

SP #b  
JUVENILE FELONY OFFENDERS: CHARACTERISTICS,  
SERVICES RENDERED, AND RECIDIVISM

By  
GARY WAYNE SUMNER  
Bachelor of Science  
Emporia State University  
Emporia, Kansas  
1976

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate College  
of the Oklahoma State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Degree of  
MASTER OF SCIENCE  
May, 1984



JUVENILE FELONY OFFENDERS: CHARACTERISTICS,  
SERVICES RENDERED, AND RECIDIVISM

Thesis Approved:

Harjit S. Sandhu  
Thesis Adviser

Richard A. Dodder

W Greuninger

Norman N Durham  
Dean of the Graduate College

## PREFACE

This study examines a population of juvenile felony offenders, their characteristics, services rendered, and the extent of recidivism. Information for the study was gathered from individual case files from Kay County, Oklahoma Court Related and Community Services on children referred in 1980 for alleged involvement in felony offenses.

This research evolved from a rather basic concept relating to youth in trouble into a rather complex, detailed project of long duration. Completion of the study could not have occurred without the assistance and support of numerous people, to whom a debt of gratitude is owed.

First, I owe a special thanks to Ms. Patricia Wideman, Assistant District Supervisor of Court Related and Community Services in Kay County. With her permission, I was able to obtain access to the case files on the children involved in the study. Of course, it should be mentioned that complete anonymity was maintained.

Next, I wish to thank my primary adviser, Dr. Harjit Sandhu, for his guidance, support, and encouragement. His expertise in the fields of Juvenile Delinquency and Corrections were invaluable to me throughout the process and most appreciated. I would also like to thank Dr. Richard Dodder for his assistance with this study, especially in regard to the technical and organizational aspects.

In addition, I would like to thank my typist, critic, and friend,

Ms. Pamela Keltner, for her excellent work.

Finally, my deepest appreciation goes to my fiancée', Ellen Williams, for her constant support, encouragement, patience, and understanding.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II. A SELECTED REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE . . . . .	3
III. RESEARCH METHODS . . . . .	10
Research Setting . . . . .	10
Research Design . . . . .	12
Procedures For Data Analysis . . . . .	14
IV. ANALYSIS OF THE DATA . . . . .	15
V. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION . . . . .	27
VI. CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	35
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	38

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
I. Variables, Attributes, and Response Percentages . . . . .	16
II. Recidivism By Various Descriptive Variables . . . . .	22

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Research in the field of juvenile delinquency has produced an identification of certain conditions, characteristics, or processes that appear to be associated with delinquent behavior. Examination of these conditions has resulted in an increased understanding of delinquency causation. Further understanding will enable us to provide a more effective societal response which may, in turn, reduce the incidence of primary and secondary delinquency.

Our level of understanding in regard to conditions associated with delinquency is by no means complete. The presence of one specific condition or of numerous conditions does not imply that delinquency always occurs. Further research is necessary to identify those conditions or characteristics which are present in a majority of cases where delinquency occurs.

The present research attempts to identify conditions, characteristics, or processes which indicate a relationship to both primary delinquency and recidivism. The basic design of the research involves an examination of youths who have committed felony offenses, their characteristics, the services rendered to them, and the extent of recidivism. The purpose is to expand our knowledge relating to determinants of delinquency and recidivism.

Information for this study was gathered from individual case files from Court Related and Community Services, the agency respon-

sible for juvenile intake, probation, and parole in Kay County, Oklahoma. These case files were examined on 144 children referred to the agency in 1980 for alleged felony offenses.

The primary research questions to be addressed in this study were as follows: (1) What were the social characteristics of this population of juvenile offenders? (2) What types of offenses were committed by these youth? (3) What processes occurred as the societal control agents intervened? (4) What types of services were implemented? (5) What characteristics, processes, and conditions show an association with recidivism?

Chapter II of this study focuses on a selected review of literature relevant to delinquency and recidivism. Chapter III outlines the research methods utilized in the present study, including a description of the research setting. Chapter IV gives an analysis of the data. Chapter V summarizes the data and presents a discussion of the meaning of the data. Chapter VI gives conclusions to the present research.



## CHAPTER II

### A SELECTED REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The scope of this research study necessitates that an examination be undertaken regarding both the concept of delinquency and the concept of recidivism. Delinquency, as defined in this research, refers to behavior on the part of a child under the age of eighteen which is in violation of written laws and is detected by a societal control agency. Recidivism is delinquent behavior which is secondary in nature, both in terms of the actual commission of the offense and in terms of the societal response. With this in mind, this review of the literature focuses upon the two related aspects: (1) causes or conditions associated with delinquency in existence prior to any societal response, and (2) causes or conditions associated with recidivist behaviors which occur during or after the societal response.

Many researchers and theorists have examined family systems and family processes and their relationship to delinquency. A number of early studies gave indication that the broken home was a major causal factor associated with delinquency (Shaw & McKay, 1932; Glueck & Glueck, 1950; Monahan, 1957; Merrill, 1947.) It is interesting to note that a later study by Shaw and McKay (1942) did not produce definitive results. They maintained a causal relationship between broken homes and delinquency but spoke more to the conflicts and tensions that arose through the parental separation. Similarly Nye (1958, p. 48) asserted that except for institutionalized children, "unhappiness in a home was

more significantly related to delinquency than a structurally broken home."

Later studies continued to focus upon broken homes and delinquency. Haskell & Yablonsky (1974) examined a number of boys committed to the California Youth Authority in the early 1970's and found that 57% were not living with both biological parents (due to separation or death). Peterson and Becker (1965, p. 69) found a "substantial relationship between delinquency and broken homes." Chilton and Markle (1972) collected delinquency data from the Juvenile and County Courts of Florida on nearly 9,000 children. They compared the family situations of 5,376 of these children with those of the overall U.S. population and found that children charged with delinquent acts came from disrupted families substantially more often than non-delinquent children. Finally, studies on the significance of parental deprivation in relation to delinquency and recidivism have found positive associations (Virkkunen, 1976; Bowlby, 1951).

