

Improving Probation through Client Strengths: Evaluating Strength Based Treatments for at Risk Youth

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Abstract: *During the past twenty years the United States has seen delinquency rates and juvenile crime develop as a significant social problem. Relatively new approaches are currently employed by agencies charged with controlling juvenile crime. The focus of this research is a non-traditional correctional program that implements strength based case management techniques to intervene, address, and prevent delinquent behavior among at-risk juveniles. This study is an impact assessment of a grant-funded intervention program on the recidivism rates of those enrolled in the program over a three-year period. The study measures the net effects of the program and lends support for further development and expansion of strength based interventions.*

Keywords: strength based interventions; juvenile probation; recidivism

Probation has become a dominant social institution in American society and the cornerstone of community based correctional programs. The roots of American probation are connected to John Augustus, a Boston cobbler, who convinced a Massachusetts magistrate to allow him to supervise criminals instead of assigning them prison terms. It is believed that Augustus oversaw nearly 1,500 offenders and established the foundation for modern probation. Following Augustus' work, the first probation legislation was established in Massachusetts in 1878 (Carney 1977). Probation, like all forms of correctional control, has greatly expanded in recent decades.

Probation is now the prevailing sentencing alternative for the majority of juvenile offenders processed in the United States. Between 1990 and 1999 the number of adjudicated cases resulting in placement on some form of probation increased 44 percent (Puzzanchera 2003). During this same time period, juvenile crime increased only 11 percent, (Snyder 2000), and the number of formally processed cases in the juvenile court system increased 27 percent (Puzzanchera 2003).

Probation is popular because it is relatively inexpensive and flexible to community and individual needs. The estimated cost to place an offender on probation is much less per day than confinement in a correctional institution, which generally costs over \$100 per day (Tonry and Hamilton 1995). Probation allows offenders to remain in the community and receive rehabilitative

services and is quite flexible to the perceived concerns of each case (Smykla 1984).

The juvenile justice system has a strong history of community based programs that dates back to the 19th century. Probation is an especially appropriate sentence for juvenile offenders because of the competing concerns of community safety and rehabilitation that dominate the modern juvenile justice system. In this context, probation is a worthy alternative to incarceration for youthful offenders and can easily incorporate other community treatment options (Bartollas, 2000).

Probation Interventions

Many probation practices are not directly linked to prominent theories of offending and are centered on correctional ideology, tradition, and faulty assumptions (Cohn 2002). The goal of most community based treatment programs is to supervise offenders in a manner that reduces the likelihood that they will commit a new criminal offense. To achieve this goal, community correction organizations are using intensive supervision probation (ISP) or electronic monitoring (ESP). ISP is a highly structured program that requires weekly contact between the probation officer and the client, periodic drug and alcohol testing, employment verification, curfew monitoring, and involvement in substance abuse treatment or psychological counseling (Mackenzie et al. 1999; Petersilia and Turner 1991; Tonry and Hamilton

1995). Traditional probation officers may supervise anywhere from 150 to 300 clients depending on local standards. ISP officers generally supervise less than 40 clients (Petersilia and Turner 1991). The hypothesis is that intensive supervision reduces an offender's willingness to engage in criminal conduct because of the elevated risk of having his/her criminal behavior observed by the ISP officer. Additionally, this level of supervision will detect evidence of behavior correlated with criminal conduct like drug or alcohol usage (Petersilia and Turner 1991). The stated objective of these community programs is the creation of a comprehensive net of social control for convicted offenders that is quite similar to what they might receive in a prison setting.

Does increased supervision decrease the risk of criminal offending? Most literature indicates that the level of supervision has little influence on the criminal behavior of offenders. Petersilia and Turner examined ISP and regular probation outcomes in three California sites: Ventura, Los Angeles, and Contra Costa. Offenders assigned to ISP or ESP were significantly more likely to acquire technical violations of probation than those assigned to standard probation. In Los Angeles and Contra Costa, new arrest rates were highest for offenders assigned to ESP and ISP respectively. The arrest rates were not significantly different between ISP and standard probation in Ventura (Petersilia and Turner 1991). The evidence provided by this research seems to indicate that increased supervision alone does not curb criminal behavior.

