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Eve Brank, Jodi Lane, Susan Turner, Terry Fain and Amber Sehgal  
*Crime Delinquency* 2008; 54; 193 originally published online Oct 26, 2007;  
DOI: 10.1177/001128706296048

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# An Experimental Juvenile Probation Program

## Effects on Parent and Peer Relationships

Eve Brank

Jodi Lane

*University of Florida, Gainesville*

Susan Turner

*University of California, Irvine*

Terry Fain

Amber Sehgal

*RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA*

In an effort to provide a wider range of services to youth and their families than is traditionally available in routine probation, the South Oxnard Challenge Project (SOCP) employed a team approach to service delivery of an intensive probation program. The researchers interviewed juveniles who were randomly assigned to either the SOCP experimental condition or the control condition of a routine probation program. The intensive probation program, among other goals, focused on improving parent-child relationships and teaching youth how to choose better peers. At 1 year post random assignment, experimental and control youth were not significantly different on key family or peer relationship measures. Level of program intensity, implementation issues, and other problems inherent in doing this type of research are provided as possible explanations for the lack of differences. These null findings are examined in light of the recent movement toward parental involvement legislation.

**Keywords:** *juvenile delinquency; probation; parents; peers*

During the 1990s, juvenile crime was one of the top policy concerns nationwide. Policymakers and practitioners faced rising juvenile violence rates and worried that the problem would only increase as the juvenile population swelled later in the decade. To curb the expected rise in crime, leaders looked for new solutions including both front-end and back-end

prevention strategies. In the midst of this national concern, California developed the Juvenile Crime and Accountability Challenge Program, designed to fund multiagency collaborations at the county level in an attempt to keep juveniles from eventually entering the California Youth Authority, the state's juvenile prison system. In 1997, Ventura County received about \$4.5 million to implement the South Oxnard Challenge Project (SOCP) to serve juveniles on probation over a 3-year period. They later received an additional year of funding. This project brought together probation, drug and alcohol counselors, a mental health counselor, police, recreation and community services staff, mediators, and mentors (called Navigators) to work together in one location in the heart of South Oxnard, the area with the highest juvenile crime rate in the county.

SOCP staff used Corrections of Place (COP) principles (Clear, 1996; Clear & Corbett, 1998) as a guide to develop a program and treatment approach with a wider range of services to youth and their families than was available for those on routine probation. Each case was assigned to a team of service providers with a case manager in charge of coordinating services. For formal probation youth, the case manager was a probation officer. For informal probation youth, the case manager was a nonprobation employee called a service coordinator. The probation officers for the SOCP were all recruited from their current positions as probation officers within formal or informal juvenile units. The probation officers who applied to be part of SOCP did so because of interest and fit in the project. They were selected through an interview process by a team of probation department leaders who were instrumental in writing and obtaining grant funding. All of those selected had been through the traditional probation officer training programs and had at least a few years of experience working as a probation officer. In addition, they participated in specific SOCP training about their roles in the team and in the project overall.

In addition to the service coordinator and probation officers, each youth had a mentor called a Navigator. A Navigator was a paid, full-time staff person who assisted the youth in "navigating" through the justice system and other areas of their lives. The Navigators' primary role was to develop a consistent relationship with the youth. The Navigators were told to give clear messages of what was expected from youth and were there to facilitate and motivate success. The Navigators' role on the team was to share this information and to act in support of the plan. Each Navigator had a caseload of approximately 15 youth. The need for additional team members (e.g., alcohol and drug treatment specialist, mental health social worker) beyond the service coordinator, probation officer, and Navigator was based

informally on information the service coordinators knew about the youth and their families.

An individual service plan, called a Challenge Plan, was developed by the team in connection with the family for each youth referred to SOCP. Team members would meet together at least once per week to discuss the cases, with more spontaneous collaborations occurring daily (Lane & Turner, 1999). During the scheduled meetings, the team members would discuss the cases and contribute ideas for how to better facilitate the youth and their families. One characteristic of this team approach was the inclusion of the special service providers and their involvement in making suggestions for youth during these meetings. Therefore, even if a youth did not have direct contact with an alcohol and drug treatment specialist, that specialist often provided input during team meetings concerning the youth's treatment and the Challenge Plan. Those on the control caseloads received typical probation services—i.e., a probation officer (not a team) who met with them approximately once a month to monitor terms and conditions. The family was not a focus of control group intervention and therefore had no input in developing goals for the youth.

The contact with the youth also took place in a more comfortable and inviting context than a typical probation office; the SOCP was located in a community center that included a library and recreation facility. SOCP youth and their families on average received 14 contacts per month with the members of the SOCP staff (Lane, Turner, Fain, & Sehgal, 2005). Routine probation officers without the help of Navigators and other support personnel averaged one contact with their juveniles (Lane et al., 2005). Evidencing the comfortable atmosphere, SOCP probation officers informally reported incidences of youth coming to the community center after school just to visit with their probation officers.

Earlier research (Lane et al., 2005) on this intervention demonstrated significantly different services provided by SOCP as compared to the routine probation program. For instance, 47% of SOCP youth received drug and alcohol treatment. In contrast, only 29% of the traditional probation youth received these same services. Likewise, 76% of the SOCP youth received some form of family services, but only about 6% of the routine probation youth received family services. The number and length of contacts with the youth differed significantly also. SOCP probation officers spent on average about 365 more minutes per month with their youth than did the routine probation officers.

Throughout the project, the evaluators were able to informally talk with the probation officers and repeatedly heard from them how different the SOCP was from the traditional probation system. In fact, similar to the

reports of some of the youth coming to the community center to spend time after school, there were also incidences of SOCP probation officers spending more time with their youth than they would normally do in a traditional probation program. For instance, it became common for youth or their parents to call their SOCP probation officers to report when they had earned good grades in school. One of the SOCP probation officers even went running regularly with one of his youth. Others also participated in nontraditional activities with their youth (see Lane et al., 2005).

The SOCP combined the team approach, service availability, and a comfortable setting to encourage youth and their parents to actively participate in the justice process and improve family relationships at the same time (see Karp, Lane, & Turner, 2002; Lane et al., 2005; Lane, Turner, Fain, & Sehgal, 2007). SOCP staff was aware of research (see Clark & Shields, 1997; Cottle, Lee, & Heilbrun, 2001; Loeber & Dishion, 1983; Simourd & Andrews, 1994) indicating that family relationships were key factors in the ability to avoid crime. They also knew through experience that many of the youth on their caseloads had problems in their family environment. Consequently, one of SOCP's stated goals was to reduce recidivism by improving family relationships.

