

The Effect of Disciplinary Segregation on Juvenile Inmates: A Propensity Score Analysis

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Introduction

- Approximately 250,000 youth are tried, sentenced, or incarcerated in the adult system every year in the United States (Vera Institute, 2012).
- A number of adverse outcomes are well documented for youth incarcerated in adult facilities (see Read, 2017 for a review).
 - Approximately 36X more likely to commit suicide
 - More than 5X more likely to be sexually assaulted and 2X more likely to be beaten by staff
 - Higher recidivism rates than youth incarcerated in juvenile correctional facilities

Introduction

- Youth placed in adult facilities frequently end up in SC (both protective custody and disciplinary segregation).
- A number of jurisdictions have initiated policies to ban or restrict the use of SC with youth.
- Critics contend that the practice causes undue psychological distress in adolescents in particular.

Introduction

- Although SC continues to be widely used across the United States, there remains little empirical research on the topic (and especially for special populations such as juveniles).
- This study fills a critical gap in knowledge by examining what effect SC has on juvenile offenders in the State of Ohio.

Research Question

Does the experience of SC differentially influence the institutional behavior of juvenile compared to adult inmates in prison?

Method

- Sample included ODRC admissions between 2007-2011
- Eligibility criteria used to select cases:
 - Inmate must have served at least 365 consecutive days in custody
 - Inmate must have spent time in DS within first 3 months
 - Inmate must be incarcerated for the first time with ODRC
 - Sample was restricted to male inmates only
 - Total number of eligible subjects: N = 521 juveniles; N = 2,333 adults

Method

- Inmates were tracked for one year after admission to ODRC.
- Institutional misconduct was defined as any violation of ODRC rule of conduct during the follow-up period.
 - VIOLENT/SERIOUS OFFENCES (e.g., assault)
 - NONVIOLENT OFFENCES (e.g., damage to property, theft, drug use)
 - ANY INSTITUTIONAL MISCONDUCT

Method

- Propensity score matching (PSM) without replacement, one-to-one nearest neighbor matching with .001 tolerance level
 - Matched juveniles to adults on fifteen criminal history and institutional variables
 - Provided an unbiased estimate of age group on misconduct
 - Chi-square test differences
- Logistic regression
 - Used for outcomes statistically significant following matching procedure
 - Used to assess age group differences while controlling for the remaining unbalanced covariates

	Pre-match			Post-match		
	%Juvenile (N = 521)	%Adult (N = 2,333)	%Bias	%Juvenile (N = 461)	%Adult (N = 461)	%Bias
Black	***81.4	48.8	72.8	***79.8	89.4	26.7
Serious mental illness	*29.2	34.0	10.3	26.3	28.2	4.4
Gang affiliation	***47.0	27.4	41.5	*41.9	49.5	15.3
Violent conviction	***83.3	70.1	31.7	82.2	79.6	6.6
F1 (most serious)	***45.7	28.0	37.4	44.0	38.0	12.4
F2	30.9	28.9	4.3	31.7	33.8	4.6
F3	***18.4	29.1	25.3	19.3	21.3	4.9
F4	***4.4	11.5	26.4	4.3	5.9	6.9
F5 (least serious)	***0.6	2.5	15.8	0.7	1.1	4.6
Maximum	0.4	0.1	5.0	0.2	0.0	6.6
Close	***37.8	17.5	46.7	*33.8	26.3	16.6
Medium	55.7	57.6	3.9	59.0	53.4	11.4
Minimum	***6.1	24.8	53.3	***6.9	20.4	39.9
Pre-violent misconduct	***42.8	32.2	22.0	38.2	43.4	10.6
Pre-nonviolent misconduct	***50.1	36.0	28.7	47.7	51.6	7.8

Note: * $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

Model Fit Summary

	Pre-match	Post-match
Percent significant differences	80.00	26.67
Mean standardized percent difference or bias	28.30	12.00
Maximum percent bias	72.80	26.70
Percent with bias over 20	66.67	13.33
Percent with bias over 10	80.00	46.67
Area under the curve (AUC)	0.77	0.50

Difference in Misconduct Outcomes

	%Youth	%Adult	Difference	ϕ
Pre-match				
Any misconduct	***82.9	60.1	22.8	0.18
Violent misconduct	***54.5	31.3	23.2	0.19
Nonviolent misconduct	***77.2	51.9	25.3	0.20
Post-match				
Any misconduct	***83.1	74.2	8.9	0.11
Violent misconduct	**53.2	44.5	8.7	0.09
Nonviolent misconduct	***77.2	66.2	11.0	0.12

Note: * $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

Logistic Regression Results

	Any misconduct	Violent misconduct	Nonviolent misconduct
Baseline model	1.71 [1.24, 2.35]	1.42 [1.09, 1.84]	1.73 [1.30, 2.32]
Main effects model	1.71 [1.22, 2.39]	1.46 [1.11, 1.91]	1.70 [1.26, 2.31]

Discussion

- The experience of DS increases subsequent violent and non-violent misconducts in juveniles when compared to adults.
- This main finding is consistent with previous theory and research on SC.
- Results support the idea that policies are needed to limit exposure of youth to harmful aspects of incarceration in adult correctional facilities.

Limitations

- Current study was limited to data routinely collected by ODRC.
- It is unknown if the current findings generalize to other agencies, jurisdictions and types of segregation.
- Other important (and unobserved) variables could have an impact on the results (e.g., conditions of confinement, institutional climate, availability of programs and services, etc.).
- Another way to investigate the research question is to compare two similar groups of juveniles who experience and do not experience DS. However, our data did not allow for this type of analysis.

Policy Recommendations

- Limit the use of DS as a punishment for juveniles.
- Implement other (more effective) approaches to target the criminogenic needs of youthful inmates.
- Youth have unique developmental needs that are likely better handled in juvenile facilities and/or other types of rehabilitative programs.

Future Research

- How does the prison system respond to rule violations by age group?
- Are juveniles versus adults treated differently by correctional officers and/or the criminal justice system?
- Do other treatment/intervention options have a more effective impact on institutional adjustment and inmate behavior?