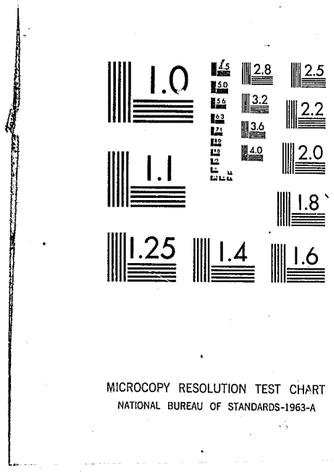

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National Institute of Justice
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Washington, D.C. 20531

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ADOLESCENTS IN LEGAL JEOPARDY: INITIAL SUCCESS AND REPLICATION OF AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM[1,2]

Edward Seidman[3] Julian Rappaport William S. Davidson, III[4]

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Before I begin to explicate the details of our efforts to divert adolescents in legal jeopardy from further involvement in the criminal justice system, I would like to place this research in its larger context. For the past several years we have been examining the systematic use of college student nonprofessionals as human service deliverers in several social systems. The larger program included four sub-projects aimed at developmentally representative target groups, i.e., school children, emotionally disturbed adults, and senior citizens residing in a nursing home, in addition to adolescents in legal jeopardy. Each sub-project involved college student change agents as the mode of service delivery. The college students are paired with target individuals on a one-to-one basis. The total set of four projects has been directed at questions such as who works best with whom, using what training techniques (Kiesler, 1966, 1971; Paul, 1969).

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[3]Paper requests should be sent to: Edward Seidman, Community Psychology Action Center, Department of Psychology, University of Illinois, Champaign, Illinois, 61820.

[4]Now at Michigan State University.

In line with this overall goal, more specific project endeavors addressed the questions of volunteer selection, volunteer training, supervision strategies, resultant changes in the volunteers per se, resultant changes in the respective target populations, and the impact of the projects on the social service systems in which they were embedded.

We have recently described the specific method of operation used in the program as a whole in a paper entitled The Educational Pyramid: A Paradigm For Research, Training and Manpower Utilization in Community Psychology (Seidman & Rappaport, 1974). In brief, each sub-project operated according to a triadic organizational model. Each was "staffed" by two principal investigators who supervised two graduate students, who shared or split responsibility for training/supervision of the nonprofessional change agents and the project specific research. Each year the two graduate student co-directors were responsible for direct supervision of undergraduate student change agents. The research reported here is based on one of the four sub-projects which was aimed at diversion of alleged adolescent offenders from the criminal justice system.

Our work is predicated on several specific values and related objectives (Fairweather, 1972; Rappaport, 1977). First of all, a major concern is intervening as early as possible to thwart an individual's envelopment by "rehabilitation" systems that are often detrimental to human welfare. We are committed to avoiding, or at least minimizing, the effects of "disculturation" (Goffman, 1961), isolation, pushouts, etc. Similarly, we endeavor to avoid "blaming the victim" (Ryan, 1971; Shur, 1973) or focusing on his/her deficits, but instead we attempt to identify and build upon an individual's assets and strengths (Rappaport et.al., 1975; Rappaport, 1977). We try to avoid placing the individual in a client or patient role. Instead, we try to foster self-

sufficiency by enabling the person to become his/her own advocate (Davidson & Rapp, 1976; Sarason, 1976) and/or to learn critical negotiation skills in dealing with significant individuals and/or agencies in their particular social support networks. Finally, we are concerned that we have an impact on the relevant social system, in this case, the juvenile justice system, so that the system itself may be more likely to prevent or minimize the exacerbation of difficulties for future entrants. In short, our efforts are directed at experimental social model building rather than exclusively the individual level of assessment or change.

As most of you know, the field of juvenile delinquency prevention has been and is experiencing an unparalleled search for alternative intervention strategies. Although enthusiastic adherents for various approaches can be found, there is little basis for strong belief in the relative efficacy of contemporary approaches when compared to each other or when compared to more traditional strategies. While some community based programs have indicated promising results (Palmer, 1971; Palmer, 1975; Shore & Massimo, 1973), most of these programs are poorly evaluated and the majority continue to be operated out of highly traditional corrections facilities (Griggs & McGuire, 1972).

From our prior experiences in the local juvenile justice system as well as the relevant research literature it was apparent to us that the point at which a youngster reaches the probation stage is not the most ideal point in the system at which to intervene, since at that time the child is already deeply entangled in the system. Consequently, we attempted to gain the cooperation and participation of the police officers responsible for alleged juvenile offenders in two adjacent midwestern American cities (joint population - 90,000), as well as the county police department.

Over the course of a pilot semester and summer we worked in close collaboration with the relevant police officers in an attempt to develop an alternative that was sensible and potentially beneficial to the youth with whom we would be involved. In developing these relationships, a good deal of "sizing up" of each other occurred. It became apparent that we did share a common concern with the juvenile officers of the two city police departments centering on the apparent ineffectiveness of the typical juvenile court and probation intervention methods.

After an initial role negotiation phase, more attention was paid to specific plans for actual project initiation. The plans for referral procedures, pre and post assessment, random assignment, insuring volunteer involvement on the part of referred youth, protection of the constitutional rights of the youth, specification of our intervention methods, and detailing of our plans for community continuation of the project following cessation of the NIMH funds were all discussed. This phase was critical in order to adequately work out the "bugs" in both the measurement and referral procedures and to get to know each other.* After a period of negotiation, we decided that the decision to refer a given youth would be left to the discretion of the juvenile officer, with the following agreed upon guideline:

> since the project does not want to become involved with youth who have been involved in only a single minor offense and are not likely to find themselves in further legal difficulty, only refer youth for whom court referral is being seriously considered.

