

DEFINING JUVENILE JUSTICE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Crime and public policy continue to be salient issues in the 21st century. This article reviews juvenile justice policy and examines initiatives that demonstrate positive directions for the future of the juvenile justice system. The authors summarize the history of juvenile justice and review recent developments that warrant further research to demonstrate rational, effective policies and strategies for responding to juvenile delinquency. The influences of ideology, politics, and the media on public policy are discussed, and the authors consider future issues in juvenile justice.

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The brief but highly publicized increase in youth violence in the 1980s and early 1990s has ended, but its effects continue to erode the foundation and principles of the juvenile justice system. Arguably, the violence resulting from the nexus of guns, youth gangs, and drugs generated three forces that have presented new challenges to the basic justification for preserving a separate system of handling youth offenders.

First, the portrayal of youth violence fueled public fear of crime and contributed to emotional reactions that approached hysterical proportions. Media coverage reinforced themes of random violence by youth and victimization of innocent strangers. As a result, public perceptions of crime were distorted, and citizens developed an exaggerated sense of vulnerability (Kappeler, Blumberg, & Potter, 2000; Merlo & Benekos, 2000).

Second, attitudes toward youth that were based primarily on images of youth offenders shifted to more anger and resentment, and youth were demonized as representing a new and different breed of delinquent (Vogel, 1994). In this context, Triplett (2000) used Tannenbaum's concept of dramatization of evil to explain how reactions to violent youth were generalized to all youth, especially inner-city male minorities. As a result, adolescent offenders were characterized as "super predators" who were both dangerous and unrepentant (Bazelon, 2000; DiIulio, 1995).

Finally, in a climate of hardening attitudes, the juvenile justice system was viewed as incapable of curbing youth crime and ineffective in controlling youth offenders. The efficacy of the system itself was challenged. As summarized by Austin, Johnson, and Gregoriou (2000) in their national assessment of juveniles in adult correctional facilities,

“This concept of a distinct justice system for juveniles focused upon treatment has come under attack in recent years” (p. ix).

These factors—heightened fear of crime, demonization of youth, and perceived ineffectiveness of the juvenile justice system—were exploited in the political arena to advance get-tough legislation and public policies that adultified youth offenders and shifted discretion in determining transfer of cases to criminal court from judges to prosecutors. Essentially, individualized responses that considered the circumstances and nature of the adolescent were displaced by legislation prescribing decisions based on the category and nature of the offense. In addition, therapeutic goals of intervention were replaced with those of deterrence, incapacitation, and punishment. The resulting convergence of the juvenile and criminal justice systems led some to argue for the abolition of the juvenile justice system (Feld, 1993, 1999).

This article reviews some of the themes that characterize the state of juvenile justice and provides a context for assessing future initiatives for the juvenile justice system. The authors identify ideology, politics, and the media as salient influences on public perceptions and social policy.

Intention and Performance of Juvenile Justice

The orthodox view of the founding of the juvenile court is represented as a humanitarian initiative of child savers and do-gooders who were intent on helping wayward children by removing them from the harms of the criminal court and by providing them with therapeutic social services (Bortner, 1988; Platt, 1977). The specialty court established in 1899 for children was based on the assumptions that children were different from adults, that they were malleable and could be reformed, and that the benevolence of the state would be exercised by the judge who would be guided by the doctrine of *parens patriae*, which would ensure individualized care for child miscreants. As Albanese (1993) explained, “The juvenile court corresponded with the rise of positivism” (p. 9), which defined juvenile delinquency as the result of environmental influences rather than free will. This view justified removal of children from their homes and neighborhoods as an effort to correct negative influences and to direct children toward more socially productive behaviors (Albanese, 1993).

In addition to its therapeutic intention, the separate system was characterized by an informal, nonlegalistic forum where children’s interests were protected by the court. Paternalism, rather than due process, and best interests, rather than guilt, were established as the parameters for court procedures. In the context of substantive rationality, Ferdinand and McDermott (2002) discussed that youth receive different responses: “Under *parens patriae*, juveniles, for example, have a right to treatment for their offenses instead of full punishment” (p. 91).

