

The effects of an experimental intensive juvenile probation program on self-reported delinquency and drug use

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Abstract In the late 1990s Ventura County, California, USA, implemented the South Oxnard Challenge Project (SOCP), designed to provide intensive, multi-agency services to youth on probation. SOCP built their program guided by Clear’s “corrections of place” model, which argued that community corrections could decrease offender risk by focusing on restorative principles rather than on coercion. SOCP was designed as a randomized experiment, comparing youths in the experimental group with those on routine probation. Researchers interviewed youths in both the experimental and control groups 1 year after random assignment. This article reports on self-reported crime and drug use, finding few significant differences across groups. Specifically, we find that SOCP youths were significantly more likely to indicate that they had committed a violent crime generally, although a majority of both groups indicated they had done so. We found that those in SOCP who robbed people also did so significantly more often than did the comparison group. In the control group, youths reported committing homicide significantly more often, but this was a rare event. Among those youths who reported taking part in gang or posse fights, those in the control group did so significantly

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more often. Finally, youths in the control group were significantly more likely to have used ecstasy on more days during the previous month than were those in the SOCP.

Keywords Drug use · Juvenile crime · Juvenile probation · Random assignment · Recidivism

Introduction

Probation officers and other social service providers working in juvenile offender programs have multiple goals. Recidivism reduction is a key outcome and a primary reason that they are in business. Policymakers and the public want to believe they are doing something to stop offenders from committing crime. In 1996 California, USA, established the Juvenile Crime and Accountability Challenge Grant Program, giving 3-year grants to 14 counties to implement and evaluate comprehensive, multi-agency approaches to reduce juvenile crime. The ultimate goal of the legislature was to reduce eventual commitments to the California Youth Authority, and project participants were to work together to affect multiple outcomes for at-risk youth to help prevent crime. Ventura County chose to implement the South Oxnard Challenge Project (SOCP) using Clear's "corrections of place" (COP) ideas to guide implementation (Clear 1996). By locating multiple agencies at one site in the heart of the community, the project staff, led by the probation agency, hoped to work together to provide services to juveniles on probation and their families to increase pro-social activities and improve their relationships with families and peers as a means to prevent youths from committing crime (see Karp et al. 2002; Lane et al. 2005, 2007, for detailed description of the program).

There have been relatively few scholarly studies on the effects of juvenile probation, especially using rigorous evaluation techniques (see Altschuler 1998; Lane et al. 2005; Krisberg et al. 1989; National Research Council and Institute of Medicine 2001; Palmer 1992, 1994). This scarcity of research is problematic, because the majority (62% in 2002) of youths who are sanctioned by the court receive probation (Snyder and Sickmund 2006). This article attempts to build scholarly knowledge on the effects of probation on juveniles. Specifically, it presents findings from the authors' randomized experimental evaluation of the SOCP. Youths who had received a citation (arrest) or who were in violation of probation were randomly assigned to either SOCP or routine juvenile probation between 1 January 1998 and 29 February 2000 and were interviewed 1 year after random assignment.

We have already reported the official records results, which indicated that there were no or few significant differences between SOCP youths and routine probationers in recidivism, restitution payment, probation and community service completion, and alcohol and other drug use at about 2 years after random assignment (Lane et al. 2005). Official records, however, are only one way to measure recidivism and drug use. Another approach is to ask the youths themselves about their delinquency and drug behaviors (Short and Nye 1957).¹ Self-reported data, as measured through interviews, have the potential to tell us about activities not necessarily available in justice system or

¹For strengths and limitations of both types of measures see Babinski et al. 2001; Elliott and Ageton 1980; Hindelang et al. 1979; Maxfield et al. 2000.

other agency files. It is possible that self-reported results might show differences across groups not evident in official records, or they can confirm findings from these records (Babinski et al. 2001; Elliott and Ageton 1980; Elliott et al. 1987; Henggeler et al. 1993; Hindelang et al. 1979; Kim et al. 2000; Lab and Allen 1984; Maxfield et al. 2000). Consequently, this article asks the following key research question: “Do self-reported delinquency and drug activities of study youths confirm our earlier findings from official records?” In other words, are there still no differences between the groups in recidivism and drug use when we ask the youths themselves? It is rare for studies to examine recidivism using multiple measures as our evaluation can (e.g., both official records and self-reports) (Maxfield et al. 2000); however, more measures make it easier to make conclusions about the effects of programs.

The effects of juvenile probation programs

There have been few recent studies evaluating the effects of juvenile probation on offenders (see Corbett 1999; Krisberg et al. 1989; National Research Council and Institute of Medicine 2001; Palmer 1992). Whitehead and Lab’s (1989) meta-analysis of treatment programs in juvenile corrections included some probation programs and concluded that treatment did not reduce recidivism. Lipsey’s (1992) later meta-analysis of juvenile delinquency treatment also included probation programs. He concluded, on the basis of aggregate analyses, that juvenile treatment programs reduced recidivism better than comparison groups (about a 10% reduction). When he compared juveniles in treatment groups with those who were given the usual treatment, however, he found fewer differences (Lipsey 1992). Lipsey and Wilson (1998) used meta-analysis to examine the effects of treatment on serious juvenile offenders only. They found that treatment reduced recidivism but that results varied, depending on the program. They also found that the effects of community-based (including probation) programs may be better for more serious youthful offenders than less serious ones (see also Lipsey 1999).

