

ABSTRACT

NEWMAN, DOROTHY NICOLE. Assessing the impact of sentencing guidelines in adolescent criminal recidivism. (Under the direction of Dr. Nichole L. Huff)

Criminal recidivism in adolescents and young adults is of growing concern, as approximately 75% of juvenile offenders reoffend within five years. Extant research correlates specific variables such as race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, mental health, and traumatic experiences with criminal behavior, however a paucity of research exists that examines the relationship between sentencing guidelines and recidivism rates. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of sentencing guidelines (i.e., dismissal, community service, probation, incarceration) on recidivism rates in juvenile offenders. Juvenile arrest records from 2012 ($N = 283$) were examined to determine if any repeat offenses were documented since the original sentencing. Findings suggest adolescent and young adult offenders who were sentenced to community service, probation, or incarceration after their first offense were less likely to reoffend than those whose charges were dismissed. Gender, age, and crime type were also significant predictors of recidivism. Implications of both punitive and restorative sentencing guidelines are discussed.

Keywords: adolescence, recidivism, reoffending, sentencing guidelines

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Assessing the Impact of Sentencing Guidelines in Adolescent Criminal Recidivism

by
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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
North Carolina State University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Science

Youth, Family, and Community Sciences

Raleigh, North Carolina

2016

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DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to my husband, Timmeo, and son, TJ, my family, friends and military family that have supported me throughout this process.

To my husband, Timmeo – From following me around the world to watching me grow in my career and education, you have always supported me. You have always had faith in me and kept me focused when I wanted to give-up. Everytime I get frustrated and start complaining, you keep me motivated and ensure me of my strengths. You have supported me through the numerous hours of staring at the computer screen, going to the library or just trying to relax before starting another assignment. You will never know how much I love you and appreciate the love and support you give me everyday and through every new task I (we) start.

To my son, TJ – Thank you so much for being the bright, smart and loving little man a mama could ever ask for. You make me want to be the best person I can be, so I can ensure I am a true role model for you and your success in life. I love you with every piece of my heart and soul.

To my family – Mama, Daddy, Mimi, Sug, Jamie, Kori- Each and every one of you have supported me throughout my life and you push me to reach my full potential. There have been many phone calls with me asking you all “what in the world I have gotten myself into” and each of you tell me the same thing “stop worrying, you can do this.” My dedication to continue to strive for more in life is because of the lessons you have taught me and I can never thank you enough. Mama -- you have always told me to “reach for the stars”

and “the sky’s the limit.” That may be cliché’ to some people, but to me they are words I live by and use to keep pushing. Thank you for editing and listening to my papers these past two years, I will see if they can squeeze your name on the certificate. I can not thank you enough for the many lessons you have instilled in me to become the woman I am today. Daddy – all the hours you have put in listening to me talk about assignments, school and everything in between are priceless. I always know that no matter what I need, you will find a way to help me. Mimi – you truly are my inspiration and every word you ever told me sticks with me. You always said “your education is something no one can ever take from you” and the famous “pat yourself on your little shoulder because you WILL do it.” I was praying that you would be able to see me walk across the stage, but Jesus needed you home with Him. In my heart you will be holding my hand as I graduate and walk across the stage. I miss you everyday and will hold on to the confidence you instilled in me. I will make you proud.

To my friends and military family- I have the most amazing support group that anyone could ever dream of. I have learned so much from each of you, whether it was phone conversations, counseling me at work or just sitting around talking. The confidence and dedication I have built thus far is due, in large part, by each of you. Thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

BIOGRAPHY

Dorothy Nicole Newman (Nikki) is a fun-loving, energetic small town girl who was born and raised in Butner, NC. She is a proud wife of 9 years to Antimmo Newman and loving mother of 5 year old TJ. She was raised to be family-oriented and to care for others. Her mother has worked in mental health for over 30 years and shares Nikki's passion of caring for others. Nikki chose a different path in human services, as she has a passion for assisting youth with traumatic experiences and juvenile delinquency.

In 2006, Nikki joined the United States Air Force, with an open mind of where life would take her. In the midst of all the training in the military, she decided to also become a full-time student at Saint Leo University, Shaw Air Force Base, SC to continue pursuing her dream of helping youth. In 2010, Nikki graduated Magna Cum Laude, and holds Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice. Shortly after having her son, her little family was relocated to Spain for two years and then to Glendale, Arizona. While in Arizona, Nikki participated in multiple programs and completed extra training to prepare her for a career and education in youth development and human services. She is a certified resilience training instructor, sexual assault victim advocate for the United States Air Force and a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) for children in the State of Arizona.

Her family loved the travel and experiencing new places, but they missed their families so in 2014, Nikki separated from active duty Air Force, joined the NC Air National Guard and came home. She is currently a full-time graduate student at North Carolina State University in the Youth, Family, and Community Sciences program, a full time

administrative assistant, full-time wife/mommy and traditional guardsmen. Nikki continues to reach for her goals and be a strong role model for her son. Throughout her graduate school experiences she has also grown a passion for research in delinquency, family systems and youth with mental illness. She intends to continue conducting research upon graduation, while spending more time with her family and focusing on the treasures of life.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my special appreciation and thanks to my advisor Dr. Nichole L. Huff, she has been a tremendous mentor for me. I would like to thank her for encouraging me to change my major from a non-thesis track to a Master's of Science and to expand my potential to new levels. Throughout this process, she has become my inspiration, motivation and advisor. The support, guidance and direction are very much appreciated.

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Chapter I. Introduction

Despite of the efforts of law enforcement agencies, adolescent and young adult criminal behavior remains a threat to society. The Federal Bureau of Investigations reported two-thirds of prisoners who were released were arrested for additional crimes within three years (UCR, 2014). Offenders under the age of 18 who were not sentenced to incarceration are excluded from this report, however they represent a large portion of American criminality. The American judicial system, and a concerned society, is trepidatious about juvenile criminal behavior and criminal recidivism in youth and young adults (Ryan, Abrams, & Huang, 2014). Recidivism is also a huge problem among youth, with approximately 75% of youth who have been released from prison reoffending within five years of release (Durose, Cooper, & Synder, 2014). In 2002, 67.8% of offenders who were released from prison had reoffended within three years, more specifically 36.8% were rearrested within six months and 56.7% within one year of release (Durose et al., 2014).

Previous research studies have found significant factors relating to the increase in recidivism rates among juvenile offenders. Race, education, family structure, economic status, mental health, and criminal associates have been positively associated with adolescent and young adult criminal recidivism (Walters, 2012). Further, criminal recidivism has been linked to adolescent behavioral issues (e.g., truancy, lying, stealing) that likely result from poor family relationships, lack of support, and low self-efficacy (Keiley, 2007). While static and familial factors, such as race, age, or family structure have been shown to have a major impact on adolescent and young adult recidivism, it is important to explore sentencing

guidelines and their influence on increased recidivism rates. Sentencing guidelines, such as community service, probation, and incarceration are further associated with a variety of influences and environments (Minor, Wells, & Angel, 2008). Further, the influences and environments incorporated with sentencing guidelines may shed light on the cause of continued offending.

