

1969

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Recommended Citation

Frank R. Scarpitti, Richard M. Stephenson, Study of Probation Effectiveness, 59 J. Crim. L. Criminology & Police Sci. 361 (1968)

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A STUDY OF PROBATION EFFECTIVENESS*

FRANK R. SCARPITTI AND RICHARD M. STEPHENSON

Dr. Scarpitti is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Delaware. He formerly taught at Rutgers University and has authored or co-authored two books, *Schizophrenics in the Community* (1967) and *Combatting Social Problems* (1967), and numerous articles in the areas of crime, delinquency and social psychiatry.

Dr. Stephenson is Professor and Chairman of the Department of Economics and Sociology at Douglass College of Rutgers University. He is the co-author of *The Analyses of Social Systems* (1962) and has published a number of papers on various aspects of crime, delinquency and social stratification.

This paper presents data on the effectiveness of probation as a treatment program for 16 and 17 year old delinquent boys. Boys assigned to probation were compared with delinquents committed to group treatment programs and to a state reformatory. Data were collected for each group at the time of program assignment, during the programs, and after release from treatment. The results indicate that probation is an effective treatment agent for the boys who are less delinquent and come from fairly stable backgrounds. More severe cases, similar to those assigned to intensive or punitive programs, do not do as well on probation.

Of the twenty-two recommendations made by the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice in the area of corrections, eight call for the expansion of community based treatment programs.¹ Prominent among the Commission's recommendations is a call for the expanded use of probation services for both juvenile and adult offenders. Citing the detrimental effects of institutionalization, especially on the young, the Commission's report concludes that placing an offender on probation allays these effects as well as increases his chances for a successful adjustment.² The negative consequences of institutionalization are well documented,³ and

* The authors are indebted to the Ford Foundation whose research support made this study possible. This study was also supported in part by grants from the National Institute of Mental Health (MH 11945-01) and the Rutgers University Research Council. We are grateful for the assistance and helpful comments of Dr. John H. McGrath.

¹ THE CHALLENGE OF CRIME IN A FREE SOCIETY, a Report by the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., Chap. 6 (1967).

² *Ibid.*, 165-171.

³ Of the many studies that have attested to the anti-rehabilitation effects of total institutions such as prisons and reformatories, see, for example: SYKES, *THE SOCIETY OF CAPTIVES* (1958); CLEMMER, *THE PRISON COMMUNITY* (1948); Cloward, *Social Control in Prison*, Chap. 2, CLOWARD, *et al.*, *THEORETICAL STUDIES IN SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE PRISON* (1960); Garrity, *The Prison as a Rehabilitation Agency*, Chap. 9, and Glaser and Stratton, *Measuring Inmate Change in Prison*, Chap. 10, CRESSEY, Ed., *THE PRISON:*

obviously, keeping one out of the reformatory or prison will prevent his experiencing their debilitating effects. However, the effectiveness of probation as a rehabilitating program is not as well documented, and its crime or delinquency reducing impact upon offenders continues to be subject to many sceptical questions.

Conclusions regarding the effectiveness of probation are generally based upon the number of probationers who complete their supervision without revocation or the amount of post-release recidivism occurring among those who complete supervision. It can be seen that these are actually two different measures of success. In the former instance, many unknown and uncontrollable variables may influence the outcome of the probation experience: the philosophy of the probation department in revocation, the intensity of the officer's contacts with the probationer, the unknown offenses committed by the probationer while on probation, and the philosophy of the court in continuing or extending probation for known offenses. Nevertheless, England's review of eleven probation studies indicates that from 60 to 90

STUDIES IN INSTITUTIONAL ORGANIZATION AND CHANGE (1961); GOFFMAN, *ASYLUMS* (1961); WARD & KASSEBAUM, *WOMEN'S PRISON* (1965); Street, *The Inmate Group in Custodial and Treatment Settings*, 30 AMER. SOC. REV. 40-45 (1965); Berk, *Organizational Goals and Inmate Organization*, 71 AMER. J. SOC. 522-534 (1966); and GIALLOMBARDO, *SOCIETY OF WOMEN: A STUDY OF A WOMEN'S PRISON* (1966).