Processes or dynamics within the family system are important in their relationship to delinquency. The quality of parent-child relationships and the quality of disciplinary methods have received much attention. The Gluecks, in their 1950 study, reported that lax and inconsistent discipline was associated with the higher percentage of delinquents than was very strict discipline (Glueck and Glueck, 1950).

Slocum and Stone (1963) found a significant relationship between fairness of parental discipline and conformity by the children. Another study found that excessive conflict within the home interferes with the child's social and moral development, often giving rise to delinquent behavior (Grogan and Grogan, 1968). Haskell & Yablonsky (1974,

p. 103) asserted that "internal family dynamics are more closely related to social deviance in general and delinquency in particular than are structural elements of the family." They further went on to state that "gross physical and emotional abuse and outright rejection are closely related to delinquent conduct" (p. 103). Finally, Abrahamson (1960) essentially believes that all delinquents have some level of emotional disturbance and are produced by tension and conflicts within the family.

The relationship between schools and delinquency has been an area of concern. Haskell and Yablonsky (1974) in their profile of a typical California Youth Authority boy, found that 67% of these youth were indifferent or negative toward school. Fleisher (1966) confirmed that a relationship exists between dropping out of school and delinquency. In one study of 761 children handled through the Children's Bureau in Passaic, New Jersey, it was found that only a very small percentage went on to finish high school. Also, the truancy rate for these delinquent children was found to be high as compared to the rates for the general population of school children (Kvaraceus, 1945). Schafer and Polk (1967) found the delinquency rate for dropouts to be ten times higher than for high school graduates. Many feel that the schools need to take a more active role in delinquency prevention by initiating more progressive curricula, individualized remedial programs, and programs geared to meeting the needs of the potential dropouts.

We now turn our attention to causes and conditions associated with recidivism which occur during or after the offense and through the process of societal intervention.

Lipton, Martinson, and Wilks have produced a survey of much importance which compiled research findings on the effectiveness of treatment administered to delinquents and adult offenders (1975). Their findings relevant to this study can be briefly summarized as follows: (1) intensive probation supervision is associated with lower rates of recidivism, (2) institutions with relative restrictive conditions, combined with two-year terms, may be more effective than less restrictive institutions with shorter terms, (3) proper supervision of parolees is related to parole success, (4) counseling and social casework do not appear to be significantly related to lower rates of recidivism, but do appear to be at least as effective as incarceration or community placement without services, and (5) counseling or psychotherapy in the community with a pragmatic orientation and with the utilization of various methods seems to be effective in reducing recidivism.

Alexander and Parsons (1973) studied a short-term behavioral intervention approach with delinquents and their families. The delinquent families placed in the experimental group were compared to families involved in treatment utilizing different modalities or to families not involved in any treatment program. They found that the program produced positive results and reduced recidivism. The key to this particular approach was the modification of family interactions.

Several studies have examined the outcomes of the diversion process with juvenile delinquents. On one side of the coin, some research has found that diversion is not successful in reducing recidivism. Lundman (1976), for example, presented evidence that diversionary treatment programs fail to reduce recidivism. He further stated that "diver-

sion units also possibly magnify existing problems" (p. 437). In another study of delinquency treatment programs, it was found that, even though some studies reported positive results, conclusions were that there was "little or no success in preventing delinquency" (Lundman, McFarlane, and Scarpitti, 1976, p. 305). Finally, Thornton et al. (1982, p. 420) stated that "diversionary programs may actually increase delinquency since no punishment is involved."

Some studies show diversion to produce lesser rates of recidivism. In a study of a family crisis intervention approach to diversion from the juvenile justice system, outcomes were examined for the first offenders involved in the program. Components of this diversion strategy include intensive focusing on the family as a system and follow-up services. This project was successful in diverting youth from court involvement (Wade et al., 1977). Another study examined the outcomes of a voluntary diversion program with the Dallas Police Department. For the more serious offenders, who were placed in a counseling unit, 10.7% were rearrested, while 50.5% of the comparison group (not receiving counseling services) were rearrested (Collingwood et al., 1976). Quay and Love (1977) found positive results with a juvenile diversion program that offered vocational counseling, training, and job placement, along with personal and social counseling, individually and in groups.

In another study of 49 police agencies in Los Angeles County in 1974, it was initially found that the rates of juvenile diversion were highly variable. The study then found that the police agencies with high rates of diversion did not produce recidivism rates different from those with low rates of diversion unless comparisons were made

between first offenders and multiple offenders (Klein, 1974).

A number of studies have examined various factors which show association to recidivism. These studies have a similar methodology to the present research. Scanlon & Webb (1981) gathered information from the Georgia Division of Youth Services on 2,574 juveniles committed. Follow-up data relating to recidivism was obtained through the Georgia Department of Offender Rehabilitation. They found the following variables to be related to recidivism: race, urban-rural residence, parental presence, type of juvenile crime, and length of stay in the juvenile system. Significantly high recidivism rates were found for blacks, urban residents, youth from single parent families, property offenders, and those who spent more than three years in the juvenile correctional system.

Another study analyzing factors related to recidivism was done in Britain and used a sample of 451 male offenders. It was found that various factors are associated to recidivism, including broken home, institutional placement, previous offenses, and frequent changes in residence (Buikhuisen & Hockstra, 1974).

In yet another study, Thomas (1977) examined the social and legal correlates of juvenile recidivism. Of 1702 juveniles who appeared in juvenile court in Virginia between 1970 and 1974 studied, 28.7% of those recidivated in that time period. Significant predictors of recidivism were school behavior and attendance, age at first court appearance, and type of offense. Variables that did not have significant association to recidivism were race, family situation and socio-economic status.

As can be seen from these research findings, results were varied,

No definitive statements nor conclusions can be made regarding causes or conditions associated with primary or secondary delinquency.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODS

#### Research Setting

The target area for this study was Kay County Oklahoma, primarily of rural composition, with a population of approximately 50,000. The largest city within this county, Ponca City, serves as the home office for both Court Related and Community Services and Kay County Youth Services. In fact, both agencies are housed together and both provide outreach services to the smaller communities. An explanation of the structure of these agencies, the referral process for juvenile offenders, and related facets of the juvenile justice system is necessary.

