Utilization of Criminal Justice Statistics Project

ANALYTIC REPORT 8

PRE-ADJUDICATORY DETENTION IN THREE JUVENILE COURTS:

AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF THE FACTORS

RELATED TO DETENTION DECISION OUTCOMES

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# PREFACE

This is the fourth in a series of papers that address issues concerning the processing of juvenile offenders. The series of papers on juvenile processing uses data collected on juvenile court dispositions in Denver, Memphis-Shelby, and Montgomery Counties during 1972. These data are perhaps one of the most comprehensive sources of information on juvenile court dispositions presently available. The scope of these data makes it possible to assess the importance of variables of two general types, legal and status, in the treatment of juveniles. A variety of appropriate statistical techniques and controls are applied.

In this report, we attempt to discover the variables or combinations of variables that most substantially account for the variation in detention decision outcomes.

In a subsequent report we will use data collected from these same juvenile courts to determine the extent to which the social biographies and personal attributes of juveniles, as opposed to "legally relevant" variables, account for the variation in the severity of disposition finally accorded the child.

The author is greatly indebted to a number of individuals whose assistance and cooperation greatly facilitated this research. I would like to express my gratitude to Betty White, Director of Intake for the Denver Juvenile Court; Anthony Pasciuto, Tom Giacinti, and John Carr of

the Denver Anti-Crime Council; Judge Kenneth A. Turner, Alan E. Highers,

and William G. Fulmer of the Memphis-Shelby County Juvenile Court; and

finally, Chief Probation Officer Anthony Guarna of the Montgomery County

Juvenile Court. All the persons mentioned above assisted in securing

the data utilized for these studies and provided valuable input and

consultation ~~regarding~~ *about* the processes of their respective courts.

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most directly and substantially related to the number of times the

child had previously been referred to the court, followed by being

female, and being referred to the court by the police.

The multiple R located at the bottom of Table 18 (.36) accounts

for only about 13 percent of the variance in the criterion.  Hence,

as was the case in Denver, the use of regression analysis has not al-

lowed us to predict detention decision outcomes with any great degree

of certainty (when) considering the predictor variables singularly.  Hopefully,

the use of predictive attribute analysis will allow us to identify

multiple combinations of predictor variables that can account for a

greater proportion of the variance in detention decision outcomes.

Similar statistics representing the results of the regression

analysis for Montgomery County can be observed in Table 19.  Here, it

appears that detention decision outcomes were most substantially related

to being idle (B = .174), being referred by a miscellaneous agency (B = -.141)

and coming from a broken home (B = .141).  Again, just as we found for

the other two courts, the multiple correlation coefficient (.34) ac-

counts for only a small proportion (about 12 percent) of the variance

in the criterion.  Let us now turn to predictive attribute analysis to

see if we can systematically uncover any of the indirect effects or

interaction patterns that occur within the data.

Figure 1 depicts the results of the PAA analysis for the Denver

Juvenile Court.  This PAA analysis indicates that prior court referral

Table 18   Bivariate Correlations (r) And Beta Weights Representing The Direct Effects Of The Independent Variables On The Detention Decision Outcome In Memphis-Shelby County

| Independent Variable | r | Beta | R Square Change[a] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Number Of Prior Court Referrals | .280 | .297 | .079 |
| Sex:   Female/Male | -.094 | -.157 | .019 |
| Referral Agency:   Miscellaneous Agency/Police | .106 | .155 | .021 |
| Family Situation:   Intact Home/Disrupted Home | .093 | .079 | .004 |
| Ethnicity:   White/Nonwhite | .006 | -.029 | .002 |
| Present Activity:   Working Or In School/Idle | .127 | .034 | .001 |
| Seriousness Of Offense:   Unruly, Alcohol, Sex, Miscellaneous/Drugs, Property Crime, Violent Crime | .003 | -.023 | .000 |
| Age | .072 | .013 | .000 |
| Socioeconomic Status:   High Or Middle/Low | -.042 | .016 | .000 |

$R$ = .34[b]

NOTE:   Dependent variable dichotomized as not detained/detained.

$R^2$ change indicates the amount of variation in the dependent variable which can be statistically accounted for by a specific predictor variable.  By summing this column we obtain a measure called $R^2$ which indicates the total amount of variation in the dependent variable which can be attributed to the variation in the best weighted combination of the independent variables.

Multiple correlation coefficient.

Table 19     Bivariate Correlations (r) And Beta Weights Representing The Direct Effects Of The Independent Variables On The Detention Decision Outcome In Montgomery County

| Independent Variable | r | Beta | R Square Change[a] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Present Activity: Working Or In School/Idle | .210 | .174 | .044 |
| Referral Agency: Miscellaneous Agency/Police | -.184 | -.141 | .029 |
| Family Situation: Intact Home/Disrupted Home | .165 | .141 | .021 |
| Number Of Prior Court Referrals | .198 | .098 | .009 |
| Ethnicity: White/Nonwhite | -.130 | -.074 | .005 |
| Sex: Female/Male | -.089 | .061 | .003 |
| Age: | .054 | .060 | .003 |
| Socioeconomic Status: High Or Middle/Low | .084 | .037 | .001 |
| Seriousness Of Offense: Alcohol, Miscellaneous, Sex, Unruly/Drugs, Property Crime, Violent Crime | -.050 | .021 | .000 |

$R = .34$[b]

NOTE: Dependent variable dichotomized as not detained/detained.