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*An interesting example of a "bug" occurred during the pilot semester. The police opened an envelope to determine the youths' random assignment to the experimental or control condition. We discovered that with certain youth the officers would continue to unseal envelopes until they found what they considered to be the appropriate assignment. Obviously, we altered the procedure to protect against such bias prior to our first full academic year of operation.

This agreement is crucial to our thinking. Unlike the youth service bureau approach, we did not wish to be involved with children who were not likely to be recidivists. They could much more reasonably be dealt with by the policeman's "warn and release procedures". We are also aware that such children, if they are overidentified, might even have problems created rather than alleviated (e.g., Fo & O'Donnell, 1975). On the other hand, we did want to identify the child for whom the police officer was ready to file a petition for court referral, and thus to divert him/her from the system.

First Year of Research

Following formal referral of 37 youths by the juvenile officers of the two metropolitan police departments, an interview was held with the youth and one of his or her parents. At that time a staff member explained the program to them, reviewing their constitutional rights and their rights as voluntary subjects; participation agreements and confidentiality agreements were signed at this time. There were no refusals. Following the introduction, the interviewer separately administered four assessment instruments to the youth and the parent. These instruments were the Marlow-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (1963), utilized to assess the positive description of one's behavior, a 16-item version of Rotter's Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (1966), revised specifically for the project to more adequately accommodate the reading level of the youth, a social labeling scale developed specifically for this project to assess the degree to which a youth identified him/herself as having been labeled delinquent or deviant by significant others in his/her life, and a 15-item behavioral checklist of commonly committed offenses designed to assess self-reported illegal activities in the prior three months. In addition, at the end of the interview, the youth was asked to nominate a close friend who would also be asked to complete

the same assessment procedures, all of which asked questions about the referred youth. Nominated peers were interviewed within 48 hours of initial referral and paid $5 for their time. Following pre-assessment, the youth and his or her parents were informed as to whether they would be assigned to the program or whether they would be asked only to complete the post assessment approximately four months later. In other words, the pre-assessment was completed with the interviewer blind to eventual experimental condition.

In summary, pre-assessment consisted of youth, parent and youth-nominated peer verbal reports on analogous forms of four assessment instruments, all pertaining to the youth's behaviors and perceptions. At the time of termination, the four interview-based measures were re-administered to all three sources. Both the youth and the nominated peers were paid, by prior agreement, $5 for completing the post assessment instruments. In addition, police, court, and school records were searched, covering the time periods one year prior to, and throughout the duration of the program; police and court records were also gathered for a two-year follow up period.

In each case, referral to the program was accomplished as an alternative to a juvenile court petition being filed. The youths referred to the program had the following characteristics: 28 were males, 9 were females; 28 were white and 9 were black; the age range was 11 to 17 years with the mean age being 14.1 years; an average youth was in the eighth grade; the mean number of police contacts in the year prior to referral was 2.16. The 37 youths were randomly assigned to the experimental program or a control group. More specifically, randomization followed a procedure resulting in two-thirds of the youths being assigned to the experimental condition with stratification for sex, race, police department, and order of referral. Since goals for a given youth might be accomplished at any time during the program, it was expected that date of

termination of contact between the college students and their referred youth would vary on an individual basis. In order to insure a consistent pre to post interval for experimental and control groups, control youths were randomly yoked with experimental youths, and each member of the experimental-control pair was evaluated over the same time interval.

The college students were assigned to youths following the completion of pre-assessment. Every effort was made to match student and youth on the basis of mutual interests, race and sex. The student initiated the contact by phone and thereafter was involved working with and for the youth six to eight hours per week for an average of four and one-half months (range three to five months). Intervention duration was determined by a goal attainment procedure (Kiresuk & Sherman, 1968) whereby behaviorally specific goals were established for each case one month after assignment and termination was completed when the specified goals were accomplished or closely approximated.

Strategies used by students can best be described as a combined effort involving the ingredients of relationship skills, behavioral contracting and child advocacy. The contracting component involved the assessment and modification of the interpersonal contingencies in the life of the youths, (e.g., with parents, teachers). The specific methods employed involved the establishment of written interpersonal agreements between the youth and significant others, as mediated by the student, according to the procedures outlined by Stuart (Stuart, 1971; Stuart & Lott, 1972; Stuart & Tripodi, 1973). In addition to the enhancement of specific behavioral changes on the part of the youth and significant others in his or her life, it was necessary in most cases to mobilize needed community resources for the youth in order to insure durability of desired change, and to provide legitimate avenues for attainment of the youth's goals. The strategies employed have recently been labeled child advocacy and involve the

targeting of community resources such as educational, vocational, or recreational programs for change. The specifics of these procedures have been reviewed by Kahn, et.al. (1973) and further detailed in a recent paper by Davidson & Rapp (1976).

Results

There were no statistically significant changes on any of the verbal report measures either from the adolescent's, his/her parents' or his/her peers' perspectives. An apparently dramatic program impact on the youths involved was evidenced primarily by police and court records and an isolated trend in school records.

Police and court records. Figure one depicts the differences between experimental and control subjects during the year prior to referral, during the intervention interval, and during the first and second year follow-up intervals since termination. During the one year period prior to referral, there were no significant differences in the number of police contacts, seriousness of police contacts (accomplished by a schema developed by Sellin & Wolfgang (1964) modified to accomodate uniquely juvenile offenses), or the number of petitions filed with the court. As you can see from Figure 1, all of the differences during the intervention, first year and second year follow-up intervals favor the experimental group, in that they have fewer contacts of lesser severity and fewer petitions filed than the control subjects. Most of these differences are significant at conventional levels, although a few only exhibit a trend. When we collapse across the approximately 27-month interval from time of referral through a two year follow-up period, the number of police contacts, severity of police contacts, and the number of petitions filed strongly corroborate the efficacy of the experimental program (see Figure 2). Controlling for prior level of "difficulty" of the youths by employing the severity of police contacts during the year prior to referral as a covariate leaves the results unaffected.

