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Journal of Knowledge and Best Practices in Juvenile Justice and Psychology

Demographic and Offense-Related Variables in Pennsylvania Court-Ordered Placements for Juveniles

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Abstract

When making placement decisions for juvenile offenders, court officers often consider the types of charges listed against them. We examined the pattern of offenses charged to residents of 7 types of placements in 1 county in Pennsylvania over a period of 2 years. Consistent, predictable patterns were found across placements, with more restrictive placements assigned to juveniles with more severe offenses, although there remained a considerable degree of variation in offenses represented in each placement type. The pattern of placements was different between genders as well, with female offenders being placed in less restrictive care even more often than their lower felony and misdemeanor rates would predict.

Keywords: court-ordered placements, gender, juvenile disposition, juvenile offenders, juvenile offenses

Pennsylvania is among those states that have adopted the philosophy of balanced and restorative justice as a model for its juvenile justice system. The model and its implementation are described in the Juvenile Act and numerous publications, including the *Mission and Guiding Principles for Pennsylvania's Juvenile Justice System* (Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, 2003) and the *Pennsylvania Juvenile Delinquency Benchbook* (Pennsylvania Juvenile Court Judges' Commission, 2003). Reflecting the model, the juvenile justice system is required to provide balanced attention: to *community protection*, the right of all citizens to safe and secure communities; to *victim restoration*, the juvenile's obligation to the victim of a crime and to the community; and to *youth redemption*, the development of competencies that enable offenders to become responsible and productive members of their communities.

The balanced and restorative justice model governs all dispositional decisions and juvenile services, which must address the three prongs of community protection, accountability, and competency development. Moreover, in recognition that each case presents unique circumstances, the response of the system must be individualized and based upon an assessment of all relevant information and factors, as specified in the *Benchbook*

(Pennsylvania Juvenile Court Judges' Commission, 2003). The dispositional process is informed primarily by a social study report prepared by the juvenile probation department. The report contains comprehensive information about: the offense; the juvenile's behavior at home, in school, and in the community; the physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development of the juvenile; the attitudes of the juvenile's family, school, and community; psychological, psychiatric, and medical reports where needed; job history and prospects; the probation officer's overall evaluation of the juvenile's rehabilitative potential; and the officer's recommendation for a disposition. In addition, the social study includes victim impact and community impact information.

In dispositional hearings, the juvenile court judge can choose from a variety of options, including probation, restitution, community service, and commitment to a juvenile facility. Placement decisions are based on the principle of least restrictive alternative consistent with the needs of the offender, the victim, and the community. As indicated in the *Benchbook* (Pennsylvania Juvenile Court Judges' Commission, 2003), commitment is meant to be a *last resort* disposition that is warranted only in cases involving juveniles who have committed very serious offenses, who present a clear danger to themselves or others, who have histories of failure under community supervision, whose home lives render removal imperative, or whose treatment needs necessitate specialized institutional care. A court presiding over a delinquency case may also order any dispositions authorized for dependent juveniles, such as

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family support measures, temporary foster care, and other dispositions usually reserved for abused and neglected children.

The juvenile court judge has a great deal of flexibility in determining the plans or programs best suited to the juvenile's treatment, supervision, rehabilitation, and welfare. Pennsylvania has a broad range of public and private facilities for adjudicated youth that vary in level of restrictiveness, including: (a) day treatment programs that allow the youth to remain at home; (b) small group homes that afford residents a chance to remain in the community while working or attending school; (c) larger and more remote residential facilities that provide restrictive access, education, and 24-hour direct supervision; and (d) locked, fenced facilities and secure treatment units.

In making dispositional decisions, juvenile court judges are also responsible for ensuring that juvenile offenders with mental health or substance abuse problems receive the assessment, treatment, and special services they need. In fact, the case for mental health services is compelling. Results of several studies have documented the high prevalence of mental disorders among youth in the juvenile justice system (Skowyra & Cocozza, 2007; Teplin, Abram, McClelland, Dulcan, & Mericle, 2002). As many as 65% of these juveniles have a diagnosable mental disorder (Desai, Goulet, Robbins, Chapman, Migdole, & Hoge, 2006). A majority of those who are diagnosed with a mental disorder also meet the criteria for one or more co-occurring mental or substance use disorders (Abram, Teplin, McClelland, & Dulcan, 2003). Additionally, the death rate from suicide appears to be significantly higher among juvenile offenders than among nonoffenders (Ryan & Redding, 2004; Sheras, 2000).

An expanding literature provides evidence of the relative effectiveness of various placements for juvenile offenders. A recent study found little evidence that expensive institutional placement offers an advantage in reducing rates of rearrest or self-reported offending, nor does the length of institutional stay appear to make a difference (MacArthur Foundation, 2009). Other researchers (e.g., Hughes, 2002; Lin, 2007) have also questioned the value of institutional placement. As Skowyra and Cocozza (2007) have discussed, multiple reviews of evidence-based treatments have provided the strongest empirical support for interventions that are individualized, community-based, family-oriented, and multisystemic. For example, evaluations of Multisystemic Therapy, Functional Family Therapy, and Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care have consistently found positive outcomes associated with their use, including decreased psychiatric symptomatology and reduced long-term rates of rearrest.

Although these research findings provide some decision-making guidance when planning for juvenile offenders, it is important to consider the unique characteristics of specific community-based services. For instance, programs that offer mental health services can vary considerably in their interventions and outcomes. A collaborative project with a Pennsylvania county juvenile probation program offered an opportunity to evaluate the relative effectiveness of specific placements for juvenile offenders. The long-term goal of the study is to develop a foundation for evidence-based placement decisions that can maximize outcomes for the diverse juvenile justice population. This initial study examined the pattern of demographic and offense-related variables in different court-ordered placements for juvenile offenders.

Given the importance and complexity of judicial decision making, further research is needed to identify the variables that influence dispositional decisions and to increase decision-making accuracy and equity in juvenile justice settings (Schwalbe, Fraser, & Day, 2007). Lin (2007) has identified several characteristics of youth that are predictive of placement recommendations, including offense severity, legal history, school engagement, family functioning, community involvement, peer influences, mental health, and substance use patterns. He notes that youth who get placed look substantially different from those who receive probation. For example, youths who are court-ordered to placement have different demographic statistics, more serious legal records, and more social problems. As Lin has observed, these characteristics not only influence placement decisions, but may also affect the response of juvenile offenders to placement, as well as their propensity to recidivate.

In an effort to further elucidate the dispositional process, we examined the pattern of offenses in different court-ordered placements, as well as relationships among felony, misdemeanor, summary, and status offenses. We hypothesized that residents placed in more restrictive settings would be characterized by more frequent and more severe delinquent offenses.

Method

Sample and Participants Selection

Our analysis included records of juvenile placements from January 1, 2004, to November 20, 2006, that were provided by the county juvenile probation office. These records included all referrals to the probation system and all court-ordered placements during that period. If an ongoing placement had occurred before the start of the data file, that information was not available to us. The records identified the adolescents only by anonymous juvenile ID number. Each record included: demographic information about the youth and his or her family, a record of the number of times the youth had been referred to the system, the charges brought against the youth at the current referral, and the date and name of placement where the youth was assigned.

There were three exclusion criteria. First, all participants were under 18 years of age; the few older juveniles were excluded from the analysis. Second, records were not included in the analysis if placements did not occur within two months of a referral. Finally, 11 records were excluded because of insufficient information to categorize the placement.

Procedure

When data regarding multiple referrals and multiple placements were available, only the first instance of a referral and subsequent placement was used for the analysis. Placements were categorized as follows: secure residential facilities; residential facilities; day treatment, alternative treatment, group home; counseling; and foster care.

Each time individuals were referred to the county juvenile probation office, they were charged with one or more offenses. For each valid record, we recorded whether or not the youth had been charged with one of four types of offenses. These offense categories were: (a) felony offenses, such as murder, rape, aggravated assault and/or battery, arson, burglary, grand theft, robbery, embezzlement, treason, espionage, racketeering, kidnapping, cannabis cultivation, and fraud; (b) misdemeanor offenses, such as simple assault, theft under $2,000, terroristic threats, weapons in school, false reports to police officers, and all drug charges except selling or intent to sell; (c) summary offenses, such as retail theft (shoplifting), criminal mischief, underage drinking, harassment, disorderly conduct, possession of tobacco on school property, and traffic offenses; and (d) status offenses, such as truancy, incorrigibility in school, and incorrigibility in the home.

Results

Demographics of the Sample

The final sample included 374 youths, of which 251 (67.1%) were males and 123 (32.9%) were females. The age of juveniles at their date of offense ranged from 11 to 17 years, with a mean age of 15.61 years. With regard to socioeconomic status, data were incomplete for 27 records. For the remaining 347 records, the household income level was generally very low; 66.6% came from households that made less than $24,000 a year. Finally, only 19.3% of the youths came from households with two biological parents. The most frequent living arrangement was the mother-only household (41.4%), followed by the two types of stepparent families (father and stepmother or mother and stepfather) (15.5%), father-only (8.3%), other

relative (7.5%), foster care (3.2%), guardian (0.8%), and other (4.0%).

The population of juveniles placed in the county varies greatly in ethnic composition from the general population statistics of the county. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2007), only 4.2% of the population of the county was not White/Non-Hispanic in 2005, whereas our sample consisted of 21.4% minorities. The largest minority was Black (15.2%), with Hispanic, biracial, Indian, and other making up the remaining 6.2%. One reason for the discrepancy in racial composition was the county's occasional placement of juveniles from an urban area that has a much larger minority population. This cannot account for the entire difference in minority representation, however, because juveniles from the urban area made up a very small part of our sample.

Analysis of Placement Category by Offense Charges

Our first goal was to examine the relationship between offense type and placement category. We calculated the percentage of juveniles attending each placement type who had been charged with each of the four types of offenses. Each youth could be charged with any or all of the four offense types. As indicated in Table 1, placements varied greatly in their patterns of offenses. Although the overall felony offense rate in this population was relatively low (14%), secure residential facilities had a high proportion of juveniles who had been charged with a felony (41%). Nonsecure residential placements, alternative treatments, and group home assignments had similar proportions of felony offenders (15% to 20%). Finally, counseling, foster care, and day treatment placements had very low rates of felony offenders (1% to 3%). A Chi-Square analysis indicated that the number of felony offenses varied significantly by placement type, $\chi^2(54, N = 374) = 102.486, p < .001$.

Table 1.

Percentages of Juvenile Offenders with Felony, Misdemeanor, Summary, and Status Offenses in Different Court-Ordered Placements

Placement	n	Felony	Misdemeanor	Summary	Status
Secure residential	17	41.2	82.4	41.2	5.9
Residential	143	21.0	47.6	10.5	44.1
Alternative treatment	50	16.0	30.0	12.0	58.0
Group home	27	14.8	22.2	0.0	70.4
Counseling	271	3.7	29.6	0.0	74.1
Foster care	29	3.4	6.9	0.0	93.1
Day treatment	81	1.2	4.9	7.4	91.4
Total	374	13.9	31.3	9.1	62.3

The pattern of misdemeanors in placements was very similar to that of felony offenses. Secure residential facilities again had the highest proportion of juveniles charged with misdemeanors (82%). Residential placements, alternative treatments, and group homes also had significant proportions of juveniles with misdemeanors (22% to 47%). Those assigned to counseling had a surprisingly high proportion of misdemeanor offend-

ers (30%), given their low felony offender rate. Again, the placements varied significantly in the number of misdemeanor offenses committed by each resident, $\chi^2(48, N = 374) = 157.571, p < .001$.

Although summary offenses were not as common as felonies in this sample, the pattern of placement of juveniles charged with summary offenses was very similar to that of the

felony offenses. Secure residential had the highest proportion (41%); residential and alternative treatment had lower levels (7% to 12%); and counseling and foster care had no juveniles who were charged with summary offenses. There were two deviations from the felony pattern. Namely, group homes had some juveniles with felonies, but none with summary charges, and day treatment had almost no juveniles with felonies, but some with summary charges (7%). Placements varied significantly in the number of summary charges as well, $\chi^2(30, N = 374) = 52.590, p < .01$.

Finally, a high proportion (44% to 93%) of juveniles charged with status offenses were found in all placements except secure residential facilities, which only had status offense

charges in 6% of their population. The pattern of offenses also varied significantly across placements, $\chi^2(12, N = 374) = 100.929, p < .001$.

Analysis of Placements by Offense Charges and Gender

Regarding the pattern of offenses, males and females had different profiles. As seen in Tables 2 and 3, females were charged with fewer and less severe offenses than males. Nearly 18% of males were charged with a felony, whereas only 6% of females had felony charges at the time of referral. In contrast, status offenses were charged to only 52% of the males and to a large majority (83%) of females.

Table 2.

Percentages of Male Juvenile Offenders with Felony, Misdemeanor, Summary, and Status Offenses in Different Court-Ordered Placements

Placement	n	Felony	Misdemeanor	Summary	Status
Secure residential	16	37.5	81.2	37.5	6.2
Residential	103	25.2	55.3	10.7	35.9
Alternative treatment	44	18.2	34.1	13.6	52.3
Group home	14	28.6	35.7	0.0	50.0
Counseling	17	5.9	29.4	0.0	70.6
Foster care	14	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Day treatment	43	0.0	7.0	11.6	86.0
Total	251	17.9	39.0	11.2	52.2

Table 3.

Percentages of Female Juvenile Offenders with Felony, Misdemeanor, Summary, and Status Offenses in Different Court-Ordered Placements

Placement	n	Felony	Misdemeanor	Summary	Status
Secure residential	1	100.0	100.0	100.0	0.0
Residential	40	10.0	27.5	10.0	65.0
Alternative treatment	6	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Group home	13	0.0	7.7	0.0	92.3
Counseling	10	0.0	30.3	0.0	80.0
Foster care	15	6.7	13.3	0.0	86.7
Day treatment	38	2.6	2.6	2.6	97.4
Total	123	5.7	15.4	4.9	82.9

We then examined each placement category to see how gender affected the pattern of offenses charged to juveniles at that type of placement. The general pattern of offenses remained the same, but there were a few differences. The only juveniles with felony charges who were placed in nonrestrictive foster care or day treatment were females. Similarly, among those charged with misdemeanors, foster care placements were only given to females. Alternative treatment and group homes displayed an unusual pattern, with the males having a wide variety of charges against them, but the females

having only misdemeanor or status charges against them. In general, while females had fewer felony and misdemeanor charges, they were placed in less restrictive facilities, even if they had committed more severe offenses.

Intercorrelations of Offense Types

Because the pattern of offenses and placements had such consistent patterns, we also examined the consistencies between the types of offense at each youth's time of referral. We

calculated Pearson correlations between the numbers of offenses of each type that were charged to a youth. The number of felony, misdemeanor, and summary charges were all significantly positively correlated with each other, as seen in Table 4.

In addition, the number of status offenses charged at the time of referral was negatively correlated with the number of felony offenses ($r = -.247$, $p < .01$), misdemeanor offenses ($r = -.407$, $p < .01$), and summary offenses ($r = -.242$, $p < .01$).

Table 4.
Intercorrelations between Types of Offenses (N = 374)

Placement	*Felony*	*Misdemeanor*	*Summary*	*Status*
Felony	--	.426**	.273**	-.246**
Misdeameanor		--	.159**	-.409**
Summary			--	-.240

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$

Discussion

Our results highlight the diversity among juvenile offenders who receive different court-ordered placements, a finding that is consistent with the differences between offenders who are given probation and those who are placed (Lin, 2007). Namely, the pattern of offenses differed significantly across placements. Not surprisingly, juveniles in some more restrictive facilities, such as secure residential placements, had committed relatively more felony, misdemeanor, and summary offenses, and fewer status offenses. Likewise, some less restrictive placements, such as foster care, were associated with fewer felony, misdemeanor, and summary offenses, and with more status offenses. However, a mixture of delinquent and status offenses characterized most placements.

Intercorrelations among offense categories pointed to significant positive relationships among felony, misdemeanor, and summary offenses, which were all negatively related to status offenses. This pattern of intercorrelations suggests that juvenile offenders who commit one type of delinquent offense are likely to commit other delinquent offenses. In contrast, juveniles who commit status offenses, which are often linked to abuse and neglect, are less likely to commit delinquent offenses at the same referral time. The distinction between delinquency and dependency is formalized in the adjudication process, although juveniles can be adjudicated both delinquent and dependent.

Given the diversity among juvenile offenders, the pattern of offenses offers a poor general guide for placement decisions. For example, although counseling is a less restrictive placement and is associated with a relatively high level of status offenses, this placement type was characterized by delinquent offenses in our sample. Similarly, juveniles who were placed in more restrictive group homes and alternative treatments had a relatively high level of both delinquent and status offenses. In these cases, variables other than offense pattern, such as the presence of mental health problems or of abuse and neglect, may play an important role in dispositional decisions.

It appears that dispositional decisions in our sample differ for male and female juvenile offenders. Namely, although females were charged with fewer and less severe offenses, they were placed in less restrictive placements even more often than their lower felony and misdemeanor rates would predict. Gender differences, if reliable, have important implications for the

juvenile justice system, which has witnessed a substantial increase in the female proportion of juvenile arrests between 1980 and 2000 (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). Many studies of juvenile adjudication and placement have examined the role of gender, and the results have been mixed. Javdani, Sadeh, and Verona's (2011) recent review of the literature found many recent studies where females were given more severe punishments and were more often removed from homes. Other researchers found that gender had little effect on placement decisions, and if anything, females were treated more leniently (Espinosa, Belshaw, & Osho, 2008). Others have found varying treatment, depending on the severity of the offenses committed (Kruttschnitt, 1996, as cited in Javdani, et al.), or the perceived need to place females with only status offenses into protective custody (Feld, 2009). Societal views of females also have an influence. As early as 1979, differing treatment based on gender was found in Memphis, TN, but not found in Denver, CO (Cohen & Kluegel, 1979). Thus, future research might productively examine gender-related differences in the dispositional process in our population, as well as the variables in our local county that influence placement decisions for males and females.

Given the many personal, family, and community variables that are considered in dispositional hearings, as well as the need for balanced consideration of the community, the victim, and the offender, a certain amount of subjectivity is unavoidable in judicial decision making. Nevertheless, there are several strategies that have the potential to reduce judicial discretion and increase accuracy in dispositional decision making.

First, standardized risk and needs assessment can increase the consistency and objectivity of dispositional decisions. Risk assessment is designed to identify youth who are at high risk for recidivism and other adverse outcomes. As Roberts and Bender (2006) have noted, no single scale or instrument can predict future criminality with certainty, and deviant behavior patterns often change with age and experience. Even so, researchers have found that numerous variables are related to recidivism (Cottle, Lee, & Heilbrun, 2001; Kingree, Phan, & Thompson, 2003; Lin, 2007; Roberts & Bender, 2006; Stoolmiller & Blechman, 2005). These include gender, race/ethnicity, offense history, age at first conviction, length of first incarceration, alcohol and substance abuse, family problems, school engagement, and peer group associations.

Efforts are currently under way to develop risk assessment instruments that reliably identify high-risk juveniles and demonstrate acceptable levels of predictive validity for the diverse populations served by juvenile courts (Krysik & Lecroy, 2002; Risler, Sutphen, & Shields, 2000; Schwalbe, Fraser, & Day, 2007; Schwalbe, Fraser, Day, & Cooley, 2006). As Grisso and Underwood (2004) have discussed, assessment instruments should: be reliable (yield consistently similar results) and valid (measure what they claim to measure); be appropriate for use with the juvenile justice population; be suitable for use with youth of diverse ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds; and offer relevant age- and gender-based norms.

