

Good critical thinking about community- based approaches to solve juvenile crime a...

[Law](#), [Criminal Justice](#)



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The Problem

The last two decades left the United States of America's detention centers flooded with juvenile offenders. The rate at which juveniles get themselves in detention facilities for rehabilitation is at its peak demanding attention from the justice system of the country. Statistics show that the young people are perpetrators of violent crimes inclusive of murder, rape, armed robbery and several other crimes more than ever before. Further studies accentuate that the greater percentage of inmates in jails currently throughout the US comprises inmates in the age bracket of 17 and 21 years. What is more disturbing is the fact that once these convicts are released from rehabilitation centers, they head right back into crime: recidivism. Unfortunately, they are incarcerated and rehabilitated but once again they end up committing crime once released.

The Factor Bearing on the Problem:

Juvenile crime is at the top of the charts of crime in the US in the previous two decades. Most states have reformation procedures for this type of crime though the rates remain undeterred. The reasons best explained is through recidivism that has been a problem that has been walking hand in hand with juvenile crime in the recent past. Studies have shown that in 1996, the youth was involved in most of the crime that occurred in that time. The Bureau of Justice Statistics had a study conducted on recidivism by releasing over 400,000 convicts in all the states of the country. The findings were that 67.5

percent of the released convicts were arrested in a span of three years (Tabita et al, 2012).

The high rate of juvenile crime and recidivism in the country can be attributed to many factors.

- However, one among them is unemployment among these factors is unemployment among the youth juveniles. The cause of unemployment is the fact that these convicts get into crime at a young age which means they waste away their education period. Once out of jail, they are uneducated implying that they are highly unlikely to get a job anywhere resulting in them recommitting crime to feed them.
- Another is the twisted mentality of societies which feels that convicts are ineligible for employment. People always feel that convicts are a bad influence and a source of trouble. Thus, they deny them employment denying them a source of livelihood.
- Poor rehabilitation facilities: it is a belief of our justice system that anyone can change for the better of himself and those around him. However, the facilities in the country concerned with rehabilitation are insufficient thus when convicts leave the prisons and back into society, some are still the same or probably worse resulting in re-offence and re-incarceration of these individuals.
- Prison sentencing in the country can also be considered as a factor that has led to higher recidivism rates. The country needs to find better ways of dealing with convicts rather than locking them up in prisons. In the prisons, they toughen up and become better in committing crimes. Thus, the

probability that they will fail to fit in the society and end up recommitting crime when set free are high (Tabita et al, 2012).

The Discussion

The US attorney general in 2013 announced the intentions of Obama's government to reduce population in the prisons of the country. Incarceration has sky-rocketed reaching peak drastically in 2009 with a total of 1, 615, 487 Americans lived behind prison bars. Juvenile arrests demonstrate rather adverse effects on the education of the youths in the country as well as other outcomes in the country. The rate of re-offending youth, as a recent study accentuated is greatly relative to the treatment and punishment youths are accorded in the prisons. The study further brought to light the fact that in-home probation works in close association with a lower risk of recidivism when it comes to first-time juvenile offenders. In comparison to the youths who were placed in a more secure environment. Such a finding is integral because it enables us identify much more efficient and effective means of interrupting crime and careers in the criminal ' docket.' A further advantage of this discovery is the fact that the methods of rehabilitation discovered will enable preservation of social bonds to school, peers and family (Weisburd et al, 2009).

Of the thousands of inmates that are arrested and housed in the jail, it is certain that the majority of these inmate's range between 17-21 years of age. Furthermore, many of these young adults, once released, will more than likely re-offend or violate probation and return to a correctional facility for a second or third time. It appears to be an ongoing issue. This issue, however,

extends far and beyond the Georgia; it is an issue that many states are trying to combat. As a response, a significant number of states, including Georgia, have implemented policies that aim to tackle the underlying issues of juvenile delinquency. There are three main approaches taken in solving a juvenile crime and recidivism. These include punitive, rehabilitative, and preventative strategies.

On is February 27th, 2013, in Atlanta, GA, a 19-year-old “ mobster” decides that he is tired of being a gang member and wants to get out of the lifestyle. He tells his co-associates “ hey, look, I want to go straight, be law-abiding”. As expected, he does not get the response that he wants. The other gang members aren’t happy with his decision. In fact, the gang members draw their weapons and the 17-year-old is shot fifteen times and left for dead. The gang’s motto is “ You’re in it until you die”. Astonishingly, in this case, the 19-year-old victim Orentheal Childs survived the fifteen shots. However, the perpetrators, a 16-year-old and 17-year-old Farrakmad Muhammad Price, though alive, face a life full of turmoil. Farrakmad Muhammad is one of the leading members of the Young Mob, which is a subset or affiliate of the “ Goodfellas” street gang, which today is a thriving gang within metropolitan Atlanta. The youth was arrested in Tennessee by the U. S. Marshalls and transferred to the Atlanta Police Department. The 17-year-old youth was considered an adult in the state of Georgia and was subsequently housed in an adult facility (Svenson and Ring, 2007).