Insert Figures 1 & 2 about here

If we stringently define a success as no further contact with the police and a failure as one or more contacts (no matter how trivial) with the police, we again find the results to be quite powerful, despite the time interval (see Table 1). While an increasing number of experimental subjects have further contact with the police, you will recall that there was no substantial increase in the average number of contacts, severity of contacts or petitions filed with the passage of time.

Insert Table 1 about here

School records. Grade-point averages achieved by youths for the pre-period (one year prior to referral) were not detectably different. There were no differences in grade-point averages calculated for the period spanning the program's operation for youths in the experimental and control groups. Attendance records were similarly lacking in positive results.

An encouraging trend in the school data involves the percentage of youths still enrolled in school at termination. All youths were enrolled at the time of referral; 71% of youths in the experimental group were still enrolled at termination while only 50% of the control group remained in school. The remainder of both groups had either voluntarily dropped out or were extruded through suspension procedures. This trend, however, did not achieve conventional levels of statistical significance.

Juvenile justice system. The total number of cases in which court petitions were filed by the police on any juvenile (regardless of program referral) were

recorded on a month-by-month basis for the year prior to program implementation and during the months of program operation. The mean proportion of cases in which petitions were filed during the program operation was less than that of a corresponding period the previous year.

During program operation, from September, 1973, to March, 1974, only 11% of all juvenile cases investigated involved the filing of petitions. This is in contrast to the parallel period during the year (September, 1972, to March, 1973), when 16% of all cases investigated resulted in petitions filed. This occurs at a time when yearly averages were on a steady rise. An analysis of variance for time series designs (Gentile, et.al., 1972) was performed utilizing the two successive years of September to March monthly means as data points. The results were significant ($F = 8.41$, $df = 1/10$, $p < .01$).

Second Year of Research

When we began our second academic year of operation, we were only aware of the reduced recidivism rates and the failure to achieve internal attitudinal changes during the intervention interval in the prior year. With the hope that we would replicate our efficacy on the so-called "hard" recidivism data, we made one major change and one major addition in an effort to more clearly understand some of the processes related to this success. These issues are presented in detail in Davidson's dissertation (1976). First, we separated the training and supervisory orientations of behavioral contracting and advocacy. We went from three small training/supervisory groups with a conglomerate orientation to two sets of two small groups with each set exclusively receiving either a behavioral contracting orientation or child advocacy orientation. While all groups had the same pair of co-supervisors, the college students were exposed to distinctively different training manuals, mastery evaluations, and content of supervision. Supervisory behavior was monitored weekly. Obviously, this

separation was intended to feret out differential effects of behavioral contracting, child advocacy, and "treatment as usual" conditions. The pre/post interval for all groups was 18 weeks. A second major foci was to gain a detailed monitoring and understanding of the critical components of events in the lives of the youth, the components of the intervention approaches, and the salient features of the training and supervision sessions. Given the previously uncharted nature of this particular endeavor, it was also necessary to assess the outcroppings of these processes in a very exploratory fashion. The goal of this component of the research design was to both provide behaviorally specific data about these domains and to allow sufficient breadth in scope of the events assessed to provide ecological validity for the results.

Process interviews were conducted at four, ten, and sixteen weeks after referral with the target youth, their parents, the volunteer student (experimentals only), and the student's supervisor (experimentals only). A rational empirical strategy was employed to construct 33 process scales reflective of critical life events, perceptions of change, characteristics of the interventions, and performance in training and supervision.

Several changes in the pre-post measures were made. First, the Gough-Peterson (1952) Socialization scale was used as an indicant of socialization. Second, the recently developed Nowicki-Strickland (1973) Locus of Control Scale was used as a measure of Rotter's notions of internal-external locus of control. Third, the card sort procedures developed by Gold (1970) were used as a measure of self-reported delinquency. Fourth, the social labeling scale described earlier was maintained. All questionnaire based measures were administered to the target youth, one of his/her parents, and a peer nominated as a close friend in the second interview following the referral.

Thirty-six youths were referred to the project (33 males and 3 females).

The mean age was 14.5. Twenty-one of the youth were white and 15 were black. In terms of the social characteristics of the youth's families, all youth came from lower to lower-middle class families. On the average, the group had 2.22 police contacts in the year prior to program referral. The type of offenses for which they had been arrested literally ranged from curfew violations to attempted murder. Following the completion of pre-assessment the youth were randomly assigned (according to similar procedures outlined for the 1973-74 project) to one of three conditions: behavioral contracting, child advocacy or "treatment as usual" control.

Results

In brief, the results of the pre-post experimental component of the design provide a pattern very similar to the data from the 1973-74 project. Namely, the verbal report data regardless of instrument or source failed to yield any significant findings for condition, time, or the interaction term.

Police and court records. As you will note in Figures 3 and 4, the results of the 1973-74 project are strongly replicated at each time interval (i.e., through a first year follow-up point, to date) and on all recidivism and severity of recidivism variables. Furthermore, there do not appear to be any significant differences between the two experimental conditions - behavioral contracting and advocacy. Again, controlling for prior level of "difficulty" of the youths by employing the severity of police contacts during the year prior to referral as a covariate leaves the results essentially unaffected.

