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Ryan Garner

Evaluation of the Juvenile Justice System

Senior Thesis

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The chief problem in any community cursed with crime is not the punishment of criminals, but the preventing of the young from being trained to crime (W.E.B. DuBois)

A Brief History of Juvenile Justice:

A grasp of the current conflict surrounding the responsibility and direction of the juvenile justice system becomes more obtainable when one takes into consideration how the system has progressed since its inception. The juvenile justice system was created in the late 1800s to reform U.S. policies regarding youthful offenders. Since that time, a number of reforms aimed at both protecting the "due process of law" rights of youth, and creating an aversion toward jail among the young have made the juvenile justice system more comparable to the adult system, a shift from the U.S.'s original intent.

The Progressive Era in the U.S. was a time of extensive social reform. The period, which formally spanned between 1900 and 1918, was preceded by nearly a century of discontent. During the Progressive Era Americans saw the growth of the women's suffrage movement, the campaign against child labor, the fight for the eight-hour workday, and the uses of journalism and cartooning to expose "big business" corruption. Prior to the Progressive Era child offenders over the age of seven were imprisoned with adults. Such had been the model historically. But the actions of political and social reformers, as well as the research of psychologists in the 18th and 19th centuries, began a shift in society's views on juvenile delinquents. Early reformers who were interested in rehabilitating rather than punishing children built the New York House of Refuge in 1824. The reformatory housed juveniles who earlier would have been placed in adult jails. Beginning in 1899, individual states took note of the problem of youth incarceration and began establishing similar youth reform homes.
Such early changes to the justice system were made under a newfound conviction that society had a responsibility to recover the lives of its young offenders before they became absorbed in the criminal activity they were taking part in. The juvenile justice system exercised its authority within a "parens patriae" (state as parent or guardian) role. The state assumed the responsibility of parenting the children until they began to exhibit positive changes, or became adults. Youth were no longer tried as adult offenders. Their cases were heard in a somewhat informal court designed for juveniles, often without the assistance of attorneys. Extenuating evidence, outside of the legal facts surrounding the crime or delinquent behavior, was taken into consideration by the judge. Early reform houses were, in many ways, similar to orphanages. Indeed, many of the youth housed in the reformatories were orphans and homeless children.

By the 1960s juvenile courts had jurisdiction over nearly all cases involving persons under the age of 18, and transfers into the adult criminal system were made only through a waiver of the juvenile court's authority. Juvenile courts aimed to make their 'civil proceedings' unlike adult 'criminal trials.' The civil proceedings, however, did not afford youths who were indeed facing a potential loss of liberty the due process of law rights explicated in the 5th and 14th Amendments. The right to trial by jury and the freedom against self-incrimination were guaranteed to citizens in 5th Article of the Bill of Rights (ratified 1791). This Article, the 5th Amendment to the Constitution, states that "No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury...nor shall [a person] be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself." The 14th Amendment required that all citizens of the U.S. receive equal protection under the law. The Amendment states, "No
State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." The 14th Amendment was ratified in 1868.

A 1967 decision by the Supreme Court affirmed the necessity of requiring juvenile courts to respect the due process of law rights of juveniles during their proceedings. The ruling was the result of an evaluation of Arizona's decision to confine Gerald Francis Gault. Gault (age 15) had been placed in detention for making an obscene call to a neighbor while under probation. The Arizona juvenile court had decided to place him in the State Industrial School until he became an adult (age 21) or was "discharged by due process of law." The Supreme Court decision, delivered by Justice Abe Fortas, emphasized that youth had a right to receive fair treatment under the law and pointed out the following rights of minors: The right to receive notice of charges, The right to obtain legal counsel, The right to confrontation and cross-examination, The privilege against self-incrimination, The right to receive a transcript of the proceedings, and The right to appellate review.

The Juvenile Justice System of 2004:

A juvenile justice system separate from the adult justice system was established in the United States about 100 years ago with the goal of diverting youthful offenders from the destructive punishments of criminal courts and encouraging rehabilitation based on the individual juvenile's needs. In practice, there was always a tension between social welfare and social control that is, focusing on the best interests of the individual child versus focusing on punishment, incapacitation, and protecting society from certain
offenses. This tension has shifted over time and has varied significantly from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, and it remains today.

It is important to remember that the United States has at least 51 different juvenile justice systems, not one. Given the local nature of juvenile justice in the United States, there has never been a single dominant vision of how to deal with delinquent children in law or in practice. The trend during the past decade, however, has been toward stiffening the laws dealing with juveniles. Every state made changes in its laws and policies governing juvenile justice during the 1990s. These changes include easier waivers to adult court, excluding certain offenses from juvenile court jurisdiction, blended juvenile and adult sentences, increased authority for prosecutors to decide to file cases in adult court, and more frequent custodial placement of adjudicated delinquents.

The great majority of recent changes in juvenile justice law and practice have not been evaluated. Research to date shows that juveniles placed in secure detention or incarceration suffer a wide range of negative effects and those transferred to adult court may be more likely to re-offend than those who remain under juvenile court jurisdiction.

Increasing numbers of young people are placed in secure detention, which disrupts young people's lives and has negative effects on behavior and future developmental trajectories. Incarcerated juveniles have higher rates of physical injury and mental health problems, and they have poorer educational outcomes, than do their counterparts who are treated in the community. Incarceration also causes severe and long-term problems with future employment, leaving ex-offenders with few economic alternatives, which often lead them back to crime. Recent research also demonstrates that
many serious as well as non-serious offenders can be treated in the community without endangering public safety.

Information about the number of juveniles in custody, in detention centers, jails, juvenile correctional facilities, or adult correctional facilities is very poor. Data on the conditions under which juveniles are incarcerated and the types of services available to them are minimal. From the few available data, it appears that the rate of juveniles placed in custodial institutions has increased substantially in the past two decades, leading to widespread overcrowding in detention and other correctional facilities.

The National System at Work:

The juvenile justice system in America is based on approximately 4,000 juvenile courts which specialize in the problems of youth and operate with a philosophy (of rehabilitation) that even the worst delinquent is not to be considered a criminal, or bad person, but instead an erring or sick child who needs help. Police arrests some 2.8 million juveniles for crimes annually, but only about 1.8 million are processed as delinquents by the courts. Numerous others are dealt with in a variety of ways, as the following list illustrates: Delinquents a term applied to the annual number (1.8 million) arrested and convicted of criminal offenses, usually of a serious or chronic nature, and are sentenced with probation (54%), prison (28%), fine (13%), or conditional release (5%). Status offenders is a term for (2.2 million) youth who are annually caught doing something wrong only because it's outlawed for a young person to do that (on account of the status of being young), with runaway, truancy, and curfew violations being the most common offenses, and they are channeled directly by police into a separate subsystem of group homes and shelters, and labeled PINS (persons in need of supervision), CHIPS
(children in need of protection and services), or MINS (minors in need of supervision) by
the court or child protective agency (Glossary of Terms in Juvenile Justice).

Abused and neglected is a term for (3.3 million) youth who are annually involved
in reports of child abuse and neglect to a state child protective agency, and 1.1 million
confirmed cases are channeled directly by social workers into a separate subsystem of
temporary foster home placements, with social workers evaluating the child's upbringing
and fitness of parents. Dependent a term used to describe (0.8 million) un-emancipated
youth who are annually put up for adoption or made a ward of the state on account of
parental abandonment (750,000), discarded as infants in public places (125), orphaned
because of parental accident (400), unclaimed at the hospital (31,000), or left for dead in
attempted infanticide (600), and are channeled directly by police into a separate
subsystem of orphanages, private foundation homes, and state homes for girls and boys
(Glossary of Terms in Juvenile Justice).

The juvenile justice system can be defined as all government or government-
funded agencies that investigate, supervise, adjudicate, care for, confine, or treat youth
who are subject to the jurisdiction of the juvenile court. There are some unique aspects
of juvenile court jurisdiction, however. For one thing, most state juvenile courts will
gladly prosecute federal laws or the laws of another state on behalf of another
jurisdiction. This runs contrary to the principle that nobody should enforce another
jurisdiction's laws. The juvenile justice system is also encapsulated with many non-
governmental social workers, psychologists, and behavioral scientists because a large
number of staff is needed to handle the enormous workload. There is also notable
variation between states and even at the county level in the various ways problems are
dealt with. The most common theme is jurisdiction by age, in what is called the age of majority (the age at which one is considered an adult). Thirty-nine states set that age at the 18th birthday, 8 states (Texas, Louisiana, Georgia, South Carolina, Illinois, Missouri, Michigan, Massachusetts) set it at 17, and 3 states (New York, North Carolina, Connecticut) set it at 16. When a child reaches the age of majority in a state, they come under adult criminal court jurisdiction (The Juvenile Court and the Role of the Juvenile Court Judge).