Needs assessment, which is undertaken to identify the current needs of juveniles, can assist staff to provide an optimal service match for individual offenders. Needs assessment generally includes a wide range of psychosocial variables, such as mental health status. There is general agreement that mental health screening should be provided within the first 24 hours of a youth's arrival at a facility (Wasserman et al., 2003). Screening is a relatively brief process designed to identify youth who are at increased risk of having disorders or conditions that warrant immediate attention, who are at risk for suicide or harm to others, who are currently on any type of psychotropic medication, or who require further evaluation or assessment. Youth who have been identified during the initial screening should be referred for assessment, which involves a more comprehensive and individualized examination of the psychosocial needs and problems identified during the initial screening. The resulting report usually provides recommendations for intervention.

Second, it is essential to formulate well-defined, specific, and measurable short- and long-term outcomes for juvenile justice services, as well as standardized procedures for evaluating these outcomes. In turn, research findings regarding the relative effectiveness of services in achieving these outcomes can be used to improve programs and enhance judicial decision making. Recidivism is frequently used as a measure of the success of juvenile justice outcomes. As Snyder and Sickmund (2006) have pointed out, efforts to evaluate recidivism face several challenges. Due to the fact that juvenile justice systems vary across states, there is no national recidivism rate for juveniles, although most states can provide a recidivism rate for a 12-month follow-up period.

Comparisons are problematic, however, because researchers sometimes use different measures of recidivism, such as re-arrest, court referral, conviction, correctional commitment, and correctional status changes within a given period of time. Moreover, the official records of these system events are generally the only available statistical indicators of delinquent behavior. As these measures of recidivism include only offending that comes to the attention of the system, virtually all measures are underestimates. In light of the challenges that accompany recidivism research, Snyder and Sickmund (2006) have suggested other measures of success, such as restitution, community service, competency development, and successful program completion.

Third, a wide range of evidence-based services is required to meet the diverse needs of juvenile offenders. In fact, numerous evidence-based services are now available for this population. In their meta-analysis of 200 experimental or quasi-exper-

imental studies of interventions for both noninstitutionalized and institutionalized serious offenders, Lipsey, Wilson, and Cothern (2000) reported an overall decrease of 12% in recidivism for serious juvenile offenders who received treatment. Using control group results from the available studies, the researchers estimated that the recidivism rate for these juveniles would be approximately 50% without treatment and that the most effective treatments would reduce recidivism by 30% to 35%.

Redding (2000) has underscored the importance of an integrated response, with the juvenile justice, mental health, child welfare, educational, and law enforcement systems working together. He maintains that best programs are based on: (a) empirically demonstrated effective treatments; (b) simultaneously addressed multiple risk factors contributing to the delinquency (e.g., youth, family, school, and neighborhood factors); (c) are tailored to each adolescent by considering the personal and environmental risk and protective factors; (d) are of sufficient duration; and (e) maintain high program quality in terms of staff recruitment and training, supervision, accountability for outcomes, and ongoing program monitoring and evaluation.

Finally, evidence-based alternatives to placement should be more readily available. As Lin (2007) has discussed, adult imprisonment has received far more attention than juvenile incarceration. He notes that the common wisdom assumes imprisonment deters offenders from committing subsequent crime through incapacitation and by making the consequences of illegal activities tangible. In contrast, critics of incarceration argue that offending is more a product of social background and life circumstances than rational calculation, that incarceration holds little promise to prevent future crime and may actually increase likelihood of reoffending, and that offenders in placement may develop delinquent identities, acquire friendships with negative peers, and learn more sophisticated criminal techniques.

Hughes (2002) has noted that there is evidence to support the value of comprehensive community-based alternative-to-detention programs. She points out that it costs more than $89,000 per year to house a youth in a New York State secure detention facility, whereas the cost of a model community-ty-based alternative-to-detention program, in New York City, is approximately $1,800 per year. Moreover, the community-based program has significantly lower recidivism rates for comparable offenders. In explaining the different recidivism rates, Hughes cites the difficult transitions from highly artificial and structured residential placements to standard community supervision, the inability of residential programs to deal with community characteristics, an important predictor of recidivism, and the exposure to deviant peers and inappropriate therapies in placement.

In conclusion, although dispositional hearings for juvenile offenders can never be perfectly objective, the appropriateness and consistency of judicial decisions can be increased by the use standardized risk and needs assessment, the formulation of more precise and measurable program outcomes, and the availability of an array of evidence-based services for juvenile offenders. Fortunately, there is progress on all of these fronts, which increases the likelihood that the juvenile justice system will be able to fulfill its mission of addressing the diverse needs of juvenile offenders, enhancing their prospects for a sat-

isfying and productive future, reducing recidivism rates, and promoting community safety.

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School-Based Juvenile Probation and Police Partnerships for Truancy Reduction

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Abstract

Truancy places students at risk in primary and secondary education and is linked to conduct disorder, drug use, and delinquency. To prevent truancy and reduce risk, school-based probation supervision has emerged within school districts in partnership with local law enforcement officers in an effort to enforce probation conditions for truant youths and prevent future delinquency. This research uses key information interviews of knowledgeable stakeholders to examine the delivery of school-based probation supervision. Home visits and court hearings were perceived to be effective at reducing truancy and tardiness. This study affirms that strong leadership, information sharing, and involvement of parents were 3 key factors related to truancy reduction.

Keywords: school-based programs; truancy reduction; juvenile probation

Ensuring school attendance has become a chief concern of school administrators and parents in many school districts around the United States. This is because truancy, defined as habitual unexcused absenteeism from school, has become more common over the years and has emerged as a serious problem in the educational system today (Zhang, Katsiyannis, Barrett, & Willson, 2007). For example, truancy rates average between 5 and 20% on any given school day (Bell, Rosen, & Dynlacht, 1994), reaching as high as 30% in some large cities (Ingersoll & LeBoeuf, 1997). The effects of truancy have far reaching implications for youth and for society as a whole. Chronic absenteeism not only results in educational opportunity losses and future employment marginalization for younger generations, but school districts also lose funding from the state when their student populations decrease (Presman, Chapman, & Rosen, 2002). Also, truant youth are disproportionately at risk of becoming involved in drug use, daytime theft, and gang activity (Fritsch, Caeti, & Taylor, 1999; Garry, 1996; Rohrman, 1993).

Reasons behind truancy are quite complex and informed by a number of theoretical perspectives such as self efficacy, family environment, school environment, or opportunity factors. For example, early research found a link between truancy and conduct disorder whereby "the most distinctive disturbance is characterized by aggressive behavior, tempers, defiance, destructiveness, uncooperativeness, disruptiveness and other evidence of poor relationships between the affected child and adults, as well as other children" (Berg, 1985, p. 327). A juvenile's lack of motivation, boredom with classroom structure, and peer pressure have all been cited as reasons for truancy. The family environment may be related to lack of parental supervision, abuse, family financial responsibilities, or other caretaking roles that may require youths to miss school, contributing to declining graduation rates (Barth, 1984; Guttmacher, Weitzman, Kapadia, & Weinberg, 2002; Hallfors, Vevea, Iritani, Cho, Khatapoush, & Saxe, 2002; Zhang et al., 2007). Excessive student absenteeism has been correlated in schools that have high rates of violent incidents on school grounds (Toby, 1983). The link between truancy and later violent behavior as adolescents and adults was especially prevalent with youth who were truant when they were 12-14 years old (Farrington, 1989). Relatedly, adolescents who feel alienated or have low levels of behavioral achievement in school are a cause of truancy, which in turn may contribute to delinquency and drug use (Maguin & Loeber, 1996; White, Fyfe, Campbell, & Goldkamp, 2001). Others argue that a positive bond to teachers is more important in delinquency prevention than school misbehavior (Smith, 2006).

Many school-based intervention strategies to decrease truancy have been tried, ranging from individual teacher-student mentoring and access to free medical services at school (DeSocio, VanCura, Nelson, Hewett, Kitman, & Cole, 2007) to re-

warding students for attendance alternative schooling, and establishing learning communities to community-based treatment and counseling approaches (Dembo & Gulledge, 2009; Gerrard, Burhans, & Fair, 2003). Law enforcement intervention strategies have been tried as well. For example, police truancy enforcement between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. to target suspected or known gang members was found to significantly reduce youth gang violence (Fritsch et al., 1999). Another response has been to monitor or sanction truant youths using in-school suspension, probation, community service, and teen courts, with some programs issuing additional sanctions for parents through citations and court-ordered parenting classes (Berg, 1985; Ingersoll & LeBoeuf, 1997; McCluskey, Bynum, & Patchin, 2004; Mueller, Giacomazzi, & Stoddard, 2006). Probation is perhaps the most common disposition for chronically truant cases (Zhang et al., 2007). However, few studies have examined school-based probation supervision, whereby the probation officer managed a probation caseload and was physically located within the school district. The current study examines the early implementation efforts of a school-based probation supervision program through the partnerships created by the probation department and the school resource officer to decrease truancy of juveniles on probation supervision.

A school-based supervision strategy originated for two reasons. First, it originated because of the link between truancy and delinquency (both violent and nonviolent acts); habitual truants were on probation, particularly if they engaged in delinquent behavior while not at school (Tait, 2004). The second reason was that once those youths were on probation, and officers had difficulties monitoring school attendance in a timely manner. With truancy as a significant predictor of delinquency, and school attendance as a required condition of probation, the situation beckoned school districts to partner with the juvenile courts and local law enforcement to provide a more comprehensive way to deal with truancy in an effort to enforce probation conditions and prevent future delinquency.

Characteristics of Effective Truancy Programs

Effective truancy programs share similar characteristics that include behavioral incentive programs for good behavior, consequences for chronic truancy, home visits, collaboration with community organizations (e.g., law enforcement, social services, etc.), commitment from parents, and support from administrators (Dembo & Gulledge, 2009; Fantuzzo, Grim, & Hazan, 2005; Mueller et al., 2006). Many schools around the country have opted to collaborate with a school resource officer (a police officer) who, together with probation in an "enhanced-supervision partnership" (Parent & Snyder 1999, p. 1) monitors daily attendance, provides counseling to parents and probationers, and provides training for teachers and counselors on dealing with disruptive students in the classroom (Presman et al., 2002). Other school-based programs strictly monitor youths already on probation. For these youths, both a school resource police officer and a court-based probation officer were used for a dual case management approach to supervision. This is the same model used in the districts in the current

study, whereby the school-based officer monitors school-related behavior of youth probationers, which may include attendance record, behavior while in school, academic progress, and after school home visits. The court-based officer was responsible for out of school behavior and court attendance. The school-based officer acted as a liaison between all the different agencies (Rubin, 1999; Stephens & Arnette, 2000; Presman et al.).

Schools in Arizona, California, Georgia, Indiana, Pennsylvania, and Virginia have served as examples of various approaches to respond to habitually truant and disciplinary problems in school. In Pennsylvania, school resource police officers and probation officers were cross-trained on similar tasks and shared the work and the cost more evenly between the school and the court. Youths on probation had improved their own attendance at school, and with a caseload averaging 27 clients, youth were more closely supervised using the dual case management approach. Agency relationships between the probation department and the school districts also improved. When compared with regular probationers, school-based probationers utilized less residential placements and were less likely to commit serious crimes than regular probationers, saving $6,600 per client (Metzger, 1997).

In other parts of the United States, outcomes differed. For example, in Montana, having a juvenile probation officer at school increased grades and decreased disciplinary referrals, but did not improve attendance. In fact, 60% of probationers completely dropped out of school within 1 year (Lasater, Willis, Sherman, Schaaf, & Petak, 2008). In general, a review of the literature revealed that most school-based programs reduce absenteeism and improve graduation rates. However, these studies have focused on youth probationers, with only one study directly relevant to staff involved in rural program delivery and implementation (Henderson, Mathias-Humphrey, & McDermott, 2008). Henderson and colleagues found a great deal of practitioner, organizational, and systemic barriers that negatively affected interagency collaborations and success of a school-based probation program in a rural Midwest county. These barriers ranged from blurred job roles, lack of training, high staff turnover, interagency friction, lack of leadership participation, and perceived lack of support by the juvenile courts (Henderson et al.). While the Midwest county partnership disintegrated within 1 year, other similar programs in Pennsylvania have had more success. It remains unclear how the successful programs have been operating and why the outcomes have been different. This research seeks to analyze the perceptions of key personnel in the delivery of school-based probation supervision according to individual and organizational factors.

Method

Participants

The state of Pennsylvania implemented school-based probation programs in 50 out of its 60 counties, with over 150 juvenile probation officers. The goals of police/probation partnerships in this study were similar to other school-based probation programs in other counties around Pennsylvania

(Metzger, 1997; Rubin, 1999; Torbet, Ricci, Brooks, & Zawacki, 2001). These goals include reducing truancy among school-aged youth, improving parental accountability, and strengthening partnerships between the police and the probation department. The school setting is the place where probation officers monitor youths at risk, whether they have already been adjudicated or are at risk for court intervention (Seyko, 2001). This study addressed perceptions from key personnel of the school truancy reduction program in two school districts within a rural county area in western Pennsylvania. This county had three cities totaling over 120,000 residents in 2000, which declined to 116,638 in the 2010 Census. In 2010, the race/ethnic demographics of this county were: 86% non-Hispanic White, 1% Hispanic, 5.8% African-American, and 2.6% Asian, American Indian, or Pacific Islander. State-wide demographics of Pennsylvania indicate more African-Americans (10.8%) and Hispanics (5.7%) with less non-Hispanic Whites (76%) according to the most recent numbers available (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Key information interviews were conducted once the program had been fully operational for about eight months. Individual face-to-face interviews were conducted for two days in a row, in a semi-structured format with six key stakeholders: three probation officers, one school resource officer, the chief juvenile probation officer, and one school district administrator. Interpretive phenomenological analysis was used to make sense of the experiences of each key stakeholder within this program (Smith & Eatough, 2006). Prior to the interview, each participant was provided with a consent form and each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. The interview was semi-structured regarding the program and whether overall program goals were being met. Field notes, experiences, and observations were meticulously logged and detailed in a journal format. Following the interviews, the responses were transcribed into a word processing program and were individually analyzed and organized according to major thematic areas as they emerged.

Procedure

The role of a school-based officer involved both case supervision and education as a treatment component. The school-based officer worked with a police officer in an "enhanced supervision partnership" to conduct after school home visits of students defined as truant (Parent & Snyder, 1999, p. 1). Once a student was found to be truant, the home visits were conducted to determine the reason to talk to the youth and/or to educate parents prior to any formal action. If the truant behavior persisted following the home visits, the case would be referred to the prosecutor's office for a scheduled court hearing. Here is one school resource officer's account of a typical day:

> When I arrive at 7 a.m. at school and check for tardy students, I am joined by the school resource officer. He sits with me and we interview kids as they arrive late--asking why they were late. They see me getting into the cruiser with the officer and that makes a difference to the kids. It makes my job easier. Next we go out to see parents of truant kids. When we go out to visit parents, I take the lead and the officer sits back. However, if the par-

ents get aggressive, the officer steps in. Parents see that the police and school district are working together. The key to success of the program is that people are getting to know each other.

The definition of truancy originated from state laws and school district rules. Ultimately, a persistent truancy case went before a juvenile court judge who imposed sanctions. It seemed from the interviews that the juvenile judges supported this program, which is a significant factor to a successful outcome (Henderson et al., 2008). A probation officer explains the process of dealing with a truant individual:

> The rules are that a written excuse is required for being absent. After three days they need a doctor's excuse. Within five days, if there is no written documentation, the 5th absence starts to be counted as "illegal absences." We go before a judge and have a hearing on the matter and most of the time, the judge backs me. After four illegal absences [which means that the student has been absent for nine days] the parents and student are subject to a fine. If Mom is really trying, only the student is cited.

The primary goal was to reduce truancy in a proactive manner through home visits of truant youths. When the program first began, truant students received wake-up calls in the morning before school (between 6:30-7:30 a.m.) and the officers conducted home visits two hours after school (3:00-5:00 p.m.). The officers felt that the morning wake-up calls were intrusive, did not promote self responsibility, and were subsequently discontinued. Focusing on the time period after school was a more effective use of resources since delinquent activities were highest during the hours after school for potentially pre-delinquent youth and youths on probation.

Results

The major thematic areas that emerged from the interviews were the effectiveness of the home visits, holding parents accountable and collaboration and information sharing. The findings below present the results along these thematic lines.

Effectiveness of Home Visits at Reducing Truancy

Three out of four of the officers interviewed perceived that the home visits and court hearings were effective at reducing both truancy and tardiness:

> We have a police officer as a truant officer in the school. It helps us tremendously. We no longer get calls about kids in the street when they should be in school. We also have the power to cite parents.

> Yes. It [coming before a juvenile judge] has had a big impact on the truancy. Out of the 49 I had in truancy court, I had only 1 repeat.

> Yes. Both [tardiness and truancy] have gone down. The repeat rate is either stable or reduced. Home visits and court hearings causes them to be accountable.

> Absolutely. Wasn't a "bad" year compared to years before the program started. Truancy was down. Tardiness was down. [School resource officer]

The school resource officer believed that the school-based program was effective with younger kids, but that court hearings and the law had its limits with youths who were 17 years old:

The program is better for 12-16 year-olds, but has no clout with those 17 and over because by law they don't have to go to school. Restrictions placed on juvenile probation to detain a child are not always enforced. Picking up kids might serve as a deterrent.

There was general satisfaction with the frequency of evening home visits, but two probation officers expressed the need for more assertive supervision, such as home visits to be conducted during the school day:

We do home visits for kids who have missed three or more days of school or [those] who are habitually late. We go home to find out why [they are late]. Parents who don't care to begin with won't make a difference, which is about 30% of parents. Some parents have requested advice on how to get their child to school (e.g., cyber-school, home tutors, pregnant teens). After six unexcused absences, we do a formal court intervention and a fine is imposed. We really should be doing more visits during the school day.

I am on home visits 2-3 days a week - I go out during the week and in other offices on the other days… If I did not have contact [with the juvenile] in the morning, I go back in the evening as well.

One respondent stated that visits should even be expanded beyond the home to where youth congregate, such as parks, convenience stores and shopping malls. Truancy sweeps of public areas, whereby truant youths without an excused absence were returned to school, were used successfully for chronic truants regardless of their probation status (White et al., 2001).

Holding Parents Accountable

One of the root causes of student truancy and tardiness was due to a variety of family problems or lack of parental accountability. Some children were in a situation where school attendance was not enforced or parents are failing to monitor daily activities. Officers were asked about whether they felt the program held parents accountable for the behavior of their children. The reactions were mixed. Three out of four officers seemed to think that home visits were related to parents becoming more responsible:

It is an added support to schools. Police officers monitoring truant issues have been a big help. Going to the parents and explaining to them alerts them to the problem. They understand they have to force the child to school.

Yes - and in both cases, parents get on board more with a face-to-face- home visit as opposed to us sending them a letter.

If a parent is having a problem, they are reporting this to the teams. They get involved to actually assist the teams in monitoring and tracking. Also we can refer them to the ministerium [religious leaders who volunteer as mentors].