Insert Figures 3 & 4 about here

Again, stringently defining failure as one or more further contacts with the police following referral as a failure, we find the results quite powerful during the intervention interval. There does appear to be some deterioration at the first year follow-up point, but the experimental conditions taken together still exhibit significantly less recidivism than the controls ($\chi^2_{cor.} = 6.30$, $p < .05$). However, advocacy subjects compared with controls manifested only a trend toward less recidivism ($\chi^2_{cor.} = 3.23$, $p < .10$).

School records. Turning to school records, while analysis of grade point average failed to yield any significant results, analysis of attendance rates indicated a maintenance of school attendance among both experimental groups across time and a highly significant decrement at a two month follow-up point in the control group.

Insert Figure 5 about here

Process analyses. The basic design used to analyze the process dimension data was a three by two by three analysis of variance with repeated measures. The three factors included were condition, success versus failure, and the three process time periods. A success-failure criteria was determined for all youth by categorizing any youth who had one or more further police contacts and/or attended school less than an average of two days per week as a failure. Youth who remained out of trouble and stayed involved in school to some extent were categorized successful.

Table 3 presents a summary of the findings of the process and outcome data. These results lead to the beginning formulations of multiple contingency model of program operation and impact. First, for all conditions it was apparent that the success-failure criteria was closely related to what has been described as socially acceptable or sanctioned role involvement. The youth who end up in further trouble

with the police and completely uninvolved in school are characterised by low levels of involvement at home, with the school system, and with the employment market. Second, two of the intervention scales were specifically contructed as checklists of the model intervention conditions to assess the compliance of the volunteers in carrying out the prescribed intervention. Both experimental groups were assessed on the advocacy and contracting scales. The results strongly indicate that the two interventions were distinct. In other words, those in the contracting condition carried out their interventions according to the contracting model and not the advocacy strategy and vice versa.

Insert Table 3 about here

Most striking, however, was the differential pattern of interventions displayed by different success and failure groups in both conditions related to the events in the youth's life. Youth who were more involved in socially approved roles received interventions focusing on multiple life domains. In addition for successful youth the intervention more closely followed the prescribed model. The interventions of those groups were characterized by higher levels of various intervention dimensions following from their intervention models. The contracting success group was observed to focus on the family and on the youth's behavior in school. On the other hand, the successful advocacy group focused on employment, the youth's friends, and changes in the school per se.

The contracting group which failed to meet with success, tended to focus on changing the youth within the family across time. In the school area, the intervention of the contracting group started with an intense effort which quickly desists. Since they showed increases over time in employment interventions and legal interventions, it is most likely that they began reacting to the demands of

the justice system directly. These events coincided with the time the youth get into further official trouble with the police. In addition, they further responded to the quick failure on school area indirectly through attempts at employment. In other words, they remained relatively focused on the youth in the family throughout. Their attempts at school intervention were replaced by an unproductive search for employment. In addition, they began responding to the juvenile justice system's need for information, reports, etc., when the youth becomes reinvolved in the justice system.

The advocacy failure interventions showed a somewhat different pattern in response to similar patterns of life events. Namely, the target youth in this group were reinvolved in trouble almost immediately (by Wave I process assessment) and consequently the intervention was characterized by responses to these legal problems. This took the direct form of engaging in interventions in the justice system as well as intensifying efforts towards obtaining a job for the youth. Essentially, the advocacy failure group included no intervention in the family domain and only minimal school intervention. In other words, the advocacy failure interventions focused from the beginning, both by actual life events and the prescriptions of the advocacy model, on responding to the justice system.

It is apparent then that the outcomes observed in the experimental and control youth were related not only to group assignment but to an apparent set of critical events. Given that the relationship of the youth to important social systems showed some deterioration following referral to the project, successful outcomes are unlikely to result. These patterns of interaction were observed much more frequently in the case of controls. When the interventions of the experimental youth met with initial success both in terms of their impact on the youth and the degree to which they can get things going in multiple areas of the youth's life, the program provides a stabilizing influence.

Conclusions and Future Directions

Our alternative to the traditional juvenile justice system has demonstrated efficacy in reducing the rates and severity of official delinquency in two successive years with two independent groups of youngsters. Presently, these changes have endured through a two and a one year follow-up point for the first and second set of participants, respectively. In the most recent phases of this intervention we have been concerned with dissemination of the project to local agencies, and have involved local professionals who we have trained in the supervision of the college students. As this program continues, cooperation has developed between police and the new program professionals such that the local community now has a viable alternative to court actions on youthful offenders.

Providing alternatives which avoid the entanglement of youth in the legal system, it will be recalled, was a major motivation for this work from its onset. Although we can no longer justify randomly assigning some adolescents to a "treatment as usual" control group, we have arranged with the local agency now responsible for program administration for a continual monitoring of the results of the intervention for youth who participate. This should provide on-going feedback about success and failure, and enable continual readjustment of procedures, rather than program stagnation.

Before the program can be disseminated to other locations it is necessary for other interventionists to compare experimental and control groups in their own locale; in order to test its efficacy in communities different than our own (e.g., those of varying size, differential police procedures, and community resources).