The development of the juvenile court, however, was not without its critics (Bernard, 1992; Feld, 1999; Platt, 1977). Although the idea of helping dependent and neglected children fit “comfortably into the historic and philosophical context of the day,” Bernard (1992) noted that “like the new idea of juvenile delinquency, the juvenile court was probably popular in part because it sounded new and different but it actually wasn’t” (p. 101). New ideas and a new legal rationale were used to institutionalize and control children for their “own good,” but at the same time served to “increase the power of the state” (Bernard, 1992, p. 106) over poor urban youth.

This benevolent social control eventually manifested abuses of informal authority, resulting in a series of Supreme Court decisions that began to transform the juvenile court. Feld (1993, 1999) has described the processes and consequences of this transformation as follows: The juvenile court shifted from informal to formal procedures, from a therapeutic to a crime control jurisprudence, and from separate jurisdiction for children and youth to the diversion of status offenders and the transfer of serious adolescent offenders to criminal court. This juvenile-criminal court convergence of procedure, jurisprudence, and jurisdiction raised the question, "What was the justification for separate but parallel systems of justice?" For Feld, there was none, and he proposed to abolish the juvenile court in favor of a unified model (Feld, 1993, 1999).

Arguably, whereas the expressed intent of the specialty, diversion court for dependent and neglected children may have been noble, the performance of protecting and caring for youth was challenged and discredited. As convergence blurred the distinction between juvenile and criminal courts, the confluence of factors summarized previously (fear of crime, demonization of youth, and dissatisfaction with the juvenile justice system) further diminished support for the juvenile justice system.

Deconstructing Juvenile Justice

In assessing the state of juvenile justice policy in the 1980s and 1990s, Merlo and Benekos (2000) identified the interaction of ideology, politics, and the media as the dynamic that both distorted the ideal of juvenile justice and deconstructed the juvenile justice system. During the wars on crime and drugs, get-tough attitudes replaced the rehabilitative ideals of post-World War II. Neo-classical assumptions of free will, rational choice, and deterrence replaced the positivist concepts of development, determinism, and treatment.

The youth crime spike of 1987 to 1994 occurred in the context of this prevailing conservative, neoclassical ideology. The get-tough reactions to adult offenders were easily transferred to youth who were vilified as "godless, fatherless, jobless" criminals who behaved like adult offenders (DiIulio, 1995). The public outcry to do something about adolescent offenders who were seen as "Public Enemy No. 1" (Magill, 1998) was channeled into the political response to treat "adult crime with adult time." "The demands of modern political campaigns require politicians to fit proposed solutions to complex problems into short, snappy soundbites" (Merlo, 2000, p. 652). The political lessons of Willie Horton underscored the effectiveness of simplifying the problem, invoking a punitive, moral position, and legislating tougher sanctions (Merlo & Benekos, 2000).

As a result, rational choice ideology and punitive politics generated legislation in several states that lowered the age that juveniles were presumptively treated as adults and prosecuted in criminal court (Sickmund, Snyder, & Poe-Yamagata, 1997). For example, a special legislative session on juvenile justice held in 1995 in Pennsylvania resulted in lowering the age to 14 for juveniles to be transferred to criminal court for offenses committed with a weapon (Juvenile Court Act, 1995; Torbet & Thomas, 1997). As a result of this type of legislative reform, by 1997, the nationwide adultification response resulted in the incarceration of 5,400 inmates younger than age 18 in state prisons and 9,100 in jails (Strom, 2000). From 1985 to 1997, the number of youth younger than age 18 sentenced to adult state prisons increased from 3,400 to 7,400, and the number held in state prisons

increased from 2,300 to 5,400. As Strom (2000) concluded, "Relative to the number of arrests, the likelihood of incarceration in state prison increased for offenders under 18" (p. 1).

Because public perceptions of crime and victims are largely shaped by media reports and presentations, "the role of the media in informing public opinion and influencing citizen reaction to crime issues is central to understanding the framing of crime policy" (Merlo & Benekos, 2000, p. 4). Kappeler et al. (2000) also critiqued the role of the media and described the social construction of crime myths. Although the media industry has an "important role" in reporting crime, Kappeler et al. cautioned, that "social policy should not be developed based on distortion, sensationalism, or a few newsworthy events" (p. 7).