Court Related and Community Services (hereafter referred to as CRCS) a division of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, has statutory responsibility for juvenile felony intake and juvenile probation and parole supervision. Formal court intake is actually a process of preliminary inquiry, with the outcome being both a recommendation to the District Attorney as to case disposition and a proposed treatment plan.

The referral process to CRCS is as follows. Following the arrest of a juvenile as a result of an alleged felony offense, a decision is made regarding either detention of the child or release to parents. If detention occurs, the intake process begins the next working day. If the child is released to the parent, they are required to appear.



at the appointed time to begin the intake process. That process then involves a meeting to discuss the offense, consider options for disposition, and consider service needs. A recommendation is then sent to the District Attorney which could be one of several options - dismissal, diversion, deferred prosecution, formal court petition, or certification to adult status. Upon confirmation by the District Attorney, the service component begins. The District Attorney does have the prerogative of pursuing a disposition other than the one recommended.

Diversion or deferred prosecution generally involves counseling and supervision of the youth without court involvement either by CRCS or by Kay County Youth Services. A formal petition initiates the juvenile court process, a formal investigation of the child's alleged delinquent behaviors. Certification to adult status involves a hearing which determines that the child is not amenable to the juvenile justice system. Generally three factors are present: the youth's repeated involvement in serious felony offenses, a history of juvenile court involvement, and various treatment modalities offered over long periods of time.

Service components which are implemented for youth following case disposition may include youth and family counseling, group therapy, voluntary restitution to victims, recreational programs, and intensive supervision. These types of community services may be provided by CRCS, Kay County Youth Services, the local mental health facility, or by private practitioners. It should be noted that Kay County Youth Services provides not only counseling for youth up to age eighteen and their families, but also operates a temporary emer-

gency shelter facility for children.

In some cases, children are placed outside their community for treatment. This generally occurs as a result of delinquency, intense family problems, or serious emotional disturbances within the child. The type of placement can vary from a foster home setting to a highly structured psychiatric treatment facility. Determination of an appropriate placement is based upon consideration of the child's problems and actual treatment needs.

### Research Design

Information utilized in this study was gathered from individual case files on 144 children referred to the juvenile intake department in Kay County Oklahoma in 1980 due to their alleged involvement in felony offenses.

The first offense for which these children were referred in 1980 (some were referred more than once) serves as the point of reference for this study. Antecedent variables, including sex, age, race, family composition, educational status, employment status, past placement and past offenses were identified. Intervening variables including current offense or offenses, intake disposition, length and type of services within the community, formal court involvement, and present placement were identified. Finally, consequent variables were examined, which included whether or not new offenses occurred and information relative to that fact.

Basically, this study analyzed a time period from time of offense until two years elapsed, if that youth remained a juvenile (less than 18 years of age). It is important to note that many youths turned 18 within that two year time period, which in some cases, drastically

cut that follow-up time period. For example, youths turning 18 within six months of their first referral may have committed subsequent offenses, but it would not appear on this study as recidivism because of their adult status.

Also worthy of note is the fact that only data which could be gathered from every case file was included. For example, the type of services provided to a youth varied from no services to limited individual and family counseling to intensive family intervention. Along with this continuum were ancillary services such as restitution or recreational programs. Incomplete information within the case files made it necessary to code the variable types of services as either no services or individual and family counseling (which always occurred when any services were offered).

At this juncture, some points need to be made regarding the structure of this research design. First, the design does not follow the experimental model because of the absence of a control group. The present design is actually a panel study, as the measurements are taken from a specific population over an extended period of time. The design will allow for an examination of this specific population, behaviors and processes that occurred, and their consequences.

Possible limitations in the research design are as follows: (1) The findings may not generalize to other populations, such as those in major urban areas. (2) Many of the findings will have quantitative significance, but will not produce definitive results at the qualitative level. (3) The findings may have been influenced by conditions undergoing change during the research time period, such as maturational processes or policy changes within the system. (4) The design is

not intended to be purely evaluative of the treatment programs examined. (5) Comparisons of various units will likely produce correlations, but may not necessarily indicate causative relationships.

Procedures for Data Analysis. Specific stages were involved in the analysis of the data and certain statistical methods, described here, were utilized in each stage.

The first stage of the analysis was concerned with descriptive univariate statistics. Frequencies were computed for every variable obtained through the use of the recording instrument. Attributes of each variable, along with response percentages were recorded.

The second stage in the data analysis involved an examination of the relationships between certain variables present (conditions, characteristics, and processes) and recidivism. Chi-square and correlation coefficients were the principal statistical techniques employed in this aspect of the analysis. The use of correlation coefficients occurred only with nominal variables having but two attributes.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Table 1 represents the variables, attributes and response percentages used in the following analysis. All attributes of the given variables were recorded by means of an instrument designed for this purpose through a case-by-case examination process.

Of the sample, 84.7% were male, and 83.3% were Caucasian. There was a significant percentage of Indian (Native American) youth, 15.3%, while only 1.4% were Black. It is interesting to note that in Kay County, the approximate percentage of Native Americans is 5% of the population. The age range of the youth in the sample was from eight to seventeen, with the highest percentage (32.6%) in the seventeen year category.

Regarding family composition, 41.6% were residing with both biological parents, while the remainder lived with one natural parent only, one natural parent and a stepparent, a guardian, or in an independent living situation. In regard to educational status, 72.2% were attending school. Concerning employment status, 30.6% were employed on a part-time or full-time basis.

