

101847

U.S. Department of Justice  
National Institute of Justice

101847

This document has been reproduced exactly as received from the person or organization originating it. Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the National Institute of Justice.

Permission to reproduce this ~~copyrighted~~ material has been granted by  
Public Domain/NIJ

~~U.S. Department of Justice~~  
to the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS).

Further reproduction outside of the NCJRS system requires permission of the ~~copyright~~ owner.





# CRIMINAL JUSTICE BOOK SUMMARIES

a service provided by the National Institute of Justice/National Criminal Justice Reference Service

## Delinquency and Community

NCJRS

JAN 26 1988

Creating Opportunities and Controls

by Alden D. Miller and Lloyd E. Ohlin

ACQUISITIONS

Delinquency is a community problem. It cannot be solved unless communities institutionalize ways to prevent and control delinquency. The primary resources for preventing and controlling delinquency reside in local communities' support for youths via local programs and services.

These are some of the main findings in *Delinquency and Community*, the final contribution in a series of research projects conducted at the Center for Criminal Justice, Harvard Law School. The series examines the theoretical foundations of the process and the effect of major reforms in the Massachusetts system of youth correctional services.

The authors' study of the theories of reform and the process of change led them to conclude that even the most strenuous and dedicated efforts to reform delinquent youth will produce few results unless youth-serving programs are associated with the community to which the offending youth must return. Their research indicates it is possible to influence youths' behavior; however, to be lasting, this influence needs to occur in the communities where the youths are expected to live free of crime.

The authors also recognize that the successful reintegration into the community of youthful offenders from training schools may require significant political changes. The policies and practices of both juvenile justice agencies and youth-serving networks in the community need to mobilize to institute prevention and control programs for troubled youths.

### A brief history of institutional treatment of delinquents

The earliest institutions for delinquents were established in the mid-1800's. In developing these "training schools," their founders drew upon two diverse models. For approaches to academic and moral instruction, they looked to emerging models of public schools and Sunday schools; for guides to work and discipline, they borrowed from adult prisons. According to the authors, these schools quickly became characterized by regimented treatment and harsh disciplinary measures; the adult prison model provided more expedient forms of control and administration than the careful evaluation and treatment methods the founders had originally envisioned.

In the 1850's and 1860's, new models of organization emerged that to a large extent still endure: family-style cottages in campus-like, institutional settings with centralized academic or vocational education facilities.

By the turn of the century, juvenile institutions were crowded and often poorly operated. The juvenile court movement helped to relieve the crowding by creating an alternative: supervised probation in the community.

After World War II, additional alternatives, including residential homes and forestry camps, were introduced. The use of group therapies in smaller, more manageable units also became popular.

### Massachusetts reforms

When Jerome Miller was appointed commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services in 1969, he took office with the intention of creating self-contained cottage units in training schools. The cottage arrangement was designed to maximize the use of small group therapeutic processes, to diversify treatment possibilities, and to generally "humanize" conditions in juvenile institutions.

These reforms provided a means for researchers to study the impact of new programs and to trace the process by which changes were instituted.

Summarized from *Delinquency and Community—Creating Opportunities and Controls*, NCJ 99269. By Alden D. Miller and Lloyd E. Ohlin. With permission from Sage Publications, 1985. 208 pp. including tables, figures, and chapter notes. *Delinquency and Community* is available from Sage Publications, 275 South Beverly Drive, Beverly Hills, CA 90212. Price \$29.95.

Summary published in August 1986. NCJ 101847

## The objectives of the study

In their studies of youth correctional reform, the authors focus on theory, research, and policy as it relates to institutional and community programs and to social and organizational change.

They acknowledge that the study of the processes that create institutional and community change is still in its infancy. Such study, however, is coming to be recognized as essential to the development of effective new strategies for preventing and controlling delinquency. Knowing how political action and power affects institutional change is central to long-range planning. And political action and power relations inevitably play pivotal roles in changing institutions and communities so they can better deal with youth problems.