There remain a number of unanswered questions. Prime among them is "Why

does it work?" What are the necessary ingredients for an effective intervention of this nature? For example, are college students (or college age people) necessary, or can similar programs operate by using older community volunteers? How crucial are the various contingencies contracted for in such a program? How salient is the intensity and format of training and supervision? What occurs in the lives of the youth and their social support networks one or two years following referral that maintains their continued non-involvement with the juvenile justice system? While we have a variety of hunches about these and other questions, we are continuing our attempts to explore and unravel the answers to these questions as systematically as possible. We hope many others will join in the quest to develop, implement and systematically evaluate similar innovative social programs designed to reduce the negative impact of the criminal justice system on young people. In this regard, we might add, not incidentally, that while programs such as the one described here may be of value for some youth, at least part of the answer to problems of delinquency will need to consider proposals for the elimination of uniquely juvenile status offenses from the realm of crime (c.f. Schur, 1973). It is only through multi-level interventions which combine such institutional changes with the kind of treatment alternatives suggested here that we can hope to have a significant impact on the problem of delinquency.

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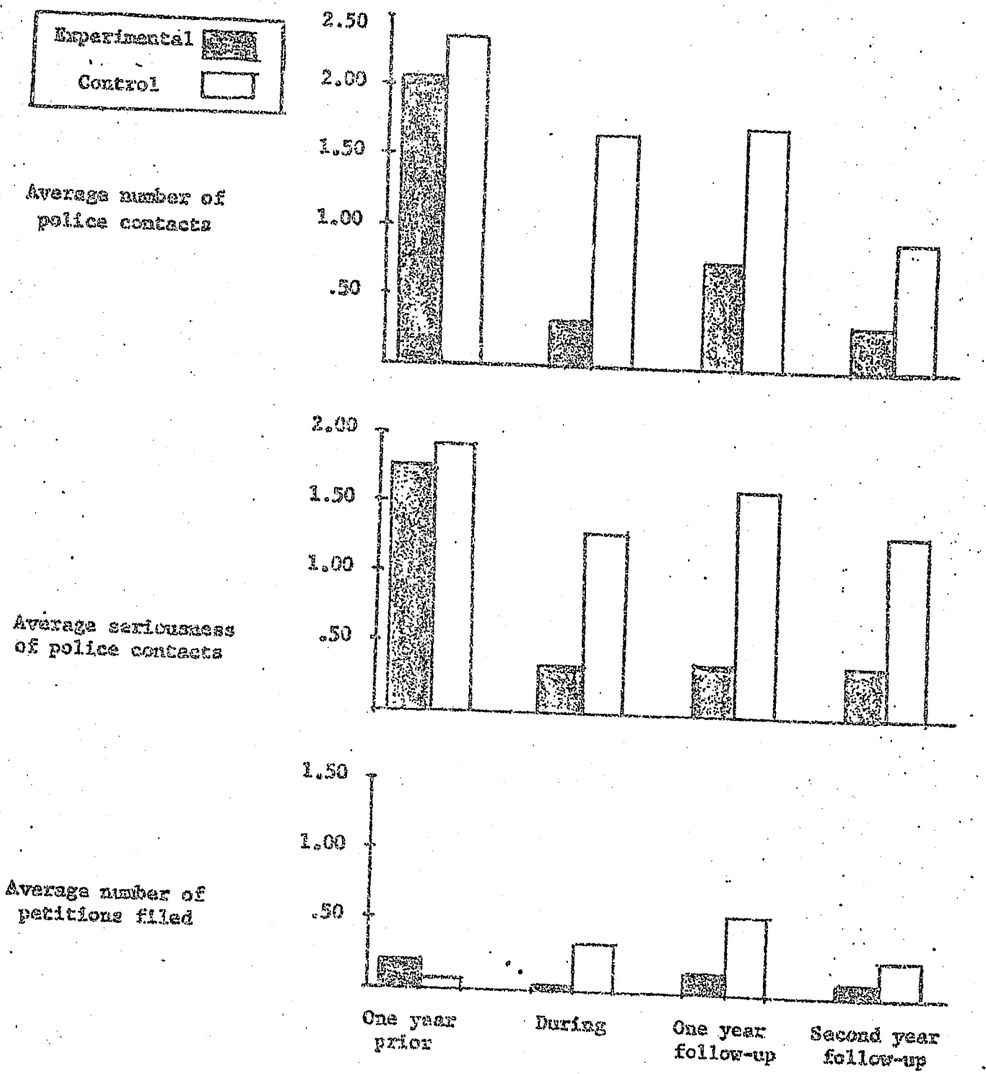