Past status offenses were recorded, in which the case files reflected that the child had been referred in the past for any of the following behaviors: truancy, runaway, or failure to obey reasonable and lawful commands of parent. In this sample, 86.1% had not committed past status offenses. In regard to past misdemeanor offenses, 84.0%

Table I

## VARIABLES, ATTRIBUTES AND RESPONSE PERCENTAGES

<u>VARIABLE</u>	<u>ATTRIBUTES</u>	<u>RESPONSE PERCENTAGES</u>
Sex	Male	84.7
	Female	15.3
Race	Caucasian	83.3
	Indian (Native American)	15.3
	Black	1.4
Family composition (child is living with)	both biological parents	41.6
	natural father only	5.5
	natural mother only	21.5
	natural mother and stepfather	16.0
	natural father and stepmother	7.0
	relative guardian	3.5
	non-relative guardian	1.4
	other	3.5
Age at time of referral	8	.7
	10	.7
	11	4.1
	12	4.9
	13	4.9
	14	13.9
	15	15.3
	16	22.9
	17	32.6
Youth's employment status	not employed	69.4
	employed	30.6
Youth's educational status	attending school	72.2
	not attending school	27.8
Number of past reported status offenses	0	86.1
	1	7.6
	2	4.9
	3	1.4

Table 1 (Continued)

Number of past reported misdemeanor offenses	0	84.0
	1	7.6
	2	5.6
	3	2.1
	5	0.7
Number of past reported felony offenses	0	68.0
	1	10.4
	2	7.6
	3	5.6
	4	3.5
	5	1.4
	6	1.4
	7	0.7
	9	1.4
Past offenses were	Status offenses only	8.3
	Crimes against property only	48.3
	Status offenses and crimes against property	16.7
	Crimes against <u>persons</u> and property	10.0
	Other	16.7
Number of months since last referral	1 to 6	42.4
	6 to 12	18.6
	more than 12	39.0
Current Offense	<u>Crimes against persons</u>	9.03
	Assault & battery (N=6)	
	Child molestation (N=1)	
	Assault on police officer (N=6)	
	<u>Crimes against property</u>	82.64
	Arson (N=6)	
	Burglary (N=50)	
	Grand larceny (N=20)	
	Destruction of property (N=1)	
	Petit larceny (N=1)	
	Forgery (N=9)	
	Receiving or possessing stolen property (N=5)	
	Unauthorized use of motor vehicle (N=13)	
	Burglary of an auto (N=8)	
	Larceny of lost property (N=1)	
	Accessory to bank robbery (N=1)	
	Embezzlement (N=3)	
Burglary of a vending machine (N=1)		

Table 1 (Continued)

	Obtaining money by deception (N=0)	
	Defrauding an innkeeper (N=0)	
	<u>Non-drug related traffic</u>	.69
	Any (N=1)	
	<u>Drug offenses</u>	4.17
	Unlawful possession or delivery (N=1)	
	Unlawful possession with intent to distribute (N=1)	
	Public drunk (N=1)	
	Attempting to pass forged prescription (N=1)	
	Inhaling volatile substance (N=1)	
	<u>Crimes Against Public Order</u>	3.47
	Reckless conduct with firearm (N=2)	
	Malicious mischief (N=1)	
	Parole violation (n=1)	
	Leaving scene of injury accident (N=1)	
	Unlawful use of explosives (N=0)	
Was there more than one current offense?	yes	20.8
	no	79.2
Intake disposition	dismissal	30.6
	diversion to youth services	22.9
	diversion to CRCS	19.4
	deferred decision to file	6.3
	deferred prosecution agreement	10.4
	formal juvenile petition filed	6.9
	certification to adult status	3.5
Number of months that services within the community were provided after present offense	0	40.27
	1 to 6	24.31
	6 to 12	23.61
	more than 12	11.81
Types of services provided	no services	39.6
	individual and family counseling	60.4



Table 1 (Continued)

---

Was there formal court involvement for the current offense?	yes	11.1
	no	88.9
Had child previously been placed outside the community for treatment as a result of delinquency, family problems or emotional disturbance?	yes	11.8
	no	88.2
Did present offense result in placement outside the community for treatment?	yes	10.4
	no	89.6
If placement outside the community ever occurred, the number of months that child was in residence?	1 to 6	28.57
	6 to 12	17.86
	more than 12	53.57
Did new offense occur within two years of referral (while still a juvenile)?	yes	36.1
	no	63.9

---

had not been involved in this category. Concerning past felony offenses, 68.0% had committed none, while the remainder had had past felonies ranging from one to nine. Most of the past offenses in all three categories involved property offenses.

In regard to the current offense, 82.64% were for crimes against property. Most of these offenses were either Burglary, Grand Larceny or Unauthorized Use of a Motor Vehicle. Many of the youths (20.8%) committed more than one current offense.

Regarding intake disposition, 30.6% were recommended to be dismissed, 22.9% were recommended to be diverted to youth services, 19.4% diverted back to CRCS, 6.3% recommended for a deferred decision to file, 10.4% a deferred prosecution agreement, 6.9% recommended for a juvenile petition, and 3.5% certified to adult status.

In regard to services within the community, 60.4% received individual and family counseling, while the remainder received services only through the initial intake process. As far as length of services, 24.31% received services for a period of 1 - 6 months, 23.61% 6 - 12 months, and 11.81% for more than 12 months. Of the sample, 11.1% went through a formal court process.

In regard to the child's placement outside the community, 11.8% had previously been placed, while 10.4% were placed as a result of the current offense. If placement ever occurred, the time span ranged from one month to fifty-two months.

Regarding recidivist behavior, 36.1% were referred within two years for a new offense.

The next process in the analysis of the data examined the relationships between many of the variables associated with conditions, charac-

teristics, or processes, and recidivism. Table II represents the incidence of recidivism (the commission of subsequent offenses) by these variables.

In regard to race, for this part of the analysis race was coded as either Caucasian or Indian, due to the fact that only 1.4% of the sample population was Black. For the Caucasian youth, 32.5% committed new offenses, while 54.5% of the Indian youth committed new offenses.

Regarding family composition, this variable was coded as either living with both biological parents or not living with both biological parents. Of those living with both biological parents, 30.0% recidivated, while in the other category 40.48% recidivated.