Muhammad’s story is only one of many stories of youth delinquency that is prevalent in metropolitan Atlanta county jails. In Cobb County Jail, the most vicious inmates are housed in four South and five South towers. The bulk of

these inmates housed in this jail is similar to inmate Muhammad; black, gang members, and seventeen.

In the U. S. today, there are stories like this one occurring every day.

Unfortunately, unlike Corinthian Childs, most victims won't survive fifteen shots, nor will they live to tell their stories. Despite that the National Journal of Crimes Statistics reporting that juvenile crime has dropped since 1999, it is evident that delinquency is still very apparent.

According to an article published by Crime Solutions Svenson and Ring (2007), nationally there were approximately 1.3 million delinquency cases trialed by courts with jurisdiction to trial young adults in 2010. Of this number, 67% were sentenced and serve time as juveniles while the criminal court sentenced 9% and served time as adults. Furthermore, in 2010, reports yielded that for every 100,000 youth between 10 and 17 years of age, there were 225 arrests for Violent Crime Index offenses. The article also stated that young adults, 18 and under were responsible for 8% of all homicides committed in 2010.

Though there is evident data, that proved that juvenile crime rates have dropped since 2010, the shift in crime rates did not occur without effort. The change in crime rates is the direct result of many states, nationwide, implementing stricter laws, utilizing more rehabilitative options, and enforcing preventative measures. In the next section of this paper, the researcher will describe three different approaches used by many states in combating and cracking down on juvenile crime and recidivism.

It could be safe to say that the current system of rehabilitation is a failure in terms of preventing recidivism and hence a failure in achieving its mission.

The mission of the rehabilitation system of the country is to convert violent youth into citizens who are productive and have the interests of the nation at heart. Because of the rampant recidivism in the recent decades, it is clear rehabilitation is not working. The country utilizes three approaches to dealing with delinquency, namely; punitive, rehabilitative and preventive. They have been our way of life and worked for a long time until recently when our youth turned sour. It means that times have changed for us and there is a need for change in our systems before they become obsolete. Just like a computer system, upgrades are needed to patch up the loopholes that may exist. Perhaps, an overview of the existing measures of rehabilitation may provide the insight we require to keep juvenile crime and recidivism issues at bay (Weisburd et al, 2009).

Punitive Approach

Today in the U. S, the most common used and possibly the most popular method of fighting delinquency is the punitive approach. The use of the term punitive may vary in meaning; however the term “ punitive” in reference to this paper include measures such as enforcing stricter punishments, harsher sentencing, and tougher legislation (Aaltonen and Salmi, 2013). The goals of using punitive measures are to ensure community and public safety, retribution for the victims of the crime, and to enforce an equal punishment for the crime committed.

There are many supporters of this “ get tough” approach. Legislatures are huge supporters of the punitive movement. According to authors Caudy et al. (2015), due to the rising rates in which juveniles are being arrested and

convicted for committing serious crimes; states have to get tough with juvenile offenders. Many states have had to shift away from traditional models of punishment that were not proving to work, to using stricter, more punishment-oriented juvenile justice options. States nationwide have begun legislating new laws, or expanding on old ones, which mandates juvenile offenders who commit certain crimes may be moved to criminal court for adult processing and punishment” (Caudy et al, 2015).

Florida has cracked down majorly on juvenile crime. According to the article written by Caudy et al. (2015,) Florida is one of the first states that have taken on the “ get tough” punitive approach to reform against delinquency. The article says that the punitive policies in Florida have had a great impact on its communities. Advocates here are most likely to transferring youth to adult courts to trail the as adults and longer sentencing. The article describes Florida’s reform policy as a way of teaching young people a lesson, a sense of responsibility (Caudy et al, 2015).

Since then, Georgia has also taken on punitive measures. In Georgia, legislators implemented the School Safety and Juvenile Justice Reform Act as a mean to fight delinquency. The Act called for juvenile offenders, age 13-16 years, to be trailed prosecuted under the jurisdiction of adult courts if they had been charged with one of the seven deadly sins. These include murder, armed robbery with a firearm, rape, voluntary manslaughter, aggravated sexual battery, aggravated sodomy and aggravated child molestation (Cochran et al, 2014).