Figure 1. Police and court record data for first year of research

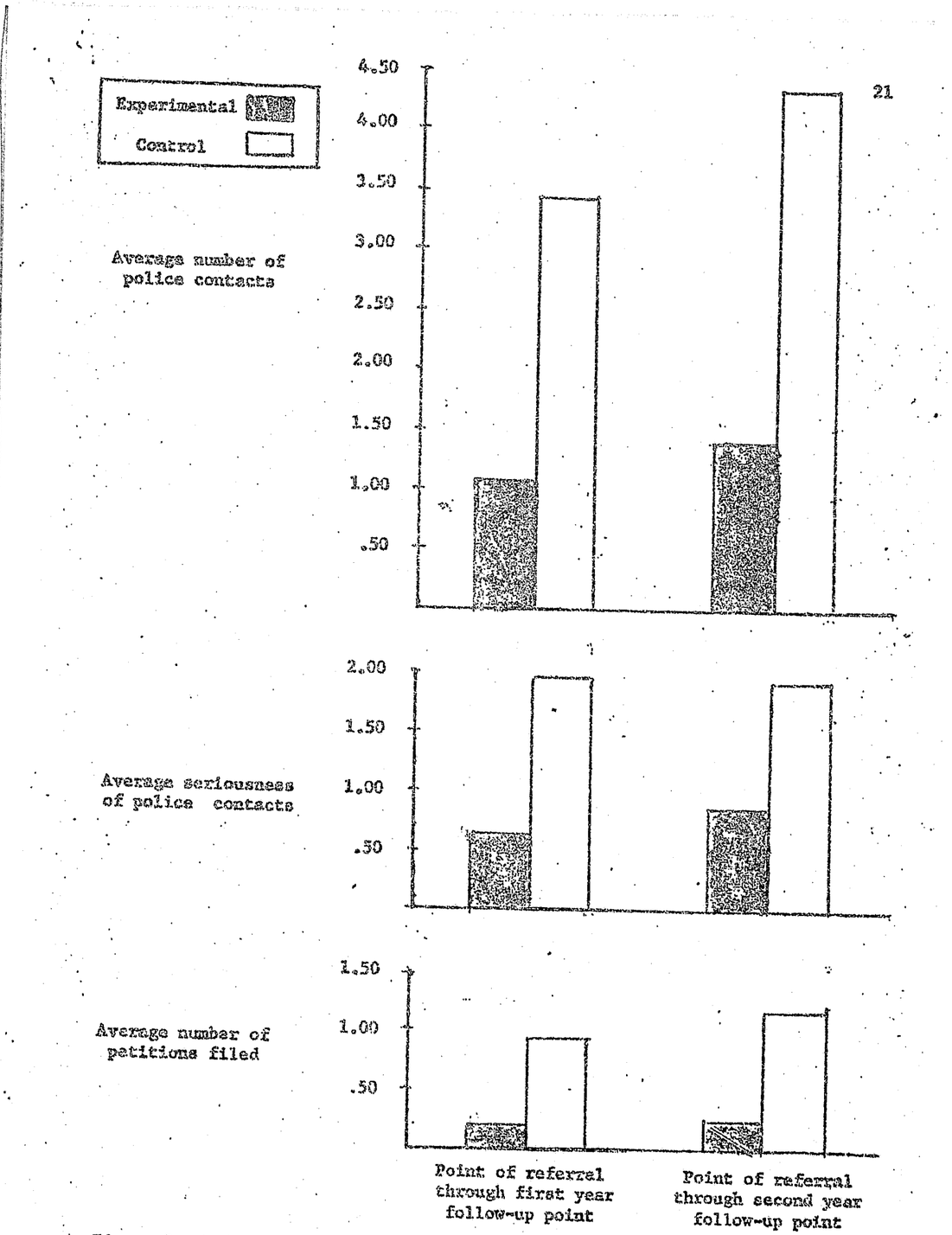

Figure 2. Police and court record data for first year of research from referral through first and second year follow-up points.

TABLE 1

Success[a] and Failure[b] of Experimental and Control Subjects
During Several Time Periods Subsequent to Referral
(First Year of Research)

	During Intervention Interval		Point of Referral to First Year Follow-Up Point		Point of Referral to Second Year Follow-Up Point	
	S	F	S	F	S	F
E	20	5	16	9	13	12
C	4	8	0	12	0	12
	$\chi^2_{cor.} = 5.79$, $p < .025$		$\chi^2_{cor.} = 11.05$, $p < .001$		$\chi^2_{cor.} = 7.47$, $p < .01$	

