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Katelynn R. Adams
East Tennessee State University

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Do Juvenile Offenders Hold to the Child-Saving Mentality? The Results From a Statewide
Survey of Juvenile Offenders in a Correctional Facility.

By:

Katelynn R. Adams

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East Tennessee State University

Katelynn R. Adams
Date

Dr. Jennifer Pealer, Thesis Mentor
Date

Dr. Courtney Crittenden, Thesis Reader
Date

Dr. Colin Glennon, Thesis Reader
Date

Abstract

At the end of the nineteenth century, individuals identified as child savers pioneered an unprecedented movement to save America's children from physical and moral harm. The establishment of the juvenile justice system came as a result of the actions of the child savers. Researchers have focused extensively on many aspects of the juvenile justice system including studies on the effectiveness of the system to tracking the changes the system has undergone since its establishment. Numerous other studies examined opinions of the juvenile justice system. However, the research has focused solely on the general public, juvenile probation officers and juvenile correctional staff.

The current study examined the actual participants within the juvenile justice system - the juvenile offenders - to gauge their perceptions of the system that was created to protect and turn them into law-abiding individuals. A survey was conducted with juvenile offenders housed within two conservative, Midwestern juvenile correctional facilities. The juveniles believed that rehabilitation should be an integral goal of the juvenile justice system and they endorsed community-based interventions as a means to change behavior. The results indicate that the juvenile offenders are in tune with the general public as seeing the juvenile justice system as a child saving institution rather than as a punitive endeavor.

With the proliferation of juvenile crime, the United States considered various ideas as to how to effectively deal with juvenile offenders. Upon the decision to create a juvenile system, lawmakers struggled to decide what the goal of the juvenile system should be. The creators of the juvenile justice system wanted to see a system that not only inflicted punishment on juveniles for wrongful behaviors, but more importantly provided rehabilitation for juveniles to prevent them from re-offending. A particular group of individuals in the United States began lobbying on the behalf of juveniles, and they were later labeled the child savers.

The child saving movement was predominately the focus of women (Platt, 1969). In the nineteenth century, women were responsible for the domestic duties of the home as well as child rearing. Women typically were not found suitable for work outside of the home. Men dominated this ideology for fear that if women entered the workforce, then they would pose additional job competition. Middle and upper class women had much more leisure time than women of lower class. Therefore, middle and upper class women began channeling their leisure time into volunteer social work with the emphasis being on child welfare. Subsequently, middle and upper class women became the face of the child saving movement (Moon, Sundt, Cullen, & Wright, 2000).

Child savers advocated for a wide-range of diverse policies such as the creation of kindergartens and playgrounds, child labor laws, and the establishment of departments of child health and hygiene. Child savers also lobbied for various reforms; among the most impressive reform was the establishment of a juvenile justice system (Moon et al., 2000). Consequently with juvenile misbehavior on the rise, the child savers' volunteer efforts were forced to be predominately concentrated on establishing a juvenile justice system (Platt, 1969).

Child savers wanted a juvenile system totally separate from the adult system. Child savers argued that the punishment applied in the adult system was damaging and unsuitable for juveniles to endure. Child savers lobbied for a juvenile system that would accomplish the two crucial objectives of protecting both the child as well as the community (Moon et al., 2000). Progressive child savers anticipated a juvenile system where the primary emphasis would be to rehabilitate juvenile offenders in such a manner that they would be successfully reintegrated back into society (Rothman, 1980).

Upon the close of the nineteenth century, the child savers efforts led to lawmakers and leaders being able to effectively create a juvenile system that comprised of correctional as well as judicial facilities to process, label, and manage problematic juveniles. The child savers' original objective was to identify and control juvenile deviance (Platt, 1969). With the establishment of the juvenile court system, juveniles were no longer faced with conviction in the adult system and the punishment handed down by criminal court judges. The juvenile system also designed and implemented programs solely for the purpose of benefitting wayward, dependent, and neglected youth (Chute, 1949).

Charles L. Chute was an avid supporter of the child saving movement. Chute (1949) was most impressed with the establishment of the juvenile court system as a result of the child saving movement. He regarded the juvenile court system as being "one of the greatest advances in child welfare that has ever occurred." He thought that the juvenile court was unlike any other court system he had seen, and felt that it would be a pioneer system for other countries to follow (Chute, 1949).

The juvenile court was created by statute as a special tribunal court that was created to determine the legal status of youth (Platt, 1969). Juvenile judges were granted a wide-range of

judiciary discretion that allowed them to adequately administer necessary treatment to juvenile offenders for their wrongful actions (Platt, 1969). The juvenile system varied greatly from the adult criminal court system. Unlike adult court, when a delinquent youth entered the juvenile court system they would not be accused of a crime. Instead the judge would offer guidance and assistance to the youth as well as provide programs that would be beneficial to the treatment of the youth (Chute, 1949).