One officer believed that while home visits were effective, solving the problem was much more than this. He stressed the importance of role modeling, mentoring, and community leadership and noted how the officers are always being watched even off the clock:

There is a very positive effect of the police and probation and us knowing each other. We know each other personally and that makes a big difference. The kids see us together at the school and they see us together when we go into the neighborhoods going door-to-door [after school] checking up on kids. The parents also know that we are proactive. I coach little league and I may see a kid in the afternoon about missing school and then see them with their parents later at the little league game. The fact that we all live in the same community makes a big difference. We have a good relationship [between the police and probation].

A 5th respondent did not believe the parental impact to be long-lasting:

Yes, [accountability is present] on a short-term basis, like for a few weeks, but not on any long term basis, like more than a couple of months.

Collaboration and Information Sharing

As an enhanced-supervision partnership between probation officers and police, information sharing and training was paramount to program success and to reduce future delinquency (Parent & Snyder, 1999). Collaboration was thus essential for agency partnerships in order that probation be able to notify the school as to which students were on probation and what special treatment needs the court had ordered related to the school environment (Metzger, 1997; Stephens & Arnette, 2000). The steps taken to bridge relationships among the police, probation, the schools, and the parents were viewed as exceptional in this jurisdiction, particularly due to the commitment of both the chief juvenile probation officer and the school district superintendent. The following four comments illustrate:

We've always had a good relationship with the school. School-based resource officers are in plain clothes if anything comes up and we do educational programs. There have been two officers in the schools… Parents were a little uneasy at first, but once we explained why we were talking to their child, they understand it.

…Was in the schools sharing info before the grant started, so no change because of grant. Change in info sharing… school shares more with their own personnel within the school. Info sharing between agencies is OK.

Our program has direct contact with the school and the info sharing has been really helpful. The police officers do much of the mediation in the schools and are able to share the problems…with probation.

Long-time resident people have a history of working together. ___ [the school superintendent] has a reputation for moving programs forward - doing what he said he would do. Police have kids in these schools because it is a small enough area and all parties know each other. Judges have been somewhat of a problem related to probation officers sharing information with police. Judges don't like "doing" things in the school because they feel it "stigmatizes" kids, so we sold the program as an after-school and before-school program. Schools seem to be willing to take the risks, even with liability issues like partnering with police. It is not purely a school issue any longer.

This last comment raises the concern that juvenile judges have about the potential stigma that the school-based program might have for juveniles, by drawing unnecessary attention to

their probationary status. Given the importance of peers as a primary reference group, this is an important concern. None of the respondents noted that any youths were adversely affected by the program. This partnership between the police and probation, however, does attempt to increase the function and responsibilities that schools accept.

Both school districts hired new school superintendents, one within the last 2 years and the other within the last 3 months. Two of three officers interviewed perceived a difference between the two school districts that seemed due to the degree of school leadership support:

Before the current superintendent, both districts were problematic and violent and now it is much improved. One superintendent is more supportive of our truancy program than the other. In the school district that is less supportive, the superintendent has less training and is losing students to charter schools, so they are losing funding. The current school officer is just waiting to retire, and Officer___[someone new] needs to be broken in after his retirement.

___ [the chief juvenile probation officer] has done a good job of public relations with the school superintendent. The ___ [other] district that has had turnover in last three months with a new school superintendent has less perseverance to program than the first school district.

Well, so far we had a change in the administration [school superintendents] and they've done well so far.

Leadership support and some disconnect was present between at least one of the school superintendents and the school probation officer. Organizational barriers with new leadership presented a challenge; high turnover of school resource officers seemed to be a problem in other areas as well (Henderson et al., 2008). However, with regard to information sharing, the school districts have been open to providing probation officers and police officers with information or record access that they need in order to monitor and track youth. Below are some of the responses:

Yes - anything I need… I get a print out of daily attendance and tardy rolls. Also the school gives background history from students' files; the school is very supportive.

Yes - can get anything I need. I developed a good enough relationship to get anything off the record if necessary.

Yes. We have an officer in the school who works in a family center who has access to records. He is aware of all of the factors involved because of the student support system.

At the present time, one of the school districts was strongly committed and the other neighboring district did not seem to be fully committed, in large part due to the school leadership.

Discussion

Schools are institutions with a great deal of responsibility. Schools are not only expected to educate youth, but teachers seem to have taken on additional accountability in delinquency and violence prevention, and raising youth to become responsible citizens (Stephens & Arnette, 2000). Given the established link between truancy and increased student risk for drug use and delinquency, a sound truancy reduction program is important for every school to have in place. This study examined a school-based probation supervision strategy, wherein the probation officer managed a probation caseload and was physically located within the school district and partnerships were created between the probation department/juvenile courts and the school resource officer in an effort to decrease truancy of juveniles at risk.

The dual responsibilities performed by the probation officers in partnership with the school resource officer seemed to run smoothly overall. The general consensus by the staff interviewed was that the program was meeting its established goals. This study affirmed that strong leadership and collaboration within each of the three key agencies (juvenile probation, police, and school districts) was paramount to sustained implementation, which is consistent with other research (Fantuzzo et al., 2005; Henderson et al., 2008). Second, knowledge and information sharing was key to success, in particular uncovering the reasons behind the truancy or tardiness (such as problems at home, child abuse, learning disabilities, drug use, etc.). Information sharing was formally worked out through memorandums of understanding and written agreements such that both agencies received the information as needed to perform their functions (Stephens & Arnette, 2000). We found that program staff was adequately trained to carry out programmatic goals and there did not appear to be any role confusion, in part, because one of the officers had primarily a law enforcement function, and was the only officer of the two authorized to make an arrest. There did not appear to be resistance at the line levels, but there was a perception of resistance at the school district leadership level. That organizational barrier was perhaps overcome by the strong leadership support that existed with the chief juvenile probation officer and the police chief.

The truancy reduction program of study did not actively pursue the root causes or broader school environment issues related to truancy. There were judicial concerns about the potential stigma that too much intervention during the school day might have for juveniles, by drawing unnecessary attention to their probationary status. Probation officers in this study also had a more narrowly defined role that was limited to interacting solely with youth on probation. This is quite different than other programs where the school-based probation officer had significantly more authority to file formal charges on any youth, who committed an offense on school grounds, admit youths to detention, and mandate community service and drug testing that may result in adjusted charges (Seyko, 2001). The trend nationwide has been to expand the juvenile probation officer's role to allow each local jurisdiction to choose whether to allow the probation officer to have peacekeeping responsibilities and to be involved in charging decisions. This expanded role has the potential for juvenile probation officers to lose their historic caseworker function and be viewed by youth as just another police officer, so we recommend a more limited role for school-based probation officers.

The current study underscores the importance of home visits and parental involvement in any truancy reduction program, which was also consistent with extant research (Dembo & Gulledge, 2009; McCluskey et al., 2004; Mueller et al., 2006; White et al., 2001). While the truancy reduction program under

study did not have cognitive-behavioral components integrated into school discipline, establishing behavioral norms and policies on regular school attendance would likely be effective in reducing truancy, alcohol and drug use, delinquency and violent behavior (Gerrard et al., 2003; Wilson, Gottfredson, & Najaka, 2001). While cognitive components address faulty thinking patterns, behavioral modeling provides components such as feedback of old behaviors, rehearsal and repeated exposure to new behaviors, and positive reinforcement when the desired behavior is exhibited, as well as negative reinforcement when old habits such as truancy are exhibited. Model truancy reduction programs have been provided in the literature (see Bry, 1982; Gerrard et al., 2003; Lochman, 1992).

Our findings were limited to the implementation process and perceptions of key personnel who were directly involved in the program. Results are thus exploratory as they were not able to be triangulated with behavioral outcome measures such as school attendance rates, tardiness, school performance, home visitation rates, or rate of re-arrest. Other limitations of these findings must be mentioned. Juvenile judges and teachers were not available to be interviewed as key personnel. Judicial support was found to be important for a smoothly operating program through court-imposed conditions and support of officer discretion for revocation proceedings if necessary. Also, youth probationers, their parents, and members of the larger community were not included in the data collection effort. Outcome variables that may be valuable to future school-based supervision programs should include type of contact the probation officer made (e.g., home visit, phone call, parent visit), quality of contact with youth, attendance record (e.g., truancy, tardiness), academic progress (e.g., grades, grade point average), behavior while at school (e.g., suspensions, expulsions), graduation rates, and adjudication rates for both violent and nonviolent acts committed while at school and off school grounds.

School-based probation supervision and truancy enforcement are just two of many techniques to respond to truant youths at risk. For truancy reduction to be effective with youth, including those who are not already on probation with the juvenile courts, we advocate using a variety of other approaches, such as responding better to how children learn, establishing learning communities, rewarding students for attendance, and sanctions via in-school suspension, and if need be, court-ordered parenting classes for uninvolved parents (Berg, 1985; Gerrard et al., 2003; Ingersoll & LeBoeuf, 1997; McCluskey et al., 2004).

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Self-Determination Theory and Juvenile Delinquency: A Validation of a Combined Theory for Understanding Youth in Conflict with the Law

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Abstract

In this study, we propose an expanded theory of delinquency that integrates social learning, control, and motivationally based explanations of human behavior. We posit that delinquency occurs partly due to attempts to fulfill 3 developmentally necessary psychological needs; autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Melding elements of 3 theories (*Social Control Theory* [Hirschi, 1972], *General Crime Theory* [Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990], and *Self Determination Theory* [Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000a, 2008]), provides a better understanding of the precursors to delinquency and possible approaches to mitigating their impact. The study examines: (a) the extent to which the 3 basic psychological needs (competence, autonomy, and relatedness) are relevant constructs to discussing delinquency, (b) how the fulfillment of these needs varies in different environments (e.g., in school v. in the hood), and (c) ways to address these needs to mitigate delinquency and school failure. Twenty-seven adjudicated youths from a county detention program completed a questionnaire regarding the extent to which the 3 constructs were relevant in their lives, and if the meeting of these needs varied as a function of setting. Seven interviews were also conducted to expand upon survey results. Findings support the following constructs: that the attitudes of youths vis-à-vis these basic needs can and will vary significantly in different settings; and that delinquency prevention and school reform will be enhanced when the basic needs of a student (i.e., to be respected [*autonomy*], to be engaged [*relatedness*], and to experience success [*competence*]), are met.

Keywords: juvenile delinquency, self-determination theory, well-being, control theory, youth violence, youth motivation

Many court-involved youths today are in crisis. High levels of school evasion, disproportionate minority representation, gang involvement, violence exposure (perpetrator as well as victim), drug abuse, and mental and emotional health-related lability make this one of today's most challenging and perplexing populations. In the U.S. in 2005, there were 1,697,900 documented instances of juvenile delinquency including: 1,400 murders, 26,000 robberies, 100,900 cases of vandalism, 13,700 nonviolent sex offenses, and 8,500 cases of arson among thousands of other documented offenses committed by juveniles (Sickmund, 2009). Social and behavioral scientists have long wondered why youth commit crimes. What does it really mean when a youth says he robbed a neighbor's house because it "felt good," joins a gang "cause [my friends] have my back. They protect me," or drops out of school because at school "teachers put me down," (participants B7 and G3, respectively; Personal

Communication, May 25, 2010)? It seems that the most frequent answers given by youth to questions about motives often pertain in some part to basic, inherent psychological needs.

The authors believe that a robust and parsimonious theory of crime must, in the end, account for any relationships between a child's motivations and needs and his or her life choices, whether socially positive or negative. This paper explores the value of a particular and current motivational theory, self-determination theory (SDT) (posited by the researchers Deci and Ryan [2000a]), in explaining delinquency. More specifically, the authors propose an expanded theory of delinquency that integrates social learning and control theories of delinquency with motivational-based explanations of human behavior. We argue that delinquency may occur as part of an individual's drive to fulfill three social and developmental psychological needs; autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory

Self-determination theory (SDT), as originally put forward by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (1985), is a theory of motivation that presumes that people innately search for personal and psychological well-being and growth. Just as there are basic physical and physiological needs that must be fulfilled in

order to survive, many argue that there are also basic psychological needs that are imperative to normal human development and functioning (e.g., Maslow, 1943; Murray, 1938; White, 1959). Yet, according to Deci and Ryan (2000a), the search for personal and psychological well-being and growth is, of course, also significantly determined by the extent to which precisely those basic psychological needs have been and continue to be met. Thus, SDT is grounded in the notions of development and personal drive or motivation, including the suppositions that human needs are inherent (Hull, 1943), psychological (Maslow; Murray), and operational (White).

Hull (1943), a learning theorist, influenced Deci and Ryan with his belief that there are specific needs which are absolutely vital for achieving optimal human functioning, though the needs delineated by Hull differed slightly from those that the SDT researchers would eventually outline. Also influential was the work of Murray (1938), which stated that human needs are psychological in nature. He paved the way for defining human needs as psychological concepts, though lacking the emphasis that Ryan, Deci, and Hull put on such needs as absolutely essential for functioning. A final influence on SDT's categorization of needs comes from behavior and motivation theorist White (1959). Deci and Ryan drew from White's idea that needs are operational; that is, that they serve some purpose for a human being. White believed that behaviors serve not only to interact with, but also to enhance one's environment, a notion he felt was lacking in preceding theories of behavior and motivation. From these theorists' ideas about what constitutes a basic psychological need, Ryan and Deci (2000a) induced three constructs essential for optimal psychological functioning; autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Deci and Ryan (2000b) defined: (a) autonomy as a sense of self-regulation and control over the events of one's life; (b) competence as an individual's feeling that he or she is capable and competent in at least some area, providing a sense of confidence and self-respect; and (c) relatedness as a feeling of deep connectedness to the world in which the individual lives. When these three basic psychological needs are met, Deci and Ryan posited that humans are able to participate in the ongoing search for improved psychological well-being. SDT asserts that the satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs allows an individual to be intrinsically motivated to perform pro-social and productive activities. As this paper will show, applying SDT to an understanding of juvenile delinquency sheds new light on youth behaviors. It reveals a discrepancy between external views of anti-social behavior and youths' own perceptions of their actions. In other words, it uncovers the apparent benefits to a youth of what to the outside observer seems to be self-destructive associations and explains the possible advantages of so-called anti-social behavior to youth. Namely, it can be a means to fulfilling precisely those psychological and emotional needs related to the attainment of well-being that youth desire most urgently. This study suggests that rather than being a negative force in a youth's life, factors of delinquency can in themselves be a means to meeting one's basic needs when other, more positive, outlets have failed to do so.

Self-determination theory and the link to delinquency. Most commonly, SDT as a theory for motivation has been applied to areas of positive functioning, such as work, education, and health (e.g., Ilardi, Leone, Kasser, and Ryan, 1993; Sheldon, Williams, & Joiner, 2003). However, the theory does not completely leave out the subject of motivation for less positive, more anti-social behaviors. Ryan and Deci (2000c) recognize and state that:

> When these needs are met, growth and integration result, but when they are not met, a variety of non-optimal outcomes accrue…SDT is concerned…with the more phenomenologically salient anxieties, insecurities, ego involvements, and heartbreaks concerning threats to basic needs, which we suggest provide more common and proximal sources of phenomena expressing the darker sides of human nature such as depression, hate, violence, and the degradation of self and others. (p. 320)

According to SDT, non-optimal outcomes will occur concomitantly with the thwarting of needs. Nevertheless, the theory does not elaborate to say that often times these non-optimal outcomes are not necessarily outcomes at all, but rather they are non-optimal means for seeking need fulfillment when the more ideal or pro-social forms of doing so have indeed been thwarted. This point is not included in SDT, but it is an important one that should be considered when applying the concepts of SDT to the case of juvenile delinquency.

Empirical and anecdotal accounts of youth offenders lacking in one or more of the three needs defined in SDT are found in journalist John Hubner's (2005) *Last Chance in Texas*. He chronicled the lives of young offenders at the Giddings State School's Capital and Serious Violent Offender Group program. In telling his *crime story*, which is a complete account of every crime a youth has committed, one young offender recounts his need for control (autonomy). Speaking about threatening his younger brother with knives, and in this particular case, a gun, the youth remembers, "I'd do it just to do it. It was fun to see him scared, running away from me. It felt good to have control over that situation. I liked it" (Hubner, p. 123). After a life filled with abuse, abandonment, and a constant lack of control, delinquency became the only way that youth knew how to give himself back some of that autonomy.

Relatedness, when not met through conventional means (e.g., through family, friends, or guiding mentors) might also be attained through other means. Perhaps the most prevalent and obvious example of youth seeking other connections is gang involvement. One Brazilian study (Campos & Raffaelli, 1994) looked at the differences in the lifestyles of children living under apparently similar conditions. A significant distinction was that one group was considered *on the street*, while the other group was *of the street*. Children who are *on the street* are living in poverty and working at extremely young ages, but still have family ties and have a consistent place to sleep at night. Children *of the street* are the children with broken family ties who have no consistent place to return to at night. They are often forced to sleep in the streets or in other dangerous conditions. When the typical family setting was compromised for these youths (whether because of factors outside of their control, such as the death of a parent, or, more often, because of voluntary departure from an abusive setting), those impacted were inclined to seek out some other form of family. In other words, when their need for social relatedness was not fulfilled at home, the youth left, forced to find a way to fulfill that need elsewhere.

Self-determination theory's third and final basic need, competence, if left unfulfilled, might also lead to problematic outcomes for youths. Competence is often generally defined as the successful achievement of developmental tasks that fit within that youth's cultural, historic, and environmental context (Graber, Nichols, Lynn, Brooks-Gunn, & Botvin, 2006). It has been pointed out that this definition means that competence is then "inherently multidimensional, because there are multiple developmental tasks salient in a given age period in a given place and time in society" (Masten & Curtis, 2000, p. 533). These tasks can include academic achievement, performance in extracurricular activities, or high levels of self-esteem. What is important is that youths are able to develop a sense of achievement in each of these domains, allowing a healthy development of self-worth to occur.

A Proposed Amended Control Theory

There are substantial commonalities between SDT and other theoretical constructs that seek to understand the causes and nature of delinquency. Hirschi's (1972) social control theory is a sociological theory that seeks to explain crime by placing a large emphasis on relationships and social bonds as preventers of delinquency. He contends that internalization of society's norms is what essentially prevents human beings from committing delinquent acts, and that the key to internalization lies in attachment to others.

A later theory posited by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) is known as the general theory of crime. This theory puts far less emphasis on relationships and instead looks at self-control, or the extent to which an individual has control over his or her own life, as a motivating force. Self-control is connected to autonomy because, as Hirschi contends, a high need for autonomy is an indicator of low self-control (Gottfredson & Hirschi). As the need to assert one's own autonomy increases, the commitment to conform to others' norms, such as those of adults or authority figures, decreases (Agnew, 1984). Additionally, some scholars add that low self-control can also contribute to a decreased ability to succeed in social settings and institutions (Evans, Cullen, Burton, Dunaway & Benson, 1997). Gottfredson and Hirschi affirmed that these ideas are key factors contributing to delinquency.

We suggest that when such basic needs as autonomy, competence, and relatedness remain unmet in positive, pro-social ways, delinquency will often present itself as a viable option for youths to fulfill core psychological needs. In order to demonstrate this, we conducted a study involving youths in a county detention facility. Several key research questions guided the creation of the survey and in-depth follow-up interviews. These research questions are:

1. To what extent are basic psychological needs-*competence*, *autonomy*, and *relatedness*-met in various ways across different social environments (e.g., school and social settings)?

2. To what extent are the three basic psychological needs, as defined in SDT, relevant constructs to describing and understanding youth committing delinquent acts?