Chapter II. Literature Review

Recidivist adolescent and young adult offenders have been shown to habitually disregard respect for laws and society, thus posing an increased threat to society (Ryan et al., 2014). The National Institute of Justice (2014) defines recidivism as an individual who reverts to criminal behavior upon completion of a previous sentence. Many criminal justice scholars consider the term *recidivism* interchangeable with the terms *reoffending* and *reconviction*, or a combination of the two (Friendship, Falshaw, & Breech, 2003). Because reoffending as a solitary concept cannot be measured—only evidenced illegal behavior is measurable—the combination of *reoffending* and *reconviction* are often used together to constitute *recidivism* (Shapland et al., 2008). For the purposes of the present study, recidivism will refer to criminal behavior beyond a first criminal offense that results in additional convictions.

Demographic and Psychosocial Predictors of Recidivism

American policymakers and crime analysts continue to explore appropriate efficacious approaches to decrease criminal behavior; however, no concrete programs or processes exist that demonstrate a defining reduction in recidivism rates (Siegle & Welsh, 2014). Nevertheless, research supports common influences of recidivism that include, but not limited to, demographic predictors, such as age, race, and socioeconomic status, as well as psychosocial factors, such as strained familial relationships, negative self-efficacy, and lack of social skills.

Demographic predictors of recidivism. The Federal Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) utilizes various demographic measures to explore possible risk factors leading to increased criminal behavior (Trayhan, 2013). Three commonly reported factors are age, race and socioeconomic status (Trayhan, 2013), which are further explored by developmental factors (e.g., abstracting thinking, decision making) and the differing environments in which individuals live.

Age. Extant research shows age to be a major predictive factor when exploring adolescent recidivism (Yonai, Levine, & Glicksohn, 2013). Adolescence is a developmental period ranging from 11 years of age to early 20s or young adulthood (Valentine, 2012). Criminal justice research suggests the average age for an adolescent's first conviction is 18 years old (Yonai et al., 2013). Throughout adolescence, many developmental changes occur that can influence criminal and delinquent behavior (Valentine, 2012). Some of these developmental changes are atypical, in which both risk-taking and decision-making skills are heightened, leaving an adolescent and young adults vulnerable to depression and delinquent behavior (Steinburg, 2004).

Research suggests youth commit more infractions than adult offenders (Holman & Ziedenburg, 2006). Developmental theories of adolescent change (i.e., cognitive, psychosocial, neurobiological) may provide further understanding of this (Cunningham & Sorensen, 2007). Specifically, youth often have difficulty making appropriate decisions as they are begin to gain independence from their parents. In response to these shifts in the parent-child attachment relationship, adolescents and young adults often navigate toward

peers as they search for their identity (Cunningham & Sorensen, 2007). Cognitive and psychosocial immaturity influences adolescent decision-making and results in higher levels of misconduct, thus increasing the possibility of criminal behavior (Scott & Steinberg, 2008). Conversely, in adulthood decision-making becomes more independent and rational, and is often influenced by surrounding, stable environments (e.g., workplace, community; Cunningham & Sorensen, 2007).

Race. Research suggests African Americans and Hispanic adolescent males have higher recidivism rates than white males (Piquero & Brame, 2008). Similarly, African American females tend to have a higher recidivism rate than white females (Schwalbe, 2006). Further, white females have shown to have the less serious offenses of both races and genders (Schwalbe, 2006). Race, like age, has been demonstrated to be a predictive factor of continued criminal behavior. Historically African Americans have shown higher rates of violent crimes than any other race (Morenoff & Tienda, 2005), more specifically, African American youth account for over half (51%) of all adolescent and young adult violent crimes committed within the United States (Puzzanchera & Adams, 2011). Similarly, ethnic differences in school-based misbehaviors demonstrate African American and Latino Americans as leading offenders among races, whereas Asian Americans are least likely to offend (DeVoe, Noonan, Snyder, & Baum, 2005). Further, research suggests African Americans who have a weakened bond with society due to poverty, educational attainment and discrimination, may have a disproportionately higher chance of building relationships

with criminals (Kaufman, Rebellion, & Agnew, 2001). Relationships with criminals are negative in nature and tend to promote continued criminal behavior.

Poverty/Socioeconomic Status. The relationship between minorities and crime may further be explained through cultural, socioeconomic, and social factors such a poverty (Walters, 2014). Poverty is a lack of economic and social resources such as residential necessities, employment, and educational opportunities (Ulmer, Harris, & Steffensmeier, 2012). Further, adolescents and young adults who were raised in neighborhoods with scare resources are often unsupervised and are more likely to offend (Onifade, Petersen, Bynum, & Davidson, 2011). Research further suggests minorities such as African Americans and Hispanics are more subject to structural disadvantage than whites due to lack of resources and education (Hipp & Yates, 2011). Lack of resources increases psychological strain, which has the propensity to foster criminal behavior among minorities (Feldmeyer, 2009).

Psychological Predictors of Recidivism. Adolescent and young adult behaviors, both positive and negative, are often linked to emotional health (Steinburg, 2008). Specifically, research supports a distinct connection between parent's actions and a child's emotional health (Shortt, Stoolmiller, Smith-Shine, Eddy, & Sheever, 2010). Adolescents and young adults with parents who express positive interactions possess stronger prosocial behavior, whereas parents with negative interactions tend to show aggressive behaviors (Ramsden & Hubbard, 2002). Further, parental behaviors that result in negative family relationships and experiences are a primary contributor to criminal behaviors such as assault, running away, vandalism, etc. (Coleman & Stewart, 2010). Parental responses to these

disruptive behaviors have been shown to affect the social skills and the self-efficacy of youth (Newman, Ogilvie, Todd, & Peck, 2013) which may lead to continued delinquency. Further, the increase in adolescent and young adult delinquency influences continued criminal behavior, whereas youth with deviant and disruptive behaviors are more likely to recidivate (Smangs, 2010).

Familial relationships. Family relationships are one of the most influential factors in shaping the trajectory of youth behavior (Keiley, 2007). With regard to delinquent behavior, negative family experiences may cause adolescents and young adults to become disassociated and struggle with handling difficult situations and emotions (Keiley, 2007). The strain of these negative experiences leads to avoidant and depressive behaviors (Aydin, 2014). Similarly, dysfunctional families increase the chance of continued civil disobedience and delinquency (Henggeler & Sheidow, 2011). Additionally, research suggests a proportionate number of juvenile delinquents have encountered some form of sexual, mental, or verbal abuse, which may alter the brain and its response to everyday functions (Coleman & Stewart, 2010) thus increasing the chances of recidivism.