It is vital to understand the Steps of the juvenile justice process in order to understand the system as a whole, and these generally appear as case flow diagrams which can be found in a number of places, but specifically by searching the website for OJJDP (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention). It is generally agreed upon that there are ten basic steps to all procedures: (1) intake and screening; (2) detention; (3) probation; (4) record-keeping; (5) psychological services; (6) protective services; (7) medical services; (8) volunteer services; (9) court services; and (10) parole or aftercare (Youth on Trial: A Developmental Perspective on Juvenile Justice).

A large correctional apparatus exists in juvenile justice. There are short-term facilities (detention centers), as well as shelters and reception and diagnostic centers. Long-term facilities include training schools, ranches, forestry camps, boot camps, farms, halfway houses, and group homes. There are more of the latter than the former. In addition, there are numerous private institutions and a number of psychiatric hospitals and treatment centers. The correctional landscape of juvenile justice is quite different from the correctional system in the adult world. While most facilities are small, America
contains about 70 large facilities for juveniles (Social Class and Delinquent Behavior in a National Youth Panel).

Juveniles usually enter the system via police contact. About 85% of delinquency cases involve a police referral. About 10% of cases involve parents who have their child declared ungovernable. The remainder of cases is the work of teachers, neighbors, and business owners using the juvenile justice system to rid themselves of a troublemaker.

There are many avenues of entry into the system. The Police Response involves several options: warn and release ("move along" or "go home"), release after filling out an interview card ("Field investigation" or "field contact"), station adjustment (a good talking to down at the police station), refer to parents (with a good talking to the parents), release to parents with a referral to some community agency, refer to some diversionary program operated by the police or community agency, issue a misdemeanor citation (requiring a later appearance in court), detain, transport, and schedule an appearance before juvenile court.

There have been many sociological studies of police response. The majority tells us that about 66% of police contacts involve the non-arrest options, station adjustment being quite common. Other studies indicate that arrest is only used 15% of the time. There has been significant research interest in the determinants of arrest. Most studies find that black males are the most likely group to be arrested, but then, that is the group most likely to be involved in serious offending. Females are surprisingly likely to be arrested for minor offenses, however, some studies indicate that if the female cries, has children to care for, and claims, for example, they were led astray by men, police officers show some discretion. Experts argue over whether police officers hold paternalistic and
chivalrous attitudes toward female offenders, or whether we have entered an age marked by the end of chivalry where police arrest females just as frequently as males (Girls, Delinquency, and Juvenile Justice).

The factors that can influence a police response are many. Early sociological studies made much of the "demeanor hypothesis" the idea that how the offender behaves or carries himself (demeanor) determines the police response; i.e., whether or not they flunk the "attitude test". The most important factor in recent studies has been offense seriousness; i.e., a felony merits an arrest, and cannot be overlooked. Police departments develop their own style of policing juveniles, and many make use of community sentiments and/or the wishes of complainants in this day and age of community policing.

Police regularly read Miranda rights to juveniles they process, and they don't have to have a parent present to do so since the case of Fare v. Michael (1979) allowed juvenile to waive their own rights. Police can also exercise something called preventive detention (if the offense is serious and the person is deemed a danger to themselves or others) under the ruling in Schall v. Martin (1984). Federal guidelines require a juvenile so detained in a lockup normally designed for adults to not exceed six hours and be in a separate area out of sight and sound of adult inmates.

The court response begins with intake screening, of course, and traditionally, probation officers have done this although there is some current controversy over what the educational qualifications ought to be for someone who does intake. Social workers are used in some jurisdictions as well as paralegals from the prosecutor's office in other jurisdictions. During the intake period, a parent or guardian is interviewed, criminal backgrounds are checked, the complaint is reviewed for legal sufficiency (grounds to
continue), and appropriateness for diversion or treatment is determined. Whether or not
detention is appropriate before a formal court appearance is also determined. The court
response involves several options: dismissal of the charges, informal supervision or
"informal probation", referral to a social service agency, and formal petition for
adjudication with juvenile court (The Juvenile Court and the Role of the Juvenile Court
Judge).

Intake personnel are usually influenced heavily by prior offenses (if any). There
should be a determination of the pattern of delinquency being displayed by the youth. In
some jurisdictions, intake personnel have their hands tied by prior-record criteria. In
such cases, automatic waivers to adult criminal court may kick in. Separate hearings are
usually required, however, to go over the waiver's appropriateness, but the process varies
by jurisdiction, in some cases being based on the absence of good juvenile treatment
programs in the local area, and in other cases, not even involving a judge, but
prosecutorial discretion. A standard finding in the criminal justice literature is that
transfers to the adult system have no deterrent effect, and often make the person more
likely to commit crime in the future once released (The transfer of juveniles to criminal
court: Does it make a difference?). There are few good national estimates on how
frequently adult waivers are used, but a modest estimate would be about 5% of all cases.

The adjudication hearing is the equivalent of a trial, with all the trappings of a
trial, such as pretrial motions, subpoenas, and plea-bargaining. The same rules of
evidence and procedure used in the adult system apply to juvenile adjudications.

Jurisdictions vary over the qualifications of the hearing officer. In some places, it doesn't
have to be a judge, but can be any lawyer empowered to hear juvenile cases, sometimes
called a referee, court master, commissioner, or mediator (in places that have embraced restorative justice). Also, some places allow jury trials, even though juveniles have no right to a jury trial. The vast majority of adjudications go "uncontested" which means, like an arraignment, the offender pleads guilty (accepting a preset plea bargain). The most common dispositions are dismissal of charges and informal probation (with the understanding that the offender will voluntarily do something to redeem themselves). In some places, parental responsibility laws kick in, and one or both parents are the ones facing punishment. However, this practice has been mostly replaced by parenting classes.

The prevailing sentiment of juvenile justice is to get as many "uncontested" adjudications as possible. Some states use teen courts as a way to do this. Someone qualifies for teen court by admitting the charges against them, but allows the teen court to understand the circumstances and settle on the punishment. There are three varieties of teen courts: (1) the youth advocate model where youth serve as attorneys and an adult as judge; (2) the youth judge model where a youth serves as judge and adults serve as attorneys; (3) the tribunal model where three or more youth serve as judges; and (4) the peer jury model, where jurors question the defendant directly. The youth advocate model is probably the most commonly used. The most frequent disposition is community service, but teen courts come up with rather unique methods of victim apology as well as relying strongly upon restitution (monetary cash payments) for harm done.

When incarceration is the disposition (usually mandated by statutory sentencing guidelines), an indeterminate sentence is the norm. This means a stretch in the number of years making up the sentence; say 1-3 years, with parole eligibility sometime after a year
and a half. If the offender is old enough, a blended sentence may be used, which means that some of the time will be spent in a juvenile facility and some of the time will be spent in an adult facility. The disposition hearing is a separate hearing from the adjudication hearing. If state juvenile facilities are overcrowded, the juvenile court can simply commit the youth to the state for later placement in a facility, effectively making it the state's problem. Disposition hearings require the filing of a persistence investigation report (PSI), which is completed by a probation officer or investigator with the prosecutor's office.

The correctional response can be described as involving institutions, which are either "open" or "closed", with the open institutions being community-based to some degree. Community-based corrections have been the emphasis of juvenile justice ever since the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 started the decarceration or deinstitutionalization movement as well as a concern over disproportionate minority confinement. National statistics do not clearly differentiate between types of institutions, but it is clear that more detention facilities exist than training schools. Detention centers are supposed to be short-term facilities, and indeed that is true since the average length of stay is longer in training schools.

Detention centers tend to be jail-like structures located in rural areas. Some are private, and most are well run. They hold a variety of youth, including status offenders, bootstrapped status offenders (technical violators of a court order), and in some cases, those awaiting trial. There are few treatment programs, however, with medical and educational services only being available. There are studies of detention centers that show high rates of attempted suicide, suicide, self-mutilation, and self-destructive
behavior, but not significantly higher than that found in the typical jail population. Some private detention centers are more "open" than closed, relying more upon staff rather than walls and fences.

Training schools tend to look like the grounds of a high school, some are even co-ed, and they are either secure or semi-secure facilities; i.e., closed institutions. State-of-the-art perimeter security is likely to be found, although all such correctional institutions for juveniles are staffed at a much greater ratio than for adult correctional facilities. There are about 70 maximum-security facilities for juveniles across America, and each state has at least one. The average training school holds about 50 residents, and the large-scale ones hold 800 residents or so. Youth placed in such facilities must first go through a reception and diagnostic center. There are a variety of treatment programs, such as counseling, education, vocational training, peer group activities, and GED completion is often a condition of release. There are reports that healthcare and injury prevention are slack, however. 75% of all training schools are state-run facilities, and most are overcrowded. Inmate rape and abuse are believed to be common.