Rehabilitative Approach

The next approach, which is an opposing approach to the punitive approach, is rehabilitative. Advocates of this approach believe that punishment suppresses behavior and has little evidence in changing an offender's behavior (Elonheimo, 2014). The supports of the rehabilitative approach also believe that increasing intensity of punishment through punitive measures is ineffective because it poses more risk than it will help. The rehabilitative advocates stress that placing young offenders in adult prisons jeopardizes the growth and their well-being of the youth, as well as dehumanizes them and prevents healing (Elonheimo, 2014).

Cochran et al (2014) says that supports of the rehabilitative approach feel that it better prepares the offender to be a better person once released from corrections, while punitive measures create more criminals. Cochran et al (2014) says that critics believe that throwing "salvageable youth" with "hardened" adult offenders only turns the child into "animals". Advocates of this approach believe that treating delinquents is best, and rehabilitation prepares a child to become a productive citizen.

Gallagher (2014) say that the best way to prevent delinquency is for the "state to seek substantive justice for the young person by offering them the opportunity to grow towards responsible citizenship". This goal is achievable through professional help. The two stated that with the finest professional help and dedication, young delinquents will get that help that they need to turn their lives around (Gallagher, 2014). They also believe that rehabilitative institutions should be utilized, and their responsibility is to provide the young the opportunity of education and growth toward reentry into the community.

Probation is also used under the rehabilitative approach. Probation assists the offender. Like adults, children placed on probation are under surveillance, are counseled, and given resources needed to reintegrate back into society (Helmond et al, 2015). Other rehabilitative approaches include, treatment strategies such as Violent Juvenile Offender Project, where the most serious and violent delinquents receive a broad range of diagnostic and treatment. This project was considered one of the greatest milestones yet (Obstbaum and Tyni, 2015). There are also group homes, Drug Abuse Treatment Programs, and a variety of other programs that are available to treat juvenile criminals.

Preventative Approach

The last approach used to fight the problem of juvenile crime is the preventative approach. This approach focuses on delinquency from a perspective outside of the court system. Based on readings, I think it is safe to say that advocates of this approach believe that the only effective solution to the problem of juvenile delinquency and crime lies in preventing delinquency before it occurs. There are three levels of preventive activities: Primary Prevention, Secondary Prevention, and Tertiary Prevention (Put et al, 2014).

Primary prevention of crime and delinquency focuses on all youth that are at risk of becoming a delinquent or criminal. The goal of this level is to identify and alter those conditions of the physical and social environment that may tempt the offender through means of providing opportunities for them to participate in crime (Reed et al, 2015). Sherman (2006) says that there must

be an “ elimination of causes of criminal behavior that motivate that behavior through actions taken before crimes are perpetrated” and the way to accomplish this is by implementing programs that aim to detect delinquency before it happens (Sherman, 2006).

The goal of Secondary prevention is to help those previously identified as delinquents and “ at-risk” on the primary level (Sirén and Savolainen, 2013). Most of the people identified as at risk youth are those who have dropped out of school, the poor, mentally ill, and handicap individuals, members of disorganized families, and those suffering from low self-esteem (Sirén and Savolainen, 2013). The way to prevent the identified from becoming actual criminals is through therapy, intervention, and social programs.

Tertiary prevention deals with those who are delinquent and criminals. On this level, the goal is to intervene in the lives of those who have already been convicted by preventing the criminal from committing more crimes (Skardhamar and Telle, 2012). This goal is executed by punishing the criminal and treating them.

The success of prevention measures lies in a successful implementation of each level of prevention. The police, courts, and schools all play important roles in carrying out preventative measures. The police responsibility is crime control. Police officers serve as the “ first line of defense against active criminality” (Svensson and Ring, 2007). Police and Community policing contribute to crime prevention approach because police establish a greater relationship with the community, as does the community with the police. Therefore, it is easier to prevent criminal activities. The court’s responsibility is also crime control; enforcing “ legal norms”, proving that criminals are

guilty, and determining what should be done with them (Svensson and Ring, 2007).

Last but not least, the school may play the most important role in prevention. According to Svensson and Ring (2007), the schools are held responsible for instilling norms and values in youth. Schools should promote positive attitudes among students despite subcultures and stations in life. Teachers should pass on knowledge and help the youth to develop skills essential to making positive choices in life. Johnson also says in reference to schools, “ They are to serve as a primary vehicle for socializing the young, thereby serving as a surrogate parent in cases where there is little faith that the family can produce responsible and well-adjusted personalities” (Svensson and Ring, 2007).