In regard to recidivism by age, there is an increase in recidivism rates up until age 16 (0.0% for ages 8 and 10, 16.67% for age 11, 14.29% for age 12, 42.86% for 13, 55.0% for 14, 59.09% for 15, 36.36% for age 16, and 23.40% for age 17).

Concerning recidivism by employment status, 25.0% of those employed recidivated, while 41.0% of those not employed recidivated. For educational status, 32.69% of those attending school recidivated, while 45.0% of those not attending school recidivated.

The incidence of recidivism according to past offenses are presented for past status, misdemeanor and felony offenses. Of those who had no past status offenses, 33.06% recidivated, while 55.0% of those who had one or more past status offenses recidivated. Of those who had no past misdemeanors, 32.23% recidivated, while those with one or more had a recidivism rate of 56.52%. Of those with no past felony offenses, 24.49% recidivated, while 60.87% of those with one or more past felonies recidivated. Thus, youths with past offenses of any type

Table II

## RECIDIVISM BY VARIOUS DESCRIPTIVE VARIABLES

Descriptive Variables	Recidivism	
	New Offense Committed	No New Offense Committed
<u>Race</u>		
Caucasian	32.5 (39)*	67.5 (81)
Indian	54.5 (12)	45.5 (10)
	df=1 $\chi^2=3.926$	p=.0475 r=0.16627
<u>Family Composition</u>		
Living w/both biological parents	30.0 (18)	70.0 (42)
Not living w/both biological parents	40.48 (34)	59.52 (50)
	df=1 $\chi^2=1.665$	p=.1969 r=.10753
<u>Age</u>		
8	0.0 (0)	100.00 (1)
10	0.0 (0)	100.00 (1)
11	16.67 (1)	83.33 (5)
12	14.29 (1)	85.71 (6)
13	42.86 (3)	57.14 (4)
14	55.00 (11)	45.00 (9)
15	59.09 (13)	40.91 (9)
16	36.36 (12)	63.64 (21)
17	23.40 (11)	76.60 (36)
	df=8 $\chi^2=15.116$	p=0.0569
<u>Employment Status</u>		
Employed	25.0 (11)	75.0 (33)
Not employed	41.0 (41)	59.0 (59)
	df=1 $\chi^2=3.391$	p=0.0656 r=0.16344
<u>Educational Status</u>		
Attending school	32.69 (34)	67.31 (70)
Not attending school	45.00 (18)	55.00 (22)
	df=1 $\chi^2=1.897$	p=0.1684 r=0.11477

\* Percentages with N's in parentheses.

Table II (Continued)

<u>Past Status Offenses</u>			
0	33.06 (41)	66.94 (83)	
1 or more	55.00 (11)	45.00 (9)	
	df=1	$\chi^2=3.592$	p=0.0581 r=0.15793
<u>Past Misdemeanor Offenses</u>			
0	32.23 (39)	67.77 (82)	
1 or more	56.52 (13)	43.48 (10)	
	df=1	$\chi^2=4.943$	p=0.0262 r=0.18527
<u>Past Felony Offenses</u>			
0	24.49 (24)	75.51 (74)	
1 or more	60.87 (28)	39.13 (18)	
	df=1	$\chi^2=17.959$	p=0.0001 r=0.35315
<u>Previous Placement</u>			
Yes	70.59 (12)	29.41 (5)	
No	31.50 (40)	68.50 (87)	
	df=1	$\chi^2=9.931$	p=0.0016 r=0.26262
<u>Current Offenses</u>			
Persons	46.15 (6)	53.85 (7)	
Property	35.29 (42)	64.71 (77)	
Public Order	20.00 (1)	80.00 (4)	
Drug Related	33.33 (2)	66.67 (4)	
Non-drug Traffic	100.00 (1)	0.00 (0)	
	df=4	$\chi^2=2.955$	p=0.5655
<u>Multiple Offense</u> (more than one)			
Yes	53.33 (16)	46.67 (14)	
No	31.58 (36)	68.42 (78)	
	df=1	$\chi^2=4.872$	p=0.0273 r=0.18393
<u>Intake Disposition</u>			
Dismiss	15.91 (7)	84.09 (37)	
Divert	40.98 (25)	59.02 (36)	
Deferred	41.67 (10)	58.33 (14)	
Petition	90.00 (9)	10.00 (1)	
Certification	20.00 (1)	80.00 (4)	
	df=4	$\chi^2=21.882$	p=0.0002

Table 11 (Continued)

Services Provided

Yes	43.68 (38)	56.32 (49)
No	24.56 (14)	75.44 (43)

df=1  $\chi^2=5.455$   $p=0.0195$   $r=-0.19463$

Number of Months of Services

0	24.14 (14)	75.86 (44)
1 - 6	28.57 (10)	71.43 (25)
7 - 12	35.29 (12)	64.71 (22)
12	94.12 (16)	5.88 (1)

df=3  $\chi^2=29.270$   $p=0.0001$

Formal Court Involvement

Yes	62.50 (10)	37.50 (6)
No	32.81 (42)	67.19 (86)

df=1  $\chi^2=5.433$   $p=0.0198$   $r=0.19424$

Present Offense Resulting in Placement

Yes	66.67 (10)	33.33 (5)
No	32.56 (42)	67.44 (87)

df=1  $\chi^2=6.776$   $p=0.0092$   $r=0.21692$

had recidivism rates of between 55% and 61%. This represents a significant association.

Concerning the relationship between previous placement and recidivism, 70.59% of those who had previously been placed recidivated, while 31.50% who had not previously been placed recidivated.

The table presents the rate of recidivism according to a breakdown of current offenses. Current offenses were categorized and coded as crimes against persons, crimes against property, crimes against the public order, drug-related offenses, and non-drug related traffic offenses. Actually, only two of these categories are really valid for consideration, because three categories, public order, drug offenses, and traffic offenses had very small numbers. Of those committing crimes against persons, 46.15% recidivated. Of those committing crimes against property, 35.29% recidivated.

Concerning recidivism by multiple offenses, 53.33% of those who had more than one current offense recidivated, while 31.58% of those who did not have multiple offenses recidivated.