Unfortunately, celebrated cases of youth violence, including school shootings, have been instrumental in developing such policies, some of which have underscored zero tolerance and expanded control over adolescents (Merlo & Benekos, 2000). For example, in his comments on the Supreme Court ruling that students can be subject to random drug testing, Schwartz (2002) concluded that the Court's decision and its rationale underscore that "the rights of young people are shredded when they walk through the schoolhouse gates" (p. 2). Although somewhat hyperbolic, Schwartz recognized that on one hand, youth who commit crimes can be held to the legal standards and consequences used for adults, and on the other hand, as students, they experience a "reduced expectation of privacy" (p. 2).

This suggests the ambivalence toward youth and reflects the cyclic nature of policy discussed by Ferdinand and McDermott (2002):

At first . . . children were treated like adults, using the same laws and courts and receiving the same punishments as adults. Then, from early in the 19th century to the mid-1960s, criminal justice officials recognized and accepted the social immaturity of adolescents and their easily manipulated, impulsive nature . . . In the third phase, we returned to treating youngsters like adults . . . culminating in the retributive policies that target serious juvenile offenders today . . . Treating youths as adults emphasizes punishment and accountability; treating them as adolescents emphasizes rehabilitation. We have swung between the two as first one paradigm and then the other gains prominence. (pp. 102-103)

The dynamic of neoclassical ideology, conservative politics, and media-influenced policies previously discussed has generated a shift in public policy that rejects the assumptions of adolescent development and tolerance for youthful indiscretions. In endorsing get-tough, quick-fix responses to youth crime, legislators appeal to the public, win support, but ignore evidence of effective strategies in preventing delinquency and treating youth offenders. The next section considers some of these strategies and the initiatives that warrant further study and evaluation.

Politics, Research, and Juvenile Justice

The 1990s witnessed political rhetoric regarding violent youth, extensive media coverage of youth crime, particularly school violence, and an ideology that was sometimes harsh and punitive toward youth. Simultaneously, the public's response to juvenile crime was alternately reactionary and preventive. In this section, some exemplary and promising programs for youth are examined and contrasted with some of the more political and reactive approaches. The policies and initiatives can be categorized as those that emphasize

prevention, education, and treatment (PET); balanced and restorative justice (BARJ); or retribution, adultification, and punishment (RAP) (see Benekos & Merlo, 2002).

Beginning in the fall of 1997, the incidence of school violence began to be perceived by the public as one more manifestation that juveniles were becoming increasingly violent and homicidal. Through extensive media coverage and seven school shootings (from 1997 through 2001), parents, teachers, students, and the public became fearful of youth violence. For the most part, the school districts embraced an old strategy for addressing the problem: zero tolerance.

Zero-Tolerance Policies in Schools

Zero-tolerance initiatives were introduced in the 1980s to address drug enforcement policies by the federal and state governments (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). In the late 1980s, school districts in Orange County, California, and Louisville, Kentucky, embraced zero-tolerance policies, requiring expulsion for gang-related activity or drug possession. By 1993, school boards throughout the United States had adopted such policies for offenses ranging from tobacco violations to school disruptions (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). However, it was a congressional initiative that became the impetus for the “new” zero tolerance. The Gun-Free School Zones Act of 1994 required any school that received federal funding to expel for not less than 1 year “any student found with a weapon on school grounds” (Bogos, 1997, p. 374). Furthermore, the legislation empowered the Department of Education to stop providing federal funds to states that did not adopt equally stringent policies within 1 year (Bogos, 1997; Levick, 2000; Skiba, 2000). Cognizant of the effects of federal money being withdrawn or withheld, states swiftly enacted legislation that not only met the federal requirements, but even exceeded them.

These policies are collectively referred to as zero-tolerance laws or initiatives. Zero tolerance legislation, mandates, and requirements are indicative of the panic surrounding the incidents and public pressure to do something to stop violence. They are emblematic of a political response to find the “quick fix” rather than a logical, rational approach to address a problem.