Multisystemic Therapy (MST) was available to only a few youth in SOCP. In fact, only 11 experimental youth were assigned to MST and only one completed it. This low number was due in part to the intensity of MST and the resulting small caseloads (five youth at a time) of mental health counselors, but also to the more informal focus on the family. Most of the youth received more informal attention to their family relationships. Specifically, SOCP hoped to better include families in the justice process by asking families to participate in the development of the Challenge Plan, maintain an active relationship with the service providers, attend SOCP events (including community meetings), and work together to improve family relationships. The idea was to use the restorative/community justice philosophy of focusing on healing everyone (but not simply in terms of clinical healing) rather than just focusing on the offender. For example, in families where the parents were struggling with their own issues, SOCP staff sometimes helped the family so that the youth might succeed. In one family, a youth rarely attended school because the mother was often abusing drugs or asleep and did not regularly wash the child's uniform, so SOCP staff helped by ensuring the youth had clean uniforms—sometimes by washing the uniforms themselves—and by making sure the youth had a ride to school. Other families had little furniture or food, so staff helped them obtain these necessities in hopes that relieving stress over basic living conditions would

improve the likelihood that they could focus on helping the youth work through the issues that had gotten them in trouble.

The probation officers knew through their own experiences and through research that peer relationships were another key element related to choices about whether to participate in conforming or delinquent behavior. Although the project did not address peer relationships in their official list of goals, much of the daily work with the youth was focused on helping them choose better peers. Gangs were considered a serious problem in South Oxnard during the mid- to late 1990s, and many of the SOCP clients lived in areas where gang activity was present. Therefore, questions were also included in the current project to gauge gang or tagging crew activity.

SOCP was designed as a randomized experiment, and eligible youth had an equal chance of being randomly assigned to either SOCP or routine probation. The authors were evaluators on the project and were involved from the beginning, participating in the initial program and evaluation design. Prior articles have addressed SOCP's effects on official outcomes (Lane et al., 2005) and self-reported outcomes (Lane, Turner, Fain, & Sehgal, in press) as well as the experience of implementing COP ideas (Karp et al., 2002; Lane et al., 2007). Those studies generally found few differences between experimental youth in SOCP and control youth on routine probation. The current article examines data from youth interviews conducted with both experimental and control cases at 1 year post random assignment and focuses on youth's perceptions of their parent and peer relationships during the previous year. The research question addressed in this article is, "Did SOCP significantly improve family and peer relationships for involved youth compared to the control group?"

## **Research on Family and Peer Involvement**

According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) social ecological model, research concerning juveniles should examine adolescents in a context. As such, the focus should not be solely on the juvenile's own characteristics, but also on what Bronfenbrenner referred to as the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem with each of these adding an additional layer around the child. For instance, the microsystem represents the child's immediate environment of their family and peers. The current research focused on family and peers because it is the most relevant to the program being evaluated and because of the clear empirical evidence of a connection between delinquency and this initial layer.

It is a widely held position that both individual and family risk factors (the microsystem) shape delinquency (Farrington, 1989; Hirschi, 1969; Loeber & Farrington, 2000; McCord, 1979; Snyder & Patterson, 1987). For instance, in the mid-1990s the American Psychological Association's Commission on Violence and Youth made several recommendations for the prevention and treatment of youth violence (see Slaby, Brahm, Eron, & Wilcox, 1994). One such recommendation was that parents should play an active role in helping their young children learn how to be nonviolent. Recommendations like these and the theoretical foundation of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) work suggest that research should examine the role of the parent-child relationship in a child's delinquency. The following section will review empirical research on the parents' role in their child's delinquency followed by an examination of peer relationships.

### **Empirical Basis for Parents' Role in a Youth's Delinquency**

Research has demonstrated that certain parental behaviors may be predictors for later delinquent behavior in children (Patterson, 1986; Patterson, DeBaryshe, & Ramsey, 1989). Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) argued that for youth to develop the self-control necessary to prevent delinquency, parents must monitor behavior, recognize problematic behavior when it occurs, and ensure there are consequences for that behavior. Meta-analysis techniques and less systematic reviews have also confirmed the influence of the parent-child relationship on delinquency and recidivism. A few decades ago, Loeber and Dishion (1983) reviewed studies from the 1960s through 1980. Parent behaviors were useful in predicting delinquent behaviors in general, but less useful in predicting recidivism. Likewise, Simourd and Andrews (1994) found through their meta-analysis that poor parent-child relations were among the most important risk factors for male and female delinquency. More recently, Cottle, Lee, and Heilbrun (2001) performed a meta-analysis examining recidivism among juvenile offenders. Once again, family factors proved to be useful, with the category labeled as "family problems" (described as poor relationships within the family) being among the strongest predictors of recidivism. Collectively, these findings can be generally categorized into two large groupings of factors that affect juvenile delinquency: parental behaviors and parent-child relationships.

One parental behavior, parental monitoring, has been the focus of numerous research projects. Greater parental monitoring, characterized as knowing the whereabouts of their children or supervising them, appears to be related to less delinquent behavior (Browning & Loeber, 1999; Guo,

Hawkins, Hill, & Abbott, 2001; Laird, Pettit, Bates, & Dodge, 2003; Patterson & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1984). Griffin, Botvin, Scheier, Diaz, and Miller (2000) found that parental monitoring served a protective function against delinquent behaviors. In addition, eating family dinners together was associated with less delinquency for single-parent families (Griffin et al., 2000). Warr (2005) examined the effects of both indirect and direct parent supervision. In general, Warr found that adolescents had a greater likelihood of having delinquent friends as their parents' supervision decreased.

As noted above, the parent-child relationship is an important factor in juvenile delinquency. Research regarding parent-child relationships has demonstrated that more open communication between juveniles and their parents is related to fewer delinquent behaviors (Caprara et al., 1998; Clark & Shields, 1997) and a decrease in school-based aggression (Lambert & Cashwell, 2004). Research has demonstrated that parents of more delinquent, aggressive, and disruptive boys are more likely to be punitive and less likely to be nurturing in their interactions with their sons (Florsheim, Tolan, & Gorman-Smith, 1996). Heaven, Newbury, and Mak (2004) also found a significant positive correlation between self-reported delinquency and juveniles' descriptions of low parental care and overprotection. Parental hostility toward (Conger & Conger, 1994) or rejection of (Barnow, Lucht, & Freyberger, 2005) their children and being exposed to violence in the home (Smith & Thornberry, 1995; Thornberry, 1994; Widom, 1989; Zingraff, Leiter, Myers, & Johnson, 1993) significantly increases an adolescent's self-reported delinquent behaviors. Parents who were more hostile, less warm, and less effective when observed with their 7th-, 8th-, and 9th-grade children later had 10th graders who had more depressive symptoms and conduct problems (Ge, Best, Conger, & Simons, 1996). Sigfusdottir, Farkas, and Silver (2004) demonstrated that family conflict has an indirect effect on delinquency by leading to more anger for the juvenile that then leads to delinquent behaviors. Focusing on mother-child relationships, McCord (1991a) found that mother's competence, parental interaction, and family expectations were predictive of delinquent behavior. In addition, maternal affection, self-confidence, and consistent non-punitive discipline served as "protections" against the influence of having a criminal father (McCord, 1991b).