per cent succeed on probation.⁴ A 1944 study of juvenile probationers showed that 35 per cent failed,⁵ and a later study of 11,638 adult probationers revealed that only 29 per cent had their probation revoked.⁶

These success-failure rates are based upon official probation records and of course suffer from the deficiencies listed above. As such, they present a most favorable picture of probation success. Using more stringent, but perhaps unfair and unrealistic criteria of failure, the Gluecks have reported probation failure rates of 57.9 per cent for youthful offenders and 92.4 per cent for adult male offenders.⁷

Perhaps the second method of determining probation effectiveness, recidivism, is a better indicator of the true success or failure of probation as a rehabilitation mechanism. Again, England reports that of the eleven studies reviewed, eight fall within the 70 to 90 per cent range in terms of post-probation success. These include Diana's study of juvenile probationers (84 per cent success), and England's study of adult Federal probationers (82.3 per cent success).⁸ In addition, other studies of post-release recidivism among both adult and juvenile offenders show success or non-recidivism rates of 72, 79, 88 and 83 per cent.⁹ These rates compare favorably with those reported for in-program success and appear to substantiate the call for increased probation usage.

Nevertheless, the high rates of probation and post-probation success are puzzling to those who are aware of the difficulties of resocialization and rehabilitation. Probation supervision and guidance has traditionally been only superficial, generally involving infrequent and ritualistic contacts between officer and offender.¹⁰ At the same time, few if any special programs of more intensive treatment and worker-client contacts can approximate the probation success rates.¹¹ Such contra-

dictory evidence causes one to ask questions that have not yet been or have only partially been answered. Are probationers the least likely of the offender population to become recidivists? Are probationers different from other adjudicated offenders? What differentiates the in-program successes from the failures? How does recidivism among ex-probationers compare with that of other offenders who have experienced alternative methods of treatment? This paper will attempt to answer these and other questions pertaining to the effectiveness of probation as a treatment method.

THE PRESENT STUDY

Data presented in this paper were collected as part of a larger comparative study of delinquency treatment facilities. From January, 1962 to January, 1965 some 1210 adjudicated male delinquents between the ages of 16 and 18 from Essex County (Newark), New Jersey were admitted into the study.¹² Of these, 943 were committed to county probationary supervision, 100 to a non-residential guided group interaction center in the county, 67 to residential guided group interaction centers in the state, and 100 were sent to the State Reformatory at Annandale. All boys were followed up for recidivism until June, 1966.

The special admission criteria used by the court in committing boys to the group centers were also used to select participants in this study. Hence, all delinquents in this sample were male, 16 or 17 years of age, had no evidence of psychosis, severe neurosis or serious mental retardation, and had no prior commitment to a correctional institution. Assurance of reasonable comparability among cases, with respect to such differentiating factors as social background, psychological profiles, and delinquency history, presents a major problem in any comparative study. Ideally, it would be desirable to have boys assigned by the court to treatment facilities on a basis that would assure such comparability or, at least, on a random basis. In this study, as in others, this was not possible.

WEEKS, YOUTHFUL OFFENDERS AT HIGHFIELDS (1958); *The Community Treatment Project After 5 Years*, California Youth Authority, no date; Empey and Erickson, *The Provo Experiment in Delinquency Rehabilitation*, Annual Progress Report for 1964, unpublished report to the Ford Foundation, 1965; Stephenson and Scarpitti, *The Rehabilitation of Delinquent Boys*, report to the Ford Foundation (mimeographed), 1967.

¹² During this period nearly 15,000 children appeared before the Essex County Juvenile Court. Some 4,761 of these youths were boys sixteen or seventeen years of age.

⁴ England, Jr., *What is Responsible for Satisfactory Probation and Post-Probation Outcome?*, 41 J. CRIM. L. & C., 674 (1957).