[a]Success (S) = no further police contacts

[b]Failure (F) = one or more additional police contacts

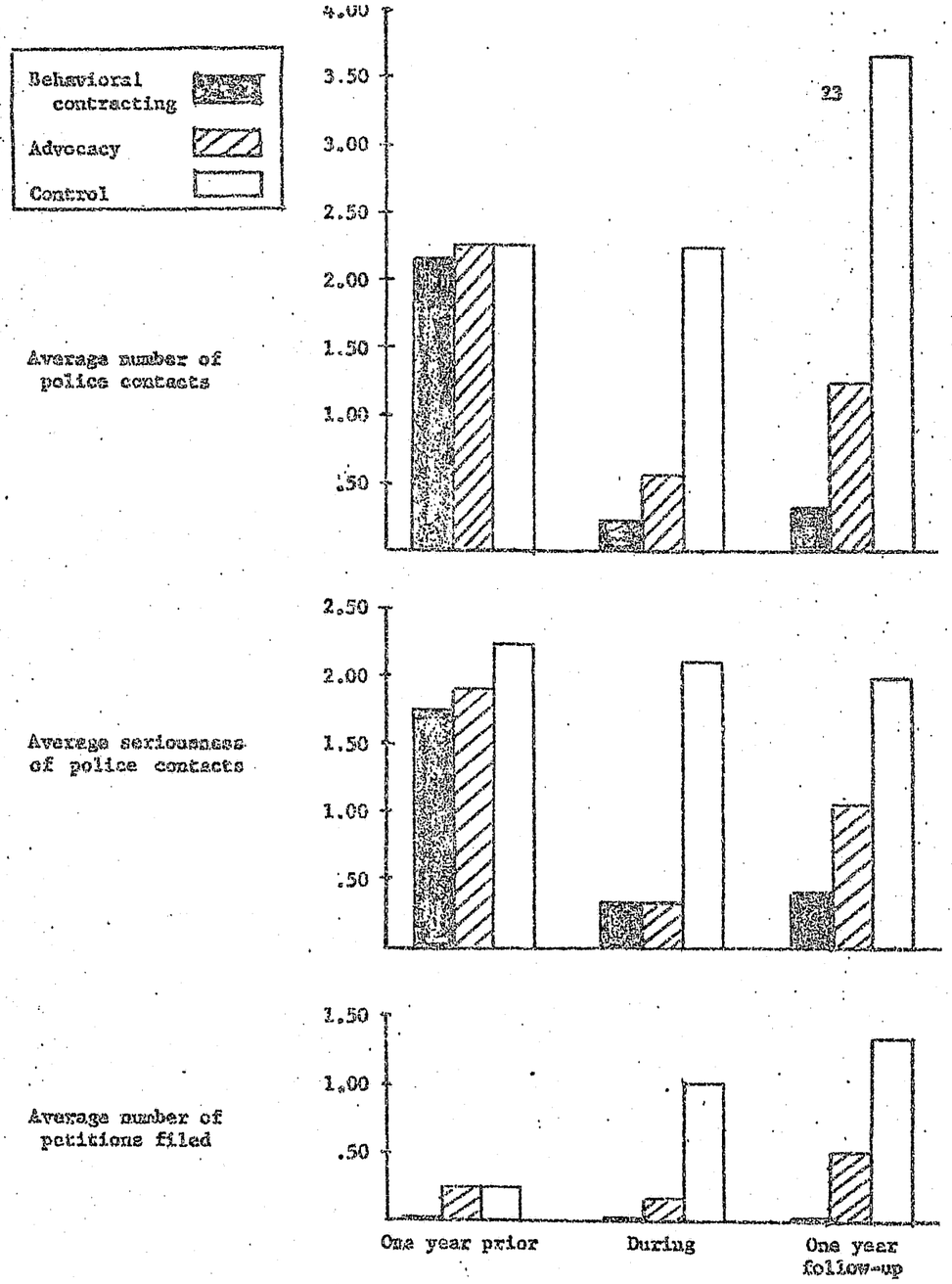

Figure 3. Police and court record data for second year of research.

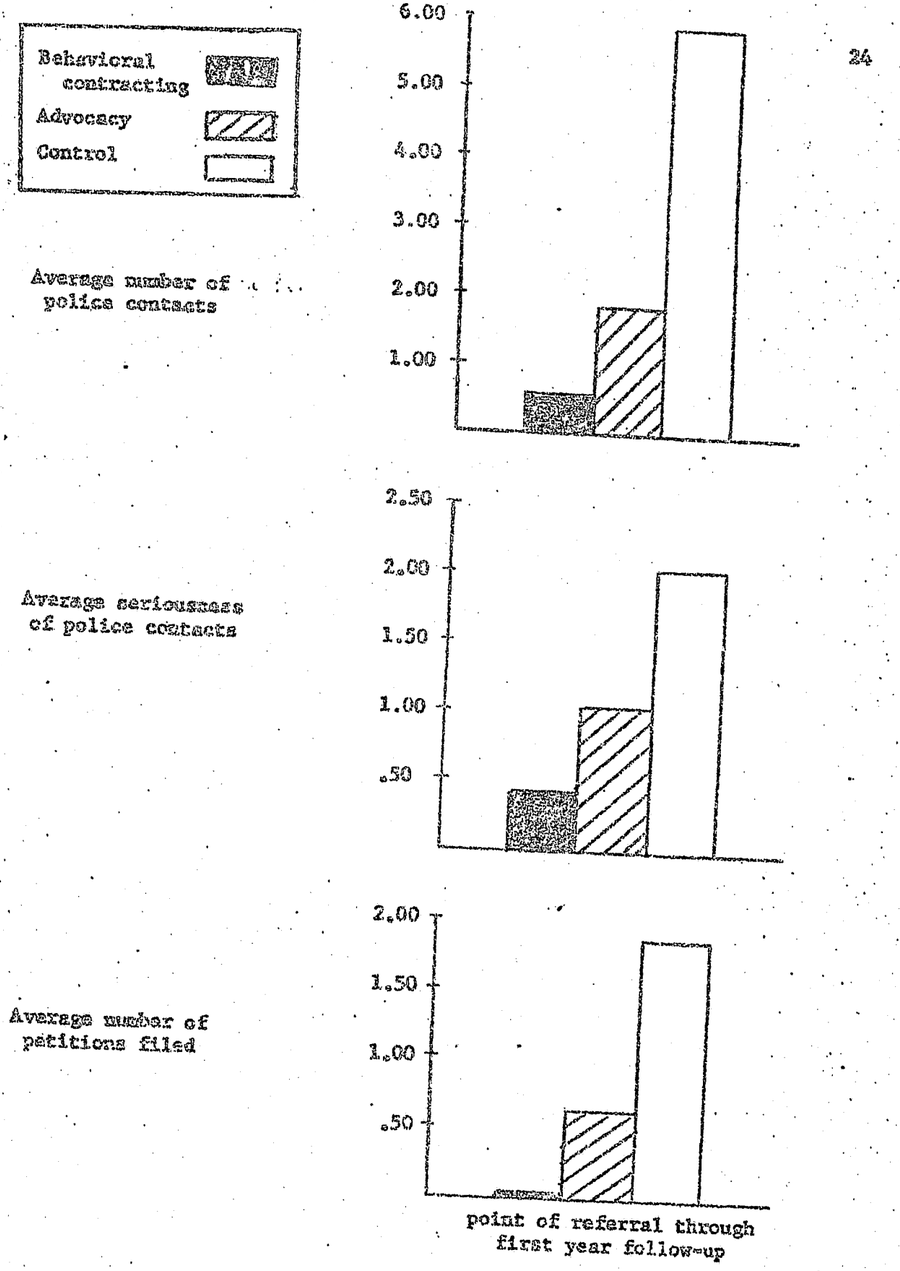

Figure 4. Police and court record data for second year of research from referral through a one year follow-up point.