Clearly, there is consistent evidence that parental behaviors and the parent-child relationship both have an influence on adolescent adjustment and behavior, but this is not just a social science concern (Dishion, Nelson, & Bullock, 2004; Finkenauer, Engels, & Baumeister, 2005; Richards, Miller, O'Donnell, Wasserman, & Craig, 2004). Legal scholars have also focused on the importance of family factors (Scalora, 1997) and policymakers continue



to pass legislation that assumes the parent–child relationship is an important factor in juvenile delinquency (see Brank, Kucera, & Hays, 2005). For these reasons, the current research provides an evaluation of a program that had a primary focus of improving parent–child relationships. The next section will move focus from the parents to examine the empirical basis for peers' role in delinquency.

### **Empirical Basis for Peers' Role in a Youth's Delinquency**

Both the Denver Youth Study (Browning & Huizinga, 1999) and the Oregon Youth Study (Dishion, Nelson, & Bullock, 2004) demonstrated that the best predictors for staying nondelinquent involve a combination of family and peer influences. Among other factors, those participants who had stable families, good parental monitoring, conventional friends, and non-delinquent peers were more likely to remain nondelinquent themselves.

Although Bronfenbrenner's (1979) microsystem clearly involves the parents of the juvenile, it also includes the peer group (see also Akers, 1998; Sutherland, 1947). Others have suggested that the analogous delinquent behavior within peer groups is the result of self-selection into a group of behaviorally similar individuals (Poulin et al., 1997; Rubin, Lynch, Coplan, Rose-Krasnor, & Booth, 1994). Either way, one of the strongest and consistently found correlates of delinquent behavior is the relationship with delinquent peers (Agnew, 1991; Dishion, McCord, & Poulin, 1999; Le, Maonfared, & Stockdale, 2005; Longshore, Chang, & Messina, 2005; Simourd & Andrews, 1994; Urberg, Değirmencioglu, & Pilgrim, 1997). In fact, some researchers have even proposed that parents have very little influence in comparison to peers (Harris, 1995). Most research does not maintain this extreme position, but rather empirical evidence supports the notion that the peer group is a significant influence in a juvenile's life. Juveniles are persuaded by the antisocial behaviors of their peers (Dishion, McCord, & Poulin, 1999; O'Donnell, 2003; Vitaro, Brendgen, & Wanner, 2005), and a decrease in involvement with such peers likewise leads to a desistance of criminal behaviors (Warr, 1998).

The same meta-analyses and reviews discussed in the preceding section also examined the role of peers. In each instance, delinquent peers were quite influential and predictive of general delinquency or recidivism (Cottle, Lee, & Heilbrun, 2001; Loeber & Dishion, 1983; Simourd & Andrews, 1994). For example, Cottle, Lee, and Heilbrun (2001) found in their meta-analysis that having delinquent peers was one of the strongest predictors for recidivism.

One reason adolescent friendships are important as a delinquency risk factor is because of the similarities that emerge between the friends. Friends

report similar drug use behaviors and grade point averages (Mounts & Steinberg, 1995). Brendgen, Vitaro, Tremblay, and Wanner (2002) found that friends' aggression was related to adolescent boys' positive attitudes toward the use of violence even when controlling for the boys' own aggression. Canadian boys who had best friends who were nominated by their classmates as being deviant were more likely to be delinquent themselves (Vitaro, Brendgen, & Tremblay, 2000). Kiesner, Kerr, and Stattin (2004) asked 7th-through 10th-grade students to nominate "Very Important Persons" (VIPs) rather than just best friends from school. This technique enabled them to garner information on siblings, romantic relationships, and friendships outside school. Similar to the best friend research, levels of antisocial behavior were comparable between the respondent and their VIP. Even younger children under 10 years of age have friendships with peers who have similar behaviors (Poulin et al., 1997). Unfortunately, the similarities can lead to delinquent behaviors. Young adolescents who chose more aggressive peers as their friends on a self-report nomination instrument were the same children who their teachers independently rated as having more externalizing problems (Mrug, Hoza, & Bukowski, 2004). Additionally, even when controlling for a child's own aggression through hierarchical multiple regression, friends' aggression significantly predicted externalizing problems.

Some peer research suggests that these similarities occur because of a peer socialization that takes place between friends (Deater-Deckard, 2001). Deviance training, as it has sometimes been called, is when peers provide positive reinforcement to rule-breaking, thereby encouraging delinquency (Dishion, McCord, & Poulin, 1999). This "training" appears to be most influential to high-risk youth who are particularly vulnerable to peer pressure. In fact, one form of deviancy training, "rule-breaking talk," has been shown to be related specifically to violence during adolescence even after controlling for childhood antisocial behavior and parental discipline practices (Dishion, Eddy, Haas, Li, & Spracklen, 1997).

Clearly, delinquent peers are highly influential in the lives of juveniles. Testing a lifestyle model of offending, Nofziger and Kurtz (2005) analyzed violent lifestyle data from the cross-sectional National Survey of Adolescents. Violent lifestyle was measured in three ways: (1) witnessing violence, (2) having violent friends, and (3) being the victim of violent behavior. Although being the victim of violent behavior was the greatest risk factor, having violent friends also greatly increased the likelihood of offending. When the extent of exposure was considered, juveniles who reported having peers who were heavily involved in violent behaviors were significantly more likely to be involved in violent behaviors than those who reported friends who were not involved in any violent behaviors.

With such clear evidence supporting the deleterious effects of delinquent peers, juvenile justice programs often attempt to target peer relationships and encourage more beneficial friendships. Likewise, the role parents play is also often a focus because of the wealth of research demonstrating the importance of healthy parent–child relationships. The current research was able to assess the nature of these relationships by asking both experimental and control group juveniles about their parents and their friends 1 year after random assignment.

Because the SOCP staff specifically intended to encourage better parent and peer relationships, it was hypothesized that the groups would differ after a year's time. We hypothesized that juveniles who participated in the SOCP would report more quality relationships with their parents than the control group juveniles. The relationship was assessed through questions that asked about the daily life of the family, including enjoyment in being together, eating dinner together, cooperation, trust, and other similar questions (discussed in detail in the results section below). Because parental behaviors are also important, we asked the juveniles about the parents' monitoring behaviors. In addition, we hypothesized that compared to control group juveniles, SOCP juveniles would report healthier peer relationships with less criminal activity by their peers. The peer relationships were assessed through questions that focused on the criminal activity, drug use behaviors, gang membership, and other related issues of the friends (see results section for questions). The juveniles' recidivism rates are not the focus of the current research, but earlier research demonstrated that they were not significantly different between the control and experimental group (Lane et al., 2005, in press).

