Pathways to Desistance Study: Implications for Intervention and Policy

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Project Background
Supported by

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- John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
- National Institute on Drug Abuse
- Pennsylvania Commission on Crime & Delinquency
- Arizona Governor’s Justice Commission
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- William Penn Foundation
- William T. Grant Foundation
Working Group Members

- Edward Mulvey
- Laurence Steinberg
- Elizabeth Cauffman
- Laurie Chassin
- George Knight
- Carol Schubert
- Sandra Losoya
- Robert Brame
- Jeffrey Fagan
- Alex Piquero
Burglary age-arrest curves
Arrests/100,000

Age
Reasons for the study

- Richer information about serious adolescent offenders
- Picture of the desistance process
  - Individual maturation
  - Life changes
  - Systems involvement
- Improved practice and policy in juvenile justice
  - Risk assessment
  - Targeted interventions and sanctions
Study design

- Two sites: Philadelphia and Phoenix
- Enroll serious adolescent offenders
  - 1,354 felony offenders, aged 14 -18
  - Females and adult transfer cases
- Regular interviews over seven years
  - Initial interviews
  - Time point interviews (background characteristics, psychological mediators, family context, relationships, community context, life changes)
- Other sources of information
  - Collateral interviews
  - Official records
## Living situation calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Month 1</th>
<th>Month 2</th>
<th>Month 3</th>
<th>Month 4</th>
<th>Month 5</th>
<th>Month 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject 1</strong></td>
<td>900 West Huntington St Gabe’s Hall</td>
<td>900 West Huntington St Gabe’s Hall</td>
<td>900 West Huntington St Gabe’s Hall</td>
<td>Vision Quest</td>
<td>Youth Forestry Camp</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Subject 2</strong></td>
<td>2429 W. Augusta Madison Street Jail</td>
<td>1808 S. Wilmot</td>
<td>1808 S. Wilmot</td>
<td>1808 S. Wilmot</td>
<td>Tucson Prison</td>
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<td><strong>Subject 3</strong></td>
<td>5050 Master 4th and Norris</td>
<td>4th and Norris</td>
<td>4th and Norris</td>
<td>4th and Norris</td>
<td>House of Corrections</td>
<td>House of Corrections</td>
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Who are these adolescents?

- At Enrollment
  - 16 years old on average
  - 86% male
  - Average of two prior court appearances
    - 32% had no prior petitions to court
    - Majority of priors were for a person crime
- Ethnically diverse

![Pie chart showing ethnic distribution]

- Caucasian
- African American
- Latino
- Other
Patterns of Offending

- **Finding:** Adolescents who have committed serious offenses are not necessarily on track for adult criminal careers. Even among serious adolescent offenders,
  - there is considerable variability
  - the pattern is reduced offending

- **Implications:** To increase the impact of investments in justice interventions, it is important to promote decision frameworks or statutes that:
  - consider cumulative risk and addressable needs
  - target services to the highest risk offenders
Self-reported offending

7 year follow-up period – only males – controlling for time on street

High stable 10%

Drop-off 21%

Lowest 26%

Low rising 12%

Low stable 31%
Mean rate of re-arrests in each wave

Number of arrests per days in the community. Ex: 1 arrest in 121 days in community = .008, 1 arrest in 65 days in the community = .015, 3 arrests in 183 days in community = .016
Severity ranking for arrests across time (within month)

1 = status offense, 2 = misdemeanor, 3 = possession of narcotics (excluding glue and marijuana), 4 = felony, not part 1, 5 = major property felonies, 6 = burglary, 7 = drug felony, 2\textsuperscript{nd} degree sex offense, 8 = felonious assault, felony w/ weapon, 9 = murder, rape, arson
Institutional Placements/Experiences

- **Finding(s):** Institutional placements and longer stays do not necessarily reduce juvenile reoffending and may increase recidivism for certain youth.

- **Context:**
  - There are about 40% fewer adolescents in institutional care than there were about six years ago
  - The system will still rely on institutional care
  - Keeping adolescents longer may not increase success
  - The quality of these environments relates to later community adjustment
  - Re-entry is a key challenge

- **Implications:** It is possible to reduce the rate and duration of institutional placements for certain offenders and increase the level of community-based services while protecting public safety.
Effect of placement on re-arrest

Comparing placement and probation without controls

Treatment effect of placement after propensity score matching on 66 baseline variables

Finding: Overall, no effect of placement on rate of re-arrest (if anything, it may increase re-arrest).
Effect of length of stay on re-arrest
3 month intervals as doses

Expected Rate of Re-Arrest, by 3 mo. Dose Category

Finding: For intermediate lengths of stay (i.e., 3-13 months), there appears to be no marginal benefit in terms of re-arrest for longer lengths of stay.
Institutional placements over 84 months

Subject 691

- Adult Setting
- Juvenile Setting
- Treatment Facility
- Community

Age 15
Access to Appropriate Services

- **Finding(s):** Community-based services can reduce reoffending and improve other outcomes, but...
  - many with identifiable problems (e.g., substance abuse problems) linked to their offending do not receive services

- **Implications:** Increase the provision of services (mental health, substance abuse, etc.) to adolescent offenders in both institutions and in the community, ensuring that the services are of adequate intensity and that they involve family members.
Are these adolescents getting substance use services?

Looking at those adolescents with a diagnosed substance use problem*

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Adult Setting</th>
<th>Juvenile Setting</th>
<th>Community</th>
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<tr>
<td>% with service</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average intensity of sessions</td>
<td>1 every 13 days</td>
<td>1 every 3 days</td>
<td>1 every 47 days</td>
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* Diagnosed at baseline as present in the past year
Significant progress has been made in risk/needs assessment

✓ Systematic approaches have reliability and validity

✓ Low risk adolescents can be diverted more effectively

✓ Issues:
  - Possible race/ethnicity biases
  - Integration into court practice to increase accountability of service providers
Current Challenges for Juvenile Justice Systems

✓ Promoting effective alternative community services
  ▪ Less institutional care is not the end goal
  ▪ Positive outcomes are not inevitable
  ▪ Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs) are not a panacea

✓ Getting the money to move from institutional care budgets to community-based services budgets

✓ Family engagement
  ▪ Most consistent caregiver
  ▪ Lack of clarity about what family engagement means
Current Challenges for Juvenile Justice Systems

✓ Integrating services in the community focused on re-entry
  ▪ Who is responsible?
  ▪ How does it get done?

✓ Measuring and responding to changes in risk status
  ▪ who to monitor
  ▪ how often to monitor
  ▪ what to monitor

✓ Moving from “evidence-based practices” to principles of effective interventions
  ▪ Data, data, data
Contact Information

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