Other research indicates that individuals reduce their criminal activities after they are assigned to probation. Research by Mackenzie et al. (1999) examined the criminal history and self-reported illegal behavior of 107 probationers and discovered that the number of arrests and self-reported criminal behavior significantly dropped following assignment to probation. This study also examined what influenced probation outcomes and self-reported delinquency using the Linear Structural Relationship Model (LISREL). The findings of their research indicate that the level of supervision and the intensity of social control have little effect on probation outcomes. The results of this research led Mackenzie et al. to make the following conclusion, "...although probation itself may reduce criminal activity, there is little evidence that what happens during probation has any additional effect on either criminal activities or violations of conditions" (1999:446). These findings provide evidence that the level of supervision does not always improve the effectiveness of community treatment programs.

Substance testing has become an extensive practice in

modern probation. The guiding principle of drug testing asserts that it reduces the likelihood of substance use by probation clients, which also decreases their involvement in criminal or reckless behavior (Deschenes, Turner and Greenwood 1996). Drug use is linked with criminal offending in other studies (Stahl 2001), which partially justifies the concentration on substance use. Like many of the guiding assumptions of intensive probation, the drug-testing assumption is not solidly linked to empirical observation. An extensive research project by Haapanen and Britton (2002) examined the recidivism rates of 1,958 California juvenile parole clients. These parolees were divided into five groups according to the frequency of drug testing, ranging from weekly testing to a no test group. All participants were observed for a 48-month period following confinement and were required to follow intensive supervision conditions. The arrest rates for all testing categories were fairly high; however, the group that was not tested and those tested only during re-entry showed slightly lower arrest rates. An interesting finding of this project was that individuals in the no drug test group were about 10 percent less likely to be arrested for violent offenses than those in the bi-weekly to monthly test groups (Haapanen and Britton 2002). Other research on drug testing shows that these practices increase the number of technical violations but not new arrests (Deschenes, Turner and Greenwood 1996). The assumptions that guide drug testing are not consistently supported in the literature, and given tight fiscal times, it appears that correction agencies should seriously examine the cost effectiveness of expensive testing regimens.

The role of the supervision officer represents an important aspect of the probation contract, and their influence on success is frequently ignored. Probation officers have two primary tasks associated with supervision of clients: social control and rehabilitation. Most research on probation officers has examined their role orientation toward social control or the rehabilitation focus of their work. An orientation toward helping produces fewer probation revocations resulting from technical violations, whereas a control orientation corresponds with increased revocations for technical violations (Clear and Latessa 1993; Fulton et al. 1997). The implications of role orientation and probation outcomes are important because helpers will tend to downplay their control function.

Strength Based Interventions

Strength based practice has become an alternative treatment modality in a number of behavioral sciences. Strength oriented approaches developed in social work

and other human service professions and have expanded into psychology (Hubble, Duncan and Miller 1999) and criminal justice (Clark 1998). The premise of strength based practice is to move away from focusing on the client's short-comings and to direct attention to the client's abilities (Saleeby 1996). The worker and the client spend very little time trying to understand how the problem developed and concentrate on strength that can be drawn upon to solve problems (Early and GlenMaye 2000). With this technique social workers identify both client and community strengths and utilize them to reduce the need for intrusive interventions (Rapp 1997).

Strength based treatment is not traditionally associated with correctional interventions but has recently extended into this field. The influences of strength and solution based treatment for lawbreakers lends support to the belief that strict control models have failed (Clark 1997). Katherine Van Wormer (1999) argues that using the strength approach in correctional settings allows clients to marshal personal assets that they never knew existed. The strength perspective allows the correctional counselor and the offenders to work together to achieve both behavioral and attitudinal outcomes. The movement beyond focusing on negative outcomes frees clients' and the officer's energy and places the focal point on achievement. It is our assertion that this perspective signals a new paradigm for probation, which offers promise for reducing recidivism. Little research exists that formally evaluates the effectiveness of strength-based practices with criminal offenders, thus the current research can enhance the literature.

Riley County Kansas's Strengths Based Case Management

Juvenile Intake and Assessment Case Management (JIACM) is a non-traditional correctional program that implements strength based case management philosophies in a variety of ways to manage at-risk behavior. JIACM provides immediate, intensive case management services for a target period of 120 days to youth at risk of further delinquent behavior, or of entering the court system. By blending social-control measures of probation with strength-based case management techniques, JIACM can develop an individual plan to intervene with juveniles of low to moderate risk of further delinquency.