⁵ Reiss, Jr., *Delinquency as the Failure of Personal and Social Control*, 16 AMER. SOC. REV. 196-207 (1951).

⁶ THE CHALLENGE OF CRIME IN A FREE SOCIETY, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

⁷ GLUECK, S. & E., JUVENILE DELINQUENTS GROWN UP, 153, (1940) and CRIMINAL CAREERS IN RETROSPECT, 151 (1943).

⁸ England, *op. cit.*, *supra* note 4, at pp. 667, 674.

⁹ Reported in SUTHERLAND & CRESSEY, PRINCIPLES OF CRIMINOLOGY 497 (7th ed. 1966).

¹⁰ England, *op. cit.* *supra* note 4; Diana, *Is Casework in Probation Necessary?*, 34 Focus 1-8 (1955).

¹¹ See, for example, any or all of the following:

However, it was felt that it would be possible to match boys across facilities on pertinent variables so as to control to some extent differences that might be found among the groups.

In order to obtain data upon which to match boys by treatment programs and to see how such data are related to progress in treatment and recidivism after release, the following information was obtained for each boy: first, social background data consisting of the usual demographic items relating to the boy and his family; second, delinquency history data consisting of the boy's entire court record (this information was up-dated during the post-treatment follow-up period); and third, a psychological profile determined by responses to questions on the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory.¹³ The personality inventory was given whenever possible to each boy after his court appearance and before entrance into one of the treatment programs. Because of the large number of probationers relative to the other treatment groups, the MMPI was not administered to members of this group after January, 1964. In order to test for change during treatment, the study subjects were again given the inventory at the time of their release.¹⁴

Hence, it was not only possible to test the impact of the probation experience as measured by program completion, psychological change, and recidivism, but also to compare the results of probation with those of other programs available to the committing judge. The programs used for such comparison can be thought of as more "in-

¹³ Of the several psychological instruments available, the MMPI appeared to be most feasible for this purpose. Resources would not permit an exploration in depth, nor was it possible to design, test, validate and complete an instrument more suitable for this particular study. On the other hand, the MMPI has been widely used, is readily administered, and gives a reasonably broad psychological profile. Moreover, a number of studies have used the MMPI on both delinquent and non-delinquent populations. See: HATHAWAY & MONACHESE, *ANALYZING AND PREDICTING JUVENILE DELINQUENCY WITH THE MMPI* (1952); *ADOLESCENT PERSONALITY AND BEHAVIOR* (1963); DAHLSTROM & WELSH, *AN MMPI HANDBOOK* (1960); WELSH, *BASIC READINGS ON THE MMPI IN PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION* (1956).

¹⁴ Since some of the boys were non-readers or failed to cooperate, it was impossible to test all in both pre- and post-treatment situations. Further attrition of cases was occasioned by changes in institutional personnel administering the tests, in-program failures, and a variety of administrative circumstances. When the inventories were scored and examined for validity, further losses were experienced. In all, there were 491 valid pre-treatment and 325 valid post-treatment MMPI inventories available.

tense" and confining than probation. The non-residential group center (Essexfields) program included a regimen of work and group interaction for approximately four months while the boys continued to live at home. The Group Centers program entailed the same elements for the same length of time, but boys resided in the Centers. At Annandale, the state reformatory, the program was restricted and irregular, and commitments averaged about nine months.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GROUPS

As Table I indicates, the social background characteristics of each group are roughly associated with assignment to their treatment facility. Although the association is not always marked or consistent, Annandale tends to have a greater proportion of boys who are Negro, in the lower range of the socio-economic continuum, and more likely to terminate their education before high school graduation. Probationers, on the other hand, are equally divided racially and generally tend to be more positive on the socio-economic, family organization, and education variables. Between the extremes of Annandale and Probation are the other two treatment groups.

In addition, 37 per cent of the Probation group had completed the tenth grade or more compared with 24 per cent in the Group Centers, 18 per cent in Essexfields, and 14 per cent in Annandale. More of the Probation group also had some employment experience prior to their treatment assignment.