TABLE 2

Success[a] and Failure[b] of Behavioral Contracting, Advocacy and Control Subjects During Two Intervals Subsequent to Referral

(Second Year of Research)

During Intervention Interval

	S	F
B.C.	9	3
Adv.	10	2
Cont.	3	9

$\chi^2_{E^c vs C_{cor}} = 7.73$, $p < .01$

Point of Referral to First Year Follow-Up Point

	S	F
B.C.	8	4
Adv.	6	6
Cont.	1	11

$\chi^2_{E vs C_{cor}} = 6.30$, $p < .025$

$\chi^2_{B.C. vs C_{cor}} = 6.40$, $p < .025$

$\chi^2_{Adv. vs C_{cor}} = 3.23$, $p < .10$

[a] Success (S) = no further police contacts

[b] Failure (F) = one or more additional police contacts

[c] Combined experimentals - behavioral contracting and advocacy youths

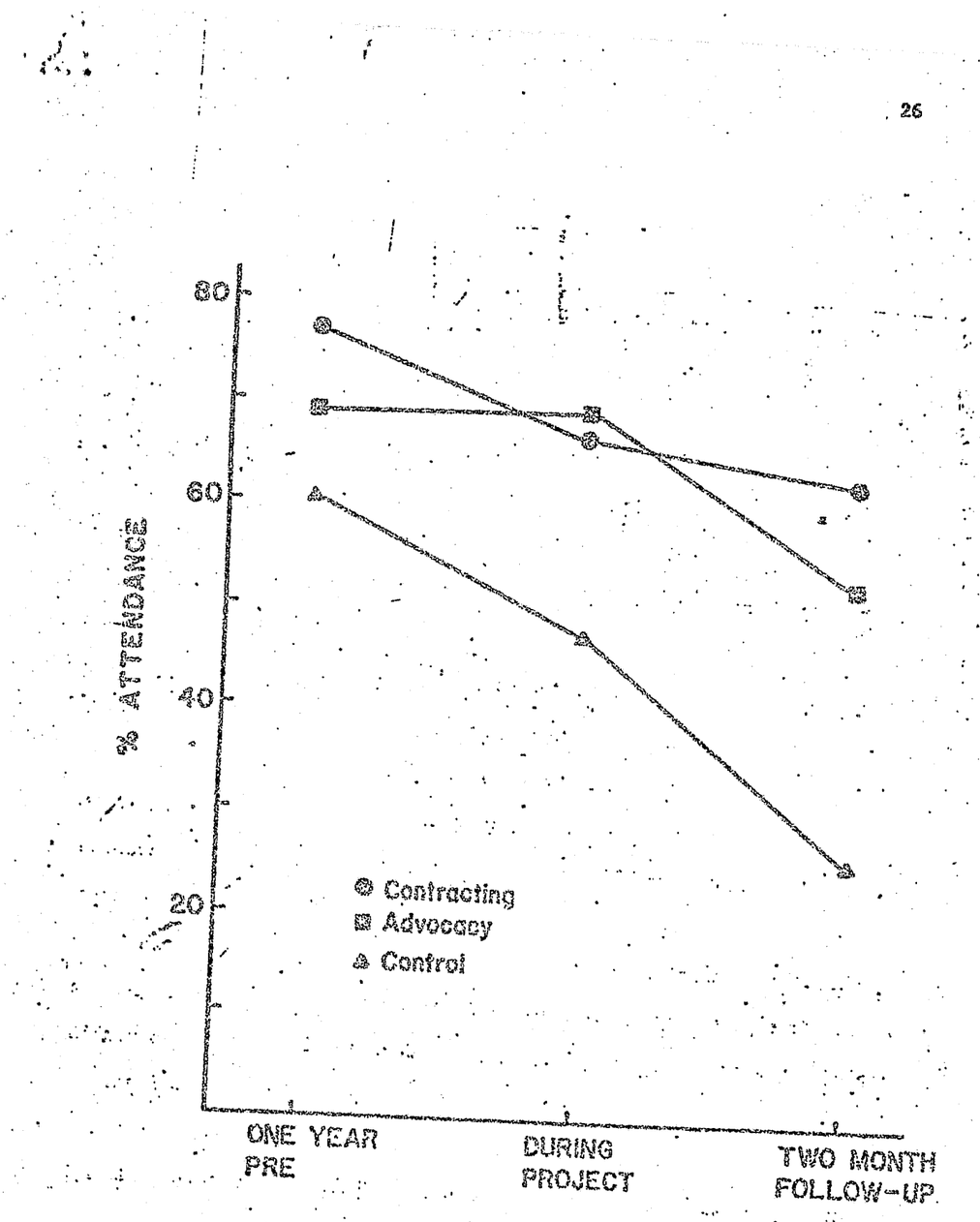

Figure 5. Percentage of school attendance - second year of research.

TABLE 3

Relationships of the Multiple Contingency Model
(Second Year of Research)

	Behavioral Contracting	Child Advocacy	Control
Success	1. Involved in socially approved roles. 2. Stability on Change Dimensions. 3. Initiating contracting model. 4. Working on changes in the family area. 5. Working on changes in the youth's school performance.	1. Involved in socially approved roles. 2. Stability on Change Dimensions. 3. Initiation of advocacy model. 4. Working with the youth's friends. 5. Working on changes in the school system.	1. Involved in family and school. 2. Stability on Change Dimensions.
Failure	1. Uninvolved in socially approved roles. 2. Deterioration on Change Dimensions. 3. Initial trouble initiating contracting model. 4. Responding to juvenile justice system. 5. Attempting to get youth employed. 6. Family intervention focused on youth per se and minimal school intervention.	1. Uninvolved in socially approved roles. 2. Deterioration on Change Dimensions. 3. Initial trouble initiating contracting model. 4. Responding to juvenile justice system. 5. Attempting to get youth employed. 6. No family and minimal school intervention.	1. Involved in job seeking. 2. Deterioration on Change Dimensions.

END