The JIACM program in the 21st Judicial District began as a grant funded intervention initiative in December 1999, via the Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant (JAIBG) and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Through attrition, other funding

sources have been acquired for continued maintenance of the program. JIACM also supplies intensive case management services to non-adjudicated youth referred by community sources.

Under this model, intake staff has a tangible resource to implement with youth and families seeking assistance immediately following arrest. The program's duration was specifically designed for a maximum period of one hundred and twenty days. This target period was identified because it was the average elapsed period of time from arrest to adjudication for a random sample of one hundred juvenile offender and child in need of care cases selected during the community planning process. This intended brevity helps to focus the intensity of the program so that the greatest number of youth can be served in the least amount of time. The short term of assignment also discourages complacency and unhealthy reliance on the program.

In July 2001, after nearly two years of operation, the 21st Judicial District Court adopted JIACM as a formal diversion program based on the authority of K.S.A. 38-1635, which pertains to immediate intervention programs. This allows the program to be used either as a voluntary intervention or as an alternative to formal prosecution under the Kansas Juvenile Justice Code. Prior to the adoption of JIACM as a formal diversion program, JIACM had been solely a voluntary program with referrals coming from juvenile intake, youth court, the district prosecutor's office, local schools, parents, and the community at-large.

The guidelines for placement of youth on JIACM-Diversion are as follows: The youth must be either a first-offense misdemeanor battery offender, have had prior police contact making them ineligible for placement on Teen Court, or have been referred directly by the local prosecutor's office.

There are two particularly attractive benefits of JIACM when compared to other programs operating within the district (Teen Court, County Attorney's Diversion, various forms of probation). First, the program is able to begin service delivery in a rapid manner. The average amount of time elapsed from arrest to program implementation is reduced to nearly one-tenth of JIACM's counterparts (the average elapsed period of time was 3.5 months from arrest to placement on the two traditional programs and only 2.7 days for JIACM in 2003). This allows expeditious travel through the system and delivers services to the youth and family in a real-time manner, which is a particular advantage for youth presenting behavioral difficulties at the time of arrest. The other visible benefit of JIACM is that those placed on the program have contact with their

case manager on at least a weekly basis as opposed to monthly or bi-monthly contact for those placed on Teen Court, the Attorney's Diversion Programs, or Court Services probation. In addition, the program often serves as an unintended screening device, helping to reduce the docket demands for both the court and the prosecutor's office by eliminating unnecessary hearings subsequent to pretrial.

Program Philosophy

The role of the case manager is to empower youth and families by identifying and enhancing strengths, which in turn encourage behavioral changes. The fundamental ideology of the JIACM program is to assist clients and families in identifying, securing, and sustaining a range of resources, both external and internal, necessary to live a normal life in the community (Clark 1997). This is accomplished by supporting the youth rather than punishing the offender, as well as focusing on the existing strengths and resources available to the family to accomplish self-identified behavioral goals (Clark 1997; Clark 1998).

A process called the strengths assessment is the foundation for the treatment mechanism of this program and is utilized to help the youth and family establish goals. The strengths assessment is comprised of information obtained by communicating with the youth, their family, and those directly involved with the case. Through the inevitable parental involvement in any behavioral intervention, parents often consider themselves involuntary clients. Therefore, it is logical that any intervention should attempt to build a partnership with families, strengthen parent-child attachment, and fully invest the entire family in the process (Stern and Smith 1999). Again, by focusing on strengths, the program seeks to foster an atmosphere of "can do" rather than the "can't do" attitude typical of formal correctional programs. These assets and talents are identified to help achieve goals, marshal individual talents, increase involvement in activities, formalize familial networks, and identify monetary resources. It is the strengths assessment process that formalizes self-identified assets and then documents them on a form that can be modified at anytime during the youth's assignment.