The primary goal that the child savers embodied for the juvenile justice system was to provide deviant youth with rehabilitative services and eventually conform them into law abiding citizens. However, around the late 1960's, the perception of the juvenile justice system began to deteriorate (Moon et al., 2000). The juvenile system, which was created on rehabilitative principles, began to simulate the punitive characteristics of the adult system. The idea that juvenile offenders could be easily rehabilitated and released back into society with little to no punishment was being attacked on numerous grounds (Feld, 1993).

American citizens appeared to have many differing views in regards to the effectiveness of the juvenile justice system. Interestingly, there were criticisms from both ends of the ideological spectrum. Liberals tended to believe that the juvenile system was simply a coercive instrument of social control, and with the emphasis on individualized treatment, the result was that the justice system was abusing their discretion and administering arbitrary, disparate treatment to the juvenile offenders (Cullen, Golden, & Cullen, 1983). On the contrary, conservatives felt that the juvenile justice system, in which the child savers lobbied for, had led to exceedingly lenient treatment of delinquent youths. Conservatives also felt that the juvenile justice system had resulted in higher victimization of the public (Cullen et al., 1983).

With the increase in juvenile crime, the juvenile justice system found itself to be under unprecedented scrutiny (Van Vleet, 1999). Critics voiced concerns that the juvenile system had thus far been unable to deter juveniles from committing crime. The juvenile court system was being portrayed as the present-day juvenile social anomie (Van Vleet, 1999). Judges were being accused of being entirely too sympathetic and not haste when distributing punishment in order to restore the loss in social order (Van Vleet, 1999). In response to the increase in juvenile crime, some states made adjustments to their juvenile system. For example, Illinois, the home of the first juvenile court, changed their system “to give equal attention to the rights and needs of the juvenile, to the rights and needs of the victim, and to the protection of the community” (Moon et al., 2000).

Approaching the centennial of the juvenile justice system in 1999, there were still several lingering concerns surrounding the sustainability of the system, and challenges that the juvenile system had failed to accomplish its original goal of rehabilitation (Van Vleet, 1999). With these changes in the foundation on which the juvenile system was established, the juvenile justice system underwent an attack, which resulted in the juvenile system undergoing modifications brought on by new legislation. Not to be confused with the “Get Tough” movement that had been occurring in the adult system since the 1970’s, lawmakers initiated a “Get Tough” movement in the juvenile system as well in an attempt to decrease juvenile delinquency. Lawmakers in states across the country enacted comprehensive policy changes to make the juvenile system tougher.

Illinois has proven to be the forerunner state for the new juvenile justice system’s implementations. Not only did they revamp their system, but they also implemented several legislative acts to apply in the juvenile system. They implemented legislation related to: the

amount of time that juveniles may be detained in custody, they created a statewide database to track juvenile offenders, they removed the special language from the juvenile court system, they provided a new approach to fingerprinting youths that proves to be more extensive, and they limited the number of station adjustments allowed for juvenile delinquents who have not been officially cited by the police (Dighton, 1999).

The transformations that Illinois implemented did not go unnoticed. Soon after Illinois' policy changes took effect, other states mirrored their legislation altering their own juvenile justice systems as well. Between 1992 and 1995, 40 states modified the original juvenile court confidentiality requirements, making juvenile court records more accessible to the public (Sickmund, Snyder, and Poe-Yamagata, 1997). Likewise at the end of 1997, 17 states had implemented legislation redefining the juvenile court system's focus to highlight emphasis on specific sanctions, public safety, and juvenile accountability (Torbet and Szymanski, 1998).

Often it is suggested that the changes in the juvenile court system can be attributed to two factors: the drastic increase in serious crime and a swing in public attitudes regarding juvenile offenders (Moon et al., 2000). A percentage that many critics of the juvenile system harped upon was between the six-year span from 1988 to 1994, the United States faced 100 percent upsurge in the amount of murders committed by juveniles (Moon et al., 2000). This increase created an uneasy feeling among the public. Critics used this trend along with other highly publicized violent juvenile crimes to label this generation of juvenile offenders as young "super-predators" that would wreak havoc as they flourished into adults (Moon et al., 2000).

With the undeniable proliferation in juvenile crime, researchers saw this as an opportune time to begin collecting data to determine what the American people's opinions of the juvenile justice system were. Surveys were distributed in various methods to people all across the United

States. Not only was the general public given surveys to assess their opinions and goals of what the juvenile system should be, but certain employees, such as juvenile correctional workers and juvenile probation officers, in the juvenile system were also presented with surveys to assess their opinions on the effectiveness of the juvenile system.

The Roper Center in Connecticut did a national poll in 1996. Based on their results, it was determined that more than 80 percent of the public felt that “teenage violence is a big problem” in most of the country. However, only 33 percent of the public felt that teen violence was a “big problem” in their own community (*The Public Perspective*, 1997). An earlier poll, by The Roper Center, suggests that the public supports getting tough with juvenile delinquents (*The Public Perspective*, 1997). A poll from 1994 discovered that 52 percent of the public felt that juveniles should be administered the same punishment as adults, while only 31 percent supported placing less focus on punishing juveniles and focusing more emphasis on rehabilitating juveniles (Moon et al., 2000).