Most studies find small or no differences between individual probation programs and comparison groups. Wooldredge (1988) found that more supervision time (around 2 years), coupled with treatment, was the best approach to reduce recidivism. Other studies, however, found few or no differences between their study groups (probationers) and comparison groups (either other types of probationers or institutionalized populations) (Austin et al. 1990; Barton and Butts 1990, 1991; Elrod and Minor 1992; Fagan and Reinerman 1991; Feinberg 1991; Minor and Elrod 1990; Sontheimer and Goodstein 1993; Weibush 1993; Zhang 1996). Still, Palmer (1992) argued that youths serving in the community did as well or better than institutionalized populations on multiple indicators over time. Given the small number of studies on juvenile probation, their equivocal results, and the importance of probation as a sanction for youths, it is important to continue researching the effects of this sanction.

Study context: South Oxnard Challenge Project (SOCP)

SOCP was designed on the basis of Clear’s “corrections of place” (COP) concept where he argued that the place movement in criminology, and particularly law

enforcement, was relevant to community corrections (Clear 1996). Clear built on the principles of restorative justice and community policing to argue that the system could manage offender risk while also working to heal the offender, victim and community. In essence, he argued that community corrections could reduce recidivism risk without focusing so much on coercion to do so. The goal was to put the state in a supportive role where it provided the resources and structure for the target groups (offender, victim, and community) to interact and work toward improving the result for each of the interested parties. Clear developed a model whereby each party was given a responsibility to the others in the transactions to help facilitate the healing. For example, the offender had the responsibility to show remorse and provide restitution to the victim, and the victim had the responsibility to provide the offender with an opportunity to make amends. The offender's responsibility to the community included service and stopping the criminal behavior, and the community's obligation to the offender was to allow the offender to repair the harm and become a full member of the community. Because Ventura was serving youths, they used this responsibilities model as a guide for developing their own program, but they modified it to include the family of the minor as an important party in the transaction. The family's role was to provide love, support, and responsibility to each other (for a graphical representation of the model, see Lane et al. 2005, 2007).

Clear and his co-authors asserted that offenders should not be solely defined by their crimes, because they also provided positive input to the community through their relationships, jobs, etc. Consequently, the whole community would be better served by keeping the offenders in the community and having all relevant parties work together to improve quality of life (see Clear 1996, Clear and Corbett 1998, 1999; Clear and Karp 1998). Clear (1996, p. 55) believed that the best approach for community corrections to facilitate this process was by:

....a geographically localized, multifunctional service delivery system in which several agencies, including those in the justice system, are working in collaboration to make the community safer.

In response to Clear's (1996) ideas about place, Ventura located the offices in the heart of the South Oxnard community, so that youths would be served within their own community rather than have to travel to the City of Ventura to see the staff. They developed a program where multiple agencies collaborated at one site to administer a number of different services to youths on probation in South Oxnard and the small neighboring city of Port Hueneme. The primary legislatively determined goal was to reduce juvenile crime and prevent youths from progressing into the California Youth Authority. Staff from participating agencies worked together on teams to determine treatment approaches and deliver services to youths and their families, which was one of the primary differences between the SOCP and routine juvenile probation. Available services included probation supervision, drug and alcohol treatment, mental health treatment, anger management skills, victim-offender and parent-child mediation, day-reporting, recreation, community service and mentoring (by staff called "navigators"). Staff members also blended roles as they worked together to serve youths, rather than adhering to strict interpretations of their job descriptions (e.g., probation officers participated in recreation and community service projects, treatment providers provided transportation) (see Karp et al. 2002; Lane et al. 2007, for a list of community-justice related activities of staff).

In addition to using the team approach, the service providers hoped to provide more services to their clients than routine probationers received, including more intensive and frequent contact with youths and their families and a stronger focus on strength rather than weakness-based treatment approaches. On routine probation, youth were to receive one contact per month, but families were not a target for services. In the SOCP, the program plan called for youths to have at least 1 hour per week of face-to-face contact and their families to have 2 hours of contact per month (see Lane et al. 2005). In a previous article, we reported that youths and their families received, on average, eight contacts a month (excluding collateral and attempted contacts) compared with youths on routine probation, who received an average of one contact per month. The average number of monthly contact minutes was 371 (about 6 hours) for SOCP youths and their families together, versus about 6 minutes for routine probation youths. Youths in the SOCP received a wide array of services, based on process data collected by staff. Most received family services (76%) and mentoring (68%). Almost half received drug and alcohol services (47%), and around a third received recreation (37%), counseling (28%) and educational (27%) services (Lane et al. 2005).