Within one week of the strengths assessment, the case manager again meets with the family to develop a personal plan. The personal plan establishes achievable goals and behavioral outcomes with the intention of alleviating the presenting difficulties. The resources identified by the youth and family in the strengths assessment are used

as the primary driving and supporting forces for the goals established by the personal plan. It is important to assist the youth and family in developing goals that can be divided into measurable, tangible tasks that can be accomplished within a short period of time (target period of 120 days). By establishing goals in a measurable and observable manner, the abstract and generalized directive is replaced with a concrete, specific, and achievable plan. Each goal contains just one evaluative standard, which serves to simplify evaluation and supports success in an incremental manner.

The case manager monitors participation in identified programs and reviews the personal plan every thirty days. During the client's assignment, the case manager overtly highlights any success on the part of the youth. Additionally, the case manager connects the youth and family with ancillary community resources to assist them in completing these tasks. At ninety days the case manager does a full re-assessment of the youth's goals and prepares an appropriate termination strategy. The re-assessment process helps to nurture a continued atmosphere of optimism and provides focus for the clients and case manager during the last month of supervision. In some cases, the reassessment can justify extending a youth's participation in JIACM beyond 120 days.

Program Failures and Disengagement

The JIACM program does not monitor conditions of probation like more traditional community based interventions. The case manager's primary focus is on motivation, support, and timely goal completion. Nevertheless, youth assigned to the program frequently make inappropriate choices that would violate the conditions of a probation or diversion program. The case manager uses these situations as a chance to rearticulate goals and to reinforce client success. In the most extreme cases, the case manager may forward the offenders case to the County Attorney for prosecution as a failure of diversion. In non-diversion cases, the behavior of the participant is used as a risk-needs evaluation for any subsequent processing decisions.

The case manager gradually disengages from the youth and family when it is determined that the maximum benefit of the program has been reached. This can occur by achieving the majority of established goals, exceeding the 120-day threshold, or in cases where participation is voluntary when the youth and family fail to cooperate with the program. Regardless of the nature of the disengagement, the case manager plans for the termination of services, encourages self-sufficiency,

competent parenting, and attempts to leave the family with a thorough knowledge of community resources.

The purpose of this study is to determine the overall effectiveness of the JIACM program over a four-year period on the recidivism rates of those involved in the program. We compare the produced re-arrest rates of JIACM to the recidivism rates of the other available programs for juvenile offenders in our community to evaluate the benefits of strength based techniques with at risk youth.

- H1: The intervening mechanisms of JIACM --length of time in the program, goals, and contact hours--will increase the odds that clients successfully terminate the program.
- H2: Successful completion of the program will reduce the likelihood of re-arrest.
- H3: Strength based case management participation will show reduced odds of re-arrest compared to a sample of court service probationers.

Methods

Population

The at-risk population served by the program is youth aged 10-17, either Juvenile Offenders (JO) or Children in Need of Care (CINC). The juvenile offender population is generally limited to youth alleged to have committed a first-time misdemeanor, or non-violent, non-drug felony. Historically, some non-person and drug felony offenders have been admitted to the program on a case-by-case basis, especially if mitigating factors such as age, and familial background are present. The CINC population consists of youth who have committed status offenses, such as truancy, violation of city curfew ordinances, or have run away from home. Often more ambiguous CINC issues exist that compel a referral such as ungovernable behavior in the home, or drug or alcohol abuse not resulting in arrest. At the time of this analysis, 122 youths participated in JIACM. However, 25 cases are excluded from the study because they either did not receive the services following referral, or the case file contained inadequate information to determine the level of participation. Case file documentation and uniformity was a particularly glaring deficiency in the early days of the program prior to revision and modification of the formal documentation policies and procedures.

Measures

Recidivism for this study is measured by the re-arrest rate of the program participants. The re-arrest frequency is obtained from official Riley County Police Department (RCPD) arrest reports, Riley County Juvenile Intake Data, and RLCO DA TRAK reports. The Riley County Police Department supplied a summary of all youth arrested within the district from 1999 to June 2004. This summary includes all relevant information necessary to determine if a youth in the program was arrested subsequent to involvement with JIACM. Other data for this research is taken from client files and applicable documentation. Sources of information include chronological contact notes, the strengths assessments, personal plans, correspondence with service providers, clinical evaluations, and disengagement summaries. Disengagement summaries are particularly useful because they recap encounters with the juveniles, the types of services rendered, and efforts to achieve program goals. Re-arrest is dichotomously coded as 1 for a juvenile arrested in the follow-up period and 0 for those youths who were not arrested.