3. In what ways can the three basic psychological needs-*competence*, *autonomy*, and *relatedness*-be nurtured in order to decrease or mitigate negative behaviors such as delinquency, violence, and victimization of others?

Method

Participants

Utilizing a mixed-methods design, the authors distributed a survey to 27 adjudicated youths in a county detention program. The participants responded to a 30-item questionnaire surveying the extent to which *autonomy*, *relatedness*, and *competence* are relevant in their lives and whether or not the meeting of these needs vary as a function of setting-school vs. neighborhood. Additionally, seven interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis to expand on and validate survey results.

The qualitative portion of the study consisted of a set of one-on-one student interviews. Interview questions in this study aimed to portray a more in-depth presentation of students' feelings in both neighborhood and school settings. Responses were also used to triangulate with survey findings and to provide deeper insights into their theoretical significance. Every attempt was made to remain objective throughout data collection and analysis. However, the authors recognize that in qualitative data analysis, personal experiences inevitably influence data interpretations. This study was conducted with the knowledge that the issue of juvenile delinquency is immensely complex, and that no one single theory or framework, including the idea being proposed, will explain it fully.

Participants in this study consisted of 27 students recruited from a central Texas county juvenile detention center. All youths were under the age of 17 and had been adjudicated at least once. Of the 27 students, 20 were male and 7 were female, reflecting a slightly higher proportion of females (35%) than is present in the entire population at the detention center, which is approximately 25%. Additional demographic information for the participating students was not made available due to reasons of privacy within the detention center.

The sampling design for this particular study was a multistage procedure in which the institution was selected first and the participants were subsequently chosen from the available pool (Babbie, 1990). The center was selected because of convenience, as well as for its relevant population. Every student within the residential program was asked in person if he or she wanted to participate in the study. The students were told that they would participate in an interview or a survey, but not both, and that neither component would last longer than 30 minutes. Students were also informed that they would not receive any compensation for participation. Additionally, students were told that a decision not to participate would not have any negative effects on treatment by staff, court hearings, probation, or any other related proceedings.

Twenty-eight students initially expressed interest in participating and signed youth assent forms. As participants were necessarily all minors, parental consent was also obtained before any data were collected. While consent forms were being obtained, seven of the students were either released or transferred to other programs. Six additional students who were not residing in the center during the initial requests for participa-

tion subsequently agreed to take part in the study and parental consent was obtained, making the final participant count 27.

Procedure

Quantitative procedure. Students were randomly assigned to either a survey group or an interview group so that the interview group would consist of approximately one third of the entire group. Of the 20 students selected for the survey group, 15 were male and 5 were female. Five males and 2 females composed the interview group. Throughout May 2010, surveys were administered in groups of two to five students, depending on availability at the time. The surveys were administered in such a way that ensured that no staff member was able to see any student's answers at any point. This guaranteed the confidentiality of the participants' responses and prevented any tensions from being created between staff and students based on the answers.

The instructions given remained the same for all groups. The scale was explained through unrelated examples (i.e., "I like chocolate ice cream") and students were instructed to identify how often each statement presented was true for them. Students were asked to be honest in their responses and to ask the researchers, who were present, if any statement was unclear. Students were told that they could skip any item that made them uncomfortable to answer but to otherwise try to answer every item. Each group was assured once again that no names would be attached to the surveys and that staff would never see their responses. Each participant was given an envelope with a coded number to place the surveys in and seal upon completion. The code assigned to each student was a way for the researchers to keep track of which students completed surveys and interviews and to ensure complete confidentiality for all other study purposes.

Measures. The quantitative measure used for the survey portion of the study was adapted from the *Basic Psychological Needs at Work Scale* designed to measure the extent to which the three concepts (competence, relatedness, and autonomy) are met in specific as well as general settings. This particular scale has been used by self-determination theory researchers Ryan and Deci (2000c), as well as others (Deci, Ryan, Gagné, Leone, Usunov, & Kornazheva, 2001; Ilardi et al., 1993; Kasser, Davey, & Ryan, 1992). Items were modified to pertain to both school and social settings instead of a work setting to fit the needs of the study. Due to the fact that many of the students participating in the study were multiple grade levels behind in reading ability, the wording of the items were adjusted to a 5th grade reading level. Sample items used included: for competence, "At school I get the chance to show how much I know;" for relatedness, "My friends outside of school really care about me;" and for autonomy, "I am free to say my ideas and opinions at school." In the 30 item survey, there were 10 items related to each subscale (autonomy, relatedness, and competency). Within each subscale's 10 items, there were 4 items each directed at a school and a social setting, as well as 2 general items, not related to any specific domain. Students were then asked to indicate on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (never true) to 5 (always true) how often they felt that each statement was true for them in the particular setting indicated.

Cronbach's alpha test was performed to determine the extent to which scale items inter-related. This particular test is most commonly used for scale-type questions with more than one answer, such as the scale used in this measure. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was .89, demonstrating high internal consistency and suggestive of item construct validity for the modified scale.

Qualitative procedure. Interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis on site at the detention center. Each interview was recorded using an audio tape recorder and responses were later transcribed into a text document to facilitate analysis. Students were asked approximately ten open-ended questions designed to elicit attitudes and other personal experiences relating to school and neighborhood settings. Examples of questions include:

a) "What frustrates you the most during the school day?"

b) "What do you enjoy about being with your friends outside of school?"

c) "Is it important to you to feel a sense of control in your life?"

The coding and indexing procedure used in the qualitative data analysis occurred simultaneously with data collection, as well as after all data were compiled. Interviews were transcribed and coded into categories of "repeating ideas." The repeating idea codes helped to identify patterns in the students' perspectives on school and social situations. Once this initial coding process was complete, repeating ideas were further grouped into broader "theme codes." These larger, generalized patterns and ideas were subsequently sorted relative to our constructs of interest-*autonomy*, *relatedness*, and *competence*. More difficult to ensure than quantitative designs, internal validity for this section was sought through triangulation with survey results and replicating results with multiple student interviews.

Results

Quantitative Results

Initially self-determination (SD) survey responses were grouped broadly for setting by each sub-constructs' "truth" value (e.g., *Neighbor-Autonomy* vs. *School-Autonomy*) (see Figure 1). This involved organizing responses into three broad 'true' categories; those indicating a 'true' value 1 (less than half the time), 2 (about half the time), or 3 (more than half of the time). Means for each setting-by domain pairing were also calculated and compared (see Figure 2). Of the 600 possible answers to the surveys, only one response was missing.[1] As such a small percentage ($< .2\%$) of the overall responses, the missing data point was replaced with the average of all the other responses to that item.

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[1] The Likert-type scale used in our survey assumes that as interval data, participating students cannot distinguish differences between the absolute scale levels given (1-never true, 2-sometimes true, 3-true about half of the time, 4-true a lot of the time, 5-always true). The results then represent the underlying continuous distribution of agreement between the different variables of setting and construct.

Figure 1: Response Frequencies for Setting: Autonomy, Competence & Relatedness

Figure 2: Mean Score Differences for Setting by Self-Determination Domain
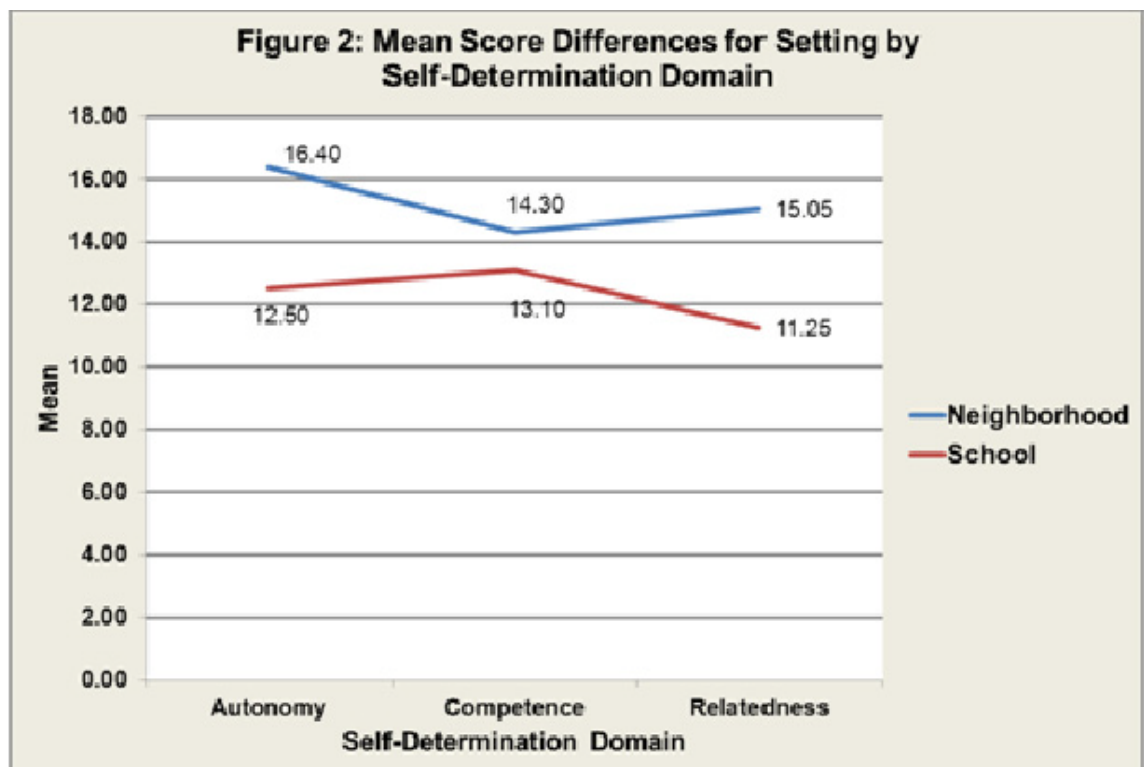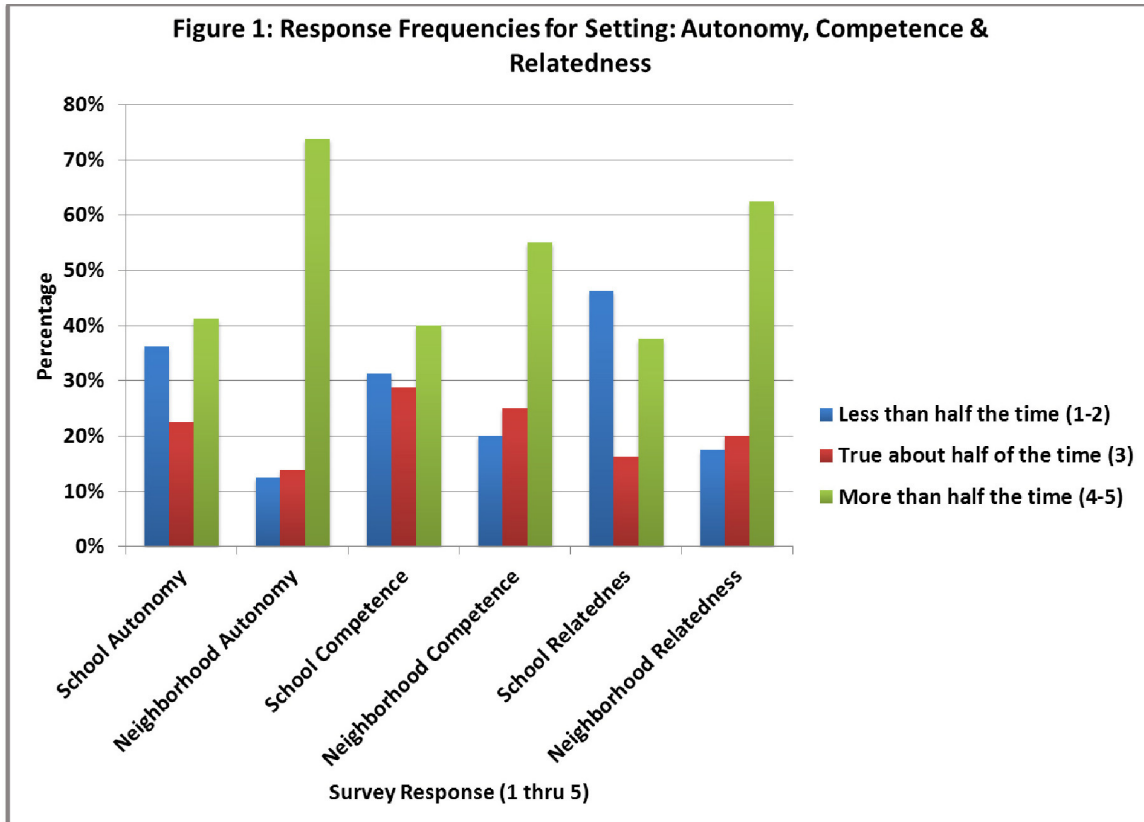
For all statistical tests, a 99% confidence level, or an alpha level of .01 was used. Given the study's small sample size and paired group responses, correlated t-tests were performed to determine significant mean differences between settings and by SD domain. Initial t-tests comparing the total responses collapsing across SDT domains yielded a significant setting difference-school vs. neighborhood (see Table 1). The average SDT domain score for setting was significantly lower for school compared to neighborhood ($M = 36.85$ vs. 45.75; $t(19) = 4.722$, $p < .01$). To distinguish which of the three constructs contributed to this difference, paired t-tests were performed for each construct.

Based on these tests, significant mean differences were obtained for autonomy and relatedness. Review of these means revealed higher response values for neighborhood autonomy and relatedness than those reported in school (i.e., 16.40 vs. 12.5 and 15.05 vs. 11.25, respectively, as shown in Table 1.

Paired t-tests showed a significant difference in t-value for relatedness ($t(19) = 4.872$, $p < .01$) and autonomy ($t(19) = 4.561$, $p < .01$), but not competence ($t(19) = 1.224$, $p < .236$) (see Table 2). These results support the hypothesis that overall, self-determination constructs are being met at lower levels in school than in the adjudicated youths' neighborhood settings.

Table 1.
Means and sample sizes for each paired variable and overall setting variables

Variable Setting	Self-Determination	Mean	Std. Error	N
Neighborhood	1 Autonomy	16.400	.678	20
	2 Competence	14.300	.498	20
	3 Relatedness	15.050	.806	20
	4 Overall	45.750	1.68	20
School	1 Autonomy	12.500	.835	20
	2 Competence	13.100	.984	20
	3 Relatedness	11.250	.739	20
	4 Overall	36.850	2.04	20

Table 2
Results for paired sample t-tests among variable pairs

		Paired Differences					
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Overall	SDT Neighborhood-SDT School	8.900	8.429	1.885	4.722	19	.000***
Pair 1	Autonomy-Neighborhood - Autonomy-School	3.900	3.824	.855	4.561	19	.000***
Pair 2	Relatedness-Neighborhood - Relatedness School	3.800	3.488	.780	4.872	19	.000***
Pair 3	Competence-Neighborhood - Competence-School	1.200	4.384	.980	1.224	19	.236

Qualitative Results

Students' responses to interview questions expanded upon the results seen in the quantitative section. Responses echoed the low levels of relatedness and autonomy being met in school and provided deeper insight into how fully those constructs are met through a student's peer group. Several repeating patterns and themes emerged during the interviews (see Appendix). One related to poor teacher support and a desire for more engaged and understanding teachers. An oft-echoed response to the question of what one thing the student would change about his or her previous school setting was the way teachers interacted with them (e.g., "Teachers always single me out and yell at me. They pick on me for things that I do even when other people are doing the same things"). Conversely, almost all students interviewed expressed positive school experiences in their current detention setting. One stated, for example, that teachers "really cared, believed in our abilities, and were there to provide help with work and other issues when it's needed." The positive connections they were making with teachers at their detention facility also seemed to link to an increased sense of competency and a desire to succeed. One student illustrated this when she noted that "It's like they challenge us here, they don't care. They will challenge us, they'll push us. They know how far we can go. And that's what I like."

School outside of the detention center was repeatedly described as boring. The importance of an engaging and hands- on curriculum was stressed by five of the students interviewed.

One student believes that, "If it was fun, I'd like school. If we were doing hands on activities. People don't like going to school because it's boring. If it was more hands on, people would go." Another theme that emerged when discussing school was the student's desire for a more autonomous setting, one in which they were afforded some say in daily experiences. The most positive school environments mentioned were those that allowed students to move at their own pace, gave opportunities for input, and generally afforded students more freedoms.

Dialogue around social settings and friend groups made it clear that the overarching draw for students was the sense of connectedness, love, respect, and support they receive from their friend groups and gangs; feelings that were often stated as lacking in the home, school, or both. One young male stated unabashedly, "My gang makes me feel loved, they support me and help me and my family out if there is something I need or my family needs. I never felt loved at home so they help me feel loved." While the importance of fitting in, being supported, and feeling respected was reiterated, six of the students also openly acknowledged that negative peer influences played a large role in their participation in anti-social activities, such as using drugs, skipping school, and being in gangs. A few students articulated a desire to distance themselves from those influences, but felt trapped in their gangs. "Once you're in, there is no way out. I'm stuck," stated one young man. Two students mentioned that if they could give any piece of advice to someone younger, it would be to tell them "to surround himself with a good crowd, better influences and to stay in school and stuff."

As a reflection on the importance of relatedness in feeling competent, one student stated, "Making my mom proud feels good. She feels proud when I do well and that makes me feel good. It makes me feel like I could do something." More often though, this positive familial presence either was not mentioned or was openly stated as missing. A sense of disconnectedness and the feeling that nobody in a student's life cared about them proved to be a volatile combination when mixed with a youth with limited tools for coping with anger and frustration productively. "I just get really frustrated. Like when people make me mad it just makes me want to do something bad," said one young male. Responses highlighted the strong interconnectedness between the three basic psychological need domains, as it seems that each one plays on and stems from the others, whether in a negative or a positive way.

Discussion

Viewing self-determination and negatively enacted need fulfillment as explanations of juvenile delinquency has merit for the understanding of youthful offenders. Delinquency, instead of being a result of failed relationships, low self-control, and decreased competence is, according to this model, the path youths take to satisfy their needs. Our data suggest that when an individual's core psychological needs are not met in positive, pro-social ways, he or she will pursue other means, including anti-social options when available.

Results, both quantitative and qualitative, indicate that SDT's construct domains - *autonomy*, *competence*, and *relatedness* - can and do inform our understanding of youths' motivations and behaviors. Overall, the results suggest that autonomy,

competence, and relatedness are not being adequately fulfilled in school. A significant number of students (from a third to almost half depending on the domain) felt these needs were met infrequently or less than half the time. This was in stark contrast to the hood where the same needs were being met significantly more often (see Figure 1). If such needs are basic, developmentally-driven psychological necessities, the authors propose, as do others (e.g., Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2008; Nance & Novy, 2010) that many of today's *disadvantaged* youth will seek out need fulfilling experiences (some damagingly *anti-social*) as they actively avoid ones associated with diminished self-esteem, lowered sense of competence, and negative peer and adult relationships.

For years we have seen schools failing to meet the basic learning needs of our most disadvantaged youths, and the link between underachievement and school disengagement is well established. If students, particularly those who are at risk of falling behind, are to remain interested and active in school, implementing stimulating, rigorous, and relevant coursework in every classroom whenever possible is imperative. Moreover, teacher support and communication are vital for any of that to matter. A majority of the students interviewed in our study mentioned one single teacher who had been supportive of him or her. According to the students, this support had a positive impact on their feelings about school. Yet, despite these individual instances of connectedness, the data show that school failed to meet these students' need to feel respected, capable, and connected. Thus, one contribution of our study would be to suggest that schools (teachers and administrators) would profit from understanding youth motivations. This would include taking into account students' need for experiences that affirm their sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. While teachers are not solely responsible for the well-being of their students, they are in a unique and skilled position to transform a student's life.