Coleman and Stewart's (2010) study examining the relationship between mental health disorders in incarcerated youth and physical and sexual abuse suggests 23.1% of the subjects' reported childhood sexual abuse and nearly half of the sample (42.5%) reported childhood physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, biting, and so on. Although childhood physical abuse was not significantly correlated with mental health disorders, childhood sexual abuse was shown to be related to anxiety, depression, and interpersonal sensitivity

(Coleman & Stewart, 2010). Adolescents and young adults with a history of abuse and unstable familial relationships have been linked with delinquent behaviors such as assault, truancy, and drug use (Henggeler & Sheidow, 2011). Approximately 50% of youth who have been incarcerated will continue delinquent behavior and return to juvenile detention facilities once released (Schubert & Mulvey, 2014).

Negative self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the belief in one's self and the ability to achieve set goals (Bandura, 1997). Negative self-efficacy in adolescents and young adults has been linked to abusive relationships and an absence of strong support and familial relationships (Bandura, 1997). Not all negative relationships however, are exclusive to physical abuse. Further, insecure or negative self-efficacy may also result from mental abuse, inconsistent discipline, lack of discipline, or absentee parents or caregivers (Tangeman & Hall, 2011). The range of contributing factors to self-efficacy are often contingent upon an individual's familial and social relationships, however they continue to have a strong effect on recidivism in youth (Ryan, Williams, & Courtney, 2013). Youth who experience limited familial cohesion tend to exhibit decreased self-efficacy and insecurities (Carroll, Gordon, Haynes, & Houghton, 2012). An individual's family and peer relationships have been shown to directly affect his or her self-efficacy and confidence, which consequently may affect their behaviors (Bandura, 1997). Further, low self-efficacy has been linked to continued delinquent behavior, including aggressive mannerisms, sex/drug abuse, and alcoholism (Ryan et al., 2013).

Social skill deficiency. Family structure and peer relationships are also thought to influence the development of social skills in adolescents and young adults (Smangs, 2010). Specifically because dysfunctional relationships can lead to delinquent behaviors such as truancy, defiance and aggression, individuals who possess these relationships are at-risk for developing social skill deficits such as lack of self-control, impulsiveness, and withdrawal (Smangs, 2010). Similarly, Hirshi (1969) proposed that these dysfunctional relationships create an insecure attachment relationship between adolescents and both parents and peers, thus weakening an adolescent's sense of conforming behavior. Conforming behaviors include following in-home rules as well as societal and legal rules. Adolescents and young adults who do not conform to societal rules often find it difficult to engage with friends, neighbors, and authorities (Stepp, Pardini, Loeber, & Morris, 2011).

Non-conforming individuals are often shunned from society and consequently unable to build and cultivate appropriate social skills (Stepp et al., 2011). The development of appropriate social skills such as adaptive functioning, positive interaction and academic achievement are crucial to learning to be a productive member of society at large (Ewart, Jorgensen, Suchday, Chen & Matthews, 2002). Adolescents who are rejected from society tend to become isolated and antisocial (Barriga, Morrison, Liao, & Gibbs, 2001). Barriga et al. (2001) define antisocial behavior as risky behavior that violates societal norms. Isolation from society may lead to fewer opportunities for youth to advance social skills, consequently leading to continued delinquent behavior (Smangs, 2010).

Recidivism and Crime Types

The type of crime committed at first offense plays an important role in assessing the likelihood of future criminal activity. Specifically, research suggests a positive association between crime type at first offense and future criminal behavior (Cottle, Lee, & Heilbrun, 2001). Research posits that a majority of adolescents and young adults begin delinquency with minor crimes such as property and theft offenses (Liam, Zahn, & Tichavsky, 2014). In contrast, offenders who committed serious violent crimes (e.g., murder, rape, and kidnapping) were more likely to continue reoffending (Liam et al., 2014). Some criminal offenses are more severe than others, with crimes against persons (e.g., violent crimes) and sex crimes shown to be the most predictive of recidivism, followed by property and theft crimes, drug violations, and public order crimes such as disorderly conduct, public intoxication (Legal Match, 2016).

Persons and sex crimes. Typically crimes against persons, as well as sex crimes, are categorized as "violent crimes," to include but not limited to murder, rape, robbery, and assault (Scott, Tepas, Frykberg, Taylor, & Plotin, 2002). FBI reported 1.1 million violent crimes occurred in the United States in 2014 (UCR, 2014). Of the violent crimes reported, 63.6% were aggravated assault and 7.3% were sex crimes (UCR, 2014). Specifically, adolescent and young adults account for 22% of all sex crimes (Christiansen & Vincent, 2013). Research further suggests, Adolescents and young adults who commit sex crimes have higher recidivism rates than those with adult records (Caldwell, 2010). These results may be produced due to the inability for youth to cover up crimes as well as adult offenders (Caldwell, 2010). Adolescents and young adults who commit such crimes are more likely to

be incarcerated than all other offenses (Sickmund, Sladky, & Kang, 2011). Further, violent adolescent offenders have a disproportionate rate of committing again (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006).

Property and theft crimes. Property and theft crimes are typical offenses with both new and recidivist offenders (Williams, 2015). Property crimes include burglary, arson, breaking and entering, vandalism, and theft. In 2014, 27,729 property crimes were reported in the United States; larceny and theft comprised 70.8% of all property crimes (UCR, 2014). Further, theft crimes tend to be short-term offenses and are usually committed by adolescents and young adults (Williams, 2015). Research suggests larceny (i.e., theft of personal property) is often linked with poverty or socioeconomic status of the offender, particularly in offenders with socioeconomic disadvantages (Williams, 2015). Individuals experiencing economic disadvantages are more likely to utilize illegal means, such as theft and burglary, to provide economic gains.

Drug Violations. Substance abuse crimes constitute more than half of all crimes committed (Kleiman & Heussler, 2011). Drug violations, such as possession, distribution, and transportation, are steadily increasing, accounting for 1.6 million offenses within the United States alone (UCR, 2014). Adolescent and young adult substance abuse is believed to strongly influence adolescent recidivism (Stoolmiller & Bleckman, 2005). Illicit drug use is inextricably linked with various crime types, especially crimes involving aggression (Kleiman & Heussler, 2011). Research suggests the associations between substance abuse and continued criminal activity are due in large part to adolescents and young adults with

high levels of family stress and anti-social behavior (Glaser, Calhoun, Bradshaw, Bates & Socherman, 2001).