## Method

### Sample and Evaluation Design

SOCP targeted youth between 12 and 18 years old who had a citation (arrest) or violation of probation, lived in South Oxnard or the small neighboring town of Port Hueneme, and scored at least 12 points on a locally adapted risk assessment.<sup>1</sup> The evaluation used an experimental design with random assignment, one of the strongest scientific methods for studying program impact (see Baird, 1991; Boruch, 1997; Campbell & Stanley, 1966; Cook & Campbell, 1979; Farrington, 2003; Palmer, 1992). The initial design called for 500 youth (250 experimental and 250 control) who met the above

eligibility criteria to be randomly assigned to either SOCP or routine probation over an 18-month period beginning January 1, 1998. When more funding was awarded, random assignment was continued until February 29, 2000. Trained probation officers in multiple units completed risk assessments when a youth received a citation or violation of probation. If the youth scored at least 12 points on the assessment, the probation officer called evaluation staff for random assignment to either SOCP or routine probation. Evaluation staff used equal probability assignment, and youth had a 50% chance of being assigned to SOCP and a 50% chance of being assigned to routine probation. A total of 539 youth were assigned to the study, 264 to SOCP and 275 to routine probation.

SOCP planned to serve youth on informal (not court-ordered) probation for 7 months and youth on formal (court-ordered) probation for 9 months. SOCP decided on these intervention periods for two reasons. First, they believed that formal probation cases by definition were more serious and required a longer intervention period. Second, the granting agency (the California Board of Corrections) required that each youth be followed for 18 months post intervention, and ending the intervention at this point allowed for the lengthy follow-up during the funding period.

At 1 year post random assignment, evaluation staff conducted lengthy interviews covering multiple topics with the majority of study youth. The evaluators chose this time period to ensure that the interview periods were consistent across both informal and formal probation, to gauge attitudes after the intervention period, and to include some part of the follow-up period. Evaluators obtained both parental consent and youth assent before conducting the interviews, which lasted approximately 1 hr and were conducted at times and places convenient to the youth. Participating youth were paid \$25 to complete the interview. Although there were multiple topics on the interview, this article examines youth perceptions of their parental and peer relationships during the year after random assignment. Given SOCP's specific efforts to improve both parent and peer relationships, we hypothesized that these youth would perceive significantly more improvement in these two aspects of their lives.

By the end of the study, evaluators had interviewed 151 (57.2%) of experimental (E) youth and 163 (59.3%) of control (C) youth.<sup>2</sup> There were no significant differences between the youth interviewed and the entire study sample on personal characteristics (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, prior record). The interview sample was mostly male (E = 78.8%, C = 73.6%), mostly Hispanic (E = 85.4%, C = 77.9%), and mostly 17 or older at the time of interview (E = 73.5%, C = 65.1%). Close to half of both groups

lived with both parents (E = 47.7%, C = 49.7%), and about a third lived with their mother only (E = 36.4%, C = 33.1%). About a third of each group was referred for property offenses (E = 33.8%, C = 31.9%), about a fifth for violent offenses (E = 22.5%, C = 19.6%), and very few were referred for drug offenses (E = 3.3%, C = 1.8%). Over 40% of each group was referred for offenses that fell into other categories (e.g., violation of probation, public order; E = 40.4%, C = 46.6%). Only about a third of each group had a prior sustained petition at the time of referral (E = 35.3%, C = 33.7%). Most youth in both groups were on informal probation (E = 67.5%, C = 68.7%) rather than formal probation. There were no statistically significant differences between the interviewed groups on the characteristics outlined above.

## Measures

*Parent relationships.* Our first set of questions regarding the family was designed to gauge what daily life in their family was like. The stem read, "What is it usually like when you are around members of your family? Tell me how often there is:" This was followed by six questions: (1) a feeling of cooperation, (2) enjoyment in being together, (3) an interest in listening and helping one another, (4) fighting or loud arguments, (5) complaining about one another, and (6) boredom—nothing happening. We also asked the participants, "How often do you and your family spend leisure time together?" They were given a response card with the following answer options—*never, sometimes, about half the time, usually, always*. The answer options were coded 1 (*never*) through 5 (*always*). We also asked, "How many times a week do you generally eat dinner with your family?" (coded 0 = *none* to 7 = *every night*).

We then asked another set of questions asking specifically about their relationships with their mother and their father. For each parent, we asked the following five questions: (1) How often do you trust him or her? (2) How often do you feel you can talk to him or her about your problems? (3) How often do you think he or she is genuinely interested in you? (4) How often do you feel he or she supports you? (5) How often are you afraid of your mom or dad? The youth answered these questions with the same response card used earlier, and the response options were coded 1 (*never*) through 5 (*always*).

The last set of questions about parents asked two yes/no questions (coded 1 = yes, 0 = no), asking, "During the 12 months after [random assignment date], only the time when you were on probation/in the Challenge Project:"

(1) Did you get along better with your parents (or guardians) than you did before [random assignment date]? (2) Did you find it easier talk to your parents (or guardians) about important things?

*Peer relationships.* We also asked a series of questions about peer relationships. We first asked them how many close friends—“that is, people you can really depend on”—that they had. Then, we asked how many close friends they had “with whom you can talk about private matters.” Then, we asked more detailed questions about the characteristics of these close friends. First, we asked how many of these friends (1) look to you as a leader, (2) agree with your ideas, (3) laugh at or make fun of you, and (4) cause trouble. Youth were given a response card with the following options: *none, some, half, most, and all*. The codes for these options ranged from 1 (*none*) to 5 (*all*).

The next set of peer questions addressed delinquent behaviors and experiences of the participants' close friends during or at 12 months after the youth was randomly assigned to the program. We asked, during the 12 months after the youth was randomly assigned, “Did your close friends do things that are against the law?” We also asked how many of them had been in local residential facilities (juvenile hall, Colston Youth Center, and the Juvenile Restitution Project [JRP]), boot camp, the California Youth Authority or prison, or on probation by the interview date. We also asked how many of their closest friends were gang members or hung out with gangs. The next set of questions asked about drug behaviors of their close friends. We asked (1) How many of these close friends use drugs now? (2) How many of your friends have used drugs and alcohol in the past but don't use now? All of these questions were again coded from 1 (*none*) to 5 (*all*). If their friends used drugs either now or in the past, we also asked the youth if he or she used drugs with the friends (coded 1 = yes, 0 = no). Another question asked, “During the 12 months after [random assignment date], how many of your friends helped you to quit drugs?” Finally, the last drug-related question asked, “How many of your close friends who do not use illegal drugs could you call and talk to right now?” These questions were again coded from 1 (*none*) to 5 (*all*).