Therefore, Ryan and Deci (2000a) assert that, "failing to provide supports for competence, autonomy, and relatedness, not only of children but also of students, employees, patients, and athletes, socializing agents and organizations contribute[s] to alienation and ill-being" (p. 740). Juvenile delinquency is too often seen merely as a direct response to some internal or external circumstance (i.e., the result of a cycle of disengagement and disconnectedness). By looking instead at delinquency as part of youths' attempt to fulfill important social and psychological needs, we see that delinquency can be the result of an attempt to feel engaged and connected. This study combined self-determination theory and past control theories of delinquency. As such, it provides the starting point for understanding delinquency not as a youth's failure to adapt, but as his or her last attempt to succeed.

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Appendix A

Examples of coded interview responses by domain: Themes, repeating ideas, quotes.

SDT Domain	Themes	Most Frequent Repeating Ideas	Key Quotes
Autonomy	Desire freedom/trust to make choices in school Desire to be able to move forward at own pace in school Being with friends allows a sense of autonomy Self-expression is important and often stifled	• Want freedom to make decisions • More leniency leads to better rule following • Having a say makes him feel important • Not being able to move forward	"I like [the alternative school] a lot better than the regular schools because we have more freedom. …we don't get in trouble as much there. I like it a whole lot better." "I hate being told what to do all the time."
Relatedness	No support in the classroom Teachers who do not relate to or communicate with kids Desire for more caring teachers Dearth of positive influences at school	• Lack of help/support in classroom • Bad communication with teachers • Teachers who can't or don't relate to kids • Teachers that care [here] make a huge difference	"I would say for more of our teachers to be able to communicate with us better or understand us better. Cause I mean like we have teachers that understand us good but it's a handful of them like…There should be more people like that and it frustrates me when there's not."
Competence	Being engaged in classes keeps students focused, interested Having a skill that one feels good about is meaningful Not being challenged leads to disengagement and disinterest in school Doing poorly and not getting help is frustrating	• Being engaged is important • Hands-on work is important to keep engaged • Feels that work in school is irrelevant to future • Can name a skill that they're good at, makes them feel good • Success in something feels good • Not being challenged is frustrating • School is boring • No being able to move forward	"Basically when you get your level three, when you get your week, it makes you feel good. Like for me, it's like I feel good when I'm doing good." "I would put myself down because I'm used to teachers putting me down." "No I never did [my work] because it was too much, I just gave up."

Efficacy of the Jesness Inventory-Revised Conduct Disorder and Oppositional Defiant Disorder Scales

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Abstract

The authors investigated the Conduct Disorder (JR-CD) and Oppositional Defiant Disorder (JR-ODD) scales developed for the Jesness Inventory-Revised. Participants included 340 youth aged 12 to 18 seen at a juvenile court diagnostic clinic in Cleveland, Ohio. The authors also investigated the previously existing Social Maladjustment (JR-SM) and Asocial Index (JR-ASO) scales. Participants were independently diagnosed as having CD, ODD, Disruptive Behavior Disorder NOS (a milder behavioral disorder), or no diagnosable behavioral disorder. Mean scores varied across the groups in the expected directions for all four scales. JR-CD and JR-ODD were better able to differentiate between their target groups and the other groups than JR-SM and JR-ASO. However, sensitivities were low, and clinicians or researchers using the Jesness-R should note that while elevations strongly suggest the presence of the disorders, a lack of elevation does not imply the absence of the disorder.

Keywords: Jesness Inventory-Revised, Conduct Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, delinquency, scale efficacy

Perhaps the most common self-report instruments used in assessing youth with behavioral disorders and delinquency have been the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory - Adolescent (MMPI-A; Butcher et al., 1992), the Jesness Inventory (JI; Jesness, 1996), and the Millon Adolescent Clinical Inventory (MACI; Archer, 2006; Archer, Maruish, Imhof, & Piotrowski, 1991; Millon, Millon, & Davis, 1993; Pinkerman, Haynes, & Keiser, 1993). Although used to assist with diagnosis, none of these inventories contain scales which directly correspond to DSM-IV-TR behavioral disorder criteria (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). The MMPI-A has several scales known to be sensitive to Conduct Disorder (CD) and Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), including Psychopathic Deviance (Pd), Mania (Ma), Conduct Problems (CON), and Cynicism (CYN); however, research has suggested that the instrument is not able to differentiate between these two disorders (Bannen, 2000). Similarly, the MACI has several scales that are sensitive to behavioral disorders in general, including Unruly (8A), Forceful (8B), Negativistic (8A), and Delinquent Predisposition (CC); however, research indicates the MACI is unable to differentiate youth who have CD from those who have ODD (Davis, 2007). The JI also has been shown to differentiate between delinquents and non-delinquents, particularly

the Asocial Index (ASO) and Social Maladjustment Scale (SM), but no research was found investigating its ability to differentiate CD youth from ODD youth or from other behaviorally disordered youth.

A growing trend in assessment devices used to assist with the diagnosis of children and adolescents is to tie the item content more closely to specific DSM-IV-TR criteria. The Diagnostic Behaviors Disorders Rating Scale (Pelham, Gnagy, Greenslade, & Milich, 1992) consisted of 36 items which coincided with DSM-III R diagnostic criteria for the disruptive behavior disorders. The Youth Inventory 4 (YI-4; Gadow & Sprafkin, 1999), the Conduct Disorder Scale (CDS; Gilliam, 2002), and the Adolescent Psychopathology Scale (APS; Reynolds, 1998) are all self-report inventories whose items specifically assess DSM criteria.

The revision of the Jesness Inventory took this approach. The Jesness Inventory Revised (Jesness, 2003) contains two scales not previously included in the Jesness Inventory - Conduct Disorder (JR-CD) and Oppositional Defiant Disorder (JR-ODD) - whose items were designed to correspond more closely to the diagnostic criteria of DSM IV-TR. In addition to 10 items included in the original Jesness, four new items were added to more completely assess the diagnostic criteria for CD. There is not a one-to-one correspondence between items and criteria, as four of the 15 criteria appear not to be tapped, and in other cases multiple criteria are tapped by a single item. However, all of the major areas of the diagnosis are tapped, including aggression to people and animals, destruction of property, deceitfulness or theft, and serious violation of rules. One new

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item was added to construct the new 16-item scale designed to assess the criteria for ODD, and it appears to tap all eight of the ODD criteria.

The Jesness-R manual (Jesness, 2003) offers what it describes as "a preliminary check of the validity of the CD and ODD scales" (p. 52). It reports a sensitivity of .77 and a specificity of .69 for delinquents vs. nondelinquents for the JR-CD scale and a sensitivity of .79 and a specificity of .64 for the JR-ODD scale for the same delinquent vs. nondelinquent samples. Unfortunately, the manual does not indicate what cutoffs yielded these figures. The manual also notes that the delinquent sample used in these studies did not necessarily merit diagnoses of either CD or ODD, and that further research with samples of diagnosed youth would be needed to validate the scales. The purpose of this study is to address this need by evaluating how well the new Jesness Inventory Revised scales identify youth who have been independently diagnosed as having either CD or ODD.

Method

Participants

Potential participants included all youth ages 12 to 18 adjudicated delinquent or unruly and evaluated for disposition at the Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court Diagnostic Clinic in Cleveland, Ohio between July 2, 2003, and April 14, 2010. These youths also received a Jesness-R as part of their court-ordered psychological evaluations, which were conducted by 12 Ph.D. or Psy.D. level licensed psychologists with an average of 14 years of experience in juvenile forensic evaluations and diagnosis. The range of experience was from 5 to 20 years. Several members of staff have made presentations in juvenile forensics at local, state, and national conferences as well as published articles in peer reviewed journals.

The psychological evaluation consisted of a semi-structured interview developed at the clinic which probed each of the criteria for CD and ODD, as well as more general information concerning family background, social history, developmental history, educational history, legal history, substance use history, and mental health history. A parent or parents, or other caretaker such as a grandmother, were interviewed by the clinician or probation officer or both. Other sources of information included a review of the youth's court record, educational record, mental health record and previous evaluations, and a mental status exam. Psychological testing was conducted by Master's level psychometrists and consisted of intelligence testing, achievement testing, and personality testing. The results of these tests were used by the doctoral level examiners to assist with diagnosis. Aside from the Jesness-R, the most commonly used personality instruments in the evaluations were the Millon Adolescent Clinical Inventory (Millon et al., 1993), the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory - Adolescent (Butcher et al., 1992), and the Rotter Incomplete Sentences Blank (RISB; Rotter, 1950).

Each psychologist produced a written report of the evaluation that included a diagnosis or diagnoses. These were made without scoring the Jesness-R for the JR-CD or JR-ODD scales and with the clinicians not having access to the individuals'

responses to the items in those scales. The report was reviewed by a second psychologist, one of the authors. Youth diagnosed as CD but whose report did not clearly identify a minimum of three criteria for that diagnosis were omitted from the study. Youth diagnosed as ODD but whose report did not clearly identify a minimum of four criteria for that diagnosis were omitted. The correlation coefficient for agreement between diagnoses was .96.

This yielded an initial sample of 402 youth - 281 males and 121 females. Mean age for the males was 14.7 ($SD = 1.5$) and for the females was 15.1 ($SD = 1.3$). Seventy-two percent were African American, 21% Caucasian, 4% Hispanic, and 2% Multi-racial. Sixty-two participants, 53 male and 9 female, were eliminated because they produced a Jesness-R with an elevated Variable Inconsistency Scale (J-VRIN) score, an elevated Variable Response Scale (J-VR) score, or an elevated True Response Inconsistency Scale (J-TRIN) score. These scales have been shown to be effective in detecting both random and partially random Jesness-R protocols (Pinsoneault, 1999, 2006; Trimble, 2005) and oppositional and acquiescent protocols (Pinsoneault, 1999). While in some settings, a 15% rate of invalid responding might be considered high, in a juvenile court setting where many of the respondents have a history of a lack of cooperation and an aversion to academically oriented tasks, such a rate is unsurprising. Retzlaff and Sheehan (1989) suggested that the expected prevalence rate for random responding in a forensic setting might be as high as 50%.

This resulted in a final sample of 340 youth, 228 males and 112 females, with a mean age of 14.8 ($SD = 1.4$). Seventy-one percent were African American, 21% Caucasian, 4% Hispanic, and 3% Multi-racial.

Procedure

Based on the diagnoses, participants were divided into five groups. Group 1 was diagnosed as having Conduct Disorder, Childhood Onset Type or Conduct Disorder, Adolescent Onset Type. It met from 3 to 9 of the diagnostic criteria, with a mean of 5.0. It also met from 0 to 6 additional partially documented criteria or documented criteria, which did not clearly meet the age of onset requirements, with a mean of 1.3.

Group 2 was diagnosed as having Oppositional Defiant Disorder. It did not meet sufficient criteria for a diagnosis of CD and met from 4 to 7 of the ODD criteria, with a mean of 5.2, and 1 to 3 additional partially documented criteria, with a mean of .73.

Group 3 was documented as having behavioral problems and met from 0 to 5 combined CD-ODD criteria with a mean of mean of 2.3 and an additional 0 to 5 partially documented criteria with a mean of 1.5, but not enough of either to merit a full diagnosis of CD or ODD. Group members were diagnosed as having Disruptive Behavior Disorder, Not Otherwise Specified.

Group 4 was documented as having milder behavioral problems and met from 0 to 5 combined CD-ODD criteria with a mean of 1.3 and an additional 0 to 4 partially documented criteria with a mean of 1.1. Group members were diagnosed as having Child or Adolescent Antisocial Behavior, Adjustment Disorder with Disturbance of Conduct, or Adjustment Disorder with Mixed Disturbance of Emotions and Conduct.

Group 5 did not meet sufficient criteria for diagnosis as having a behavioral disorder. It met from 0 to 5 combined CD-ODD criteria with a mean of 0.9 and an additional 0 to 4 partially documented criteria with a mean of 0.6. Group members were diagnosed as having no diagnosis or a mental health or substance abuse diagnosis. Common diagnoses included Parent-Child Relational Problem, Dysthymic Disorder or Depressive Disorder NOS, Cannabis Abuse or Cannabis Dependence, Sexual or Physical Abuse of Child or Neglect of Child, Borderline Intellectual Functioning or Mild Mental Retardation, and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

One hundred thirty-two youth were in Group 1, 55 in Group 2, 42 in Group 3, 50 in Group 4, and 61 in Group 5. Group 1 was termed the Conduct Disorder group (CD), Group 2 the Oppositional Defiant Disorder group (ODD), Group 3 the Otherwise Behaviorally Disordered group (OBD), Group 4 the Mildly Behaviorally Disordered group (MBD), and Group 5 the Non-Behaviorally Disordered (NBD) group.

The Jesness-R inventories were then re-scored for the JR-CD and JR-ODD scales. The primary Jesness-R scales orig-inally designed to differentiate delinquent youth from nonde-linquent youth, the Asocial Index (JR-ASO), and Social Maladjustment Scale (JR-SM), were also investigated to deter-mine their effectiveness in detecting youth with CD or ODD, although they were designed to detect a broader group of unso-cialized youth beyond those specific diagnoses.

Results

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations for the scales for the various levels of delinquency. For the JR-CD scale, ANOVA yielded significant differences between the groups ($F = 18.09$, $p < .01$), and a follow-up Fischer's LSD Test showed that the CD group was significantly elevated over the other four groups. The ODD and OBD groups were signifi-cantly elevated over the NBD group. Further examination with Cohen's d showed these differences to be moderate to large (see Table 2).[1] None of the other groups differed significantly.

Table 1.
Means and Standard Deviations

	CD Group		ODD Group		OBD Group		MBD Group		NBD Group	
Scale	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
JR-CD	54.42	11.4	48.07	9.5	47.88	8.4	44.88	7.9	43.34	7.2
JR-ODD	55.40	9.8	53.13	10.5	49.74	9.4	47.24	10.4	45.62	10.1
JR-ASO	60.70	8.6	57.15	9.0	57.14	9.4	57.14	9.6	53.70	9.0
JR-SM	58.94	10.1	54.47	9.4	54.79	10.5	54.38	10.5	51.85	9.9

For the JR-ODD scale, ANOVA also yielded significant differences between the groups ($F = 12.99$, $p < .01$), and a fol-low-up Fischer's LSD Test showed that the CD group was sig-nificantly elevated over the OBD, MBD, and NBD groups. The ODD group was significantly elevated over the MBD and NBD groups. Further examination with Cohen's d showed these differences again to be moderate to large (see Table 2). The OBD group was also significantly elevated over the NBD group, although Cohen's d showed this difference to be some-what smaller. The CD and ODD groups did not differ signifi-cantly on the JR-ODD scale. This might be expected, as many youth who have CD also have characteristics of ODD. None of the remaining groups differed significantly.

For the ASO scale, ANOVA again yielded significant dif-ferences between the groups ($F = 6.61$, $p < .01$), and a fol-low-up Fischer's LSD Test showed that the CD group was significantly elevated over the ODD, OBD, MBD, and NBD groups. Cohen's d showed the differences with the first three groups to be small, while the difference with the NBD group was moderately large (see Table 2). None of the other groups differed significantly.

For the SM scale, ANOVA also yielded significant differ-ences between the groups ($F = 5.99$, $p < .01$), and a follow-up Fischer's LSD Test showed that the CD group was again signif-icantly elevated over the ODD, OBD, MBD, and NBD groups. Cohen's d showed the differences with the first three groups to be small-to-moderate, while the difference with the NBD group was again moderately large (see Table 2). None of the other groups differed significantly.

Cohen's d for two independent means is defined as $d = (M1 - M2) / \sigma$. M1 = mean of first sample; M2 = mean of second sample; σ = population standard deviation.

Table 2.
Cohen's d Effect Size Difference Scores

Group	CD	ODD	OBD	MBD	NBD		CD	ODD	OBD	MBD	NBD
	JR-CD Scale						JR-ODD SCALE				
CD	--						--				
ODD	**.64**	--					.23	--			
OBD	**.65**	.02	--				**.57**	.34	--		
MBD	**.95**	.32	.30	--			**.82**	**.59**	.25	--	
NBD	**1.11**	**.47**	**.45**	.15	--		**.98**	**.75**	**.41**	.16	--
	JR-CD Scale						JR-SM Scale				
CD	--						--				
ODD	**.36**	--					**.45**	--			
OBD	**.36**	.00	--				**.41**	.03	--		
MBD	**.36**	.00	.00	--			**.46**	.01	.04	--	
NBD	**.70**	.34	.34	.34	--		**.71**	.26	.29	.25	--

Note. CD = Conduct Disorder Scale; ODD = Oppositional Defiant Disorder Scale; ASO = Asocial Index; SM = Social Maladjustment Scale. Values in bold were statistically significant.

Table 3 shows specificity, sensitivity, positive predictive power (PPP), negative predictive power (NPP), and overall effectiveness for the JR-CD, JR-SM, and JR-ASO scales in differentiating the CD group from the other four groups. Scores of 60 or higher were quite suggestive of the presence of Conduct Disorder, but the sensitivity was low. With lower cutoffs many non-conduct-disordered youth would be flagged as resembling conduct-disordered youth. Scores of 70 or higher on JR-SM or JR-ASO are also indicative of the presence of Conduct Disorder, but the sensitivities were even lower.

Table 4 shows information for the JR-ODD, JR-ASO, and JR-SM scales in differentiating the ODD youth from the other groups. The CD group was not included in this analysis, as many conduct-disordered youth also have ODD, but the ODD diagnosis is subsumed by the more severe CD diagnosis. Scores of 60 or higher were somewhat suggestive of the presence of ODD, but the sensitivity was again low and a fair number of OBD, MBD, and NBD youth all produced elevations this high. Scores of 65 or higher were quite suggestive of the presence of ODD, but the sensitivity was even lower. As with the JR-CD scale, with lower JR-ODD cutoffs, many non-oppositional youth would be flagged as resembling oppositional youth. Scores of 70 or higher on JR-ASO or JR-SM were also indicative of the presence of ODD, but the sensitivities were again even lower.

Table 3.
Scale Effectiveness in Detecting CD vs. ODD+OBD+MBD+NBD

Cutoff	Spe	Sen	PPP	NPP	Eff
JR-CD≥50	.75	.59	.60	.74	.69
JR-CD≥55	.82	.43	.60	.69	.67
JR-CD≥60	.91	.33	.70	.68	.69
JR-CD≥65	.96	.22	.76	.66	.67
JR-CD≥70	1.00	.11	1.00	.64	.65
JR-CD≥75	1.00	.05	1.00	.62	.63
JR-SM≥50	.36	.80	.44	.74	.53
JR-SM≥65	.53	.64	.46	.70	.57
JR-SM≥60	.68	.48	.49	.68	.61
JR-SM≥65	.87	.30	.59	.66	.65
JR-SM≥70	.91	.18	.57	.64	.63
JR-SM≥75	1.00	.06	.89	.63	.63
JR-ASO≥50	.25	.89	.43	.79	.50
JR-ASO≥55	.43	.73	.45	.71	.55
JR-ASO≥60	.63	.57	.49	.70	.61
JR-ASO≥65	.80	.38	.55	.67	.64
JR-ASO≥70	.90	.13	.46	.62	.60
JR-ASO≥75	1.00	.04	.83	.62	.62

Note. Spe = specificity; Sen = sensitivity; PPP = positive predictive power; NPP = negative predictive power; Eff = overall effectiveness.