Comparison Samples

Data on re-arrest is also collected on three other groups of juveniles processed by authorities in Riley County. The first group includes a random sample of 100 juveniles contacted by Juvenile Intake and Assessment Services (JIAS). In accordance with Kansas' statutes, all youths arrested for criminal or status offenses must be processed by JIAS. Although the majority of these cases are not formally processed by the juvenile justice system, JIAS data does provide a fair estimate of the re-arrest rate for the Riley County as a whole.

The second comparison group contains juveniles formally prosecuted by the District Court and assigned to Court Service Probation (CSO). To effectively represent youth placed on probation that are deemed low to moderate risk, a random sample of 100 CSO probation clients was collected from youths supervised during one of the years since implementation of JIACM program (1999-2003). Assignment to Court Services is typically reserved for youths found to be first-time misdemeanors, or low risk offenders. The Court Services Officer who conducts the pre-dispositional investigation makes this determination. To determine which dispositional alternative is appropriate, the Court Service Officer conducts a cursory background investigation, interviews the youth and family, and completes a risk needs screening.

The third comparison group is a random sample of 100 youth supervised by Riley County Community Corrections and assigned to Juvenile Intensive Supervised Probation (JISP). JISP is the most intrusive of the correctional alternatives used by the local jurisdiction. JISP is typically reserved for high-risk, violent, felony offenders or youths with a history of multiple adjudications. Periodically, youths who do not have a serious committing offense or a significant record of adjudication are placed on JISP due to considerable need or risk factors. This program requires frequent contact between the officer and client, random substance abuse testing, curfew enforcement, educational and vocational obligations, and in some instances, surveillance and electronic monitoring.

Logistic Regression Analysis

We use logistic regression analysis to ascertain which program components influence re-arrest. A key independent variable for this study is success, which is measured by examining both goal completion and the case manager's perceptions of the client's overall performance. Clients who complete fifty percent of their assigned goals and are deemed successful by the case manager's disengagement summary are considered successful and coded as 1. Unsuccessful clients are coded as 0.

A number of demographic variables are associated with probation outcomes, which include gender, age, race, prior criminal history, type of offense, and sentence length. Female offenders tend to respond more effectively to probation sentences compared to males. Additionally, property offenders are more likely to re-offend than those who commit person offenses. Offenders with prior felony arrests and those with longer sentences are also more likely to fail on probation (Mackenzie et al. 1999; Sims and Jones 1997). A series of dichotomous dummy variables are used for the majority of demographic and control variables. A comparison sample for logistic regression is also used in this research. This sample was limited to first time misdemeanor offenders placed on standard probation. It is our belief that the level of offense and intensity of intervention employed by the court makes this population most comparable to youth assigned to JIACM. Members of the control sample are coded as 1, and JIACM participants are coded as 0. Coding details for major independent, dependent, and control variables are included as Appendix A.

Findings

Table 1 shows the re-arrest rates of JIACM and that

of each of the community based intervention programs examined by this research. The sample of youths processed by JIAS generates a re-arrest rate of 9 percent. As one would expect, this rate is quite low, as intake processes all juvenile in Riley County at the point of arrest, encapsulating a majority of youth who will not have repeat contact with law enforcement. This sample gives a fair estimate of the recidivism rate of all youths in Riley County. The Court Services sample yields a re-arrest rate of 38 percent. Although no data exists for recidivism rates of youth placed on probation with Court Services in Kansas, this rate is congruent with the re-arrest rates of similar probation systems throughout the United States (Preston and Minor 1992). The Intensive Probation sample produced a re-arrest rate of 53 percent, which was the highest of the comparison groups. Although this rate is elevated in contrast to the other programs, it is somewhat expected when considering the population served by intensive probation. Previous research has shown that ISP units typically carry the highest recidivism rate of all the community based sentencing alternatives.

Table 1. Re-arrest Rates for JIACM and Other Intervention Samples

Program	Total	Re-arrested	
	N	N	%
Juvenile Intake	100	9	9.0 %
Court Services Probation	100	38	38.0
Intensive Probation (ISP)	100	53	53.0
Juvenile Intake Case Management (JIACM)	97	30	30.9

Of the 97 youth in the JIACM research population, 31 percent were re-arrested in the follow up period. Although this recidivism rate appears robust, please note that it is lower than both the traditional probation and ISP groups. Comparisons between the groups are problematic because of offense characteristics, but it allows for some interpretation of how recidivism rates of JIACM participants measure up to other local programs.