In contrast to the typical probation office, the SOCP tried to make their offices inviting to youths and their families, to follow Clear and Karp's idea of using informality to increase accessibility to services (see Karp et al. 2002). There were no metal detectors, bulletproof glass, designated interview rooms, or staff regularly wearing gear. All staff wore street clothes, including the police officer (who did carry a gun, under police department policies and procedures). In addition, meetings often had an informal feel, taking place in staff offices, outside, or in the community where the youths were (e.g., at school, their home, the park). There was anecdotal evidence that this attempt to increase comfort levels worked, as youth stopped by unannounced and unsolicited and as families called to share not only bad news but also good news, such as better grades or improvement in behavior (see Karp et al. 2002). The hope was, that by following Clear's (1996) ideas of using less coercive approaches to delivering services and providing surveillance, and by improving family relationships, project staff would find that their clients would be less likely to recidivate than those probation youths who did not receive these unique probation services.²

Method

Sample and evaluation design

The authors served on the evaluation team contracted to evaluate the SOCP and participated in project development and evaluation design from the outset. The evaluation used an experimental design with random assignment, which is one of the strongest methods to determine program impact (see Baird 1991; Boruch 1997; Campbell and Stanley 1963; Cook and Campbell 1979; Farrington 2003; Palmer 1992). The initial evaluation design was for 500 youths (250 in the experimental

²We report results for the goals related to families and peers in another article (Brank et al. 2008).

group and 250 in the control group) to be randomly assigned over an 18-month period beginning 1 January 1998. After an additional year of funding had been awarded by the state, random assignment was continued until 29 February 2000. There were four criteria for youths to be eligible for random assignment: they had to (1) reside in South Oxnard or Port Hueneme, California; (2) be between 12 years and 18 years old; (3) have had a citation (arrest) or be in violation of probation, and (4) score at least 12 points in a locally adapted risk assessment.³ If a youth met these criteria, the probation officer, who could be in any of the probation units, would call the evaluators for assignment to the SOCP or to routine probation. Evaluation staff used equal probability assignment, ensuring that a youth had a 50% chance of being assigned to either condition. There were 539 youths assigned to the study, including 264 to the SOCP and 275 to the comparison group. Those youths assigned to SOCP were immediately transferred to SOCP by probation officers. The youths in the comparison group were assigned to or stayed in a regular probation unit. SOCP served youths who were on informal probation for 7 months and youths on formal probation for 9 months.⁴ Youths on routine probation were served until the case was closed either because probation requirements were met or the youth was violated.

At 12 months after random assignment, the evaluation team conducted approximately 1-hour, structured interviews with the majority of the youths in the study. Each youth was interviewed only once. The instrument was composed of closed-ended (e.g., yes/no and Likert scale) and short-answer questions. We chose a 1-year time frame to ensure that the interview was standardized across informal and formal probation youths and to capture their attitudes after the intervention (7 months or 9 months) and part of the official records follow-up period (about 2 years after random assignment) (see Lane et al. 2005). Interviews were conducted between 8 June 1999 and 13 September 2001. Evaluators gained permission from the youth's parent/guardian and assent from the youth before proceeding with the interview. Interviewees were ensured confidentiality with a confidentiality certificate obtained from the National Institute of Drug Abuse. Interview times were scheduled at a place (e.g., interviewer's office, youth's home, a restaurant) and time convenient for the youths. Youths were paid \$25 for completing the interview. By the end of the study, evaluators had interviewed 151 (57.2%) youths in the experimental group and 163 (59.3%) in the control group.⁵ There were no statistical differences between the interviewed youths and those not interviewed (collapsing across experimental and control groups) in the following variables: gender, age at random assignment,

³During the summer of 1997, a local Screening and Selection Committee, composed of agency leaders and personnel, adapted (revised scoring categories) and pre-tested a validated risk instrument to ensure that it would "capture" youth who, based on probation agency experience, were actually at medium-to-high risk of committing crime in the near future. The committee was aware of research indicating that programs are more successful when they target youth who are of medium-to-high risk (see Lipsev and Wilson 1998; Wilson and Howell 1995). The committee determined that a score of at least 12 on their assessment would capture these youths in their community.

⁴These time periods were chosen by program designers to ensure that youths that had committed a more serious crime (formal cases) received services for a longer period of time and to ensure enough follow-up time after the intervention (18 months) to meet grant requirements and to determine if the program had a long-term impact on clients' criminal behavior (see Lane et al. 2005).

⁵Youths may not have been interviewed because they or their parents had refused consent, interviewers had been unable to establish contact, or the study had ended before they were contacted.

ethnicity, type of probation, living situation (with both parents or not), number of prior sustained petitions, seriousness of prior sustained petitions, or risk score. In addition, we found no significant differences in the rates at which youths in the experimental and control groups were or were not interviewed.

The youths in this interview sample were mostly male and Hispanic. At the time of interview most youths were 17 years or older. About half lived with both parents and close to one-third lived only with their mothers. Over two-thirds were on informal probation, so they were not serious offenders. Few were referred to the program due to a violent offense. There were no significant differences in these characteristics, between the interviewed youths in the SOCP and those in the control group (see Table 1).

