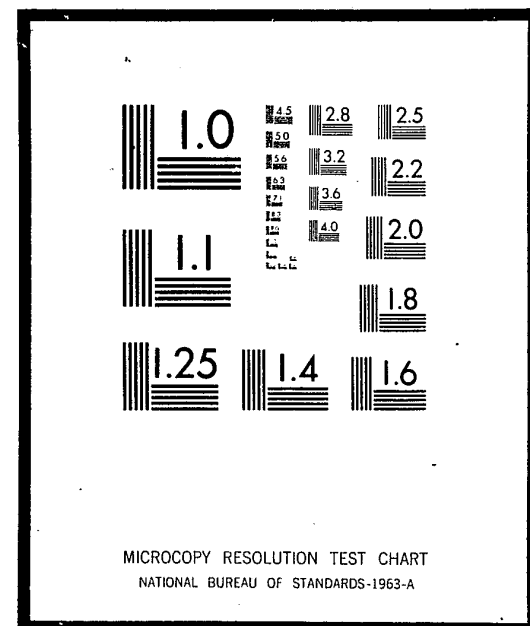


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EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTS OF ALTERNATIVES TO INCARCERATION ON JUVENILE OFFENDERS:

The Cohort Analysis in the Study of the
Massachusetts Department of Youth Services
by the Center for Criminal Justice,
Harvard Law School.

April, 1974

Perhaps the most critical issue in the field of corrections in the United States today is to develop a clearer understanding of how to transform deeply entrenched traditional concepts and patterns of correctional treatment of offenders into more progressive and effective types of services. There exists a great deal of knowledge about what form a beneficial treatment might take but only limited experiments to implement these measures have thus far been tried. Everywhere they have encountered deep resistance from established services which have again and again proved incapable of curtailing high rates of recidivism by offenders. This has been true in the area of juvenile justice as well as in adult correctional services.

At the present time the Massachusetts Youth Correctional system is undergoing a massive attempt to reform its services. The Center for Criminal Justice at the Harvard Law School has undertaken to evaluate these reform measures and to study the process of reform itself to shed greater light not only on the impact of the new versus the traditional programs but also on the administrative, organizational and political problems of instituting them. In this document we describe a cohort analysis, funded by the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, which will form a cornerstone of this evaluative effort. It is part of a larger project, part of which has been funded through the resources of the Massachusetts Governor's Committee on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice. Here we have tried to describe the contribution of the cohort analysis within the frame work of the total research effort.

I. The Cohort Analysis and the Larger Related Project

The Cohort Analysis is an important part of a larger project concerning the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services. The three major goals of this overall research project are: (1) to study the organizational and political process and progress of correctional reform in the Department of Youth Services; (2) to evaluate the various treatment programs for juveniles at the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services; and (3) to develop a more effective methodology for evaluating new programs as they are developed. On December 1, 1973, the Center started its fourth year of this six year project.

The Center for Criminal Justice and the Department of Youth Services agreed at the beginning of the project that the Center would have free continuing access to all aspects of the Department's operations. In return, the Center would provide to the Department periodic evaluations and reports of the Department's policies and programs. Thus, the Department has had the advantage of continuing counsel from a large-scale research project geared specifically to its needs.

Changes occurring now in the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services in personnel, programs, and facilities are the most comprehensive in youth corrections in the United States. The institutions have closed and are being replaced by purchase of service on a large scale. Treatment is now to be community based and individualized, ranging from group homes to foster care and nonresidential programs.

Two important parts of the process are (1) therapeutic settings characterized by sympathetic involvement of all the staff and juveniles with each other and constructive involvement of the entire population of the Department -- staff and charges -- in the decision-making process, and (2) strenuous direct efforts to provide support from the community itself sufficient for successful reintegration of clients back into the community.