A fairly clear pattern of progression with respect to the association between delinquency history and treatment program is also evident. This pattern indicates that the extent of delinquency tends to increase from Probation through Essexfields and Group Centers to Annandale. This progression is most clearly indicated by the number of past court appearances. Nearly half of the Probationers had no prior court appearance, while only seven per cent or less of the other boys fall into this category. Twenty per cent of the boys at Annandale, 15 per cent at Group Centers, 6 per cent at Essexfields, and 3 per cent on Probation had five or more appearances. Only 40 per cent of the Probationers, but over 90 per cent of the boys in the other groups had one or more prior petitions sustained by the court. Forty-one per cent of the Annandale boys had three or more petitions sustained, but only 5 per cent of the Probationers

TABLE I
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SOCIAL BACKGROUND FACTORS BY TREATMENT PROGRAMS

Background Factor	Probation	Essexfields	Group Centers	Annandale
Race:	(N = 943)	(N = 100)	(N = 67)	(N = 100)
White.....	50	41	55	29
Negro.....	50	59	45	71
Family Income:	(N = 938)	(N = 100)	(N = 67)	(N = 95)
Welfare.....	15	18	12	26
Less than \$2,000.....	2	6	3	1
\$2,000-4,000.....	20	19	25	25
\$4,001-6,000.....	28	33	28	24
\$6,001-8,000.....	19	15	21	12
\$8,001-10,000.....	9	4	8	8
\$10,000 or more.....	8	5	3	3
Occupation of Breadwinner:	(N = 737)	(N = 76)	(N = 52)	(N = 67)
Unskilled.....	21	35	25	33
Semi-skilled.....	44	41	27	39
Skilled.....	14	12	19	8
Clerical.....	12	7	14	8
Owner-Manager.....	5	3	8	13
Professional & Semi-Professional.....	4	3	8	—
Education of Breadwinner:	(N = 891)	(N = 99)	(N = 61)	(N = 56)
Grammar school grad. or less.....	16	15	5	27
Some high school.....	59	65	66	54
High school grad.....	19	17	21	11
Some college.....	3	3	5	7
College graduate.....	3	—	3	2
Parents' Marital Status:	(N = 943)	(N = 100)	(N = 67)	(N = 100)
Unknown.....	1	—	—	2
Never married.....	2	2	2	5
Married.....	49	47	46	40
Separated.....	20	22	13	27
Divorced.....	10	12	13	6
One or both dead.....	18	17	25	20
Boy Lives With:	(N = 943)	(N = 100)	(N = 67)	(N = 100)
Both parents.....	49	45	45	39
Parent and step-parent.....	11	13	15	10
Mother only.....	30	33	28	31
Father only.....	4	4	6	3
Relatives, foster home, or institution.....	6	5	6	17
Boys' School Status:	(N = 943)	(N = 100)	(N = 67)	(N = 100)
In school.....	48	68	48	28
Expelled.....	4	2	—	14
Quit.....	39	20	39	51
Excluded.....	7	9	13	7
Graduated.....	2	1	—	—

Eighty per cent of the Probationers but only 19 per cent of the Annandale boys had never been on probation before. As a group, Probationers were older and Annandale boys younger at the time of the first court appearance. Almost two-thirds of the Probationers were 16 or 17 years of age at their first court appearance; less than a

third of the boys in any other group were that old. Insofar as previous court history and age of first court appearance are associated with continued delinquency, the Probationers appear to be the best risks and Annandale boys the worst.

When the psychological characteristics of the four groups are examined, rather distinct differ-

ences can also be seen.¹⁵ As with many of the social background and delinquency history characteristics, the Probation and Annandale groups are the most different, with the Essexfields and Group Centers groups falling between these two extremes. These results suggest that the Probation boys as a group are somewhat less anti-social, less delinquent (although exhibiting a distinctively delinquent personality pattern), and better emotionally adjusted than the boys in the other groups. They are also less anxious and less hostile, exhibit a slightly better attitude toward themselves, have a better work attitude, and score higher on the social responsibility dimension of the inventory.