Table 4.
Scales Effectiveness in Detecting ODD vs. OBD+MBD+NBD

Cutoff	Spe	Sen	PPP	NPP	Eff
JR-CD≥50	.75	.62	.34	.81	.58
JR-CD≥55	.77	.49	.44	.81	.70
JR-CD≥60	.85	.38	.48	.79	.73
JR-CD≥65	.97	.13	.58	.76	.75
JR-CD≥70	.99	.04	.67	.74	.72
JR-CD≥75	1.00	.00	.00	.74	.74
JR-SM≥50	.38	.69	.29	.77	.46
JR-SM≥65	.54	.49	.28	.75	.52
JR-SM≥60	.69	.33	.27	.74	.59
JR-SM≥65	.88	.15	.30	.74	.68
JR-SM≥70	.91	.07	.22	.73	.69
JR-SM≥75	.99	.00	.00	.73	.73
JR-ASO≥50	.27	.80	.28	.79	.41
JR-ASO≥55	.44	.58	.27	.74	.48
JR-ASO≥60	.65	.42	.30	.76	.59
JR-ASO≥65	.82	.24	.32	.75	.66
JR-ASO≥70	.91	.11	.30	.74	.70
JR-ASO≥75	.99	.00	.00	.73	.73

Note. Spe = specificity; Sen = sensitivity; PPP = positive predictive power; NPP = negative predictive power; Eff = overall effectiveness.

Discussion

Results suggest that the new Jesness Inventory-Revised scales are useful in helping to detect youth with CD and ODD. Youth diagnosed independently with those disorders showed higher mean scores on the scales than youth with milder behavioral disorders or no diagnosable behavioral disorder. Youth with CD showed similar elevations on the JR-ODD scale to those diagnosed with ODD. This result is also in the expected direction, as many youth with CD also have the symptomatology of ODD.

The scales also showed higher specificities and sensitivities for the disorders than the previously existing JR-ASO and JR-SM scales. At a given specificity range, the new scales showed higher sensitivities, and at a given sensitivity range, the new scales showed higher specificities. This, again, might be expected as JR-ASO and JR-SM were developed to detect more general social maladjustment rather than these particular diagnoses.

JR-CD scores ≥ 60 strongly support a diagnosis of CD, while JR-ODD scores ≥ 65 strongly support a diagnosis of ODD. The traditional Jesness-R cutoff of 60 may over-diagnose ODD. Obviously, no diagnosis would be made based solely on a test score, and the cutoffs are offered only to assist clinicians in knowing what elevations are seen among CD or ODD youth but rarely seen among other youth who come to the attention of court clinics.

Users should note that the sensitivities of the scales were not strong at cutoffs with good specificities, and that they pro-

duced many false negatives. Many youth with the disorders do not endorse enough items to attain clinical elevations, and the lack of an elevation does not imply the lack of the disorder. Forty-one percent of the CD youth here produced JR-CD elevations below 50. Sixty-five percent of the ODD youth produced JR-ODD elevations below 50.

A primary strength of this study was that the sample consisted of members of the primary population for whom the Jesness-R is intended - juvenile delinquents. Diagnoses were made independently by Ph.D. or Psy.D. level licensed psychologists with many years of experience working in the field of juvenile forensics, and all diagnoses were reviewed by a second doctoral level psychologist. The independent diagnoses made by experienced psychologists in a juvenile forensic setting represents another strength of the study, particularly since the delinquent data used for the revision of the Jesness Inventory did not involve cases diagnosed with ODD or CD. The base rates of the different groups were the naturally occurring base rates in a court diagnostic clinic setting. All participants, however, came from the same urban setting, and the results need to be replicated in rural settings and other populations.

A limitation of the study is paradoxically embedded in its strength. This study looked only at a sample from a juvenile court setting where a high base rate of ODD and CD would be expected. A nondelinquent sample, consistent with a sample used in the data collection for the Jesness Inventory-R, would have enhanced the methodology of our study. Additionally, our sample consisted of 71% African American, 21% Caucasian, 4% Hispanic, and 3% Multicultural. This compares to the normative delinquent data from the revision of the Jesness Inventory, which consisted of 53% African American, 26% Caucasian, 14% Asian, 2% Hispanic, 2% Native/Aboriginal, and 1% "Other". A more heterogeneous sample would have also improved the methodology of the current study.

Some of the weaknesses of the new Jesness-R scales observed here may be related to the item content. While the revision of the Jesness to the Jesness-R did increase the sampling of the criteria for CD, it is still not a one-to-one correspondence. Criteria of forcing someone into sexual activity or breaking into places are not assessed. The two items related to stealing tap attitudes of whether one considers stealing to be wrong and not whether one has engaged in stealing behavior. Some items suggest a person who might be perceived by others as threatening or intimidating, but no items directly query such behavior. A single item appears to assess both fire-setting and other deliberate destruction of property. Another single item assesses cruelty to both people and animals. Another single item is used to assess the triad of staying out at night, running away, and truancy.

The criteria for ODD appear to be better sampled; however, the items that relate to being touchy or easily annoyed appear to relate more directly to having one's feelings easily hurt rather than to being easily annoyed. Additionally, othercriteria are assessed by only a single item. A future revision of the Jesness-R might further improve the scales' efficacies by addressing these limitations. However, the inherent difficulty in detecting the diagnostic criteria for these particular disorders through self-report is not easily overcome. Youth with ODD or CD often do not perceive themselves as having the problems

that are observed by others, or are aware of them but unwilling to overtly acknowledge them.

Finally, further research addressing the limitations of our study is needed to provide additional data on the validity of the Jesness-R ODD and CD scales. Specifically, and as noted above, a nondelinquent sample and more racial and ethnic heterogeneity in the sample would provide additional valuable data on the diagnostic utility of the ODD and CD scales. It should also be stated that a diagnosis of ODD and CD needs to be made from multiple sources of information and not just from one inventory such as the Jesness-R. Clinical interviews with the child, parent(s)/guardian(s), review of records, collateral contacts, and additional psychological testing should be included in a full diagnostic evaluation to confirm diagnoses of OD or CD and assess for other comorbid diagnoses. Future research is also needed to study the rates of comorbidity with the ODD and CD scales of the Jesness-R.

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The Theory of Cognitive Dissonance: A Reappraisal

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Abstract

The cognitive dissonance theory, as postulated by Festinger (1957), has undergone increased scrutiny since its development. Through a reappraisal of this theory as explicated by other researchers, specifically relying on extant and current research in this theory, coupled with recent developments, this paper provides a context for better understanding of how individuals experience cognitive dissonance and its implications for clinical practice.

Keywords: cognitive dissonance, attitude change, motivation, self-perception

The cognitive dissonance theory as postulated by Festinger (1957) has been undergoing increased scrutiny since its development. How we experience cognitive dissonance has been a fertile ground for a plethora of studies in social psychology. Some of the findings from these studies as to how we experience cognitive dissonance have led credence to Festinger's conceptualization of dissonance, and while others (e.g., Bem, 1967) have not provided empirical support of how we experience dissonance as explained by Festinger. Through a reappraisal of this theory as explicated by other researchers, this paper provides a context for better understanding of how individuals experience cognitive dissonance and its implications for clinical practice. Specifically, this paper sheds light on contradictory and somewhat complementary explanations of how we experience cognitive dissonance.

Cognitive dissonance is an uncomfortable feeling caused by holding two contradictory ideas simultaneously. The theory of cognitive dissonance proposes that people have a motivational drive to reduce dissonance by changing their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, or by justifying or rationalizing them (Brehm, 1956; Festinger, 1957). In this context, dissonance occurs when a person perceives a logical inconsistency in their beliefs, when one idea implies the opposite of another. The dissonance might be experienced as guilt, anger, frustration, or even embarrassment.

Classic Experiment of Cognitive Dissonance

Festinger and Carlsmith (1959) conducted a classic experiment of cognitive dissonance. In this experiment, students were asked to spend an hour on boring and tedious tasks (e.g., turning pegs a quarter turn, over and over again). The tasks were designed to generate a strong, negative attitude. Once the participants had done this, the experimenters asked some of them to do a simple favor. They were asked to talk to another subject (actually an actor) and persuade them that the tasks were interesting and engaging. Some participants were paid $20 for this favor, others were paid $1, and a control group was not asked to perform the favor.

When asked to rate the boring tasks at the conclusion of the study (not in the presence of the other *subject*), those in the $1 group rated them more positively than those in the $20 and control groups. This was explained by Festinger and Carlsmith (1959) as evidence for cognitive dissonance. The researchers theorized that people experienced dissonance between the conflicting cognitions, "I told someone that the task was interesting" and "I actually found it boring" (p. 207). When paid only $1, students were forced to internalize the attitude they were induced to express, because they had no other justification. Those in the $20 condition, however, had an obvious external justification for their behavior, and thus experienced less dissonance.

Alternative Explanations of Dissonance

Daryl Bem (1967) was an early critic of cognitive dissonance theory. He proposed self-perception theory as a more parsimonious alternative explanation of the experimental results. According to him, people do not think much about their attitudes, let alone whether they are in conflict. He interpreted people in the Festinger and Carlsmith (1959) study as inferring their attitudes from their behavior. Thus, when asked "Did you find the task interesting?" they decided that they must have found it interesting because that is what they told someone (Bem, p. 183). Bem suggested that people paid $20 had a salient, external incentive for their behavior and were likely to perceive the money as their reason for saying the task was interesting, rather than concluding that they actually found it interesting.

In many experimental situations, Bem's theory and Festinger's theory make identical predictions, but only dissonance theory predicts the presence of unpleasant tension or

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arousal. Lab experiments have verified the presence of arousal in dissonance situations (Zanna & Cooper, 1974; Kiesler & Pallak, 1976). This provides support for cognitive dissonance theory and makes it unlikely that self-perception by itself can account for all the laboratory findings.

Aronson (1969) reformulated the basic theory of cognitive dissonance by linking it to the self-concept. According to this new interpretation, cognitive dissonance does not arise because people experience dissonance between conflicting cognitions. Instead, it occurs when people see their actions as conflicting with their normally positive view of themselves. Thus, in the original Festinger and Carlsmith study, Aronson stated that the dissonance was between the cognition, "I am an honest person" and the cognition, "I lied to someone about finding the task interesting" (p. 27). Other psychologists have argued that maintaining cognitive consistency is a way to protect public self-image, rather than private self-concept (Tedeschi, Schlenker, & Bonoma, 1971).

Cooper and Fazio (1984) argued that dissonance was caused by aversive consequences, rather than inconsistency. According to this interpretation, the fact that lying is wrong and hurtful, not the consistency between cognitions is what makes people feel bad. Subsequent research, however, found that people experience dissonance even when they feel they have not done anything wrong (Harmon-Jones, Brehm, Greenberg, Simon, & Nelson, 1996).

Chen and Risen (2010) have criticized the free-choice paradigm and have suggested that the *Rank, Choice, Rank* method of studying dissonance is invalid. They argue that research design relies on the assumption that, if the subject rates options differently in the second survey, then the subject's attitudes toward the options have therefore changed. They show that there are other reasons one might get different rankings in the second survey - perhaps the participants were largely indifferent between choices. However, some follow-up research has provided contradictory evidence to this account (Egan, Santos, & Bloom, 2007). Also, more recent studies have demonstrated the biological bases of how cognitive dissonance is experienced (e.g., Monroe & Read, 2008; Van Veen, Krug, Schooler, & Carter, 2009).

Discussion

In recent times, social psychological experiments have provided impetus for the sustained interest in cognitive dissonance and, consequently, challenged the revisions of dissonance theory and provided empirical support for Festinger's original conceptualization of dissonance. On the basis of these profound experiments, dissonance reflects inconsistency and is at variance with self-threat or the production of an aversive consequence. According to Aronson (1992), a number of social psychological theories, including self affirmation theory, could be conceptualized as dissonance in the form of guilt. In addition to the theories postulated by Aronson, much research and theory concerned with guilt (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994) and self-regulation over prejudiced and other impulses (Amodio, Harmon-Jones, Devine, Curtin, Hartley, & Covert, 2004) may be understood from the perspective of dissonance.

Festinger (1957) failed to explicate why cognitive inconsistency produces discomfort and motivates perceptual, cognitive and behavioral changes. Nevertheless, research on the action-based model (Harmon-Jones & Harmon-Jones, 2002) suggests cognitive inconsistency produces a negative emotive state that causes cognitive and behavioral changes. Specifically, the action-based model suggests a new way of thinking about cognitive dissonance processes; it states that dissonance processes may serve the necessary and vital function of assisting in the execution of effective and unconflicted behavior. It is incumbent upon social psychological researchers to include these ideas from action-based model into future research in cognitive dissonance.

As continued interest in dissonance theory is sustained, it is clear that this theory has faced many challenges in terms of its conjectures, but still provides empirical foundation for generating new hypotheses that lend themselves to testing. Against this backdrop, it is instructive to note that recent empirical and theoretical developments within dissonance theory will shed more light on how we conceptualize Festinger's theory.

In conclusion, this paper did not provide an exhaustive review of the literature of how we experience dissonance, but only a sample of the literature. However, the review of the literature presented here underscores the importance of complementary explanations of dissonance, and these explanations on how individuals experience cognitive dissonance has one common thread. This indicates that people experience dissonance and the source of the components of this dissonance might be different for individuals. Against this backdrop, are there any clinical implications resulting from cognitive dissonance? Fortunately, the answer is yes. For example, how one experiences cognitive dissonance may have utility in the clinical intervention of individuals suffering from anxiety and other maladjustments (Freedman, 1965).

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Missing and Exploited Children in Jamaica: An Empirical Analysis

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Abstract

This paper is an analysis of missing, abused, and exploited children in Jamaica. I examined the responses of advocate groups and the government to determine the steps to take to protect children who are most vulnerable. I collected data through interviews from the Police National Intelligence Bureau, the Office of the Children's Registry, the Office of Children Advocate, literature review, and the printed media (e.g., The Jamaica Gleaner, The Jamaica Observer, and The Jamaica Star).

Keywords: victimization of children, exploitation of children, child abuse, child labor, Child Care and protection Act, Convention on the Rights of the Child

Victimization of children is a worldwide phenomenon, despite the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) that was adopted by 70 Heads of Government over half a century ago, transforming the ways in which children are perceived globally. The Convention emphasizes that every child under the age of 18 should be: (a) afforded the right to survival; (b) able to develop to the fullest; (c) offered protection from harmful influences, abuse, and exploitation; and (d) able to participate fully in family, culture, and social life. The core principles underpinning the Convention are: (a) non-discrimination; (b) devotion to the best interests of the child; (c) the right to life, survival, and development; and (d) respect for the view of the child. In addition, the Convention protects children's rights by setting standards in health care, education, and legal civil and social services (Convention on the Right of the Child, 1989).

These rights mean that Jamaican children should be treated as equally as children worldwide. However, it was not until 1991 that the Rights of the Child were ratified in Jamaica. This became a reality after much advocacy by the Jamaican Coalition on the Rights of the Child, with support from six other non-government organizations. This revolutionized approach brought a paradigm shift on how Jamaican children should be treated, as Jamaica instituted a number of legislations, public policies, and institutions that would better serve the welfare of children. To ensure compliance, a national plan of action and programs was implemented. Included in the national plan was the passing of legislation such as the Early Childhood Commission Act of 2003, which focused on the administration of early childhood, education, and development. This act was succeeded by the passing of the 2005 Early Childhood Act, which prescribed the regulatory powers of the Commission and set standards for all early childhood institutes. The Child Care and Protection Act of 2004 created one piece of legislation that outlined universal standards for the care and treatment of children. Another legislative act was the Trafficking in Person Prevention, Suppression, and Punishment Act of 2007, which was enacted to prohibit all forms of trafficking in persons, including women and children, and related offenses.

To further ensure compliance, numerous policies and plans were created to fulfill the World Fit for Children Commitments. Among the policies and programs introduced were: (a) the National Youth Policy of 1994, which was the first comprehensive policy on youth, addressing education and training, employment and entrepreneurship, health care, youth participation and empowerment, and care and protection (this policy was updated in 2004 and is currently under review); (b) the Poverty Eradication Policy of 1995, which included a social investment fund and a social safety net program to be administered through a program of advancement through health and education; (c) the National Policy on Children, which ensures the right of every child to the attainment of quality education, health care, and justice; (d) the National Plan of Action for Children of 1995-2002, which aimed at providing an institutional framework to address and enforce children's rights; (e) the National Plan of Action for Orphans and Other Children made Vulnerable by HIV/AIDS of 2003-2006, which was in response to the needs of the National Plan of Action for Children (it sought to improve the quality of life for children in Jamaica made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS); (f) the National Plan of Action for an Integrated Response to Children and Violence, which is a multifaceted approach to reducing violence against children; (g) the National Plan on Child Justice of 2008, which addressed a number of issues regarding how children in conflict with the law are treated; (h) the Social Investment for Children Initiative of 2006, which sought to increase the level of social investment for children; and (i) a national Parenting Policy of 2008, focused on parenting practices nationwide. Other initiatives to

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further benefit children included child-specific National Human Rights Institutions, the Institution of a Juvenile Unit in the Police Force, and a Victim Support Unit in the Ministry of National Security to assist child victims of violence.

Special institutions and agencies were created in support of the national plan, including: (a) the appointment of a Special Envoy for Children of 1998, with primary responsibility to influence the development of policies concerning the welfare of children. However, this position no longer exists; (b) the formation of the Child Development Agency, which has responsibility for children in need of care and protection (the agency was created to achieve the holistic development of children through the creation, implementation, coordination, and regulation of programs and policies that meet Jamaica's obligation to international standards for children); (c) the establishment of the Office of the Children's Advocate in 2006, to protect and enforce the rights of Jamaican children and promote their best interest, and (d) the implementation of the Children's Registry in 2007, which receives, records, and stores reports of all types of reported abuse, abandonment, and neglect (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2005; the Office of the Children's Advocate & UNICEF, 2009; Witter, 2009).

Despite all the legislation, polices, and agencies created by the government, children's rights are still not respected nationally. Evidence of this can be seen in the increased number of children who go missing and are victimized. Types of victimization range from exploitation, abuse, child labor, child prostitution and pornography, and violence against children.

Missing Children

Children have accounted for the greatest percentage of missing persons in Jamaica for the last 5 years. For the period January 1, 2006, to October 31 2010, a total of 4,870 children were forwarded to the Missing Person Call Centre (Jamaica Police National Intelligence Bureau [JPNIB], personal communication, November 17, 2010). This is frightening and disturbing and has raised a number of questions. Statistics derived from the Missing Person Call Centre at the National Intelligence Bureau indicate an annual increase in the number of missing children between 2006 and 2010 (JPNIB, personal communication, November 17, 2010). Table 1 illustrates the gravity of the situation. It is noteworthy that children account for the greatest percentage of missing persons.

Table 1.