The Center allocates its resources in the overall Department of Youth Services project primarily to five types of evaluation studies: First, the cohort study; second, evaluation of how programs are set up and function; third, the program subculture studies; fourth, an organizational and political analysis of the regional offices and their work in designing and implementing programs; and fifth, a continuing analysis of organizational efforts in Boston Office of DYS and political efforts at the state level to arrive at and implement new Departmental goals. These studies are described more fully below so that the central significance of the cohort study to the overall research strategy can be clearly identified.

A. Cohort Analysis

The Cohort Analysis consists of the study of a sample, or cohort, of juveniles with a panel design of four successive interviews for data collection. The members of the cohort are successive admissions to DYS during designated periods for the seven regions of the state. The four interviews of the panel

establish a baseline as youth enter the Department through the court and the detention process and follow them as they progress through the Department's program to the point of discharge.

The cohort will consist of samples of youth passing through the system since January, 1973, some months after the closing of the cottage-based training schools at Shirley and Lyman. Comparison between the results of the programs of these older large institutions and the results of the newer non-institutional and small residential programs will be accomplished by using the three cross sectional baseline studies of institutionalized youth done by the Center during the three years before the closing of the institutions. These data were collected in the Summer of 1970, the Summer of 1971 on 10 cottages, and most recently from December 1971 to March 1972 just prior to the closing of Shirley and Lyman Schools. To these data we will add longitudinal information from official records of court appearances and dispositions both prior to and after release from the institution.

The Center for Criminal Justice regards the Cohort Analysis as one of the most important components in the larger research project. From the Cohort Analysis the Center hopes to be able to develop the most persuasive and powerful data on the effectiveness of new programs for the reintegration of the Department's clients. This part of the study will represent the crucial evaluation of the end product of the reorganization and program reformation monitored in the rest of the study. It will thus make the results of the study as a whole more immediately accessible and useful to agencies interested in reform in other parts of the country.

B. Evaluation of Program Organization and Function.

This type of evaluation relies on observation, surveys and strategic interviewing. It seeks to identify program strategies and to document the reactions of staff and youth to the various strategies, including for example, programs funded by the Governor's Committee, the University of Massachusetts Conference in 1972, or the efforts of LEAA-funded group homes to neutralize the resistance of local communities. The data relate to program strategies, processes of entry and discharge, physical structure and space, location, costs, number and flow of youth, number of staff, program needs perceived by staff, and measures taken to affect the distribution of responsibility, power, and reward among youth, between youth and staff, and between youth and the community. Of equal importance is the assessment of the role of community groups in the development of these programs.

C. Program Subculture Study.

This evaluation study tries to pinpoint those critical factors which create a favorable social climate for constructive work with youth. The subculture study in 1973 for group homes and nonresidential programs is a replication of an earlier one done in the institutions in 1971. It probes differences among institution, nonresidential, and community group home subcultures. Data collection methods include participant observation techniques and informal and structured interviewing. This type of evaluation study affords an intimate knowledge of day-to-day interactions in

different settings, and thus provides an indispensable supplement to knowledge derived from the other evaluation studies.

D. Organizational and Political Analysis of Regional Offices.

The organizational and political analysis of regional offices is a monthly survey supplemented by routine contact with the regional offices. It deals with the operations of the regional offices which have replaced the administrative offices of the institutions as the organizational centers of field activity in DYS. This type of evaluation study concentrates on the DYS organization and programs, although in describing how DYS works at the regional level it must also deal with community groups. The monthly survey will reveal the range and concentration of types of programs in each region and the community relationship to these programs. It will cover planning and implementation of programs on the regional level and will document the effects of organizational and political efforts by the Boston Office at the state level.

E. Organizational Efforts in Boston Office and Political Efforts at the State Level.

The project currently has two full-time persons collecting data from observation and interviews concerning operations in the Central Office of DYS and political efforts at the state level. This work monitors planning, operations, and decision-making in crisis situations. The data involved range from the operation of specific units in Boston Office, including the planning and

administration units financed by the Governor's Committee, to the larger process that led to the initial stages of Departmental reform, the enactment of reform legislation, the appointment of a new commissioner pledged to implement a reform program, and the securing of federal funding, including LEAA and Governor's Committee funds. This kind of evaluation study keeps the project in touch with impending change in programs and also makes it possible to understand the organizational and political processes of reform.

