

Importance of a Youth's Reentry Process

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In Boman and Mowen's (2018) research article, their main goal of the study was to focus on the importance of a youth's reentry process and realizing its influencers. In 1930, researcher Shaw published a study on life course that soundly demonstrated that the behavior of peers was instrumental for offending. Since then, more researchers have conducted studies revolving around this topic and have further developed knowledge on how, when, and why peers are influential for crime. Boman and Mowen had two research questions: "How family conflict and delinquent peer associations relate to substance use and reoffending during reentry [and] What specific mechanisms impact family conflict and delinquent peer associations" (276). Using a series of cross-lagged dynamic panel models, the discussion of youth reentry is put into the spotlight.

Data for the research was received from the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI) youth sample. Between 2005 and 2007 SVORI was collected across 14 different states from individuals who were incarcerated at the time of the collection of data. This data is only a sub-sample of the population. This youth sample was composed of 337 males. These males were located in either Colorado, Florida, South Carolina, or Kansas. Participants had to be within the following: under 18 years old or a youthful offender, which is someone under the age of 25 and is incarcerated by the "Youthful Offender" laws. Female data was not included from the SVORI collection. There were five areas that the researchers focused on improving: housing, health, education, criminal justice, and employment. Half of the participants from the SVORI were randomly assigned to receive enhanced SVORI programming, compared to the other half, which were not SVORI participants. The article states that the project was

approved and followed all modern ethical standards and guidelines. This project collected data in four different waves. Wave one data was collected 31 days prior to a participant's release date from the facility. Wave two was collected three months after the release date, wave three was nine months after, and wave four was 15 months post-release. During each wave, participants were asked various questions focusing on criminal offending histories, peer relationships, family dynamics, mental health, or substance use that had occurred since the wave before. Demographic data of each respondent was collected (Boman & Mowen, 2018).

In the first analysis, the dependent variable is the self-reported criminal offending and substance use after release. When focusing on criminal offending, respondents were asked at each wave if they had committed battery, assault, sold illegal drugs, carried a weapon, or committed a property crime. The answer "yes" was coded as 1 and the answer "no" was coded as 0. When focusing on substance use, respondents were asked if they had used any of the following substances: cocaine, hallucinogens, heroin, marijuana, inhalants, methadone, alcohol, opioids, stimulants, sedatives, or amphetatives (without a prescription because for some of these substances, they can be legally prescribed). The same coding system was used here as well (Boman & Mowen, 2018).

Within the second analysis, the two dependent variables focused on family conflict and delinquent peers. While assessing family conflict, three questions were taken from the SVORI data to look into negative family dynamics. They were assessed on a four-point Likert-type scale, which included strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, and disagree. The questions were "(1) fight a lot with family members, (2) are criticized a lot by their family, and (3) feel like they disappoint their family" (Boman & Mowen, 2018). The last dependent variable in the second

analysis is delinquent peers. During each wave, participants were asked simply how many of their friends were incarcerated, committed theft, had assaulted someone, or sold drugs. They responded on a four-point scale that included all, most, some, or none of them.

Multiple control measures were set forth in order to get a complete understanding of youth reentry. Under family support, respondents were asked on a four-point scale how close they feel to their family, if they want their family involved in their lives, and if they consider themselves a source of support for their family. Prior research was conducted in regards to see if family members were also incarcerated. During each wave, respondents were asked if they were employed because this measure varies across time. The race of the respondents was also controlled after the random assignment. 54.3% of respondents were black, 19.9% were White, and 25.8% were other races. Another control measure looked into was prior convictions and researchers had respondents report the total number of prior convictions (Boman & Mowen, 2018).

The results demonstrated that even while attempting to control post-release behavior, family conflict and peer delinquency were significantly associated with higher levels of criminal offending and polysubstance use. Overall, research suggested that the most important factor to youth reentry is decreasing family conflict because if not, it causes direct increases in offending and substance abuse. Boman and Mowen (2018) state that:

From the perspectives of differential association (Sutherland 1947) and differential coercion and social support (Colvin et al. 2002), we find a great deal of support for the importance of family conflict—as a source of coercion—for developmental outcomes among adolescents during reentry (285).

The findings compare well with prior research conducted, noting that family conflict is associated. Going further into the research, it may suggest that family conflict drives the adolescent away, causing the peer influence to increase.

This article did not focus much on the idea of race, gender, or class having an impact on youth reoffending and reentry. The research findings do seem to support popular beliefs on the idea that the media portrays reoffending a high opportunity for adolescents. Researchers did address policy implications they think are necessary. They stated that there needs to be a seek to reduce offending among returning youth; therefore, considering implementing programming that directly targets levels of family conflict among the youth after incarceration. Existing policies do not directly focus on family conflict, which they may be failing in two ways: (1) they aren't seeing family conflict as a negative component, and (2) by not intervening, they aren't preventing a major cause of peer delinquency. With future research, it should refine understandings of the importance of being involved in a youth's reentry process.

References

- Boman, J. H., & Mowen, T. J. (2018). A Developmental Perspective on Reentry: Understanding the Causes and Consequences of Family Conflict and Peer Delinquency during Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence*, 47(2), 275–289.
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