
Bright and Jonson-Reid evaluate how involvement in the public welfare system as a child and in adolescence can be a warning sign or indicator of future entrance into the criminal justice system. This study distinguishes factors that can determine whether an individual has a susceptibility to criminal action, including gender, timing of entrance into welfare system, family contact, peer deviance, trauma, maltreatment, and socioeconomic class, and determines to what extent each of these play a role using latent class analysis. The study took a sample of high-risk youth and studied their justice systems patterns through a database, separating them into classes where their warning factors were similar, and provided evidence that those classes in which the individuals have higher rates of offending into adulthood tend to have high multisystem involvement in adolescence, demonstrating that involvement in the welfare system indicated a child at risk of criminal involvement. The study’s conclusion states that it is clear that patterns of service use and behavior among a sample of youths who suffered from poverty or maltreatment during childhood indicate a higher risk of future offending, but because less than 25% of the at-risk group actually committed a crime in the future, it is more dangerous to label the other 75% as a criminal when “not all children who experience similar risks will follow similar developmental trajectories.” This final concession will be the primary purpose this study serves for my paper, in that it made me ponder the perspective of those against using early preventative techniques to prevent future criminal behavior and to further investigate whether intervention methods should be used at all.


Farrington and his associates evaluate how the Stop Now and Plan Program, which has been proven to reduce chances of later offending by boys when the prevention is implemented at ages 6-11, benefits the economy by saving money. By evaluating the boys who participated that had later convictions compared to those who didn’t, the authors conclude, “…between $2.05 and $3.75 are saved for every $1 spent on the program. Scaling up to undetected offenses, between $17.33 and $31.77 are saved for every $1 spent on the program. The benefit-to-cost ratio was greatest for the low risk boys and smallest for the high-risk boys. However, there were indications that the program was particularly effective for high risk boys who received intensive treatment. Our benefit-to-cost ratios are underestimates. On any reasonable assumptions, the monetary benefits of the SNAP-ORP program greatly exceed its monetary costs. It is desirable to invest in early prevention programs such as SNAP-ORP to reduce crime and save money,” demonstrating that future use of programs such as SNAP-ORP
that reduce crime cost money at first but actually end up saving money in the end. This study also describes the methods involved in the SNAP-ORP program, such as, “Children ages 6–11 are admitted to the program if they have a T-score of 70 or greater on the delinquency subscale of the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL; Achenbach, 1991) and/or have had recent police contact resulting from their own misbehavior.”


Huesmann, Eron, and Dubow establish that childhood aggression is one of the best predictors of future criminal activity in an individual. The primary aim was to assess which family background variables and child behavior warning signs indicate a higher chance of later justice system entry. The authors utilize past studies, such as one constructed by Olweus, as evidence for childhood aggression playing a role in future criminality. This study is relevant because it concludes that the other factors that have been shown to act as predictors for future criminality are all in some way correlated to the child’s individual aggression. The authors report on a data analysis from the Columbia County Longitudinal Study in which an 856-child sample with a mean age of 8 are interviewed at a young age and then with follow-up interviews at ages 22 and 30, where they also evaluate public records of criminal activity. The initial interviews consisted of peer-assessed aggression, peer-assessed popularity, the child’s IQ, and a parent interview. The results concluded that the boys who the researchers could not find criminal data on, therefore assuming they have not committed a crime, were far less aggressive at age 8 than the boys in the study who did have a criminal record. The researchers claim, “More aggressive children were less intelligent, less popular, rejected more by their parents, had parents who believed more firmly in punishment for transgressions, were less identified with their parents’ self-images, were less likely to express guilt over transgressions and were less likely to confess undetected transgressions. Although lack of guilt and lack of confessing most probably are precursors to aggression, the parenting factors might as easily be reactions to the child’s aggression,” establishing again that childhood aggression is a primary factor in determining potential future criminal behavior. They also conclude, “As reported in earlier papers, age eight peer-nominated aggression was a significant predictor of being arrested by age 30,” establishing that peer-nominated aggression could be a potential method of evaluation used in my proposed solution. This study is relevant to determining at what age intervention methods should be taken at, for the conclusion states, “These results suggest that how aggressively children behave by age eight is the best predictor of how likely they are over the next 22 years to be arrested, how many times they will be arrested, how serious will be their crimes, how many times they will be convicted and how long they will serve in prison,” indicating that my proposed solution should be before the age of 8. The significance of this study is also that the sample studied was from a middle-class, predominantly white community sample, concluding that intervention methods do not work only for high-risk youth. Another significant argument that I can utilize is that parents’ involvement as an indicator of future criminal behavior could in fact just be a correlation to childhood aggression. For example, an individual having a harsh relationship with his parent can lead him to associate with deviant peers, and that