From all indications, it would appear that Probation received the less delinquent and better socially and psychologically adjusted juvenile offender. In this sense, it becomes responsible for what might be termed "easier" cases, or boys for whom the probability of success is greater. The relationship between pre-treatment probability of success and actual success can be seen in terms of (1) program completion, (2) change during the program, and (3) post-treatment recidivism.

IN-PROGRAM SUCCESS AND FAILURE

"In-program failure" is used to refer to any boy who was sent back to the court during the course of the treatment program and who was not returned by the court to the same program. It refers to those boys returned to the court for committing a new delinquent offense, being incorrigible or unmanageable while in the program, or, in the case of Essexfields and Group Centers, being socially or emotionally unsuitable for the program. In essence, the in-program failures were those boys upon whom the various rehabilitation programs had the least immediate effect, not even providing them with an opportunity to experience the entire treatment process.

Aside from Annandale, a custodial institution where program completion is not a question, the in-program success and failure rates for the other facilities were strikingly similar. Although the

failure rate for Probation, 28 per cent of the committed boys, is higher than that for Essexfields, 23 per cent, and the Group Centers, 27 per cent, these differences are not statistically significant. These rates do indicate, however, that the overwhelming majority of the boys in non-custodial programs complete their treatment experiences without becoming involved in further difficulty. Using only this criterion of success, probation fares no better than some others, and theoretically more meaningful, programs of treatment. In addition, some 219 Probationers appeared in court for a new offense during their probationary period, but were given dispositions of "Probation Extended" or "Probation Continued." Hence, they were not counted as in-program failures.

Examination of pertinent background, delinquency and personality variables shows interesting differences between Probation successes and failures. In Probation, whites have a lower failure rate and a higher success rate than Negroes. Failure is also more likely to occur for those boys who were out of school at the time of their admission. The same is true for those boys with a negative educational status score, a composite index which includes present school status, number of grades completed, and number of years retarded in school. The delinquency history score, another composite index consisting of age first known to court, number of delinquent offenses, and types of delinquent offenses, presents further evidence that the less delinquent and less delinquency-prone do better on probation than the more seriously delinquent. All of these differences are statistically significant at the .05 level or better. The same relationship, however, is not necessarily found between failures and successes in the other groups. Generally speaking, failures in the other groups are similar to Probation failures, but do not differ as markedly from the successes in their groups.

The MMPI data corroborate these findings. Again, the greatest differences are found between the Probation successes and failures. Nineteen of the 29 scales used in this study differentiate these two groups at the .05 level of significance or better. Among those tests which distinguish between the groups are the psychopathic deviancy, hypomania, schizophrenia, and *F* (indicating an attempt by the respondent to show himself in a bad light), as well as the delinquency, escapism, and social responsibility scales. As with the other

¹⁵ In addition to the regular fourteen basic clinical and validity scales, fifteen other measures selected from Dahlstrom and Walsh (*op. cit.*) and other sources were used in the analysis of the MMPI's. For a detailed discussion, see Stephenson and Scarpitti, *The Rehabilitation of Delinquent Boys*, report to the Ford Foundation (1967) (mimeographed). The authors gratefully acknowledge the contribution of Dr. Richard Lanyon, Department of Psychology, Rutgers, The State University, in the analysis of these data.

tests which differentiate, the Probation successes score more positively than do the failures. The failures clearly have a more delinquent personality pattern, conforming closely to the classic pattern for delinquents.

All of the scores for the Probation successes indicate that they are not very disturbed and are fairly well adjusted. Probation failures, as indicated, are less so, but are similar to both the failures and successes in Essexfields and Group Centers. In these groups, there are practically no significant differences between program successes and failures as determined by the MMPI tests. Failures in both programs, however, generally score more negatively than do successes on most scales. Although many of the success-failure differences in the Essexfields and Group Centers programs are in the same direction as those found in Probation, they are milder and less able to distinguish between the criterion groups.