It is obvious that the public shows serious concerns about juvenile crime and represents a punitive attitude towards juvenile delinquents. Unfortunately, most of the research collected regarding the juvenile justice system’s reform has failed to take into consideration whether or not the public feels that rehabilitation should be an legitimate goal of the juvenile system. With the results produced from recent research, it has been assumed by researchers that with the public’s growing support of a punitive juvenile justice system then it can be correlated that the public’s support for rehabilitation of juvenile offenders has subsequently decreased. However, researchers Melissa M. Moon, Jody L. Sundt, Francis T. Cullen, and John Paul Wright (2000) felt that it is unjust to assume that there is a correlation between an increase in the need for a more punitive system and less of a need for juvenile rehabilitation. Therefore, they developed a survey that

asked the public in-depth questions regarding juvenile rehabilitation to gain a greater understanding of whether or not the public indeed supports juvenile justice and what type of rehabilitation the public believes is most effective.

In the article “Is Child Saving Dead? Public Support for Juvenile Rehabilitation” (2000), researchers Moon, Sundt, Cullen, and Wright approach the idea of juvenile rehabilitation much differently than previous researchers. In their survey, they distributed a questionnaire examining citizen’s attitudes on various juvenile justice policy issues to 1,500 randomly selected individuals living in Tennessee. Their questionnaire was aimed to assess an advanced understanding of the public’s attitudes toward the treatment of juvenile offenders by evaluating an expansive range of attitudes towards juvenile rehabilitation.

Moon, Sundt, Cullen, and Wright (2000) were able to determine that respondents felt not only should rehabilitation be the primary focus of juvenile prisons, but they also determined what the respondents felt would be the best way to rehabilitate juvenile offenders. 64.5 percent of respondents felt that rehabilitation should be a very important goal of juvenile institutions followed by 43.2 percent of respondents who felt that society needs protection from juvenile offenders, and 42.5 percent felt punishment of juvenile offenders should be the goal of juvenile prisons.

Respondents were given three choices to determine what they thought would be the most efficient way to rehabilitate juvenile offenders: help juvenile offenders change their values and assist them with the emotional problems that caused them to commit their crime, teach juvenile offenders a skill that they can use upon their release to help them obtain a job, and give the juvenile an education. 92.9 percent of respondents felt that the most efficient method to help rehabilitate juvenile offenders is by helping them establish better core values as well as help

them cope with the emotional problems that caused them to break the law. 89.3 respondents answered that providing the juveniles with job skills would better rehabilitate the juvenile, and 76.5 percent felt that providing the juvenile with a good education would be the best way to rehabilitate the juvenile (Moon et al., 2000). This more found that while it is obvious that the public is still in support of rehabilitation of juveniles, they are in support of juvenile punishment as well.

In a similar survey administered in 1998, one in three respondents answered that rehabilitation should be the main goal of juvenile prisons. In the same survey, the question was asked: What should be the goal of the juvenile system while offenders are imprisoned? 95 percent of the respondents reported that it is important to rehabilitate juvenile offenders who are incarcerated in juvenile facilities. Likewise, a vast majority of the respondents also support rehabilitation programs not only in the prison system but also in the community. Based on the same question as stated above, approximately 90 percent respondents agreed that juvenile offenders deserve to receive punishment because their negligent action harmed society (Moon et al., 2000). The results from this specific survey do not discredit the support of direct punishment in the juvenile justice system. However, what these results do indicate is that in today's society, the general public would prefer that the juvenile system use a rehabilitative approach to coincide with the punitive approach.

In support of the idea that the public has consistently supported rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents, Donna Bishop in October of 2006 wrote a reaction essay titled "Public Opinion and Juvenile Justice Policy: Myths and Misconceptions". In the article, Bishop utilized various public opinion surveys regarding the goal of the juvenile justice system that have been administered throughout the past 35 years to prove that the primary goal of juvenile justice has always been

rehabilitation. The earliest data sample Bishop cites is the results of a national poll in 1981, at a time when the juvenile crime rate was still relatively low, 75 percent of the respondents favored rehabilitation over punishment (Opinion Research Center, 1982).

In a similar national survey distributed in 1991, when there was an upsurge in juvenile violence, over 75 percent of the respondents chose to “treat and rehabilitate” over “punish” delinquent youth (Schwartz, Kerbs, Hogston, & Guillean, 1992). In a 1995 poll, over 80 percent of Cincinnati residents endorsed juvenile rehabilitation. Similarly, in the same year 63 percent of Virginia citizens responded that the main purpose of the juvenile justice system should be to rehabilitate juveniles (Bishop, 2006). More recently, Bishop provided the results of a statewide survey distributed in Florida in 2005, where more than “80 percent of the respondents supported rehabilitation for wide range of juvenile offenders- young and old, first offenders and repeaters, and violent and nonviolent youths.”