Variables and analysis

The focus of this article is on self-reported offenses and drug use. We asked youths about their participation since the date of random assignment in 18 different offenses, including drug (e.g., possessing marijuana or hashish), property (e.g., breaking into a house, building or car in order to take something), violent (e.g., robbing a person) and other crimes (e.g., providing sex for money). The entire list of specific offenses is enumerated in the *Results* section, but youths were asked the following question:

This is a list of activities that you may have been involved in during the twelve months since [random assignment date]. Remember what you say is completely confidential. Please just think about these questions and tell me whether you were involved in each activity during the twelve months after [random assignment date].

If the youth indicated that he/she had been involved in committing the particular offense, the interviewer recorded the number of times. We first report the percentage of youths who indicated that they had committed each crime and the mean number of times the offenses were committed, including those youths who committed none in the mean calculations. To examine differences across groups, we used *t*-tests. Next, we report results for only those youths who reported having committed at least one offense, again reporting the mean number of times each offense was committed. In this set of results, we have also included lambda, a measure of offending frequency for those committing a certain type of crime (see Blumstein et al. 1986; Chaiken and Chaiken 1982, 1990; Horney and Marshall 1991). Lambda includes only those youths who reported committing each particular crime. In calculating lambda we determined each individual's number of street days during the year (365 minus number of days of incarceration). Next, we calculated lambda for each youth by dividing the reported number of crimes by the number of street days and multiplying by 365. This gives, for each individual, the number of crimes they would have committed had they been out on the street for all 365 days following random assignment. The lambda values were then subjected to Winsor transformation (extreme values were re-coded to the 90th percentile). To calculate the aggregated lambda values (i.e., violent, property, and drug crimes as a group), we summed the lambda values for the individual crimes. We report the mean lambda values for the groups on each individual crime and the aggregate

Table 1 Characteristics of the sample (reprinted from Lane et al. (2007))

Characteristic	SOCP (<i>N</i> =151) (%)	Control (<i>N</i> =163) (%)
Gender		
Male	78.8	73.6
Age at interview (in years)		
12–14	2.0	2.5
15–16	21.2	28.8
17–18	47.0	39.9
19+	26.5	25.2
Unknown	3.3	3.7
Mean age	17.6	17.3
Median age	18	17
Ethnicity		
White	6.0	9.8
Hispanic	85.4	77.9
African–American	7.3	8.6
Other	1.3	3.7
Living arrangements		
Both parents	47.7	49.7
Mother	36.4	33.1
Father	5.3	2.5
Other	10.6	14.7
Referral offense ^a		
Violent felony	3.3	1.8
Violent misdemeanor	19.2	17.8
Property felony	12.6	8.0
Property misdemeanor	21.2	23.9
Drug	3.3	1.8
Other	40.4	46.6
Type of probation		
Informal	67.5	68.7
Formal	32.5	31.3
Prior sustained petitions (at least 1) ^b	35.3	33.7
Mean number	0.69	0.58
Median number	0	0

None of the differences between the youths in the SOCP and those in the control group was statistically significant ($P < 0.05$, by chi-square tests for dichotomous variables and t -tests for means)

^a For formal probation cases, these data refer to the most serious sustained petition prior to entry into the study. For informal probation cases, they refer to the most serious prior referral. The initial data collection instrument was designed to capture the common data elements required by the California Board of Corrections and did not indicate if the offense coded here was the trigger for random assignment

^b The required data collection elements (by the State of California) called for the measurement of prior sustained petitions (convictions, including the instant and previous offenses) rather than arrests at random assignment. Consequently, the dataset does not include the total number of prior arrests

indexes. We also used t -tests to determine if there were significant differences between groups in the lambda scores.

The next set of questions discussed here asked youths to indicate if they had ever used any of a list of 13 drugs (e.g., alcohol, marijuana, crack, cocaine, methamphetamine). Again, the entire list of specific drugs is enumerated in the *Results* section, but if the youth indicated that he/she had used the particular drug, we would ask: “When was the last time you used [particular drug]?” If the youth indicated more than 30 days ago, the interviewer went to the next drug. If the youth indicated within the last

30 days, the interviewer would ask: “How many days in the last 30 days have you used [particular drug]?” Here we present the results for self-reported drug use within the past 30 days, or what is often considered current use in the drug literature (e.g., Fisher et al. 2004; Inciardi and Surratt 2001). We report the percentage of youths who had used drugs within the past 30 days and, if they had used during that time, the mean number of days they had used the drugs. We examine differences across groups with *t*-tests. If the youth indicated that he/she had not ever used the drug, he/she was counted as not having used in the past 30 days. On the basis of our official records results and prior studies on the effects of juvenile probation, we hypothesized that there would be few differences across groups in their drug use or criminal behaviors, even though the program’s expectation was that its approach would be better at reducing crime than would routine probation practices.