These five types of evaluation studies that make up the overall project employ a wide range of methods, such as, participant observation, informal and formal interviewing, survey work, and use of records and documents. Together, the five types of study provide a variety of data cross-checks to assemble a valid representation of change and program development in DYS. They furnish a rich and interrelated set of facts and observations for analyzing how change comes about and what it means for the general public, special interest groups, staff and juvenile offenders committed to the system.

However, it is difficult, simply by describing the components of the study, to show the systematic comprehensiveness and significance of the data for providing new understanding about the way the system now works, how it changes, and what impact it has for all involved. To describe this more fully we have sketched in the chart on the following pages the variety of facts and observations, generated from the five components taken together, upon which we shall draw to create an indepth portrait of the DYS Agency System in the process of change.

DATA DESCRIBING THE DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH SERVICES SYSTEM OF AGENCIES

(Definition of terms: The DYS Agency System includes DYS and all its contracting agencies; program interests include plans as well as action; program can be viewed on several levels: program strategy, programming for a facility, regional programming, and system-wide Boston office programming.)

1. Background of DYS Reforms

In order to understand the process of change it is essential to understand who are the concerned groups in the community, the legislature, the state administration, and within DYS itself. It is also important to understand how each of these concerned groups is organized, even if the organization is extremely informal. A concerned group is a group of one or more persons that has invested its action resources or expectations in a line of current or future activity relevant to the process of influencing the organization, program, or policies of youth corrections.

Most of the information on concerned groups is collected for long-term analysis. The Center will be extremely cautious and selective about releasing information on concerned groups in the short run because indiscriminate release of such information could seriously affect the process of change, and because much of the information is obtained under a pledge to maintain confidentiality.

2. Goals and Outcomes

a) Data on general goals, outcomes, and type of youth or clients.

General goals, outcomes, and type of clients refers to what the Department, a region, or a specific program facility sees as its goals, and refers additionally to what actually happens in general terms, and to whom. Included here are such things as the degree of recidivism and the degree of new skills obtained by youth for "going straight."

b) Data on relationships among youth.

On a more detailed level, goals and outcomes must be discussed in terms of the subculture of relationships produced among the youth in the care of the Department. This subculture has been long recognized as important in efforts to change youth, and our subculture and program baseline studies have documented that youth subcultures vary considerably and importantly from program to program. Specific kinds of data include:

- (1) Nature and distribution of responsibility in the relationships among youth.
- (2) Nature and distribution of power in the relationships among youth.
- (3) Nature and distribution of rewards in the relationships among youth.

c) Data on relationships between staff and youth.

Also of importance in the more detailed discussion of goals and outcomes is an analysis of relationships between staff and youth. The Center's subculture study and program baseline studies have both documented that these relationships vary in significant ways from program to program. Specific kinds of data include:

- (1) Nature and distribution of responsibility in the relationships between staff and youth.
- (2) Nature and distribution of power in the relationships between staff and youth.
- (3) Nature and distribution of rewards in the relationships between staff and youth.

d) Data on quality and extent of relationships of youth with the community while in placement.

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Of extreme importance in the new programs of the Department is the quality and extent of relationships between youth and the community while the youth are under the care of the Department. This is important because the institution of constructive relationships between youth and the community under the guidance of the Department is a central feature of the Department's strategy for reintegrating the youth into the community. It is important to study as part of the goals and outcomes of the new programs the development of such relationships while the youth are in placements. Specific kinds of data include:

- (1) Nature and distribution of responsibility in the relationship between youth and the rest of the community.
- (2) Nature and distribution of power in the relationship between the youth and the rest of the community.
- (3) Nature and distribution of rewards, in the relationship between the youth and the rest of the community.

e) Data on quality and extent of relationship of youth with the community after leaving placement.

