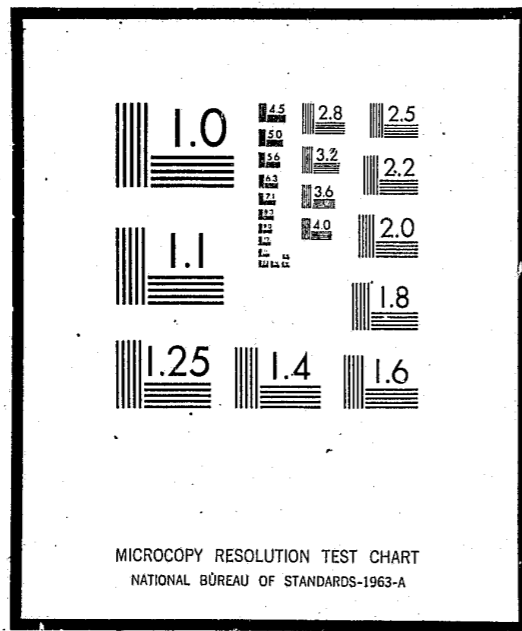


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CLINICAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE:  
A REVIEW OF THE EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

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Evidence is accumulating that correctional treatment is ineffective (Bailey, 1966; Shohan, et al. 1971; Robinson and Smith, 1971; Lenz, 1966; Teuber, 1953; McCord et al. 1959; Caplan, 1966; Ward, 1967; Miller, 1962) and under certain conditions may prove to be dysfunctional (Adams and Vetter, 1970; Cohen, 1962; Schorer, et al. 1968; Bureau of Social Research, 1966; Adams, 1961; McClintock, 1961). Relative to the magnitude of the problem, the amount of adequate scientific research devoted to it is rather small (Wilkins, 1969; Bailey, 1966; Hindelang, 1970). Further, the available evidence suggests that, from a learning theory perspective, the behavior that is reinforced by our correctional system may not be the behavior we wish to see the offenders continue to exhibit (Hindelang, 1970; Buehler, et al., 1966). Contrary to this body of data is a series of empirical studies indicating certain correctional therapies to be not only effective, but even more effective than the same therapies applied to neurotics. An assessment of clinical criminology appears in order.

Bailey (1966) reviewed 100 correctional treatment studies, which he classified as experimental (22), systematic empirical (26), and non-systematic empirical (52). He reports a positive association between outcome reported as "harmful or no effect" and the methodological rigor of the study. "Harmful or no effect" results increased from 4% for the non-systematic group to 23% for the experimental group. Wilkins (1969) reported an assessment of our empirical knowledge concerning correctional treatment effects. While his assessment agrees with Bailey's, he suggests that a "distinct trend" in correctional research towards greater rigor and complexity would allow us to alter the present state of affairs. He further contends that there are some empirically verified general assertions regarding correctional treatment which can be made at this time,

among them being the existence of interaction effects between variables, such as type of treatment and typology.

"Combinations of different forms of treatment reveal interactions that have been discovered to be negatively related to desired outcomes in some specific instances. It, therefore, seems probable that elements within a complex treatment program may also interact; and some of these forms of interactions may be dysfunctional for the treatment program as a whole." (pp 113).

Specific studies amply attest this point. For example, the PICO Project (Adams, 1961) reported the percentage of possible lock-up time 33 months after release as: treated amenable (6.2%); non-treated amenable (14.5%), treated non-amenable (16.7%), and non-treated non-amenable (14.6%). Amenability referred to amenability to correctional psychotherapy. This suggests that treatment can increase or decrease recidivism depending upon the typology of the offender receiving it. Moreover, Adams and Vetter (1970) have demonstrated that under certain conditions correctional treatment appears to increase criminality (Jesness Inventory Scores) while similar treatment under other circumstances appears to reduce criminality (recidivism) (Adams, Allen, and Vetter, Forthcoming). To further complicate the issue, other empirical research studies report not failure or interaction, but therapeutic success with offenders (Persons, 1965; Persons, 1966; Persons and Pepinsky, 1966; Truax, et al., 1966). Although there is a common consensus among research criminologists that the exact nature of such effects will never be apparent without adequate research, the evidence suggest that the criminological literature contains only a few instances of well designed, well-controlled studies concerning correctional treatment. England (1955) in a survey of the British and American literature on probation, was able to locate only 15 "... ac-

counts of scientific research into the efficacy of this correctional device." (p. 10), 6 of which were concerned mainly with behavior during probation. Wootton (1957) surveyed the (empirical) treatment literature, and by applying quite legitimate methodological criteria, reduced the survey to a mere 21 research projects. Yet, Meltzoff and Kornreich (1970), in the most comprehensive review of the research in psychotherapy to date, assessed the application of a variety of treatment methods to delinquents and concluded;

"Conclusions favorable to psychotherapy can be drawn from this collection of experimental evidence. These studies have shown that psychotherapy not sought voluntarily by the patient, whether of the conventional individual or group variety or an approach that involves extensive interaction in the life space of the delinquent, in institutional or community settings, with juvenile delinquents, youthful offenders, adult prisoners, and adolescents with behavior problems, can have a demonstrably beneficial effect upon personality and attitudes, intramural and extra-mural adjustment. This has taken the form of fewer violations and more positive adaptive behavior within the institution and reduced anti-social behavior and recidivism outside of the institution as well as increased adaptive social behavior." (pp 211)

However, Bennett, Chief of Research for the California Department of Corrections, reporting a significant policy decision bearing on this issue states:

"Probably the most significant step forward for the Research Division of the California Department of Corrections during 1970 was the redefinition of the goals of research in the Department and the realignment of research priorities to correspond to the new definitions of goals. This redefinition was stimulated by a review of previous research projects which suggested that programs designed to change inmates were generally of limited impact and that even those which seemed to change behavior dealt with such small specialized groups that the impact on the total system seemed to be negligible" (Dickover, 1970, Foreward).

The research done by the California Department of Corrections and the California Youth Authority represents the largest, best designed, best executed, and most accurately assessed body of research data on correctional outcome available to date. Robison and Smith (1971) recently

reviewed that entire body of research and conclude:

"Analysis of findings in a review of the major California correctional programs that permit relatively rigorous evaluation strongly suggest the following conclusions: There is no evidence to support any program's claim of superior rehabilitative efficacy.

"The single answer, then, to each of the five questions originally posed - 'will clients act differently if we lock them up, or keep them locked up longer, or do something with them inside or watch them more closely afterwards, or cut them loose officially' is: Probably not." (p. 80)

The matter, obviously, is far from being settled. The evidence seems to suggest that because of the lack of high quality systematic study of the issue, we can claim to know very little about the variables operating to "cause" the effects currently observable and even less about which variables to manipulate and how to manipulate them to produce behavioral change.

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