## The issues

The authors' research explored five significant issues:

1. The responsiveness of youth subcultures to traditional training school regimens, as contrasted to small group therapy approaches.
2. The effects of transferring the small group cottage approach to similar community-based programs.
3. The effects of institutional versus community-based programs on recidivism.
4. The conceptualization of social and organizational change in the reform process.
5. An examination of different opportunities for youths and the integration of youth correctional services in the Boston area.

## Traditional institutionalization versus small group therapy

The authors examined the impact of traditional training school regimens on youth subcultures and the responsiveness of youths to treatment. They contrasted the impact of the traditional approach with the group therapy or guided group interaction forms of treatment. The fact that Jerome Miller's reforms were only partially instituted at the outset of the study

allowed for comparisons of traditional, custody-oriented cottages to the reformed, therapy-oriented cottages. A later study allowed for comparisons involving cottage-based programs and other State programs which varied from tightly organized encounter-type programs to nonresidential, open, community-based programs.

The results showed that the youths in the therapy-oriented cottage settings were more supportive of the staff's efforts to help the youths solve their own personal problems as well as solve group problems.

Acts of violence among the youths or between youths and staff were markedly reduced in the therapy-oriented cottage settings. The authors also found that perceptions of the staff's helpfulness with problems were much more pervasive in the cottages than in the traditional setting, where the perception dominated that staff were preoccupied with control.

The authors saw clearly that the official goals and procedures for custody and treatment played a significant role in determining the level of "inmate" subculture opposition to or agreement with the system, and the system's ability to control violence among inmates.

Youths within a subculture change in response to changes that occur in the official correctional system in which they live. Through policy, the system officially "structures," or directs, relationships among inmates and between staff and inmates, and consequently creates both legitimate and illegitimate opportunities for inmates to meet their goals and needs. Legitimate opportunities are officially approved ways to accomplish one's objectives; illegitimate methods involve inmates' use of violence to control and exploit other inmates, rather than official methods, to achieve their goals or to meet their needs.

If legitimate opportunities for meeting needs are unavailable, inmates seek out illegitimate alternatives. Institutions oriented mainly to custody produce a hierarchical inmate social structure that uses exploitation and violence for control. In contrast, group treatment programs foster equality and participation, and thereby reduce exploitation.

Correctional staff, however, are not totally free to organize or "structure" the official system. Controls available to staff are determined by the existing political process.

## Transferring cottage program approaches to community-based programs

The researchers also examined whether the small group treatment approaches used in the cottages could be effective in similar community-based programs.

Some of the residential small-group programs operated in relative isolation from the surrounding community. These programs operated more like therapeutic cottages in the training school.

In contrast, other residential and nonresidential group programs were more open to community interactions. These programs permitted varying degrees of contact with other youth subcultures in the community.

The authors found that value and attitude changes were less pronounced but more enduring among juveniles who had more contact with the community than among juveniles in closed programs. Problems arising from contacts with street-corner groups, for example, could be addressed in program discussions and decisions. However, the greater contact juveniles had with friends in the community, the more difficult it was for staff to impose their standards and limits on the juveniles' behavior.

## Differences in recidivism rates

The authors then examined recidivism. They compared the effects of institutional versus community-based programs on subsequent contacts that offenders had with juvenile or adult criminal justice agencies.

When released into the community, youths from correctional institutions face the same barriers that all youth face regarding meaningful employment opportunities. However, youths from correctional institutions already have proven their ability to take advantage of socially unacceptable opportunities. Unless the system can affect either juveniles or their opportunities to commit delinquent acts, the juveniles are likely to drift back into delinquency.

The recidivism rates indicated that traditional training school graduates showed overall slightly lower rates of rearrest or reconviction. The authors point out, however, that the results are inconclusive because the community-based program alternatives were not firmly established in some regions of Massachusetts. Where reforms were firmly in place, the recidivism results favored the community-based programs.