[a] $R^2$ change indicates the amount of variation in the dependent variable which can be statistically accounted for by a specific predictor variable. By summing this column we obtain a measure called $R^2$ which indicates the total amount of variation in the dependent variable which can be attributed to the variation in the best weighted combination of the independent variables.

[b] Multiple correlation coefficient.

explains the greatest amount of variation in the detention decision outcome. Of the 2,562 juveniles who had appeared before the Denver court on at least one previous occasion, 32.7 percent were detained prior to adjudication, while a lesser percentage (10.2) of the 1,998 juveniles making their first appearance in court were accorded like treatment. Among those who had prior records of court referral, the agency which initiated court action was found to be the next most substantially related variable to the detention decision outcome. Youths who were referred to the Denver Juvenile Court by "miscellaneous" agencies and who also possessed a prior court referral record were more apt to have been detained (56.6 percent of 136) than were youths (with prior records) referred by the police (31.6 percent of 2,411). On the other hand, youths with no prior court history were substantially more apt to have been detained if they were idle (19.4 percent of 284) than if they were working and/or attending school (8.7 percent of 1,559).

Our analysis further indicates the existence of substantial indirect relationships regarding the detention of idle youths with no prior court history, and those who had previously been before the court on at least one occasion, who had been referred by "miscellaneous" agencies. Figure 1 indicates that juveniles who had no prior record, and were idle were substantially more apt to be detained if they were female (33.3 percent of 75) rather than if they were male (14.4 percent

of 209). Also, those with one or more prior referrals brought before
the court by "miscellaneous" agencies were substantially more apt to
have been detained if they were white (65.4 percent of 52) than
if they were nonwhite (51.3 percent of 80).

Figure 2 shows the results of our PAA analysis for Memphis-Shelby
County. This figure demonstrates the presence of a great many substan-
tial indirect effects, making the analysis rather complex. Present
activity is the variable that was found to be most substantially
related to the criterion.[33] While 63.3 percent of the 1,934 idle youths
referred to this court in 1972 were detained, similar treatment was
accorded to 42.8 percent of those 6,771 who were working and/or in
school.

Substantial indirect relationships are evident among youths who
were working and/or attending school and their prior court history.
Youths who were either working and attending school were more apt to
have been detained if they had been before the court previously (53.2
percent of 3,226) than if appearing for the first time (33.3 percent
of 3,545). Our analysis further indicates that youths working and/or
in school, with no prior court record were substantially more apt to
have been detained if they were female (45.8 percent of 1.156) than if
they were male (27.3 percent of 2,389). In addition, females who
worked and/or attended school, with no previous court referrals, were
more likely to have been detained if they were charged with a "less serious"

offense[34] (52 percent of 868) (were) than if they charged with the alleged commission of a "highly serious" offense (27.4 percent of 288).

Figure 2 shows that juveniles working and/or in school, with at least one prior court referral, were substantially more apt to have been detained if they were referred by the police (57.8 percent of 2,383) than by a "miscellaneous agency" (40.1 percent of 843). Furthermore, among these same youths referred by a "miscellaneous agency," females (54.8 percent of 312) were considerably more likely to have been detained than were males (31.5 percent of 531). Similar findings were uncovered for those youths referred by the police; that is Figure 2 shows that among the youths employed and/or in school, with prior court records, who had been referred to the court by the police, females were substantially more apt to have been detained (73.2 percent of 358) than were males (55.1 percent of 2,025).

Finally, Figure 2 shows that idle youths were more likely to be detained if referred by the police (66 percent of 801) than if brought to court by a "miscellaneous agency" (46.6 percent of 133). Furthermore, idle youths referred to court by the police were considerably more likely to have been placed in detention if they came from a disrupted home (70 percent of 574), as opposed to those from intact homes (55.9 percent of 227).

Figure 3 presents the PAA analysis for Montgomery County. Here present activity is most substantially related with the criterion --

38.7 percent of the 106 idle youths were placed in detention, while

only 14.8 percent of those working and/or in school were accorded like

treatment. Furthermore, idle youths were substantially more apt to have

been placed in detention if they were white (48.1 percent of 77) than

if they were nonwhite (13.8 percent of 29). Among the youths referred

to the Montgomery County Juvenile Court who were employed or attending

school, those brought to court by "miscellaneous" agencies had a higher

detention rate (33.3 percent of 135) than did those referred by the

police (12.5 percent of 1,057).

Figure 3 demonstrates that youths working and/or in school who

were referred to the court by the police were more likely to be detained

if charged with a "low severity" offense (26.1 percent of 207)

than if charged with a "high severity" offense (9.2 percent of 850).

Finally, youths in this cohort charged with "high severity" offenses

were considerably more apt to have been placed in detention if they

had prior court referrals (20.5 percent of 200) than if they had no

previous court history (5.7 percent of 650).

In sum, the PAA analysis for each court indicates the presence

of many substantial indirect effects occurring within the data. In

the Denver Juvenile Court the decision to detain a juvenile prior to

an adjudicatory hearing appeared to be influenced by a combination of

factors, the most important being a prior history of court referral.

Youths who had been in court previously were substantially more apt

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