The table presents recidivism according to intake disposition, with this variable coded as either dismissal, diversion, deferred, petition, or certification. Of those dismissed, 15.91% recidivated. Of those diverted, 40.98% recidivated. Of those deferred, 41.67% recidivated. Of those in which a petition was filed, 90.00% recidivated, which is a significant finding. Of those certified, 20.00% recidivated.

In regard to recidivism by services provided within the community, 43.68% of those who did receive services recidivated, while 24.56% of those who did not receive services recidivated.

Regarding recidivism according to length of community services,

as the time of services increased, the recidivism rate increased. For youths receiving services from 1 - 6 months, the recidivism rate was 28.57%. For 7 - 12 months, the recidivism rate was 35.29%, while the rate for those receiving services over 12 months was 94.12%. The latter finding represents a significant association.

The table presents recidivism by formal court involvement. Of those youth who went through the formal court process, 62.50% recidivated, while those who did not had a rate of 32.81%. Of those who were placed as a result of the present offense, 66.67% recidivated, while those who were not placed had a rate of 32.56%. Both of these findings indicate a significant association.



## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

In consideration of the preceding section on analysis of the data, the following summary is presented. First, the majority of youth are not living with both biological parents. Most were referred at ages 14 through 17. Most were attending school, but not employed. Most did not have previous offenses on record. An extremely high percentage committed crimes against property.

Next, in regard to intake disposition and services provided, there was a fairly even distribution within each variable. Most children were not placed outside the community, but did receive services within the community. The overall recidivism rate was 36.1%.

In regard to conditions associated with recidivism, the following variables showed a strong relationship: past felony offenses, previous placement, number of months of services within the community, formal court involvement, and present placement. The following variables showed a moderate association with recidivism: race, age, past status and misdemeanor offenses, multiple offenses, intake disposition, and services provided in the community. Certain variables appeared to have no significant association with recidivism. These included family composition, employment status, educational status, current offense.

The following discussion will focus on an interpretation of these results and their implications.

Most of the youth who were referred to Kay County CRCS in 1980

for alleged felony involvement committed property offenses (82.64%). In fact, most of the youths committed either a Burglary or a Grand Larceny. One could legitimately speculate that a youth's motive for involvement in these types of offenses was associated with a desire for material gain. It is certainly possible that these youth had a desire to obtain some type of goods, had little or no legitimate access to these goods, and thus turned to illegitimate means to obtain them. However, if this theory were true, one would expect to find a relationship between youth's unemployment status and recidivism. The present findings do not seem to reflect such a relationship.

A number of considerations come to mind in terms of formulating ways to reduce property offenses. The first relates to what the community can do to increase youth's legitimate access to material goods. Many (or most) youth, when they reach an age of 14 or 15, wish to become employed in some capacity, but are not able to fulfill that desire. Many youth do wish to become part of the working force and are capable of performing services at a high level of productivity. Gaining legitimate access to material goods and services through gainful employment may tend to reduce attempts at illegitimate methods.

A second consideration focuses upon what the individuals can do to not become a victim. In reading through a number of police reports contained within the case files examined for this study, it became apparent that some steps could have been taken by the victim which would not have allowed the offense to occur (i.e. security measures).

A further consideration focuses on restitution by the offender to the victim when property damage is done, a concept utilized in Kay County with juvenile offenders. The philosophy behind such a program

is a sound one, from the standpoint of the offender taking responsibility for his or her actions and the victims gaining compensation. However, the program appears to have an inherent flaw. The youth who commits an offense in which a victim suffers a loss probably does not have access to a legitimate means to repay the victim. Again we become faced with the dilemma of legitimate access.

Of primary importance in this study are the relationships between the variables associated with conditions, characteristics, or processes, and recidivism. Each will be examined in detail.

As stated earlier in the chapter on the review of literature, much research has shown a relationship between family structure and processes and delinquency (Monahan, 1957; Peterson and Becker, 1965; Chilton and Markle, 1972). The present study did show that only 41% of the youth referred lived with both biological parents, but did not find a significant association between family composition and recidivism. It could be argued that for those youth not living with both biological parents, some factors associated with their family disruption may have contributed in some way to their delinquent involvement. More research is needed to examine this area.

In regard to race and recidivism, this study does seem to reflect some degree of difference between Caucasian and Indian youth in terms of recidivism. However, these findings may not be significant due to the low number of Indian youth (22) referred during 1980.

The present findings in regard to recidivism by age are of some value. For those children age 8 through 12 who were referred in 1980, their recidivism rate was low. Only two children out of 15 in this age category recidivated in the two-year follow-up period. For those child-

ren referred at age 13, their rate of recidivism jumped to 42.86%. For 14 year olds, the recidivism rate was 55.0%, while the rate for 15 year olds was 59.09%. Children aged sixteen and seventeen did not have high recidivism rates. It should be noted that many of these youths did recidivate, but their offenses occurred after they reached legal age of 18. This study did not reflect these subsequent offenses. Analysis of these variables gives one clear indication that the 13 - 15 age category is a high risk population for further delinquency involvement. It may be speculated that when a youth reaches a certain age (possibly 16), he or she reaches a maturational level in which certain behaviors are eliminated, including delinquency. The youth may simply "outgrow" these socially unacceptable behaviors.

The findings in regard to recidivism by employment status do not appear to be significant. The difference in the percentage of recidivism between youth employed or not employed was 16.0%. The findings were not statistically significant.

In regard to recidivism by educational status, the findings in this study go contrary to previous research alluding to a relationship between delinquency and school non-attendance (Fleisher, 1966; Kvaraceus, 1945; Schafer and Polk, 1967). Expectations of finding a high recidivism rate for those youth not attending school were simply not realized.