Bishop’s 2006 article clearly demonstrated that although the public is actively aware of the juvenile crime increase, the public still views rehabilitation as an important component of the juvenile system. Her research supported the idea that the public indeed wants to see juveniles receiving punishment for their wrongful actions, but the public also still strongly believes that juveniles need to be rehabilitated. In lieu of the public’s response, rehabilitation should still be one of the primary focuses of the juvenile system.

Not only were members of the public given surveys, but juvenile correctional officers and juvenile probation officers were also administered surveys to determine what they felt should be the focus of the juvenile justice system. Allowing individuals who work in the juvenile system the opportunity to provide their opinion was a huge bonus for researchers. These are the individuals who work daily with these juveniles, and their opinions regarding the effectiveness of

the system as well as whether or not rehabilitation should remain to be a primary component of the system is valuable information.

In the 2008 article “What Drives Juvenile Probation Officers?: Relating Organizational Contexts, Status Characteristics, and Personal Convictions to Treatment and Punishment Orientations”, authors Geoff Ward and Aaron Kupchik’s research provided clear insight into the goal orientations of juvenile probation officers’. Ward and Kupchik (2008) administered a survey to juvenile probation officers in 12 mid-western juvenile courts between June of 1999 and June of 2000 with a 75 percent response rate from juvenile probation officers from 494 probation officers. The results from Ward and Kupchik’s (2008) survey indicated that treatment and punishment are flexible orientations acquired by a case-by-case basis. Ward and Kupchik’s (2008) research suggested that rehabilitation and punishment may not exactly coincide with each other, but they also are not necessarily opposing orientations. Their research supported the idea that “child saving orientations can exist alongside and independently of political ideology and punitive attitudes” (Ward & Kupchik, 2008).

Ward and Kupchik (2008) also examined whether age played a factor in the decision between punishment and/or rehabilitation. Their research determined that the probation officer’s age plays a very important factor in the decision of whether or not to punish or rehabilitate juvenile offenders. Younger probation officers were more inclined to seek punishment as opposed to rehabilitate juvenile offenders in comparison to their older counterparts. Ward and Kupchik (2008) believed that these officers would gradually develop a more balanced view seeking rehabilitation alongside of punishment especially working around the influence of their older peers. However as of now, there is a primarily balanced consensus between probation officers regarding punishment and rehabilitation (Ward & Kupchik, 2008).

Among all of the individuals who work with juvenile offenders, juvenile correctional officers spend the most time with a vast majority of the juvenile offenders. There have been numerous studies regarding the attitudes of adult correctional officers concerning rehabilitation, but there has been very minimal research conducted regarding the opinions of juvenile correctional officers. Kristie R. Blevins, Francis T. Cullen, and Jody L. Sundt (2007) used a secondary dataset to examine the orientations that Ohio juvenile correctional officers held. The authors noted that it is important to understand that there are two distinct perspectives concerning the correctional orientations of juvenile correctional officers. First, the child saving or rehabilitative mission that the juvenile justice system was founded on would indicate that correctional officers should have very high levels of support for rehabilitation (Blevins et al., 2007). The second orientation stems from the punitive shift that has occurred throughout the last 30 years in the United States correctional system as well as the juvenile system (Blevins et al., 2007).

The results from Blevins, Cullen, and Sundt's (2007) survey supported previous data concerning correctional officers in adult facilities. Juvenile justice correctional officers supported rehabilitation and punishment simultaneously. Juvenile justice correctional officers explained that while child saving should still be a primary focus of the juvenile justice system, it should not be the only focus of the juvenile justice system. Blevins, Cullen, and Sundt's (2007) research indicated juvenile correctional officers felt juvenile rehabilitation should be the focus for all juvenile offenders regardless of whether they are incarcerated in a juvenile facility or in the community.

Researchers saw an opportunity to determine whether or not the juvenile system, upon which the child saving principle was established, still adequately served its stated purpose.

Researchers also wanted to know if the general public still supported the goals of the juvenile justice system, and what they would like to see changed regarding the juvenile justice system. It is apparent based on the research that there is still general support for juvenile rehabilitation. After the upsurge in juvenile crime, however, respondents increased support for punishment of juvenile offenders in addition to rehabilitation.

The general public, as well as juvenile justice system employees, frequently completed surveys regarding their sentiment towards the juvenile justice system. Juvenile offenders have yet to be asked their opinions on how they view the juvenile justice system- a system designed to serve them. The present survey, however, provided critical insight into the attitudes of those served by the juvenile justice system. This research is unprecedented, and completes a previous gap left by other researchers. For the first time since the establishment of the juvenile justice system at the peak of the 19th century, the juvenile offenders were able to provide their opinions to the viability of the juvenile system.

Sample

The data for this article was drawn from a larger survey, which examined juvenile offenders' attitudes on various juvenile justice policy issues. The sample was drawn from juvenile offenders in a Midwestern state who had been confined to two juvenile correctional institutions. At the time of the survey distribution, a total of 335 youth were confined within the two institutions that served the state. However, only 310 surveys were distributed, as some of the youth were not allowed to complete the survey due to being in the intake unit or in the restrictive unit. Of the 310 surveys that were distributed, a total of 245 usable surveys were completed which constitutes a 79 percent response rate.