Finally, a detailed analysis of goals and outcomes must consider the nature of relationships of youth with the community after leaving placement, which is to say we must consider the long term result of the Department's programs in terms of relationships between youth and the rest of the community. Specific kinds of data include:

- (1) Nature and distribution of responsibility in the relationship between youth and the rest of the community.
- (2) Nature and distribution of power in the relationship between the youth and the rest of the community.
- (3) Nature and distribution of rewards in the relationship between the youth and the rest of the community.

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3. Departmental Program Activity to Achieve Desired Outcomes

In considering what is actually done to bring about outcomes in accordance with goals one must begin with a general consideration of what basic strategies are employed, such as the types of group homes, nonresidential services, or detention and aftercare. And, still on a general level, having identified strategies, one must deal with general characteristics of the strategies, ranging from how youth get in and out to costs and needs. Specific kinds of data include:

- a) Data on general strategies including program strategy matrix and specific goals of strategies.
- b) Data on progress of entry for youth.
- c) Data on process of discharge for youth.
- d) Data on physical structure and space.
- e) Data on location (e.g. type of neighborhood).
- f) Data on costs, number and flow of youth, number of staff.
- g) Data on program needs perceived by staff.

Then, on a more detailed or analytical level, one must consider what is done in the program that affects the relationships that comprised the more detailed goals. Specific kinds of data include:

- h) Data on actions taken by staff, youth, or others affecting the distributions of responsibility, power, and rewards in the relationships among youth.
- i) Data on actions taken by staff, youth, or others affecting the distributions of responsibility, power, and rewards in the relationships between staff and youth.

- j) Data on actions taken by staff, youth or others affecting the distributions of responsibility, power, and rewards in the relationships between the youth and the rest of the community while youth are in placement.
- k) Data on actions taken by staff, youth or others affecting the distributions of responsibility, power, and rewards in the relationship between the youth and the rest of the community after youth leave placements.

4. Organization of Staff in DYS and its Contracting Agencies to Implement Program Activity

Finally, having considered goals and outcomes, and program activities, one must consider as part of the DYS Agency System the relationships among people who work in DYS or in its contracting agencies. Here we are concerned with the organization of an agency and its contracting affiliates to provide services to youth. This involves not only the organization of program staff, but also of planning and administrative staff. Specific kinds of data include:

- a) Data on nature and distribution of responsibility among staff.
- b) Data on nature and distribution of power among staff.
- c) Data on nature and distribution of rewards among staff.
- d) Data on actions taken by staff or others affecting the distributions of responsibility, power, and rewards among staff.
 - (1) Staff selection procedures and background of staff.
 - (2) Formal and informal staff training.
 - (3) Actions other than selection or training.

The Center has been developing a theoretical model over the past several years in the course of its work on the DYS project. This model is very tightly integrated with the conceptualization presented above. The conceptualization and theoretical model, of course, apply to data collected as early as 1970 as well as to current and future data.

II. Goals of the Cohort Analysis

The Cohort Analysis involves a series of observations and panel interviews concerning a group of clients in the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services. The goals of these interviews and observations are two-fold: (1) To develop data-gathering instruments for tracing change in delinquent youth as they progress through a correctional program (such instruments consist for record-check procedures as well as of interviews with youthful offenders and staff), and (2) To develop a model of factors causing change in delinquent youth in the care of a corrections agency. The combined effort amounts to a crucial evaluation of the Department's program strategies. Attention will be focused on the basic expectations of delinquent youth as they enter the system, their attitudes once they have become adjusted to the program before parole, and their reactions to the parole or aftercare experience. This attitudinal information combined with observations on behavior should enable the project to develop and refine measurement instruments, establish a model

of factors causing change in delinquent youth, and assess the effect of new department programs on youth adjustment both within the Department of Youth Services and out in the community.