Wilderness programs based on the Outward Bound model of mountain climbing, backpacking, and mountain biking can be found in some places, and promise incarcerated youth a physically and emotionally challenging experience. Studies of such programs parallel the results from evaluations of boot camps and Scared Straight-like programs - there are brief positive effects on self-esteem and desire not to re-offend, but over time, the effect is diminished, and can have backlash effects, which mean even worse offending.
Group homes, halfway houses, foster homes, and day treatment centers are the primary "open" facilities in juvenile corrections. They usually allow the residents to go out during the day but require them to come in at night. Escapes, re-offending, and technical violations are common. Many such places are used as part of an aftercare plan for inmates who have worked their way up a point or honor system from training schools or detention centers. There is little sound research on the effectiveness of such institutions. It can safely be said, in summarizing the literature, that there are few juvenile justice responses that have been found to reduce delinquency.

**Juvenile Justice System of Pennsylvania:**

Pennsylvania is in the process of transforming its juvenile justice system with the adoption of a purpose clause that highlights consideration of the public interest while stressing the importance of programs that protect the community; hold the offender accountable; and develop offender competencies. This purpose incorporates a philosophy known as balanced and restorative justice that requires the system to serve three distinct clients: the community, the victim, and the offender. Pennsylvania may be the first state in the nation to incorporate these principles into the preamble of juvenile law (Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency).

The state of Pennsylvania juvenile justice system follows the delinquency proceedings of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. Under the act the state must preserve the unity of the family whenever possible or to provide another alternative permanent family when the unity of the family cannot be maintained. The state is called upon to provide the care, protection, safety and wholesome mental and physical development of children coming within the provisions of the law. The State
must stay consistent with the protection of the public interest, to provide for children committing delinquent acts programs of supervision, care and rehabilitation which provide balanced attention to the protection of the community, the imposition of accountability for offenses committed and the development of competencies to enable children to become responsible and productive members of the community (Juvenile Justice Act).

Under the Act 148, the state must achieve the foregoing purposes in a family environment whenever possible, separating the child from parents only when necessary for his welfare, safety or health or in the interests of public safety. Also the state must provide means through which the provisions of this chapter are executed and enforced and in which the parties are assured a fair hearing and their constitutional and other legal rights recognized and enforced (Juvenile Justice Act).

**An Overview of Juvenile Delinquency:**

To fully understand the juvenile justice system it is important to understand what the system is dealing with. Juvenile delinquency is widespread, so widespread, it can be talked about as being a normal part of growing up, in the sense that rebellion and anti-adult behavior is normal. Each generation engages in it with such a regular, creative fervor, that you would think we know something about it by now. Some of those regularities include the following: Boys more than girls are involved in delinquency, by about a fairly stable 4-1 ratio, although the ratio is much closer for runaway behavior (1:1), embezzlement (1:1), forgery (2:1), and larceny-theft (3:1) (Chesney-Lind & Sheldon 1991). Nonwhite males (40%) constitute the largest group of delinquents, followed by white males (22%), nonwhite females (18%), and white females (10%), with
estimates not equal to a hundred because of statistical variation (Wolfgang, Figlio, & Sellin 1972). Age tends to produce a curvilinear pattern, with delinquency beginning in early adolescence (11-12), peaking in the mid-teens (15-16), and decreasing in later years (19-20), whereas an "aging out" effect normally takes place by age 24 (Jessor & Jessor 1977).

Victimization is also significant among young people, as 12-17 year olds are two to three times more likely to become a victim of violence by a friend or acquaintance (66% of the time as opposed to 34% of the time by a stranger) as those over age 18 (Snyder & Sickmund 1999). Peer influence is a factor, and in fact, delinquency is a group phenomenon where solo offending is very rare (Shaw & McKay 1942). Poverty is a factor, whereas lower class youth are over represented among those who commit more serious offenses, like felony assault and robbery (Elliott & Huizinga 1983).

Economy and demographics are long-term factors where it's always the case that when the economy is doing good, we see terrible increases in juvenile crime while adult crime goes down in a good economy (one reason why juvenile delinquency is sometimes called a crime of affluence), and it's always true that juvenile crime rates go up and down in proportion to "baby booms" and boomlets (Gurr 1977).

**Theories to explain Juvenile Delinquency:**

Criminology is a rich discipline with multifarious approaches. While understanding that no approach stands on its own, and there is a degree of interpenetration between approaches it is still useful to classify approaches at least as ideal types. Here I will attempt to classify the criminological approaches broadly within
the following framework, positivist approaches, strain theories, social control theories, youth sub culture theories, and labeling theories.

The positivist theory or approach is most commonly found within the juvenile justice system, this theory supports the idea that rehabilitation will alter the lives of youth offenders and lead them away from a life of crime. The positivist approach is one that advocates that individuals commit crimes either because of biology, environmental factors or sociological factors. Individuals thus commit crimes for reasons often beyond their control and they should be ‘cured’ of their disposition to commit crimes. Positivist approaches thus recommend an individualized approach where offenders are classified and different kinds of treatments are prescribed. Thus a whole range of expert interventions is recommended to ensure that the individual does not commit crime again as suggested by sociologists, psychologists, doctors, social workers and other experts.

The Justice system as a whole strongly believes in the classical theory, which is premised on the notion of free will. If individuals commit crime, it is because they freely choose to do so and have to take responsibility for their action. Since individuals are responsible for their actions this theory advocates that punishment is a way of deterring rational individuals (all individuals are rational) from committing crime. Classical theory is based on a Benthamite calculus of pleasure and pain and believes that if pain is administered by way of imprisonment then wrong doing would be deterred.

The juvenile justice system is in place to rehabilitate youth offenders with the goal of leading them away from a life of incarceration. However, the system is also in place to punish individuals who break societies laws. The Juvenile justice system relies
heavily positivist theory and the control theory when deciding on policy and programs for youth offenders.

The strain theory is an approach that decisively moves responsibility for crime away from the individual person on to the social structure. Crime is not the result of an individual predisposition for crime, but happens because of the way society has structured common goals and ways to achieve them. For example in Merton’s analysis, if all individuals share the common American dream of financial success, but the institutional means to achieve success are limited to a few, then one outcome would be crime, which is a non institutional means to achieve the same. Thus crime is seen as an outcome of a social disease be it inequality of opportunity, inability to integrate those considered alien or a socially and culturally discriminatory attitude.

In my short time working with juvenile offenders I found that the strain theory can be applied loosely to the inmate population, and be applied only when making generalizations about the population. The juvenile detention centers have a very diverse population; the situations that lead youth to crime are often complex in nature. The circumstances under which youth commit crimes vary between individuals and cannot be solely blamed on societies structure.

Social Control theory is premised on the idea that it is an individual’s bond to society, which makes the difference in terms of whether or not they abide by society’s general rules and values. I believe this theory works well in explaining juvenile delinquency, however only works when applied when making generalizations about youth offenders. Hirchi theorized that the social bond is made up of four elements which include Attachment which is the ties of affection and respect to significant others in one’s
life, and more generally a sensitivity to the opinion of others. Commitment describes the investment of time and energy in activities such as school and various conventional and unconventional means and goals. Involvement explains the patterns of living which shape immediate and long term opportunities, for example, the idea that keeping busy doing conventional things will reduce the exposure of young people to illegal opportunities. Lastly the idea of belief which is the degree to which young people agree with the rightness of legal rules, which are seen to reflect a general moral consensus in society,

It is the combination of attachment, commitment, involvement and belief which shapes the life world of the young person and which essentially dictates whether they will take advantage of conventional means of social advancement or whether they will pursue illegal pathways to self gratification.

Youth subcultures, is another important theory closely linked to social control theory is the idea of youth subcultures, wherein what society calls criminal behavior is learnt in a group setting. The sub culture sees itself as operating on different value systems, different notions of right and wrong and individuals act in conformity to the norms of the subculture to which they belong. Subcultures are also seen as a response to social and economic marginalization and are a creative mode of coping with or resisting deprivation.

**Delinquency Services in Pennsylvania:**

So how does the system combat juvenile delinquency? The delinquency services of Pennsylvania are broken into primarily four sections: Delinquency Intake Screening, Diversion, Direct Placement, and Detention centers. Delinquency Intake Screening, probation supervision, and aftercare services are organized at the county level under the
administrative authority of the juvenile court judge. Juvenile probation officers serve as the primary point of contact throughout case processing beginning with intake and terminating with case closing. Counties fund detention facilities. The Department of Public Welfare's Office of Children, Youth, and Families administers non-secure youth forestry camps and secure youth development centers (Assessing Detained Youth in Pennsylvania).

Diversion takes place all across the state, juvenile probation officers or prosecutors redirect less serious juvenile offenders from the formal judicial process to diversion programs. Diversion programs attempt to hold juvenile offenders accountable by requiring them to perform community service and/or address victim concerns. Probation departments, police departments, and prosecutor offices administer diversion programs that involve various models of neighborhood-based youth aid panels (Neighborhood-based responses to minor delinquency, 1997).