Manning evaluates the effectiveness of early developmental prevention programs targeted at children aged 0-5 that are members of an at-risk population and measures the results by educational success, cognitive development, social involvement, and involvement in criminal justice. All of these measures have been showed to have either a direct effect on future criminality or to have a correlation. The largest effect out of 17 studies was educational success (effect size .53), but involvement in criminal justice still had a significant effect size (.24). Manning concludes that “programs that lasted longer than three years were associated with larger sample means than programs that were longer than one year but shorter than three years,” demonstrating that intervention methods that are longer than three years increase effectiveness. In addition, Manning states, “There was a marginally significant trend for programs with a follow-through component into the early primary school years to have more positive effects than programs without a follow-through,” exhibiting the benefits of a program conducting a later intervention to follow up on their initial intervention. Such programs are called early developmental prevention, or EDP programs, and they have been proven to minimize crime-related problems in the future. An important note about this study is that it is not health-based, and the children who are considered at-risk do not have mental health or severe developmental health. Manning also concludes, “In recognition of these risks and opportunities, much emphasis is placed by government on reducing negative outcomes during adolescence (e.g. school drop-out, formal contact with the criminal justice system). Our results are consistent with the argument that governments should invest more in the implementation of good EDPs to balance the more usual strategy of relying on costly remedial interventions,” establishing why the government should invest their money in EDPs rather than post-disaster prevention methods. Another question that this analysis presented was how to target the studies toward disadvantaged youth where the schools are worse because as of now their families can’t pay as many taxes, demonstrated by the claim, “Effects are particularly evident for children who come from low-income backgrounds, with short-term gains in intellectual and academic achievement scores, and long-term outcomes demonstrating successful educational performance, a reduction in behavioral problems and delinquency, and improved family wellbeing (Brooks-Gunn, Fuligni, & Berlin, 2003, p.5-9). Moreover, a systematic delivery of basic services to disadvantaged children and their families has demonstrated large reductions in crime involvement amongst targeted groups (Reynolds, Ou, & Topitzes, 2004; Schweinhart, 2004; Schweinhart, Barnes, & Weikart, 1993; Yoshikawa, 1994; Zigler, Taussig, & Black, 1992),” which also establishes that low-income groups have the potential for receiving the greatest benefits from EDPs. Results also revealed that “…cognitive
impacts during the preschool period were greatest for those programs that had a direct teaching component in preschool,” and “…cognitive impacts during the K-8 time period were greatest for those programs that had a follow-through educational component in elementary school,” showing the various ways that programs are effective. Manning also describes the “five forms of EDP: structured preschool programs, center-based childcare/developmental day care, home visitation programs, family support services and parental education.” Manning concludes by stating, “In this paper we have attempted to inform the choices faced by decision makers interested in moving government policies in the direction of primary, long term prevention by presenting a rigorous analysis of the best available evidence on the effects of early developmental programs on adolescent outcomes,” which shows that their purpose was government-based, and also proposes that what is now needed is a large-scale, long-term experiment.