Results

Offenses

Table 2 compares self-reported violent, property, and drug offenses for the entire group of interviewed SOCP participants as well as the control group of routine probationers. We first examine the percentage of youths who committed a crime and the mean number of times the crimes were committed. For the broad categories of offenses (i.e., violent, property and drug offenses), there were no significant differences across groups, except for violent crimes. Youths in the SOCP were significantly more likely to have reported committing a violent crime (67.6%) than were those in the control group (55.6%). There were few significant differences between the groups in the percent of youths who committed any particular crimes or in the mean number of times they committed the crimes. For 16 of the 18 individual offenses enumerated here, there were no significant differences between the groups. The only significant differences occurred in mean number of times a crime was committed. Those youths in the SOCP reported significantly more robberies of people than did the control group, and the control group reported committing significantly more homicides, although this was a rare event.

Although there were few differences between the groups here, there are interesting general findings. In no specific offense category did a majority of youths in either group indicate that they had committed the crime during the 12 months after random assignment. The most common violent offense committed by both groups was assault (SOCP=47%, controls=36.6%). The most common property offense was stealing (SOCP=46.4%, controls=40.1%). Youths in both groups were more likely to have possessed marijuana (SOCP=46.7%, controls=35.8%) than to have dealt drugs or possessed hard drugs. Although there were no significant differences for most crimes, a larger percentage of SOCP youths often indicated that they had committed any particular crime. It is unclear why. These youths may have committed more crimes and the program may have made them “worse,” or they may have felt more comfortable talking to the researchers due to the more comfortable environment of their probation/treatment experience (see Greenwood and Turner 1993).

Table 2 Self-reported offenses during the 12 months after random assignment. Means for number of crimes reported include zeroes (*SD* standard deviation)

Offense	SOCP (<i>N</i> =151)			Controls (<i>N</i> =163)		
	Percent of youths	Mean no. of times	<i>SD</i>	Percent of youths	Mean no. of times	<i>SD</i>
Violent crimes	67.6% ^a	6.3	11.8	55.6%	6.1	16.4
Committed robbery—business	15.2%	0.4	1.3	10.5%	0.3	1.3
Committed robbery—person	26.5%	1.2 ^a	2.8	18.5%	0.5	1.4
Committed/attempted assault	47.0%	3.1	9.4	36.6%	2.8	12.3
Committed/attempted homicide	0.7%	0.0 ^a	0.1	3.7%	0.1	0.3
Committed/attempted rape	0.7%	0.1	0.8	0.0%	0.0	0.0
Took part in gang/posse fights	27.8%	1.7	3.9	25.3%	2.4	6.1
Property crimes	62.3%	9.2	30.0	61.7%	9.1	30.7
Damaged/set fire to school property	19.9%	1.8	10.1	16.7%	1.0	3.9
Damaged/set fire to other property	19.9%	1.8	8.8	21.6%	2.0	6.7
Broke into house/building/car	25.2%	1.4	5.3	25.9%	0.7	1.7
Stole something (other than automobile)	46.4%	3.0	9.4	40.1%	4.4	28.8
Stole an automobile	13.2%	0.3	1.3	11.7%	0.2	0.7
Used checks/credit cards illegally	5.3%	0.1	0.5	8.0%	0.3	1.2
Used prescriptions illegally	2.6%	0.3	2.5	2.4%	0.1	0.6
Ran cons/scams	3.3%	0.5	3.7	3.7%	0.4	2.3
Drug crimes	52.3%	27.4	92.3	44.4%	32.0	97.5
Dealt/delivered drugs	28.5%	6.3	34.2	22.2%	8.2	35.3
Possessed marijuana	46.7%	18.9	63.7	35.8%	18.8	65.0
Possessed hard drugs (e.g., cocaine, crack, heroin, PCP, LSD)	15.3%	2.4	7.5	15.4%	5.0	32.9
Other crimes						
Provided sex for money (prostitution)	1.3%	0.1	0.5	1.2%	0.0	0.2

^a Differences significant between SOCP and controls, $P < 0.05$

Table 3 reports results for those youths who indicated that they had committed at least one offense. For this group, we present the mean number of times an offense was committed and the lambda value. The comparison of means shows results similar to those in the last table for robberies of people, with SOCP youths reporting significantly more. In addition, the means reported in this table shows that those youths in the control group who reported taking part in gang or posse fights did so significantly more often than did those SOCP youths who participated in these offenses.

The lambda results confirm the mean findings. SOCP youths reported committing significantly more robberies of people, and those in the control group reported participating in significantly more gang fights. Although there were no other significant differences across the groups for lambda, the youths in the SOCP reported slightly more activity during the year since random assignment for four other individual crimes (burglary, automobile theft, running scams, and possessing hard drugs.). For nine other individual crimes (robbery of businesses, assault, homicide, vandalism of school property, vandalism of other property, stealing, illegal use of checks, dealing drugs and possession of marijuana), the control group reported committing more offenses during the previous year. Looking at these offenses more generally (in the aggregate), we find that youths in the SOCP and in the control group reported committing property crimes at the same rate, but the

Table 3 Self-reported offenses during the 12 months after random assignment, for youths who reported committing at least one offense. In computing lambdas, we re-coded extreme values to minimize the effects of extreme outlying values. A blank cell indicates that too few youths reported the crime for us to compute lambda (SD standard deviation)