It is clear that the rehabilitation system is still workable. The only problem is that the system is not able to cope with the changes of this time. The times of seeking only justice have passed. In this millennium, the country is supposed to think about developing and be able to provide sustenance to its citizens. Such is not possible if recidivism is still an issue. The failure of our system to tackle this problem indicates that change is imminent. Our focus should be more rehabilitative and preventive, but the focus should be on transforming the convicts into more productive citizens.

CONCLUSION

Recidivism is a problem, but it does not mean that we ignore it until it becomes a bigger problem. It is a recommendation that the government invest in education policies of the juvenile convicts. A move of such nature

will prepare the convicts for the life out of prison once set free. Furthermore, the government should educate societies out there to be more receptive of the freed convicts so that they can accept them as changed individuals and not eye them as a potential source of harm. By so doing, these convicts will have an opportunity to be more productive once they join these societies. Education policies that the government can implement include teaching the inmates specialized skills such as carpentry according to their talents. Following the fact that the youth today are multitalented in things to do with technology, the government can provide the juvenile inmates with training in this field. By allowing them to enhance their skill in such areas of interest, once freed from prisons, they may have a chance to earn themselves income and turn away from crime. Of course, as mentioned above, the societies still bear stereotypic ideologies concerning convicts. The government should aim to erase such type of thought from the minds of people if these convicts can become changed citizens. Assuming that some juveniles are released into our communities even today, people will still fear to have them as their employees.

The fact that these juveniles are also human means that they will give up the search for jobs. Normally they will claim that jobs are not their 'thing.' The next move will be to go back to what they are used to; crime. At that very point, recidivism is prone to transpire putting the convicts back on the law enforcement wanted list. Therefore, it seems education should not be reserved for the convicts alone but also the societies. They should be informed that these convicts have successfully gone through the rehabilitation program in place and are now changed individuals. Once they

realize that, their attitudes towards the convicts will change allowing them a chance to be better citizens. It is common knowledge that individuals will resolve to crime sometimes when circumstances such as poverty forces them. Thus, by eliminating this factor of crime, recidivism will be half-way solved increasing the objectivity of our rehabilitation system.

References

Aaltonen, M., & Salmi, V. (2013). Versatile Delinquents or Specialized Pirates? A Comparison of Correlates of Illegal Downloading and Traditional Juvenile Crime. *Journal Of Scandinavian Studies In Criminology & Crime Prevention*, 14(2), 188-195. doi: 10. 1080/14043858. 2013. 837267

Juvenile crime is an issue that is plaguing the country at the moment and any information that may provide insight into the issue is welcomed.

Aaltonen and his colleague inform us of the rampant crime involving the youths and compares them with illegal downloading of copywrited software.

Caudy, M. S., Folk, J. B., Stuewig, J. B., Wooditch, A., Martinez, A., Maass, S., & Taxman, F. S. (2015). Does substance misuse moderate the relationship between criminal thinking and recidivism?. *Journal Of Criminal Justice*, 43(1), 12-19. doi: 10. 1016/j. jcrimjus. 2014. 11. 001

Caudy's work relates substance abuse with recidivism levels which he claims results in criminal thinking. By so doing, the convicts once released, end up re-offending. Thus, they shed light on the causes of rampant recidivism in the country.

Cochran, J., Mears, D., & Bales, W. (2014). Assessing the Effectiveness of Correctional Sanctions. *Journal Of Quantitative Criminology*, 30(2), 317-347.

doi: 10. 1007/s10940-013-9205-2

Cochran and colleagues provide information concerned with the effectiveness that comes with correctional sanctions. The information in this article sufficiently describe the correctional facilities in the country aiding the success of this study in achieving its goals.

Elonheimo, H. (2014). Evidence for the crime drop: survey findings from two Finnish cities between 1992 and 2013. *Journal Of Scandinavian Studies In Criminology & Crime Prevention*, 15(2), 209-217. doi: 10. 1080/14043858. 2014. 939458

Elonheimo informs us of the drop in crime in the country by use of data from two cities. The aim of the study is to find out the level of youth involvement in these crimes and at the same time decipher the level of juvenile crime. The study is comprehensive because the data is a result of observation of twenty one years which is between 1992 and 2013. Thus, the trend is easily acquired from this data.