These data seem to indicate that the Probation successes are less delinquent and better adjusted than all other boys in this study, successes or failures. In Essexfields and Group Centers the successes and failures are more similar to each other, as well as to the Probation failure group.

CHANGES DURING TREATMENT

The pre- to post-treatment MMPI changes made by boys while on Probation were relatively minimal. Of the basic MMPI scales, the significant changes were an increase on the depression and defensiveness scales, and a decrease on the paranoia and social introversion scales. While this pattern of change is not readily meaningful, it becomes clearer upon examination of the remaining scales. Decreases occurred on the anxiety and neuroticism scales, although these changes tend to be inconsistent with the increase in depression. Other changes were an improvement in attitude toward others, in attitude toward self, in work attitude, in intelligence and in dominance.

These scores suggest that a definite though slight change did take place in the boys during their probationary term. However, the changes were not in the scores characteristic of delinquency (psychopathic deviancy, hypomania, and schizophrenia), but in a variety of other areas. Overall, the boys became a little less anxious, and more outgoing, secure, and intellectually efficient. Also, there was improvement in attitudes toward themselves, others, and work. The slight decrease in

paranoia seems to have little meaning, since larger decreases were shown by all other groups.

Changes shown by the Essexfields and Group Centers boys were somewhat more marked than those shown in the Probation sample. Although the changes were not necessarily the type associated with delinquency reduction, they reflected general improvement in attitudes and ego-strength and a reduction of anxiety. Annandale boys, however, did not exhibit any of these positive changes and showed a greater tendency for change in a negative direction. Most noteworthy, perhaps, was an increase in the hostility score over the period of institutional confinement.

These findings indicate that the greatest positive changes, as measured by the MMPI, occurred in the group programs. Changes for the Probation group were slight, but in a positive direction. To account for Probation's more favorable initial group profile, groups within the four programs were matched on clinical scales regarded as predictive of delinquency. The changes for these matched groups were very similar to those of the unmatched groups. We might conclude then that Probation's effect in this respect is slight but positive. It is not as effective as either the non-residential or residential group programs, but much more beneficial than the reformatory experience.

RECIDIVISM

Perhaps the most crucial indicator of probation effectiveness is whether or not boys who complete the program continue to experience difficulty with the law. Objections to the use of recidivism as a criterion of "successful" treatment may be raised on several grounds. Recidivism indicates only one aspect of the effectiveness of a program of rehabilitation. Improvement in work habits, educational orientation, family adjustment, or personality characteristics are not necessarily indicated by the fact that a new offense is or is not committed. In addition, a person may commit numerous infractions of the law without arrest or conviction and still be regarded as a "success." Nevertheless, an avowed goal of corrections is to inhibit a return to crime and delinquency. Short of daily surveillance of individual cases or reliable community sources of informal information concerning them, the available evidence for estimating effectiveness in reaching this goal is the official record of court appearances and dispositions. This evaluation therefore seeks to answer one major

question: to what extent do those released from a program of treatment become involved in delinquency or crime as indicated by court action?

Boys who completed treatment and had no court appearances from their date of release to June of 1966 are clearly non-recidivists. Those who had one or more court appearances after release are not so readily disposed of since a court appearance is not sufficient to regard a case as a recidivist. A wide range of alternative dispositions are available to the court that may indicate a minor offense or even none at all. Therefore, the following court dispositions were used as the basis for determining recidivism: fine, jail, probation, Essexfields, Group Centers, reformatory, and prison. A court appearance resulting in any other disposition¹⁶ was regarded as non-recidivism, since the court obviously did not view the case as demanding intensive correctional treatment or punitive action.