Descriptive statistics for the key program components are listed in Table 2. The mean number of goals set for those who successfully complete the program is slightly greater than 4.5 per participant. Of the goals set, the average successful client completes slightly more than 3.6 goals. The mean number of days in the program for successful clients is 118 days. Youths who fail on JIACM have appreciably lower means in the key program components. On average these youths set fewer than 4 goals and achieved less than 1 of them. Unsuccessful

youths remain in the program for an average of 77 days. Only nine of the youths who successfully completed the program were re-arrested in the follow-up period, whereas 21 of the unsuccessful clients were re-arrested.

Table 2. Descriptive Comparison of Successful and Unsuccessful JIACM Cases

	Successful disengagement (N = 49)	Unsuccessful disengagement (N = 48)
Mean number of goals	4.56	3.14
Mean number of goals achieved	3.62	0.85
Mean number of days	118.12	77.30
Total number re-arrested	9	21

To determine which parts of the JIACM program influence positive outcomes we conduct logistic regression analysis. The first model indicates the results of this regression for successful program completion as indicated in the first hypothesis. Race and gender is not significant in regards to successful completion of the program. Of the possible referral sources, youths referred by the County Attorney’s office are more than 84 percent less likely to complete the program successfully. This finding was not unexpected as the program’s flexibility has defined it as the most practical, immediate recourse to address a youth whose behavior may be escalating in an alarming fashion. Often the prosecutor saw involvement with JIACM as the last alternative for an escalating, yet borderline, youth prior to entrance into the formal juvenile justice system (probation; out of home placement). Youth referred by the prosecutor are compelled to complete the program and face additional sanctions if they do not

Table 3. Logistic Regression Analysis for Successful Program Completion

Variables	B	S.E.	Wald	OR
White	.985	.701	1.973	2.678
Female	.744	.429	3.010	2.678
Case manager #1	-2.657	1.154	5.300	.070 *
Case manager #2	-2.029	1.069	3.599	.132 *
90 Days in Program	1.809	.839	4.648	6.106 *
Goals	-.206	.128	2.593	.814
Hours	-.498	.250	3.981	.607 *
Referred by CA	-1.835	.923	3.951	.160 *

Cox and Snell R Square = .427 *p < .05; **p < .01.

fulfill program requirements. Furthermore, these youth are more likely to have a criminal charge than others assigned to this program.

In accordance with hypothesis 1, several variables that measure components of the program are statistically significant and affect program outcomes. Youths who spend more than 90 days in the program are 510 percent more likely to be successful than those who are involved with the program for less than 90 days. Several other program components are statistically significant but the results are not favorable to the program. The number of goals set at the personal plan meeting slightly increases risk of program failure (OR = .814). This variable is continuous and depicts the relative odds for a one-unit increase. This infers that each goal reduces the likelihood of successful completion by 19 percent. We believe that this is indicative of the overall needs of the client at the time they were assigned to the JIACM program. A high number of goals set during the personal plan is emblematic of the juvenile’s and family’s level of dysfunction. It could also indicate that establishing too many goals creates an atmosphere of insurmountable hopelessness, particularly in the face of initial difficulty within the program. This is an important finding for continued program revision, as case managers will be encouraged to establish fewer initial goals, as well as establishing one highly attainable goal. In circumstances in which a youth accomplishes goals quickly, the case manager can re-assess and re-establish goals to foster continued personal growth.

Another program facet negatively associated with success is the number of hours spent between the officer and juvenile. Increased time between the case manager and the youth elevates risk of re-arrest (OR = .607, p < .05). Clearly, this was an unexpected outcome and can be interpreted in one of two ways. First, the interactions between the case manager and the client may increase risk of program failure resulting from strain or factors associated with traditional coercive supervision techniques (Clark 1997; Colvin, Cullen and Vander Ven 2002). A second way to evaluate this result is to argue that the case manager may increase the number of hours working with difficult, or high-needs clients. The sample contains multiple instances of youths who fail in the program and also require many hours of the case manager’s time. In fact, 21 of the youths who were re-arrested spent 41 or more contact hours with their case manager. We argue that difficult cases require more direct services from the case manager and increase the overall number of contact hours, thus it was not time with the case manager that increases the risk of re-offending per se. This could indicate that the program is poorly suited

for some populations, particularly high risk youths.