Individual data regarding demographic information was not able to be collected from the youth due to confidentiality issues. However, the state provided aggregate data to determine the gender, race, and age of the juveniles. Table 1 presents the characteristics of the sample. The sample consisted of 227 (92.7 percent) males and 18 (7.3 percent) females. The respondents were predominately white (70.2 percent) with an average age of 17.6.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Juveniles

Characteristic	Percentage	Number
Gender		
Male	92.7	227
Female	7.3	18
Race		
White	70.2	172
Nonwhite	19.8	73
Average Age		17.6

Measures

This survey contained a number of measures that assessed the juvenile’s views on the goals of juvenile institutions, the justifications for intervening with juveniles and what community-based treatment options should be available for juveniles. Following each question, the juveniles were provided with a force-choice response or a Likert-type scale that was used to express their level of agreement. All of the following responses provided are in percent form.

Results

Table 2 provides a breakdown of the juveniles’ responses on their individual views on the importance of the goals of the juvenile justice system. 72 percent of juveniles said that rehabilitation should be either an important or a very important goal of the juvenile system. Respondents ranked restoration second for what should be important goals of the juvenile justice system. 50.9 percent of juveniles thought it either very important or important that the juvenile

justice system require juvenile offenders to work in order to repair the harm that they caused to their victim(s). 41.8 percent reported that it was either very important or important that the juvenile justice system should require juvenile offenders to work so that they can repair the damage that they caused in their community. Worthy of notation, 8.7 percent of juvenile respondents found that incapacitation is either very important or important. Rehabilitation is clearly viewed to be of much higher significance than incapacitation among juvenile respondents.

Table 2: Juveniles’ Views on the Importance of Goals of the Juvenile Justice System

Goals of Juvenile Justice System	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not All Important
Rehabilitation					
To change juvenile offenders through treatment or education so that they will be productive citizen.	31.3	40.7	19.8	7.0	1.2
Deterrence					
To discourage other people from committing crimes by punishing juvenile offenders as an example.	2.5	8.7	28.9	28.9	31.0
To discourage juvenile offenders from committing more crimes in the future by showing them the costs of crime.	11.2	30.7	34.4	14.9	8.7
Incapacitation					
To prevent juvenile offenders from committing more crimes by keeping them locked up for a long time.	2.5	6.2	16.2	26.1	49.0
Restoration					
To make juvenile offenders work to repair the harm they caused their victims.	19.3	31.6	31.6	14.8	2.9
To make juvenile offenders work to repair the harm they caused their community.	11.2	30.6	33.5	16.1	8.7
Retribution					
To make sure that juvenile offenders get the punishment they deserve.	5.8	20.6	39.1	21.0	13.6

Table 3 depicts the juveniles’ responses on their agreement for various goals of imprisonment. There were six sub-categories under rehabilitation, one sub-category under retribution, three sub-categories for deterrence, and two sub-categories for incapacitation. All six of the sub-categories for rehabilitation received more agreement than any other sub-category. All of the six sub-categories for rehabilitation received 82 percent or more agreement from the respondents.

Of the six, 90.5 percent of juvenile respondents agreed that the best method for juvenile rehabilitation while incarcerated is to teach them a skill that they can use to get a job once they are released from the correctional facility. Only 18.2 percent of the juvenile respondents agreed that punishing juvenile offenders is the only way to stop juveniles from re-offending, and 10.2 juveniles agreed that since most juvenile offenders re-offend, the only way to protect society is to put juvenile offenders in jail.

54.2 percent of the respondents felt that juvenile offenders should be put in jail so that innocent citizens will be protected from these youth. Whereas 64.2 percent agreed that sending young offenders to jail will not stop juveniles from committing crimes. Drawing conclusions from these two opinions that are held by juveniles regarding the various goals of imprisonment, it seems that juveniles hold sympathy with the innocent victims and agree that they should be protected. However, juvenile respondents do not support incapacitation or themselves.

Table 3: Juveniles’ Level of Agreement for Various Goals of Imprisonment

Correctional Goal	Agree	Disagree
Rehabilitation		
1. It is a good idea to provide treatment for juvenile offenders who are supervised by the courts and live in the community.	82.0	18.0
2. It is a good idea to provide treatment for juvenile offenders who are in a juvenile correctional facility.	87.6	12.4
3. It is important to try to rehabilitate juvenile offenders who have committed crimes and are now in the correctional system.	86.9	13.1
4. Rehabilitation programs should be available even for juvenile	88.6	11.4