The courts often opt to directly place juvenile offenders in private residential facilities without committing the youth to the Department of Public Welfare. Act 148 of 1976 mandated state reimbursement to counties for services provided to dependent and delinquent children and their families. Act 148 encourages and provides financial incentives to counties to expand the range of community-based services rather than rely on state institutions. This provision encourages local planning and coordination of services and assists county commissioners/human services administrators in managing the number of out-of-home placements (Juvenile Court Judges’ Commission).

The court also has the option of sending juvenile offenders to detention facilities. The county in which they are located primarily operates juvenile detention centers. As of
2002, there are 23 juvenile detention facilities in operation across Pennsylvania. With a combined 761-bed capacity, 21 of these facilities are county owned and 2 are privately owned. The state reimburses counties 50% of their detention expenditures. The Juvenile Act does not preclude placing delinquent youth in secure detention facilities as a sanction for violating probation or as a disposition; however, detention as a disposition is discouraged. The Juvenile Detention Centers Association of Pennsylvania (JDCAP) developed performance-based juvenile detention program standards in 1993 to govern the provision of services to youth held in detention centers. Several detention centers are participating in the Mental Health Assessment Project and are administering the new screening instrument to all new admissions (Pennsylvania Progress, 2000).

**Juvenile Detention:**

You enter the building through what is called a sally port literally, “a gate or passage in a fortified place” and once inside you’re searched and sorted according to size and shape. For clothes you’re issued baggy, convict-style scrubs. There are security cameras everywhere you’re led, and no doors that will open at your touch. “Your” room consists of a toilet, a table, a metal bed and is as barren as any cell. And yet, this is not a bad place. The Schaffner Youth Detention center located in the borough of Steelton, Dauphin County, Pennsylvania a multi-service site that includes detention and shelter services for males and females. The 35,375 Square Feet of operating space opened its doors to inmates in January of 1996. However unwillingly they arrive here, many juvenile residents of Schaffner are favorably impressed with the facility. Many of the inmates that I talked to reported that the Center was better than they thought it would be.
Apart from meals and supervision, a stay at Schaffner means a medical examination, much-needed dental care, access to a walk-in mental health clinic, and basic classes at an onsite school operated by the county's intermediate education unit. Whatever they may be going through, wherever they may be headed, this is a safe place in the meantime, considerably safer than the streets from which many of them come.

Providing safety, secure care, and services to young people who are stuck, for the moment, "in the meantime" that's the difficult but necessary job that Schaffner and the 22 other juvenile detention facilities scattered across the state have been asked to do.

On paper the juvenile detention centers seems to be an appropriate response to deal with juvenile offenders, however like any system, there are major problems that lie within the walls of these centers that house our youth.

Problems with Pennsylvania’s Juvenile Detention:

Juvenile Detention by the Numbers:

There were just over 20,000 admissions to Pennsylvania’s juvenile detention centers in 2001 with Philadelphia’s Youth Study Center, Allegheny County’s Shuman Center, and Dauphin County’s Schaffner Youth Center together accounting for over half (54%) of the state’s total, while smaller facilities in Blair, Cambria, Tioga and Centre Counties accounted for less than one-half percent combined. Generally, detention admissions rose steadily statewide throughout the 1990s, but have begun to level off in recent years (Final Report: Pennsylvania Juvenile Detention Assessment).

Capacity and Utilization:

Pennsylvania’s 23 secure detention centers had a combined licensed capacity of 712 beds in 2001. The state’s total bed capacity increased 31% over the decade from
1991 to 2001. However, beds weren’t always available where they were most likely to be used. Eight detention facilities practically all in the populous southeastern part of the state operated over capacity in 2001. Most of these facilities are in fact chronically over-utilized; with average daily populations that exceed the number of beds they are licensed to provide year in and year out. On an average day in 2001, 334 juvenile detainees—about 48% of Pennsylvania’s total were being held in such facilities (Final Report: Pennsylvania Juvenile Detention Assessment).

Crowding in detention is not a problem unique to Pennsylvania, of course. In 1995, for example, a nationwide survey found that nearly three-quarters of all juveniles in detention were being held in facilities operating above their design capacity (Snyder, H. and Sickmund, M. 1999).

Population:

A demographic profile of admissions to secure detention centers turns up a few surprises. The typical detention admission involves an older youth, as you might expect, well over half of those in 2001 involved juveniles 16 or over. But more than 10% involved children between 10 and 13. Which means that, in a typical facility of median size (20), two of the beds on any given night were likely to be occupied by middle or even elementary school students. Likewise, while girls accounted for less than 17% of all admissions to detention in 2001, and that proportion has not changed radically in recent years, with female admissions increasing 38% from 1997 to 2001. Racially, most detention admissions in Philadelphia involved non-Hispanic black youth. In the rest of the state, most detention admissions involved non-Hispanic whites (Final Report: Pennsylvania Juvenile Detention Assessment).
Charges:

Although secure detention is popularly thought of as a measure required to safeguard the public against violent offenders, in 2001 only about a third of all detention admissions outside of Philadelphia involved cases in which any sort of violence was alleged (homicide, simple or aggravated assault, robbery, violent sexual offenses, and other sexual or person offenses). A quarter of all admissions involved property offenses (burglary, theft, being in possession of stolen property, arson, and even vandalism and trespass). Ten percent involved drug offenses, and another ten percent involved probation violations. In some admittedly rare cases, the most serious charges recorded against detainees were public order, traffic, and disorderly conduct infractions (Final Report: Pennsylvania Juvenile Detention Assessment).

Length of Stay:

Overall, the average length of stay in juvenile detention was 12.5 days in 2001, and the median length of stay was 5 days. Of course, numbers like these mask large variations, even within individual facilities. Detention is supposed to be a relatively brief experience, and for many juveniles it is. But some linger in detention for long periods. Perhaps they have already been adjudicated, and are awaiting scarce openings in residential facilities that are capable of meeting their needs. This is quite often the case with juveniles who have mental health problems (Schaffner home page).

Detention Criteria and Decision Making:

Virtually all-local jurisdictions adhere to statewide standards spelling out criteria for secure detention. But in most places, the admissions process itself, the procedure for determining which juveniles actually will be detained is relatively unstructured. Pennsylvania’s statewide detention standards trace their origin to federal class action
litigation filed in 1981 and settled in 1986. Originally embodied in a statewide consent
decree that eventually became the basis for the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission's
(JCJC) and laid out standards for governing the use of secure detention under the Juvenile
Act. (While the standards have now outlived the consent decree on which they were
based, compliance with them is a mandatory condition of county participation in the
JCJC's grant-in-aid program.) For each type of detention authorized under the Juvenile
Act, that is, detention "required to protect the person or property of others," detention
"required...because the child may abscond or be removed from the jurisdiction," and so
on (Juvenile Court Judges' Commission).

The Detention Standards specify minimum criteria that must be met. In cases in
which secure detention is being considered on public safety grounds, for example, the
Detention Standards impose a minimum offense/offense history guideline list of 17
specific, mostly violent offenses or offense categories (including homicide, rape, robbery,
kidnapping, aggravated assault, and any offense involving the use or possession of a
deadly weapon) that must be alleged; if a less serious charge is involved, it must be
coupled with a specified court involvement history. In order even to reach the issue of
whether detention is necessary to protect persons or property, in other words, the
decision-maker must first determine that the alleged offense or the offense in
combination with the juvenile's past history qualifies the case for public safety detention
consideration. Likewise, in any case in which secure detention is being considered in
order to ensure attendance at hearings, the Detention Standards require a showing that the
juvenile actually is an absconder or fugitive, has a documented history of absconding or
failing to appear for hearings, or else presents extraordinary circumstances that make
absconding likely (Controlling the Front Gates: Effective Admissions Policies and Practices).

Nevertheless, the detention standards were never meant to dictate detention decisions. The purpose of setting eligibility guidelines was to eliminate the possibility of secure detention in cases that don’t meet the guidelines not to make detention automatic in cases that do. Unfortunately, this is the only structure to guide admissions decision-makers. All most all-local jurisdictions reported that detention intake decisions were initially made by juvenile probation officers (98%). Their decisions were said to be based on the charges in the complaint (92%), the Detention Standards (90%), and the officer’s discretion (77%). And even though detention decisions invariably involve calculations of risk, very few jurisdictions (16%) reported using a formal detention risk assessment instrument (Final Report: Pennsylvania Juvenile Detention Assessment).

The danger of this kind of decision-making is compounded by the fact that decision-makers in many jurisdictions are not necessarily focusing on the need to protect the community or ensure hearing attendance, but are considering the use of secure detention for completely unrelated purposes. Over half (54%) of survey respondents reported “sometimes” or “frequently” using detention as a sanction for probation violations, for instance, and more than a quarter (28%) said offenders in their jurisdictions were sometimes simply sentenced to detention (Invisible Punishment: The Collateral Consequences of Mass Imprisonment). Likewise, substantial percentages effectively admitted detaining for convenience, at least on occasion, in order to make it easier to get pre-hearing clinical assessments (36%) or conduct pre-hearing investigations (26%) (Final Report: Pennsylvania Juvenile Detention Assessment).
Possible Alternatives:

If detention decision-makers are forced to make a straight, yes-no, detain-or-release choice in every case, if there are no alternative options that lie between unrestricted freedom and the lock-up then they are likely to detain many juveniles for whom community-based supervision, monitoring and services might have done the job just as well as detention at a fraction of the cost, and without separating them from their families and support networks. That’s one reason JCJC Detention Standards require detention decision makers to give “preference...to non-secure alternatives which could reduce the risk of flight or danger to the child or community” (Juvenile Court Judges’ Commission. 2003).