III. Method, Timetable, and Evaluation in the Cohort Analysis

The structure of the Cohort Analysis is a series of four interviews with a cohort of youth in the care of the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services, made up of youth entering the Department in 1973 or early 1974. The cohort will be followed with a succession of interviews from detention, if any, through program experience and return to the community.

A youth may come into contact with the Department in several ways and at several stages of his contact with the criminal justice system. Some youth are detained prior to court appearance. We interview each youth detained for more than two days in DYS, getting information on individual background, current relationships, aspirations, and self image. Some of these youth are released without being put into further contact with DYS. Others are committed or referred to DYS.

Youth who are either committed or referred to DYS are then interviewed after going through court. The interview at this stage deals with the court and detention experiences and with relationships, aspirations, and self image. Some youth, particularly referred youth, will reach this stage without

going through detention. These youth are then being interviewed for the first time as they enter a program. They are not asked about detention, since they have not been through it, but they are asked about their individual background, since they have not been asked before. In addition, a small sample of youth going through detention but not committed or referred to DYS are interviewed a second time, just like those who are committed or referred, for comparison purposes. There is also a small comparison sample of youth who are not detained, and who go through court with some contact with a DYS court liaison officer, but who are subsequently not committed or referred. They are given the same interview as the youth who are committed or referred without having been detained.

Youth who are committed or referred are then interviewed again prior to the termination of a residential program or after a period of three months in a nonresidential program. This interview concerns the experience in the program, relationships, aspirations, and self image. Because of the great variety of programs involved, this information is supplemented by information from a program survey which is a cross sectional examination of programs on the basis of interviews with staff and youth. Not all the youth responding to this survey are cohort sample youth. The survey is needed because the cohort youth at this point become too dispersed to provide sufficiently comprehensive descriptive material on any particular program facility to interpret the findings from the cohort interviews.

With the aid of these cross sectional program data, the cohort results can be used to evaluate the effects of different types of program on youth. Without the cross sectional data the evaluation of effects might be clear, but the identity of the types of program that work best would not be clear.

Finally, the most crucial interview occurs after the youth have been out of residential programs for about six months, or have been in nonresidential programs about nine months, or when a youth has recidivated. This interview focuses heavily on relationships between the youth and members of the community, as well as upon aspirations and self image. It is supplemented by information from DYS staff and by official record checks. The official record checks will cover a period of time extending considerably beyond the last interview. The youth in the comparison samples of youth who may or may not be detained but are not committed or referred, described at the second stage above, are given the same interview and record checks at this point as are the youth who are committed and referred and who have gone through the DYS programs.

Of course some youth do not follow clear paths through DYS such as those described above. The sequence of interviewing is adapted to the course they do follow. For example youth who keep moving from program to program are additionally interviewed as they leave each program, unless this happens more frequently than at one month intervals.

Thus the chief categories of data involved are the individual backgrounds of youth, their experiences in programs, their

relationships, their aspirations, their self images, the impressions they make on staff, and their official records. The youth involved are primarily the youth served by the Department of Youth Services, contrasted with a small comparison sample of youth in the criminal justice system but not served by the Department. There is also emerging a possibility of adding a small comparison sample of youth not involved at all in the criminal justice system.

Sampling of youth for each cohort is accomplished in the following way. There are seven administrative regions in Massachusetts for the youth services system. The seven regions are divided, for the purposes of the study, into four sets, three containing two regions, one containing one very populous region. Since January 15, 1973, we have interviewed successive admissions in two sets of regions and have nearly completed a third. All youth staying longer than two days in detention are interviewed and all youth committed or referred to the Department are followed through the complete sequence of interviewing. This process has continued until we have reached the point of having approximately seventy committed or referred youth in each region. The seventy committed or referred youth from each region are this set of regions' contribution to the projected sample of four hundred committed or referred youth across the state for the cohort, allowing for attrition of the sample over time. Then the youth constituting this set of regions' contribution to the comparison sample are selected. Youth not committed or referred but going through detention are represented by twelve such youth in each

region, and the sample of youth having contact with DYS but not detained, committed, or referred is being selected by requesting from selected courts the names of such youth that they have dealt with on randomly selected days. Twelve such youth will be selected from each region. Thus the comparison sample for the entire state, counting both detained and nondetained youth, will reach approximately one hundred, after attrition.