offenders who have been involved in a lot of crime in their lives.		
5. The best way to rehabilitate youth is to teach them a skill that they can use to get a job when they are released from a juvenile correctional facility.	90.5	9.5
6. The best way to rehabilitate juvenile offenders is to try to help them change their values and to help them with the emotional problems that caused them to break the law.	84.0	16.0
Retribution		
7. Juvenile offenders deserve to be punished because they have harmed society.	44.5	55.5
Deterrence		
8. Punishing juvenile offenders is the only way to stop them from engaging in more crimes in the future.	18.2	71.8
9. Putting young people in prison does not make much sense because it will only increase crime because prisons are schools of crime.	49.4	50.6
10. Sending young offender to jail will not stop them from committing crimes.	64.2	35.8
Incapacitation		
11. We should put youth in jail so that innocent citizens will be protected from these youth who victimize them if given the chance.	54.1	45.9
12. Since most juvenile offenders will commit crimes over and over again, the only way to protect society is to put the offenders in jail when they are young and throw away the key.	10.2	89.8

Due to a drastic increase in prison populations, lawmakers and judiciaries sought an alternate option for imposing punishment for sentencing offenders. Community corrections tactics were implemented as a result. Community corrections is a relatively new idea that provides judges with an alternative beyond sentencing individuals to a correctional facility.

Table 4 provides the juveniles' levels of support for various community correction options. 86.8 percent of the juveniles either fully support or moderately support juvenile offenders completing coursework to obtain their high school diploma if they have not done so yet. While, 88.5 percent of the juveniles either fully support or moderately support juvenile offenders being taught a skill so that they can acquire a job upon their release from the juvenile facility.

Of the various community corrections options provided in Table 4 almost all of them were moderately or fully supported by 55 percent or greater by the juvenile respondents. However, the tough love category was not thought of highly by the juvenile respondents. For example, scared straight was moderately or fully supported by a mere 40.6 percent and boot camp was moderately or fully supported by only 41.4 percent.

Table 4: Juveniles’ Level of Support for Various Community Corrections Options

Correctional Option	Fully Support	Moderately Support	Slightly Support	Do Not Support
Counseling				
Individual: Having the youth meet with the counselor who would try to solve the emotional problems that caused the youth to get into trouble in the first place.	30.6	34.5	19.6	15.3
Group: Having a counselor meet with a group of juvenile offenders to try to solve the emotional problems that caused them to get into trouble in the first place.	21.3	35.7	23.4	19.6
Family: Having a counselor meet with the entire family and the juvenile to attempt to uncover any issued within the family itself that could be affecting why the juvenile is committing crimes.	26.5	32.5	21.4	19.7
Anger Management: a program designed to teach youth how to recognize and control their anger.	27.2	41.3	20.9	10.6
Drug/Alcohol				
Treatment: having youth enter a program to eliminate their addiction to drugs and/or alcohol.	30.0	32.6	21.9	15.5
Testing: having youth give a urine sample to test if they are using drugs	20.2	33.9	19.7	26.2
Educational/Vocational				
Education: having the youth participate in a program to get their high school diploma if they have not finished high school.	57.7	29.1	7.7	5.6
Vocation: teaching youth a skill (such as plumbing, air conditioning repair, computer repair) so they can get a job.	62.0	26.5	9.0	2.6
Restorative				

Victim restitution: having the youth work in order to pay back the victims for any damages the youth caused.	20.6	35.2	24.5	19.7
Community service: having the youth work in the community (without pay) on such projects as restoring or painting old houses, cleaning up trash, working in public places.	22.7	35.6	24.0	17.6
Tough Love				
Boot camp: having the youth go through a program that is similar to basic training in the military.	17.9	23.5	28.2	30.3
Scared straight: having youth visit an adult prison where inmates yell, insult, and scare youth to deter them from committing any future crimes.	19.7	20.9	23.1	36.3
Monitor				
Electronic monitoring: requires that the juvenile wear a bracelet that tells the probation officer his/her location	17.4	31.5	28.1	23.0
Home incarceration: having youth stay in their home rather than staying in a juvenile correctional facility. Youth on home incarceration would only be allowed to leave their house for certain reasons, such as meeting with their probation officer, attending counseling or going to the doctor.	48.1	31.5	11.9	8.5

In both the adult and juvenile justice systems, researchers have often explored what the purpose of the justice system should be. The four categories of purpose that have been designated to the justice systems overtime are retribution, incapacitation, rehabilitation, and deterrence. Deterrence has been distinguished by two groups- specific deterrence and general deterrence. Specific deterrence received much higher agreement among the respondents with 60.8 percent either strongly agreeing or agreeing that the juvenile justice system should sentence juvenile offenders so that they will learn their lesson and not commit crimes. On the contrary, only 33.1 percent of juveniles strongly agreed of agreed that general deterrence where the

juvenile justice system should sentence offenders to set an example so that others will not commit crimes.

Again, rehabilitation received the highest level of agreement among the respondents. 88 percent of juveniles either strongly agreed or agreed that rehabilitation is the purpose of the juvenile justice system. The purpose of the justice system has often been the topic of discussion among the public and lawmakers. For the purposes of this survey, the juvenile respondents were asked to consider whether they agreed or disagreed with the various purposes of the juvenile justice system. Table 5 indicates that of all five purposes rehabilitation far exceeds any other purpose for agreement among juvenile respondents.