Another alternative to detention would be to implement a much larger system of non-secure alternatives, and making those detention alternatives widely available to counties across the state. Non-secure alternatives would include electronic monitoring, in-home detention, and shelter care.

Throughout my research process I found that there clearly is a great deal of variation with regard to alternative program development across the state. There are some jurisdictions that are strongly committed to detention alternatives most notably Philadelphia, which uses shelter care, in-home detention and house arrest, electronic monitoring, voice-tracking, pre-hearing intensive supervision, and a unique program called the Detention Diversion Advocacy Project to reduce reliance on the Youth Study Center, and in fact keeps five juveniles in alternative programs for every one juvenile it detains.
Pennsylvania’s Juvenile Corrections budget for 2004:

County, state and federal government fund Pennsylvania’s juvenile justice system. As of 2004 the juvenile court judge’s commission of Pennsylvania, who is responsible for running programs such as, the juvenile court, juvenile probation services, and specialized programs will experience a hefty budget cut. Although they are not alone another branch of the juvenile justice system, The Commission on Crime and Delinquency, which is responsible for programs such as Victims of juvenile crime, juvenile accountably programs, and juvenile justice and delinquency prevention will also be affected by the governments’ budget cuts.

Pennsylvania’s juvenile courts and juvenile probation programs will take a 2.1 % cut in spending allowing for only 25 million to be shared by the different jurisdictions within Pennsylvania. Specialized probation services, which are responsible for services such as school based programs, intensive supervisions, and after care services will take a 1.9% cut only allowing for 15 million to be shared by the different jurisdictions within Pennsylvania (Pennsylvania FY 2003-04 Enacted Budget).

Pennsylvania’s Commission on Crime and Delinquency victims of juvenile crime services which protects the rights of victims of juvenile offenders will experience a 3.0% cut, only allowing for 3 million to be shared by the different jurisdictions within Pennsylvania. Juvenile Accountability programs that include administration treatment and prevention projects targeting juvenile offenders with special problems will take a 8.2% cut only allowing for 16 million to be shared by jurisdictions across the state (Pennsylvania FY 2003-04 Enacted Budget).
All expenditures over budget are the responsibility of the county, however the government will reimburse counties up to 50% of the expenditure cost. Although the reimbursement may sound like a fair deal but often county budgets are spread thin leveling counties with no other choice but to eliminate certain programs that may be vital to the juvenile offenders prior to their release.

**Problems with Funding:**

Under the current system, the state partially reimburses counties for many of the costs of county purchased services for juveniles, including day treatment, counseling, foster and institutional care, and detention. (You will often hear these reimbursements referred to around the state as “Act 148 payments,” because they are authorized under 62 P.S. §704.1 of the Public Welfare Code as amended by Act 148 of 1976 as well as other laws.) But not all county purchased services are reimbursed at the same levels. For instance, in-home and community-based services that the state wishes to encourage are generally 80% reimbursed, while reimbursement rates are deliberately set lower for secure detention (50%), secure residential (60%), and non-community-based residential services (60%)(Juvenile Court Judges’ Commission, 2003).

The 50% reimbursement rate applicable to detention, which is the lowest for any state reimbursed youth service, has been in place from the beginning, and was deliberately intended to serve as a fiscal deterrent to unnecessary and inappropriate detention usage. But has “fiscal deterrence” worked in this case? And if it has effectively starved the detention system of resources, are juvenile detainees being deprived of needed services as a result? On the other hand, if the reimbursement structure were changed now, would it only serve to encourage reliance on detention or, even worse,
stimulate new investment in secure detention beds at a time when promising detention alternatives still appear to be underutilized and underdeveloped?

The Detention Assessment Project conducted by a group that monitors Pennsylvania’s progress found widespread local dissatisfaction among chief juvenile probation officers with the current structure of reimbursement for detention. A total of 85% of survey respondents believed that the Act 148 reimbursement rate for detention should be increased, with most of them suggesting a considerably higher rate 75 or 80%. They decisively rejected (by 89% to 8%) the suggestion that increasing the reimbursement rate would increase secure detention usage in their counties. But at the same time, they were skeptical of the notion that higher rates would translate into better detention services, with nearly as many disagreeing (48%) as agreeing (49%) with the proposition (Pennsylvania Progress 2003).

The detention reimbursement rate remained stable throughout the 1990s, and yet secure detention admissions overall rose steadily presumably for reasons unrelated to the reimbursement rate throughout the better part of that decade. Conversely, in what might be thought of as a kind of rough natural experiment, total admissions stabilized for three consecutive years from 1999 through 2001, despite the fact that during that period federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funds happened to become available to cover counties’ detention costs (Juvenile Court Judges’ Commission. 2003).

But the conclusion that state reimbursement rates have no effect on local detention usage may not be warranted either. Even if individual detention decisions are unaffected by reimbursement rates, local juvenile justice planners and policy-makers may be significantly influenced by them. If you are weighing program development
investments, the current reimbursement scheme unquestionably makes alternative programming somewhat more inviting and new secure beds somewhat less inviting than they would otherwise be. It is useful to remember that, especially in areas of the state that must contend with crowding in detention, the temptation to consider expanding detention space is more or less constant. And once you’ve invested in a new or expanded detention facility, there’s not much you can do with it except fill it up.

**Recommendations:**

If juvenile detention facilities in Pennsylvania are to serve as something more than holding tanks, if, for example, they are to do all they can to contribute to efforts to assess and develop the skills and strengths of juvenile detainees it will only be after consensus has developed that this too is part of their mission. That will require articulating and disseminating the broader vision, along with model policies and procedures to implement it.

Standard admissions criteria for local detention admissions processes rarely feature objective assessment instruments or decision-making protocols, and that is a problem. Promoting standard criteria for admissions could increase consistency, and reduce inappropriate admissions.

Enhanced services should be offered in every detention center. The average length of stay in secure detention is more than two weeks in most of the state and this affords an opportunity to accomplish something. The opportunity is too often wasted. Individual needs assessments and modular, individually focused, short-term services including education, life and job skills, victim awareness, and drug and alcohol awareness ought to be available in every detention facility.
Community-based alternatives such as group homes and in house detention should be implemented along with a standard model of non-secure detention alternatives (i.e. electronic monitoring) should be promoted statewide, along with information about program development, funding, implementation strategies, and performance measures.

And lastly I recommend that every detention center in the state keep data records that report outlines of specific shortcomings and inconsistencies with programs and policies. And further I recommend that the juvenile justice system as a whole suggests and implements new strategies for improvement.

Conclusion:

The juvenile justice system separate from the adult justice system was established in the United States about 100 years ago with the goal of diverting youthful offenders from the destructive punishments of criminal courts and encouraging rehabilitation based on the individual juvenile's needs. In practice, there was always a tension between social welfare and social control that is, focusing on the best interests of the individual child versus focusing on punishment, incapacitation, and protecting society from certain offenses.

It is important to remember that the United States has at least 51 different juvenile justice systems, not one. Given the local nature of juvenile justice in the United States, there has never been a single dominant vision of how to deal with delinquent children in law or in practice. The trend during the past decade, however, has been toward stiffening the laws dealing with juveniles.

It can be said that juvenile justice system as a whole has slowly slipped away from the idea of rehabilitation into the adult world of warehousing. The sole purpose of
the juvenile justice system was to save the youth, and offer them safe alternatives to jail-like atmospheres, while implementing punishment and understanding for the crimes they had committed. To instill in them life long goals that will better the inmate and the community in which he or she will be released back into.

So why has the justice system reverted to warehousing the youth, the same youth that system set out to save? Perhaps this is because it is just not financially feasible to implement new policy changes on such a wide scale, or maybe it is the lack of manpower to support such a diverse system of justice. Or maybe just maybe we have become content just warehousing our youth. After all the system is overflowing with court cases, and the mentality has become out of site out of mind, on to the next case. And this approach is understandable. It is easier to incarcerate than to find alternative avenues of justice. It may be easier to incarcerate youth offenders, however it is not right, and it is not the purpose of the juvenile justice system.

I believe the juvenile justice system warehouses youth rather than rehabilitating them because youth offenders serve a functional purpose within the system. Robert Merton’s theory of structural functionalism focuses on the structures of society and their functional significance within that society. Juvenile offenders serve a vital purpose in prison society, they are looked at as being the next generation of criminals, for now they occupy the detention centers, but one day the prison industry will need them to fill the cells in the adult system.