Hypothesis 2 is concerned with which variables influence client re-arrest. To determine the affects of successful program completion on recidivism rates, logistic regression is conducted with re-arrest rates serving as the dependent variable. Only one demographic variable, white, had a significant relationship with re-arrest in this model. White individuals are 81 percent less likely to be re-arrested in the follow-up period ,indicating that being white in the local community may mediate the risk of re-arrest. From a theoretical standpoint this may show that whites have greater access to resources and are less likely to be negatively labeled as a result of the program. Female offenders, age, days in the program, hours, and goals are not statistically significant. The strongest relationship in this model is between re-arrest and those assigned for juvenile offenses (as opposed to CINC/ status offenses). Juvenile offenders are 113 percent more likely to be re-arrested than other youth. This result is not particularly surprising given the findings of other juvenile offender intervention programs. Offenders successfully completing the program are nearly 73 percent less likely to be re-arrested. This reflects that although not every individual component of the program directly reduces re-arrest risk, general success in JIACM does.

Table 4. Logistic Regression Analysis for JIACM Participant Re-arrest

Variables	B	S.E.	Wald	OR
White	-1.665	.591	7.449	.189 **
Female	-.350	.333	1.106	.705
Age	.193	.196	.973	1.213
90 Days	-.205	.697	.086	.815
Goals	.009	.097	.008	.992
Hours	.216	.166	1.696	1.242
Successful	-1.295	.638	4.122	.274 *
JO Case	.757	.232	10.669	2.133 *
Cox and Snell R Square = .299 *p<.05; **p<.01.				

The final model estimates the re-arrest for JIACM and the most appropriate comparison group. In hypothesis 3, we argue that clients assigned to JIACM will have lower re-arrest rates than youth from a comparison sample of court service clients. This represents a quasi-experimental comparison sample because the JIACM and control group are not randomly assigned, therefore these results must be interpreted with caution (refer to coding for variable details). Please note that the offenders in both samples are matched on compatible levels of criminal behavior and court intervention (i.e. no felony cases or youth assigned to JISP are included in the comparison

sample). The interventions employed by JIACM and Court Services probation are quite different, which means that only demographic variables and case samples are included in the model.

Table 5 indicates the key statistical analysis of this expanded sample. African Americans are 345 percent more likely than whites to be re-arrested regardless of the assigned program. Youths who committed a juvenile offense are also more likely to be re-arrested than those assigned for a status offense. Both JIACM and Court Service programs supervise status offenders. Finally, youth from the comparison group are 117 percent more likely to be re-arrested than youth served by JIACM. These results lend support to the value of the JIACM as an intervention program.

Table 5. Logistic Regression Analysis for JIACM and Comparison Re-arrest

Variables	B	S.E.	Wald	OR
African American	1.469	0.587	6.273	4.345 **
Male	0.362	0.374	0.937	1.436
JO Case	0.567	0.185	9.438	1.764 **
Comparison ¹	0.775	0.357	4.701	2.17 *
Cox and Snell R Square = .119 *p<.05; **p<.01.				
¹ The comparison group is a random sample of Court Service probation clients. An initial sample of 100 offenders was identified, however only first time misdemeanor offenders or status offenders are included in the analysis because of their comparability with the JIACM group.				

Discussion

We are cautiously optimistic that strength based programs can offer a positive alternative to traditional coercive probation interventions. Furthermore, the position of the program within the system naturally identifies at-risk youths early in the process (post-arrest, pre-trial) and is the only viable option to address these youths prior to adjudication. This program provides direct interventions not usually available to first time offenders prior to adjudication. A variety of referring parties sought JIACM as an avenue to address delinquent or at-risk behavior not typical of the majority of first time low-level juvenile offenders. These youth were referred to the program because key players in the community believed that these youth demonstrated risk factors not traditionally associated with minor offenses. Had these youth been processed in a normal fashion, we believe the majority would have been placed on Court Services probation and not diversion because of the risk factors that required immediate intervention. In essence, the majority

of JIACM youths could be considered the highest risk offenders from a low-risk population (based primarily on the presenting charge).