Offense	SOCP (N=151)				Controls (N=163)			
	N	Mean no. of times	SD	Lambda	N	Mean no. of times	SD	Lambda
Violent crimes	102	9.4	13.3	8.0	90	11.0	20.7	8.7
Committed robbery—business	23	2.4	2.6	2.2	17	3.1	2.9	2.8
Committed robbery—person	40	4.4 ^a	4.0	4.2 ^a	30	2.9	1.8	3.0
Committed/attempted assault	71	6.5	12.8	4.9	59	7.8	19.4	5.2
Committed/attempted homicide	1	1.0			6	1.5	0.5	1.7
Committed/attempted rape	1	10.0			0			
Took part in gang/posse fights	42	6.0 ^a	5.5	5.7 ^a	41	9.5	8.9	8.0
Property crimes	94	14.8	36.9	10.0	100	14.7	38.0	10.0
Damaged/set fire to school property	30	9.3	21.4	5.0	27	6.2	7.8	5.8
Damaged/set fire to other property	30	9.2	18.1	6.7	35	9.2	12.0	7.6
Broke into house/building/car	38	5.4	9.6	3.0	42	2.8	2.3	2.8
Stole something (other than automobile)	70	6.4	13.1	4.6	65	11.1	44.9	5.0
Stole an automobile	20	2.5	2.6	2.2	19	1.7	1.3	1.8
Used checks/credit cards illegally	8	1.8	1.2	1.8	13	3.2	3.2	2.2
Used prescriptions illegally	4	10.8	10.7		4	3.0	2.4	
Ran cons/scams	5	14.6	16.1	10.7	6	10.2	7.2	10.2
Drug crimes	79	52.4	122.7	33.2	72	72.1	136.6	37.1
Dealt/delivered drugs	43	22.1	61.7	7.3	36	37.0	68.2	9.1
Possessed marijuana	70	40.5	88.7	28.0	58	52.6	100.6	35.2
Possessed hard drugs (e.g., cocaine, crack, heroin, PCP, LSD)	23	15.6	13.0	15.3	25	32.3	79.6	11.9
Other crimes								
Provided sex for money (prostitution)	2	4.0	0.0		2	1.5	0.7	

^a Differences significant between SOCP and controls, $P < 0.05$

control group reported committing violent and drug crimes more frequently. Still, these differences were not significant.

Drug use

Table 4 presents the percent of youths who used drugs from a list of 13 drugs during the past 30 days and the mean number of days the drugs were used for those who reported they did so. Again, significant differences across groups were almost non-existent. In fact, the only significant difference was that youths in the control group indicated significantly more days using ecstasy/MDMA (SOCP mean=1.8 days, control mean=4.2 days).

Very few youths in either group indicated that they had used any of the “hard” drugs during the past 30 days (ranging from 0% to 4%). Those in the SOCP were more likely to report using marijuana (SOCP=31%, control=25%), but only a third of them did so. This group used drugs more often (around 11 of the past 30 days) than users of other drugs. The most commonly used drug for both groups was

Table 4 Self-reported drug use within past 30 days (*SD* standard deviation)

Drug	SOCP (<i>N</i> =151)			Controls (<i>N</i> =163)		
	Percent of youths who used in past 30 days	Mean no. of days	SD	Percent of youths who used in past 30 days	Mean no. of days	SD
Alcohol	51.0	5.7	4.7	41.7	7.3	6.4
Marijuana	30.5	11.7	10.3	24.5	10.5	9.9
Crack (smoked)	0.7	2.0	–	2.4	3.5	2.5
Cocaine (snorted, injected)	2.0	1.0	0.0	1.2	2.0	1.4
Methamphetamine (“crank”)	3.8	6.5	11.6	3.0	2.8	1.5
Amphetamines (“speed,” “uppers,” “bennies”)	1.3	1.0	0.0	1.2	7.0	2.8
Heroin	0.0	–	–	0.6	1.0	–
Heroin & cocaine mixed together (“speedball”)	0.0	–	–	0.0	–	–
Non-prescription methadone	0.0	–	–	0.0	–	–
Other opiates (e.g., Demerol, codeine, Dilaudid)	1.3	1.0	0.0	1.2	3.5	2.1
Hallucinogens (e.g., LSD, PCP, peyote, mushrooms)	0.7	1.0	–	3.1	4.6	4.0
Ecstasy/MDMA	3.3	1.8 ^a	1.3	3.1	4.2	1.9
Inhalants (e.g., spray paint, glue)	0.0	–	–	2.4	4.3	2.2

^aDifferences significant between SOCP and controls, $P < 0.05$ using *t*-tests. Mean number of days is reported only for those who used at all

alcohol. Over half of those in the SOCP reported drinking during the past 30 days (51%), while only about 42% of the control group reported drinking. However, those in the control group that used drugs used them slightly more often.