The prison industry is a billion dollar industry with many private players that benefit from individuals incarceration. Many well known private business profit from the prison industry. Roughly 7 billion a year was spent nationally over the past decade
building prisons. The prison industry generates an estimated 40 billion a year with private corporations receiving an increasing amount of taxpayer’s money to run private prisons and provide services. The profiteers are privately owned prisons possess a notorious reputation for their abusive guards, sub-standard living conditions, and inmate escapes. Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) is the largest private prison corporation in the world. AT&T, Sprint, and MCI charge inmates and their families as much as 6 times the normal cost of a long-distance call within the U.S. Chevron, TWA, and Victoria’s Secret use prison labor to do data entry, book telephone reservations, and make lingerie at 23 cents an hour. UNICOR, the federal prison industry corporation, uses inmates to make recycled furniture at $40 a month for a 40-hour workweek (The War on drugs ‘PDF’ web site).

If the juvenile justice system was to successfully rehabilitate youth offenders, whom would they find to fill the role for the next generation of adult criminals? Full rehabilitation of the youth could lead to the downfall of this multi billion-dollar industry we call justice.

The ideas and recommendations I have mentioned are not ground breaking ideas, nor are they new concepts, however they are ideas and recommendations that have been pondered over and studied but never implemented into the system. However I believe that if these programs would have a positive influence on juvenile offenders as well as the juvenile justice system as a whole.

The juvenile justice system is a complex branch of the law that deserves an antiquate amount of attention from those in local, state, and federal government along with the communities, law enforcement officials and tax payers in order to implement
cost effective policies and programs while watching out for the welfare of juvenile offenders.


Internet Resources


California Youth Authority.  
http://www.cya.ca.gov/

Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice  
http://www.cjctj.org/

Children, Youth, and Family Consortium  
http://www.cyfc.umn.edu

Children's Defense Fund  
http://www.childrendefense.org/

Coalition for Juvenile Justice  
http://www.juvjustice.org/

Dauphin County home page  

Florida Department of Juvenile Justice  
http://www.djj.state.fl.us/

Glossary of Terms in Juvenile Justice  
http://www.hsdyc.state.ut.us/terms.htm

Schaffner Youth Detention Center  
Ryan Garner

Journal Entries: Time Behind Bars

5-11-04
These logs are my personal reflections on my time spent with inmates, security guards and councilors that live and work in the Schaffner youth detention center. None of what you are about to read is exaggerated or misconstrued in anyway. All of the topics and stories are real life experiences, all quotes are true statements given by the inmates during our time together. The logs are made up of conversations I had with the inmates, my reactions, and thoughts about either certain inmates or my thoughts on certain aspects of the society and culture these inmates have grown up in. Each log equals two hours inside of the center. There are eight logs, which total sixteen hours of work inside of the center. I hope that in reading this you may be able to take away some sense of what I felt and experienced while I was working with the inmates of Schaffner youth center.
Log 1

September 25, 2002, 5:30 pm the group going to the Shaffner Youth Detention Center met in the Eisenhower circle full of excitement and anxiety. Everyone in the group seemed a little nervous but anxious to get there and meet the kids and young adults that we would be working with. For me personally the ride there was just another van ride. For I have had a few experiences with the law and troubled youth. As I sat in the van I over heard some of the groups conversations. And everyone including my self had many of the same questions “will I be able to reach these kids, will I be excepted by them, will I be able to share my faith in away they will be able to understand, and will I be able to relate to these kids. After a short fifteen minute van ride we were there. And I could see that many of the people in the group were surprised that there was no barbwire fences or guards with guns. One member of the group said “is this really it, it looks just like a normal building”.

At 6:00 pm after getting cleared we broke up into groups, My group went to the lock down B pod which is made up of fourteen one room cells that house 14 inmates who’s age range from thirteen to eighteen. Because I have had a little experience with troubled youth, I was placed in the role of “group leader” one in which I was happy to take, yet hesitant at the same time. As we walked into the meeting room, the cell doors opened and the kids filled the room, all wearing the same matching sweet suit and flip flops. As we all sat down in a circle, there was a moment of silence, everyone seemed kind of uneasy. Then being the group leader I had the responsibility to get things started. For the first fifteen min we just went around and introduced our selves and tried to learn the names of the inmates. After a feeble attempt to get the names down, we played a
game, this seemed to relax everyone, and the inmates seemed to really enjoy the interaction with the messiah students. Around 7 we broke up into groups of about four messiah students with four inmates.

The one on one time with the inmates, for me this was a great experience; we had sometime to talk and get to know the kids on a more personal level. I was taken by surprise by how open they were about being there, and the reasons they were arrested. They were also very interested in my personal life. Many of them asked if I had a girl friend and if I had any kids. This question kid of took me by surprise, but then a number of them said, “when you have kids make sure you are there for them, and the babies momma”. From this I got the impression many of them came from broken homes. Although do to the time constraints I did not have time to further engage them in conversation about there families. Also The older inmates were very interested in college life, particularly girls and sports; also they were very interested in what I was studying. And thought it was “cool” that I was studying law enforcement and social work. From this got a better understanding that the kids did not blame the officers or the courts for putting them there. But they have accepted the fact that they were there because of their own doing.

Although this was just my first visit to the detention center, I feel that I have already in some way made a small connection with some of the inmates. There are many things I will take away form this first night, the sound of the cell doors opening, the room filling with kids, the smiles on the kids faces, and how cool they thought it was that we would take the time to hang out with them. But most importantly I learned that all of these kids in some way or another have had a back ground that has influenced there
decisions weather it be a broken home, gangs, drugs, or just the need to be befriended and loved.
6:00 pm Wednesday October 2, 2002 we pull into the Shaffner youth detention center. This is our second visit to the center, as group leader of the Pod (the Pod is the maximum-security cells for kids ages 13-18) I get my group together and we enter into the center. As we are walking down the narrow hall way, I notice that we pass by D pod (D pod is the all male cells that we work in the week before) this kind of threw me for I thought we would be working the same group of young men we worked with the week before, and I was comfortable with this idea because we had had a great time getting to know them the week before. As we passed by D-Pod I asked the officer where he was taking us. He informed me and the group that we were going to B-Pod, which is the all female pod. And for the first time I felt thankful that I was one of the only guys in my group. Not because I was about to enter into a room full of girls, but that all the students from messiah in my group were female. Which would be a help to me because they would be able to relate to the female inmates and bond with them faster than I would.

And I say that with uncertainty, because it has been my experience threw life that males bond faster with males and females with females. There is often an unsaid understanding between the same sex, which allows them to communicate and understand each other.

Although as we stepped into the female pod I learned quite quickly that was not the case. I left out the simple fact that most of these girls have been on lock down for months at a time and have not seen someone from the male sex in quite awhile. So naturally most of their attention was on me. Many of the girls had an arsenal of questions pertaining to my dating relationships, my age, my interests, my study at school, and where I was from.

Many of them commented on my “southern draw”. It was not until we broke up into
small groups where I could really answer their questions and ask some of my own. Usually my typical questions consist of their name, age, their families, their interests and if they seem comfortable with me I ask them about life in the jail, and how they came to be there.

In working with the inmates I hear a lot of stories, mostly about their pasts, the groups they hung out with, and some of the crimes they have committed. I can’t help but wonder if I am allowed to share these stories in my logs or with other people or am I held to certain level of confidentiality. Now of course if they were tell me that they planed on harming themselves or others I would have responsibility to tell someone. But as in the case where it is just them telling me their stories I feel that there is certain level of trust that goes along with that.

In our society and social structure our relationship with others are based on trust, and often times you only tell people what you feel comfortable telling them. And you as the receiver of the information have two options, to share with others or to just keep it to yourself. In dealing with the inmates where do you draw that line? Inside the detention center they seem to be very open in telling their stories, yet on the out side many would be look down upon them for what they have done. Yet at the same time, I feel sharing the stories that I have heard would help the readers of the logs and other people better understand these kids, and the social groups they grew up in, and in someway justify there actions to a certain extant. Although at the same time I feel that in telling there stories I would be breaking that certain trust. I am sure some would say you could tell the stories with out using the names, or even places of the events. Others would even say just tell the stories they will never know and the chances of us ever meeting them would
be slim. All of these statements are true, the inmates would never know that I was sharing their stories with others, but I would know. And I have grown up in a society that has been pushing confidentiality and privacy ever since I can remember. Really the confidentiality of the inmates is not the true issue, rather the issue at hand is for me to tell there stories, and share there experiences that have entrusted me with, I would be breaking a social norm that I have grown up in.

In working with the inmates I often am amazed how much my beliefs and social norms are tested. Because inside the detention center there are a different set of rules than on the out side and to be accepted by the group in side the center you have to conform to the rules on the inside. I find it hard to separate the social norms on the inside of the detention center from the social norms on the out side. The stories I hear while I am in the detention center are said under that social system inside of the cell walls. So the lingering question I have been struggling with is, do the social norms in one society change when they are placed into another society or are the social norms of one society supposed to be respected when they are not accepted as social norms with in another society?