Intake has been closed in both regions of each of the first two sets of regions, and the study is in the third set of two regions currently. Thus the total sample for the cohort will be made up of successive admissions in particular regions, with the time period of the successive admissions varying by region. As we take youth into the sample in a new set of regions, we are of course simultaneously following up the youth already taken into the sample in previous sets of regions. Thus the intake process moves around the state. The follow-up process remains wherever there are youth in the sample. This means that the geographical area within which large numbers of detained youth are being interviewed, some of whom will end up in the sample of committed or referred youth and some of whom will not, is limited to one set of regions. The geographical area within which follow-up interviews are being done for the sample of committed or referred youth or for the comparison sample can range over the entire state, and even into neighboring states when out-of-state placements are used by the Department.

The yield of all of this will be samples of predetermined size

of referred or committed youth and of comparison youth, plus a very large sample of undetermined size of detained youth, not followed up because they did not continue under the care of the Department. It is, of course, essential to interview these detained youth because one can not tell in advance which detained youth will continue and become part of the sample of committed or referred youth. A side benefit is the fact that we will end up knowing a great deal about youth who are detained but then not placed under the care of the Department.

The analysis of all the foregoing data will be directed toward contrasts among programs and between cohorts by means of multivariate analysis, including possible causal modeling of a type drawn from the econometrics literature to deal with reciprocal causation problems generally ignored in quantitative analysis of corrections before now. The same modeling techniques may also allow us to reduce the effects of measurement error. Our analysis of the problems we face encourages us to believe that we will learn much from the use of these techniques that has not been possible with the techniques commonly used in the study of corrections in the past. At the very least we will be able to employ very powerful descriptive multivariate analysis, and we are hopeful that the causal modeling will be successful as well.

IV. Significance of the Cohort Analysis

Internal reports are being given to the Department of Youth Services regularly as the panel study of the cohort progresses.

The study will also lead to published articles and books describing the Massachusetts experiment in youth corrections.

The information obtained from the Cohort Analysis should provide the basis for advice which the Center for Criminal Justice hopes to be able to give to agencies, legislatures, crime commissions, and professionals across the country about the efficacy of programs. More specifically, the Cohort Analysis should provide the most useful kind of feedback to the Department of Youth Services, in the form of information about youth reactions and adjustments to the institutions and the community. In a sense, these are the kinds of data that the agency needs most, since the ultimate payoff of correctional programs is the adjustment and reintegration of offenders processed through them.

The significance of the Cohort Analysis is greatly augmented by the fact that we have a working relationship with the National Assessment of Correctional Programs for Juvenile and Youthful Offenders, being run by Professors Robert Vinter and Rosemary Sarri, at the University of Michigan.* We have shared our questionnaire instruments with the National Assessment, and our data will be congruent with the data from other states collected in the National Assessment. The National Assessment will include several in-depth analyses of selected state systems, as well as a survey of all state systems. One of the states selected for in-depth analysis is Massachusetts, and the Center for Criminal Justice will by

* This is a five year national survey and analysis of service programs for delinquent youth. This study is funded by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration in the U.S. Department of Justice.

means of the large study described here, make a special contribution to that effort. The opportunities for utilizing the data and analysis results from the Cohort Analysis, as well as data from the rest of the larger study of the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services, in comparative analysis on a nation-wide scope has opened up new possibilities in the analysis of organizational strategies for making programs effective for youthful offenders.

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