Discussion

Summary of results

Our primary research question asked whether or not these results would confirm results from the official records regarding recidivism and drug use (Lane et al. 2005). In effect, were there still no differences in recidivism between the experimental and control groups when we asked the youths themselves? The answer again is that there were very few differences between the groups in crime or drug use measures. For self-reported offenses, SOCP youths were significantly more likely to indicate that they had committed a violent crime than were youths in the control group, although the majority of both groups indicated that they had done so. SOCP youths also reported committing or attempting significantly more robberies of people per respondent, and lambda results indicated that those who committed such robberies did so more often than those in the control group who were active in committing this offense. Control group youths reported significantly more homicides than did SOCP youths, but homicide was extremely rare. Control youths who reported participating in gang fights did so significantly more often than did SOCP youths who reported these crimes. These findings, although small, were generally in the opposite

direction of that hoped for by SOCP service providers. We found similar results for self-reported drug use during the past 30 days. There were few significant differences between the groups, except that the control group used ecstasy more often than the SOCP group did. Given the large number of comparisons (specific offenses and types of drugs) made between the groups here, one would expect that some (about one out of 20, based on the 95% confidence interval) might be significant by chance. Consequently, it is unclear whether the few differences we found in this study are true differences.

The SOCP apparently had little measurable effect on these outcomes, beyond the effects already present for youths on routine probation, regardless of how recidivism was measured. Lane et al. (2005) showed that officially recorded recidivism was similar for the SOCP and comparison groups; our current study shows that self-report measures are similar to each other, with few exceptions. Official records and self-reports are not significantly correlated in this sample.⁶ In fact, for many offenses, self-reports indicated much more criminal activity than official records suggest, pointing to the fact that many youths reported offenses that went undetected by the system. For example, for SOCP, the 13-month and 15-month official records indicated that 41.7% were arrested for any crime, while self-reports indicate that a majority (86.1%) had committed a crime. For youths in the control group, official records show that 41.1% were arrested for a crime, but 79.1% reported committing at least one crime.⁷ This study, then, confirms the general assumption that the dark figure of crime is likely much larger than the number of crimes recorded by the police.⁸

Why few differences?

We have speculated in other writings the reasons that the SOCP had so few statistically significant results beyond that of routine probation (e.g., Lane and Turner 1999; Karp et al. 2002; Lane et al. 2005, 2007). Our results support prior studies of juvenile probation that find few or no results between probationers and comparison groups (e.g., Austin et al. 1990; Barton and Butts 1990, 1991; Elrod and Minor 1992; Fagan and Reinerman 1991; Feinberg 1991; Minor and Elrod 1990; Sontheimer and Goodstein 1993; Weibush 1993; Zhang 1996). Of course, some

⁶Self-reported property crimes are significantly correlated with referral for any crime, but are only marginally correlated with referral for property crime.

⁷Similar results appear when we compare categories of offenses. For example, official records indicate that 5.2% of SOCP youth were arrested for a violent crime, but 67.5% indicated in the interview that they had committed one in the past year. For the control group, 10.5% were arrested for a violent crime, but 55.3% admitted to offenses against people. For property crime, only 10.6% of SOCP interviewees were arrested, based on official records, but 62.2% of them said they had engaged in property crime. For controls, 6.7% of interviewees were arrested for property offenses, but 61.3% indicated they had committed these offenses. Finally, 1.4 % of SOCP interviewees were arrested for drug crimes, but 52.4% indicated they had participated in drug crimes. For controls, 1.8% were arrested for drug crimes, but 44.1% admitted to participating in these offenses.

⁸In Lane et al. (2005) the official records data were reported at the end of the intervention and 18 months after the intervention had ended—or 25 months after random assignment for informal probation youths and 27 months after random assignment for formal probation youths. The 13-month and 15-month official records are based on the random assignment date. For interviews, the results are presented for data collected 12 months after random assignment.

readers might conclude, on the basis of our results, that intensive programming for juvenile probationers is not worth the resources and effort, but we believe that measurement and implementation issues lead to more complicated conclusions about program effectiveness. As our earlier articles have noted, the SOCP staff was required by grant guidelines to participate in data collection, so we have data on their activities. Agency staff who worked with the control group youths were not compensated by the grant, and those outside of the Probation Agency did not record data regarding treatment and services provided to this group. Many of the services that SOCP provided on site to their clients (e.g., mental health, drug and alcohol treatment, recreation, community service) were available to the control group also, but not at one site. It is possible that the true difference between the groups regarding service delivery was *where* they received services, not *whether* they received them. In other words, the large differences in numbers of contacts and contact time between the experimental and control groups may not be as large as the data show. If this were true, it would explain the lack of differences between the groups (see Lane et al. 2005).

Another reason that there may have been few effects is that most of the youths in this study were on informal (not court-ordered) probation and were, therefore, less serious offenders. Research has shown that programs have more impact when they focus their efforts on more serious offenders (Andrews et al. 1990; Lipsey and Wilson 1998). The SOCP started with a validated risk assessment but adapted it for local conditions. Although they expected to capture youths who were medium-to high-risk, most of the selected youths were not. The reasons for this discrepancy are unclear. The high number of low-risk youths could have been due to the fact that many were referred from a unit that only served youths on informal probation, the possibility that referring staff who wanted a youth to be eligible adjusted point scores to ensure they were in the pool, or the inability of the revised assessment truly to capture appropriate youths.