A direct measure of the juveniles' behavior or psychological make-up at the time of placement in JIACM does not exist, and thus we cannot absolutely conclude that the intervention results in the outcomes espoused by strength based techniques. As detailed above, we conclude that JIACM cases are those youth defined at an early stage as being at-risk of future delinquent behavior. Rarely does pre-trial intervention occur within the other programs, which underscores our argument that the JIACM population is probably comparable to youth on Court Services probation.

As supported by the data and analysis, successful completion of the JIACM program significantly reduces the risk of re-offending despite the fact that traditional values of probation are abandoned. By focusing on goals and strengths, youths are less likely to experience the negative side effects of probation. Youths who spend three or more months in the program are more likely to be successful, supporting the intervening mechanism of the strengths approach. Each officer is specifically trained in strength based techniques so it is logical to conclude that the extent of their interactions with the juveniles focuses on building the youth's abilities.

Probation is at a crossroad. Evaluative studies are consistently disproving that intensive and punitive social controls reduce the risk of re-offending (Mackenzie et al. 1999; Preston and Minor 1992; Petersilia and Turner 1991). Even assumptions grounded in empirical evidence, such as the connection between drug usage and offending do not support the practices that have evolved (Haapanen and Britton 2002). Other practices of probation remain untested or have limited empirical validity. If probation is an intervention program, then new approaches should be investigated to reduce delinquent behavior. Purely as a punitive or controlling measure, probation is an idea that resonates well with the public and policy makers, and seems to fulfill this purpose. In fact, some argue that probation may be more punitive than incarceration (Petersilia, 1990).

If probation is intended to change the behavior or circumstances that lead to delinquent conduct, then the current practices are failing. Programs similar to JIACM may point to the future of intensive community based supervision and at least offer new tools for practitioners. Communities that successfully address juvenile delinquency generally have a number of treatment options available to juvenile justice officials (Holsinger and Latessa 1999). We argue for the continued expansion

and integration of these practices to every corner of the correctional milieu. In its most basic form, JIACM provides a swift and flexible avenue to process and address the behaviors of youths who exhibit the early signs of involvement with the juvenile court system.

Appendix A. Measurement of Key Independent and Dependent Variables

Variables	Yes	%
Dependent variable		
Successful completion of JIACM ¹	48	42.3 %
Re-arrest	30	30.9
Control variables		
Female	32	33.0 %
Juvenile offender ²	57	58.8
County attorney referral	12	12.4
Independent variables³		
Case manager #1 ⁴	23	23.7 %
Case manager #2	54	55.7
90 or more days in program	41	42.3
Variables in comparison model⁵		
Re-arrest	62	35.8 %
African American	16	9.2
Male	118	68.2
Comparison group	75	43.4

¹ Required successful completion of 50% or more of goals and case manager's determination of success in the disengagement summary. Initially, these components were coded as two distinct dichotomous variables, one for achievement of goals, and the other for successful completion of the program as determined by the case manager. However, while examining the data we discovered that the two variables were collinear with a Pearson's r correlation coefficient of .818 and a high VIF. We concluded that the two variables were, in fact, measures the same underlying construct of client success. We collapsed the two variables into one dichotomous success measure that encompasses the concerns of both measures.

² Child in Need of Care Cases (non-truant, non-runaway) served as the offense reference category.

³ Number of goals and age are measured in actual numbers and contact hours are coded in 15-hour increments.

⁴ Case manager #3 served as the reference category.

⁵ The comparison group logistic model is the only one to include these variable (n = 173).

Endnotes

¹ For each of the comparison populations we generated a list of all youth served by each of the programs during the same years as JIACM (1999-2004). We targeted samples of 100 youths for each of program populations to give a sample size similar to JIACM. The first offender

was randomly selected from each list. We then skipped the appropriate number from the first selected case based on the total population size divided by one hundred. For example, the JIAS had slightly less than 400 youth, consequently every fourth case from the starting point was included in the sample. The case files were pulled for general information and re-arrest frequency was obtained from official Riley County Police Department (RCPD) arrest reports, Riley County Juvenile Intake Data, and RLCO DA TRAK reports.

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