This study evaluates how an online training program called Strongest Families Smart Website intervention can help reduce disruptive behavior. They analyze using high-risk 4 year-olds that attend well-child clinics. The authors conclude, “The Strongest Families Smart Website intervention is hypothesized to improve parenting skills, reduce child disruptive behaviour, reduce parental distress and improve family functioning. These results will likely inform subsequent investigations, public policy, and early treatment of childhood disruptive behaviour problems,” which helps my research because it suggests that this should pose as a suggestion to government officials how they should change their policies to support this program. A major factor in these children is ODD, or Oppositional Defiant Disorder, and the authors claim that this has been shown to indicate future criminality on page 6. The authors claim that parent training is the most effective approach to reducing disruptive behavior and hope that this study will provide suggestions to government officials.


This study evaluates the effects of Chicago’s Child-Parent Centers that have been proposed as a federally-funded preschool program. It is important to note that the children analyzed are from low-income families, and this once again raises the question as to how, in the future, low-income areas and schools will get much-needed funding.
when there is a major lack of donations and tax benefits within that region. The authors begin by establishing, “that participation in a variety of preschool programs not only enhances children’s school readiness and early school performance (Karoly et al., 1998; Ramey & Ramey, 1998; White, 1985) but is associated, many years later, with reduced incidence of remedial education (Barnett, 1995; Karoly et al., 1998; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000), delinquent behavior (Garces, Thomas, & Currie, 2002; Reynolds, Temple, Robertson, & Mann, 2001; Schweinhart, Barnes, & Weikart, 1993), and higher levels of educational attainment,” exhibiting that preschool participation does act as an indicator against future criminal behavior. They investigate the pathways of long-term effects of preschool participation for youth in the Chicago Longitudinal Study. A hypothesis as to why early intervention is effective is, “the cognitive advantage hypothesis. It indicates that the long-term effects of intervention are initiated by improvements in children’s developed abilities, as typically measured by standardized tests of cognitive ability, language and literacy skills, and school readiness…Support for the cognitive advantage hypothesis as a primary mechanism of intervention effects is extensive (Campbell & Ramey, 1995; Consortium for Longitudinal Studies, 1983; Lazar, Darlington, Murray, & Snipper, 1982; Reynolds, Mavrogenes, Bezruczko, & Hagemann, 1996; Schweinhart et al., 1993; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1980; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).” Another hypothesis is the family support hypothesis, but the evidence is less consistent. Finally, another more recent suggestion is the school support hypothesis. “Here, the effects of program participation would be expected to persist as a function of children attending schools of sufficient quality and support to maintain preschool learning gains,” which indicates that having better schools would help solve this issue. This article will be of use because of the statement, “teacher ratings of social adjustment were a significant predictor of several measures of later behavior, including delinquency and special education placement,” which validates any claim that teachers are qualified to assess a child’s behavior. The authors also claim, “avoidance of delinquency and crime not only brightens an individual’s economic prospects but can save the public billions of dollars in treatment and incarceration. The annual cost to society of school dropout and delinquency is estimated at $350 billion (Cohen, 1998; National Science and Technology Council, 1997),” to establish the cost benefits of these preschool programs, especially because there are large investments being made in these programs. Also, they conclude that “the school support hypothesis, measured by mobility and school-level achievement, contributed most to delinquent behavior,” when establishing which hypotheses led to which social outcomes (the number-based evidence is on pg. 1314). They also claimed the cognitive advantage led to school achievement. “Reynolds et al. (2001) found that relative to a matched comparison group enrolled in alternative early childhood programs, preschool participation in the Title I Chicago CPCs was associated with significantly lower rates of juvenile arrests and multiple juvenile arrests by age 18.” They also evaluate cost-effectiveness by claiming, “The rate of juvenile arrest for violent offenses, for example, was 6.9% for the preschool group and 14.1% for the comparison group (a rate reduction of 51%). Given the high costs of crime to society, this link between preschool participation and delinquency prevention is practically significant. A one-third reduction in the rate of juvenile arrest translates into a net economic benefit in 1998 dollars of $21,000 per participant in savings in the criminal justice system and averted tangible and intangible crime victim costs,” establishing the futuristic cost benefits of these programs. They suggest reduced class sizes and improvements to schools as a possible solution or method of prevention.