Embracing zero-tolerance initiatives as a panacea for school violence illustrates an ideology most closely associated with RAP. For the most part, the policies are punitive and intransigent. There appears to be little discretion in interpreting the policies, and school officials treat every incident the same, whether it is a 5-year-old kindergarten child or a 17-year-old high school senior. The students’ motivations, degree of understanding, or actual behaviors do not seem to merit consideration (Bogos, 1997; Levick, 2000). There are numerous examples of how zero-tolerance policies have resulted in suspension or expulsion for students from elementary through high school for relatively minor behaviors, such as bringing a nail clipper to school (Benekos, Merlo, Cook, & Bagley, 2002). Behaviors that were once considered adolescent indiscretions were now criminalized.

School Bullying

Rather than focusing on zero-tolerance policies as the first line of defense against school violence, some school systems have begun to emphasize and implement antibullying strategies. Recent evidence suggests that bullying is related to school violence and other problem behaviors. In its report on school violence, the Secret Service found that a number of the school shooters “experienced bullying and harassment that were longstanding and

severe” (Preventing School Shootings, 2002, p. 14). Interviewing youth who engaged in school violence, the Secret Service found that the bullying of the youth was close to torment (Preventing School Shootings, 2002). Bullying “involves a real or perceived imbalance of power, with the more powerful child or group attacking those who are less powerful” (Ericson, 2001, p. 1).

According to Ericson (2001), bullying is manifest in three ways: physical, which includes pushing, kicking, and hitting; verbal, which includes making threats and taunting; and psychological, which includes intimidation and social exclusion. The extent of bullying in schools is not entirely known, but the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development estimated that 1.6 million children in the 6th through 10th grades are the victims of bullying at least once per week, and 1.7 million children engage in the bullying of others just as frequently. Clearly, the effects of bullying are serious, but not only as they relate to school violence. Research indicates that those who are victimized, as well as those who are perpetrators, experience short- and long-term problems, including psychological and emotional dysfunction and criminal behavior (Ericson, 2001).

By involving parents, peers, and school personnel, successful antibullying measures (such as those developed by Olweus in Bergen, Norway) can have a positive effect on elementary, middle, and junior high school students (Olweus & Limber, as cited in Ericson, 2001). A number of school systems have emulated that program or incorporated some of its components. Antibullying programs foster an increased awareness about bullying, require more intervention to stop intimidation, stipulate the articulation of clear rules regarding inappropriate behavior, and provide victim support and protection (Ericson, 2001). Clearly, schools can prevent and reduce the incidence of bullying on school grounds and create a safer environment for children. In fact, the Bergen study demonstrated that incidents of bullying decreased by more than 50% in the 2 years that the program was used (Ericson, 2001).

The Secret Service report also indicates that prior to the shooting incidents, most of these youth engaged in some type of behavior that demonstrated their need for help. From attempted suicide to threats to commit suicide, as well as expository writing assignments that focused on homicide, suicide, and depression, there were manifestations that the youth were experiencing difficulties (Preventing School Shootings, 2002). These findings suggest a more active role for schools in the prevention of violence. Efforts to encourage greater communication among parents, students, and school personnel and the creation of an environment where youth are able to approach teachers and staff members with their concerns through extended before- and after-school programs can help prevent youth from engaging in violent behavior.

Youth Victimization and Prevention Initiatives

Beginning in 1992, official data indicate that violence in school has been decreasing. By contrast, schools have become safer places than they had been prior to 1992, and school-related violent deaths have decreased (Brooks, Schiraldi, & Zeidenberg, 2000; Justice Policy Institute, 1999; Powell, 1999; Repenning, Powell, Doane, & Dunkle, 2000). In fact, school is one of the safest places for children to be (Snyder & Hoffman, as cited in Preventing School Shootings, 2002). In 1998, “students were twice as likely to be victims of serious violent crime away from school than at school” (Girouard, 2001, p. 1).