Through this study, there was found to be relationships between past offenses and recidivism, especially past felony offenses. This is consistent with much previous research. These children who had committed past offenses appeared to have some level of attachment to delinquent behavior patterns for which societal intervention was unable

to break. From this, we can conclude that past offenses are a good predictor of further involvement in delinquency. Most would contend that serious intervention with these youth would be essential in trying to eliminate these behaviors. In fact, it could be further stated that the most intensive services should be directed toward those youth who have characteristics that put them at risk of further involvement, including a previous placement outside the community, juvenile court involvement, and multiple offenses.

The concept of providing services to youthful offenders within their own community as opposed to placing children in treatment facilities outside the community has emerged as the primary treatment modality within the juvenile justice system. Community treatment of offenders is seen as a more rational deterrent, more therapeutic and more cost effective than placement. This research examines to some degree both aspects.

In regard to placement outside the community, the following results were obtained. For those children who had experienced a placement outside the community prior to the current offense, their recidivism rate was 70.59%. Those children, who were placed in treatment facilities as a result of delinquency, family problems, or emotional disturbances, returned to the community, committed some type of offense, then recidivated at a later time. It could certainly be argued that, for these children, their placement resulted in less-than-successful outcomes.

In regard to those children placed outside the community as a direct result of their present offense, their rate of recidivism was 66.67%. It should be noted that some of these youths committed subsequent offenses while in residence at a treatment facility. As with

those youths previously placed, this category produced high rates of recidivism.

The placement process for youth in trouble has come under scrutiny in recent years. Actual outcomes with these children have often been contrary to the desired results. A number of factors may contribute to these undesirable results. First, there is likely to be a significant amount of trauma for the child leaving both home and community, and long-term negative effects may result. The manifestation of these negative effects may take the form of delinquent behaviors. Second, treatment modalities within the facilities may need improvement. Finally, the child who experiences a placement often comes from a negative home environment, and upon discharge, returns to that same environment. Any positive emotional and behavioral changes may quickly be extinguished within that negative environment.

We now turn our attention to community services. The data indicated that youth who received community services had a 43.68% recidivism rate. It is important to note that all youths referred went through the intake process. If no subsequent services were provided, then the youth was coded into the "No" category. Of interest here is the fact that those who received services had the higher recidivism rate. In addition, through analysis of recidivism by number of months of services in the community, it was found that those youth with the longest period of services (more than 12 months) had the highest recidivism rate (94.12%). A probable explanation of these findings is that certain youths were seen as more at risk than others of committing further offenses, thus necessitating services, often long-term. Quite possibly, the services offered were unable to counteract negative

environmental influences, or eliminate internal disturbances. The highest quality and quantity of services cannot always produce successful outcomes. This explanation could also apply to those youth going through the placement process.

Generally, reasons for long-term agency involvement have to do with continued inappropriate behavior by the child and/or continued family dysfunction. Thus, the long-term involvement by the service agency has adequate justification. However, because of the high incidence of unsuccessful outcomes, it may be that these long-term interventions may require a different type of approach. For example, short-term, intensive family treatment may be more productive.

The data concerning recidivism by current offense produced no significant results, primarily because most of the offenses were in the property category. However, recidivism by multiple offenses showed a degree of association. For those youth who committed more than one current offense, their recidivism rate was 53.33%. Multiple offenses may mean a stronger commitment to delinquent behavioral patterns.

In regard to recidivism according to intake disposition, several items are of interest, the most significant of which is the fact that 90% of those youths who were recommended to be processed through the juvenile court system recidivated. Recidivism rates for those diverted or deferred stand at approximately 41%, and for those dismissed, 15.91% recidivated. Regarding recidivism by formal court involvement for the current offense, a slight discrepancy here requires explanation. The table which presents recidivism according to intake disposition shows that ten youth were recommended for the filing of a petition. However the data further shows that sixteen youth went through a formal court

process as a result of their involvement in the current offense. An explanation would be that the District Attorney elected to prosecute even though it might not have been recommended following intake. At any rate, there seems to be an association between formal court involvement and recidivism, as shown by the table. Some factors associated with the court process may be influential in whether or not recidivism occurs. For example, the negative stigmatization of those youth going through the court process may be a legitimate concern. If indeed negative factors are present in the juvenile court process, they need to be identified and dealt with.

The other side of the coin regarding the juvenile court process would be that the association between court involvement and recidivism is a spurious one. Certain underlying factors need to be considered. It is likely that only the most "hard-core" delinquents go through this process, those enmeshed in deviant behavior patterns. The impact of the court may not be sufficient to alter these patterns.



## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS

Some of the findings in the present research go contrary to previous research, while some compare favorably to past findings. The present findings give rise to a number of considerations relevant to the field of juvenile delinquency.

The present research may indicate that long-term community services do more harm than good. It is highly doubtful that long-term services do any harm whatsoever, unless they are clearly substandard and in violation of accepted therapeutic interventions. Within the present research setting, it could not be plausibly argued that the quality of services provided were anything less than exemplary.

Of course, new and innovative approaches to community services to youthful offenders need to be tried. It is possible that the high-risk, youthful offender population might better be served through intensive, short-term community services. Presently in Kay County, an intensive caseworker maintains daily contact with youth and families who are within the high-risk category. In the long run, these types of approaches may produce very positive results.

The present research appears to call into question the juvenile court process. The high recidivism rates for those youth involved in this process may be the result of many different variables. It would be improper to place the blame solely on the process itself. Further research is needed to more critically examine those youth involved

in juvenile court. At the same time, it may be that more research will point to the need for a more efficient and productive utilization of the juvenile court process.

This research gave indication of a relationship between out-of-community placement and recidivism. The entire placement process needs close examination to reach a better understanding of both the successful and unsuccessful outcomes. One aspect of the placement of children which seems to have much validity is that the family needs to be included in the actual treatment process.

Contrary to a great deal of previous research, little association was found between family composition and recidivism. A possible explanation of this finding would be that the quality of the family system was of greater importance than the actual composition. Single or step-parent families can be of high quality in terms of relationships, communication patterns, and overall functioning. The reverse can also be true. Families composed of children living with both biological parents may be replete with problems.