Setting aside for the moment the fact that boys in different programs differ in social background and delinquency history, it can be seen from Table II that Annandale boys have the highest recidivism rate (55 per cent) and Probationers the lowest (15 per cent). Essexfields and Group Centers fall between these extremes, although recidivism is somewhat lower for Group Centers boys (41 per cent) than for Essexfields boys (48 per cent) and terminates earlier than that of any other program. It also is apparent that this general pattern is repeated when recidivism is calculated for each six month post-release period. The differences in rates of recidivism between Probation and each of the other three programs are statistically significant at a level greater than .001.

Among all recidivists, the highest percentage of recidivism was within the first six months, and nearly 75 per cent of the recidivism took place within a year after release. Probation recidivists appear to have the highest rate of recidivism within the first year and decrease strikingly thereafter. Noting the early termination of recidivism among Group Centers boys, the other three programs

¹⁶ Court dispositions not regarded as recidivism included dismissal, petition withdrawn, private placement, hospital placement, restitution ordered, counseled, adjustment to be reviewed, referred to parole (no further action taken), probation extended or continued (for Essexfields and Group Centers releaseses), probation vacated, bench warrant issued and case pending.

appear to spread out recidivism over a longer time span.

Since boys in the four programs of treatment were found to differ with respect to social background and delinquency history, an attempt was made to match cases across programs. With the exception of Probation, the total number of boys in each program was relatively small. This meant that to match on more than two or three variables was not feasible. At the same time it was desirable to include as many of the relevant factors as possible. One way to handle this problem was to combine several related variables into one index. Three factors were selected for matching purposes: socio-economic status (index comprised of family income, education and occupation of family breadwinner), delinquency history (index described earlier), and race.

It was possible to match only 44 boys across all four programs on the three matching factors. After elimination of in-program failures, the following rates of recidivism were observed: Probation ($N = 34$), 21 per cent; Essexfields ($N = 35$), 49 per cent; Group Centers ($N = 31$), 45 per cent; and Annandale ($N = 41$), 56 per cent. The differences in rates between Probation and each of the other three programs are statistically significant at a level greater than .01. Probationers were then matched separately with Essexfields boys since these two programs were most similar. Ninety-nine boys were matched in each group and, after eliminating the in-program failures, recidivism rates of 19 per cent for Probation ($N = 69$) and 48 per cent for Essexfields ($N = 76$) were found. As these results from matched groups indicate, the relative proportion of recidivists for each program does not change greatly even when seemingly significant variables are controlled.

It appears that Probation is highly successful as a treatment device when compared with alternative methods of dealing with delinquent boys. Probationers who complete their treatment have lower rates of recidivism than those who complete other types of programs, even when matched on background and delinquency factors. A great difference can be observed, however, between the recidivism rates of Probationers who complete and those who fail to complete the program. This is a significant consideration because recidivism rates of in-program failures may bear upon the finding concerning recidivism among boys who successfully completed treatment.

TABLE II

NUMBER OF RECIDIVISTS, CUMULATIVE RECIDIVISTS AND CUMULATIVE PER CENT OF RELEASEES WHO ARE RECIDIVISTS BY SIX MONTH PERIODS

Months	Probation (N = 671)			Essexfields (N = 77)			Group Centers (N = 49)			Annandale (N = 97)		
	%R	CR	C%	%R	CR	C%	%R	CR	C%	%R	CR	C%
6	50	50	7	12	12	16	8	8	16	20	20	21
12	37	87	13	9	21	27	5	13	27	16	36	38
18	9	96	14	8	29	38	5	18	37	9	45	46
24	5	101	15	6	35	45	2	20	41	6	51	53
30	1	102	15	1	36	47	—	—	—	1	52	54
36	—	—	—	1	37	48	—	—	—	1	53	55

N—Number of releasees (completed treatment).

%R—Number of recidivists.

CR—Cumulative recidivists.

C%—Cumulative percentage of releasees.