The final set of peer-related questions asked about gang-related or tagging crew activity they had participated in during the previous 12 months and at the time of interview.<sup>3</sup> We asked (1) Did you associate (“kick it”) with any gang members or a tagging crew? (2) Have you ever been jumped in? (3) Did you claim a gang or tagging crew? and (4) Do you have a moniker (nickname)? If they said they claimed a gang/tagging crew, we

asked the following questions: Does your gang (1) Get into fights with other gangs? (2) Steal cars? (3) Rob other people? (4) Steal things? Are there (1) initiation rites, (2) established leaders, (3) symbols or colors, or (4) hand signs?

The next set of questions asked participants about help they may or may not have received to get out of negative peer relationships. These questions were designed to determine if SOCP staff were more active than routine probation officers in encouraging more positive peer relationships. For those who claimed a gang or tagging crew, we asked if during the previous 12 months while they were on probation or in SOCP: (1) Did anyone talk to you about leaving the gang/tagging crew? (2) Did anyone help you choose friends outside the gang/tagging crew? If so, (3) Was the help useful to you? For all youth, even those who did not claim a gang/tagging crew, we asked: (1) Did anyone help you choose friends who do not break the law? (2) Was this help useful to you? (3) Did anyone help you choose friends who do not use alcohol and/or other drugs? If so, (4) Was this help useful in helping you not use alcohol and/or drugs?

## Results

### Family Relationships

Attitudes about youth's daily family life are presented in Table 1. There were no significant differences between SOCP and control youth on these questions, except that control youth ate dinner with their families significantly more nights (a little over three) than did SOCP youth (slightly less than three). Youth in both groups indicated that their families experienced a feeling of cooperation, enjoyment in being together, and interest in listening to and helping one another about half the time. Fighting occurred somewhere between sometimes and half the time. They generally indicated that they sometimes complained about each other or were bored (see Table 1).

Table 2 presents the participants' perceptions about their relationships with their parents. Again, there are no significant differences between the two groups on these variables, but they illustrate interesting results generally. Youth generally indicated that they usually trusted both their mother and father, although they indicated that they talked to them about their problems about half the time. They also believed their parents usually were genuinely interested in them and supported them. Youth said they were only sometimes afraid of either parent (see Table 2).

**Table 1**  
**Mean Comparisons of Daily Life in the Family for South Oxnard  
 Challenge Project (SOCP) and Control Youth**

Survey Questions	Mean Ratings			
	SOCP	<i>n</i>	Control	<i>n</i>
Response scale (1 = <i>never</i> , 5 = <i>always</i> )				
What is it usually like when you are around members of your family? Tell me how often there is:				
A feeling of cooperation	2.8	151	2.8	162
Enjoyment in being together	3.0	151	2.9	162
An interest in listening and helping one another	2.9	151	3.0	162
Fighting or loud arguments	2.5	151	2.5	162
Complaining about one another	2.4	150	2.5	162
Boredom – nothing happening	2.4	151	2.4	162
How often do you spend leisure time with your family?	2.2	151	2.2	162
Mean values (0 = <i>none</i> , 7 = <i>every night</i> )				
How many times per week do you eat dinner with your family?	2.8	151	3.4*	162

\* $p < .05$ .

The perceptions about their relationships with their parents during the 12 months since random assignment are presented in Table 3. This table illustrates only one statistically significant finding—SOCP youth were more likely than control youth to say that the help received from staff improved their family relationship ( $E = 49.3\%$ ,  $C = 30.3\%$ ). In contrast to this more general question, less than half of both groups indicated that they got along better with their parents, found it easier to talk to their parents, or that their parents monitored their behavior more. Although not statistically different, a higher percentage of control youth than experimental youth indicated improvements on these three more specific questions.<sup>4</sup>

## Peer Relationships

The concept of peer relationships was addressed by our question of whether SOCP made a significant difference in decreasing negative peer relationships for their clients. Table 4 presents the characteristics of the close friends. Once again, SOCP youth were not significantly different from those on routine probation in the types of friends they had during the time since they were randomly assigned.



**Table 2**  
**Mean Comparisons of Relationship With Parents for**  
**South Oxnard Challenge Project (SOCP) and Control Youth**

Survey Questions (response scale: 1 = <i>never</i> , 5 = <i>always</i> )	Mean ratings <sup>5</sup>			
	SOCP	<i>n</i>	Control	<i>n</i>
How often do you trust your mother?	3.7	140	3.8	147
How often do you trust your father?	3.5	96	3.5	104
How often do you talk to your mother about problems?	3.2	140	3.2	147
How often do you talk to your father about problems?	2.8	96	2.9	104
How often is your mother genuinely interested in you?	4.1	139	4.2	147
How often is your father genuinely interested in you?	3.9	96	4.1	104
How often do you feel your mother supports you?	4.1	140	4.2	147
How often do you feel your father supports you?	4.0	96	4.2	104
How often are you afraid of your mother?	1.9	140	1.7	147
How often are you afraid of your father?	2.0	96	1.9	104

**Table 3**  
**Percentage Comparisons of South Oxnard Challenge**  
**Project (SOCP) and Control Youth's Relationship With Parents**  
**in the 12 Months After Random Assignment<sup>6</sup>**

Responses	SOCP (%)	<i>n</i>	Control (%)	<i>n</i>
Got along better with parents	44.0	150	45.3	161
Found it easier to talk to parents	37.8	151	42.0	162
Parents monitored behavior	49.7	149	51.6	161
Help received improved family relationship	49.3*	148	30.3	155

\* $p < .05$  using chi-square test.

Generally, the results demonstrated that some of the friends met the criteria asked about in each question. Youth in both groups generally indicated that some of their friends looked to them as a leader, while about half of

**Table 4**  
**Mean and Percentage Comparisons of Close Friend Characteristics**  
**for South Oxnard Challenge Project (SOCP) and Control Youth**

Survey Questions (response scale: 1 = none, 5 = all)	Mean Ratings	
	SOCP	Control
How many of your close friends:		
Look to you as a leader?	2.0	2.1
Agree with your ideas?	2.7	2.8
Laugh at or make fun of you?	1.8	1.9
Cause trouble?	2.3	2.5
Did things that are against the law?	2.3	2.1
Had been in juvenile hall, Colston, or JRP?	1.9	1.8
Had been in boot camp?	1.4	1.4
Had been in CYA or prison?	1.2	1.2
Were on probation?	2.3	2.1
Were gang members?	2.0	1.9
Hung out with gang members?	2.3	2.2
Use drugs now?	2.3	2.2
If so, did you use with them? (% yes)	68.6	70.8
Used drugs in the past, but don't use now?	2.1	2.1
If so, did you use with them? (% yes)	61.6	60.0
Help you quit drugs?	2.4	1.4
Of close friends who do not use illegal drugs:		
How many could you call and talk to right now?	2.3	2.4

Note: JRP = Juvenile Restitution Project; CYA = California Youth Authority.

their friends agreed with their ideas. Some of their friends also laughed at them or made fun of them (see Table 4).