The authors believe their most important finding pertains to the short-term impact of most forms of treatment. Although the results documented positive changes in youths, especially in many of the group process programs, the changes appeared to be short-term unless, while under supervision, the youths engaged in relationships and problems they would have to deal with when free of correctional oversight.

### **A simulation of the reform process—social control and relationships**

The authors developed a mathematical simulation that permitted 6-month projections of how reform would occur in community youth correctional systems. Later, they expanded their simulation to include social control modeling and change in communities.

The simulation showed that a well-developed conceptual system with a limited number of empirical propositions could describe the step-by-step course of reform and allow policymakers to make reasonable projections into the future about correctional system reform.

The simulation is constructed by conceptualizing seven variables and then detailing the relationships among the variables. Within that framework, the authors can empirically determine what relationships actually occur. This yields a set of equations that can be used to project reform from a historical baseline.

The following seven variables are those used by the authors to explain the relationships that affect reform:

- The existing relationship of youths to the community: Do youths have satisfying responsibility, power, and reward in society?

The authors found that when youths are successfully integrated into the community, they experience rewarding relationships with the people and institutions that keep the community alive. When they are alienated from the community, they feel powerless and hostile, which leads to continued delinquency.

- The effect of the correctional system on the future relationship of youths with the community.

The authors found that systems that primarily emphasize staff supervision do little to directly affect the relationship of youths to the community. These systems simply monitor behavior and threaten youths with return to the system if behavior is not satisfactory.

On the other hand, systems that aid youths in reentering school and enable them to stay there, or assist them in finding and retaining jobs usually also help youths with day-to-day life in their relationships with family, friends, and the community.

- The nature and distribution of power among youths and staff.

In a therapeutic correctional setting the emphasis is on sharing power among staff and youths. Youths feel responsible to make one another confront personal problems. In an open correctional setting, the emphasis is much like a therapeutic setting except the staff do not force youths to confront personal problems. In contrast, in a custodial setting power is concentrated in the staff. Youths are responsible only for obedience.

- The actions of the correctional system to directly affect the distribution of power among youths and staff.

The authors examined the ways the system uses treatment, support, and punishment to distribute power among staff and youths.

When the staff use treatment, they pay a great deal of attention to individual relationships among youths, and they give rewards generously in supervised, verbal exchanges. The staff use support in much the same way as treatment, but without confrontation. In contrast, punishment is a physical means of ensuring conformity to rules or incapacitation of youths.

- The distribution of power among the interest groups associated with youth correctional institutions;
- The impact of interest group actions on the future distribution of power among interest groups; and
- The impact of interest group actions on the future of youth correctional programs.

These final three variables address the many interest groups associated with correctional institutions, including politicians, the judiciary, parents, social workers, and so forth.

According to the authors, when liberal coalitions hold power the emphasis in institutions is on therapy and/or linkages between the institution and the community. Logically, it follows that the actions of liberal interest groups tend to promote therapy and programs that link youths with the community.

When conservative coalitions hold power, the emphasis is on security and control and/or punishment.

In both cases, the interest groups may take action to replace existing programs, staff, and facilities, they may reform existing programs, or they may consolidate existing programs.

### **Providing opportunities for youths in the community**

The final issue the authors examined related to the forces that support or restrict integration of youth correctional services into the community within one community in the Boston area.

The authors conducted surveys of youth services and opportunities for youths within a community they call "Center" during 1981 and 1982.

At the time, Center was a community undergoing significant changes. It was diverse and lively and was noted for its concerned citizens of all political persuasions. The atmosphere was tolerant of change and variety of lifestyles.

Center was mostly residential, but had significant industrial and commercial zones. The population was mixed. It was 53 percent white, 17 percent black, and 25 percent Hispanic. The Hispanic population was the fastest growing segment.

Although the area had been regarded as one of the safest in the city, fear of crime had increased. Problems with youth were present, but not severe.

Center, in combination with the greater Boston area, had a large network of public and private agencies for youths during 1981 and 1982. Many youths, however, did not participate because little outreach work was done. What had occurred in the past to assist youths had been reduced or eliminated in many areas due to financial constraints.