Salehzade and her associates determine that students who are labeled “bad” by their teachers are at a higher risk of future criminal involvement and effects the persistence of disruptive behavior. The researchers conclude that, “children who have been labeled as ‘bad’ and problematic will be under lots of educational and social effects. Different studies have confirmed that when a child identifies by his teacher, the self-fulfilling prophecy process begins. It means that [the] teacher just expect[s] certain behavior from the student and [the] student just [responds] to this expectation,” establishing that much of a child’s risk of aggression comes from a teacher’s expectation of them, which is relevant to my topic because forcing a child into an intervention program could result in them feeling labeled as “bad,” and according to this study, encouraged to continue with bad behavior. By establishing that a student simply responds to their teacher’s expectations for them, one can assume that the role of the teacher is huge in preventing future criminal behavior. Another relevant conclusion is that an established Teacher Rating Form (TRF) of the child behavior checklist (CBCL) from ASEBA is an accurate assessment of childhood aggression, establishing that a teacher is qualified to determine risk factors of their students by utilizing evidence that the children who teachers determined as aggressive were likely to have DSM-based syndromes. The researchers additionally state, “Studies have shown that behaviors resulting in ODR and those most noticed by teachers are behaviors that disrupt the learning environment and are categorized as externalizing behaviors(Harrison et al., 2012),” further establishing the claim that teachers possess the resources to determine a child’s potential for future criminal involvement, although the study does contain a concession in which they state that there could potentially be teacher bias associated with these evaluations and a psychiatric diagnosis should be included in later studies as well as a more in-depth diagnostic like the Diagnostic Interview Schedule. This piece allowed me to evaluate the potential costs of intervention methods as well as possible methods of evaluating a child’s aggression.


The Perry Preschool Project is an overwhelmingly commonly cited research study that concludes the multitude of lifelong positive effects that a cognitive learning-based preschool program has on the outcome of an individual and their adult well-being. Schweinhart and his team constructed a preschool program for 3 and 4 year olds living in poverty, which is a criminal risk factor, from 1962 through 1967 and followed their successes and failures up to age 40. The implications of this study for criminal behavior include that from Figure 1, one can conclude that 36% of the program group were arrested 5 or more times by the age of 40, compared to 55% of the no-program group. The researchers conclude that, “The study presents
strong evidence that the Perry Preschool program played a significant role in reducing overall arrests and arrests for violent crimes as well as property and drug crimes and subsequent prison or jail sentences over study participants’ lifetimes up to age 40,” and provides significant percentage-based evidence of this regarding many different types of crimes, including, “Consider also that by age 40, compared to the no-program group, the program group had significantly fewer arrests for property felonies (19% vs. 32% ever arrested), drug felonies (7% vs. 28%), violent misdemeanors (19% vs. 37%), and property misdemeanors (24% vs. 41%); significantly fewer arrests for property felonies by age 27 (14% vs. 26%); and significantly fewer arrests from ages 28 to 40 for violent felonies (2% vs. 12%), drug felonies (3% vs. 15%), and property misdemeanors (10% vs. 28%),” establishing the positive impact that preschool learning programs have on future criminality predictions. Another implication that allows me to begin to lean toward the conclusion that an intervention program should be mandated nationwide is that the program was also proven to positively affect education levels and economic well-being. The researchers state that “the economic return to society of the Perry Preschool program was $244,812 per participant on an investment of $15,166 per participant—$16.14 per dollar invested,” as well as, “Male program participants cost the public 41% less in crime costs per person—$732,894 less in undiscounted 2000 dollars over their lifetimes,” indicating that by preventing crime, preschool programs and intervention methods save the public thousands of dollars in the future. This study furthered my research about the benefits of prevention programs and allowed the futuristic perspective to represent itself all the way to age 40 of the individuals.