Number of Children between Ages 0 and 17 Years Reported Missing for the Period January 1, 2006 to October 31, 2010

Year/Reported	Males missing	Males returned home	Females missing	Females returned home	Total number of missing persons
2006	43	16 - 37%	24	10 - 42%	67
2007	6	3 - 50%	12	5 - 45%	18
2008	612	184 - 30%	1,046	324 - 31%	1,658
2009	484	194 - 40%	1,286	553 - 43%	1,770
2010 (Jan-Oct)	321	125 - 39%	1,036	1,036 - 35%	1,357
Total	1,466	622 - 42%	3,404	1,255 - 37%	4,870

Source: Jamaica Police National Intelligence Bureau, November 2010 (JPNIB, personal communication, November 17, 2010).

Numerous reasons have been posited as to why children go missing, including poverty, poor economic circumstances, family conflict, mental illness, financial difficulties, abuse (physical, verbal, sexual) from immediate family members and step-parents, fear of being reprimanded or punished, becoming lost, abductions, kidnappings, or death. The Missing Persons Desk of the Jamaica Police National Intelligence Bureau has provided a myriad of reasons for the vast number of missing children aged 0 to 17. Chief among them include: (a) kidnapping for ransom; (b) child abuse (verbal or physically); (c) mental or neurological conditions or severe depression; (d) running away from home or going off with friends and not informing parents, guardians, or relatives; (e) killed and not identified; (f) ingesting and trafficking of narcotics overseas; (g) displacement resulting from human trafficking; (h) desire to become involved in criminal activities, especially teenage boys who want to join gangs; (i) pregnanancy; (j) parental pressure; (k) peer pressure; and (l) incarceration (JPNIB, personal communication, November 17, 2010).

The locality from which children go missing varies (e.g., school, bus stops, home), which has sent waves of panic across the nation causing parents, teachers, and prospective victims to take extra precautionary measures. Extra security and surveillance strategies were placed in several localities. For example, some schools increased their security, while others suspended extracurricular activities and encouraged students to go home at the end of the school day (Jamaica Gleaner, 2008e).

Parents, guardians, and relatives are often blamed for their high level of irresponsibility in reporting their children missing. According to officers at the Jamaica Police National Intelligence Bureau (personal communication, November 17, 2010), children go to relatives' house and the relatives do not inform the parents. It is only when the missing person report is publicized in the media that the child is discovered. Responses from a series of interviews revealed that the majority of the children who go missing are taken by strangers, family members, and friends of the family. However, there are others who leave home of their own free will due to abuse, economic reasons, social problems, mental health challenges, and drug trafficking (Jamaica Police National Intelligence Bureau 2010). Interviews further revealed that mothers, particular those in some inner cities, send away their girls to other communities

with the hope of protecting them from the dons in the communities who prey on them for sexual favors. In protecting their innocence, mothers report their daughters as missing.

Anthropologist Herbert Gayle (2007), in offering an explanation on the phenomenon of missing children, focused on a four-stage system that starts with feuding among community members and ends with abduction and rape. He argued that the first stage of the process starts with single murders, followed by geo-serial murders, which occur in areas occupied by warring factions, and multiple murders. He also maintained that gangs are usually responsible for a number of these murders in an effort to outdo their rivals. The final stage, according to Gayle, is "When people are in a feud, in order to create a 'trigger' they need to take out people who are outside the game of feud. This includes women, children, and the elderly. The more graphic it is, the more 'respect' you earn" (as cited in Jamaica Star, 2008a, "Four-Stage System," para. 2). In this final stage, women and children may be abducted, raped, and disposed of in an effort to show one faction's dominance over the other to support their false sense of control (Jamaica Star).

The fear of children going missing has sent ripples through out the religious community, which interprets it as having "supernatural undertones" (Jamaica Star, 2008a, "Supernatural Influences," para. 1). Pastor John-Mark Barnett of the Pentecostal Tabernacle church in Kingston said:

> There is something sinister about what is happening. These people are not being held for money, these women and children are being raped and killed. I am wondering if there is something particularly devilish about this. Sex plays a role in Satanic worship rituals and I am beginning to think that this is a possible cause for so many abductions. (Jamaica Star, 2008a, "Supernatural Influences," para. 2)

Regardless of the reasons given for disappearances, there are also criminal, civil, and psychological implications. Rand (1997a) noted that abducting or kidnapping of children is a criminal as well as a civil offense. Furthermore, Rand believes that children who have been psychologically violated and maltreated through the act of abduction are more likely to exhibit a variety of psychological and social inadequacies which make them vulnerable to detrimental outside influences. Researchers suggest that in most cases, victims of abduction suffer from adverse psychological effects. According to Binder et al. (2008), these victims often suffer from symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (e.g., nightmares, flashbacks, and frightening thoughts), which may impede their developmental progress. Additionally, children may suffer from psychotic effects that may include Stockholm syndrome, where victims begin to feel loyal to their abductor as a coping mechanism (Binder et al.).

Based on reports, it is obvious that the majority of children abducted in 2009 are from impoverished communities (as cited in Reid, 2009a), although reports from the Planning Institute of Jamaica (2008) indicate an upward movement in Jamaica's poverty line and a decrease in the number of people going hungry. However, there is still a high correlation between missing children and poverty levels, because the children who go missing are mostly from communities where poverty is at its highest, despite the statistics showing the prevalence of poverty dropped from 18.7% in 2000 to 9.9% in 2007 (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2008). In addition, it was indicated that the

prevalence of food poverty fell from 4.9% to 2.8% during the same period. Despite these findings, there are areas where poverty is still very high (Planning Institute of Jamaica).

Robertson (as cited in Reid, 2009a) argued that children from working-class homes are the most vulnerable in the missing dilemma, due of breakdown of the family unit. Many of the homes have single parents (chiefly mothers), unlike their upper middle-class and upper-class counterparts. He believes that these families lack the financial means to implement security mechanisms, such as dropping off or picking up their children from school, security surveillance at home, and electronic or technological devices to communicate with their families. He further alluded that financial straits in the homes of lower middle class homes often result in parents sending the children out on the streets to sell *quick-cash* items in a desperate bid to supplement the family's already meager disposable income (as cited in Reid). Having children unsupervised makes them more vulnerable to being abducted or going missing.

Although the number of missing children has increased annually, a new pattern was observed in 2009. According to the Jamaican police, children from upscale communities and predominantly wealthy Jamaican families were abducted, where monetary reward had to be exchanged to gain their freedom (Reid, 2009b; Brown-Daniels, 2010). Highlighted in the report from the police were incidents of human trafficking of children from rural communities to urban and metropolitan areas in Jamaica (Jamaica Star, 2007b). In October 2007, police attached to the Centre for the Investigation of Sexual Offences and Child Abuse (CISOCA) charged three persons who were allegedly involved in a human-trafficking ring (Jamaica Star). Five other persons were charged with the trafficking of a child, under the Child Care and Protection Act of 2004 (Jamaica Gleaner, 2008). This practice has serious implication for children, considering the growth of human trafficking globally. Already an estimated 50,000 women and children in the Caribbean region have been victims of human trafficking (Jamaica Gleaner), which is prohibited under international law. The Human Rights Report, Jamaica (2008) reported that Jamaicans who are victims of human trafficking are usually poor women and girls (sometimes boys). They are trafficked from rural to urban and tourist areas for commercial sexual exploitation. It was also reported that these individuals are typically recruited by family members or newspaper advertisements promoting work as spa attendants, masseuses, or dancers, who after being recruited are coerced into prostitution. Some victims are subjected to conditions of forced labor as domestic servants, while others are invited to live with families, go to school, and get an informal education in order to avoid exposure to the public (Human Rights Report, Jamaica).

Abused Children

Table 2 shows the Office of the Children's Registry reported that there were over 15,600 cases of child abuse reported between 2007 and 2010.

Although cases are reported as abuse, a number of the cases are categorized as neglect (i.e., child left unsupervised, deprived of food and clean/adequate clothing, and attended school dirty/unpresentable without the basic necessities). Indication is

Table 2.
Number of Child Abuse Cases Reported for the Period January 1, 2007 to April 2010

Year/Reported	Number of abuse cases	Total
2007	460	460
2008	4,100	4,100
2009	6,100	6,100
2010 (Jan-Oct)	5,000	5,000
Total	15,660	15,660

Source: Jamaica Gleaner (2010b).

there were 7,000 cases of neglect between 2007 and 2010 (Jamaica Observer, 2010c). According to the Office of the Children's Registry (OCR, 2010), despite the increase in the number of abuse cases, a more significant number of incidents go unreported. This was blamed on the *informer fi dead* culture, where persons who have information are reluctant to report out of fear for their lives, so many children silently suffering from abuse and are afraid to speak out (Jamaica Star, 2010b).

The Jamaica Gleaner (2010c) documented Deputy Commissioner of Police, Mark Shields' view that originally, when cases of child abuse were reported, not many arrests were made. This is because abuse is one of the hardest offenses to investigate as there are usually two witnesses, the abuser and the abused. Jamaica Gleaner also reported that child abuse cases were investigated by the Community Relation arm of the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF), instead of treated under the serious crime portfolio. However, the enactment of the Child Care and Protection Act of 2004 charged adults with the legal responsibility of reporting child abuse. Failing to report known cases or suspicion that a child is abused or in need of care and protection could result in 6 months in prison or a fine of $500,000. Additionally, the new law increased the maximum sentence for incest to 16 years imprisonment and separated children from parents who were found guilty of harming them (Child Care & Protection Act, 2004).

Child abuse, in general, is a worrying factor in Jamaica, but additionally there is evidence of increases in sexual abuse/carnal abuse cases (incest to carnal abuse), along with physical and emotional abuse. The latest crime statistics indicate a 5% increase in carnal abuse cases (Jamaica Gleaner, 2010d). For the period of January through September 2010, 384 children were sexually assaulted, compared to 365 over the same period in 2009 (Jamaica Gleaner, 2010d). The Jamaica Gleaner (2008a) documented Rainford's (consulting obstetrician and gynecologist) findings that adolescent sexual offenders are teenagers between the ages of 13 and 17, which data suggests are usually male family members of the abusers. Furthermore, abusers engaged in illegal sexual behavior, including intercourse, or acts such as obscene telephone calls. He found that the abusers were more likely to be male than female, while the victims were more likely to be females. While the cause of this behavior is unknown, research indicates that children who were physically abused were more likely to exhibit this behavior. According to the Jamaica Gleaner, Rainford further identified alcohol or other drug abuse, family difficulties,

a history of sexual abuse, and exposure to pornographic material as factors associated with this type of abuse. He believed that victims of sexual abuse were more likely to become promiscuous and engage in thoughtless sexual acts, and the younger that a girl started having consensual sex, the more likely that she had been forced to have sex in the first instance (Jamaica Gleaner).

Although the figures regarding sexual abuse cases are revealing, a vast number go uninvestigated due to lack of reporting. In a number of situations, underage girls who get pregnant are fearful for their lives if the father of their child is revealed. The police see this as a challenge to investigations. Little-White (2008) posited that child sexual abusers are in different localities (inside and outside the home), and are typically men, although some women sexually abuse children for their own sexual gratification, or initiate young boys into sexual intercourse. Nonetheless, due to cultural practices (e.g., the culture of silence), most cases of sexual abuse of boys by women are not reported to the police and, in some instances, are condoned by society which sees it as a badge of honor for the boy even though he is under the age of consent. According to Little-White, in most instances the abusers may be the father (rare instances of a mother), step-father, sibling, or a relative, such as an uncle or cousin. A case prosecuted in the St. Catherine Circuit Court, which saw a 48-year-old uncle plead guilty to impregnating his 12-year-old niece (Jamaica Star, 2009), supported Little-White's arguments.

In Jamaica, like many other countries, it is illegal for anyone to have sex with a girl who is under the age of 16. Little-White (2008) noted that child sex abusers get their victim to comply with them by grooming them with attention, affection and gifts of money and other treats. She further posited that abusers may even groom the mother or caregiver of the child in order to win the family's trust and gain access to the child. According to Little-White, the child may develop affection for the abuser and become subjected to repeated acts of sexual abuse, and out of fear choose not to disclose the experience.

Several convictions in 2010 resulted from numerous incidents of sexual abuse and rape. For example, *Zebra*, a popular dance hall deejay, was sentenced to 30 years of hard labor on carnal and buggery charges (Jamaica Observer, 2011). In another case, a 31-year-old security guard (who posed as a taxi driver to lure his victims) was found guilty for raping a 12-year-old girl and a 22-year-old woman on separate occasions. He was convicted on two charges of rape and illegal possession of a firearm and was sentenced to a total of 52 years in prison (Jamaica Observer).

The problem of sexual abuse has negatively impacted the health sector. Of great concern to practitioners in the medical profession, limited hospital resources are overstretched, resulting from the high percentage of 12 to 16 year olds who are sexually abused and become pregnant. Under the Jamaican law, sexual encounters with females under the age of 16 attract a jail term of 6 years (The Child Care and Protection Act, 2004), but often law enforcement faces difficulties in arresting those involved. In support of this law, the Child Care and Protection Act of 2004 introduced additional penalties, which range from a maximum fine of JA$500.000 and/or 6 months imprisonment

if someone is knowledgeable of, or suspects, child abuse and fails to report it to the Office of the Children's Registry.

Although the sexual exploitation of children has put Jamaica in a negative light, this practice is also a significant problem regionally and internationally. Child pornography, juvenile prostitution, child sex tourism, and trafficking of children for sexual purposes have taken on a greater dimension over the last 2 decades. According to Estes and Weiner (2002), these behaviors have been fueled by several factors including: (a) existing adult prostitution rings in communities where children live; (b) children going missing from home; (c) prior history of child sexual abuse and child sexual assault; (d) poverty; (e) unattached transient males in communities; (f) girl membership in gangs; (g) the promotion of juvenile prostitution by parents, older siblings, and boyfriends; (h) the recruitment of children by organized crime units for prostitution; and (i) illegal trafficking of children for sexual purposes.

Increased incidents of physical abuse are also a concern. Abuse is frequently perpetuated against children in their homes, which includes physical punishments administered as discipline, especially by mothers. However, in Jamaica the cultural practice of physically punishing children for reasons such as disobedience, disrespect, stealing, lying, answering back, fighting, and poor homework is not considered physical abuse, because it occurs in the context of disciplining the child. Some parents even threaten to murder their children without considering it as abuse.

Who are the Perpetrators of Missing and Abused Children?

Perpetrators of missing children are not only strangers. Often family members and friends are also implicated. For example, a Jamaica Observer article titled *Cabbie charged with abduction, rape 12-y-o girl:*

The taxi driver who allegedly abducted and raped a 12-year-old girl, then buried her alive after he thought he had strangled her to death, was yesterday remanded in custody when he appeared before the Corporate Area Resident Magistrate's Court. The accused, 26-year-old Garsha Wilson, is charged with rape, abduction, attempted murder, malicious destruction of property, and cruelty to a child. The police alleged that the child -- who was reported missing from the transport centre in Half-Way-Tree, St Andrew on March 22 -- was abducted by Wilson, said to be a family friend. It is alleged that Wilson took the child to Smokey Vale, St Andrew where he raped her and choked her until she was unconscious. The accused, believing that the child was dead, reportedly buried her in shallow grave and covered it with stones. The girl regained consciousness and dug herself out and was assisted by residents who took her to the police where the matter was reported. Wilson, who had reportedly accompanied the mother to report the child missing, fled the scene after he heard that she was found. He was arrested 3 days later. (Jamaica Observer, 2010b, para. 1-7)

In identifying the perpetrators of child abuse, a common thread that runs through a number of studies shows that culprits are often parents, especially mothers. Research conducted by anthropologist Gayle in 2004 (Jamaica Observer, 2005a), noted that the number one abuser is the mother, followed by female teachers. Not only are parents abusers, but parents aid in the

speedy trial of other perpetuators by not making their children available to court at the trial out of fear of reprisal, pay-off by offenders, and not wanting to be exposed to public embarrassment. The research shows that parents abuse their children for a number of reasons, including economic gain. The Jamaica Gleaner (2009a) highlighted an exclusive story about three of four sisters who have taken their father to court for years of alleged sexual abuse. Some of the incidents date back more than 4 decades.

Although parents are often involved in the abuse of their children, other family members, relatives, caregivers, strangers, and influential persons (e.g., teachers, bus drivers, conductors, and taxi operators) are featured in numerous incidents. For example, an article in the Jamaica Gleaner (2005), titled *Teacher on carnal abuse rap granted bail*, featured the story of a 29-year-old teacher who was arrested and charged for carnally abusing one of his students, but released on $1 million bail. The student was hospitalized with hemorrhaging.

Despite school teacher involvement in sexual harassment of students, little is done to deter this behavior by the school system. For example, in one parish a male teacher who was brought before the court for allegedly fondling a female student was back at school. The principal noted that, "He was on leave, but he came back (September 1). We don't have any authority to tell him to come off the compound; the board would have to meet and get directives from the ministry," (Jamaica observer, 2005b, para. 3).

Reid, (as cited in Jamaica Gleaner, 2011a), quoting Cargill research officer in the Office of the Children's Advocate (OCA) noted that:

In the school system where teachers are hired and disciplined by a school board, the employment contracts of educators who are accused of child sexual abuse are sometimes terminated by the board without the tutor being convicted. As a result of the gaps in the system, such a teacher can then seek employment in other schools, and the cycle of abuse continues. ("Most Cases Still Pending," para. 3-4)

Another incident involved the arrest of a 38-year-old woman and her 43-year-old partner for aiding and abetting the carnal abuse of their 12-year-old daughter (Jamaica Star, 2007a). This couple from the parish of St. Elizabeth was charged with aiding and abetting the carnal abuse and exposure of a juvenile to moral danger, after allegedly swapping their 12-year-old daughter for a piece of land (Jamaica Star, 2007a). Police from the Centre of Investigation of Sexual Offences and Child Abuse (CISOCA) in December 2008 arrested two uncles and a step-grandfather for raping a 12-year-old girl in their custody (Jamaica Star, 2008b). Additionally, the Jamaican Star (2009) reported that a 48-year-old uncle pleaded guilty to sexually assaulting and impregnating his 12-year-old niece in the Spanish Town Resident Magistrate's Court.

Statistics shows that 70% of rape victims in Jamaica are under the age of consent (Livesey, 2007). A report published by Amnesty International (2006) on sexual violence against women and children in Jamaica, *Just a Little Sex*, highlighted the manner in which the justice system in Jamaica has failed to adequately deal with sexual violence. Amnesty International noted that:

Discrimination is entrenched and often exacerbated in the police and criminal justice system. Women and adolescent girls are rarely believed by the police, so have little confidence in reporting crimes against them. Evidence is often not sought effectively or professionally, and witnesses are rarely protected. In court, women's testimony is explicitly given less weight than men are, thereby depriving women of the right to equality before the law. ("Sexual Violence In Jamaica," para. 3)

According to a media report, the prevalence of sexual abuse against women and girls solicited the anger of a senior magistrate who had to deal with 10 new cases of sexual offenses in one day against women and girls and suggested the re-introduction of chastity belts (Jamaica Observer, 2007). Six of these cases were committed against 6-year-old school girls (Jamaica Observer). These blatant acts against Jamaican girls were allegedly carried out by men and boys, including a 49-year-old basic school principal (Jamaica Gleaner, 2007). According to the senior magistrate, "Shortcomings in national legislation do not deal adequately with marital rape, incest, or sexual harassment, thereby encouraging impunity and leaving women without the protection of the law" (Jamaica Observer, para. 13).