Though the present findings showed no relationship between educational status and recidivism, the former variable may be of great importance. Of this population, nearly 28% were not attending school, which may be problematic in itself. These children may not recidivate at a higher rate than children attending school, but may present social problems on a different level, including future unemployment. Consideration should be given to programs directed toward those not in attendance in the traditional classroom, such as alternative education or day treatment.

Utilizing the present research as a foundation, certain additional

directions within the juvenile justice system are worthy of consideration. (1) The creation of more opportunities for youth to learn effective ways of seeking and maintaining employment. (2) The creation of placement facilities for youthful offenders outside their home but within their community. (3) Consideration of expansion and improvement of voluntary restitution programs. (4) Consideration of the expansion of delinquency prevention programs so that societal intervention with delinquent children might not even have to occur.

Finally, in order for definitive conclusions to be made regarding conditions associated with recidivism, many more youthful offenders will need to be studied. It is hoped the findings presented here will encourage further research.

#### SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abrahamson, David. The Psychology of Crime. New York: Columbia University Press, 1960.
- Alexander, J. F. and B. V. Parsons. "Short-term behavioral intervention with delinquent families: impact on family process and recidivism." in Effective Correctional Treatment, Robert B. Ross and Paul Gendreau (Eds.). Toronto: Butterworths, 1980.
- Bowlby, John. Maternal Care and Mental Health. Geneva: World Health Organization, 1951.
- Buikhuisen, W. and H. A. Hoekstra. "Factors Related to Recidivism." British Journal of Criminology, Vol. 14, No. 1, January, 1974.
- Center for Economic and Management Research. Statistical Abstract of Oklahoma - 1982. College of Business Administration, University of Oklahoma, 1982.
- Chilton, Roland J. and Gerald E. Markle. "Family Disruption, Delinquent Conduct and the Effect of Subclassification." American Sociological Review, (37) February, 1972.
- Colligwood, T. R. , A. Douds, H. Williams. "Juvenile Diversion: The Dallas Police Department Youth Services Program." Federal Probation, 40(3), 1976.
- Fleisher, Belton M. The Economics of Delinquency. Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966.
- Glueck, Sheldon and Eleanor T. Glueck. Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency. New York: Commonwealth Fund, 1950.
- Grogan, Hiram and Ruth Grogan. "The Criminogenic Family: Does Chronic Tension Trigger Delinquency?" Crime and Delinquency (14) July, 1968.
- Haskell, Martin R. and Lewis Yablonsky. Juvenile Delinquency. Chicago: Rand McNally College Publishing Company, 1974.
- Klein, Malcom. "Labeling, deterrence, and recidivism: a study of police dispositions of juvenile offenders," Social Problems. Notre Dame, Indiana, 22(2), 1974.
- Kvaraceus, William. Juvenile Delinquency and the School. Yonkers, New York., World Book Company, 1945.

- Lipton, Douglas. Robert Martinson, Judith Wilks. The Effectiveness of Correctional Treatment: A Survey of Treatment Evaluation Studies. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975
- Lundman, R. J. "Will diversion reduce recidivism?" Crime and Delinquency, (22) 1976.
- Lundman, R. J., P. T. McFarland and F. R. Scarpitti "Delinquency prevention: A description and assessment of project reported in the professional literature." Crime and Delinquency, 1976.
- Merrill, Maude A. Problems of Child Delinquency. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974.
- Monahan, Thomas P. "Family Status and the Delinquent Child: A Reappraisal and Some New Findings." Social Forces, (35) March 1957.
- Nye, F. Ivan. Family Relationships and Delinquent Behavior. New York: Wiley, 1958.
- Peterson, Donald R. and Wesley C. Becker. "Family Interaction in Delinquency:" in Juvenile Delinquency: Research and Theory. Ed. Herbert C. Quay. Princeton, N.J.: Van Nostrand, 1965.
- Quay, H. C. and C. T. Love. "The effect of a juvenile diversion program on rearrests." Criminal Justice and Behavior, (4), 1977.
- Scanlon, John R. and Larry Webb. "Juvenile offenders who become adult criminals." Criminal Justice Review. Atlanta, Georgia, 6(1), 1981.
- Schafer, W. E. and Kenneth Polk. "Delinquency and the Schools" in Task Force Report: Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime. Washington, D. C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967.
- Shaw, Clifford R. and Henry D. McKay. "Are broken homes a causative factor in juvenile delinquency?" Social Forces (10) May 1932.
- Shaw, Clifford R. and Henry D. McKay. Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942.
- Slocum, Walter and Carol L. Stone. "Family Culture Patterns and Delinquent-Type Behavior." Marriage and Family Living. (25) 1963.
- Thomas, Charles W. "Who will return? Social and legal correlates of juvenile recidivism." in Youth Crime and Juvenile Justice: International Perspectives. Praeger, New York, 1977.
- Thornton, William E. Jr., Jennifer James, William G. Doerner. Delinquency and Justice. Glenview, Illinois, 1982.
- Virkkunen, Matti. "Parental deprivation and recidivism in juvenile delinquents." British Journal of Criminology. London, 1976.

Wade, T. C., T. L. Morton, J. E. Lind, N. B. Ferris. "A family crisis intervention approach to diversion from the juvenile justice system." Juvenile Justice Journal, 28(3), 1977.

VITA

Candidate for the Degree of  
Master of Science

Thesis: JUVENILE FELONY OFFENDERS: CHARACTERISTICS, SERVICES RENDERED,  
AND RECIDIVISM

Major Field: Corrections

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Emporia, Kansas, November, 12, 1951, the son of Lee and Eileen Sumner.

Education: Graduated from Emporia High School, Emporia, Kansas, in May, 1969; received Bachelor of Science Degree in Sociology from Emporia State University in August, 1976; completed requirements for the Master of Science degree at Oklahoma State University in May, 1984.

Professional Experience: Assistant Director of Lyon County Youth Center, Emporia, Kansas, from April, 1976 to May, 1978; Assistant Director of Kay County Youth Services, Ponca City, Oklahoma, from April, 1979 to present; Member of the American Association for Counseling and Development, 1980 to present.