Table 5: Purpose of the Juvenile Justice System

Purpose	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Retribution – Juvenile offenders should be sentenced based solely on the seriousness of their offense	14.5	36.2	31.5	17.9
Incapacitation – Juvenile offenders should be locked up so that they are not able to harm anyone again	3.0	17.4	43.8	35.7
Rehabilitation – The juvenile justice system should treat and help the juvenile offenders with their problems so that they do not commit crimes and return to society as a law-abiding citizen	38.6	49.4	7.7	4.3
Specific Deterrence – The juvenile justice system should sentence the juvenile offenders so that they will learn their lesson and not commit crimes.	12.3	48.5	26.8	12.3
General Deterrence – The juvenile justice system should sentence the juvenile offenders to set an example so that others will not commit crimes.	3.9	29.2	31.8	35.2

The juvenile offenders who were chosen to participate in this survey were asked what they felt were the causes of juvenile offending. Table 6 clearly depicted juveniles felt the environment around them served as a primary factor for why juveniles commit crime. 68.8 percent of juvenile respondents felt that growing up in a lower-income neighborhood with high criminal activity and gang affiliations is a primary cause for juvenile offending. 68.1 percent of juvenile respondents felt that outside influences such as peer pressure and money problems can be attributed to juvenile crime. 63.5 percent of respondents felt that juveniles commit crimes as a way to cope with poor living conditions. The juvenile respondents found these three causes to be of most importance in correlation to causation of juvenile offending, and all three of the causes relate to the daily environment in which the juveniles surround themselves in throughout their daily life.

Table 6: Causes of Juvenile Offending

Causes	Not Important*	Somewhat Important	Important**
Single parent homes – families that have only one parent in the home.	28.5	30.5	41.0
Youth grow up in poor neighborhoods where gangs and other criminal influences are widespread.	12.9	18.3	68.8
Parents who spoil their kids.	46.8	27.4	25.8
The youth have bad character.	26.1	36.6	37.4
The failure of the criminal justice system to punish kids who get into trouble.	40.9	34.2	24.9
Parents who do not spend enough time with or care about their kids.	17.6	16.8	65.6
Their homes were lacking in love, discipline and supervision.	14.1	22.6	63.4
The decline in morality that has taken place in American society.	24.9	31.6	43.4
Youth are too lazy to find a lawful way to get out of a bad situation.	34.4	29.0	36.6
The failure of the government to support programs that will help kids from troubled families.	23.1	26.1	28.2
The lack of good religious upbringing	51.9	23.4	24.7

The failure of parents to punish and discipline kids for their misbehavior.	20.7	29.7	49.5
Schools that fail to provide kids with a good education.	21.9	27.4	50.6
Outside influences such as peer pressure, money problems, etc.	15.6	16.4	68.1
The increase in the number of mothers working rather than staying home with kids.	34.8	36.6	28.6
The failure of the government to provide quality afterschool programs to keep youth out of trouble until their parents get home.	35.6	28.8	35.7
Families that don't provide enough guidance and support.	16.7	26.1	57.2
Youth have little or no self-control.	14.3	30.6	55.1
Society offers them little opportunity to get an education and a job to make money.	13.2	29.1	57.6
Youth commit crimes as a way of coping with poor living conditions (e.g., extreme poverty, violence in the home, family problems).	13.7	22.6	63.5

* Combines responses of “not at all important” and “not very important”

** Combines responses of “important” and “very important”

Discussion

The data presented above showed juveniles strongly support the child saving mentality the juvenile justice system was established upon. This research encompassed multiple facets of juvenile opinion. Not only is it apparent that juveniles are supportive of rehabilitation, but this research allowed us to document what type of rehabilitation would be most effective in the juveniles’ opinion. For the first time, juveniles are able to voice their own opinion of the juvenile justice system, provide their insight on what should be the goal of the juvenile justice system, and specify what they feel causes juveniles to commit crime.

Similar to public opinion, juvenile respondents believed that rehabilitation, at 88 percent (based on table 5), should be the primary focus for the juvenile justice system. Previous research indicated the public still agrees that rehabilitation should be a primary goal of the juvenile justice system. However, the public felt that it should not be the only goal of the juvenile system. The

public supported rehabilitation along with a judicial emphasis on incapacitation. When asked what the juveniles thought of incapacitation and whether or not they felt it should be a primary goal of the juvenile system, only 20.4 percent agreed that it should be a primary goal.

Juvenile offenders appeared to realize they deserve punishment based on their delinquent actions. As table 3 specifies, 54.1 percent of juvenile respondents supported incapacitation by putting youth in jail so that innocent citizens will be protected from youth who victimize. Whereas, 44.5 percent of respondents feel that retribution where the juveniles deserve to be punished because they have harmed society. The juveniles who participated in this survey received six differing options for rehabilitative correctional goals. Of the six options for rehabilitation, 80 percent or more of the juveniles supported each of the options of rehabilitation.