Youth between the ages of 12 and 17 are much more likely to be the victims of crime than are youth ages 11 and younger. In analyzing the 1997 FBI data from 12 states,

Finkelhor and Ormrod (2000) found that juveniles were more likely to be victimized by family members when they were younger than 5, but more likely to be victimized by peers as they move into adolescence. Although adolescents typically victimize peers, they also continue to be victimized by adults (Finkelhor & Ormrod, 2000).

Youth victimization is a serious problem, and its consequences are deleterious. Although earlier research has examined the effects of child maltreatment and later delinquency and criminal behavior, little research had been conducted on adolescent maltreatment as separate from child maltreatment (Widom, 1995). Using data from the National Youth Survey, Menard (2002) found that violent victimization during adolescence increases the victim's likelihood of being a violent offender or victim in adulthood, increases the odds of property offending in adulthood, and "doubles the odds of problem drug use in adulthood" (p. 14).

Similarly, Ireland, Smith, and Thornberry (2002) highlighted the importance of understanding the long-term effects of substantiated maltreatment. With data from the Rochester Youth Development Study, Ireland et al. found maltreatment that occurred only in adolescence and persistent maltreatment that occurred in childhood and adolescence were related to both delinquency and drug use. Adolescents who were the victims of maltreatment were more likely to be arrested in their sample than youth who had not been victimized (Ireland et al., 2002).

The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges has worked closely with an advisory committee to develop strategies for intervening in the lives of victims of domestic violence and child maltreatment (Kracke, 2001). The *Green Book* provides the guidelines for creating a collaborative approach to address both domestic violence and child maltreatment among child protective services, the juvenile and criminal courts, and community groups (Ireland et al., 2002; Kracke, 2001). With the goal of protecting and empowering the victims of abuse, it is currently being evaluated at six demonstration sites throughout the United States.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has also taken a proactive role in intervening in the lives of at-risk children and youth through its comprehensive strategy, which has two major components: reform of the juvenile justice system and prevention efforts (Wiebush, Freitag, & Baird, 2001). In examining the factors that are identified as precursors to delinquency and violence, the comprehensive strategy separates risk factors into four main areas: community, family, school, and individual and peer (Wiebush et al., 2001). In the area of maltreatment, efforts focus on the family.

To help child protective agencies deal with child maltreatment more successfully, the structured decision-making model has been implemented in a number of jurisdictions. It uses a risk-assessment tool that provides agencies and professionals with an equitable and effective method of dealing with victims of child maltreatment and also includes a research instrument that enables comprehensive assessment and planning (Wiebush et al., 2001). The structured decision-making model facilitates the delivery of services, the agencies' accountability, and the outcome evaluation process (Wiebush et al., 2001).

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention established the Child Protection Division in 2000 to deal with child protection issues (T. Cullen, 2001). One of the Child Protection Division's programs is the Safe Kids/Safe Streets project, which is currently operating at five demonstration sites. Its goal is to reduce childhood and adolescent victimization through a coordinated approach that involves strengthening the family, creating neighborhood programs, improving child protective agency services, establishing home visitation protocols, implementing court reforms, and enlisting child

advocacy center teams that involve law enforcement, medical, court, and social service agency representatives who collaboratively investigate and intervene in the lives of child and adolescent victims (T. Cullen, 2001). Through these kinds of research initiatives, the federal government is taking steps to ameliorate the lives of children and adolescents who have been victimized and to prevent the possible victimization of children who may be at risk.

According to Widom and Maxfield (2001), the message is fairly straightforward. First, early intervention is critical. Community police officers, teachers, and health care workers must attempt to identify those children and youth who are victimized by abuse and neglect. Second, both abuse and neglect hinder the healthy development of children. Although neglect cases are more widely reported in the system, both kinds of victimization merit intervention efforts. Third, agencies need to reexamine how they respond to abused and neglected children, particularly regarding out-of-home placements. They recommend that child protective service agencies review their policies and conduct research on the effects of out-of-home placements versus in-home supervision (Widom & Maxfield, 2001).