The data suggest that boys who fail during treatment and are reassigned to another program are poor risks for rehabilitation. Although this is true for all programs in which in-program failure was possible, it is especially true for Probation. Not only do Probation failures have a much higher rate of recidivism than failures in other programs, but they also have a significantly higher ($p > .001$) rate than those who complete treatment. When program successes and failures are combined, that is, all boys originally assigned to Probation by the court, the recidivism rate for Probation more than doubles, although it still remains lower than that of the other programs.

DISCUSSION

This paper has presented data on the effectiveness of probation as a treatment program for 16 and 17 year old delinquent boys. Boys assigned to probationary supervision were compared with delinquents committed to group treatment programs and to the state reformatory. Pertinent data were collected for each group at the time of program assignment, during the programs, and after release from treatment.

As a group, boys assigned to Probation appear to be "better" or "easier" cases than those assigned to other treatment facilities. They appear to come from more stable family backgrounds, are less deprived, and have a more positive educational history. Their delinquency careers are shorter and involve fewer past offenses and official court actions. The MMPI scores suggest that Probation boys are less delinquent, less anti-

social and better adjusted than boys in the other groups. Of the more than 1200 delinquent boys selected for this study, it is clearly evident that the best "risks" were assigned to Probation. As others have indicated,¹⁷ the bulk of Probationers are not seriously delinquent and probably not in need of intensive rehabilitative efforts.

Once assigned to Probation, some 72 per cent of the group completes the program and are successfully discharged. This is comparable to the percentage completing the group programs. More significantly, however, are the differences observed between the Probation successes and failures. On practically every count, the in-program failures are worse off than the successes. These differences are not seen between successes and failures in the other programs. Probation failures conform more to the profiles of all boys in the other groups than they do to the successes in Probation. Hence, it would appear that Probation rids itself during the course of treatment of those boys who are most delinquent and hardest to resocialize.

For those who complete probation, little change is reflected on the psychological and attitudinal dimensions of the MMPI. This is not surprising since the pre-tests did not indicate gross abnormalities among these youths and since the most disturbed, who had the greatest margin for improvement, were eliminated as in-program failures. It seems significant then that even modest positive changes were found in attitude, ego-strength and anxiety. Although not as great as

¹⁷ Diana, *op. cit.* *supra* note 10; and England, *op. cit.* *supra* note 4.

the changes made by boys in the group-oriented programs, they are certainly more favorable than those of the reformatory group.

In the last analysis, the crucial test of program effectiveness is recidivism, despite its many shortcomings. Again, boys assigned to Probation do much better in staying out of legal difficulty after release than their counterparts in other treatment programs. The Probation recidivism rate of 15 per cent is substantially below that of other programs. Although this low rate may result from Probationers' having the most favorable social backgrounds and delinquency histories, when boys were matched across programs, the relative rates of recidivism remained substantially unchanged.

The low rate of recidivism of the Probationers who complete treatment may partially be accounted for by the high rate of recidivism of in-program failures, on the grounds that Probation rids itself of high recidivism risks. By returning high risk boys to the court for further disposition, Probation may increase its chances of non-recidivism among boys who complete treatment. This is possible to a much lesser extent at Essexfields and Group Centers, and practically impossible at Annandale. This possibility must be considered as a strong conditioning factor in assessing the

very low 15 per cent recidivism among Probationers who completed treatment.

On the basis of the criteria used in this study, Probation does appear to be an effective treatment agent, at least for certain types of boys. Those who are less delinquent and come from fairly stable backgrounds complete their treatment program and remain free of delinquency involvement. More severe cases, similar to those assigned to intensive or punitive programs, do not do as well on Probation.

These findings lead us to a note of caution. It would appear that the good performance of probation is often misunderstood and thought to mean that all offenders can benefit from being placed under probationary supervision. This is clearly not the case. If probation is extended greatly, failure and recidivism rates will grow markedly, unless, of course, there is some monumental change in treatment techniques. Barring such change, a backlash effect is possible, with the public's reacting against probation, which they will assume to be ineffectual, and demanding more incarceration. The use of probation should be expanded, but its direction must be carefully guided and those assigned to it must be chosen with rigor.