Public Order Crimes. Offenses with the least strain on society thought to influence recidivism is public order crimes to include harassing phone calls, disorderly conduct, and trespassing (Worrall, 2006). These crimes are not commonly examined and reported through the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) or other criminal reporting agencies, as they do not have a significant economic or social effect on the community (Worrall, 2006). Further research suggests that public order crimes may seem less serious, however they often lead to more serious crimes if they are not addressed (Barrett, Katsiyannis, Dalun, 2009).

Sentencing Guidelines

Court-mandated sentencing guidelines involve various environments that may impact criminal behavior in adolescent offenders, such as incarceration, community service, or probation (United States Sentencing Commission [USSC], n.d.). According to the National Center for Victims of Crime (2008), law enforcement and court officials maintain and control crime rates by imposing sentencing guidelines on offenders. The criminal process begins at the time of arrest and continues until the judge either dismisses the charges or sentences the offender. If the charges are dismissed, the offender will be released; otherwise he or she will begin the sentencing guidelines mandated by the judge. Sentencing guidelines are based on the severity of the crime and the criminal background of the offender (USSC, n.d.). Four predominate sentencing guidelines include voluntary dismissal, community service and intervention, probation, and incarceration.

Voluntary dismissal. Community service, probation, and incarceration are common sentences mandated in the justice system, however there are many charges that are voluntarily dismissed due to absence of the victim, little to no evidence of offense, and/or violation of offender rights. Dismissed court cases are rarely explored, however it is one of the most common forms of dispositions in the United States (Vilcica, 2012). Further, in a 2008 study by Wooldredge and Thistlethwaite, research reported that dismissals had minor impact on prediction of reoffending, however split sentencing such as incarceration with parole revealed a positive prediction of recidivism in assault offenders.

Community service and intervention. Community service and intervention is the least punitive of the sentencing guidelines in regard to length of sentence and supervision. While research varies regarding the effectiveness of community service, existing research suggests community service sentences generally demonstrate lower levels of recidivism among offenders (Andersen, 2014). Community service allows the offender the opportunity to learn new services and escape the stigma of custodial sentences that would negatively impact future employment opportunities and improved economic status (Harris & Wing Lo, 2002). Research also suggests lower recidivism rates in community service than in a custodial setting (Andersen, 2014), with a substantial decrease in offenders with no prior prison experience (Muiluvuori, 2001).

Strong family relationships are imperative to positive youth development and behavior (Henggeler & Sheidow, 2011). Multiple studies have suggested a significant link between dysfunctional parent-child relationships and adolescent and young adult criminality

(Henggeler & Sheidow, 2011). Dysfunctional parent-child relationships, however, can be enhanced with proper intervention services, such as counseling, therapy, or mediation. Further, mandated family therapy may be a successful approach for decreasing recidivism (Van der Put et al., 2012). Studies on family-based programs such as family functional therapy (FFT) have shown to be successful upon completion (Van der Put et al., 2012). Regulating youth emotions through parental acceptance and emotional coaching is also related to decreasing child aggression (Ramsden & Hubbard, 2002). Educating parents on ways to build relationships, manage their behaviors and show respect for their child's emotions will decrease youth aggression (Ramsden & Hubbard, 2002). Short term crisis intervention builds resiliency between family members and enhances family function without the turmoil of removing a destructive youth from the home (Duppong Hurley et al., 2012).

Probation. Probation is a court-mandated sentence releasing the offender back into the community under officer supervision (FindLaw, 2016). The efficiency of probation is often questioned due to the lack of security and possible increase of risk to society (McNeil, 2011). The purpose of probation is to reprimand the offender, while promoting rehabilitation to fully exonerate, or absolve, the offense (McNeil, 2011). Probation is designed to extend social support to offenders, and offenders' access to structural resources such as social support, employment and education attainment in order to deter future criminal behavior (Healy, 2012). For example, extant research generally supports the use of less severe sentences to property and theft crimes (Ryan et al., 2014) with the expectation of educating offenders on legal ways to gain economic success. In contrast, custodial sentencing such as

incarceration is repeatedly associated with welfare involvement, unemployment and limited resources, thus increasing the chance of recidivism (Minor et al., 2008). Social support, specifically familial involvement, decreases the likelihood of recidivism by maintaining family and social bonds (Dizeraga, 2011). The key advantage to non-custodial sentences, such as probation, allows an adolescent offender to remain in close proximity to their support system (i.e., family, friends, church groups; Dizeraga, 2011).

Additionally, probation allows the officer and offender to work towards gaining developmental attributes associated with shaping influences of societal contexts (e.g., higher income, societal respect). The probation officer's approach is thought to impact the success of the program in decreasing recidivism. Research suggests officers who focus on the risks, needs, and responsivity of the offender have more effective programming (Trotter, 2013). Research indicates that a non-accusatory attitude between the officer and the probationer can decrease recidivism rates (Trotter, 2013). These attributes deter delinquent behavior by focusing on the offender's strengths, while educating them on creating goals (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). The strengths-based approach focuses on the individual's assets rather than their shortcomings (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). Focusing on someone's failures and issues may demotivate them, thus worsening the situation. Further, probation officers who promote positive skills are more inclined to have clients with lower risk of reoffending (Trotter, 2013).

Incarceration. Incarceration is a punitive form of sentencing, confining the offender to a structuralized facility (Altschuler & Brash, 2004). Correctional facilities maintain

offenders in a 24-hour secured location where they are required to abide by all rules and regulations of the facility with little communication with the outside world. While limited communication with society and family support is intended to punish offenders while protecting society, it tends to pressure offenders to learn aversive behaviors of the prison population (Ryan et al., 2014). Continued association with deviant offenders further disrupts conventional society norms, thus reinforcing delinquent patterns (Sickmund et al., 2011). Adolescents and young adults who commit violent crimes, such as crimes against a person, are more likely to be incarcerated, or sentenced to a correctional facility (Sickmund et al., 2011). Similarly, approximately 25% of all juvenile offenders are sentencing to incarceration or similar out of home facilities (Bissler, 2014). Further research reports incarceration of adolescent and young adult offenders does not provide an effective approach to deter violent behavior (Ryan et al., 2014), thus recommending a less invasive approach.

Correctional facilities have been shown to decrease self-efficacy in addition to (and perhaps as a result of) decreasing familial and societal support (Ryan et al., 2014). Further, correctional facilities are often dangerous environments, thus offenders housed in correctional facilities often engage in non-compliant behavior in response to a sense of physical danger (Weller, Bowen, & Bowen, 2012). Research suggests incarceration causes an increase in criminal behavior due to the need for survival and environmental factors in prisons (Lambie & Randall, 2013). Correctional facilities are incased with defiant individuals who attempt to find acceptance and dominance through gangs, mafia, and other similar groups (Orrick et al., 2011). Because correctional facilities have a reputation for being

aggressive, deviant, and violent (Altschuler & Brash, 2004), research suggests incarceration causes an increase in criminal behavior due to the need for survival and environmental dynamics (Lambie & Randall, 2013). Research further suggests juveniles who were incarcerated are at higher risk of recidivism as an adult, which increases 22-25% by the age 25 (Aizer & Doyle, 2013).