Gallagher, J. R. (2014). Predicting Criminal Recidivism Following Drug Court: Implications for Drug Court Practice and Policy Advocacy. *Journal Of Addictions & Offender Counseling*, 35(1), 15-29. doi: 10. 1002/j. 2161-1874. 2014. 00021. x

Helmond, P., Overbeek, G., & Brugman, D. (2015). An examination of program integrity and recidivism of a cognitive-behavioral program for incarcerated youth in The Netherlands. *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 21(4), 330-346. doi: 10. 1080/1068316X. 2014. 989164

Obstbaum, Y., & Tyni, S. (2015). Who receives substance abuse treatment in the ' real world' of the prison? A register-based study of Finnish

inmates. *Journal Of Scandinavian Studies In Criminology & Crime Prevention*, 16(1), 76-96. doi: 10. 1080/14043858. 2014. 1003709

Obstbaum provides us with an overview of the rehabilitation system in the country which enables us to identify the weakness that it has. By noting that the centers are few means that they are overcrowded following the increased levels of juvenile crime.

Put, C. E., Asscher, J. J., Stams, G. M., & Moonen, X. H. (2014). Differences between juvenile offenders with and without intellectual disabilities in the importance of static and dynamic risk factors for recidivism. *Journal Of Intellectual Disability Research*, 58(11), 992-1003. doi: 10. 1111/jir. 12078
Put and colleagues' work proved valuable to the study owing to the fact that it adequately describes the state of juvenile crime in the country.

Furthermore, it analyzes the risk factors involved with recidivism. It also provides information on juvenile crime in the country proving essential in the study.

Reed, T., Broussard, B., Moore, A., Smith, K., & Compton, M. (2014). Community Navigation to Reduce Institutional Recidivism and Promote Recovery: Initial Evaluation of Opening Doors to Recovery in Southeast Georgia. *Psychiatric Quarterly*, 85(1), 25-33. doi: 10. 1007/s11126-013-9267-1

Reed and his colleagues provide vital information concerned with the community navigation which is vital in the fight against recidivism at both institutional and nation-wide levels. Their study was based in Georgia. The essence of this source is to shed light on the state of recidivism in the country.

<https://assignbuster.com/good-critical-thinking-about-community-based-approaches-to-solve-juvenile-crime-and-recidivism/>

Sherman, L. W. (2006). Crime and Juvenile Delinquency. *Gender Issues*, 23(4), 60-68.

Sherman provides a rather broad analysis of juvenile crime in the country and linking it with delinquency. The data is from the National Crime Victimization Survey in conjunction with the Uniform Crime Reporting System thus the question of validity of the data used in the study is no longer important.

Sirén, R., & Savolainen, J. (2013). No Evidence of Specific Deterrence under Penal Moderation: Imprisonment and Recidivism in Finland. *Journal Of Scandinavian Studies In Criminology & Crime Prevention*, 14(2), 80-97. doi: 10. 1080/14043858. 2013. 805048

Reino and his colleague, in their work, provide rather crucial information on the issue of recidivism and juvenile crime and shows exactly how prison sentencing works to increase it. Thus, the information provided proved essential to the study.

Skardhamar, T., & Telle, K. (2012). Post-release Employment and Recidivism in Norway. *Journal Of Quantitative Criminology*, 28(4), 629-649. doi: 10. 1007/s10940-012-9166-x

This article is crucial because it gives us the picture of how things are in Norway. By identifying how the program of post-release employment that is in place in Norway and its effects in reducing recidivism. By reducing factors such as employment for the convicts, the convicts have a better chance of survival in the real world.

Svensson, R., & Ring, J. (2007). Trends in Self-Reported Youth Crime and Victimization in Sweden, 1995-2005. *Journal Of Scandinavian Studies In*

Criminology & Crime Prevention, 8(2), 185-209. doi: 10.

1080/14043850701517805

This is also a report on the state of juvenile crime in Sweden between 1995 and 2005. By analyzing the trends in these crimes, the governments are able to formulate policies regarding these crimes and smother them by bringing to book the perpetrators.

Tabita, B., de Santi, M. G., & Kjellin, L. (2012). Criminal recidivism and mortality among patients discharged from a forensic medium secure hospital. *Nordic Journal Of Psychiatry*, 66(4), 283-289. doi: 10.

3109/08039488. 2011. 644578

Tabita and colleagues have their own thoughts concerning recidivism. They feel that forensic psychiatric treatment is a limited method of care for convicts to reduce recidivism. Thus, they conducted a study in Sweden and documented it to justify their hypotheses and thoughts.

Weisburd, D., Morris, N., & Groff, E. (2009). Hot Spots of Juvenile Crime: A Longitudinal Study of Arrest Incidents at Street Segments in Seattle, Washington. *Journal Of Quantitative Criminology*, 25(4), 443-467. doi: 10.

1007/s10940-009-9075-9

This is a comprehensive study of areas in Seattle which Weisburd considered hot spots of juvenile crime. Through the study of arrests in the area, he was able to clearly map the areas he found to be centers for juvenile crime.