



Hasaan Munim
Research Assistant
Austin 009
1515 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02138
(617) 496-0917
hmunim@law.harvard.edu

To: Jim Greiner
From: Hasaan Munim
RE: Peter W. Greenwood & Susan Turner, *Evaluation of the Paint Creek Youth Center: A Residential Program for Serious Delinquents*, 31 *Criminology* 263 (1993).
Date: August 22, 2018

Title: Evaluation of the Paint Creek Youth Center: A Residential Program for Serious Delinquents
Authors: Peter W. Greenwood and Susan Turner
Location: Southern Ohio
Sample: N = 150
Timeline: February 1986 to April 1988
Target group: Juvenile Offenders
Intervention type: Juvenile offender program
Research papers: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.1993.tb01130.x>
Partners: New Life Youth Services and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, National Institute of Justice

Abstract

There had been much criticism of traditional training schools for serious juvenile offenders and interest in various reforms and non-institutional alternatives, but few evaluations of juvenile correctional programs. Using random assignment to the Paint Creek Youth Center, an experimental program for juvenile offenders, and to traditional institutional programs, the researchers tested for recidivism and drug use. None of the findings were statistically significant, perhaps due to the study being statistically underpowered.

I. Policy Issue

Existing evaluations of attempted juvenile correctional program improvements used inadequate research designs, hampering their ability to provide compelling evidence of their ability to reduce delinquency. Meta-analyses found that behavioral, skill-oriented, and multimodal strategies best improved outcomes and that these strategies best succeeded in community settings.

Drawing upon strategies deemed critical to success in empirical and theoretical literature, correctional professionals developed the Paint Creek Youth Center (PCYC). Did the Paint Creek Youth Center increase treatment and improve outcomes for juvenile offenders?

II. Context of Evaluation

New Life Youth Services opened the PCYC in 1984 in southern Ohio to provide programming for youths convicted of felonies. The program administrators intended to distinguish the program from large institutional programs through programming and management techniques inspired from the literature, such as an absence of locked doors and fences, a formalized system for assessing and tracking behavior deficits, and daily group sessions. The program divided an individual's movement through the program into distinct phases contingent upon achieving behavioral goals, wherein each phase increased one's privileges and responsibilities. By the end of the program, youths could work in part-time jobs onsite.

The study used traditional institutional programs, specifically two Ohio Department of Youth Services (DYS) institutions, as a control against PCYC. Traditional institutions placed a heavy emphasis on remedial education and vocational training. Staff decided when youths received counseling and outside groups provided therapy.

III. Details

The study randomized court-certified eligible youths into the PCYC ($n = 75$) or control conditions ($n = 75$). In order to qualify for PCYC, a convicted juvenile needed to be over age 15, committed to the Ohio DYS for a class 1 or 2 felony from one of 17 southwestern Ohio counties. Random assignment began in February 1986 and ended April 1988.

Researchers obtained data through personal interviews with youth six months after study placement, background case files, exit interviews with caseworkers or counselors, and an interview with released youth one-year post-release.

IV. Results and Policy Lessons

Official Record Outcome Measures

Recidivism Rate: Looking at the fraction of a sample that experienced recidivism over twelve-months post-release, there were no significant effects between the control and experimental groups.

Survival Analysis: Researchers graphed the time to recidivism to determine whether intensive aftercare for experimental youths postponed a return to crime, but the experimental group had no significant difference in outcomes.

Self-Reported Recidivism

Asking youths one-year post-release about their involvement in seven types of criminal behavior, PCYC participants reported more crimes and drug use in certain categories, but none of the differences were statistically significant.

The authors wrote that the lack of statistical significance either implied implementation issues or an overall ineffectiveness of the program as designed. They suggested that future programs ought to focus on maintaining gains in prosocial behavior after youths return to their community.

V. Quality of the Study

The study would benefit from a more detailed definition of the intake, randomization procedure, and consequent analysis method used by the researchers. For example, did the study suffer selection bias from the judge's ability to determine who among eligible juvenile offenders could enter the program? Were there deviations from the study treatment, and, if so, how did the authors treat these cases in the analysis?

The study's results imply that the study was underpowered. The trends in the statistics, such as the 10-20% differences between experimental and control groups in drug use and re-offending, imply that the study could find statistically significant impacts if the researchers used a larger sample size.