Incarceration often exposes adolescents and young adults to new criminal activity, consequently influencing continued offending once they are released (Altschuler & Brash, 2004). Confinement in a correctional facility socially binds an individual to the customs of the system (Lambie & Randall, 2015). Adolescents who have been imprisoned are more likely to continue delinquent behaviors upon release due to the limited resources of psychosocial development within the facilities (Valentine, 2012).

While some correctional facilities offer programs to bridge the gap between prison and society, the success of these programs are unreliable due to static factors such as younger age at first arrest, number of prior offenses, being male, or being a member of minority racial group (Minor et al., 2008). Contrastingly, programs that are academic focused and provide post release support have been proven effective in decreasing recidivism rates (Rodriguez, 2007). Research further suggests the efficiency of correctional programs are dependent upon the focus and consistency of program delivery (Barrett et al., 2009).

Theoretical Construct

Although various theoretical constructs are associated with criminal behavior, two prominent theories include *attachment theory* and *social strain theory*. Attachment theory

and social strain theory both focus on individual behavior in response to societal and environmental influences. Together both theoretical constructs consider the effects of healthy versus dysfunctional relationships and environmental strains in relation to criminal behavior. Further, as sentencing guidelines encompass multiple environments such as support groups, intervention programs, and custodial facilities, each environment includes a voluminous amount of variables that may lead to connections or distortions of appropriate behavior. Attachment theory and social strain theory identify how multiple environments may influence criminal behavior.

Attachment theory. Many behaviors exhibited by juvenile delinquents are believed to stem from the relationship between the child and his or her family members, especially the primary caregiver. Perhaps this is best described by attachment theory (Bowlby, 1979). Attachment theory suggests that people develop relationships and attachments early in life, which subsequently mold future behaviors and interactions of the individual (Bretherton, 1992). Parental involvement and response is directly related to a child's attachment (Bowlby, 1979). Parents who tend to be quick reactors to a baby or child's physical and emotional cues (e.g., crying, rubbing eyes, cooing, etc.) are more inclined to have children who develop strong social, emotional and secure attachment relationships (Bretherton, 1992). Swift responses to a child's cues provide a sense of security and trust, thus creating a positive attachment (Stevenson-Hinde, 2007). On the contrary, parents who have a longer response time and minimal engagement receive the opposite reaction; these small versions of neglect may cause the child to feel insecure and anxious (Bretherton, 1992).

While attachment dysfunctions begin in early childhood and are predominately focused on parental and caregiver relationships, attachment theory also incorporates connections with the community and external associates (e.g., neighbors, probation officers, work associates; Ansbro, 2008). Stefani et al. (2013), suggests that adolescents and young adults behave in response to whether or not they have a secure or unsecure attachment to their families. Securely attached adolescents and young adults have a strong, positive sense of support, whereas insecurely attached adolescents and young adults are anxious, avoidant, and are often withdrawn from others (Brown et al., 2008). Individuals with secure attachment have a strong sense of security and are more likely to accept support when needed (Lopez & Brennan, 2000). In contrast, individuals with insecure attachment reject assistance and utilize externalizing behaviors, such as hyperactivity, aggression, and delinquency to fulfill a sense of control (Brown et al., 2008). Youth with insecure attachments experience difficulty regulating their emotions (Newman et al., 2013). Reconnecting youth with their parents in order to foster the development of more secure attachment relationships within families has been shown to be effective at decreasing violent behavior (Savage, 2014). Non-custodial sentencing guidelines, such as community service and probation, aim to prevent isolation and continuous delinquent behavior through rehabilitative approaches and enhancing social relationships (Dubberley, Jones, Graham, & Roscoe, 2015).

Social strain theory. Attachment theory focuses primarily on interpersonal relationships, whereas social strain theory focuses on external relationships of an individual, specifically with regard to society. Social strain theory, a prevailing theory in criminal justice

fields, suggests that societal pressures may be the source of deviant behavior (Agnew, 2001). According to Agnew (2001), society's view of success is based on specific goals such as education and economic status. Strain theory posits that an individual may use whatever means necessary to satisfy these goals (Agnew, 2001). For example, people living in poverty have a greater chance of committing property crimes due to the lack of resources necessary to receive an acceptable economical stature (Williams, 2014). The need to satisfy societal goals and maintain healthy life experiences may pose strain on individuals.

Anomie, which is an extension to strain theory, suggests five adaptations to the acceptance of society goals and institutionalized means. These include conformity, ritualism, innovation, retreatism, and rebellion (Forsyth & Copes, 2014). First, *conformists*, such as doctors, lawyers, entrepreneurs, accept both cultural goals and institutionalized means (Agnew, 2001). *Ritualism* is someone who rejects societal goals such as promotion and constant growth, however they accept the means they receive (Agnew, 2001). Ritualists work and maintain means legitimately however they are not successfully wealthy, yet they are satisfied such as teachers, social workers. *Innovation* is the most common type of deviant behavior found in criminals, as they accept the means and reject the goals (Forsyth & Copes, 2014). For example, drug dealers strive for money and economic stature, yet they perform illegal tasks to receive these means. *Retreatists*, conversely, reject both societal cultures and institutionalized means (Forsyth & Copes, 2014). Retreatant behaviors are often seen in individual who are intentionally unemployed and maintain survival through others. Finally, impulsive violent offenders are often classified under *rebellion* adaptation; not only do they

reject societal goals and institutionalized means, they create new goals and means that fit their own agendas (Forsyth & Copes, 2014). An example of this would be serial killers, murders, etc.

In addition to societal goals and institutionalized means, research proposes that strain theory is linked with negative emotions as a reaction to negative relationships (e.g., abusive or controlling relationships), crisis situations, and relative deprivation (Capowich, Mazerolle, & Piquero 2001). Crisis situations, such as deaths or fatal illnesses and relative deprivations, such as individuals that pursue further success yet continue to fail often have difficulties remaining resilient. These experiences are often associated with a sense of insecurity and failure, thus increasing strain (Capowich et al., 2001). Furthermore, as pressures lead to serious strain in an individual, his or her inability to cope with these issues increases deviant behavior (Agnew, 2001). Strain theory does not suggest that delinquent behavior is caused by stressful situations; rather it explains adverse effects of one's lack of ability to cope with stress (Agnew, 2001).