A situational analysis of rape in Jamaica came to the following conclusions: (a) violence and crime in certain communities increased women's vulnerability to rape; (b) rape is very prevalent in many impoverished communities in Jamaica; (c) the majority of the rapes are committed by males ages 16-25 in Jamaica; (d) Jamaica, unlike other Caribbean countries, is not proactive enough in producing legislation to protect women from sexual violence; and (e) Jamaica still operates under an archaic statute dating back to the 1800s when it relates to sexual offenses (Simms, 2007). The executive director of the Women Centre Jamaica indicated how women are sexually exploited in Jamaica, as she acknowledged in an interview that between 2006 and 2007, 766 of the girls enrolled in the program between the ages of 12 and 16 became pregnant (Jamaica Gleaner, 2008d).

Perception of Advocacy Groups on Missing and Abused Children

Advocacy groups have offered various explanations for this unprecedented behavior. For example, Blaine of the advocate group Hear the Children's Cry argued that maltreatment and abuse is the primary factor why children leave their homes (Jamaica Gleaner, 2009c). She believes that often these children are unhappy at home and experience some form of abuse (e.g., sexual, physical), in addition to being hungry and in need of material things (e.g., clothes, books, etc.). In her analysis, she maintains that missing children in Jamaica are a "phenomenon" that does not affect the upper classes (para. 14). To her, it is 100% a problem of the poor and working class, because it is these children who go missing. Blaine further argued that other children are sent away from home for economic reasons (Jamaica Gleaner).

Research conducted between January and November of 2009 by Jamaica for Justice (2009), a childrens' lobby group, revealed that some teenage girls reported missing were actually being held hostage by inner-city thugs, who impregnated or in-

fected them with sexually-transmitted diseases. The research also found that certain parishes (e.g., Kingston, St. Andrew, St James, Clarendon, and Manchester) accounted for most of the cases of missing children (Jamaican for Justice). Children who find themselves in these situations are more vulnerable to exploitation.

Exploitation of Children

Exploitation of children is just as problematic as other kinds of abuse in Jamaica, which is blamed on the increased pervasiveness of online media; this has put a new dimension to the victimization of a greater number of children. Evidence of this is the use of the internet to commit crime against children globally. For the last decade, there has been an increasing use of the Internet to prey on innocent victims or to lure unsuspecting children into illegal activities, ranging from sexually explicit conduct to the production, manufacture, and distribution of child pornography (Jamaica Gleaner, 2006). In addition, some are exposed to child pornography, while others are recruited for the purpose of sex tourism, for commercial gain, and/or personal gratification.

Jamaica's *Criminal Code*, Article 58 (2003) prohibits procuring a girl less than 18 years of age for the purposes of prostitution. Furthermore, acts of prostitution that involve girls under the age of 18 are punishable by up to 3 years imprisonment (*Criminal Code*, Article 58, 2003). The *Criminal Code*, Articles 45, 58a, c (2003) also prohibits the procuring of a woman or girl to leave the island for work in prostitution. Moreover, the Child Care and Protection Act of 2004 prohibits the sale or trafficking of any child. Assault, immigration, or customs laws may also be applied to prosecute cases of child trafficking (U.S. Department of State, 2004). However, despite all these laws and regulations, human trafficking, especially the internal movement of young women to work as exotic dancers or prostitutes in night clubs, brothels, go-go clubs, or massage parlors, is evident in certain locations in Jamaica.

Reports from the Jamaican police communication network illustrate that often children reported missing are located in popular hot spots known for seafood, guest houses, and prostitution (Jamaica Gleaner, 2009e). For example, the Jamaica Gleaner (2009d) printed an article with the headline *Teen prostitutes - Missing 15-y-o selling sexual favors on Back Road*. Another article, titled *Five teens held on 'Back Road' - Police crackdown on prostitutes*, featured five 16-year-old girls who were reported missing to be among the 15 persons suspected of prostitution on the *backroad strip* in Portmore, St. Catherine (Jamaica Gleaner, 2009e). Additionally, the police reported that adult males take girls from schools to hotels located on the strip. The practice of minors engaging in prostitution in this location solicited the wrath of one business operator on the strip when she said "sometimes when I see the young girls them and what them doing to their bodies, me stomach sick" (Jamaica Gleaner, 2009e, para. 11).

Although the Child Care and Protection Act of 2004 stated that hiring a child to work in a night club would attract a penalty of JA$1 million and the risk of having the club closed by government licensing authorities, some night club owners are still breach the law. The 2009-2010 report of the Office of the

Children's Advocate (OCA) indicated that children were still engaged in or subjected to illegal activities (e.g., trafficking and armed conflict) in a number of night clubs and other establishments (OCA, 2011). Hence, it was recommended that the police should conduct more raids at night clubs, bars, and massage parlors as part of an effort to minimize the involvement of children in illicit activities (OCA).

In 2001, a study conducted in Jamaica on behalf of the International Labor Organization-International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (ILO-IPEC), found that children as young as 10 and 11 were sexually exploited, engaged in prostitution, and catered to tourists. The study listed nine categories of children engaged in sex for economic gain, due to the lack of economic support, love, and affection. The first of the nine categories listed was children living and working on the streets, mostly boys between the ages 12 and 18 (ILO-IPEC). In addition to being on the street, the report mentioned that children were trafficked within the island for sexual exploitation and pornography (U.S. Department of State, 2004).

Exploitation of children also occurs in less expected areas, such as in religious communities, which profess good moral values. There have been reports involving ministers, as well as members of their congregations, involved in the exploitation of young children. For instance, an internationally recognized pastor was arrested for sexually assaulting a 15-year-old girl (Jamaica Gleaner, 2009b). Another incident reported in the Jamaica Star (2010a) highlighted a deacon of a prominent religious domination admitting to the content on a tape showing him making sexual advances to a teenage boy. This case was supported by the Centre for Investigation of Sexual Offences (Jamaica Gleaner, 2011b). Yet, another deacon of a church in St Catherine was arrested for sexually molesting a 12-year-old girl in her bathroom (Jamaica Star, 2011). Again this case was supported by Centre for Investigation of Sexual Offences.

The practice of taping sexual encounters has generated much discussion and concern among the public, who seek to offer some explanation. For example, much has been blamed on the Internet's pornographic websites, which constantly require new material. With the increasing demand of pornographic material, unsuspecting teens often become victims. Luton (2006), reporting on a survey done in the Corporate Area (Kingston and St. Andrew), revealed an increasing demand for locally-produced pornographic movies with young girls. The response of one male vendor in downtown Kingston was also documented, in regard to the high demand for his products, saying, "people buy dem as dem come" ([people purchase these tapes as soon as they are received], para. 4). In addition, one Corporate Area store proprietor acknowledged that locally produced pornographic movies were in great demand and implied that local DVDs with young girls were marketed very fast (Luton). The practice of illegal sexual behavior has become so widespread that school children are involved in this behavior. On September 26, 2008, four boys aged 11 to 14 were sentenced for carnal abuse after pleading guilty in the Home Circuit Court to charges of sexually assaulting a 13-year-old girl on two occasions (Jamaica Gleaner, 2008c).

Easy access of pornographic videos through the Internet has been blamed for this new education on sexual behavior.

The power of technology (e.g., pens or cellular phones with cameras) has also contributed to the exploitation of children, because images can easily be concealed. Once captured, images may be uploaded to either the Internet or a secondary medium, which aid in the publicity of children.

Children are not only influenced by the Internet, but often get involved in sexual encounters because of poverty. Amnesty International (2006) highlighted cases of girls being coerced to provide sexual favors to older men who *mind* (take care of) them in return for protection; for example, bus conductors take girls to school for no fee or provide them with money to buy school books. In circumstances such as this, children have to make choices between pursuing an education and rescuing themselves, and potentially their families, from poverty and being free from sexual violence and exploitation (Amnesty International).

Similarly, Gayle (2007) argued that parents of children in poor communities are involved in the exploitation of young Jamaicans. Furthermore, he noted that a large number of Jamaican children are head of their households, and others are forced to drop out of school. This is not only exploitation, but also abuse.

Moreover, there are also myths that have contributed to the sexual exploitation of girls, such as belief that adolescent girls are less likely to carry sexually transmitted diseases and hence are more likely to be sought or sexually exploited by men. Also, it is believed that men who have contacted sexually transmitted diseases may be cured by having sexual intercourse with a virgin.

Child Labor

The Child Care and Protection Act of 2004 prohibits the employment of children under the age of 13; however, children ages 13 to 15 have limited permission to work in a prescribed list of occupations, as indicated by the Minister of Labor. Among the prohibited jobs are night work, industrial work, and work that is hazardous or interferes with education. Child labor violators can be subject to a fine of JA $500,000 or six months imprisonment.

The Statistical Institute of Jamaica (2002, 2005) estimated that 2.2% of children ages 5 to 17 were working in Jamaica in 2002. While child labor is not reported to be a significant problem in Jamaica's formal sector (Statistical Institute of Jamaica, 2002, 2005), children were found working in certain sectors, notably fishing, agriculture, and tourism (ILO-IPEC, 2003a). More than 2,800 children live on the streets (UNICEF, 2005) and are engaged in work, such as newspaper delivery, panhandling (i.e., buying and selling on the street), and domestic service (Statistical Institute of Jamaica, 2002, 2005). Children also work as shop assistants in carpentry and mechanic shops (ILO-IPEC, 2003b). In tourist resorts, children were reported to work in kitchens, hotels, and recreational and cultural activities. Children employed in these different fields are often subjected to other types of victimization.

The 2006 situation analysis on excluded children reported that 16,240 children aged 5 to 17 were involved in economic activities (Witter, 2009). Furthermore, the analysis found that

working children were mostly boys ages 15 to 17 who worked an average of 22 hours each week. In addition, an estimated 2,000 children live or work on the street. Many are higglers and cleaners of car windscreens during school hours (Witter). UNICEF's (2008) report indicated that 41.7% of the Jamaican poor were children, compared with 46% for those age 18 to 59. Children in Jamaica face many challenges throughout their youth with about a fifth living in poverty. The chance of being poor is greater for those who live in rural communities than those in urban communities (Witter).

Children - Victims of Violence

The protection of Jamaican children from violence is one of the biggest challenges facing the nation. From 2006 to 2008, 230 children under age 17 were murdered, which is a reflection on the high rate of crime and violence plaguing Jamaican society (UNICEF, 2008). Ministry of Health data in 2007 and 2008 stated that over 11,100 cases of violence-related injuries (i.e., sexual assault, stab wounds, gunshots, or blunt force injury) were treated in emergency rooms across island hospitals among persons aged 0 to 19 (UNICEF). Although legislation has banned corporal punishment in early childhood and residential care institutions, it remains the dominant form of discipline in homes, as well as in primary and secondary schools. According to the 2005 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 87% of children aged 2 to 14 are subjected to at least one form of psychological or physical punishment (UNICEF).

Children are often the victims of interfamilial and extra-familial violence. Family violence, abuse, and neglect can be found in families of all social class and economic background. According to Hess (2010), children are mutilated, shot, stabbed, burned, beaten, sodomized, and raped. Lesser, Cooper, and Morales (2005) argued that children are affected by violence through separation from parents. These types of violence may have multiple consequences not only for the children, but also for the family and society. According to them, within the last decade 22,000 youth were labeled *street children* who lived and worked in the streets doing jobs such as machinery, welding, domestic work, care-giving, and newspaper delivery. Many turn to or are forced into child prostitution and/or the drug trade to survive (Lesser, Cooper, & Morales).

Pinheiro (2006), professor and author of the 2006 *UN Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children*, indicated that, "In an environment where violence breeds more violence, the ways in which Jamaican children are subjected to violence are inextricably linked to the unrelenting levels of crime and violence affecting the island" (p. 1). This dramatic increase of missing children and abuse of children has left an emotional stress and numbness on the society (Pinheiro).

What has being done to Address the Plight of Children?

Several strategies that have been taken to address how children are treated include:

1. Implementation of a more integrated approach to the investigation of child abuse cases resulting from the 2008 Child Protection Audit. This approach was undertaken to reduce the gap between the reporting of the incident and the trial, improve the quality of evidence provided, and ease the trauma on the child. A model was implemented to improve the way child sexual abuse cases were addressed and increased collaboration among stakeholder. From this model, it is less likely for evidence of child abuse to be lost, as victims would be immediately referred to the system that would not just involve a police investigation, but would involve the social worker who would be actively involved in children's welfare. Additionally, this approach improved the quality of evidence used in court so as to reduce the trauma at the trial process. Other options were identified to ensure the safety of the children rather than place them in a child care facility (Butler, 2010).

2. Addressing by several state agencies the problem of exploitation of children, including the Jamaica Constable Force. The St Catherine South police department launched several operations against prostitutes on *Back Road* targeting nightclubs and other places that attract minors involved in prostitution. The police also conducted several meetings with business operators.

3. Introduction by police of a new policy profiling communities and areas where cases of runaways are most rampant. This policy was aimed at stemming the increasing numbers of missing children across the island (Hunter, 2010).

4. Introduction of the Ananda *Alert* system, a multi-agency system (i.e., law-enforcement agencies, broadcasters, and transportation agencies) designed to alert the nation whenever a child is reported missing. This is a nationwide missing children emergency network, inspired by the death of 11-year-old Ananda Dean, who was killed after she disappeared on her way home from school.

5. Dedication of the week of May 16-24 to children under the theme *Our Children…Show Them We Care*. During that week, the wider society undertakes activities to show Jamaican children that society cares. Activities include the staging of educational displays, treats, and special education programs via the electronic media.

6. Display of pictures of missing children a on Jamaica Urban Transit Company (JUTC) vehicles, as well as in the JUTC Metropolitan Transport Region.

7. Creation of the website (http://JamaicanMissingPersons.org), operated by Loss Control Associates, allows family members to post photographs and pertinent information about missing relatives.

8. Use of electronic and printed media that have been instrumental in yielding positive results. Its involvement has assisted the work of investigating officers, as well as reuniting children with their families.

9. Establishment of government policies and programs to eliminate extreme forms of child labor. In 2004, the Government of Jamaica, in cooperation with ILO-IPEC, concluded a 3-year USDOL-funded national program on child labor (ILO-IPEC, 2003a). The government also provided support to non-Government Organizations (NGOs) that are working on child labor issues (ILO-IPEC, 2004).

10. Commencement (in 2011) of a special project sponsored by the International Labor Organization (ILO), known as TACKLE (Tackle Child Labor), which aims at getting children who live and/or work on the street into a learning environment. The project focuses on rehabilitating and educating working

children, mainly in the metropolitan area and Spanish Town region, as a part of a wider thrust to eliminate child labor in Jamaica.

Challenges Faced

Several challenges encountered in combating the problem of children going missing include:

1. The way in which reports are made. According to police, family members who report missing children sometimes provide cell phone numbers that do not work. When the police try to communicate with these families, either the telephone number has changed or service has been terminated.

2. Inadequate information given by family members. Family members are not able to give adequate information on the missing person, such as the clothing he/she was wearing when last seen and by whom. In addition, some family members did not have a current photograph of the missing person.

3. Families do not report when children return home, so statistics cannot be updated.

Recommendations

The recommendations that follow were compiled from those shared during my interviews with law enforcement and human service professionals, children advocate groups, and from articles written in the printed media. They reflect prevention and harm reduction for victims and their parents. Emphasis is placed on the implementation of laws to protect children, for parents to be more proactive, and for the collaboration of human service agencies (e.g., children advocate groups, private sector, and government and law enforcement agencies). Moreover, specific recommendations are made for sexually offending adults and juveniles.

Recommendation #1: protect the children. Prevention must be the first priority in protecting children; hence, there is a need to increase the presence of law enforcement in school zones and communities. There are several advantages to having law enforcement involvement in school zones; it serves as a deterrent to potential perpetrators while potential victims, parents, and teachers feel safer. Furthermore, law enforcement officers are available to respond to emergencies.

Recommendation #2: promote safety among children. Children are at higher risk of victimization when alone; thus, children should be encouraged to commute in groups (e.g., when going or leaving school) to ensure safety. Parents, schools, and child advocacy organizations need to work together in developing and disseminating messages related to the protection and safety of children. The electronic media, especially television, must continue to share responsibility in disseminating information concerning the nature, extent, and seriousness of child victimization, and offer tips of how to avoid being victimized.

Recommendation #3: proactiveness of parents. Parents need to play a more proactive role in the protection of their children to minimize the likelihood of their going missing, being kidnapped, or being exploited. However, if their children do go missing, they need to inform the police immediately for quick action; no need to sit, wait and hope for the safe return of the child. In addition, parents need to supervise their children

regarding the use of computers, since technology is an integral part of children's lives in the 21st century. Parents should be aware of the content their child uploads and downloads on their computer, as well as the people they meet in the chat rooms, as a large number of young people have encountered sexual solicitation, have been introduced to sexual materials, and have engaged with individuals who have threatened and harassed them into illicit sexual activities.

Recommendation #4: technological support. Better technology need to be implemented that fosters better communication between the police, school administrators, and parents of missing children. With improvement in technology, immediate action may be taken to locate missing children. Additionally, school administrators will be able to communicate with the police in the case of a kidnapping at their school.

Recommendation #5: punishing adult sex predators not the child victim. The Jamaican government needs to be more proactive to ensure that the rights of children are protected. In this regard, adult sex predators should be targeted and swift penalties administered. According to Estes and Weiner (2002), law enforcement and human service agencies should focus on the arrest, prosecution, and punishment of adult perpetrators (e.g., pimps, traffickers and customers) who commit sex crimes against children, rather than the apprehension of sexually involved street youth. Moreover, law enforcement agencies should become more involved in the identification and prosecution of adults involved in national and transnational sex crime rings that include child sex, as well as the collaboration of private human service agencies to work more cooperatively with law enforcement (Estes & Weiner).

Recommendation #6: enforce more fully existing laws relating to child sexual exploitation. Prosecutors must use current laws against sexual exploitation of children. The government must assume a leadership position in encouraging law enforcement, as well as all other agencies that cater to children, to fully implement all laws pertaining to the protection of children. These interventions should encourage all government agencies to develop strategic plans for implementing laws related to the protection of children and provide financing for implementing all laws.

Recommendation #7: collaboration of agencies and advocate groups. Human services agencies, service providers (e.g., medical professionals, legal fraternity, etc), advocates, researchers, and policymakers must collaborate in identifying victims. If victims are identified and reports are made to the relevant authorities as the law specifies, more adult sex predators will be identified and brought to justice.

Recommendation #8: provision of service for victims. Victims must have access to specialized services. In receiving specialized service, victims will not feel they are being criminalized by the criminal justice process. Victims offered these services will be more willing to participate in prosecutions.

Recommendation #9: implementation of law to regulate Internet sex crime. The establishment of a government funded Internet Crimes against Children unit would systematically evaluate sex crime through the entire island. This would provide an overall picture of what is happening to children throughout Jamaica.

Jamaica, like other countries worldwide, is experiencing social issues of abuse and exploitation of children despite the many laws, protective treaties, and conventions that have been ratified to protect them from deprivation of their liberty. Children are innocent victims that should be educated about their rights as provided by the convention on the rights of the child and the laws of Jamaica that were enacted to protect them. The various strategies implemented by the government are an indication of concern, but this concern needs to be shown by the wider society. Earlier identification and more intensive supervision of sexually offending adults and juveniles should be of priority, as children are our future; they must be protected, and their rights must not be ignored. In addition, there is a need for more in-depth research into other societal factors that may contribute to the abuse and exploitation of children.

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