Interestingly, when we asked about problem or delinquent behaviors or experience with justice system punishments, youth generally indicated that only some of their friends caused trouble or did things that were against the law. Some of them had also been on probation, but fewer had been in institutions, especially those that were not locally run. Youth in both groups indicated that some of their friends were gang members and some of their friends used drugs either now or in the past. If their friends used drugs, most of the youth indicated that they had used drugs with these friends. SOCP youth were more likely, but not statistically significantly, to say they had close friends who tried to help them quit drugs. Youth in both groups said that they had some friends who did not use drugs whom they could call and talk to (see Table 4).

**Table 5**  
**Percentage Comparisons of South Oxnard Challenge Project (SOCP) and Control Youth's Gang or Tagging Crew Activities**

Survey Questions	SOCP (% yes)	<i>n</i>	Control (% yes)	<i>n</i>
Associate with any gang members/tagging crew?	49.0	149	44.4	162
If so, still associate at end of 12 months?	61.3	106	53.5	114
Have you ever been "jumped in"?	8.1	148	9.9	162
Claim a gang/tagging crew?	22.0	150	20.5	161
If so, still claim at end of 12 months?	87.9	33	93.9	33
If still claim at end of 12 months:				
Do you have a moniker (nickname)?	65.5	29	78.1	32
Does your gang:				
Fight with other gangs?	82.8	29	88.5	32
Steal cars?	58.6	29	67.7	31
Rob other people?	53.6	28	62.5	32
Steal things?	75.9	29	84.4	32
Have initiation rites?	55.2	29	71.9	32
Have established leaders?	32.1	28	28.1	32
Have symbols or colors?	72.4	29	87.5	32
Have hand signs?	89.7	29	90.6	32

Note: SOCP = South Oxnard Challenge Project.

**Table 6**  
**Expectations About Continued Gang or Tagging Crew Activity (for those who claimed association)**

Expectation	SOCP ( <i>n</i> = 33; %)	Control ( <i>n</i> = 33; %)
Staying in	30.3	39.4
Want to get out	15.2	12.1
Want to get out but can't	0.0	6.1
Will get out	36.4	21.2
Don't know	3.0	15.2
No answer	15.2	6.1

Note: SOCP = South Oxnard Challenge Project.

Peer relationships specific to gang activity were addressed by asking the youth if they associated or claimed a gang or tagging crew. If the youth said yes (33 experimental cases and 33 control cases), we then asked about their gangs.<sup>7</sup> Table 5 shows the youth responses, which did not differ significantly

**Table 7**  
**Help Received Concerning Gang or Tagging Crew**  
**Activities (for those who claimed association)**

Responses	SOCP (% yes)	<i>n</i>	Control (% yes)	<i>n</i>
Anyone talk to you about leaving the gang/crew?	69.0	29	65.6	32
Anyone help you choose friends outside the gang/crew?	41.4	29	40.6	32
Was this help useful to you?	28.6	21	26.1	23
Anyone help you choose friends who do not break the law?	22.0	150	21.6	162
If so, was this help useful to you?	56.2	32	77.1	35
Anyone help you choose friends who do not use alcohol/drugs?	24.5	151	17.3	162
If so, was this help useful to you?	59.5	37	75.0	28

Note: SOCP = South Oxnard Challenge Project. Gang-related questions were asked only of those who claimed gang membership (33 SOCP youth and 33 control youth). Other questions were asked of all participants.

between SOCP and the control group. Still, there were some intriguing results. Almost half of both groups indicated that they associated with gang members or a tagging crew during the 12 months since random assignment, and most of these were still associating with the group at the time they were interviewed. Still, less than 10% had been “jumped in”; yet, about 20% of youth in both groups said they “claimed” a gang. Of those who claimed, most had a moniker/nickname, and most said their gangs fought with other gangs, stole cars, robbed people, stole things, had initiation rites, had symbols or colors, and had hand signs. About a third of those in both groups who claimed gangs said their gangs had established leaders (see Table 5). If they still claimed a gang at the time of interview, we asked the youth, “Do you plan to stay in the gang/crew or are you considering getting out?” Table 6 shows that there are again no significant differences across groups on this measure, and about a third of both groups planned to stay in.

Table 7 presents perceptions of the help youth received during the 12 months after random assignment. The first three questions were asked only of those youth who claimed a gang. The results again indicated that there were no significant differences between the two groups regarding someone talking to them about leaving the gang, helping them choose friends outside the gang, or the usefulness of this help. The next two questions were asked

of all youth surveyed. Again, there were no significant differences between the groups regarding help choosing friends who did not break the law or use alcohol and drugs. If someone did help them choose different friends, control youth were more likely to say this help was useful to them.

## Discussion

### Summary of Results

Our research examined the impact of SOCP on parent and peer relationships. We found that there were generally no significant differences between SOCP and control youth on our measures. Control group youth ate dinner with their families significantly more times per week (3.4 vs. 2.8), and experimental youth who received help on family issues were significantly more likely to say that the help actually improved their relationships. These were the only findings that were different across groups, but they should be considered with great caution. These differences could be attributed to statistical chance or question wording issues rather than substantive differences. Although an initial reaction may be to say that SOCP improved the parent-child relationships, this is more likely a result that represents experimental youth responding to the intensive program and the focus that was clearly directed toward their relationships with their parents. In support of this interpretation there were no other differences with regard to specific questions about their daily life experiences in the family, their relationships with their parents, characteristics of their close friends, gang participation or gang-related activities, or help getting out of the gang.

Based on the current literature that relates family and peer relationships with juvenile offending, the SOCP was positioned to provide noteworthy changes in the lives of the experimental youth. Previous studies have consistently demonstrated the importance of family and peer influences on juvenile offending. Although research has indicated that these microsystem relationships play a large part in a juvenile's offending, we have less empirical information about attempts by programs such as SOCP in altering those relationships. We expected to see a change in the targeted relationships and in turn those differences may be useful in predicting reductions in recidivism. Unfortunately, the results are overall unresponsive to an effect on parent or peer relationships, which naturally removes the possibility of differentially predicting recidivism. The following sections will address the possible reasons why the experimental and control group juveniles had no significant differences on their reports of parent and peer relationships.

