

The juvenile boot camps for offenders criminology essay



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The United States used to be a nation focused on rehabilitating juveniles that deviated from the social norms (Ar dovini-Brooker & Walker, 2000). This attitude was dramatically altered in the 1960s when public opinion of the medical model deteriorated and the punishment model started to gain support (Ar dovini-Brooker & Walker, 2000). This shift in ideals has resulted in an increased popularity of boot camp programs (Gover, MacKenzie, & Armstrong, 2000). There has been a great deal of debate as to whether boot camps are more or less successful than traditional detainment facilities at reducing recidivism rates among juveniles (DeMuro, 2008). Despite the lack of empirical evidence that juvenile boot camps are more successful, they continue to gain popularity within the juvenile justice system (DeMuro, 2008).

Boot camps are less cost effective, and no more successful at reducing recidivism rates among juveniles, than traditional treatment facilities.

The first boot camps used as alternative punishments in the United States were created in Georgia and Oklahoma in 1983 (Tyler, Darville, Stalnaer, 2001). The first boot camp program oriented toward juveniles was created in Orleans Parish, Louisiana in 1985 (Tyler et al., 2001). Between 1985 and 1995, the number of juvenile boot camps had risen to more than 75, spanning across 13 states (Ar dovini-Brooker & Walker, 2000). Furthermore, Ar dovini-Brooker & Walker (2000) expected that half of all juvenile jurisdictions in the United States would have boot camp programs in place by the year 2000.

There were many factors that gave rise to the popularity of juvenile boot camps. Ardovini-Brooker and Walker (2000) state six objectives of juvenile boot camps. The first objective of the boot camps was to alleviate the overcrowding facilities that were already in place (Ardovini-Brooker & Walker, 2000). The second objective was to lower the cost of juvenile treatment by placing the juveniles in a program that took less time to complete (Ardovini-Brooker & Walker, 2000). The third objective was to increase the perceived accountability of the juvenile justice system because many thought that it was too lenient with juvenile offenders (Ardovini-Brooker & Walker, 2000). The fourth objective was to increase the rehabilitation of the juvenile offenders by placing them in a more structured environment (Ardovini-Brooker & Walker, 2000). The fifth objective was to reduce juvenile recidivism rates through shock incarceration (Ardovini-Brooker & Walker, 2000). The sixth and final objective of juvenile boot camp programs was to give back to the community by requiring the juveniles in the program to perform duties such as litter pick-up (Ardovini-Brooker & Walker, 2000).

Both adult and juvenile boot camps were designed for first time or less violent offenders and are considered to be as a type of shock incarceration (DeMuro, 2008). Experts believe that the radical change in behavior that offenders will experience in a boot camp should be enough to scare or “shock” them straight (Ardovini-Brooker & Walker, 2000). Boot camps achieve this radical change by incorporating basic elements of military philosophy (Gover et al., 2000).

Juvenile boot camps are supposed to provide intense physical activity and a healthy atmosphere that result in a favorable background for therapy and education (Styve, MacKenzie, Gover, Mitchell, 2000). These boot camps can vary in length of time but are generally between 90 and 120 days (Ar dovini-Brooker & Walker, 2000). The programs incorporate elements of military boot camps such as uniforms, marching, calisthenics, and running various types of drills (Styve et al., 2000). These elements are supposed to combine to make the boot camp a life changing event for the juvenile offender (Tyler et al., 2001).

There are many experts who are opposed to using juvenile boot camp programs as a means of punishment or rehabilitation. These experts point to the fact that there is no empirical evidence that boot camp programs actually reduce recidivism rates and that boot camp programs are not cost effective (DeMuro, 2008; Tyler et al., 2001). Styve et al (2000) stated that boot camps may not provide the necessary care and attention to individuals that is required for rehabilitation to take place. These same experts believe that the system would be better off using the traditional facilities and supervised probation programs already in place (Tyler et al., 2001).

The first problem with juvenile boot camp programs that many experts cite is that there is still relatively little empirical data to support the claim that they reduce recidivism rates (Ar dovini-Brooker & Walker, 2000). The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention [OJJDP] stated that the use of juvenile boot camps has had no effect on the rates of juvenile recidivism (Tyler et al., 2001). Experts in the juvenile justice field believe that this may be a result of the lack of uniformity among the many boot camp programs <https://assignbuster.com/the-juvenile-boot-camps-for-offenders-criminology-essay/>

(Ardovini-Brooker & Walker, 2000). Some examples of this lack of uniformity would include: the duration of the boot camp (90-120 days), which of the six objectives the camp is focused on, the type of offender that is sentenced to the boot camp, and whether or not there is an intensive after care program that is used in conjunction with the boot camp itself (Ardovini-Brooker & Walker, 2000; Tyler et al., 2001).

A second criticism of juvenile boot camp programs is that they are not cost effective. According to OJJDP, juvenile boot camps cost nearly 10 times more than juvenile probation programs per offender (Tyler et al., 2001). In Texas in 1998, the cost per day of a juvenile in a boot camp was \$88.62 (Tyler et al., 2001). At the same time, the cost for a juvenile in a traditional treatment facility was \$85.90 per day, and the cost of probation per day was \$8.44 (Tyler et al., 2001). Taking into account that juvenile boot camps help fewer offenders at a time, Tyler et al (2001) calculated the average cost of a boot camp program per juvenile per year to be \$33,480. Further, they calculated the average cost of a traditional detainment facility to be \$31,354 per juvenile per year. This, they stated, demonstrates that juvenile boot camps are not a cost effective alternative to using traditional facilities or probation.

A third criticism of juvenile boot camps is that not all juveniles are suited mentally enough to handle the environment of a military style boot camp (Gover et al., 2000). There are many juveniles that cannot adjust to the sudden change in culture that is associated with boot camps (Gover et al., 2000). Gover et al (2000) claim that the harsh conditions at boot camps do not provide a stable environment that is healthy for therapy, which is a contradiction of one of the goals of juvenile boot camps. When selecting <https://assignbuster.com/the-juvenile-boot-camps-for-offenders-criminology-essay/>

juveniles for boot camp programs, it is important to choose older youths who are less prone to experience anxiety, as those who are younger or are more prone to experience anxiety are less likely to be responsive to any treatment they may receive in a boot camp (Gover et al., 2000).

Over the past few decades, juvenile boot camps have increased in popularity (Ardovini-Brooker, & Walker, 2000). This trend has continued despite any lack of evidence that supports the idea that juvenile boot camps reduce recidivism rates (Ardovini-Brooker, & Walker, 2000). It has also been shown that boot camp programs are not a cost effective alternative to traditional treatment, particularly when compared to supervised probation (Tyler et al., 2001). These facts have led many experts to believe that juvenile boot camp programs, as a whole, are not a successful alternative to traditional treatment facilities.