocial interventions for traumatized youth in the juvenile justice system: Research, evidence base, and clinical/legal challenges. *Journal of Juvenile Justice*, *5*(1), 31–49.
- Ford, J. D., & Blaustein, M. E. (2013). Systemic self-regulation: A framework for trauma-informed services in residential juvenile justice programs. *Journal of Family Violence*, *28*(7), 665–677.
- Ford, J. D., Elhai, J. D., Connor, D. F., & Frueh, B. C. (2010). Poly-victimization and risk of posttraumatic, depressive, and substance use disorders and involvement in delinquency in a national sample of adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *46*(6), 545–552.
- Ford, J. D., Chapman, J. F., Hawke, J., & Albert, D. (2007). Trauma among youth in the juvenile justice system: Critical issues and new directions. *National Center for Mental Health & Juvenile Justice*. Retrieved from [https://www.ncmhjj.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/2007\\_Trauma-Among-Youth-in-the-Juvenile-Justice-System.pdf](https://www.ncmhjj.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/2007_Trauma-Among-Youth-in-the-Juvenile-Justice-System.pdf)
- Ford, J. D., Hartman, J. K., Hawke, J., & Chapman, J. F. (2008). Traumatic victimization, posttraumatic stress disorder, suicidal ideation, and substance abuse risk among juvenile-justice-involved youth. *Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma*, *1*(1), 75–92.
- Foy, D. W., Ritchie, I. K., & Conway, A. H. (2012). Trauma exposure, posttraumatic stress, and comorbidities in female adolescent offenders: Findings and implications from recent studies. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, *3*, 1–13.
- Frounfelker, R., Klodnick, V., Mueser, K. T., & Todd, S. (2013). Trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder among transition-age youth with serious mental health conditions. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, *26*(3), 409–412.
- Gerson, R., & Rappaport, N. (2013). Traumatic stress and posttraumatic stress disorder in youth: recent research findings on clinical impact, assessment, and treatment. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *52*(2), 137–143.
- Human Resources Code. Sec. 221.001. (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/HR/htm/HR.221.htm>
- Kerig, P. K., & Becker, S. P. (2012). Trauma and girls' delinquency. In *Delinquent girls* (pp. 119–143). New York, NY: Springer.
- Kerig, P. K., & Ford, J. D. (2014). *Trauma among girls in the juvenile justice system*. Los Angeles, CA, & Durham, NC: National Center for Child Traumatic Stress. Retrieved from [http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/trauma\\_among\\_girls\\_in\\_jjsys.pdf](http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/trauma_among_girls_in_jjsys.pdf)
- Kerig, P. K., Moeddel, M. A., & Becker, S. P. (2011, October). Assessing the sensitivity and specificity of the MAYSI-2 for detecting trauma among youth in juvenile detention. In *Child & Youth Care Forum*, *40*(5), 345–362.
- Klinik Community Health Centre. (n.d.). *Trauma-informed: The trauma toolkit*. Retrieved September 7, 2017, from [http://trauma-informed.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Trauma-informed\\_Toolkit.pdf](http://trauma-informed.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Trauma-informed_Toolkit.pdf)

- Kim, Y. J. (2016). Posttraumatic stress disorder as a mediator between trauma exposure and comorbid mental health conditions in North Korean refugee youth resettled in South Korea. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 31*(3), 425–443.
- Ko, S. J., Ford, J. D., Kassam-Adams, N., Berkowitz, S. J., Wilson, C., Wong, M., & Layne, C. M. (2008). Creating trauma-informed systems: Child welfare, education, first responders, health care, juvenile justice. *Professional Psychology: Research & Practice, 39*(4), 396–404.
- Lang, J. M., Campbell, K., Shanley, P., Crusto, C. A., & Connell, C. M. (2016). Building capacity for trauma-informed care in the child welfare system: Initial results of a statewide implementation. *Child Maltreatment, 21*(2), 113–124. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.pvamu.idm.oclc.org/docview/1792211886?accountid=7062>
- Maschi, T., Bradley, C. A., & Morgen, K. (2008). Unraveling the link between trauma and delinquency: The mediating role of negative affect and delinquent peer exposure. *Youth Violence & Juvenile Justice, 6*(2), 136–157.
- National Center for Innovation and Excellence. (n.d.). *Trauma informed care and positive youth development*. Retrieved September 5, 2016, from <http://ncfie.net/our-expertise/system-reform/trauma-informed-care-positive-youth-development/>
- National Center of Mental Health and Juvenile Justice. (n.d.). *Trauma among youth in the juvenile justice system*. Retrieved September 7, 2017, from <https://www.ncmhjj.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Trauma-Among-Youth-in-the-Juvenile-Justice-System-for-WEB-SITE.pdf>
- Perry, B. D. (2000). Traumatized children: How childhood trauma influences brain development. *Journal of the California Alliance for the Mentally Ill, 11*(1), 48–51.
- Perry, B. D. (2006). Fear and learning: Trauma-related factors in the adult education process. *New Directions for Adult & Continuing Education, 2006*(110), 21–27.
- Strange, D., & Takarangi, M. K. T. (2015). Memory distortion for traumatic events: The role of mental imagery. *Frontiers in Psychiatry, 6*, 1–4.
- Texas Juvenile Justice Department. (2016). Juvenile justice training latest news. Retrieved from [https://www.tjjd.texas.gov/regionaltraining/training\\_news.aspx](https://www.tjjd.texas.gov/regionaltraining/training_news.aspx)
- Texas Senate Bill 1356. (2013). *LegiScan*. Retrieved from <https://legiscan.com/TX/text/SB1356/id/817334>
- Widom, C. S., & White, H. R. (1997). Problem behaviours in abused and neglected children grown up: Prevalence and co-occurrence of substance abuse, crime and violence. *Criminal Behaviour & Mental Health, 7*(4), 287–310.
- Wolpaw, J. W., & Ford, J. D. (2004). *Assessing exposure to psychological trauma and post-traumatic stress in the juvenile justice population*. Los Angeles, CA: National Child Traumatic Stress Network.