As our prior articles noted, a third reason for the lack of findings may have been the implementation difficulties faced by SOCP staff (see Karp et al. 2002; Lane and Turner 1999; Lane et al. 2005). SOCP set very high expectations for the project regarding the number and depth of programs they would deliver to their clients, and they attempted to implement them all at once rather than phase them in over time. A phased implementation plan may have allowed them to solidify implementation of each component before moving to the next. There were also contradictions between grant expectations (serve youths, family, community, and victim) and court expectations (serve and monitor youths). Probation staff, at least, often did focus on youths at the expense of the other target groups, because their primary job responsibilities indicated that they must monitor and serve the youths and the officers were concerned about pleasing the juvenile court judge. In addition, SOCP staff was limited to 40-hour work weeks and found it difficult to implement all components of the program well. This was, in part, due to the increased time spent in meetings necessitated by the team approach to serving youths and their families and, in part, due to their expanded job duties (e.g., serving multiple roles and multiple target groups). With so many different job duties, the staff may have been too scattered to focus on any particular component as much as they wanted to. In other words, they may have touched the surface on many types of services but been unable to give any particular service the level of energy and time needed to make a true difference. Lipsey (1999) found only a small percentage difference in

recidivism for youths who received routine probation versus routine probation plus a minimal program, so it may not be unexpected to find few differences here.

One also may question whether the lack of significant findings is due to low power to detect differences between the groups. In the current study we did not have a priori information on the size of the expected effect. At the same time, a statistical power analysis suggests that our study had very high statistical power for detecting moderate program effects. Using a 0.05 significance threshold and a non-directional hypothesis, we calculate a statistical power level of 0.99 for a standardized moderate effect size ($d=.50$) as defined by Jacob Cohen (Cohen 1988). Nonetheless, we recognize that prior studies have found relatively small effects in juvenile studies, averaging as low as 0.10 (Lipsey 2003). Using this effect size estimate, we find that our power level is relatively low (0.23).

Theoretical implications

The SOCP was developed on the basis of the Corrections of Place model, where Clear (1996) argued that the popular place movement in criminology could be applied to community corrections. Building on community justice principles and community policing strategies, Clear believed that offenders could be managed effectively in the community (recidivism reduced) at the same time that healing could occur among interested parties (e.g., victims, offenders, and the community at large). He argued that these approaches did not need to be at odds with each other. He stressed the importance of locating services in the heart of the community being served and using multiple strategies and service providers to address the crime problem. SOCP hoped to do that by placing their offices in South Oxnard, where their target population lived, and by collaborating across multiple agencies working as a team to address the needs of youths, their families, their victims, and the broader community. Their goals were multi-faceted, hoping to enhance service delivery and be more responsive to the people they served, to increase accountability among the youths on their caseloads, to increase family and community participation, and to decrease juvenile delinquency (see Karp et al. 2002).

Because SOCP developed their program based both on Corrections of Place (COP) theory and local context, this study cannot serve as a “test” of the theory. Rather, it is a test of one project’s attempt to take theory to practice and implement Clear’s (1996) ideas. This article addresses only one of the explicitly stated goals, reduction of juvenile delinquency, and it shows that there were practically no differences across the experimental and control groups with regard to participation in violent, property, and drug crimes or drug use. Confirming our official records results (Lane et al. 2005), this analysis indicates that SOCP’s attempt to put COP into practice did not make a significant difference in their clients’ likelihood of committing crime.

However, it is difficult to attribute any of these results directly to COP theory itself, primarily because the theory was in its early developmental stages at the time this project was developed, which therefore meant that SOCP made multiple adaptations to the model to bring the theory to the field. In addition, SOCP faced implementation difficulties as they proceeded, making it difficult to argue that the theory alone could explain the results (see Karp et al. 2002; Lane et al. 2005). To understand fully the effectiveness of COP, more sites across the country will need to

implement Clear's (1996) ideas (see also Clear and Corbett 1998, 1999; Clear and Karp 1998), and evaluators will need to examine the results in those areas.

Policy implications

The results of this analysis indicate that SOCP had few effects on self-reported crime and drug use. What should these generally null results mean for policymakers and practitioners? SOCP had so many implementation difficulties that it is difficult for us to make definitive conclusions about the effects that well-implemented programs might have on youths. Consequently, those who make decisions about current and new programs should interpret these results with care and not jump to the conclusion that restorative or rehabilitative programs cannot work.

These results indicate that those who have argued that the only way to deal with young offenders is to "get tough" may be wrong. It is true that youths in SOCP did not do much better than those on routine probation, but they also generally did not do worse. Even with implementation difficulties, the philosophy of the program and its staff were clearly much more "helping" than "punishment" oriented. These results may lead to the conclusion that softer approaches are just as effective as typical ones—that one does no harm by focusing on rehabilitation (see Lane et al. 2005).

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