Juveniles did not support either the boot camp or the scared straight program, provided via the tough love programs. Only 41.9 percent of respondents supported electronic monitoring where the juvenile offender had to wear an electronic monitoring device notifying his/her probation officer of his/her location. On the contrary, 79.6 percent of juveniles supported at-home incarceration wherein the juvenile could only leave his/her home for specific reasons such as: going to the doctor, meeting with his/her probation officer, going to school, and/or attending counseling. Based on the responses given by the juvenile respondents, it appears that juveniles are obstinate in their opinions and beliefs about what will work and what should be the goals of juvenile justice.

Accompanying the data presented above are some limitations. Due to the stipulations on utilizing juveniles for research purposes, we were unable to dissect the findings based on gender and race. However, the juveniles in this facility were not required to participate in this survey. It was solely based on personal choice. As noted before, there were a total of 335 juveniles in the

two facilities, but only 310 were allowed to be administered the survey. Of those 310 distributed surveys, only 245 were completed. While this is unprecedented research, readers must consider that this sample was only administered in two juvenile correctional facilities in one Midwestern state. Therefore, it would be an unjust generalization to assume that this data holds valid for the all juvenile offenders in the United States.

An additional limitation to this research is that there were contradictions within some of the juvenile respondents answers. A very evident contradiction surrounds the idea of incapacitation and deterrence. In table 2, juvenile respondents indicated that incapacitation only holds 8.7 percent of being a very important goal or an important goal of the juvenile justice system. Whereas in table 3, 54.1 percent of respondents agreed that youth should be put in jail so that innocent citizens will be protected from youth who victimize them if given the chance. Also in table 5, the juvenile respondents reported that 20.4 percent either strongly agree or agree that the purpose of the juvenile system should be to lock up offenders so that they are unable to harm anyone again. It is evident that juvenile respondents hold an array of opinions regarding incapacitation, and regrettably during this research experiment we were unable to fully grasp an understanding as to why the juveniles answered the way that they did which poses as an additional limitation.

Deterrence also seems to hold contradictions for the juvenile respondents. In table 2, the juveniles were asked their views on the importance of the goals of the juvenile justice system. Only 11.2 percent of respondents found it important or very important to punish juveniles as a method to deter other juveniles from committing future crimes, and 41.9 percent found it important or very important for the juvenile system to punish juveniles to deter the juvenile offenders from recidivating. In table 3, only 18.2 percent of juveniles felt that punishing

juveniles is the only way to stop them from engaging in more crimes, and 64.2 percent felt that sending young offenders to jail would not stop them from committing more crimes.

Table 5 is where the contradiction regarding deterrence can be found. 60.8 percent of juveniles felt that the juvenile justice system should sentence juvenile offenders so that they will learn their lesson and not commit crime. Whereas, 33.1 percent of respondents felt that the juvenile system should sentence juvenile offenders to set an example so that others will learn their lesson and not commit crimes. Unfortunately due to time restraints and the limitations placed on utilizing juveniles for research, we were unable to dive deeper into what the juveniles actually meant by some of their contradictions.

This survey sheds a light on juvenile opinion for the first as well as creates a great foundation for future researchers. Future research should be aimed to attempt to better understand why deterrence and incapacitation does not rank high among juvenile offenders and seems to be exceedingly contradictory among them. If assumptions were to be made regarding the reasoning behind the contradictions, it would be fair to assume that while the juveniles know that their actions were negligent and unlawful, they are still juveniles and naturally they do not want to be incarcerated for a long period of time and lose direct contact with their family and friends. However, they seem to agree that negligent actions deserve punishment, but when realizing it is their individual person assuming the punishment, it does not appear quite as popular.

It must be understood that this survey was given to a group of juvenile offenders to determine their opinions on a system that designed to rehabilitate them, but over time transformed into a system that now predominately administers punishment. While the juveniles did not specifically agree with incapacitation, they agreed that they deserved to be punished for

negligent actions. Table 6 provides detrimental information that could be viable for future research concerning what various causes influence juveniles to commit crime. Along with understanding the causations that motivate juveniles to commit crime, it is imperative that the juvenile justice system utilize the juvenile offender's responses when considering system changes.

The respondents' answers corroborated the initial discussion of whether or not juvenile offenders hold to the child saving mentality. The juveniles' beliefs are indeed in alignment with the public opinion on the juvenile justice system supporting that the child saving mentality is indeed not dead, and that the juvenile system should continue to operate in accordance to the child saving mentality. Due to the proliferation in juvenile crime, the changes that have been done to the juvenile justice system are inevitable. While the increase in public support for a punitive juvenile justice system does not go unnoticed, neither does the continued support for juvenile offender rehabilitation. In lieu of the juvenile respondents answers in concurrence with the public's opinion, the research proves that rehabilitation should continue to be a primary focus of the juvenile justice system.

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