## Why No Significant Differences?

*Family intervention lacked necessary intensity.* A number of researchers who have studied the role parents play in their child's delinquency have also postulated that programs developed to address delinquency should focus on shaping more appropriate parent-child relationships (Barnow, Lucht, & Freyberger, 2005; Ge, Best, Conger, & Simons, 1996). In fact, family-centered interventions appear to have some of the greatest potential with reductions in delinquency and recidivism (Sherman et al., 1997). These family-focused interventions often involve intensive family therapy or skills training (Mulvey, Arthur, & Reppucci, 1993). Additionally, Lipsey, Wilson, and Cothorn (2000) examined through meta-analysis serious juvenile offender programs and found that family counseling provided mixed but generally positive effects. Programs such as Functional Family Therapy (FFT; Gordon, Graves, & Arbutnot, 1995), Problem-Solving Skills Training (PSST), Parent Management Training (PMT; Kazdin, Siegel, & Bass, 1992), and MST (Henggeler, Melton, & Smith, 1992; see also Henggeler, Melton, Brondino, Scherer, & Hanley, 1997) are intensive family interventions that have had notable success at reducing juvenile antisocial behaviors and recidivism rates. The current intervention was one that lacked this kind of intensive focus on the family or the parents for the whole group. While the staff clearly had the goal of influencing family relationships, the results seem to indicate that the intensity of the interventions was likely not adequate. SOCP staff had hoped to provide MST to experimental youth, but the mental health counselor was limited to serving five youth at a time due to the intensity of services she was to deliver. Consequently, most youth did not receive MST and even fewer completed it. Many youth did receive other forms of services including drug and alcohol, counseling, education, family, vocational, mentoring, and recreational services (see Lane et al., 2005, for a complete comparison of percentages between routine probation and SOCP for these services).

Based on the previous literature where success was demonstrated, the current program may not have focused enough on family involvement to be able to obtain the desired significant changes (see Mulvey, Arthur, & Reppucci, 1993). While this answer may appear as a simple, even vacuous, explanation to the null findings, there are deeper ramifications to this interpretation. State legislators have been moving toward a juvenile justice system that places a greater weight and responsibility on juveniles' parents.

Often referred to as parental responsibility laws or parental involvement laws (Brank, Kucera, & Hays, 2005; Davies & Davidson, 2001), these statutes place expectations or even requirements of parental involvement in a youth's

case. For instance, in Arizona, the court may order parents to participate in a diversion program or complete counseling, treatment, or an educational program (Treatment, service, restraining and protective orders, 2006, § 8-234[F]). Similarly, in North Carolina, parents can be ordered to attend parental responsibility classes when their child is adjudicated undisciplined or delinquent (Parental responsibility classes, 2005). Parents of delinquent youth in Oregon may also be ordered to attend parental education or counseling programs (Court may order education or counseling, 2003).

Parental involvement laws, rightly or wrongly, place an emphasis on the parent's role and the parent-child relationship. Notably, legal scholars have pointed out that these laws, however, do not address implementation (much less evaluation) of the required parental involvement (Ebenstein, 2000). These laws relate to the current study because SOCP was a program that had the goal of improving parent-child relationships to reduce recidivism, but was unable to do either probably because of the lack of focus and intensity on those relationships. These Parental Involvement Laws speak of the parent-child relationship as an answer to the juvenile crime problem without considering the implementation difficulties or the needed intensity. They are "symbolic politics" (Tomaszewski, 2005) in the sense that they allow for a response to juvenile crime without any financial commitment from the legislature. The current study suggests that such responses to juvenile crime may not be focused or intensive enough to have the intended consequences.

## Peer Intervention

The authors know of little research that addresses the specific issue of interventions that focus on peer relationships. Clearly, there is a link between delinquent behaviors and peer delinquent involvement (Brendgen, Vitaro, Tremblay, & Wanner, 2002; Dishion, McCord, & Poulin, 1999; Mrug, Hoza, & Bukowski, 2004; Vitaro, Brendgen, & Tremblay, 2000); however, research in this area has primarily focused on this association or the negative effect of aggregating delinquent youth together in intervention programs (Dishion et al., 1999; Gifford-Smith, Dodge, Dishion, & McCord, 2005; Mahoney, Stattin, & Magnusson, 2001; O'Donnell, 2003). Although the staff was certainly aware of the effects peer relationships can have on delinquency, the program did not have the primary goal of influencing these relationships. In line with the research in the area, the program only had minimal aggregation of the juveniles; there were only a few opportunities for the juveniles to be together with other participants during their program. It may be that there were no significant differences on some of the gang-related questions

because of the small number of youth who were in a gang and therefore answered these dependent questions. In general, the peer relationships were likely not affected for the same reason the family relationships did not see a vast improvement, that is, a lack of intensity of the program on this issue. In addition, there were several implementation issues with undertaking such a program. The following section will address these difficulties.

*Implementation difficulties.* These authors have consistently reported the problems faced by the SOCP while implementing such an ambitious program (see Lane & Turner, 1999; Karp et al., 2002; Lane et al., 2005; in press). The program set out to deliver a multiagency, comprehensive program to juvenile probationers, because they believed that addressing multiple factors in youths' lives was their best chance at making a difference. A key stumbling block was that because of time limits on grant funding, all of these components were implemented simultaneously, rather than phased in over time. The challenge of putting so many new program components in place together was difficult on the best days. This difficulty was compounded by the newly developed multiagency collaboration. Although all parties were motivated and interested in the new ideas included in the project, they often spoke different languages and had different visions of what those ideas meant in practice (see Karp et al., 2002). Participants were faced with the challenge of overcoming these differences while they built the new program from scratch.

Another issue that may have resulted in these findings was staff discomfort with the requirements and expectations of the new SOCP program, which was designed based on Clear's COP model (see Clear, 1996) and built from restorative justice principles. Consequently, the SOCP program called for a different approach to doing business (see Clear, 1996; Clear & Karp, 1999), and staff often felt they had no clear guidelines regarding what COP and restorative justice principles meant in practice. For probation officers especially, often the philosophy (helping in atypical ways) was contradictory to their training (surveillance, accountability). Many of them were energetic about helping youth, but they struggled with balancing the unique helping approach of the program with what they perceived to be their obligations to the court (see Authors, 2002). In other words, even though the SOCP probation officers desired to focus on the families, they knew they still had an obligation to the court to provide the judge with the typical probation reports.

Many staff were also not experts on family matters, so it may be unreasonable to expect them to have had big impacts on family relationships that were likely more strained than those in the "typical" family (e.g., because



of involvement in the criminal justice system and living in a high-crime neighborhood). Probation officers, mentors, and others were not trained in dealing with the complexities these families faced. Rather, the project had mental health counselors on site who specialized in this area. However, because they were to deliver MST, they had very few youth on their case-loads at one time (a maximum of five). This meant that they were not able to spend much time helping the majority of youth in the project. There were also parent-child mediations available, which were conducted by an on-site mediator, but very few of the interviewed SOCP ( $n = 17$ ) or control youth ( $n = 2$ ) reported having participated in these mediations. These factors together lead the authors to believe that few of the families likely got the intensity of services they probably needed to *really* make differences in their lives (see Mulvey et al., 1993).