This government-released review of how crime prevention funding is being used concludes that the nation needs to invest money into evaluating crime prevention methods rather than randomly investing a small amount of money in a program that hasn’t proved to be successful. Sherman concludes, “Congress can solve this problem by limiting the scope of required evaluations, but requiring that evaluations that are funded receive sufficient funding levels to answer the important questions. In order for this approach to be effective, Congress must also match the ten percent of program funding earmarked for field-tested programs with another ten percent to pay for the evaluations,” demonstrating that it is Congress that should fix this in the future. Sherman also states that even though many school-based prevention methods have been proven beneficial, they are not being financially supported. “Despite substantial scientific evidence of the effectiveness of some school-based programs, it remains an opportunity the Congress has lost for preventing crime. The Congressional mandate in this setting for DOJ is for less than $25 million per year, and supports some of the least effective programs available. This includes the earmarked $1.75 million Byrne Discretionary Program funding of Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE), as well as the estimated $20 million annual Byrne Formula Grants for the education purpose area (including DARE). These expenditures are small in comparison to over $500 million in annual school-based prevention funds appropriated through DOE and DHHS, and tiny compared to $2 billion invested in police strategies. Given the potential to integrate school-based prevention into a comprehensive strategy on youth violence, the Congress could profitably consider expanding the DOJ role in
advancing this area,” demonstrating that Congress should pass a law to make the DOJ’s funding go toward different, effective school-based prevention programs.


Thoder and Cautilli evaluate how crime prevention methods work for children who have already committed a crime. This is valuable to our research topic because it allows us to decide whether prevention methods are more valuable before the child becomes a criminal or after, and if before proves to be more effective, it would provide us with an argument why money should be spent on pre-adolescent prevention programs rather than damage control for a child after they are declared a criminal. Another useful piece of evidence is the specific names that the authors have for modes of therapy. The authors state, “Longitudinal studies and meta-analyses have shown cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) to be effective. Mode deactivation therapy (MDT) is a form of CBT based on the theory of a network of cognitive, affective, motivational, and behavioral components that create a personality…In MDT, using a manualized treatment, the therapist reduces symptoms of behavior disorder, physical and sexual aggression, anxiety, and traumatic stress while keeping the juvenile offenders out of long-term, out-of-home placements.” The study involves the measurement of the effectiveness in MDT in 14-17 year old males, and the authors conclude that a significant decrease in antisocial behavior, which is a proven indicator of future criminality, occurred. The study goes on to define and describe what MDT entails, including, “…an individual and family manualized treatment that incorporates treatment strategies from behavioral, cognitive, dialectical, and other supportive psychotherapy approaches” (p. 364). It includes weekly individual or group therapy session. MDT begins with an exhaustive case conceptualization that includes a diagnostic interview, a comprehensive behavioral history and a complete family history,” which describes how the system functions. Another piece of relevant information is the written evaluations of the teens that are used in the study, for the futuristic lens requires knowledge about which methods of observation actually indicate future criminality. “These include the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL), the Youth Self-Report (YSR), the Devereux Scales of Mental Disorders (DSMD), the Fear Assessment [which is a measure of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)], the Beliefs Analysis of Aggression, the Beliefs Analysis of Victims, the Beliefs Analysis of Intimacy, the Beliefs Analysis of Control, the Juvenile Sex Offender Protocol – Adolescent (JSOP-A), and a reading test.” The authors conclude that, “All DSMD scores were significantly decreased…In regards to Recidivism, at the intake, 60% of the residents displayed anti-social values. Over a four year period, the youth in this study had no felony arrests. Only two (5.13%) had criminal charges during the first six months following their discharge. The overall recidivism rate was 7%,” demonstrating the overall success of MDT.