Early Intervention Programs for Children and Parents

Recent research and longitudinal studies have provided service providers with a much more detailed look at child abuse and neglect and its effects throughout the life course. In addition, research has supported the importance of early intervention and delinquency prevention programs (Merlo, 2000). Public support for early intervention has also been documented. In a survey of the public, F. Cullen et al. (1998) found that “a clear majority” of citizens still favor “governmental efforts designed to intervene with families and children” (p. 197). Using a sample of respondents in Tennessee, Moon, Sundt, Cullen, and Wright (2000) found that the public strongly supported allocating resources for prevention-oriented programs over the construction of new prisons.

Some of the more promising approaches to prevention of juvenile offending focus on intervening in a child’s life long before delinquency occurs. For more than 40 years, the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project has been in the forefront as a successful early intervention effort. Initially, 123 high-risk African American children were invited in 1962 to participate in the research study. Children from the ages of 3 and 4 were randomly assigned to the control or experimental group. They were from low socioeconomic backgrounds, had low IQ scores, and were considered to be high risk in terms of school failure (Parks, 2000).

The High/Scope Perry Project is characterized by low staff-to-client ratios, an environment that involves active learning, and a home visitation program that encourages and enlists parents to become involved. Staff, programming, and families have all contributed to its success (Parks, 2000). Part of the project’s strength is attributed to the fact that it combined early education with family support. According to Parks (2000), offering both of these kinds of services to preschool children was critical in preventing future delinquency and lowering welfare dependency while increasing academic achievement, employment, and prosocial behavior.

Another early intervention strategy, “The Incredible Years: Parents, Teachers, and Children Training Series,” targets parents of children from ages 3 to 12. The 11-week program attempts to support and enhance parents’ monitoring and disciplinary skills while simultaneously improving their confidence (Alvarado & Kumpfer, 2000). In addition to focusing on parental techniques for discipline, the program also introduces and encourages

parents to become involved in their children's education. Research has indicated that this program effectively reduces children's problem behaviors and engages them academically (Alvarado & Kumpfer, 2000).

These kinds of strategies symbolize prevention, education, and treatment, and are considered to be far more beneficial in terms of cost-effectiveness and outcome measures than the reactive stance of the past (i.e., RAP). Research has enlightened the development of the curriculum and objectives of the programs, and results demonstrate the need for collaboration and cooperation among parents, schools, communities, and social service and justice professionals.

Legislative Changes in Juvenile Justice

One manifestation of the RAP approach to youth can be discerned from the legislative changes that occurred in juvenile justice. By the mid-1990s, 45 states introduced and enacted legislation that facilitated the transfer of juveniles from the juvenile justice system to the adult court system (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999). An ideological shift toward youth was occurring, and it was manifested in legislative provisions that made it easier to move juveniles into the adult system from the juvenile system. Coupled with the changes in the procedures for waiving juveniles into adult court, legislators in 47 states amended or revised statutes dealing with the confidentiality of juvenile records (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999).

Legislators not only altered the procedures for waiver and confidentiality, they also amended the statutory purpose clause of juvenile courts. According to Torbet and Szymanski (1998), by the end of 1997, 17 states redefined their juvenile court purpose clauses to emphasize public safety, punishment for youth, certain sanctions, and/or offender accountability. Although the earlier language had focused only on children's best interests, the new legislation emphasized the protection of the community, the need for accountability, and the importance of providing treatment, but with a balanced approach (see Bazemore & Day, 1996).

When Governor Tom Ridge signed Act 33 into law in Pennsylvania in 1995, the changes were dramatic. Rather than focusing singularly on the youth's needs as previously stipulated, the revised statute elevated the protection of the public interest and required that programs should address community protection, offender accountability, and competency development to assure that children would become responsible and productive members of the community (Juvenile Court Act, 1995; Torbet & Thomas, 1997). According to Pennsylvania's Juvenile Act, the victim, the community, and the offender are to receive "balanced attention," and the resources of the state through the juvenile justice system should be allocated to all three client groups to achieve these goals (Juvenile Court Judges' Commission, 1997). Bazemore and Umbreit's (1995) conceptualization of BARJ was consistent with the evolution of the Pennsylvania Juvenile Act.