Anger, for example, is a prominent emotion that fuels antisocial behaviors when dealing with stressful experiences. However, the ability of adolescents and young adults to properly manage experiences may be outside of their developmental capacity, therefore their reactions can be more deviant than adults (Morris, Carriaga, Diamond, Piquero, & Piquero, 2012). Situational factors and characteristics (e.g., social support, environmental resources) have been shown to influence coping behaviors and increase the likelihood of criminal

behaviors (Sheuerman, 2014). These behaviors may continue unless appropriate measures are taken to educate and support the offender in hopes of reducing the possibility of recidivism.

Impacts of Sentencing Guidelines

Upon gaining a conceptual understanding of demographic, psychological, and theoretical influences of adolescent recidivism, it is imperative to capture the impact of specific sentencing guidelines (i.e., dismissal, community service, probation, incarceration) with respect to recidivism. The present study was used to further explore the effects of sentencing guidelines in relation to adolescent and young adult recidivism.

Chapter III. Methods

After receiving University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, 357 arrest records from a northern county in North Carolina were collected and analyzed from youth and young adults who were adjudicated (i.e., convicted in a judicial proceeding) in 2012. The county is classified as 45.3% urban and 54.8% rural (Access NC, 2015). The last census was conducted in 2010 with a population of 59,916; however a projected population survey in 2014 suggested 58,284 people reside in this particular county with 24.8% being under the age of 19 (Access NC, 2015).

Procedure

Public arrest records from 2012 were provided by four law enforcement agencies within the county that represent three city jurisdictions, as well as the Sheriff's Department that enforces county laws as a whole. The year 2012 was used as a point of reference in order to search a three-year span (2012-2015) to allow a reasonable time for recidivism to have occurred. Public arrest records from the four departments for adults age 18-22 were eligible for this study. In the state of NC, arrests for anyone over the age of 16 are considered adult offenses and are reported on adult records; however, only records of offenders at least 18 years of age are considered public information. Thus, public court records further detailed any criminal offenses made by each arrestee prior to age 18.

Court records were reviewed based on the arrestee names provided by the law enforcement agencies. Of the 357 records examined, 73 were not included in analysis: 56 indicated minor violations only (e.g., traffic offenses, failure to comply), 16 were out of

jurisdiction, and 1 record indicated that the offender died prior to the court hearing. Records that contained minor violations in addition to major offenses (e.g., assault, substance abuse) were captured in the study. Further, recidivism was explored from a three year time period. The final sample included $N = 283$ criminal court records of adolescent/young adult offenders. All data was recorded in aggregate; no personally identifiable information was retained.

Sample

Of the $N = 283$ criminal court records examined, 72.8% ($n = 206$) were male and 27.2% ($n = 77$) were female. Race distribution was as follows: African American 59.7% ($n = 169$); Caucasian 35.7% ($n = 101$); Hispanic 2.5% ($n = 7$); Native American 1.1% ($n = 3$); and Other/Not Specified 1.1% ($n = 3$). When compared to the racial background of the county (58.7% Caucasian; 32.0% African American, 7.5% Hispanic, 0.7% Native American, and 1.1% Other), racial demographics of offenders were not proportionate to the general county population. The mean age the sample was 19.02 ($SD = 1.84$), with age at first offense ranging from 13-22. Of the offenders examined, 76% ($n = 215$) of the convictions were misdemeanors and 24.0% ($n = 68$) were felonies. Crime type and sentencing guidelines are discussed below in Chapter IV: Results.

Chapter IV. Results

Demographic Predictors

Of the offenders ($N = 283$), recidivism occurred in 53.7% ($n = 152$), whereas 46.3% ($n = 131$) were one-time offenders. Of the recidivist offenders 67.5% ($n = 106$) of the offenders recidivated within one year after the first crime was committed, whereas 22.3% ($n = 35$) recidivated between 1-2 years after first crime, 5.7% ($n = 9$) between 2-3 years, and 4.5% ($n = 7$) after 3 years. Multiple regression analysis was used to test demographic variables that significantly predicted recidivism. Results indicated *gender* significantly predicted recidivism ($\beta = .139, p = .039$), as did *age* ($\beta = .133, p = .000$). Findings suggest male offenders were more likely than females to commit future crimes. Additionally, the younger the offender was at the time of his or her first offense, the more likely he or she was to recidivate. More specifically, recidivism increased by 13.3% for every year an individual aged.

Recidivism

In order to further examine factors associated with recidivism rates in the current sample, Pearson r bivariate correlation analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between five variables (*age, gender, race, crime class of first offense, sentencing guidelines*) and the single outcome *recidivism* (see Table 1). Specifically, four significant relationships were found with relation to recidivism: *age* ($r = -.488, p = .00$); *gender* ($r = -.123, p = .039$); *crime class* ($r = .126, p = .034$); and *sentencing guidelines* ($r = .169, p = .005$). Additional significant relationships are denoted in Table 1 and are discussed in Chapter V.

Table 1. *Pearson r Bivariate Correlations between Predictors and Recidivism*

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Age (at first conviction)	-				
2. Gender	.205**	-			
3. Race	.085	-.066	-		
4. Crime class of first offense	-.186**	-.177**	-.033	-	
5. Sentencing guidelines	-.246	-.300	.131*	.195**	-
6. Recidivism committed	-.488*	-.123*	-.013	.233**	.169**

**Correlation significant at $p = 0.01$

*Correlation significant at $p = 0.05$

Before analysis, all categorical variables were dummy coded. Gender included *female* (0) and *male* (1). Crime class included *misdemeanor* (0) and *felony* (1). Recidivism after first crime was coded as *no* (0) and *yes* (1). Additionally, race and sentencing guidelines dummy coded and further assessed for significant relationships with regard to recidivism. Categorical variables were dummy coded as specific category (1) and all other categories (0). No significant relationships were found between racial categories and recidivism. Relationships between sentencing guidelines and recidivism are displayed in Table 3 (see Sentencing Guidelines subsection later in this chapter).

Crime Type

Criminal offenses were separated into seven categories based on crime type and were operationalized as follows: *drugs* (possession, distribution and transportation of illegal substance); *property crimes* (vandalism, arson, breaking and entering); *person* (murder, kidnapping, assault); *theft* (larceny, possession of stolen goods, shoplifting); *public order* (harassing phone calls, disorderly conduct); and *sex* (rape, sexual misconduct, statutory rape). Finally, offenders who were convicted of committing more than one of the above crimes, including fraud, were coded as *multiple crimes*.

A majority of offenders committed multiple crime types (25.1%) on their first conviction. Subsequently, drugs (19.8%) and property (19.4%) crimes were most prevalent, with sex crimes (1.4%) being the least prevalent (see Table 2).