I have come to the conclusion that both societal structures need to be respected. Prison life is different from life on the out side, therefore in order to survive on the inside one must conform to the rules that the inmates set. Just like we must conform to the rules set by the society we live in. I have learned that in order to work with and gain the trust of juvenile delinquents one must understand and conform to the structure within the prison. That does not mean we need to condone the crimes committed by individuals. But we much try and understand the reasoning behind there offences.
Log 3

October 23, 2002 6:00pm inside the Shaffner youth detention center, my group is heading down to the all girl pod, when we are told that on this night we would be splitting up into two groups. One group would be going to Pod B (the all guy pod) and the other group would be heading to Pod D (the all girl pod) So after a few last minute adjustments to the evenings activities, we break up and move into the two cell blocks. For some this would not present such a problem, but in the setting such as in the center, we are out numbered even when our whole group goes into one Pod. After leaving part of my group at Pod D, I make my way down the hall to Pod B. On my way to the Pod I had the opportunity to talk to one of the social workers that was working with one of the inmates I had the privilege of meeting a few weeks back. I was disheartened to hear that Norman the inmate I spent most of my time talking to during our two hours, had his bail rejected and was sent back to New York to serve time in the adult system.

The night had to go on, I had to put Normans situation in the back of my mind and work with the kids that were there that night. We went through our regular routine of introducing our selves to the new inmates, then opened in prayer, and one of the members of our group shared her testimony. After we broke up into small groups like we do every week to have some one on one time with the inmates. Do to the fact that we were short handed it was more like four inmates to one group member. In talking to the four girls I learned that one of the girls I had spent a lot of time talking to earlier in the month Lakia was realeast and sent home early for good behavior and a new ruling by the court. The rest of the night consisted of the girls showing me there school work, some of the poems they have written, some talked about music, others asked me how school was going. And at
the end one of the girls asked me if I would take some time to pray with her. I jumped at the chance. So we prayed and at the end as I wrapped up our time there and was about to leave she came over and gave me a hug and said “you coming here means a lot to us, you might not think it has an impact, but it does. Thank you”.

I have decided to leave all sociological issues and findings out of this log, for every week I am faced with different social issues and challenges while working with the kids in jail and they came be written about at a later time. This log I want to express how working with the kids has affected my life. Before I ever went into the center, I had prejudgments of the kids. I have always thought that one should be responsible for his or her actions no matter how he or she feels, leaving no room for breaking the law. After that is why these kids are there. I never thought that meeting this kids once a week would be a test of my character, in how I handle different kids, what to say to them. How hard it is to answer all their questions. Questions such as “why did my dad split when I was a baby, why did I have to grow up in a broken home, why did I have to live a life of shit and the toughest one of all why did God let this happen to me”. I do my best to answer their question but I have come to the realization that no matter how hard I try to understand there questions and make sense of there situations, I will never fully understand them, or there way of life, for I have never had to deal with those issues.

I have only been going there for four weeks; I have had a chance to work with the kids, and some I know better than others. Yet all of them seem to have an impact. As I sit and talk to these kids, about their dreams, the mistakes that they have made, their families, I can’t help but to see the potential everyone one of them have. Yet in going into this service project I did not think that the kids would have an impact, I went in thinking
these are kids who are here because they have broke the law, although in talking to them you find that there are many reasons behind their actions, broken homes, gangs, drugs. Now this does not excuse their actions or even the crimes they committed. Although it does help better understand where they are coming from.
Wednesday October 30, 2002 inside the Sheaffner youth detention center. Tonight we went to Pod C, which is the other all male Pod on the first wing of center. We went through the normal introductions, and explanation for why we were there. Although right from the beginning I knew that the night was not going to go well. The kids seemed to be very tense, and there attention seemed to drift to the floor, to the bathroom, and while one of the group members was giving her testimony there were many side conversations between the inmates. Over all I felt like these kids were very disrespectful to our group from messiah. One inmate even commented, “I thought this was supposed to fun, why didn’t you guys not bring us any candy”. As the Group leader it was my responsibility to explain our purpose for being there. I reiterated that we are here to hang out with them, to share a little bit how god has worked in our lives, and in some way show them that some of us have been through some of the same ordeals that they have been going through, and it is not to late for change. But also it is a time for them to talk to us, ask questions, and talk about what ever they want. So after explaining why we were there, we broke up into small groups. I spent the rest of the night talking to two inmates. And found out that there are two different ways of living inside the center. Brian a 16 year old (the only while boy in the Pod) explained to me the importance of staying to him self inside the center. He explained that it was not in fear of getting in a fight, or because he felt threatened by anyone. But that if he stays to him self, then none of the people in the center can say anything bad about him when he goes back to court. And he said “the last thing you want
is someone to go in and speak on your behalf and trash you, because of your behavior and stuff, so stay to myself, that way they can say anything bad”. Although Cedric an 18 year old inmate had a totally different out look on the center, “the more friends you can make in here the better, you never know when you are going to run into them on the street, you never know when you might need there help, if you know what I mean” I believe he was talking about scoring drugs, or some other criminal activity.

I find it funny that these kids hate the center and all they talk about is getting out, yet in the second breath they talk about going out and doing all the things that put them in the center in the first place. Maybe it is just the hard nose attitude of the center, or maybe for these kids drugs, gangs, criminal activity is all they know. At times trying to relate to this kids is so frustrating because I cannot fully understand where they are coming from, and they do not fully understand where I am coming form, when I say it is not to late to make a change, you don’t have to spend the rest of you life in jail. I have found that many are so quick to place the blame of someone else for them being where they are. “Oh the judge did not like me, the cops just picked me up for no reason, I should not be here”. My only response to them is that we are responsible for our actions no matter how we feel. No one made you steal that car, smoke that pipe, or hit that kid. You are the only one responsible for your actions.
Wednesday November 6, 2002. Tonight I did not really interact with the inmates. As a group did not have anything planned for the Center. Tonight was more or less a free night. The students from Messiah split up into groups and talked to the inmates. Most of the night was spent in one on one time, and small group discussions. I spent the night talking with and interviewing Mr. Griffen, to get a better feel for the center along with an idea of what kind of work he does. Mr. Griffen is a life-programming specialist / councilor / security guard. Mr. Griffen works with the inmates on life programming skills, anger management and people skills. Mr. Griffen has his degree in social work. I asked Mr. Griffen about the type of training one needs to work inside the center. Other than his college degree in social work, he had go through safe crisis management and impulse control tactics. The employees are taught how to control a situation if one arises between inmates, and how to take control of someone psychically with minimal force. Mr. Griffen also told me about the policies that mandate how the center serves the inmates. The center follows the Juvenal justice act and is licensed by the department of public welfare. Every year the center renews their licenses through the public welfare office. Also the center must follow the sentencing terms handed down by the court. Because every inmate has different sentences every inmate is handled differently.

During my time working with the inmates and people like Mr. Griffen, I have gotten a better feel for the juvenile justice system, I have more respect for not only the officers
who work with the inmates, but my level of respect for the inmates has also grown. In my short time working there I have heard stories that have been humbling, hard to accept, and at the same time have tested my faith and the way I look at society as a whole. I have enjoyed my time working in the center and if nothing else it has heightened my interest in working in the field of law enforcement or corrections.
Log 6

Wednesday November 13, 2002. Tonight we visited the inmates in pod C. Pod C is an all male cell. Tonight one of the group members read from Jeremiah 29:11 which says “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future”. Many of the inmates just sat there listening, but this verse lit a fire under one inmate. The inmate turned the five-minute bible study into a fifteen-minute yelling match. And it seemed as though the group was being put on the defensive. It really was almost like this one inmate vs. the group from Messiah. He kept saying, “If god really loved me, I would not be here”. The group tried to explain to him the concept of free will, and the decisions we make often have their own consequences. But it was like talking to a brick wall. With every answer we gave him, it just seemed to fuel the fire. This was one of the first times I think our group from Messiah has ever really seen how fast a peaceful time can quickly turn into something that has the potential of being violent. As I sat there and listened to the group debate (yell) with this inmate, I could see the guards becoming tense. It was obvious to everyone that we were not getting anywhere with this kid and trying to preach to him was not the answer. So I stopped the discussion and we broke up into small groups. This gave everyone a chance to relax a little and talk freely about whatever they felt like discussing.

During the small groups, I talked to Mr. Giffen (the life programming councilor that works in the pod) and apologized for what had just taken place. He said not to worry that our point was solid, and many of the inmates take well to the bible studies and look forward to our visits. He also told me that today many of the inmates had gone to court
for there sentencing hearings, so many of the inmates are very touchy. He also pointed out “you never know what will happen when you work with troubled kids, the slightest thing can set them off, but it makes the job exciting and you guys seem to handle it well”.