To successfully implement the principles and objectives of the BARJ model, funding has been provided through the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency to train juvenile justice professionals; to coordinate the initiative with the juvenile court judges in the state; to provide victim services, including services for juvenile crime victims; and to assist in evaluating the initiative (see <http://www.pccd.state.pa.us/JUVENILE/barj1.htm>).

BARJ is popular with various constituencies. By incorporating elements of a punitive stance with those of a treatment stance, BARJ is widely acclaimed and endorsed because it satisfies the conservative political demands to be tough on juvenile offenders with its emphasis on accountability and community safety while simultaneously courting more

liberal voters with its emphasis on competency development. The actual degree to which BARJ is implemented and supported differs from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Most commonly, BARJ is applied to juveniles on probation or unofficial supervision. For example, requiring a youth to participate in community service satisfies the accountability requirement because the youth attempts to make amends to the community. Simultaneously, the youth who engages in community service is developing certain competencies, including work habits and skills due to the experience. Finally, the benefits for the community in terms of its need for safety and protection are fulfilled by the fact that the youth's time is structured, and the community is involved in the supervision (Ellis & Sowers, 2001).

BARJ emphasizes the importance of victim-offender mediation, community conferencing, and other initiatives designed to make juvenile offenders accountable and to recognize the harm done to victims and communities. It reflects a more equitable approach to juvenile offending, and it provides justice professionals with an opportunity to work with offenders and communities simultaneously. Continued evaluation will determine its effectiveness in reducing juvenile recidivism, providing greater responsiveness to victims, promoting the development of positive behaviors, and protecting the community.

Conclusion

Juvenile justice has undergone significant transformation in the past 103 years. Perceptions of youth have changed and now reflect a more punitive, reactionary stance. One of the characteristics of the political policy initiatives of the 1990s is the lack of research guiding decision-making processes. In their haste to enact new, tougher sanctions against juveniles, legislators rarely paused to ask, "Where are the data?" (Merlo, 2000). While official reports documented that juvenile crime was decreasing, legislators were amending transfer legislation, authorizing and funding the construction of new juvenile prisons, and implementing harsh sanctions. Although the long-term consequences of these kinds of legislative initiatives are not yet fully known, more youth have been sentenced to adult prisons; more school districts have expelled or suspended children and youth for minor misbehaviors; and adolescence, as a developmental stage, has been challenged.

Simultaneously, research-based initiatives are becoming increasingly prominent. Juvenile justice programs and strategies are responding to the demand for outcome assessments, accountability in programming, and classic experimental design. Programs that were once considered sacrosanct, such as DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education), are being reformulated after research demonstrated they were not effective in preventing youth from engaging in drug abuse. Rather than eschewing evaluation, programs are embracing it.

Early intervention, prevention, and parenting programs are becoming more widespread. There is evidence that the public supports these efforts and that they are successful. In addition, the government encourages and funds collaborations between justice agencies, social service agencies, schools, and the public. There is ample evidence of creative and highly motivated practitioners working in the system with coordinated responses between various agencies.

The current research has enlightened approaches and assisted efforts in preventing and controlling juvenile offending. Some of the greatest strides have been made in research

on childhood neglect and abuse and the effects of childhood and adolescent maltreatment. The challenge will be to use the findings in developing and refining intervention strategies.

Ireland et al. (2002) noted that the emphasis on punishment toward juveniles and the accompanying movement to transfer juveniles to adult court to hold them accountable for their offending might result in fewer initiatives to identify and treat adolescents who may be victims of abuse or neglect. Although there have been some efforts to address the problem of childhood and adolescent victimization equitably, there is not much evidence to suggest a softening in the public's attitudes toward adolescents who have been victimized.

Whereas ambivalence toward youth persists, there is evidence of a retreat from the punitive, get-tough approaches emblematic of the 1990s. Highly publicized school shootings have not continued to occur, and the public is now more focused on the economy and terrorism. Bernard's (1992) conceptualization of the cycles of juvenile justice would appear to suggest that we are moving toward a more liberal treatment- and prevention-oriented approach toward youth (Merlo, 2000). These changes are not likely to occur immediately, but they do provide an opportunity to use a more research-based approach in dealing with the prevention and treatment of youth offenders.

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