Table 2. *Crime type at first conviction*

<i>Crime Type</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Multiple Crimes	71	25.1
Drugs	56	19.8
Property	55	19.4
Person	48	17.0
Theft	30	10.6
Public Order	19	6.7
Sex	4	1.4

A Chi-Square Test of Independence was performed to examine the relationships between *recidivism* and *crime type* of first offense, which was significant, $\chi^2(6, N = 282) = 54.134, p = .001$. Pearson *r* bivariate correlation analyses were then conducted to determine whether crime types at first offense were significantly related to juvenile recidivism (see Table 3). Significant positive correlations were found between *recidivism* and *theft* ($r = .229, p < .001$) and *multiple crimes* ($r = .229, p < .001$). Significant negative correlations were found between *recidivism* and *property* ($r = -.313, p < .001$) and *person* ($r = -.165, p = .006$).

Table 3. *Pearson r Bivariate Correlations between Recidivism and Crime Type*

<i>Type of Crime</i>	<i>Recidivism (r)</i>
Drug	.064
Property	-.313**
Person	-.165**
Theft	.229**
Public Order	-.033
Sex	-.009
Multiple Crimes	.229**

**Correlation significant at $p = 0.01$

*Correlation significant at $p = 0.05$

Multiple regression analysis was used to test crime types that significantly predicted recidivism. Results indicated *property crimes* significantly predicted *recidivism* ($\beta = .382, p = .000$), as did *person* ($\beta = .246, p = .007$) and *theft* ($\beta = -.267, p = .010$). Findings suggest offenders who were convicted of property, person, or theft crimes were more likely to reoffend.

Sentencing Guidelines

Sentencing guidelines were separated into four categories: dismissal, community service/intervention, probation, or incarceration and were operationalized as follows: *dismissal* (charges were dropped by judge), *community service/intervention* (offender was sentenced to volunteer in the community and/or complete a mandated therapy program), *probation* (offender received supervised sentencing allowing for release into society with specific guidelines), or *incarceration* (offender was sentenced to a custodial facility, such as a prison). Sentencing guideline distribution was as follows ($N = 283$): *dismissal* 41% ($n = 115$), *community service* 5% ($n = 15$), *probation* 44% ($n = 123$), and *incarceration* 11% ($n = 30$).

A Chi-Square Test of Independence was performed to examine the relationships between *recidivism* and *sentencing guidelines* of first offense, which was significant, $\chi^2(3, N = 282) = 8.470, p = .037$. Pearson *r* bivariate correlation analyses were then conducted to determine whether sentencing guidelines at first offense were significantly related to recidivism (see Table 4). A significant positive correlation was found between *recidivism* and *probation* ($r = .131, p = .028$). In contrast, a significant negative correlation was found between *recidivism* and *dismissal* ($r = -.160, p = .007$).

Table 4. *Pearson r Bivariate Correlations between Recidivism & Sentencing Guidelines*

	1	2	3	4
1. Recidivism	-			
2. Incarceration	.068	-		
3. Probation	.131*	-.302**	-	
4. Community Service	-.033	-.081	-.207**	-
5. Dismissal	-.160**	.255**	-.725**	-.196**

**Correlation significant at $p = 0.01$

*Correlation significant at $p = 0.05$

Multiple regression analysis was used to test whether sentencing guidelines significantly predicted recidivism. Results indicated *dismissal* significantly predicted recidivism ($\beta = .171, p = .008$). This suggests that offenders whose charges were dismissed were significantly more likely to re-offend than offenders who received community service, probation, or incarceration.

Chapter V. Discussion

The major aim of this study was to compare recidivism rates among sentencing guidelines to assess factors that may impact criminal juvenile recidivism. Data analysis suggests significant differences between sentencing guidelines (i.e., dismissal, community service, probation, incarceration) and recidivism rates, as well as additional findings related to recidivism that merit further discussion.

Demographic Predictors

Results indicated two demographic factors significantly predicted recidivism: age and gender. With regard to age, the results paralleled findings by Yonai et al., (2013) suggesting that the younger the offender at first conviction, the more likely they are to reoffend. Similarly, research suggests that minorities, specifically African Americans, are more likely to recidivate than other races (Hipp & Yates, 2011). In the present study, however, race did not yield a significant relationship with recidivism. Contrastingly, race did prove significant with regard to sentencing guidelines. The present study indicated a positive relationship between race and sentencing guidelines. Likewise, research suggests African Americans and Hispanic males are at higher risk for being arrested and incarcerated than white males (Piquero & Brame, 2008).

Crime Types

The current study revealed that crime type was a strong indicator of increased recidivism. More specifically, individuals who committed property and theft crimes were more likely to reoffend when compared to the other crime types. Research suggests property

and theft crimes are often committed due the low probability of being of caught (Maddah, 2013) and the odds of serving substantial time in custody for these crimes (Williams, 2015). As noted, economic indicators were not included in the present study, however based on previous research, poverty and other socioeconomic factors could influence these results.

Likewise, findings from the present study also support crimes against persons significantly predicted recidivism in adolescents and young adults. In the present sample, adolescents who committed crimes against persons as their first offense were more likely to reoffend. Crimes against persons, such as murder, assault, or battery, are typically committed from emotional imbalance such as extreme anger (Munyo & Rossi, 2013). Previous research suggests adolescents who commit serious violent offenses had higher rates of recidivism than those with minor offenses (Ryan et al., 2014). Contradictory to the predictive analysis, crimes against persons showed a significant negative relationship with recidivism. Research suggest adolescents and young adults who commit crimes against person are more likely to be incarcerated than all other offenses (Sickmund, Sladky, & Kang, 2011). Thus, these findings could be due to the fact the some of the offenders were still serving custodial time limiting the ability of committing further crimes. On the other hand, sex crimes did not prove to be significant, however, research posits that adolescent sex crimes pose an increased risk for recidivism, as majority of adult sex offenders admitted to performing their first criminal sex act between the ages of 8 and 18 (Christiansen & Vincent, 2013).

As noted in the results section, multiple crimes were not calculated based on total counts of one particular crime type, rather multiple crime types in one conviction (e.g., theft,

person, drugs). Although not coded on each individual crime, offenders who committed multiple crimes types during their first offense were significantly more likely to reoffend. These findings are likely due to the numerous crimes that are often associated with further delinquency, such as crimes against persons and drug violations (Kleiman & Heussler, 2011).

Surprisingly, drug crimes alone showed no significant relationship with recidivist offenders. Contrary to the present study, drug crimes are thought to substantially influence criminal recidivism (Stoolmiller & Bleckman, 2005). It is possible that these results are due to historical findings that suggest that most drug crimes are discovered when authorities are responding to a different crime, such as theft, property, and person crimes (Kleiman & Heussler, 2011). In the present study, these types of charges were coded as multiple crimes, thus further explaining why multiple crimes were significant with regard to an increase in recidivism rates among the sampled offenders.