Vitaro, F., Barker, E. D., Brendgen, M., & Tremblay, R. E. (2011, December 29). Pathways explaining the reduction of adult criminal behaviour by a randomized preventive

Vitaro and his associates conclude that a preventative intervention targeting disruptive boys lowered adult criminal involvement via reduced early and middle adolescent antisocial behaviors. The study included social skills training in a small group format for 7-9-year olds involving a majority of “prosocial” peers, family visits, and teacher management skills. The researchers investigate different pathways that have been shown to act as predictors of future criminality including antisociality, parental supervision, deviant peers, and school engagement. They conclude that “no long-term effects on criminal involvement might be achieved without a reduction in affiliation with antisocial peers,” establishing that my proposed solution must include a way to separate deviant students and not put them all in a class together. In this study, teachers evaluated the behavior of their kindergarten students using the disruptiveness scale of the Social Behavior Questionnaire, which prompted me to investigate and further my research to find the potential ways a disruptive youth could be evaluated. The intervention program included social skills training for the disruptive boys, parent training, and information and support for teachers. Other forms of evaluations used include the 17-item Self-Reported Antisociality Questionnaire and Pupil Evaluation Inventory disruptiveness items. The conclusion of the program included an evaluation of criminal records of the children at age 24, and the results stated, “the effect of the intervention on criminal records was nevertheless considered to be clinically significant in light of the difficulty to prevent this kind of outcome.” A benefit of this specific program is that it “simulates a real-world application of the program where certain participants drop out of the program or do not participate at all in the intervention that is offered to them. More importantly, it respects the initial random assignment of the participants in the intervention and control conditions.” This study benefitted my research with a suggestion to offer more incentives to participants to increase participation in the program. Also, this study states that “the preventative intervention nevertheless affected crime involvement without influencing parental supervision,” providing me with the basis of an argument against the necessity of parental involvement in such programs. “Only a reduction in antisocial behaviour operated as a mediator in the final pathway linking program participation to reduced criminal records,” demonstrating that reducing antisociality is the only necessity for intervention methods.


Welsh and Farrington evaluate the effectiveness of family-based programs to prevent future criminality. This article is an accumulation of various other studies and compares and contrasts them in order to draw connections indicating common factors. Out of 22 studies, the tested group did better than the control group in 19 cases. “They attempt to change social contingencies in the family environment so that children are rewarded in some way for appropriate or prosocial behaviors and punished in some way for inappropriate or antisocial behaviors,” Farrington and Welsh state about preventative measures. This observation allows me to further my research into finding in what locations such measures could be made (at school, at
home, etc.), which can provide me with a conclusion as to where the prevention program should be held and who should mandate it. For evidence, the researchers stated that five of the 11 experiments that were large-scale in nature found that the intervention had significantly reduced later offending. In another project called the Abercedarian project, “Campbell and her colleagues (2002) found that an intensive cognitively-oriented preschool curriculum combined with family support led to 36% fewer convictions up to age 21 (compared with a regular preschool program),” establishing that cognitively-oriented support promotes a reduction in later offending, prompting me to research whether family support is necessary in prevention programs. In McCord’s study, a project based solely around counselor-based support with activities actually resulted in more of the treatment group being convicted of serious crimes as adults, prompting McCord to hypothesize that “the treatment might have caused high expectations and dependency, so that there were negative effects when it was withdrawn,” establishing the fine line between prevention programs that help and those that are detrimental. Children at Risk was effective and researchers concluded that it was through reducing peer risk factors. Cunningham’s study shows that programs are not as effective once the child has actually committed a crime, providing evidence for early intervention. The Seattle Social Development Project included modified classroom teaching practices, which encouraged me to research this project more and investigate such practices, and the intervention group reported fewer arrests, less violence, etc. Another conclusion that proposes that psychologists or other experts should teach the prevention program is that an unsuccessful program was one that was assembled and mandated by a court system and not by researchers. This piece establishes the complexity and necessity of the issue of criminal prevention in children with its conclusion, “...the time is ripe to mount a large-scale evidence-based national program to evaluate the effectiveness of family-based interventions.”