### Survey of youth programs in the community

The authors interviewed youths and staff in seven schools, five other education programs not associated with formal schools, and 18 correctional programs ranging from secure facilities to home-based casework programs. They talked with families, family planning and counseling agencies, job programs, recreational programs, churches, social work and mental health agencies, police departments, and court programs.

The authors' analysis of the survey responses revealed that youths believed they could engage in both delinquent and nondelinquent activities, although they preferred the latter. The community was making delinquent behavior less desirable than nondelinquent activity, but not less possible.

When the adolescents in Center left their programs, many of them sat around in groups, bored. In the high-energy but boring world of adolescence, juvenile wants may be quite volatile. The authors suggest that the volatile behavior of nondelinquent youths is probably stabilized by their relative lack of opportunity to do serious delinquent acts on a moment's notice. The delinquent behavior of correctional youths, however, tends to be reinforced in its delinquency because these youths have demonstrated previously that they can perform delinquent acts at any time.

The authors found that staff in most programs try to do all the work themselves, rarely involving people of the community. They seemed hesitant to involve the people of the community.

As a result, youths were not linked to any controls in the larger community

### Further readings

"Intervening With Violent Juvenile Offenders—A Community Reintegration Model." NCJ 95172. By J.A. Fagan, E. Hartstone, and C.J. Rudman. In *Violent Juvenile Offenders—An Anthology*, (1984), pp. 207–229.

"Community Reintegration in Juvenile Offender Programming." NCJ 95181. R.A. Mathias, ed. In *Violent Juvenile Offenders—An Anthology*, (1984), pp. 365–376.

*Juvenile Court and Community Corrections*. NCJ 95871. By T.G. Blomberg. 152 pp.

that outlasted their stay in the program. In such cases, the authors warn, youths cannot be expected to stay away from crime for an extended period of time once they are out of the program.

### Social controls

Much of the authors' analysis of Center focused on positive communication and reward versus negative communication and punishment. During the year of their survey, they found that reward and positive feedback were more common than punishment in the schools, whereas in correctional institutions the opposite was true. In both the school and corrections, what little response was encouraged from the community emphasized positive communication and reward.

The authors suggest that the expected response by youths to a punishment-oriented pattern of control is alienation and crime. Adolescents in punishment-oriented programs have little stake in cooperating with adults, who are often viewed by adolescents as the enemy.

The authors suggest that society is retreating from working with youths in the schools and is instead working with them in correctional facilities, which are more isolated than schools from the community. The authors speculate that if this trend continues, we may reach the point where our society is a "treacherous divider of youth" that rewards juveniles who succeed in the less supportive environment, and banishes those who fail to correctional institutions.

The value of improvement in corrections will be lost, they maintain, without corresponding maintenance and improvement of youth services in schools and communities. The community needs to be responsible for helping youths find jobs and other sources of legitimate activity.

### In conclusion

The authors acknowledge that their data are exploratory. Although limited, the data nevertheless show that juvenile behavior can be positively influenced and that this influence must take place in the community, where delinquency occurs. Their data further reveal patterns that suggest an urgent need for a larger-scale study using the same approach.

To change delinquent behavior, one must encourage nondelinquent, rather than delinquent, activity. Since the community allows both kinds of activity to occur, the community must be the resource for effectively socializing youths and linking them with activities and programs that encourage and reward socially acceptable behavior.

### Other sources of information

Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse/NCJRS  
P.O. Box 6000  
Rockville, MD 20850  
800-638-8736

Responds to written and telephone requests. Provides document and bibliographic information.

National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges  
P.O. Box 8978  
Reno, NV 89507  
702-784-6012

Provides technical assistance, career development activities, and document information in juvenile justice. Membership organization.

National Juvenile Detention Association  
Jefferson County Detention Center  
720 W. Jefferson Street  
Louisville, KY 40270  
502-625-6838

Provides technical assistance, publications, and career development activities in juvenile corrections. Membership organization.