We wrapped up our time in the center, and on the way home the yelling match between the group and inmate was topic of conversation, well at least in the car I drove. And I could not help but wonder if some of the people in the group are too sheltered in the ways of the world. Many seemed to be shocked that this inmate would use that type of language in conversation, or would turn a peaceful conversation into something aggressive. I can’t help but to think that some students at Messiah are too sheltered to the outside world, that they are so wrapped up in the Messiah bubble of bible studies, tests, and well an easy life compared to some, that they do not see what is happening out side of Grantham PA. That there is more to life than what happens here at Messiah and the community that we have here at messiah does not really exists beyond Grantham road. Or possibly it is just me. Maybe I did not find this kids actions to be alarming or shocking because I transferred from a secular college, or that I went to a public high school, or maybe it is because I have had my own run-ins with the law (in a previous life).

In spending time in the center and working with the kids it is clear that many come from unstable families and have grown up in rough areas. I have also learned that not everyone is capable to relate to this kids, no matter how hard they try they will never be able to fully understand what they have been through or are going through. And that it is important to be able to relate to them on some level, and that is imperative that in working with them we start where they are at, that we do not try to change them or mold
them, but understand where they are coming from and where they are at because you can’t really help them, if you cannot understand them.

Log 7

Wednesday November 20, 2002. Have you ever had one of those days where you wish you could just get back into bed and start it all over? Well today the twentieth of November was one of those days. The day started off like any other, I wake up, shower, and run to the van where my eight am class was meeting to go to the Bethesda Mission. On my way to the van I rolled my ankle so I continued on. I went to the on the field trip where we walked around the mission for about an hour. On returning to school I noticed that my ankle was swollen but I still had two more classes I had to attend before I could go to the doctor (talk about a dedicated student) later I found out that I had strained ligaments in my ankle and had an extensive ankle sprain. After leaving the doctors office I arrived back at school around 4:45. Remembering I had to be at the Jail by 5:30. I debated weather or not to go and while debating it with myself, I came across some poems that the girls in the all female pod had written me, the jest of there poems where how they enjoyed our visits to the center, needless to say that ended the debate and I went to the jail.

Tonight I had the opportunity to sit and talk with an inmate named Bryan. He is your typical inmate (if there is such a thing) of the age 16. He was brought back to the center after breaking crew few that was set by his PO (parole officer) for the next hour Bryan shared his life story with me. How he had grown up on the streets, his dad spilt when he was two, and how his mom works all the time just to support the family. Bryan was the first inmate I talked to that did not blame the system or is home for where he was.
He told me that he is the only one to blame that no one made him steal the car, sell the
drugs, or break crew few. After brain explained why he was in the center and told me
about his life on the streets. I asked him why he committed the crimes. At first he kind of
laughed, then he looked at me and just said. “At first it was just for the thrill of doing
something I knew I was not supposed to, you know that kind of rebel thing everyone has
deep down inside of them. But then I needed money so I would sell. If I need a ride I
would just take one (a car). Before I knew it became a daily thing. I stopped going to
school, stopped checking in at home. I was free from all the bull sh-- that my life had
become. And at the time I thought it was really cool. But now (haha) I just have created
more bull sh--, but it is my own fault, you know?”

For me personally my conversation with Bryan was meaningful as of late I had
been losing hope in the inmates, I was tired of all the excuses, tired of hearing the stories
of the crimes they committed that put them in the center and have them sit there and talk
about doing the same thing when they get out “just in a smarted way”. My conversation
with Bryan was meaningful not because he opened up or even the fact that I thought he
was being honest with me. But it was simply the fact that here is a kid that has had a
rough start to life and now has to spend time in jail and does not make excuses or blame
anyone but himself. In working in the center you hear a lot of stories, you hear excuse
after excuse why this kid is in jail. But Bryan was one of the first to take responsibility
for his own actions. To live up to what he had done, and he was the first inmate I had
talked to that I believed when he said, “this is the last time I am going to be in here”.

Many feel that Juvenal criminals are the out come of a poor home, possibly an
unstable society. They lay the blame on everyone and everything, either to protect the
“child” or in hope that one can be rehabilitated within the system. I do believe that their background has a lot to do with why some commit crime. But at the same time these kids need to be held responsible for their actions. Everyone knows that stealing a car, sealing drugs is against the law and goes against the structure of society. You do not need to be brought up in a stable home to know that these things are bad. Every inmate I have talked to knows that his or her actions were wrong. So I wonder if they admit to their actions being wrong and unjust, then why do they make excuses and not take responsibility for their actions.

I have come to the conclusion that these kids do not take responsibility for their actions because society makes excuses for them. Public defendants, social workers, and people rights activist all line up blaming the family or the society these kids have grown up in but they never lay blame on the child. These kids will never take responsibility for their actions until society makes them. Why take the blame if blame can be placed some place else. Many say that these kids are learning vital lessons being put behind bars. I have a hard time believing this when I hear the inmates say “man I can’t wait to get out of here, I can’t wait to sell again, steal again, fight again, run the streets again, I just need to do it smarter, after all if is not my fault, it is the society I grew up in. that is why I have tremendous respect for inmates like Bryan, for he could blame everyone and everything yet he puts the blame on himself, cause he knows that no one is truly to blame except for himself. When I had my own run in with the law the arresting offer said something to me that I will never forget he said “ You know, you can think of people to blame, make excuses for why you are sitting in the back of this car right now, but the truth is, you are responsible for you own actions, no matter how you feel”. I strongly believe if more
Juvenile criminals were taught that, either at home or by the courts the rate of repeat
juvenile offenders would decrees. But society has to stop making excuses for these kids.
Let them own up to their own actions, as the song goes “you reap what you sow”.
Log 8

Wednesday November 27, 2002. This was our last night in the center as a group. For many this will complete there sixteen hours of service work, for me it will end the service work hours, but I plan on continuing my visits to the detention center. Tonight was a quite night in the center. We broke up into small groups like we have done every week sense the beginning. We shared a verse out of the bible and one of the group members spoke about it. To be honest I do not really remember the verse that was read, or even what was said about it. I sat there thinking about the past two months, how much that has happened in just those short sixteen hours of work. The inmates I had met, the ones that got out, and the ones that got out and were back in the matter of weeks, the ones that were moved to different holding facilities and the ones that were placed “in the big show” the big show according some inmates is the adult system.

I thought about the first my first night working with the inmates. How I felt, what I expected of my self and of them. And compared it to how it ended up. I thought about how I felt then and how I feel know. Tonight in some sense I feel tired. Tired in the sense that I am tired of hearing the stories of broken homes, lives being lived on the streets and in gangs. I am tired of the excuses, tired of the all the big talk coming from the fourteen year old kid who weights about 105 pounds. I am tired of having to think about my time in the jail and having to retell the stories to friends and family and in the logs. And at the same time, that is such a humbling experience. These kids have to live with this everyday, and when they get out there nothing really waiting for them. I am only there for two hours a night. I only hear a short portion of these kids stories their life experience and
then I get to go home. Free to hang out with friends, go to the bathroom when ever I want
do what ever I want when ever I want with out some one always watching over me. And
that thought is humbling. I look at the society these kids live in, and I wonder how my
life would have been different if I had grown up in the same situation. Would have made
the same choices they made, or would I have done it differently. I guess I will never
know. But I have come to understand that many are thrown into this life, either cause of
society has placed them there, or there families have placed them there. And I do feel that
society is somewhat responsible for the out come of these kids. But at the same time it is
important for them to take responsibility for there actions. In ending my service hours it
is really a bittersweet experience. I will miss the kids, sharing my own stories with them,
answering their questions about school and life “on the out side”. Although I will not
miss hearing about the kid who got out and then picked up a week later. I will not miss all
the big talk about how these kids think it is so cool to run the streets. Although I will not
miss those things, that does not mean I am giving up on them or rejecting them from
society. Everybody changes on there own time, maybe for some it is the second time
around or maybe it really is the third time is the charm. Either way there are things I will
miss and things I will not miss.

This experience working with the inmates has really opened my eyes to a
different part of society on that I was aware of, but never fully understood. Sometimes to
fully understand the society you live in, you have to look at the parts that are forgotten
about, the parts that are deemed unclean, or lost causes. Until you understand the problem
at it root, you will not be able to fix it. And in working in the center that has become
clear. The Juvenals held in the center are either the future of the criminal justice system
or perhaps the future of our society, or a part of our society. So to fully understand the society we live in, we must understand the aspects of the society as a whole not just the parts we deem pretty and neat. Working with these kids I can see how society has cast them out, thrown them to the side, in away to fend for them selves. Through my time at the center I have learned not to be so quick to judge, that there are many underlining factors that are behind one action and ones motivations. And it is so true when working with troubled teens. I will look at the whole picture now before making assumptions about ones lives actions. And I will be careful of how I speak of them, because you can never really fully understand ones circumstance until you have lived through it your self.