Similarly, few of the staff had specific training regarding how to improve peer relationships. Rather, as in most probation programs, they were expected to encourage youth to choose different peers and to talk to them about the benefits and costs of choosing offending friends. Navigators were there to guide them toward better choices and the program created an environment for choosing "better" friends through positive peer activities. But, again, it may have been too much to expect staff to be able to reach the core issues underlying their choices of friends without providing more mental health counselors or others specifically trained to address these needs. The program was already expensive and included many components, which were difficult to implement en masse, so it may have been unreasonable to expect the project to be able to hire even more staff and focus even more on each of the included components.

Although the research did employ an experimental design, no preintervention measures are available for comparison. Baseline information about family and peer relationships may have provided some useful information for pre- and postintervention comparisons; however, careful care was taken to ensure random assignment into the two conditions. Earlier examinations of these data (Lane et al., 2005) confirm that the two groups were not statistically different on demographic characteristics. Although it is impossible to know without the pretest information, the assumption is that the two groups were not statistically different on the relationship questions before the intervention because they were randomly assigned to the conditions. Nonetheless, adding a baseline would be helpful in future research endeavors such as this.

In addition to the inclusion of a baseline measure, an additional recommendation would be to more closely monitor the behaviors of the team

members, especially the probation officers. Informal observations indicated that the team members were following the recommendations for their roles and the goals of the program; however, there is no substitute for empirical data collection and analyses on the topic.

## Conclusion

The current research was based on random assignment of juveniles to either a traditional probation program or an intensive experimental one. While the researchers have some methodological concerns about the implementation (see Discussion above), the strength of the research design enables us to make some conclusions that we might not otherwise be able to make. We encourage those involved with future probation programs desiring to influence family and peer relationships to carefully consider the results from this study. Although we generally found that SOCP did not have an effect on the juveniles, there is much that can be gleaned from this project. First, intensive family interventions will take an enormous commitment of time and resources. The current program tried to influence family relationships, but was likely not focused enough on that portion of the intervention for it to be successful. A phasing in of different components will be useful so that the service providers and probation officers can become acclimated to each new component one at a time. In addition, it would be helpful to more closely control the actions of the probation officers and other team members.

Second, general questions about family relationships may illicit false perceptions, or at least incomplete perceptions, from the youth. In the current study, youth said that they got along better with their families, but when questioned more specifically about that relationship it appeared that there was not a true improvement as compared to the traditional probation youth. Future studies investigating family relationships will need to be careful to employ in-depth scales about those relationships to ensure that an accurate measure of family relationships is obtained.

Third, legislators and policymakers should give careful consideration when implementing parental involvement programs in their statutes. The results from the current project imply that a simple inclusion of such language in the statutes (without the focused, intensive programs to back them up) will likely not result in the intended impact or any impact at all.

## Notes

1. During the summer of 1997, a local screening and selection committee comprised of agency leaders and personnel adapted (revised scoring categories) and pretested a validated risk instrument to ensure that it would “capture” youth who, based on probation agency experience, were actually at medium to high risk of committing crime in the near future. The committee was aware of research indicating that programs are more successful when they target youth who are at medium to high risk (see Lipsey & Wilson, 1998; Wilson & Howell, 1995). The committee determined that a score of at least 12 on their assessment would capture these youth in their community. The final sample, however, was primarily informal probation cases, indicating that this assessment did not necessarily capture high-risk youth.

2. Youth may not have been interviewed because parents or the youth refused consent, interviewers were unable to establish contact, or the study ended before they were contacted.

3. The researchers recognize that a tagging crew is not the same as a gang. Tagging crews are involved in graffiti only, while gangs have a much larger scope. The participants were asked the name of their tagging crew or gang if they indicated involvement. Although we could have determined from the name provided and the police files to which group the youth belonged, we decided not to do so. We decided not to make the distinction in the current research because it was not important to do so for our study’s purpose and the proportion of respondents who indicated involvement in either group was quite small.

4. Youth were also asked whether they got along better with their siblings and whether they found it easier to talk with their siblings about important things than they did before [random assignment date]. There were no significant differences between the SOCP and the routine probation youth. For those youth who had siblings, approximately 30% of both groups believed they were getting along with their siblings better than before and were finding it easier to talk to them about important things.

5. The lower numbers for some of these questions are the result of the father/male guardian or mother/female guardian not being a regular part of the youth’s life. If that was the case, then the youth did not answer the questions regarding them.

6. The information provided in this table is also presented in Lane, Turner, Fain, & Sehgal (2007).

7. The lack of significant differences on gang-related questions displayed in the following tables may be because of the small number of youth who responded that they were in a gang or tagging crew and therefore answered the dependent gang questions.

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**Eve Brank** (JD, University of Nebraska, Lincoln; PhD, Social Psychology, University of Nebraska, Lincoln) is an assistant professor in the Department of Criminology, Law, and Society at the University of Florida. Her research focuses primarily on families, juveniles, and especially parental responsibility laws.

**Jodi Lane** (PhD, Social Ecology with Concentration in Criminology, Law and Society, University of California, Irvine) is an associate professor in the Department of Criminology, Law, and Society at the University of Florida. Her interests include fear of crime, juvenile justice policy, corrections, and evaluation research. Her work has also appeared in *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, *Deviant Behavior*, *Justice Quarterly*, and *Law & Society Review*.

**Susan Turner** (PhD, Social Psychology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) is a professor of criminology, law, and society (CLS) at the University of California, Irvine, and associate director for the Center of Evidence Based Corrections in the CLS. She was previously with RAND for over 20 years, where she led evaluations on the impact of juvenile and adult correctional programs, drug courts, and intensive supervision probation and parole. She has led a variety of projects, including studies on racial disparity, field experiments of private-sector alternatives for serious juvenile offenders, work release, day fines, and a 14-site nationwide evaluation of intensive probation supervision. Her expertise includes the design and implementation of randomized field experiments and research collaborations with state and local justice agencies, including multisite evaluations of drug courts and mental health courts. She was the principal investigator for the 14-site National Institute of Justice-funded study of drug courts.



**Terry Fain** (MA, Mathematics, Vanderbilt University; MA, Sociology, Vanderbilt University; MS, Clinical Psychology, California State University, Los Angeles) is a senior research manager at the RAND Corporation and has published numerous RAND reports in the area of criminal justice as well as articles in peer-reviewed journals. He has more than 20 years' experience in managing and processing large, complex databases.

**Amber Sehgal** (MS, Criminal Justice, California State University, Long Beach) is a research associate at the RAND Corporation who has worked on numerous criminal justice projects. She has extensive field experience working with programs aimed at reducing juvenile delinquency, and has published in RAND reports and peer-reviewed journals in this area.