Sentencing Guidelines

As hypothesized, sentencing guidelines were positively associated with an increase in recidivism rates. Specifically, dismissal was found to be a significant predictor of recidivism. These findings could be due in large part to refusal of victims to testify against the offender. In the present study, 30% of all voluntary dismissals were dismissed due to the absence of victims and witnesses. Conversely, previous research found no significant impact between charge dismissal and recidivism (Wooldredge & Thistlethwaite, 2008. Worall (2006), however, suggests if minor crimes and theft crimes are not addressed, offenders are likely to recidivate.

Previous research suggests community service decreases recidivism, while sparingly including programs designed to introduce the offender to a more efficient, positive approach to managing difficult circumstances (Harris & Wing Lo, 2002). While not statistically significant in the present study, the negative correlation between recidivism and community service showed a similar trend, thus suggesting a non-significant decrease in recidivism among offenders sentenced to community service and/or intervention. Research further suggests that focusing on interventions based on building familial relationships may decrease delinquent behavior by increasing parental respect and regulating youth emotions (Ramsden & Hubbard, 2002).

Although probation indicated a significant relationship on recidivism in the current study, the results were different than hypothesized. Based on the literature, it was expected that results would demonstrate a negative relationship, in which recidivism rates would decrease upon receiving a sentencing guidelines of probation. However, findings revealed a significant positive correlation between probation and recidivism. These findings are logical, however, given that there are approximately 45-55 probationers to every 1 officer in the county of study (Robert Hobgood, personal communication, July 16, 2015). According to Trotter (2013), probation officers who promote individual strengths and enhanced social skills are more inclined to yield lower recidivism rates among probationary offenders. The officer-to-probationer ratio in the current study explains the probable lack of availability of probation officers and subsequent services to more effectively rehabilitate the offenders.

Finally, results of the present study showed no significance with regard to incarceration. Previous research findings suggest that incarceration exposes adolescents to factors and environments that may promote their becoming better criminals, thus influencing continued criminal behavior (Alschuler & Brash, 2004). Although incarceration was not statistically significant in the sample, the findings demonstrated a positive relationship supporting research that incarceration may increase recidivism. Perhaps these non-significant findings were the result of the small subsample of offenders who were sentenced to incarceration (11% or 30 offenders). Further, records were pulled from 2012, providing a 3-year-window for recidivism to have occurred. It is also reasonable to suppose that incarcerated offenders in the present sample were still serving custodial time and thus the feasibility of reoffending was minimized by the limited window of the data collected.

Conclusion

Research supports that criminal behavior is linked to demographic, psychological, and social factors. Aside from demographic factors, psychological and social influences are commonly developed within an individual's environment. Furthermore, existing research suggests the significant impact of sentencing guidelines on adolescent and young adult recidivism (Ryan et al., 2014). These findings are further substantiated by the results of the present study. Specifically, findings from the current study suggested that charge dismissal predicts recidivism. These insights can serve as a guide to the judicial team in focusing on more appropriate sentencing to better address criminal behavior.

Limitations

There were a few limitations of note in this study. A principal limitation was a lack of further information regarding the conditions of an offender's probation. If the success or efficiency of a probation program is largely dependent upon a probation officer's approach and the programs he or she requires of the offender throughout the sentence (Trotter, 2013), then additional research is needed to effectively assess probation program efficiency in the present sample. An additional limitation was the lack of knowledge regarding the familial structure and socioeconomic status of each offender. Research suggests that family structure has a major impact on criminal behavior, especially adolescent and young adult delinquent behavior (Henggeler & Sheidow, 2011). Research further posits that relationships between race and crime are often associated with poverty and other socioeconomic factors (Ulmer et al., 2012). Including these factors in analysis could allow for a more in-depth review of contextual markers, thus providing a better understanding of continued delinquency.

Sampling location was a limitation that likely influenced both incarceration and community service sentencing. Specifically, the geographical location from which the court records were obtained is a fairly small county with limited access to both custodial facilities and community service and intervention services. The few number of convictions that resulted in these two sentencing guidelines likely did not yield a large enough subsample to obtain statistically significant results. Further analysis utilizing quota sampling for each sentencing guideline is recommended. Finally, in reference to sampling limitations, juvenile court records are sealed; thus there is an inability to evaluate offenders who committed first or multiple crimes before the age of 16-18, when records become accessible to the public.

More information on offenders under the age of 18 is imperative to draw substantial conclusions on trends in adolescent recidivism and criminality.

Implications

Providing the judicial system a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of sentencing guidelines on adolescent and young adult recidivism can serve as a guide to judges in mandating appropriate sentencing guidelines. The findings can further aid in the development of appropriate programs such as family based practices to manage criminal behavior, thus decreasing adolescent and young adult recidivism. Judges should be mindful of charge dismissal and its link to recidivism highlighted in the findings. Offenders should be held accountable for their crimes and given some form of sentence, rather it be rehabilitative such as community service and probation or punitive such as incarceration. These findings may further suggest the creation of new policies regarding sentencing. The present study further suggest that probation programs may not be effective in reducing recidivism, which may require more investment from county, state, or federal agencies to offer increased intervention programs and stricter supervision mandates from probation officers.

Incorporating programs such as FFT and emotional coaching may also be effective in decreasing delinquent behavior, while increasing attachment between parents, peers and adolescents. These programs attempt to mend familial relationships as well as enhance youth resiliency. Furthermore, ensuring the probation officer-to-probationer ratio is relatively low may increase the likelihood of achievable program efficacy.

The current study seemed to be consistent with social strain theory suggesting the environment of offenders area associated with criminal delinquency. Theft and property crimes were most prevalent in recidivist's offenders, which are often associated with socioeconomic deficits. Although there was no psychosocial data available (e.g., family structure, poverty rates, mental health diagnoses), the sentencing guidelines, such as incarceration and community service, demonstrated trends in the direction of previous research.

Future Research

Based on findings from the current study, future research examining factors contributing to adolescent and young adult recidivism rates should look beyond general sentencing guidelines to more detailed conditions of sentencing. For example, intervention programs required for community services as well as programs available for incarcerated offenders should be explored. Additionally, deficits in the probation program (e.g., officer-to-probationer ratios) merit further study. Furthermore, examining detailed probation records may better explain the increasing rates of recidivism in probationers, thus a needs/strengths assessment could be designed to investigate appropriate interventions or programs necessary to provide a more successful and effective probation sentence. Further research considering juvenile recidivism should assess family structure and psychosocial markers. Finally, increasing the sample size and including multiple geographic sampling would provide a wide range of offenders and sentencing guidelines, thus providing a more comprehensive study. Overall, despite the limitations, the findings are consistent with literature, providing strong

evidence that significant attention should be given to the process of imposing sentencing guidelines.

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